

Differing Needs, Differing Agendas: Activism by People with Experience of Homelessness
In the Capital Region of British Columbia

By

Trudy Laura Norman

B.Sc., University of Victoria, 1978

M.A. University of Victoria, 1986

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Interdisciplinary Studies

© Trudy Laura Norman, 2015

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This dissertation may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopying or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisory Committee

Differing Needs, Differing Agendas: Activism by People with Experience of Homelessness in
the Capital Region of British Columbia

By

Trudy Laura Norman

B.Sc., University of Victoria, 1978

M.A. University of Victoria, 1986

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Bernadette Pauly (School of Nursing)

(Co-supervisor)

Dr. Margo Matwychuk (Department of Anthropology)

(Co-supervisor)

Dr. William Carroll (Department of Sociology)

(Outside member)

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Bernadette Pauly (School of Nursing)

Co-supervisor

Dr. Margo Matwychuk (Department of Anthropology)

Co-supervisor

Dr. William Carroll (Department of Sociology)

Outside member

Governments have done little to address poverty and homelessness despite awareness of the increasing number of people affected by these issues. Neoliberalizing processes and resulting federal and provincial social policy changes since the 1980s have driven the decimation of Canada's welfare state and contributed to expanding inequalities that systematically privilege a wealthy few at the expense of the balance of Canadians, particularly those living in poverty. Collective resistances may be the best available and most powerful tool people in poverty, including those who experience homelessness, possess to challenge government policy directions and outcomes that marginalize their voices, needs, and wants.

The literature on collective action of people in poverty and who experience homelessness is sparse. Scholarship incorporating the voices of people who experience homelessness and participate in collective action is meager within this small body of literature. The role agency plays in individual behaviors and how such choices may be shaped by social conditions, is relatively unexamined. An activist ethnography, with structural violence as described by Paul Farmer as the critical frame, was used to explore the role various types of agency played in collective actions of people with experiences of homelessness or experience housing insecurity in the Capital Region of British Columbia.

Primary questions guiding the research were “What were participants’ experiences of collective change efforts? How may these efforts be understood within a structural violence framework? To answer these questions I chronicle and critically examine the challenges and successes of “The Committee”, a group of housed and unhoused activists as one example of collective actors that ‘push back’ against processes and practices that produce and reproduce homelessness.

Findings suggest that structurally violent processes generate embodied outcomes, lived experiences that constrain agency, often working to exclude people with experience of homelessness from collective resistances. Participation of people who are actively homeless or with experiences of homelessness in collective resistances requires attending to basic material needs and daily life issues in ways that allow meaningful participation in organizing work as a precursor to collective action. Allies can reproduce structures of violence and contribute to dismantling those same structures. Relationships between people with experience of homelessness and allies may work to mitigate unequal power relations, allowing some people with experiences of homelessness opportunities for participation in collective resistances not otherwise available to them. Implications for grassroots organizing and inclusion of people with experience of homelessness in collective resistances are included.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	.iii
Table of Contents.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Dedication.....	x
Chapter 1: Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Structural Concomitants of the Social Determinants of Health.....	3
Approaches to Ending Homelessness.....	6
How the Research Came About.....	9
Purpose and Objectives of the Research.....	12
Importance of the Research.....	14
Chapter 2: Scholarly Influences on the Research.....	17
Poverty, Inequality and Health.....	17
Health and Homelessness.....	21
Marginalization of people experiencing homelessness.....	27
Structural Violence.....	32
Social Movements.....	36
People with Experience of Homelessness and Social Movements.....	41
Summary.....	52
The Need for the Research.....	53
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	56
Epistemological Stance.....	56
Project Description and Methodological Approach.....	59

Ethnographic Approach.....	61
Project Description and Implementation.....	64
Entering the Field.....	64
Data Collection.....	66
Participants.....	68
Ethical Considerations.....	68
Data Analysis.....	76
Chapter 4: The Capital Region: Theater for Resistance?	80
Homeless in the Capital Region.....	81
Accessing the Social Determinants of Health.....	83
Primary Services for People Experiencing Homelessness.....	86
Accessing Social Services: Survival, “It’s a war out there”.....	89
A History of the Committee.....	104
Summary.....	119
Chapter 5: The Committee as a Site of Resistance.....	121
The Members.....	121
Meetings: “It’s our thang”.....	125
Working Together: Moving Beyond “Us and Them”.....	127
An atmosphere of caring.....	132
“We all learn here”.....	136
Working Together is Not Always Easy: More on Meetings.....	141
Inclusion or Tokenism: Involvement of People with Experience of Homelessness.....	149
“You don’t speak for me”.....	151
Boiled eggs and Bananas: Food as a Key to Inclusion.....	155
Differing Needs, Differing agendas.....	158

Challenging Systemic Power: “Going from I to We”	161
Summary.....	164
Chapter 6: The Context, the Committee and Collective Resistance.....	168
“So, Where the Hell Are We?”.....	168
Reflections on Structural Violence.....	168
Reflections on the Committee as a Social Movement Organization.....	174
Reflections on Inclusion and Organizations of People with Experience of Homelessness.....	180
Conclusions.....	182
Reflections: Reflexivity and Ethnographic Practice.....	186
References.....	190
Appendix A: Introductory Script-The Committee.....	207
Appendix B: Participant Recruitment and Consent Process.....	208
Appendix C: Consent Form Participant Observations.....	209
Appendix D: Script- Observation and Field Note Process.....	213
Appendix E: Participant Observations/Field Notes-areas of interest.....	214
Appendix F: Participant Observations-Verbal Consent Script.....	215
Appendix G: Recruitment letter-Focus Groups.....	216
Appendix H: Introductory Script-Focus Groups.....	217
Appendix I: Consent Form-Focus Groups.....	218
Appendix J: Draft Focus Group Questions.....	222
Appendix K: Recruitment letter-One on One Interviews.....	223
Appendix L: Participant Recruitment Poster.....	224
Appendix M: Introductory Script- One on One Interviews.....	225
Appendix N: Consent Form, One on One Interviews.....	226
Appendix O: Draft One on One Interview Questions.....	230

Appendix P: Consent Form-Email/Facebook.....231
Appendix Q: Committee Charter.....234
Appendix R: Committee “Who we are and what we do” Statement.....235

Acknowledgement

I find it hard to believe I am here. A long held dream is coming true at this ‘mature’ stage in my life. It has taken all the patience, perseverance and courage I could muster to follow my heart and complete this degree. Heaven only knows the challenges those close to me have endured over this past seven and a bit years as I wound my way through the doctoral process. To all who have been with me through this time I am forever grateful.

I would like to give special thanks to my friends Ruth Miller, Marion Ellis and Diane Fox who walked beside me the entire way. You bolstered my self-esteem when I wavered, provided support however necessary, and believed when I sometimes didn’t, that all would end well. I could not have done this without all of you. I also acknowledge the support of companions on the doctoral journey, Lynne Belle-Isle and Lauren Casey, whose support and encouragement always came at crucial moments.

I would also like to acknowledge my committee members for their kind, generous and thoughtful support throughout the doctoral process. Dr. Bernie Pauly I thank you for helping me learn a balance between rigor and compassion, head and heart, in doing research in social conditions that enrage me. Dr. Margo Matwychuk, I thank you for your incisive critiques of my work that spurred my thinking to new and wonderful places. Dr. Bill Carroll, I thank you for entreating me not to use ‘weasel words’ and come right out and say what I think! Clearly, I would not be here without all of you.

Thank you to the members of the Committee who invited me into their group and their lives. Without their willingness to share their thoughts and feelings with me, this research would not have taken place. I thank you for your faith in me. Wednesdays will never be the same!

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who experience homelessness and their allies, seeking social change and an end to conditions that lead to an outcome termed ‘homelessness’.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

It is estimated that 35,000 Canadians experience homelessness¹ on a given night and that over 235,000 people experienced homelessness in Canada in 2013 (Gaetz, Gulliver, & Richter, 2014). Though experienced by individuals, homelessness as a problem is a result of increasing inequalities in Canada shaped and maintained by factors such as declining incomes for people in poverty, an affordable housing crisis and increasing restrictions to social and economic supports (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013).

Homelessness in Canada is gendered and racialized (Gaetz et al., 2013). Almost half of people who experience homelessness are single males between 25 and 55, one fifth are youth aged 16 to 24 and Aboriginal people are significant experiencing homelessness (Aubry, Klodawsky, Coulombe, & Mills, 2004). A significant number of women experience homelessness. For example, 25% of those enumerated in the most recent count in Vancouver were women (Thomson, 2015). A diverse range of women and girls experience homelessness including young women and girls, women and girls with children, women engaged in survival sex, and indigenous women and girls (Yeo, 2015). In the Capital Region, 25% identified as

¹ The Canadian Definition of Homelessness (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012) part of a national body, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with ranging from without any shelter at one end, and insecurely housed at the other. Homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations including: 1) Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation; 2) Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence; 3) Provisionally Accommodated referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure and 4) At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit or Native though they comprised only 2.8%² of the regional population (Worton, 2007). For a vast majority of people homelessness is a one-time event of less than 30 days; for another group (3-11%), homelessness is episodic with several events over three years; however, for a small but significant group, 2 to 4%, homelessness is chronic, an ongoing experience with multiple occurrences (Aubry, Farrell, Hwang, & Calhoun, 2013). A similar pattern of shelter stays was found in Victoria in a recent study (Rabinovitch, Pauly, & Zhao, 2013).

Health is negatively impacted by the experience of homelessness (Frankish, 2005). People who experience homelessness have increased rates of chronic illness, acute conditions, and mortality than the general population (Hwang et al., 2013). Further, they experience increased barriers to accessing health care and may delay access to what care is available to meet daily survival needs (Hwang et al., 2013) Formerly homeless older adults experienced increased health concerns for a significant period after becoming housed (McDonald, Donahue, Janes, & Cleghorn, 2009).

A ‘social determinants of health’³ perspective may usefully frame a range of factors contributing to homelessness and helps to focus on the causes or determinants of homelessness. A social determinants of health perspective illustrates, for example, how income, housing, level of employment, access to health services, ethnicity, social exclusion and education contribute to the health status of individuals (Marmot, 2005). I focus on social exclusion as a determinant of health and how that is enacted. A social determinants of health perspective also takes into

² In the National Housing Survey of 2011, 4.2% of the population of the Victoria CMA identified as Aboriginal with a global non-response rate of 22.7% (Statistics Canada, 2014).

³According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the social determinants of health are “the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems”. Please see: http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/

account how the components of homelessness may be shaped by a range of policies at federal, provincial and local levels (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010). This perspective also helps to provide insights into solutions to homelessness. In this project, my focus was on how policy and practice at all levels of government have shaped conditions at a local level, and how those conditions may work to constrain the ability of people with experience of homelessness⁴ to participate in collective actions to address issues of homelessness. In this chapter, I broadly outline the scope and nature of these policy changes and actions undertaken on a national level in Canada to address homelessness. This chapter orients the reader to issues contributing to homelessness and how social determinants of health perspective, specifically social exclusion, may usefully frame this research project.

Structural Concomitants of the Social Determinants of Health

Though there is much evidence that structural conditions shaped by neoliberalizing processes are the root of poverty in Canada, governments have taken little advantage of this information to make changes addressing these concerns (Raphael, 2009). Instead, policy directions continually emphasize a need to ‘eliminate the deficit’ with cuts to social programs among the first ‘cost-saving’ choices, though these programs’ contribution to the deficit is minimal, as are the cost savings when social programming is eliminated (Phillips, 1996). People with low incomes are disproportionately affected by these changes and over time become increasingly unable to meet their life needs, moving progressively deeper into poverty.

For example, termination of the federal housing program in 1995 and cancellation of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) in 1996 brought changes to both national and provincial assistance

⁴ ‘People with experience of homelessness’, ‘people who are homeless’, ‘people with lived experience(s) of homelessness’; are used synonymously in this work to avoid reification of ‘homeless’ as a term for people who have a range of experiences of unhoused experiences.

programs that resulted in reduced and restricted access to income and supports for Canadians in need, greatly contributing to increasing numbers of people living in poverty and experiencing ‘homelessness’⁵ (Hulchanski, 2002). With less income to pay for increasingly expensive and scarce housing, people in poverty fall further behind in efforts to obtain and maintain housing (Hulchanski, 2006). Within an urban context, gentrification may also play a role in both the supply and cost of housing (Harvey, 2009).

Sometimes referred to as ‘urban revitalization’, gentrification is a process where ‘underutilized’ areas within an urban core are redeveloped and higher density ‘upscale’ housing and businesses affordable to more affluent individuals appear (Harvey, 2005). This process often results in displacement of people living in very low rent situations to the edges of the core area in an effort to find affordable housing. As gentrification proceeds, rents increase and as low middle income earners seek more affordable housing, low income earners are ‘squeezed out’ of affordable living situations and may become homeless, coming to city centers for services (Harvey, 2009).

Gentrification began in Canadian cities such as Toronto, where in the 1970s many Skid Row residents were evicted from marginal or low cost housing such as single room occupancy hotels/buildings (SROs) onto the street or into shelters, swelling the numbers of people experiencing homelessness (Hulchanski, 2006). Vancouver has experienced multiple evictions of tenants from housing in the Downtown Eastside to make room for upscale housing projects (Pell, 2008), several in preparation for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics though organizers made many promises to the contrary (Chan, 2014). Gentrification of SRO hotels may render many people

⁵ In 2015 1746 individuals were counted as homeless, 488 unsheltered and 1,258 sheltered in Vancouver. This is a reduction from 1800 total individuals counted in 2014 (Thomson, 2015). In 2014, a total of 1,167 individuals, 1,089 in 87 facilities and 78 turned away, were enumerated in a one night count in Greater Victoria (Albert, Pauly, Cross & Cooper, 2014).

homeless at one time. Isitt (2008) describes urban renewal beginning in Victoria in the 1960s with the development of Blanshard Courts. What was intended as a solution to both accommodation of a new Blanshard Street throughway and providing new housing for low income families, resulted in concentration of seniors and families, including 400 children in a 1.5 block radius (Isitt, 2008). A recent example may illustrate the impact of this form of gentrification in Victoria.

The Fairfield Block on the corner of Douglas and Cormorant streets in downtown Victoria is currently for sale. It houses six retail units on the main floor and 62 single room occupancy units on the third and fourth floors ("The Fairfield Block: A Historic Building In Downtown Victoria, 1601-1609 Douglas Street, Victoria," 2015). According to the Colliers website, the units currently rent for between \$375 and \$475 per month, placing them among affordable units for people receiving income assistance in Victoria⁶. The listing website states that the building is among several in the downtown core that are part of ongoing gentrification⁷ in the city ("The Fairfield Block: A Historic Building In Downtown Victoria, 1601-1609 Douglas Street, Victoria," 2015). This building is marketed as a prime source of income when 'revitalized'. However, there will be a net loss of 62 affordable units for people on low incomes. Indeed, the advertisement notes that "The vendor will consider providing vacant occupancy with respect to the hotel units" ("The Fairfield Block: A Historic Building In Downtown Victoria, 1601-1609 Douglas Street, Victoria," 2015). This may mean that 62 people may become homeless as a result of the sale of this building.

⁶ \$375 per month is allocated for housing costs for individuals receiving any form of income assistance in British Columbia (Ministry of Social Development, 2015).

⁷ It is interesting to note that "gentrification" is actually used in online advertising for sale of this property.

The loss of units in the Fairfield Hotel as part of the Fairfield Block will add to the pressures of the scarce affordable rental housing market in the area (Pauly, Cross, Vallance, Winn-Williams, & Stiles, 2013). Those least able to afford available housing, people living in poverty, are less able to afford the higher cost of alternate rental housing. People living on any form of income assistance most often already experience shortfalls between income and housing and basic food costs for individuals (Pauly et al., 2013) and families (Albert, Pauly, Cross, & Cooper, 2014a). Affordable housing with supports, managed by not for profit providers in the Capital Region, geared to individuals who experience homelessness and who also have mental health and addictions concerns has an effective zero vacancy rate (Norman & Pauly, 2015). Individuals seeking supported housing must fill out complex forms and enter a waitlisting process where a median wait time for those who actually received housing was eight months (Norman & Pauly, 2015). Without access to adequate housing and income, people who experience homelessness face increased health risks (Frankish, Hwang, & Quantz, 2005; Pauly, 2008).

Approaches to Ending Homelessness

In recent years, some authors suggest that there have been some changes to how homelessness is addressed in Canada; there has been a shift toward discourses that highlight ending rather than managing homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2014) based on an approach developed in the United States, Ten Year Plans to end homelessness have been developed in several Canadian cities including Calgary (*Calgary's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness 2008-2018, January 2011 Update*, 2011), Edmonton (*A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness*, 2009), and Victoria ("Solving Homelessness in British Columbia's Capital Region: A Community Plan," 2012). Most ten year plans focus on ending homelessness for

individuals who chronically experience homelessness as this group tends to access costly supports such as emergency services and hospitals much more frequently than other people who experience homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013). Many of these plans incorporate a Housing First⁸ strategy, where individuals are placed directly into housing and provided supports where needed. Few of these plans though address the continuing production of more homeless people that results from the structural factors noted above.

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) has adopted a national strategy for ending homelessness in Canada in 10 years with the hope that communities would take up the challenge to create and implement plans to end homelessness (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012). The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH) implemented a ten year plan in 2008. Though some progress has been made, the GVCEH will not likely meet its goal to end homelessness in Victoria by 2018. Indeed, in Victoria, a recent one night count enumerated 1,089 individuals in 87 facilities and 78 individuals turned away from a facility (Albert, Pauly, Cross, & Cooper, 2014b).

Progress toward ending homelessness⁹ has been made in several centers across Canada. Indeed, officials in Medicine Hat, Alberta claim they will likely “end chronic homelessness” this year (Wong, 2015). There is still much to be done to end homelessness in Canada. Despite successes in housing individuals in some jurisdictions, on a national level little progress has

⁸ Housing First’ is both an approach to and philosophy of housing people experiencing homelessness. The five principles of Housing First programs are, “immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements; consumer choice and self-determination; individualized, recovery-oriented and client driven supports; harm reduction and social and community integration”. Please see: <http://www.housingfirsttoolkit.ca/key-questions1#1whatishousingfirst>

⁹ The term ‘ending homelessness’ is most often used in reference to Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness. Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness generally address only individuals who experience chronic homelessness. One concern with this approach is that focus remains on the individuals who are homeless rather than for example, the structures that contribute to homelessness.

been made to either stem the flow of people into homelessness or support the stable rehousing of those who are currently homeless (Gaetz et al., 2014).

While many individuals and groups are working to end homelessness, there is little involvement of people with experience of homelessness in the work of ending homelessness (Norman & Pauly, 2013). Indeed, people who experience homelessness have been deemed ‘deficient’ and ‘in need of fixing’ within a service sector that constructs the experience of homelessness as a ‘problem’ that requires medical intervention (Lyon-Callo, 2008). In this view of homelessness, currently hegemonic, there seems little room for meaningful participation of people with experience of homelessness in solutions and strategies to end homelessness. Yet, people who experience homelessness are experts of their experience and have insights germane to ending homelessness not available to those without this experience (Sakamoto et al, 2008). Several authors have noted that individuals can also internalize dominant ideologies and come to participate in their own disciplining (Farmer, 2005b; Lyon-Callo, 2008) and oppression (Freire, 1995).

A small body of literature includes the voices of people with experience of homelessness in solutions and strategies to end homelessness (cf. Bridgman, 1999; Lyon-Callo, 2008; Sakamoto et al, 2008; Van Drannen et al, 2013; Waterston, 1998). People who experience homelessness often experience a lack of dignity and respect when attempting to have their needs met at service agencies (Norman, Pauly, Marks & Palazzo, 2015). Individuals in this study expressed much anger at this situation, yet felt challenged to address their concerns as homelessness was a ‘full time job’ requiring most of their energy on a daily basis (Norman et al, 2015).

This study examines collective resistances by people with experience of homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia through study of one group in Victoria composed of housed allies and people with experience of homelessness. The study aims to explicate the ways in which collective resistances by people with experience of homelessness may be constrained or alternatively, enabled, when viewed through a structural violence lens (Farmer, 2004).

How the Research Came About

I came to graduate school after working for over twenty years with people who experience homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia. In my tenure with a large not for profit society, I noticed that no matter how hard I worked, how many individuals I assisted and how many units of housing the organization built, there were far too many individuals I could not aid. Indeed, for almost ten years as a street outreach worker I spent my day assisting people who were homeless to apply for income or disability benefits, get medical assistance and find housing. There was a continual flow of people to my door and little I could do but listen, offer a meal or accompany the individual to an appointment with a worker at a social agency. Many people who were homeless saw no way out of poverty and the conditions they lived in. Anger and despair abounded.

Increasingly, it seemed there was little I could do to improve outcomes for people who were homeless. There were fewer and fewer places individuals could afford to rent when receiving \$375 per month shelter allowance. Many times two people would share a one bedroom apartment in an attempt to live in a nice space. Often sharing an apartment would not work and one person moved out leaving the other with unaffordable rent. Both individuals generally became homeless, again. After ten years of seeing these situations on a daily basis I burned out.

I knew what I offered was helpful but what people experiencing homelessness needed was safe, affordable housing and an adequate income to maintain that housing, feed and clothe themselves, pay the bills and have a little fun in life. Some people who experience homelessness may need more supports as they try to cope with mental health and substance use issues and the trauma of homelessness. Rather than give up, I moved into program development, seeking and obtaining funding for more housing and supports for people experiencing homelessness. Though the lives of some individuals experiencing homelessness improved, there were many more who continued to live in extreme poverty. I wondered what could be done to assist people to get their life needs met? Why was there a seemingly ever increasing number of people experiencing homelessness?

With these questions as impetus I applied for and was accepted into an interdisciplinary doctoral program at the University of Victoria. My doctoral program has focused on gaining an understanding of the range of political, social and economic factors that work together to create conditions in which people fall through or are unable to access our ever shrinking support systems to become homeless. The work of Canadian scholars David Hulchanski and Dennis Raphael helped me understand some of the myriad ways in which social policy is impacted by neoliberal ideological currents. I was literally stunned by the work of Vincent Lyon-Callo (2008). His analysis of the influence of neoliberal thought, drawing on Foucauldian notions of governmentality on construction of 'good' and 'compliant' shelter users within a medicalized discourse of homelessness, left me sobbing. I felt complicit in the production and reproduction of discursive notions and daily sensibilities within my shelter workplace that viewed people who are homeless as 'ill' and in need of 'fixing'. As my program progressed to discussion of my dissertation research and now aware of the structural issues underlying poverty and homelessness

in Canada I wondered what, if any, other avenues existed that might generate action or changes to truly address homelessness. Further, I noticed that people who experience homelessness were notably absent from discussions on homelessness both in the literature and in practice.

David Hulchanski and Dennis Raphael suggested that collective action may be the most likely or perhaps only avenue open to people in poverty to get their needs met. This notion led me to explore the literature on social movements involving people with experiences of homelessness, which I discuss in Chapter 2. Farmer's (1996) notion of structural violence helped further solidify my thoughts on a theoretical lens for my work. Structural violence may be viewed as differential use of power, applied through a social structure such as policy that limits individuals' ability to meet life needs (Galtung, 1969). I found a research area where I might address some of my questions! I heard there was also an activist group in Victoria whose goal was to include the voices of people with experiences of homelessness in dialogues on homelessness. I went to a group meeting and introduced myself. I was warmly welcomed and quickly included in group work. After some time with the group and discussions with members it was settled, I had found the place to explore my questions and potentially, contribute to ongoing efforts addressing issues of homelessness in the region.

Recent literature highlights the need for including the voices of people with experience of homelessness in developing solutions and strategies to end homelessness (Norman & Pauly, 2013; Sakamoto et al., 2008; Whiteford, 2011). Conversely, other works highlight the technologies of governance that construct some sections of the population as problems (Foucault, 1982; Parker & Fopp, 2004; Rose, 1996). Some authors also discuss how people who are homeless and subject to these processes internalize these constructions and participate in their own disciplining (Lyon-Callo, 2008; Parker & Fopp, 2004). Foucault (1982) and Gramsci

(Crehan, 2002) among others have argued that these processes are never total, and the Committee was a space where I thought I may find resistances to dominant discourses and practices of homelessness.

Purpose and Objectives of the Research

The purpose of this project was to explore how people with experiences of homelessness participate individually and jointly in collective actions challenging both the discourses and practices of 'homelessness'. The research objectives were:

1. To map the ways in which oppression, i.e., structural violence (Farmer, 1996) is lived out in the daily lives of participants. This included how oppressive processes may inhibit and constrain collective actions of people who experience homelessness, including roadblocks and barriers that prevent individuals from participating in collective action.
2. To reveal and explicate the range of collective actions of people with experience of homelessness in the Capital Region that focus on 'homelessness'.
3. To illuminate the role(s) housed allies play in these collective actions by people who experience homelessness. This included housed participants in the Committee¹⁰, not for profit agency staff, elected officials, and university/college faculty and students and the ways in which these allies constrained or facilitated collective action by people with experience of homelessness, and reproduced or challenged structural violence.

¹⁰ 'The Committee' (not the real name) is a group of housed allies and people with experience of homelessness who, through a range of collective resistances, work to forefront the voices of people with experience of homelessness in conversations on homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia.

4. To explore the involvement of individuals with experience of homelessness in collective action against 'homelessness', and how these actions were constrained or facilitated by political, economic and social forces within the Capital Region of British Columbia.

Two primary research questions, along with a number of sub-questions are associated with these objectives:

1. What are participants' experiences of collective challenge efforts? Further questions following from this are:

- a. How do participants conceptualize their participation in collective action?
- b. To what extent does resistance play a role? What prompts people who are homeless to participate in collective action?
- c. What are the roadblocks and barriers that prevent individuals from taking part in action or collective action? What might be done to mitigate or transform these roadblocks and barriers?
- d. What are the lessons learned from homeless activists' experiences?

2. How may these collective actions and efforts be understood within a theory of structural violence (Farmer, 1996)? Questions flowing from this include:

- a. What specific processes may constrain collective action of people who are homeless in the Capital Region?
- b. How are these processes lived out on a daily basis in the bodies of people who are homeless and participate in collective action?

- c. What kinds of agency are constrained in these processes?
- d. What processes, if any, exist that support or enable the participation of people with experience of homelessness in collective action? What are the outcomes of these processes? What kinds of agency are impacted and how?
- e. How might such enabling processes be supported or enhanced?
- f. What role(s) do housed allies play within the collective actions of people who are homeless and how may they be understood within a structural violence framework?

Importance of the Research

In this research project, I aim to investigate the ways in which the social and political agency and autonomy of people with experience of homelessness are constrained or enabled as they participate in collective actions challenging homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia. Such a project can contribute to knowledge on homelessness in several ways. First, though the number of works including the voices of people with experience of homelessness engaged in collective action challenging the issues of poverty and homelessness is increasing within the literature, there are none that view collective actions through a structural violence lens. Explicating participation in collective action against homelessness through the voices of those who take part including how and why such individuals participate, how they understand participation, what kinds of agency are exerted and how agency and autonomy may be constrained, will begin to address this gap in scholarship and contribute to our understanding of responses to homelessness, and the ways in which people who experience homelessness perceive themselves and their actions within a context of structural violence.

Further, a detailed and thorough description of the particular, how a specific set of circumstances and conditions are lived, can shed light on the context or whole in which the particular is a component (Abu-Lughod, 1990). One space in which awareness of how structurally violent processes may affect the work of activists who are homeless and challenge issues of homelessness is in their daily lives and work. More specifically, the Committee is composed of a range of participants from those who are unhoused to those who may be considered over-housed, providing opportunities for gaining insights into organizational and movement dynamics and issues that arise in the building of a social movement that involves people with experiences of homelessness and the participation of allies. This may add to current understandings in the literature of how such groups operate, and how challenges, such as membership fluctuations and changing political landscapes that the group faces, may influence participation, cohesion and effectiveness over time. Several founding members including people with experience of homelessness still participate in the group. These founding members can provide an oral history and access to documented group history, important components of understanding the context in which the group formed and has developed.

The project has relevance to Victoria, the Capital Region and similar cities within Canada and the United States as neoliberal influenced policy environments, material outcomes of policy changes, and homelessness exist in these areas. Further, an explication of the lived experience of structural violence and its effects on social and political agency may surface ways in which these effects may be mitigated. Importantly, a discursive space will be opened to consider the possibility that the effects of structural violence may not be all encompassing; that is, that participants in collective action with experiences of homelessness may assert their social and political agency in some ways or in some circumstance and not in other ways or circumstances.

I explore my research questions throughout this dissertation. I develop an argument that people with experiences of homelessness in the Victoria area encounter multiple constraints within their everyday lives as a result of structurally violent processes that severely inhibit their ability to ‘push back’ against issues of homelessness in a collective manner. Further, I argue that there are effective ways and occasions where such constraints may be mitigated and unequal power relations challenged and perhaps reversed, to benefit people who are homeless.

In Chapter 2, I discuss three streams of literature that influence this work: health; specifically the key social determinants of health impacting homelessness; Paul Farmer’s theory of structural violence which forms the theoretical lens for the work, and social movements theory, practice and outcomes as they relate to activism by people with experiences of homelessness. In Chapter 3, I detail the study methodological approach and techniques for implementation from entering the field, ethical considerations to data sources and collection and analysis. In Chapters 4 and 5, I discuss the Committee, its history and work, through the eyes of members with lived experiences of homelessness and housed allies. Further, I critically engage with the findings through a theoretical lens of structural violence, understandings of social exclusion/inclusion and their impact on the Committee as one example of a social movement involving people with experience of homelessness. In Chapter 6, I offer a summary reflection on the findings, questions, and offer suggestions for enhancing participation of people with experiences of homelessness in groups that aim to ‘push back’ against issues of homelessness. Lastly, I consider the notion of reflexivity in ethnographic practice and myself as novice ethnographer.

Chapter 2

Scholarly Influences on the Research

This research project focuses on how participation of people with experiences of homelessness in collective action aimed at addressing issues of homelessness may be impacted by social exclusion¹¹. In this chapter, I review literature illuminating a path that connects social policy climate, subsequent policy changes and the impacts those changes may have on the health of Canadians, notably people in poverty and who experience homelessness. I then discuss how these and other types of policy changes have been translated at a local level and contribute to the marginalization of people who experience homelessness. Then, I discuss the theoretical frame of the study, how Farmer's (1996) notion of structural violence may further clarify how these federal, provincial and local policies may impact the daily lives of people who are homeless, potentially constricting their ability to make life affirming choices. Next, I discuss social movement theory and works that describe past and present efforts of people in poverty or who are homeless to address their unmet life needs through collective action. Finally, I provide a short summary of the literature and describe the need for this research.

Poverty, Inequality and Health

Increasingly, conservative influences on government and particularly the election of the Mulroney Conservative government in 1984 made possible a series of changes marking the beginning of Canada's shift from welfare to neoliberal state (Raphael, 2007). Though as Canadians, we see ourselves as differing from Americans in our conviction in the need for and protection of our social safety net, current realities might usefully lead us to question this belief

¹¹ Social exclusion is understood here as "both process and outcome that is, people experience social exclusion because of structural processes that marginalize and exclude them from the housing, income, and supports that would permit them to participate as social and political equals in their community" (Norman & Pauly, 2013, p.139).

(McBride & McNutt, 2007). These changes in Canada's welfare state have contributed to poverty, inequality, and homelessness. With the 1995 passing of the Budget Implementation Act (BIA), the federal government repealed the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) and introduced the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). While CAP provided funds to provinces with portions designated specifically for health, education and social assistance, CHST involved block transfer of funds to provinces. Along with these changes, a 25% reduction in federal transfers forced provinces to further prioritize service choices and many programs experienced severe cuts or, in the case of programs for women, sometimes disappeared entirely (McBride & McNutt, 2007; Morrow, Hankivsky, & Varcoe, 2004). Further, provinces now decide funding allocations in each area, minus restrictions previously imposed by the federal government that set the levels of benefits required.

The cumulative effect of these changes was to provide a 'conditioning framework' for provincial social policy that allowed room for divergence from a universal 'Canadian' course and experimentation with alternative policy directions (McBride & McNutt, 2007). This change in the balance of power marked a fundamental shift in federal and provincial relations, changing the limits of 'fiscal federalism', and setting in motion progressive deterioration of the welfare state and increasing neoliberalization of Canada (Hallstrom, 2009). Since that time federal policy directions have continually emphasized a need to 'eliminate the deficit' with cuts to social programs among the first 'cost-saving' choices, though these programs' contribution to the deficit is minimal, as are the cost savings when social programming is eliminated (Phillips, 1996). The following illustrate impacts of some of these changes on Canadian social policy.

Canada's involvement in providing social housing was meager and short-lived. Programs implemented in the 1970s were cut in the 1980s. By 1993 the federal social housing program

was cancelled and responsibility for new or existing social housing was devolved to the provinces (Hulchanski, 2002). Without the benefit of a national strategy mandating development of a range of affordable housing options, people in poverty become systematically excluded from safe, adequate affordable housing. Those most affected by program cuts were those with low income and most likely, renters (Pomeroy & Evans, 2008).

Canada's housing system is almost entirely market based and as such relies on market mechanisms to supply, distribute, and maintain housing (Hulchanski, 2006). Further, changes to CMHC policy since the 1990s have resulted in loss of funding to co-operative housing programs, another form of affordable housing. Subsidies for co-operative housing are not being renewed as operating agreements expire (Pablo, 2014) effectively extinguishing a viable, non-market, democratic and affordable housing alternative. The needs of those who cannot afford to own or pay market rents, disproportionately women, those of Aboriginal ancestry and new immigrants, are not well served by Canada's current housing system and are progressively more severely disadvantaged when seeking housing in market centered climates (Mirchandani & Chan, 2007).

Canada's national unemployment insurance program has undergone several revisions, including a name change from "Unemployment Insurance" to "Employment Insurance" focusing benefits on training for and acquiring paid work, rather than providing assistance between periods of work (McBride & McNutt, 2007). 'Employment insurance' has also moved from a universal benefit for all unemployed people to an arrangement in which progressively fewer may access benefits despite all who work paying into the fund. Benefit levels have decreased while qualifying hours have greatly increased. In the 1990s, 80% of unemployed Canadians qualified for benefits during the recession, while in 2009 less than 50% of those unemployed could access reduced assistance for an extremely limited period (Campbell, 2010).

On a provincial level, British Columbia has experienced some of the most severe changes resulting from neoliberalizing policy influences, including restricted access and time limits on welfare entitlements. Programs for women, especially for victims of violence, have been severely reduced or cut in British Columbia along with legal services supporting systemic challenges, limiting individual options for contesting unfair or unjust government practices (McBride & McNutt, 2007). Surveillance of income assistance recipients has increased in British Columbia to include mandatory documentation and exposure of spousal relationships, finances, and volunteer, as well as paid, work (Mirchandani & Chan, 2007). Income assistance recipients deemed 'employable' must report all 'earned' income and may keep none of those earnings before benefits are reduced. Assistance recipients may elect to be 'honest' and experience a reduction in benefits, or 'dishonest' so they may pay for rent, food, or other life necessities (Reitsma-Street & Wallace, 2004). Income assistance recipients are often funneled to paid work as the lone appropriate occupational choice (Mirchandani & Chan, 2007; Morgen & Maskovsky, 2003; Morrow et al., 2004). Unwaged work including volunteering, childbearing, rearing, family care giving, and household management labor of women are not considered 'work' and therefore not included in benefit eligibility (Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2008). Government social assistance in Canada is increasingly gendered and racialized with women and immigrants, notably persons of color, experiencing significant barriers in applying for and obtaining income assistance or employment. Barriers may include lack of transportation to the income assistance office, difficulties understanding and completing required forms, and difficulty dealing with caseworkers because of perceived racism (Mirchandani & Chan, 2007). For women who are often the presumed child caregivers, there are additional pressures including inability to attend appointments or presence of young or nursing children in interviews when there is no one else to

care for them (Mirchandani & Chan, 2007). Indeed, women's roles are often normalized in media, schools, and employment to mean that of a home-based unwaged supporter within a male-headed family, both producing and reproducing unequal power relations within the family and society, and rendering women and their children more vulnerable to poverty should the family unit dissolve (Young, 2001).

Aboriginal persons in Canada are significantly overrepresented in prison and homeless populations, and are often subject to institutionalized racism on many levels including access to safe, affordable housing and health supports (Laird, 2007a). Further, Aboriginal persons have few suitable avenues for challenging unjust policy and practices (Kingfisher, 2005). A 'social determinants of health' perspective may help clarify how these social policy changes impact the lives of people living in poverty and who experience homelessness.

Health and Homelessness

A social determinants of health perspective illustrates for example, how income, housing, level of employment, access to health services, ethnicity, social exclusion and education contribute to the health status of individuals (Marmot, 2005). In this research I focus on social exclusion as a determinant of health. People who experience homelessness also experience social exclusion (Norman & Pauly, 2013). Denial of employment and economic opportunities, denial of access to housing and use of public space as a consequence of marginalization, stigma and discrimination often associated or attributed to homelessness are underlying factors that contribute to social exclusion (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001; Shinn, 2010). Social exclusion may be understood as a process characterized by restricted access to opportunities, limited capability to benefit from those opportunities, along with several social and economic components such as

exclusion from adequate resources, the labor market and social relations including participation in political and cultural life (Hayes, Gray, & Edwards, 2008). Social exclusion is thus both material in lacking access to resources, and non-material in lacking respectful relationships with service providers and without meaningful participation in decisions affecting them (Norman & Pauly, 2013). A discussion of how the social determinants impact the health of people who experience homelessness may illuminate the importance of addressing social exclusion in efforts that aim to tackle homelessness.

The general health status of Canadians has improved significantly since 1900. However, only 10-15% of increased life span can be related to advances in medical care, the balance is attributable to overall improvements in the social determinants of health such as food availability, housing, education, and working conditions, (Raphael, 2009). The health of Canadians is largely shaped by the circumstances in which they live, increasingly known as the ‘social determinants of health’¹² (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010). Brunner and Marnot (2006) introduced the term based on Tarlov’s work examining how inequalities in housing, education, social acceptance and employment transformed into disease processes. The social determinants of health are

the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.

(WHO, 2015)

¹² I will sometimes use the terms ‘determinants’ or ‘social determinants’ here as a short form for the ‘social determinants of health’.

For Canadians the determinants include disability, early life experience, education, employment status and working conditions, food insecurity, health services, gender, housing, income, and income distribution, race, social exclusion, social safety net, and unemployment and job security (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010). Many of the determinants of health are defined by the way in which income and wealth are distributed locally, nationally, and globally (Macdonald, Raphael, Labonte, Torgerson, & Hayward, 2009).

Raphael (2009), notes that differences in health status may be explained by quantitative differences in Canadians' lived experience of the determinants. People with higher incomes not only have a much greater range of choices for housing, food and education for themselves and their children than people who are in low income, they have differential access to those determinants based on their relative social position (Graham, 2004). Further, Graham asserts that social position (as determined by material assets and social capital) is the key or 'link' through which structural inequalities operate), suggesting that higher social standing most often equates to better health status. Indeed, in Canada "life expectancy increases with each and every step up in the income scale" (Shapcott, 2009p.12).

Children living in low-income families have a greater incidence of illnesses of all kinds and are more likely to experience the effects of lower academic achievement, child abuse and family violence, carrying these effects into their adult years (Raphael, 2009). Additionally, women and people of Aboriginal ancestry are more likely to experience low income, low social rank and associated effects on their health status (Raphael, 2007). Social position thus influences current health status and current health status, through unpaid sick leave, reduced employability, poor insurance coverage, no income replacement, and reduced access to health care affects

social position in the future (Graham, 2004); creating a potentially devastating cycle of health decline.

People experiencing housing insecurity and those who are homeless, those in the lowest social positions, are at increased risk in several key health areas. As found in one British study, as number of episodes of inadequate housing increased, so did the risk of illness or disability along the life course (Thomson, Petticrew, & Morrison, 2001). People who have been homeless for long periods experience a phenomenon known as ‘accelerated aging’ where individuals age 50 or more may feel considerably older (McDonald et al., 2009). These authors observed that once housed, participants’ access to health care improved however, “undiagnosed or latent conditions that occurred during homelessness affected health and well-being outcomes long after they had moved into housing” (McDonald et al., 2009, p.5). For example, symptoms similar to PTSD¹³, depression and physical illnesses that can affect an individual’s willingness to initiate or participate in relationships were observed among participants. Indeed, these authors concluded that several years of stable housed recovery may be necessary for every year a person is homeless (McDonald et al., 2009).

For people in poverty living with HIV, stable housing increased adherence to HIV medication protocols, use of complementary therapies, and decreased transmission of HIV, indeed stable housing was ‘vital’ to the health of these immunosuppressed persons (Leaver, Bargh, Dunn, & Hwang, 2007). Securing and maintaining stable housing was key for people experiencing homelessness and who had persistent mental illnesses; as housing tenure increased,

¹³ PTSD or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is “a potentially debilitating anxiety disorder triggered by exposure to a traumatic experience such as an interpersonal event like physical or sexual assault, exposure to disaster or accidents, combat or witnessing a traumatic event”. PTSD has been associated for example with war, rape, or by those who experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse as children “ (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001923>).

hospital utilization generally decreased (Kyle & Dunn, 2008). According to Shaw, “Housing is best viewed as a catch-all term for the myriad and multidimensional ways in which our conditions of living, physical, proximate, emotional and social- can affect health” (2004, p. 414, sic). Indeed, housing is the social determinant of health through which all the others operate (Bryant, 2009) and key to improving the health of people who experience homelessness.

When governments decrease social programs, people receiving these benefits often have fewer alternatives from which to replace lost income and supports. For example, people receiving income assistance and deemed able to work, can often access only minimum wage and often part-time employment that does not nearly cover basic living costs such as rent and food in cities such as Victoria where housing is expensive (Pauly et al., 2013; Pauly, Jackson, Thompson, & Kerr-Southin, 2011). Housing and food costs have continued to rise in Victoria. In 2013 the median rate for a bachelor apartment was \$695, an increase of \$20 per month from 2011; however income assistance rates remained the same as in 2011 (Pauly et al., 2013). Further, these authors state that individuals receiving disability benefits, the highest level of income assistance available for single people under age 65, could still not afford to cover both rent and food costs in a month. Income assistance in British Columbia remains \$375 per month for housing for a single individual, regardless of the level of additional support received through Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) or Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefits (Ministry of Social Development and Innovation, 2015). With a vacancy rate of 0.9% for a bachelor unit renting for \$700 per month or less, coupled with a long waiting list for subsidized units, housing options are extremely limited for people with very low incomes in the Victoria area (Pauly et al, 2013). With a financial deficit looming each month, individuals must address survival needs in other ways.

People living in low incomes generally have no savings or ability to save, and most often no family or friends who can assist in times of difficulty (Reitsma-Street & Wallace, 2004).

People living in extreme poverty, such as those who are unhoused, often have few alternatives to address their unmet life needs and may resort to ‘crimes of survival’, such as thefts of food and toiletries, non-payment of rent and prostitution in order to meet basic needs (Sheehy, 2004).

People living in poverty including those experiencing homelessness, racial minorities, and lone mother families on income assistance reported facing discrimination based on income when seeking housing (Novac, Darden, Hulchanski, & Seguin, 2002). When people in low income do find housing, they may choose to pay rent at the cost of other necessities such as food, making potentially life-threatening choices on a daily basis (Dunn, Hayes, Hulchanski, Hwang, & Potvin, 2006). Living in poverty, making survival choices and not fully meeting basic needs has effects on health and wellbeing that negatively impact individual chances over the life course (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010).

Poverty and inequality is not only gendered and racialized, but also depoliticized and seemingly accepted as ‘how things are’ in the current neoliberal political economic environment (Lyon-Callo & Brinn-Hyatt, 2003). For increasing numbers of people in poverty in Canada, including those who experience homelessness, changes in policy areas such as housing and income, have fostered inequalities that severely impact health (Hallstrom, 2009; Raphael, 2007, 2009). Living outside or ‘sleeping rough’ is a choice made by some people who are homeless as an alternative to staying in a shelter (Williams, 2005). Sleeping outside has numerous effects on the health of people who are homeless.

Living outside, especially during the winter months has many impacts on health. Consequences from exposure can include hypothermia and respiratory illnesses such as

pneumonia or bronchitis (McDonald et al., 2009). When coupled with inadequate nutrition from inability to afford appropriate food and restricted access to appropriate health care options, such conditions can, according to these authors, result in early aging and an increased risk of death. Living outside or in inadequate or overcrowded housing conditions also present a range of safety concerns for individuals that may lead to injury, illness or death. Indeed, a longitudinal study of 8,769 men in Toronto showed a greater risk of mortality was associated with periodic use of shelters (Hwang, 2002).

People who are homeless experience a range of health conditions as a result of poverty. The connections between policy changes that result in increased poverty, marginalization and stigmatization that may result in poorer health outcomes and constrained lives often remain invisible. Structural violence is the name given to these processes.

Marginalization of People Experiencing Homelessness

People who are homeless experience marginalization (Norman & Pauly, 2013). In the following section, I describe a number of structural conditions and policy impacts that contribute to marginalization of people who experience homelessness. A range of government decisions experienced as unfair or discriminatory limit or differentially allow access to social and economic supports and contribute to marginalization. These decisions may be institutionalized through policy and practices. For example, policies based on normative understandings of family, gender, and sexual orientation and those that elide racialized relations may disproportionately affect and marginalize persons occupying non-normative categories (Anglin, 1998). Thus, an individual who, for example, identifies as female, single, poor, and Aboriginal may suffer from multiple agentic constraints and severely reduced opportunities for wellbeing.

Indeed, many structural factors that work to marginalize people who are homeless have developed in Canada and the United States. Criminalization of poverty and homelessness further contribute to a number of conditions that shape the experiences of people who are homeless.

Criminalization of poverty and homelessness is on the rise in the United States (Amster & Cook, 2010; Foscarinis, 1996; Gustafson, 2009; Niwa & Foscarinis, 2004) and Canada (Gaetz, 2004a; O'Grady, Gaetz, & Buccieri, 2011; Sheehy, 2004). Gentrification and economic recession in the United States beginning in the 1980s contributed to massive numbers of homeless people with nowhere to go (Smith, 1996; Wagner & Cohen, 1991b). The contested ground to which people who are homeless often turn is 'public space'; streets, parks, and gathering places such as city squares or boulevards, often with seating areas. Public space is increasingly privatized, patrolled by paid security guards, turned into outdoor cafes for nearby businesses, or its use restricted by municipal by-laws against panhandling or playing bongo drums. As well as contributing to the loss of much low cost housing, 'urban renewal' has fostered the reduction and redefinition of many formerly public spaces for almost exclusive use of home and business owners in 'revitalized' areas (Amster, 2008; Laurenson & Collins, 2006; Smith, 1996).

Without housing, or at least a place where they may close a door and control entry, people who experience homelessness have fewer places in which to conduct their everyday lives. Often, they conduct a large portion of their lives in public spaces (Amster, 2008; Hodgetts, Radley, & Hodgetts, 2007). Normative notions of dress and behavior, currently those of the middle class, are seen as natural and expected (Laurenson & Collins, 2006). Those not conforming to norms of behavior and dress, spending time on the streets, sleeping in parks, or seeking respite in a library for example may, by reason of appearance or perceived lack of responsibility, be ascribed a lesser category of citizenship (Hodgetts et al., 2008). This 'second

class' group is treated differently than other citizens by the law and may receive more active surveillance by police (Sheehy, 2004). Thus, people who “occupy public spaces because they lack private ones, and whose poverty is highly visible, are subject to extra attention by the criminal justice system not so much for *what* they do, but for *who* they are and *where* they are” (O'Grady et al., 2011, p. 7, italics added). There are many examples of such discriminatory practices and several are discussed below.

In a study involving homeless street-involved youth in Toronto, social profiling¹⁴ was found to be common and possibly based on a wide definition of ‘suspicious person’ (O'Grady et al., 2011). These authors suggest that the term ‘suspicious’, a reason used by police to stop individuals in public space, may have been determined by dress, location, or time of day. Sheehy (2004) argues that people, particularly women, living in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver as compared to other Vancouver residents, are often subjected to increased surveillance by police, including increased detentions, with unlawful search and seizure of personal items. In a Victoria study examining policing and poverty, 91% of respondents, most of whom had been homeless in the previous two years, reported they were stopped by police at least once in the past year for no apparent reason other than being in a public space such as a street corner or the steps of a church (Herman, 2011). A City of Victoria by-law that limits use of Pandora Green in downtown Victoria stands out as a clear and intentional example of spatial marginalization intended to remove people who are homeless from a specific outdoor space.

¹⁴ Social profiling “occurs when an action is taken against a person based on the fact that this person seemingly belongs to an identified group; in this case people who are deemed by police officers to *be* homeless, because of how they look, what they are doing, and where they are doing it” and “The social profiling of homeless persons refers to a range of actions undertaken for safety, security or public protection, or in response to public fear, that relies on stereotypes about the danger and criminality of people who are homeless and their uses of public space (for money making, sleeping or resting), rather than on a reasonable suspicion, to be singled out for greater scrutiny or differential treatment”. (O'Grady et al, 2011, p. 13).

Supported by a group of businesses neighboring the area, the City of Victoria spent \$500,000 turning the former green space into a paved median designed to deter stopping, sitting or sleeping by people who are homeless or who use services in the area (Herman, 2011). Though the by-law language includes everyone, it is only people who are homeless or who use Our Place, the largest social agency serving people who are homeless in the downtown core of Victoria, that would spend any amount of time on this median. This means that patrons of Our Place, located next to the former green, may not sit on and are encouraged not to *stand* on this median. Patrons are asked to enter Our Place building and courtyard directly and move away from the Pandora Street frontage as quickly as possible when leaving. If they do not do so, patrons are often challenged or requested by police to ‘move along’ (k.hines, personal communication, April 2013).

“Spatial marginalization” or eviction of people who are homeless from city centers (Laurenson & Collins, 2006) may occur on a larger scale in response to encampments or ‘tent cities’¹⁵. One example is a shantytown that grew up in Tompkins Square Park in New York City in the late 1980s as a response to poor shelter conditions and inadequate affordable housing (Smith, 1996). People experiencing homelessness were herded from one area to the next with tent cities and shantytowns erected in new areas as quickly as they were razed in others. By the end of 1992, Tompkins Square Park was ‘reclaimed’ for ‘public’ use and the ‘homeless problem’ moved elsewhere. As Smith notes, images of “young, white middle class families enjoying the park” (1996, p.104) filled the media. In Victoria, BC, campers were evicted from Cridge Park in November 2005, about one month after erecting a tent city protesting a shortage of beds, overcrowding and privacy concerns within Victoria’s shelter system. Though moved for illegal

¹⁵ Tent cities are also often a form of protest. They are discussed more fully in the section on social movements.

occupancy of a 'public' space, people who were homeless challenged the eviction, resulting in a much different outcome than Tompkins Square, one that is discussed in the next section.

With restricted access to private indoor spaces people who are homeless often conduct activities such as sleeping and socializing outdoors in public spaces such as parks, green spaces or street corners. Victoria by-laws such as the one for Pandora Green further limit the use of some public spaces by people who are homeless. In public spaces, some activities may be constructed as illegal for example talking to a friend may be constructed as 'loitering' or if the conversation becomes loud, being 'a public nuisance'. Transgressors are often subject to confiscation of belongings or fines. Further, subsistence efforts of those in poverty or who are homeless such as panhandling and sex work are illegal in many areas, leading to further negative encounters including incarceration, with a system possibly 'stacked against them'. Systematic efforts to remove people who are homeless from public spaces as a type of 'ethnic cleansing'(Amster, 2003, p. 201) linked with "Disneyfication" that is, making spaces appear as a "sterilized environment, a place stripped of any outward signs of filth, decay, spoilation, or despair" (2003, p. 197, sic). Such terms are often associated with people who are homeless and reinforce marginalization and social exclusion (Middleton, 2014).

People who are homeless experience marginalization and stigmatization both within the local physical environment and within a service sector designed specifically to meet their needs (Norman, Pauly, Marks, & Palazzo, 2015a). Multiple stigmas associated with poverty and homelessness such as those associated with substance use and mental illness, can work to further exclude individuals from the services and supports they need (Pauly, 2014a). People who were homeless often felt unwelcome and experienced a lack of dignity and respect when seeking service at social agencies in Victoria (Norman, Pauly, Marks, & Palazzo, 2015b). Such practices

may be wide-ranging and occur in many situations including access to services designated for people who are homeless and those such as a library, designed for the 'general public' (Hodgetts et al., 2008).

Shelter living provides little privacy and often brings increased levels of surveillance and governance not present in hotel or hostelling situations aimed at middle class users (DeVerteuil, 2006; Lyon-Callo, 2008). In one study of a Canadian shelter, expectations to conform to 'middle-class' values and make 'progress' toward hegemonically defined appropriate behavior, appearance, and work choices was mandatory or residents risked denial of services (Desai, 2009). Shelter residents may then search out alternative outdoor refuge or 'sleep rough' to escape shelter rules, regulations, and demands where they risk having "no place to be" (Mitchell, 1997 cited in Amster, 2003, p. 201). Thus policy and practices that differentially target people who are homeless in public spaces further marginalize and exclude those suffering stigma and discrimination due to their impoverished status (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001).

Structural Violence

Initial use of the term 'structural violence' is attributed to Johan Galtung who defined it as "avoidable impairment of human life... which lowers the degree to which someone is able to meet their needs below (what) would otherwise be possible" (cited in Ho, 2007, p.3). Drawing on his work in Haiti, Farmer added another dimension observing that structural violence "is exerted systematically... by everyone who belongs to a certain social order" (2004, p.307).

Importantly, as Scheper-Hughes observes, structural violence remains hidden and

refers to the invisible social machinery of inequality that reproduces social relations of exclusion and marginalization via ideologies, stigmas,

and dangerous discourses (such as ‘youth violence’ itself) attendant to race, class, sex, and other invidious distinctions. Structural violence ‘naturalizes’ poverty, sickness, hunger, and premature death, erasing their social and political origins so that they are taken for granted and no one is held accountable except the poor themselves.

(2004, p.1)

Institutionalized social inequality replicates power differences among social groups, with a range of often devastating results. Control and distribution of resources may be achieved through repression, domination and subjugation or other means deemed ‘necessary’ to the benefit of elites or those with authority or power¹⁶ over others (Farmer, 2004). Thus, exploitation is core to structural violence. It is essential not to confuse the ‘victim and perpetrator’ dynamic as the source of violence. It is “not that human beings are inherently violent; it is that certain contexts and social formations seem to produce violence” (Anglin, 1998, p. 146) .

Increasingly, structural violence occurs through systematic disregard of human rights when indigenous peoples are displaced, livelihoods destroyed, homes demolished and natural resources plundered. The ‘value’ of persons and the land, water and air they need to survive fluctuate in service of capital and accumulation (Anglin, 1998). Growing inequalities are thus leveraged on a global scale to maximize the benefit of elites with little acknowledgement, without respect for the human rights of affected persons. Structural violence then is a result of “hierarchies (that) structure society in such a way that some people have less, struggle, suffer, and die so that others can have more, prosper, flourish, and live longer lives” (Taylor, 2013, p.258).

¹⁶ I take power here to mean ability to control or direct “the distribution of resources, the exercise of agency, and the institutionalization of social control in the production of inequality” (Bourgois, Lettiere & Quesada, 1997, p. 156).

The near obliteration of the Tutsi in Rwanda is an extreme example of structural violence where enormous income inequality fuelled anger that spurred marginalized youth to participate in mass killings (Lemarchand, 1999). The phenomenon of ‘bride burning’, incinerating women in India who lack a dowry, highlights a highly gendered and institutionalized practice that crosses all castes. Most commonly, women living in poverty are sacrificed in this way. Despite constitutional gender equality the practice continues, with authorities often willingly ignoring cases brought to their attention (Kelkar, 1985). Indeed, that such atrocities continue may be attributed to a distinguishing factor of structural violence, memory is ‘erased’; events are reconstructed and retold in ways that fit current political needs, processes Farmer refers to as ‘pathologies of power’ (Farmer, 2004).

Social forces such as poverty, racism, and gender inequalities construct and shape risk of illness, injury and death (Farmer, 2005b). Indeed, Farmer asserts that structural violence is ‘embodied,’ with people living in extreme poverty experiencing its effects on a daily basis; “structural violence is ... *stricturing* (emphasis in original). It tightens a physical noose around their necks; this garroting determines the way in which resources--food, medicine, and even affection-- are allocated and experienced” (Farmer, 2004, p. 315). For example, the possibility of hunger, torture, and rape underlie daily living in Haiti, where Farmer has conducted much of his work; shaping conditions before other events take place.

Farmer (2005b) observed tuberculosis and AIDS in adults and diarrhea and tetanus in malnourished children. He relates the story of a woman with breast cancer who, as she must work many hours daily to feed her family and travel for days to receive only basic care, died. Had this woman the choice to receive more timely care and not put the survival of her family at risk, Farmer believes she may not have died. In this way, acute or chronic illness, hunger and

poor health care may be said to constrain the agency of their victims; that is, people who lack these have less ability to make choices to support health and well-being, focusing only on survival (Farmer, 2005b).

Differential application of power often distant from the source, can constrain agency (Farmer, 1996). Policies based on normative understandings of family, gender, and sexual orientation may disproportionately affect and marginalize persons occupying non-normative categories (Anglin, 1998). Thus an individual, who for example identifies as female and single, and who also lives in poverty, may suffer from multiple agentic constraints and severely reduced opportunities for wellbeing. Further, Anglin argues these restrictions are often attributed to individuals, further normalized, rendering ideological assumptions invisible and hegemonic interpretation ‘natural’.

People in poverty not only most often experience structural violence; the experience of poverty, wherever avoidable, is structurally violent (Ho, 2007). Poverty, lack of housing and inadequate income to meet life needs along with limited access to supports such as health care shape the daily lives of people who experience homelessness. The impacts of structurally violent policies that differentially affect people who experience homelessness may be seen to affect the extent to which they can achieve health and wellness.

Researchers found that exposure to ‘everyday violence’ coupled with institutionalized racism and unequal power relations between sex workers in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside¹⁷ and police, resulted in a greater risk for HIV transmission among drug-using women participating in survival sex work (Shannon et al., 2008). Indeed, structural violence is the

¹⁷ The Downtown Eastside neighborhood has a high percentage of people who live in poverty as compared to other areas of Vancouver .

“experience of people who live in poverty or are marginalized by racism, gender inequality, or a noxious mix of all of the above” (Farmer, 2004, p. 308).

The link between structural violence and social exclusion is clear. Social exclusion is rooted in structural inequities that limit social, economic and political opportunities. Those same social, economic and political processes as has been demonstrated above may also be structurally violent. Social inclusion, a social determinant of health, refers to economic inclusion, adequate income, housing, and access to health care and supports along with the ability to participate in social and cultural activities (Arthurson & Jacobs, 2003). People who are homeless are socially excluded as they lack adequate income to afford life necessities and must spend the vast majority of daily life meeting survival needs (Norman et al., 2015b). Thus, the ability of people who are homeless to participate in activities other than those aimed at meeting life needs is severely hampered (Norman et al., 2015b). A structural violence perspective places onus for health impairments on structures, often policy changes, that shape health outcomes rather than individuals experiencing impaired health and wellness. Addressing such violence then may require efforts aimed at the structures that foster them. In this project, addressing structural violence is examined through collective resistance.

Social Movements

Freire (1995) believed that a crucial component of liberation is ‘conscientization’ or attainment of a critical consciousness. In a systematic process, individuals, in a reciprocal dialogue with others in a group, problematize the sociocultural context and history in which they live, over time, emerging to think outside what they have accepted as normal; questioning political and social actors and actions, rather than passively receiving rule. Freire believed that

this educative process transforms oppressors as well as the oppressed. Though his ideal of equal and reciprocal relations among all people does not yet exist, one must he believes, commit to working toward equality.

Striving for equality in contested areas, is an implicit, if not explicit rationale for social movement formation (Scott, 1987). Consequently, it may be useful to think of social movements as instruments of a “politics of transformation” (Cunningham et al, cited in Carroll, 1997, p. 5) wherein collective agency begets social change (Carroll, 1997). Collective resistances through mass actions often represent the most powerful way in which disenfranchised groups such as poor people may assert their agency and influence social transformation (Piven & Cloward, 1979). Social movements, by various acts of collective resistance, attempt to redress inequalities within specific local and historical contexts (c.f.,Fantasia, 1995), increasingly, in a neoliberalized global framework (Sklair, 1995). There is a large body of work on social movement theory and social movements. I provide a short overview here of concepts that when viewed through a structural violence lens may further understanding of benefits and challenges people with experiences of homelessness may face when taking part in various group resistances.

Piven and Cloward (1979) observe that impetus and opportunity for mass protest spring from the everyday places where people live and work. These authors suggest that individuals in poverty frequently push back against perceived injustices such as large rent increases on an individual level. They rarely challenge those responsible for rent increases such as property owners or policy-makers who might institute rent controls. These authors argue that mass disruptions of bureaucratic practice at the local level for administrative fairness for individuals, and mass protest at the national level, is poor peoples’ only real option for generating change. The disadvantaged are heard less often than others and less authority is paid to them when they

do speak (Purcell, 2009). One example of a poor peoples' movement was the Welfare Rights movement of the 1960s. Multiple disruptions over a period resulted in policy change that allowed greater access to welfare and income assistance programs for a range of people in the United States, primarily women and children¹⁸.

Leverage poor people gain through disruption is determined by three factors; “ the importance of the contribution withheld by the protesters, the degree to which those affected by a disruption can concede the resources sought and the degree to which demonstrators can protect themselves from reprisal” (Piven & Cloward, 1979, p. 24). When government is unable to disregard a protest or is unwilling to compel an end to the action, negotiations with protestors are likely. Improvements offered by government are often minimal and those already within its mandate to deliver. Further, according to these authors, when initial protest demands are met, governments may cautiously use repressive measures such as police intervention to quell an action, and return to the status quo.

When poor people no longer pose a threat of disruption, advantage disappears and concessions may be withdrawn or become the focus of resentment of other groups, turning public opinion against the protestors. If government then decides to end the protest, their actions are seen as “fair and balanced” given the circumstances (Piven & Cloward, 1979, p. 33). Disenfranchised groups “must always proceed as if protest was possible. They may fail; the time may not be right, but then, sometimes they may succeed” (Piven & Cloward, 1979, p. 358). Critiques of Piven and Cloward's work have emphasized the necessity of organizational infrastructure in sustaining social movement organizations rather than inhibiting them, and overemphasis on the instrumentality of mass disruption (Gamson & Schmeidler, 1984). In

¹⁸ Please see <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/national-welfare-rights-organization-1966-1975>

response, Piven and Cloward argued that poor people's power is "when they mobilize to withhold the contributions they make to institutional life" (Cloward & Piven, 1984, p. 589) such as refusing to work, pay rent or follow the social order. Poor people control their participation in these acts of everyday living, and by refusing to participate exercise their agency, disrupting not only the social order, but interrupting the flow of capital accumulation for elites. Several other theories of social movement formation and operation may also contribute to an understanding of collective actions by people with experience of homelessness.

Newer social movement theories have two broad formulations; Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), which suggests that movement formation depends on the amount of resources a group can gather, and New Social Movement (NSM) theory that emphasizes how sociocultural shifts for example, toward individuality and self-realization help shape social movements (Carroll, 1997). RMT has two interpretations. Zald and McCarthy's Entrepreneurial Model focuses on instrumentality, suggesting that people weigh the 'costs and benefits' of participation (Carroll, 1997). In this formulation, organizations often have a smaller member base with a few highly skilled activists who are 'professionals'. These professionals are paid for their skills and do the majority of work, with 'conscience' members leveraging their constituencies for resources and support (Carroll, 1997).

Tilly's Political Process Model of social movement formation contends that movements need the right conditions to form as well as the resources and that the balance of contextual political factors has direct bearing on how well movement goals are achieved (Carroll & Ratner, 1996). 'Framing' particular cohesive ways in which groups understand contested areas and through which they engage various actors in the issues they contest (Benford & Snow, 2000) is

particularly useful in situating collective actions within their particular social and psychological contexts (Carroll, 1997).

Dixon (2014) provides some thoughts on current grassroots social movements that may give some initial insights into social movements of people with experiences of homelessness. He suggests that “historical amnesia” may play a role in current efforts as we often forget that many have travelled the roads of resistance and may offer strategies for moving social justice ends forward in ways that are already known to work. For example, the Black Panther Party in the United States, often viewed as extremely radical, provided social services such as meals, clothes and healthcare as “survival programs pending revolution” (Dixon, 2014, p. 30). Meeting individual life needs as Dixon notes, was a way to “challenge relations of scarcity and subordination” (2014, p. 30), demonstrating the possibility of a different social system while addressing hunger and deprivation.

Political education, consciousness raising and working across political and social differences “building bridges where we stand” (Dixon, 2014, p. 36) emerged as key thoughts in Dixon’s work. Considering the everyday life context, understanding individual needs, fighting for these needs while retaining a vision of a different society is critical to creating a chain of small changes that eventually transform the system. ‘Being in the world’ for people who are homeless means working within the context of the not-for-profit social service sector.

Many not-for-profit groups form ostensibly as a humanitarian response to the needs of people experiencing life challenges, including poverty and homelessness. Dixon (2014) notes that such organizations are often driven by granting cycles, deadlines and political priorities rather than the needs of those they seek to serve. Further, Dixon observes that a power over

relationship is created within these organizations such that individuals seeking service are, by way of organizational structure, in a less powerful position than staff. Further, Dixon states this leaves “little room for people to organize to address their own needs ... [in a system that] is largely oriented toward helping people survive within society as it is currently organized, rather than helping them challenge and change the systems that force them to need services in the first place” (2014, p. 141). Discussions of social movement formation and activities by people with experiences of homelessness have drawn from the range of theoretical perspectives and examples of grassroots organizing presented above. These perspectives may serve as context to assist the reader in understanding collective actions and resistance by people with experience of homelessness presented below.

People with Experience of Homelessness and Social Movements

The literature on people who experience homelessness and participate in collective action has focused on questions of who participates and why, the nature of participation and how individuals taking part in collective action understand their participation, as well as barriers to participation and how they may be overcome. People who experience homelessness and their allies have participated in a range of collective actions including squats, tent cities, protest marches and building occupations, with various results.

Collective action involving homeless people have been described in various ways, in part dependent on the definition of ‘homeless’ or ‘homelessness’ used. Anker (2008) uses a FEANTSA¹⁹ definition of ‘houselessness’ in his discussion of an interest organization in Denmark. Other works define ‘homeless’ as “have no address” (Wagner & Cohen, 1991b, p.

¹⁹ European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless

545) or “sleeping in homeless shelters” (1991, p. 549), with slight variations of ‘on the street’(Corrigall-Brown, Snow, Smith, & Quist, 2009; Cress & Snow, 1996, 2000; Snow, Soule, & Cress, 2005), ‘poor’ and ‘without housing’ (Greene, 2005). Some authors simply refer to a ‘squatter movement’ forming an alternative community such as Christiania (Amoroux, 2008) or with various goals including protesting housing shortage, as in Amsterdam (Uitermark, 2004) with ‘homeless’ remaining undefined. Pell (2008) includes no definition or description of ‘homeless’ in her discussion of Woodsquat, rather, she refers to “identities of homeless/squatter rooted within a specific neighborhood” (p.151). Other authors imply a definition of homeless as living in a shelter (Williams, 2005). Definitions of homelessness vary, and have changed over time with our developing understanding of the issues, leading to the Canadian definition of homelessness (“Canadian Definition of Homelessness,,” 2012) which I use in this research. The Canadian definition of homelessness was developed in an attempt to account for a heterogeneous group of people with a shared experience, rather than a homogenous group of people²⁰(*The Canadian Definition of Homelessness*, 2012). Thus, it is important to note that a diverse range of people who have been unhoused or homeless are understood to have participated in a range of types of collective action discussed below.

Several authors examine actions by people who are homeless within a resource mobilization (RMT) framework acknowledging the importance of strain, or degree of probability of adequately achieving daily life needs, and its effects on individual ability to participate in political protest. Cress and Snow (2000) argue that people who are poor or homeless have few resources other than their voices and attendance at events to offer in support of mobilization. Without addressing individual material needs, collective action remains challenging (Amster &

²⁰ The Canadian Definition of Homelessness was also an attempt to describe homelessness in a way that the general public could engage with and begin to understand the issues involved.

Cook, 2010). Indeed, Norman and Pauly (2013) point to the importance of addressing material and social needs as a first step in providing a foundation for meaningful participation in solutions and strategies to end homelessness and as such may apply to participation of people with experiences of homelessness in collective actions addressing homelessness. People who experience homelessness may be so constrained by material disadvantage, lack of personal and community connections and absent social power, it may be surprising they have mobilized at all (Snow, Soule & Cress, 2005). People with various experiences of homelessness have mobilized under a range of conditions.

Mass protests of people who were homeless occurred in the 1990s in cities where groups had access to sufficient resources (Snow et al., 2005). As well, those who felt they held common concerns with other people experiencing homelessness were more likely to engage in activism and protest; and once having taken part further participation was likely, particularly as the differential between their cost of housing and income increased (Corrigall-Brown et al., 2009). Strong, sustained organizing efforts coupled with financial and administrative support from other constituencies allowed people who were homeless to mount effective protest (Snow et al., 2005). The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) recruits, organizes and maintains membership. It also provides material supports for its activities and is able to garner media attention and mount organized protests (Greene, 2005). In the same way Piven and Cloward (1979) describe an effective local Social Movement Organization (SMO), OCAP first focuses on addressing individual needs for adequate housing and income, using advocacy and intimidation where necessary, then mobilizing members for mass disruptions including marches and public actions (Greene, 2005).

OCAP protestors at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) defied the social order by interrupting a very public event, but as part of a large group, individuals faced little personal risk, and as the goal of local media exposure was modest, the goal was achieved (Greene, 2005). As the protested event was an international one, it received much greater exposure than initially planned. Gaining an important ally, a film director, was designated happenstance, but perhaps also a fortunate outcome of a well-timed action within the political opportunity structure of the moment (Greene, 2005).

Disruptive tactics such as impromptu protests and sit-ins along with adequate material and non-material supports to maximize desired outcomes, were critical to successes of the Oakland Union of the Homeless (OUH) and the Philadelphia Union for the Homeless (PUH) in obtaining and managing several housing projects (Cress & Snow, 2000). Both OUH and PUH were members of the National Union of the Homeless (NUH). A history of the NUH suggests that as a result of NUH leaders' substance use concerns and increasing splits within the group after OUH and PUH received large grants for housing, the NUH went into decline, ceasing operations in the early 1990s after less than ten years in existence (McNeill, 2011).

Mass protests are not necessarily organized a priori, and without the resources of money and skill such actions by people who are homeless are most often local and intermittent (Wagner & Cohen, 1991b). However, these constraints may not necessarily impede gains for participants, particularly if individuals are attached to the movement and its potential outcomes. People who are homeless have marshaled and leveraged what resources they have for protest, including the physical presence of individuals, emergent leadership, relationships with service providers and bureaucrats, along with targeted protest to achieve movement goals (Wagner, 1993). The 16 day occupation of Atlanta's Imperial Hotel in 1990 is an example of what was meant as a few hours

occupation where people who were homeless were heard and eventually, much needed shelter and housing was developed (Steffen, 2012). Though there were gains, they came at great cost to some people who were homeless. Some collective actions by people who are homeless may, then be understood as involving aspects of both RMT (resource accumulation and leverage), and more traditional use of mass disruption when appropriate.

Interestingly, one study of people who were sleeping outside suggested that individuals retained an identity of 'normal' rather than 'homeless' (Parsell & Parsell, 2012). In viewing homelessness as a choice these individuals were able to rationalize their houseless state. Indeed, they exercised agency, choosing between poor alternatives; sleeping outside versus the less preferred overcrowded shelter, exercising a measure of control over their situation while preserving a preferred identity (Parsell & Parsell, 2012).

Tent cities and squats have been among the most successful poor people's protests, often relaying class interests in a highly disruptive and effective manner. Squats and tent cities may be viewed as mass defiance through illegal occupation of buildings or sleeping where prohibited by groups of people who are homeless. Christiania originated as a protest against housing issues, but evolved over time into an alternative community (Amoroux), as did Dignity Village in Oregon (Finley, 2003). Amsterdam protests centered on the lack of affordable housing and later, around privatizing public housing stock (Uitermark, 2004), while Woodsquat advocated for social housing among several demands (Pell, 2008).

Tent cities are not easily ignored and governments are often forced to negotiate with protestors, addressing urgent material or symbolic needs (Piven & Cloward, 1979). In Toronto, housing was found for all tent city residents only after an eviction order was set by the owner of

the property on which the tent city sat (Laird, 2007b). As Piven and Cloward (1979) observe, housing and rent supplements offered to tent city residents in Toronto were within the government mandate to provide (Gallant, Brown, & Tremblay, 2004), thus the city's rehousing plan consisted of the government merely doing its job. In a one-month tent city protest in Victoria in 2005, a great deal of attention was brought to the issue of shelter. Even as the City of Victoria attempted to evict tent city residents, participants sought legal assistance and mounted a Charter challenge, setting legal precedent on the right to life based on health concerns of sleeping outside without shelter from the elements ("Victoria (City) vs Adams," 2008).

Mass actors, indeed all protestors, according to the authors of these studies, shared a common interest and goal(s), though not necessarily a common identity as 'homeless' or 'squatter', though many may identify as 'poor'. Actions were predicated on a belief that individuals have a right to safe, affordable, adequate housing and sufficient income to maintain such housing. Indeed, several of the works mentioned the need for people who are homeless to find their voice in order to assert their right to protest and seek redress for housing and income inadequacy (Anker, 2008 ; Greene, 2005; Pell, 2008; Williams, 2005).

As a result of working together during a tent city, people experiencing homelessness were observed to create and maintain strong social connections and networks (Wagner, 1993; Wagner & Cohen, 1991a), contrary to Snow and Cress's (2000) viewpoint that people who are homeless have few social connections. Many of these efforts achieved successful outcomes. Indeed, in Victoria ("Victoria (City) vs Adams," 2008), Oakland and Philadelphia (Cress & Snow, 2000). Nationally, and internationally, poor Canadians' interests were exposed to the world (Greene, 2005). What is common to successful efforts is that people who were homeless were able to

access and leverage considerable resources, forge relationships with key allies and plan and carry out strategic acts of mass defiance.

Actions by people who experience homelessness may reflect aspects of social movement theorizations. Examples often frame concerns as a lack of affordable housing and supports. Though two organizations do not identify as SMOs as they do not publicly protest, outcomes of their activist work parallel outcomes sought through collective action (Anker, 2008; Williams, 2005). Within RMT, people who are homeless bring two major assets to organized dissent, their voices and physical presence (Cress & Snow, 2000), which cannot be underestimated. Utilizing these assets to achieve a goal in a particular political opportunity structure may depend on the presence of an SMO with enough material supports including funding, to provide basic administrative services to effectively organize and protest (Snow et al., 2005). However, lack of an identified SMO did not impede movement effectiveness when strong leaders emerged from the homeless protesting group (Wagner, 1993). The presence of emergent leaders and strong allies, including the legal team supporting tent city protestors in Victoria, led to groundbreaking change ("Victoria (City) vs Adams," 2008). Clear and specific diagnostic and prognostic frames were critical in describing what protestors wanted and what would satisfy their needs (Cress & Snow, 2000).

Individuals experiencing homelessness have been motivated to participate in collective action for several reasons including a need to bring public attention to the range of issues of poverty and homelessness (Greene, 2005), influence policy (Williams, 2005), obtain material changes to welfare rates, and push for affordable housing development (Pell, 2008). Those who held concerns in common with other individuals experiencing homelessness such as a need for

safe, affordable housing may be more likely to initially engage in activism and protest, and once having participated, continue their involvement in the future (Corrigall-Brown et al., 2009).

People who experience homelessness have also participated in user organizations that inform homeless individuals of their rights and service entitlements, and act as peer advocates within a sheltering system such as SAND in Denmark (Allen, 2009). They have also acted as community advocates for the needs of individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness (Greene, 2005; Williams, 2005). Shelter Now does not clearly fit the definition of an SMO as it combines aspects of an SMO, an interest organization and community service agency. SAND defines itself as an 'interest organization'. Williams (2005) argues that Shelter Now's continuous advocacy and empowerment efforts as forms of 'everyday resistance' (Scott, 1987) on behalf of people experiencing homelessness, qualify it as a SMO, even as it does not use public protest to address its concerns. SAND focuses on empowering people who are homeless to find their voices and advocate for themselves and educating the public on issues of homelessness (Anker, 2008). Anker suggests that even though SAND does not engage in public protest, by its other activities, it constitutes an SMO (2008). Both groups have similar goals and outcomes, though achieved through different strategies, yet SAND is characterized as an SMO and Shelter Now, only in part.

The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) in the United States is a not for profit organization begun in 1982, a third and different type of organization. NCH is a coalition of people with experience of homelessness and their allies, individuals and organizations who, through ongoing advocacy and activist efforts, aim for every person in the United States to have safe, adequate affordable housing (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2015). According to its

website, NCH has worked since 1982 to foster development of a national movement of people with experience of homelessness.

People who experience homelessness have accessed and leveraged a considerable range and types of resources and, along with allies and key acts of mass defiance, have achieved successful outcomes. For example, a number of people who were homeless successfully challenged a municipal by-law preventing overnight camping in City parks ("Victoria (City) vs Adams," 2008). The challenge, based on a Charter right to sustain life, resulted in repeal of the by-law and thus effectively allowed sleepers to erect tarpaulins and tents to protect themselves from the elements and concomitant health risks associated with sleeping outside. The City of Victoria, however, quickly passed a second by-law limiting the hours in which one could sleep under shelter and the places where those shelters could be erected.

In Oakland and Philadelphia, marches and squats led by organizations of people who were homeless resulted in these organizations eventually managing several housing projects (Cress & Snow, 2000). In Seattle, numerous building occupations resulted in a range of new shelter and housing choices for people experiencing homelessness (Demirel, 1999). OCAP leaders in Ontario note that many of the gains made through protest, such as a march at TIFF, were made by individuals who were previously assisted in accessing housing and income assistance and then participated in collective action (Greene, 2005). Woodsquat in Vancouver, an occupation of the Woodward's building sought conversion of the building into social housing rather than high end condominiums, promises for inclusion of at least minimal affordable housing in any project were eventually achieved (Pell, 2008). Individuals can face potentially overwhelming barriers and consequences when resisting rules or actions they deem unfair.

Indeed, such consequences may diminish or even preclude participation in collective action (Williams, 2005).

Individuals who advocated for themselves, for example resisting shelter policy and practices, may have felt unable to participate in collective action, finding the prospect of doing so all but impossible with unpleasant or even harmful consequences (Lyon-Callo, 2008). Consequences included denial of services up to a complete shelter ban and labels such as ‘non-compliant’ or ‘treatment resistant’ recorded in a case file, potentially permanently affecting the way an individual was assessed or treated within the shelter environment. Steffen (2012) suggested that “To gain access to homeless service programs as they were constituted and funded under the new HUD guidelines, an individual was required to certify that he or she was, in effect, damaged goods, the victim of physical and/or mental disabilities that called for intensive therapeutic intervention” (p. 771). This medicalized view of homelessness, currently hegemonic, is similar to Lyon-Callo (2008) findings. Further, a medicalized view “operates upon the bodies and minds of homeless people to produce a bifurcated subjectivity of personal responsibility and collective passivity” (Steffen, 2012, p. 770). People who experience homelessness may then experience both internal psychological and external structural constraints to participation in collective action.

A ban from staying in a shelter during the winter has potentially serious health consequences for individuals because of exposure including hypothermia, pneumonia or even death (“Victoria (City) vs Adams,” 2008). In another shelter setting, expectations to conform to ‘middle-class’ values and make ‘progress’ toward hegemonically defined appropriate behavior, appearance, and work choices were made part of the ‘rules’ which if challenged, put residents at risk of denial of services (Desai, 2009). Coupled with the serious and potentially life-threatening

consequences that may accompany resistance when attempting to address basic life needs such as food and shelter, it is not hard to imagine that individuals may comply with service provider rules and regulations. Indeed, the experience of extreme poverty and subsequent need to focus most of one's energy on obtaining the necessities of daily living may be a major constraint on the mobilization and collective action of people who are homeless (Williams, 2005).

Organizations that aim to have people with experiences of homelessness participate fully in democratic processes to address their concerns face many challenges. To remain viable, such organizations must have ongoing access to resources, administrative stability, (Cress & Snow, 2000) and continuity of membership (Allen, 2009; Anker, 2008). As membership and participation by people who have experienced homelessness may fluctuate over time, paid staff often carry the 'organizational memory' and maintain daily operations including fundraising, potentially becoming the core of such efforts (Anker, 2009).

The success of two Seattle grassroots groups, the Seattle Displacement Coalition (SDC) and Operation Homestead (OH), was attributed to the efforts of two housed activists who 'steered' the organizations, often with minimal participation by people who experienced homelessness (Demirel, 1999). A third organization, Seattle Housing and Resource Efforts (SHARE), initiated by a housed activist dedicated to having unhoused people as the majority of the organization's membership, has, over time, become entirely led by people with experience of homelessness, with ongoing successes managing shelters and housing (Seattle Housing and Resource Effort, 2015).

Participation and voices of people with experiences of homelessness are key to organizations that aim to 'empower' them, otherwise groups risk alienating and further

marginalizing those they seek to assist (Demirel, 1999; Rosenthal, 2000). Amster and Cook (2010) argue that resistive actions by people with experiences of homelessness may take place on the local level due to the many constraints they experience yet such local actions may have myriad implications “ranging from the level of homeless bodies and municipal policies to national trends and global movements” (p. 13).

Summary

Beginning with a series of changes at the federal level in the mid-1980s, policy directions have resulted in a shift from welfare to neoliberal state in Canada. While some programs such as the national housing program have ceased, others including employment insurance and income assistance have diminished, or been redefined and access limited. At the same time some policies have worked to privilege some, such as owning a home versus renting. Poverty and inequality have increased significantly in Canada.

People who are homeless experience extreme poverty and have inadequate access to housing, income and supports, experiencing significant challenges to health and wellbeing. They must also spend much of their day working to fill survival needs, requiring they attend numerous social services. In the course of meeting daily life needs people who experience homelessness also experience stigma associated with poverty and mental illness or substance use and often, discrimination based on ethnicity, gender or social status. Marginalization and oppression of people who experience homelessness is one result of these processes. Poorer health outcomes and decreased chances for improvement of these outcomes over the life course are also a result of marginalization.

Paul Farmer termed processes that systematically oppress a group of individuals leading to poverty and poorer health outcomes, including disease and death, structural violence. Further, Farmer argues these outcomes are embodied, lived out in the daily lives of those who experience them. These processes are often policy or policy driven, and exercised at a distance from those who experience them. Policy processes at federal, provincial and municipal levels that have ceased or changed access to housing, income and health supports have contributed to homelessness in Canada and may then be seen to be structurally violent. On an individual level then people who experience homelessness face extraordinary challenges to survival. ‘Pushing back’ and challenging systematic oppression to gain access to housing and supports may be life threatening to people who experience homelessness. Yet, people who experience homelessness have pushed back in various ways.

Theorizations of collective action by people living in poverty or who experience homelessness have noted many challenges faced by these groups when attempting collective action. Marshaling and leveraging resources, accessing powerful allies, mobilizing participants and survival while homeless, have been discussed in the literature as affecting collective action by people with experience of homeless. Successful actions have gained housing, greater access to income and health supports and fostered solidarity among participants.

The Need for the Research

Raphael (2007) observes that in Canada “people are poor because they do not have the power to have their needs addressed” (p. 98). Some scholars argue that collective action challenging policy directions and outcomes may be among the best available routes to structural change that addresses the needs of Canadians in low income and with little ‘political clout’

(Hulchanski, 2006; Raphael, 2007). However, such actions will most likely need broad societal support to achieve change (Lyon-Callo, 2008). Collective action provides opportunity for people to ‘push back’ and resist oppressive structures and processes, achieve change, and may be among the best options for people in poverty to have their needs addressed (Piven & Cloward, 1979). Resisting oppression to effect change is not without risk. Collective action can minimize risks to individuals through anonymity (Greene, 2005) and maximize political impact through numbers of participants (Piven & Cloward, 1979).

Challenging oppression and harnessing personal power or agency however may be perilous for people in poverty with potential for retribution and life altering consequences (Farmer, 2005a). People who experience homelessness often experience stigma, discrimination and a lack of respect at social agencies (Norman et al., 2015b), People who are homeless depend on these agencies and ‘pushing back’ may involve ‘biting the hand that feeds you’ in that those they may choose to challenge have the power to decide whether an individual receives a meal or a bed for the night. Indeed, following prescribed behaviors at for example, a shelter, may determine whether an individual receive services at all (Desai, 2009 ; Lyon-Callo, 2008). Yet, people with experience of homelessness do individually and collectively challenge processes that marginalize and oppress them.

There is a small body of research on collective action by people with experience of homelessness. The voices of people who have experienced homelessness and who participate in collective action are rare within this small body of literature. A significant gap exists in our understanding of the participation in collective action by people who experience homelessness. Though some risks of defiance may be mitigated by collective rather than individual acts of

resistance (Greene, 2005), the agency and autonomy²¹ of individuals who experience homelessness and participate in these actions may be constrained or facilitated in ways not currently illuminated in the literature.

To begin to address this gap in the literature, in this study I will explore how structural violence may constrain the agency of people who experience homelessness and who participate in collective action. Further, I will strive to elucidate how such collective efforts may be constrained or how some individuals may act outside or in spite of structural violence to ‘push back’ against oppressive policy and practices and advocate for the needs of themselves and others. I will also discuss the essential contribution of structural violence to social exclusion. As Lyon Callo suggests, “If we hope to intervene in more effective ways [address neoliberal contributors to homelessness], it is imperative to understand the full complexity of what produces and maintains the objective, subjective, and systemic violence of homelessness” (2012, p. 218, 219).

²¹ Agency here denotes the ability to decide and effect a course of action, while autonomy considers the context in which decisions are made. Decisions are often made in a context that presumes an individual can select among a number of choices. Race, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation for example, can affect the range and kinds of choices available to individuals and thus the degree of autonomy she may exercise in a particular situation. “Autonomy is best achieved where the social conditions that support it are in place” (Sherwin, 1998, p. 26) that is, the conditions support an individual’s ability to make the choice she judges as best among a range of viable alternatives. Conditions supporting a relational autonomy, in which for example an individual can make choices free from outside pressures, must include adequate access to material resources. Conditions for such an autonomy also include having the skills and information necessary to make an informed choice, being respected for choices made, and reflection on choices and the values underlying them (Sherwin, 1998).

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the epistemological stance underlying my orientation to the research project, methodological approach and rationale for choosing the specific approach. Project implementation includes a description of data sources, gathering, analysis and my experiences of these aspects of the research to assist the reader in understanding how the research took place.

Epistemological Stance

There are a number of epistemological approaches to the development of knowledge. A constructivist paradigm suggests that individuals interact with the world and create meaning from those interactions; that meaning is constructed in the context of an individual's experience and history, and is experienced in and generated from contact with others in a group of people (Cresswell, 2009). Philosophical perspectives that extend the constructivist paradigm to include a political component and advocacy for marginalized groups have developed in many disciplines, including anthropology. Such a paradigm, often termed the advocacy/participatory approach, evolved based on the work of Marx, Habermas and Freire among others and more recently Kemmis and Wilkinson (Cresswell, 2009). A participatory view holds that doing research for 'its own sake' is not adequate and a political or social justice agenda where a plan of action is a key outcome of the research is necessary (Cresswell, 2009). I specifically draw on feminist principles to inform the participatory approach in this research, specifically the work of Thayer-Bacon (2003) and Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen (1989).

Thayer-Bacon, an educational psychologist, stresses the “transactive connections between social beings and ideas” (1997, p. 240) that is, that we learn to become knowers in the relationships we have with other humans. I assume along with Thayer-Bacon (2003) that humans are social beings and that we learn who we are from interacting with others in the context of our daily lives. Indeed, Thayer-Bacon asserts we can only become knowers through experiencing caring relationships with other people (1997). Thus “knowing is an activity, like dancing, singing or loving that is done with others” (Thayer-Bacon, 1997 p.243)

As we interact in relationships with others, our sense of self is formed and our understanding of the world develops. As our sense of self grows our ability to question beliefs taught to us by others emerges (Thayer-Bacon, 1997). I understand a sense of self as necessary to becoming a potential knower, and as a potential knower I am imperfect. My body is the vessel of self through which I interact with others, learn, and potentially, know. All knowledge based on my interaction with others is then subject to a particular construction and interpretation that is uniquely mine based on my experiences within and in relation to the specific context in which I live. Thayer-Bacon observes:

I am describing ourselves as contextual beings, and I am acknowledging the dominancy of culture. Yet, I am also describing ourselves as people who are able to begin to understand the setting we are born into and how it has affected and shaped us. We gain insights into our contextuality through our interactions with other people. As we begin to understand this contextuality, we begin to develop the ability to offer fresh, unique perspectives. We will discover that not only do we develop a sense of self due to the relationships we have, but we all become aware of that sense of self and how our social context has affected the

way we view the world through our relationships with others.
(1997, p.245)

It is an ability to “offer fresh, unique perspectives” that is particularly germane to this research project and how I as a unique individual knower may potentially offer something new and useful to understandings of resistance by people with experiences of homelessness. A relational epistemology also calls for “active engagement, aiming at democratic inclusion, joining theory with praxis, striving for awareness of context and values, tolerating vagueness and ambiguities” (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p.9). Active engagement, coupled with ongoing reflexivity and reflectivity in the research environment, may provide ‘satisfactory truths’ or ‘warranted assertability’ in a domain where all knowledge is qualified, relative, and contextualized (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p.9)

My position is nuanced by a belief that “oppression permeates... the multiple relationships that structure an individual’s selfhood” (Sherwin, 1998, p.19). Such an understanding brings awareness of the power relations inherent in relationships such as the helping professions (in which I am trained as a counselor) or research, where researchers from the academy for example, are often presumed to know ‘more’ or ‘better’ what decisions should be made and how to make them. A politicized perspective assumes that individuals are competent to make decisions on their own behalf, best able to decide what is in their interests, and are independent in their decision-making where the requirements for autonomy exist (Sherwin, 1998).

Project Description and Methodological Approach

Ethnography can sit comfortably within a constructivist participatory paradigm (Whitehead, 2004). Given the theoretical lens of this project, the exploratory nature of the research questions and intention to generate an understanding of lived experience, an activist or politically engaged ethnography was employed for this research project.

Ethnography has a rich tradition emanating from the work of anthropologists who sought to experience and understand life circumstances much different from their own, often living for extended periods in a setting at some distance from their daily lives and with vastly different language, food, and customary practices (Wolf, 2007). Wolf suggests the aim of ethnography is to make explicit that which is implicit or tacit in the interactions of individuals within a social group, that is how individuals understand and make sense of their shared world, thereby illuminating the “common sense knowledge” of that group of people (2007, p. 293). Ethnography also enables such knowledge to be situated and understood within the larger social, political and economic context in which it occurs (Abu-Lughod, 1991).

Understandings generated through ethnography most often are written narratives constructed by the researcher. These narratives are based on data from a range of sources including observations of people participating in the social group, interviews with specific individuals, documents, and other records such as video and voice recordings analyzed through the theoretical lens and questions specific to the research project. Narratives prepared by the researcher then have a component of the lived realities of participants as they understand and describe them, and a component of interpretation of these realities by the researcher, thus

“realities are jointly constructed at given points in time by the ethnographer in conjunction with the people being studied” (Whitehead, 2004, p.21).

Ethnographic approaches variously termed ‘militant’, ‘engaged’ and ‘activist’ or ‘from below’ have developed in anthropology and share some or all of the features described within a participatory/advocacy paradigm. Following Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998), these features are that the research is dialectical, focused on practical changes, assists individuals to attain a critical consciousness to the degree possible, challenges power inequalities, and is collaborative (Cresswell, 2009). In anthropology such an approach also recognizes that what is presented in the ethnographic narrative is, at best, only a partial view and representation of ‘self and other’ (Mascia-Lees et al., 1989).

Davis (2003) and Scheper-Hughes (2006), along with Lyon-Callos and Brin-Hyatt (2003) call for such a politically engaged anthropology which they term ‘activist’ or ‘ethnography from below’. Scheper-Hughes (2006) argues for an anthropology of morality, ethics and anti-colonialism that eschews a traditional view of distance and embraces a moral necessity of assistance rather than ‘impartial’ observation of the researched “other” and, possibly, their suffering. Scheper-Hughes asserts that this notion of separation and observation may not only have allowed, but also perpetuated human suffering by doing nothing about injury, injustice, or abuses of power. By being ‘personally engaged’, emotionally as well as intellectually, and physically becoming part of the lives of participants, anthropologists may take part in rather than ‘observe’ the lives and struggles of those we seek to understand (Scheper-Hughes, 2006). By critically reflecting on our mutual embeddedness in the structural processes that create poverty and inequality, we can move toward potentially more potent analyses of power that may help us

as researchers make a difference and “identify more innovative ways to sustain struggles against the predominant ways power is used” (Moss & Matwychuk, 2000, p. 85)

Lyon-Callo and Brinn-Hyatt actively engaged participants in dialogue in the ethnographic encounter with the explicit aim of “demystifying the nature of the neoliberal state” (2003, p. 177). Thus, an activist ethnography in their view is one that observes, documents, and analyzes behaviors and interactions, and one that “problematizes the ethnographic relationship through working with people in a collaborative manner... [and] in a constantly evolving dialogue” (Lyon-Callo, 2008, p.22). Thus “by revealing the machinations of neoliberalism as ‘the wizard behind the curtain’, ethnographic research can offer at the very least a way to help people...see in a new light the ways in which their struggles and histories have been ‘disappeared’” (Lyon-Callo & Brinn-Hyatt, 2003, p. 177).

Direct involvement in activism and social movements, the most politically engaged form of anthropology, has produced useful insights into grassroots organizing of people with experience of homelessness (Demirel, 1999). Speed (2006) argues that activist engagement with research participants must, at the very least, honor participants’ rights, involve them in decision making about the research to the extent possible, and further their struggle in some way with the research product. Further, she argues that work that explicitly involves participants in these ways makes the construction of knowledge from research “more visible and more accountable” (p. 72) to all those involved in the project and the community as a whole.

Ethnographic Approach

The ethnographic work I undertook in this project most closely resembled that of Lyon-Callo (2008). The research “explicitly aimed to support social change efforts” (Dyrness, 2008)

p.23). I was part of the lives of participants physically, emotionally, and intellectually as the work progressed (Scheper-Hughes, 2006). Consistent with this approach, data sources for the project included individual and group interviews, participant observations of meetings and activities, review of archival documents, and reflexive and reflective comments within my field notes. I used a range of techniques in fulfilling the research objectives and answering the research questions.

To answer the first question and its sub-questions, “How do people who experience homelessness in the Capital Region collectively challenge processes, policies and outcomes that contribute to homelessness?”, focus groups recordings/minutes and field notes from observations provided support to answer sub-questions around what constitutes an action, useful outcomes and how these outcomes may be leveraged in the future. Individual interview material provided supplemental information on individualized factors that lead to success as an advocate. Documents such as StreetNewz, the Times-Colonist newspaper, Committee meeting minutes, websites including Homeless Nation, ‘Facebook’ and the THAW film “Taking the Fall and Rising” provided information on the range of collective actions by people with experience of homelessness. Corroboration was provided by articles in the Times-Colonist and other local newspapers about these events.

To answer my second question, “What are participants’ experiences of these collective efforts” and its sub-questions, I focused on individual interviews, participant observation, focus groups and comments on websites including Homeless Nation or Facebook as evidence. Participant observation and field notes from Committee meetings along with workshops, panel discussions on homelessness and actions that I participated in provided support in answering this question.

To answer my third question, “How may these collective actions and efforts be understood within a structural violence framework?” I focused on individual interviews about individuals’ daily lives and experiences as a member of the Committee. The role of housed allies in collective actions was evidenced through participant observations at Committee meetings, meeting minutes, media articles, website posts, and key informant interviews.

I offered my time, knowledge, and skills to the group as part of the research agreement for the study. The group deemed this a fair exchange of value for allowing me to work with them for my project. Participants were intimately involved in negotiating the research agreement that delineated my needs as a researcher in the project and what the group expected from my participation. Such an agreement is common in a participatory research approach as part of ‘reciprocity’ (Bastida, Tseng, McKeever, & Jack, 2010).

I adhered to principles of respect, financial transparency, fairness, ongoing informed consent, reciprocity, and full disclosure in discussing the project with participants (Bastida et al, 2010). These principles have been successfully used in research among people with experience of homelessness who participated in grassroots organizing (Yeich, 1996). I became a full member of the group, drafting letters to policy-makers in support of group aims; contributing to position papers, planning and taking part with this and other groups in direct actions and engaging with policy makers (Lyon-Callo & Brinn-Hyatt, 2003). My participation also involved ongoing discussions of current sociopolitical and economic conditions such as neoliberal influenced Canadian policies, how these may be seen to be structurally violent processes and how such policies have, for example, affected income assistance rates and lack of affordable housing. In working in such an engaged and collaborative manner with participants I was always

mindful of power relations. Illuminating power relations, including those between myself and participants was a key part of the research process.

Project Description and Implementation

The project was located in Victoria, BC. The Committee was founded in 2006 with the aim “to try and get the voices of the homeless heard in Victoria” (Lyons, 2008, p.5). Meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend and participation is encouraged by people in a full range of housing conditions, from unhoused to over- housed. I sought to understand how challenges and successes of collective efforts and actions against ‘homelessness’ by people with experiences of homelessness and their allies as experienced by the Committee and its members in the sociopolitical context of the Victoria area of the Capital Region of British Columbia may reflect challenges or potential successes by other groups involving people with experiences of homelessness as they attempt to collectively ‘push back’ against issues of homelessness.

Entering the Field

I attended my first Committee meeting in May 2011 subsequent to chatting at the Annual General Meeting of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH) with a member with experiences of homelessness. The member answered my initial queries about the group and invited me to attend the next meeting. As is Committee custom, a round of self-introductions took place at the beginning of the meeting. I introduced myself as a doctoral student working in the area of homelessness and interested in the group. A member was quick to explain that the Committee was “not the Coalition”.²² I attended weekly meetings for many

²² The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH), the multi-agency group formally tasked with addressing issues of homelessness in the Capital Region is often referred to as “the Coalition”. The Committee has

months getting to know members, hearing about group initiatives and listening to the stories of members with lived experience of homelessness. In consultation with my co-supervisors, I decided that I would like to work with the Committee for my dissertation project to understand experiences of resistance.

I discussed the possibility of doing my research with several long-term group members to gauge their interest in working with me. Initial responses were very positive. At this point I committed to working with the Committee as my dissertation project and began developing a research proposal. Discussions with the Committee continued as my proposal progressed. At a meeting in August of 2012 subsequent to my presentation and ensuing discussion, the Committee passed a motion to officially endorse my research (See Appendix A). Over several meetings in August and September while waiting for ethics approval, my research was an ongoing topic at the meeting. I explained my interest in the area of activism and collective actions by people with experiences of homelessness, the research process and writing of the dissertation. I explained data collection including interviews (which most people were familiar with), participant observations and taking field notes in detail. Questions focused on issues of anonymity and confidentiality. For example, some individuals were concerned their real name might be used in the research write-up. I explained both to the best of my ability and noted that I would be open to questions for the duration of the research as required by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB). I received ethics approval from HREB in September 2012.

been confused with the Coalition many times much to the dismay of Committee members. Memberships of the groups do not overlap.

Data Collection

As sole researcher, I gathered all the data including conducting focus groups, one-to-one interviews and participant observations. Observed events included Committee weekly meetings, THAW subcommittee meetings, actions, actions where the Committee partnered with other groups and actions in which Committee members took part. Subsequent to receiving ethics approval, I followed the participant recruitment and consent process (see Appendix B). The Committee weekly meeting and the Transforming Homelessness Advocacy Watch (THAW) film group were observed for six months from October 2012 until early April 2013.

I brought observation consent forms to each Committee meeting (see Appendix C). For the first several meetings, participants asked questions and one or two signed forms each time. I reviewed the observation process, writing field notes (Appendix D), reviewed areas for observations (see Appendix E) and obtaining ongoing consent (see Appendix F). By late October 2012 the process of signing forms and receiving ongoing consent was familiar to most members and took only a couple of minutes at the beginning of a meeting.

Observations of meetings and events totaled almost 500 hours over the life of the project. Following Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), initial field notes consisted of drawings of seating arrangements at meetings, patterns of interaction among participants in meetings or events and key words and phrases to assist in remembering conversations. Upon returning home from each meeting or event, I transcribed the short notes to a computer file, adding more pieces of conversation along with my thoughts and feelings around the meeting or event. I often made a second entry in the computer file the next day after reflection on the observed events.

Document analysis including Committee meeting minutes, letters, flyers, workshop proceedings, the monthly StreetNewz newspaper, the Times-Colonist and other local newspapers, and websites such as the Committee, Homeless Nation and social media (Facebook) along with the film, “Taking the Fall” produced by THAW began in October 2012 and continued throughout the project. As secretary to the group for the duration of fieldwork, I constructed more detailed meeting minutes, creating an enhanced data source for the research.

Focus group participants were recruited by email²³ (see Appendix G). Two focus groups were held with current and former Committee members to gain a broader understanding of the history of the group, actions and events that Committee members planned or participated in. Focus groups were conducted in a private meeting room at the GVCEH using the introductory script (see Appendix H). Consent forms (see Appendix I) were distributed, discussed, signed and returned to me. A copy of the consent form was left with each focus group member. Focus groups were audio recorded. A list of questions used as a beginning point for the focus group interviews appears in Appendix J.

Participants were recruited by email for one-to-one interviews (see Appendix K). Further, I distributed copies of the recruitment poster at each Committee meeting with my contact information (see Appendix L). A total of nine individual interviews were conducted in a public place such as a coffee shop or a private space such as an office or another place such as the participant’s home, whichever made the participant most comfortable. The interview began with the introductory script (see Appendix M). Consent forms (see Appendix N) were presented, discussed, and signed prior to commencing the interview. A copy of the consent form was left

²³ Email was used as that was most convenient for previous members, including those with experience of homelessness. People with experience of homelessness often access the internet through social agencies, public libraries or devices they own (McInnes, Li, & Hogan, , 2013)

with each participant. Interviews were audio recorded. Appendix O is the list of interview questions used to spur discussion in one-to-one interviews. Appendix P is the consent form for use of email and Facebook posts of members relating to the Committee.

The key informant interviews and focus groups took place between January and March 2013. Follow up conversations with participants to further clarify comments and gain feedback took place for the duration of the project. Each focus group participant received a \$15 stipend for taking part in the group. Each participant in a one-to-one interview received \$25 for participation. Snacks were provided for both focus groups and individual interviews.

Participants

Participants were adults, housed allies and people with experiences of homelessness. There were both current and former members of the Committee. There was an almost even number of male and female participants. Allies all possessed university level education, with several having obtained advanced degrees. Some people with experience of homelessness had attended university. Allies outnumbered members with lived experience of homelessness in the study by a margin of three to one, similar to the ongoing makeup of the Committee.

Ethical Considerations

There were several ethical issues to consider in the research. These included negotiation of trust, confidentiality, privacy, ongoing informed consent and accurate representation of information and findings (Munhall, 2007). Individual reflective practice was the foundation for developing reflexive practices as a researcher. Reflexive practice was critical to help illuminate the ways in which my experiences influenced my participation in the research from data gathering to analysis and interpretation of the findings (Dowling, 2006).

I am a highly reflective person, and have spent many hours doing personal psychological work in individual and group sessions to further understand myself in relation to the world. My aim is ever increasing understanding of myself and my interactions with the world. Critical self reflection has always been the core of my practice as a counselor and is as important now as a researcher. During the research, I was a member of an ongoing women's support group and had regular opportunities to share feelings arising from research situations. This group process was confidential and I followed group protocol omitting names of research participants and discussing only my feelings in response to events. These explorations of feelings in a safe environment allowed me to more clearly and honestly interrogate ways in which I may have influenced the research by illuminating attitudes, assumptions and investigative approaches for review and evaluation of appropriateness in the research setting. My reflective process became reflexive, assisting me in developing more nuanced understandings of particular events and evaluation of choices for future actions in the research project, including appropriate personal boundaries and managing participant expectations. Managing personal boundaries and participant expectations was especially important.

Working with participants over the length of the project fostered generally positive relationships. These relationships aided in- depth ethnographic encounters. Boundary setting skills were important as the field work came to an end and participants learned to see me in the role of group member rather than researcher. My overall focus for reflective and reflexive inquiry was my role in the complexity of power relations that influenced the work of the Committee.

I am deeply embedded in the power relations underlying the structurally violent processes I examined in this project. Initially, I was aware of several forms of my privilege, for example, as

a housed person and a PhD student with adequate income and good health. I was also a former manager and counselor in a large social agency that serves people who are homeless and had pre-existing relationships with potential research participants. Power relations were most often unequal in relating to people with experiences of homelessness in my previous employment. Expressions of privilege such as advanced education and professional status, as well as my place in the organizational hierarchy colored my perceptions and came with me into the research. These unequal relations afforded me added influence in certain contexts such as Committee meetings attended by social agency staff and politicians (Kraemer, 2007).

With my social and economic privileges I was, thus, in a position of greater power than the people with experiences of homelessness who I sought to work alongside with in this project and whose information and experiences I wished to elicit, record, and use as research data. I was in a relatively more equal power position with group allies as we shared a ‘middle-class’ social location, comfortably housed and with advanced education.

Participants may react in at least three ways to unequal power relations in a research setting (Burns & Grove, 2009). First, individuals may agree to participate because they do not feel they can say no, for example, because I was from the university, or because we had a previous relationship from a work setting and the individual wished to maintain that relationship. Second, individuals may not participate because they are aware of the inequity and fear they may be used in the research process. Third, individuals may participate to obtain compensation such as food, bus tickets or honoraria that are offered. Runnels, Hay, Sevigny, and O'Hara (2009) suggest that stipends are often the most important consideration for people who are homeless to participate in research. Ten or fifteen dollars is a significant amount for someone living in extreme poverty. It is also possible that individuals may participate in research as he or she may

wish to ‘curry favor’ with the researcher. In this scenario, the individual believes the researcher may bring access to future benefits including participation in other research projects (Williams, 2005). People with lived experiences of homelessness are a highly researched group in this area. It is possible this worked both for and against this project.

Individuals with experiences of homelessness who took part in this research project were at least minimally familiar with other research projects that had taken place in the area over the past several years. One participant commented, “Research, research...oh you’re doing that are you? Should I be a guinea pig?” His comment, along with a look that appeared somewhat dismissive of the research process, received several nods and laughter in one meeting. Nevertheless, he had signed a consent form and became part of the research, though his participation was limited to being observed. Approximately fifteen individuals with experience of homelessness received and reviewed the research flyer during group meetings. Several asked questions about the research. Participants with experience of homelessness had taken part in other research projects. Without prompting, participants noted that the stipend of \$25 was a fair exchange of value.

People who experience homelessness may be considered to have ‘enhanced vulnerability’ (Runnels et al., 2009) or ‘diminished autonomy’ (Burns & Grove, 2009) in research settings. Restricted choices in daily settings, discrimination and marginalization may necessitate that people with experience of homelessness receive special consideration of the issues of coercion, having adequate information and decision-making skills, and access to a full range of choices when making decisions (Burns & Grove, 2009; Sherwin, 1998). Issues arise in giving informed consent including diminished capacity that may occur when an individual is under the influence

of alcohol and drugs, is without prescribed medications for mental illnesses, literacy, and various forms of cognitive impairment (Runnels et al., 2009).

I mitigated concerns of diminished autonomy in several ways. I took part in the group for over a year prior to beginning the research and became known to most regular members. I worked to develop a degree of trust in the group based on my interactions with members, working with the group, level of honesty, and being ‘vouched for’ by two long-time group participants. I acknowledged my privileges in the group as well as I knew them. As the research progressed I came to understand my level of ignorance of power relations, notably how they may be embodied in daily life²⁴. I acknowledged that I could not know the experiences of people who were homeless, and sought to increase my understanding of homelessness by listening to and attempting to understand their experiences. Increasing trust does not decrease power differences. However, power inequities may be mitigated by developing trusting relationships (Pauly, 2014b). My willingness to name my privileges and indeed, discuss them, seemed to assist members with experience of homelessness to feel more at ease with me and perhaps more likely to tell someone, if not me, about any concern they have with the research. I also asked two key members with experience of homelessness to help me understand their situations more fully, including pointing out to me when they perceived me as coming from a position of ‘white middle class’ privilege.

I undertook several strategies to mitigate concerns in obtaining informed consent. As noted earlier, I brought copies of consent forms to several group meetings and shared a summary of the process and copies of the forms with members. I stayed after the meetings to answer questions. Questions included: who was funding the research and who would get the

²⁴ I discuss this topic later in the data analysis and discussion sections of this work.

information, what it would look like when written up, would a name be attached to what an individual said and what would happen to recordings. I discussed the consent procedure for formal observations of group meetings in detail prior to beginning observations. The procedure for observation, recording of information, and how I would deal with those who did not give consent in observations was discussed and member questions addressed. Members were invited to view field notes to see what was recorded and how it was recorded. At each meeting where observations took place I informed the group of procedures, answered any questions, invited new members to take part and recorded ongoing consent. In focus groups and individual interviews the informed consent process was more straightforward. Focus groups were small, two or three people, and one-to-one interviews gave adequate time and space to discuss any participant concerns. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any time and have concerns about their participation adequately addressed prior to beginning the research. Participants were reminded of these rights intermittently for the duration of the project.

Participants were given pseudonyms in the write-up of the research and every effort has been made to ensure anonymity to the extent possible. Use of the proper name of the group versus using a pseudonym was discussed in depth at a regular meeting of the group. I explained the use of a pseudonym as a strategy for protecting privacy and confidentiality of participants. Participants were adamant they were “activists” and wanted the group’s proper name used. After discussion of the pros and cons, it was decided by those present that use of “The Committee” was acceptable to the group. Though not the formal name of the group, “The Committee” is the name by which the group is commonly known in the area.

There was also an agreement that if one member did not want “The Committee” used, I would use the generic term, “the group” in the dissertation. I also noted that I would send a blind

email to all group members for whom there was an email, whether participants or not, letting them know about the discussion and the decision of the group. I devised such an email, sent to all previous members for whom I had an email address and who had taken part in the group during data collection. I noted that the name “The Committee”, though specifically used by this group, would likely be considered a generic term for anyone outside the local area of the research as Committees of many kinds exist in most urban areas. I included a reminder that individuals were free to change their minds even if they were present at the meeting where use of the group name was discussed. I asked for a reply within ten days if any individual wished me to use “the group” rather than “The Committee”. I received no such replies, with the result that “The Committee” is used as the name of the group in this work.

Anonymity was not always feasible where a participant had a high community profile and events in the participant’s personal history have been made public. Ongoing consent and strategies for protection of privacy were negotiated with individual participants. In one case where I believed certain information would clearly identify a particular participant, I reviewed with the individual their direct quotations in context in the dissertation and the individual gave permission for them to be used.

Situations arose during two one-to-one interviews where information of a personal nature emerged that required the interview be stopped and a break taken to address the concerns. Following Munhall (2007), at these times I proceeded in a way that prioritized the needs of the individual interviewee over the research. On both occasions individuals became a little overwhelmed by feelings that arose during the interviews and needed to take a few minutes to regroup and discuss the feelings with me. Both interviews resumed after ten to fifteen minutes, and were completed without further difficulty. Considerations of participant rights to

confidentiality, privacy of person and information for the duration of the research and after its conclusion were addressed according to research protocols for storage of research notes and recordings in a locked cabinet. Notes and recordings will be destroyed after formal completion of the project.

Leaving the field at the completion of the study was also an ethical concern. I live in the fieldwork location and continue to work with the Committee and other agencies on issues of homelessness subsequent to my dissertation research project. Moving from immersion in the work and in the lives of a number of people to a lesser involvement required some time and a commitment to anticipate and work through any challenges that arose.

I negotiated a contract for services and deliverables with the group for the duration of the data gathering phase of the research. This contract included secretarial services to the group for five weekly meetings for six months of primary data gathering and for three meetings a month for another six months of follow up data collection, plus a written history of the group to post on their website. The history of the group was the first product of the research. It was posted on the group website in January 2014. Several members have at least perused the document. One long time member felt she “took a trip down memory lane” as she had forgotten the exact “where and when” of some events and was pleasantly reminded of them as she read the history. Two other members reported reading the history and learning more about the group as they were not part of its’ early days.

At each stage the group was informed of the change in my level of involvement. This provided greater clarity regarding the connection between my commitments to the group around the research project and how I volunteered with the group after the data collection was complete.

My commitment to taking meeting minutes was scaled back again after one year to two meetings a month for three months and then one meeting a month to provide a graduated withdrawal from group activities. I currently take minutes for one meeting a month on an occasional basis and support other activities the group is involved in on a time available basis.

Data Analysis

I used an inductive approach to data analysis as described by Cresswell (2007). Inductive analysis is “from the ground up...the researcher follows a path of analyzing the data to develop an increasingly detailed knowledge of the topic being studied” (Cresswell, 2007) p. 19). Analysis was iterative, much like a spiral where I followed the overlapping paths of information and evolving understandings of the data from the beginning to the end of the project.

It was clear from the outset that there was a limited pool of potential participants for this project. Further, within that pool there was an even smaller group of people with lived experiences of homelessness to draw from for the research. At this point, I realized the key role each data source would play in the project. If participant observations were the base of a hand, then field notes, interviews, meeting minutes and other archival documents would be fingers. Though a hand without fingers may provide a gross sense of an object, there is no way to grasp or incorporate more nuanced understandings that fingers make available to perceiving and understanding an object.

Field notes associated with participant observations were both ground and support, playing a key role as data and through my reflective entries, examining other data sources for interpretation of the data as a whole. Field notes were reviewed, analyzed for patterns of interaction and conversation, and topics of conversation. Topics not discussed were also

recorded. Recurring themes were highlighted in the notes and summarized. Reflective entries were reviewed, contributing to an evolving “felt sense” or embodied understanding of data at any particular point in project. I am very comfortable with the focusing process as it is a key component of my reflective process and was a technique I studied for my master’s thesis. Todres describes an extension of the work of Eugene Gendlin²⁵ as “participation of the lived body as an authenticating or validating procedure” (1999, p. 284). Following Todres, I used the focusing technique throughout the project to advance my understanding and interpretation of the data.

I conducted two focus groups with two participants each that focused on historical information. However, within those two interviews participants shared a number of observations of the group over time that covered a range of subjects pertinent to the research. At that point, I made a decision to ask questions included in the individual interviews to maximize data gathering potential. Two focus group participants were members for several years early on in the life of the Committee and provided significant information and insights into group actions and challenges during those years. Additionally, I conducted nine one-to-one interviews. Many of these interviews provided a basis for ongoing conversations about Committee efforts that took place across the data collection period. Focus group meetings and one- to- one interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded and emerging themes summarized.

Document analysis proceeded in a manner similar to interview transcriptions. For example, as I began taking minutes at Committee meetings, I immersed myself in previous years’ minutes to glimpse the group past and gain a sense of the whole of their efforts. I focused on issues of homelessness the group addressed over time and how those issues were dealt with

²⁵ Please see: Gendlin, E.T. (1969). Focusing. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 6(1), 4-15. From http://www.focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2048.html.

by the group. All meeting minutes were then reviewed and key points summarized. Resulting notes were searched for patterns of issues and subsequent actions to address these concerns. These notes were then used as a reference for current group work. Facebook posts were handled in a similar manner. I viewed the film, “Taking the Fall and Rising” several times, making notes about issues discussed by participants and their reflections these issues in the film.

As the research progressed, I focused more on a particular type of data such as observations of meetings, actions and interviews, then returning to document review. As Pauly observes, I followed “a pattern of immersion in the data, abstraction of themes/categories, interpretation and return to immersion” (2005) p. 167). Themes and categories continually evolved and were updated as the research progressed. Coupled with the focusing technique, analyses were continually reviewed to search for omitted or misconstrued items and alternate explanations sought similar to ‘rival thinking’ as described by Yin (2011). Ongoing conversations with participants, one on one or in groups of two or three, provided further information for reflection and interpretation of the data. At the end of six months of intensive data collection, patterns of issues and concerns began to repeat. At one year, I believed I had adequate information to answer some of my research questions.

As mentioned above, the first product of the research was an historical narrative of the Committee. The process of writing the history provided an excellent opportunity to integrate a vast range of supporting documentation into a meaningful whole. Almost seven years of meeting minutes, workshop notes, grant applications and reports, along with the film “Taking the Fall and Rising” and numerous video clips not included in the film formed the basis of the history supplemented by information from the focus groups. The process of constructing the historical

narrative demonstrated that many challenges the Committee faces today are similar to those encountered throughout the group's lifespan.

I discussed my findings informally with participants on various occasions as the analysis progressed. One key informant with experiences of homelessness gave feedback many times over the course of the data analysis and reviewed some of the written work. Several participants thought the findings, as one ally noted, "Not surprising, that's us...Oh God". Some were also apprehensive about what I might uncover. One ally noted quickly as she left a meeting, "You aren't going to judge us, are you?"

Several weeks after learning that one of the main challenges the group faced with getting people with experiences of homelessness to meetings was the necessity of putting survival needs first, one participant with experiences of homelessness shook his head saying, "What else do you expect...it's [addressing homelessness] not high on Christy Clark's list of things to do". Members remained interested in the research. I plan a presentation of the research findings and implications once the dissertation is successfully defended.

Chapter 4

The Capital Region: Theater for Resistance?

I begin discussion of the research findings in this chapter with a description of conditions in the local context of Victoria that limit participation in the Committee by people with experience of homelessness. This climate is the outcome of structural violence, where those at a distance (e.g. law and policy makers) systematically exert power over individuals for the benefit of one group of people (e.g. businesses) and disadvantage other groups (e.g. people who are homeless). Structural violence can then be seen as “structuring and stricturing” (Farmer, 2004, p. 308), present every day in the lives of people who experience homelessness in Victoria. Worse, people who experience homelessness can feel there is little hope or avenue for escape of these conditions (Norman et al., 2015b).

A chronicle of the Committee within the local context follows this description of the local context. These separate but complementary pieces set the historical, social, economic and political stage for explicating collective resistances by people with experiences of homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia²⁶. My intent is to lead the reader into a progressive and deepening understanding of the hidden nature of structural violence and its impact on people who experience homelessness in the Capital Region and collective actions that have been undertaken by one group of allies and people with experience of homelessness to push back against structural violence.

²⁶ The City of Victoria is contained within the Capital Region of British Columbia. Many services for people who experience homelessness are within the City of Victoria. Some services may be regional and people who experience homelessness do not only live within the boundaries of the City of Victoria. Thus, the terms Victoria and Capital Region are used somewhat interchangeably in this dissertation.

The findings in this chapter respond to the first two research objectives set out in Chapter 1. The first section of the chapter, “Homeless in the Capital Region” describes the ways in which structural violence is lived out by people with experience of homelessness in the Region and how oppressive processes may inhibit and constrain collective actions of people who experience homelessness, including roadblocks and barriers that prevent individuals from participating in collective action. This description includes recent research, much of which is local, Committee documents and participant observations.

The second section of this chapter, “A History of the Committee” responds to the second objective of the research, to reveal and explicate the range of collective actions of people with experience of homelessness in the Capital Region that focus on ‘homelessness’ and objective four, to explore the involvement of individuals with experience of homelessness in collective action against ‘homelessness’. This section addresses a primary research question, how do people who experience homelessness in the Capital Region collectively challenge processes, policies and outcomes that contribute to homelessness? This section chronicles the development of the Committee and how the Committee has responded to structurally violent processes that impact people with experience of homelessness in the Capital Region. The history is derived from Committee documents and archival materials, individual and focus group interviews and participant observations.

Homeless in the Capital Region

The Canadian Definition of Homelessness states “Homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one’s shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency” (“Canadian Definition of Homelessness,,” 2012). It is

difficult, if not impossible, and arguably not useful (Hulchanski, 2000) to establish the exact number of people who are homeless in an area, here, the Capital Region. The extent of homelessness in the area may, however, be visualized through the Report on Housing and Supports produced for the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness by CARBC at the University of Victoria. The 2012/13 report stated that over 1600 different individuals used an emergency shelter bed in 5 of 6 emergency shelters in Greater Victoria (Pauly et al., 2013). On a one night count, more than 1,000 people stayed in such transitory accommodation. Further, the authors note that while the number of unique individuals using these shelters was similar to 2011/12, the overall occupancy rate was 112% that is, 12% over capacity, due to the increased numbers of emergency sleeping mats made available.

Individuals were also turned away from the largest shelter in Victoria every night (Pauly et al., 2013). These numbers indicate that on any given night in the Victoria area there are more people seeking shelter than there are beds or sleeping mats to accommodate them. This means that even with implementation of measures such as sleeping mats to increase capacity, there are individuals that cannot be accommodated and must seek shelter elsewhere. For example, the City of Victoria staff estimates there are approximately 130 individuals sleeping in city parks on a nightly basis (Bell, 2015).

Individuals who are sheltered or sleeping outside represent only a portion of those who experience homelessness in the Capital Region. Many more individuals couch surf, stay with friends and family, sleep in their cars or are precariously housed (Gaetz et al., 2013). As a result of extreme poverty people who experience homelessness experience many barriers to health and wellness (Raphael, 2007). Indeed, the median age of death for a person with experience of homelessness is between 40 and 49, a life expectancy of less than half of other British

Columbians (Condon & McDermid, 2014) . Further, people who experience homelessness die twice as often as other British Columbians by accident, suicide, or homicide (Condon & McDermid, 2014). Challenges faced by people who experience homelessness in the Capital Region in meeting daily life needs may be understood within a social determinants of health perspective. Such a perspective may also assist in understanding how life challenges as a result of living in poverty may be seen as health challenges addressed by Farmer (2004) in his notion of structural violence.

Accessing the Social Determinants of Health

Affordable housing is at a premium in the Capital Region and lags far behind the numbers of people who seek such accommodation. According to (Pauly et al., 2013), in late 2012 the overall vacancy rate for the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) was 2.8%. However, the rate for bachelor units renting for less than \$700 per month in the Victoria CMA was 1.3% and, in the City of Victoria where many services for people who experience homelessness are located, the vacancy rate for bachelor units was 1%. Indeed, the numbers of suites available in the Victoria CMA renting for less than \$700 per month has declined since 2006 while average rental cost has increased by 24% in that same period (Pauly et al., 2013).

Thus, with few affordable market rental units available and many people seeking them, the likelihood that someone who is homeless will find adequate affordable housing within the private housing market is scant. A small number of units or rental subsidizes have been added to the subsidized/supported housing sector in Victoria in recent years (290 since 2009) and none in 2012/13 for people who are homeless (Pauly et al., 2013). New units are filled from among the 1477 applicant households on the BC Housing Registry (*Victoria's Vital Signs: Greater*

Victoria's 2013 Annual Checkup, 2014). Rental subsidies for up to 150 people with experience of homelessness were allocated in 2012 and no new subsidies were added in 2013 (Pauly et al., 2013). No new subsidies were made available in 2014. Individuals on a list for supported housing for people with experience of homelessness and mental health and addictions concerns wait a median time of 240 days for housing, if they are housed at all (Norman & Pauly, 2013). According to these authors, only twenty-six percent (26%) of referred individuals have been housed or rehoused through this waitlisting process. Should a person who is homeless find appropriate accommodation within the private market, it would be extremely challenging for him/her to pay for it on an ongoing basis without a rental supplement.

The maximum income assistance in 2013 was \$663.37 for basic assistance, \$711.29 for persons who experience persistent and multiple barriers to employment and \$963.86 per month for persons considered permanently unable to work (Pauly et al., 2013). These authors point out that these rates do not permit people in the Capital Region receiving any form of provincial income support to pay both rent and costs for an adequate diet (Pauly et al., 2013). Further, *a person who is on any form of income assistance and has no fixed address, such as those staying in a shelter or sleeping 'rough' (outdoors), does not receive the housing portion of income assistance* (Ministry of Social Development and Innovation, 2015) further limiting an individual's ability to meet their daily life needs. This shelter amount varies from \$375.00 for single individuals to \$820 for a family unit of seven persons.

In a recent study in the region involving 63 participants with experience of homelessness, 68% of those who were considered homeless at the time of the study, all but four indicated some form of provincial income assistance was their primary source of income (Norman et al., 2015b). These authors also note that a significant percentage of participants (25%) also reported

supplementing assistance with alternative work such as binning and panhandling in an effort to meet their basic needs. People who are homeless or insecurely housed also seek paid work.

According to the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation (2015) , family units of any size, including individuals, on income assistance may earn \$200 per month with no penalty. If a family unit has one member who experiences Persistent Multiple Barriers, that person may earn \$500 per month. A family unit consisting of a single mother caring for a child with a disability may earn \$300 per month. Any family unit that included an individual who has a disability may earn \$800 per month. Earnings above these amounts are clawed back by the Ministry.

Seeking, securing and maintaining work is a difficult task for people who are homeless. The most frequent occupations in the Victoria CMA according to the 2011 census are in the service sector including retail sales and restaurant positions where minimum wage and part-time hours are common (Statistics Canada, 2014). After mandatory tax and benefit deductions, the individual would be left around \$1200 per month, just enough to cover rent for a bachelor apartment, basic food and utilities. Other barriers may challenge an individual's ability to maintain employment. Finding adequate housing and paying a damage deposit may be almost insurmountable barriers in Victoria (Pauly et al., 2013). Further, the individual may need to purchase suitable work clothes, and pay for food and transportation to and from work for two weeks prior to receiving a pay cheque. Taken together, these issues suggest that without adequate resources, the initial phase of a new job may be more than an individual can manage, primarily for financial reasons.

People who are homeless often do not have financial reserves or resources such as family and friends who might provide assistance (Reitsma-Street & Wallace, 2004). In a recent study in Victoria, only 2 of 63 homeless participants said that full, part time or casual work was a primary source of income (Norman et al., 2015b). With extremely limited resources, people who are homeless depend on a number of social agencies to fulfill their survival needs.

Primary Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

A web of agencies, located primarily in Victoria's downtown core, serve people who are homeless in the Capital Region. I list some of the most utilized services (shelter, food, income assistance, health care) for illustration. A more complete list of services and supports for people who are homeless is available in the Street Survival Guide (<http://victoriahomelessness.ca/street-survival-guide/>). Services, other than shelter spaces offered by agencies described below are open to anyone with the exceptions stated. Many people living in poverty who may be marginally housed or living in supported or subsidized housing situations access these supports as well as people who are homeless.

The largest provider of shelter and support services in the region, the Victoria Cool Aid Society, has 84 shelter beds and 15 overflow sleeping mats at its primary shelter along with two family units and 23 units of transitional housing. This shelter provides a free community meal Saturday and Monday to approximately 50 people not staying at the shelter as well as hygiene, laundry and counseling services. A shelter for individuals who identify as female is also operated by this agency and provides 25 spaces and supports similar to those of the primary shelter.

Another large organization, Our Place Society, provides 45 units of transitional housing and three free meals a day Monday to Friday to all who come with lunch only served on

Saturday and Sunday during the spring and summer months. As well, a snack bar serving tea, coffee, fruit and baked goods is available all day. This agency provides a range of other supports through its drop-in such as free haircuts, foot care, clothing exchange and basic veterinary services as well as use of several computers and a phone. The largest soup kitchen in the area, the 9-10 Club, generally located in the basement of a downtown cathedral, is currently located at this site during cathedral renovations. The kitchen provides over 350 soup-based meals each of five mornings a week. Another agency provides shelter to 21 men only and a free meal service for all two days a week. A smaller soup kitchen, the Rainbow Kitchen, several kilometers from downtown provides a hot meal to between 120 and 140 people five days a week. Group members with experience of homelessness indicate the quality of the meals and consistently non-judgmental atmosphere make this service a favored stop even with a long walk (4.9 km) from town.

The Extreme Weather Protocol (EWP) is a community program that allows the opening of 115 sheltering spaces (mats on the floor) in four locations, three in the downtown area, during periods of intense cold or wet weather. The protocol is activated under a specific set of conditions set by BC Housing Management Commission in conjunction with the service funder, that include “temperatures near zero with rainfall that makes it difficult or impossible for homeless people to remain dry; and/or sleet/freezing rain; and/or snow accumulation; and/or sustained high winds; and/or temperatures at or below -2 Celsius (Victoria Extreme Weather Protocol, 2015). Extreme weather sheltering services normally operate from November through the end of March each year.

There are several food bank services in the downtown Victoria area. Two of the three largest food banks are operated through churches (the Mustard Seed Church and St. John the Divine)

and the third through a religiously affiliated organization, the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Families or individuals may access each of these services once a month. These services rely on donations, many of which are seasonal, and the ability of the food banks to buy basic food stuffs in large quantities to obtain the best value. People who are vegetarian or on a gluten-free diet face further challenges. Vegetarian and gluten-free diets depend more on fruit and vegetables, expensive purchases when out of season, supplemented with grains such as quinoa which also tend to be more expensive. There is limited availability of such foods. Staples such as rice, peanut butter, bread, tinned fruits or tomatoes most often comprise a food hamper geared for a meat, dairy and wheat- based diet²⁷. One food bank is unique in that it allows patrons to select items from a list of available goods to promote “a sense of individual respect and lessens the chance of receiving unwanted items which might be thrown away”²⁸.

Primary health care services are provided for those with low incomes through a health center operated by the Victoria Cool Aid Society and located in downtown Victoria. The center also provides outreach health services at other agencies used by people who are homeless or living in poverty. The health center provides enhanced services such as administration of intravenous antibiotics and advanced HIV/AIDS care protocols at its primary location. Subsidized or reduced cost dental services are available through a dental clinic operated by the Victoria Cool Aid Society, though a significant wait time for non-emergency service often occurs in such publically funded clinics in British Columbia²⁹ (Wallace & MacEntee, 2013).

²⁷ Please see (<http://mustardseed.ca/ministries/food-bank/>). Tables with surplus donations, e.g. bread, cookies, yogurt or vegetables, if available, are in the drop-in area and individuals may take as much as they wish.

²⁸ More details are available at <http://www.stjohnthedivine.bc.ca/page/emergency-food-service-efs>.

²⁹ Basic health care is available to all Canadian citizens and landed immigrants. Dental care is not included in basic health care.

The following section illustrates the range and types of limitations people who experience homelessness encounter daily in attempting to meet their life needs in the Victoria area. People who experience homelessness face these challenges each time they seek services or supports in Victoria. These restrictions contribute to social exclusion and limit participation by people with experience of homelessness in little more than survival activities (Norman et al, 2015).

Accessing Social Services: Survival, Not Health, “It’s a war out there”

Though a range of services exist for people who are homeless, each has mandated limitations. Limitations include capacity restrictions (e.g. the number of beds or sleeping mats available), dollar value ceilings for entitlement (e.g. income assistance), days and hours of operation (many run Monday to Friday during business hours, normally between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm), rules for behavior and deportment, tolerance of perceived intoxication, frequency a service may be accessed (e.g. once a month for each food bank) and how long an individual may use a service. Stays are limited at shelters, e.g. thirty consecutive days followed by a one week absence is the policy at the largest mixed shelter, Rock Bay Landing. Individuals may stay for several months if they agree to ongoing goal planning case meetings. If an individual does not agree to be ‘case managed’, then he or she may wait two or three weeks for readmission after a thirty day stay at the shelter and then face a requirement to sign-in for a bed each day. Case planning as a prerequisite for ongoing shelter stay at this Victoria agency is similar to that found by Lyon-Callo (2008) in his study of sheltering services in a small American city.

Medicalization of homelessness and governance of people who are homeless to ‘fit’ within a service system that deems them deviant and in need of rehabilitation is both a method of

‘fixing’ people who are homeless (Lyon-Callo, 2008) and exercising social control (Desai, 2009). Governing and self-governing can be ways to manage access to shelter and supports for people who are homeless based on judgments of deservingness of services past mandated time limits by shelter staff and resident compliance to often neoliberalized shelter policies (Desai, 2009). These limitations and a range of contextual factors act as barriers that can inhibit access, limit utilization, or contribute to an unwelcoming atmosphere at social agencies such that people who are homeless may be unable to adequately fulfill their daily survival needs. One participant with experience of homelessness noted what he sees as a great propensity for the system to “label” him as having a mental illness, “I know I drink, I’m not mentally ill”. He believes “that if I were ‘mentally ill’ [makes quotation marks with his fingers], I would probably get housing and whatever, but I drink and that’s it”. This member is now housed, though paying more for a lesser quality of housing than he would receive if he accepted a mental health diagnosis. With a mental health diagnosis he may qualify for supported housing through a non-profit housing provider for 30% of his gross income, though waitlists for supported housing are extremely long and wait times often eight months or more (Norman & Pauly, 2013).

When you are homeless in Victoria survival can be an arduous and intimidating task. Homelessness is a ‘full time job’ that is, people who are homeless spend most of the time and energy in a given day meeting their survival needs with little energy left for other life pursuits (Norman et al., 2015b). Most often people who are homeless or living in poverty walk from service to service. Such a walk is 4.9 km if an individual walks from a multi-service site on the edge of downtown to a soup kitchen, or 2.6 km from a shelter to a soup kitchen. It is a 2.1km walk from the largest shelter Rock Bay Landing, to one major service provider, Our Place, or the

Ministry of Social Development and Innovation's general income assistance office³⁰. A trip from a shelter to a downtown site and return is 5.2 km and would according to Google, (<https://www.google.ca/maps>) take 27 minutes to walk each way or almost an hour walking both ways, assuming an individual is physically able to walk a kilometer in 13 minutes. If an individual who is able to walk significant distances and is attending a soup line for lunch, this may mean that a single trip into downtown could take a minimum of 1.5 hours when waiting in a line-up and eating a meal are included. This is a significant amount of time dedicated to securing the essentials of life such as food.

If coming downtown is part of a day filled with other appointments such as meeting with an income assistance worker, a counselor or a physician, a morning or an afternoon may be involved in meeting only a portion of an individual's basic needs for that day. If an individual experiences health challenges that limit walking or is in a wheelchair, significantly greater time and effort may be needed to meet survival needs or address life concerns. According to a participant with experience of homelessness who has several chronic health challenges, "I try to walk as much as I can, but mostly I'm too tired. When I have my [wheel] chair I can move more, but still can't go far...its hurts my hands" [showing calluses on her hands].

Travelling considerable distances between services takes significant time and energy. It also requires that an individual cross into the "Red Zone". The 'Red Zone' is the area of downtown Victoria bounded by Courtney, Wharf, Blanshard and Discovery streets often deemed 'off limits' to people receiving judgments from provincial courts in Victoria, although this bylaw

³⁰ The income assistance office for people receiving disability supports is located in a mall 4.3 km from downtown. This means that an individual who must attend a meeting with an assistance worker must either walk this distance twice or take a 24 minute bus ride each way (if the traffic is light). Thus, a round trip from downtown including a wait time of 30 minutes and 15 minutes to see their worker would take at least 1.5 hours on any given day.

was struck down in 1999³¹. The “Red Zone” is often perceived as an area where access to non-prescription drugs and opportunities for illegal behaviors may flourish. Many individuals have been barred from entering the ‘Red Zone’ in an effort to reduce the chances they may encounter situations such as ‘easy’ access to drugs, deemed to put the individual at risk and promote unlawful behaviors. Most social agencies are located within this zone. Certain individuals, particularly those with criminal records, have been banished from entering the Red Zone in the past, although the courts have found those restrictions unconstitutional (Kataoka, 2005). Though denying access to the ‘Red Zone’ was ruled illegal in 1999, such prohibitions continued to occur in judgments involving people who are homeless and who also frequent the downtown core of Victoria (Kataoka, 2005).

The Pandora Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) is one of several ‘good neighbor’ agreements covering social services in Victoria’s downtown core. The agreement is between the City, business community, police, area residents and a social agency among others, and is required by the City of Victoria through its downtown area plan (City of Victoria, 2012, p. 102). Such agreements are most often used to regulate establishments serving liquor, primarily bars and pubs, to promote adherence to City noise, capacity, and patron behavior regulations (City of Portland, 2012), and are also used for this reason in the City of Victoria.

GNAs were originally developed in the United States as tools to increase accountability between the environmental industry³² and the communities in which they did business as part of a community empowerment strategy to “foster sustainable development” (Lewis & Henkels, 1996, p. 138). The use of GNAs to control the activities of social agency users may have

³¹ (see <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/victoria-s-red-zone-struck-down-1.187521>)

³² For example, ways to control the production of industrial waste such as leaking of tailings or effluent from mines into local waterways, poisoning of land, release of toxic gases into the air; outcomes or byproducts of industry that have an influence on the health and welfare of the community in which they operate.

emerged from their development and use in the United Kingdom to manage ‘anti-social behavior’ of social housing tenants (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007). In the City of Victoria, GNAs are in place for a transitional shelter, a multi-service site, the largest shelter serving people who are homeless and a multi-service health unit. GNAs as used in the City of Victoria begin with an implicit assumption that the users of social service agencies are a potentially problematic and undesirable population. GNAs put the onus on social service agencies to regulate the behavior of their users in order to maintain ‘good relations’ with their immediate business or residential neighbors without the input of those most affected by the agreements, the service users (Cross, 2015). Without input from people who use services covered by a GNA, conversations remain one-sided and focused on the needs of business and other area residents. There is no opportunity for service users to have their voices heard or contribute to conversations that may provide solutions to neighborhood concerns³³. An ally offered the following observations on her participation in Pandora GNA meetings,

It is discouraging to attend GNA meetings where the provision of social services are constantly debated within the context of stereotypes and myths, rather than on research and best practice. There is generally an adversarial environment where one side -- business owners and residents -- are given a forum to complain, giving rise to generalized comments like “*I feel like I am living in a ghetto.*” Any suggestion of new supports or services to alleviate this image, such as storage facilities for homeless people to put their belongings while accessing services in the neighborhood) are prevented

³³ CAP-D – The Community Action Plan on Discrimination began as an initiative of VIPIRG and the City of Victoria Youth Council to combat social and racial profiling in Victoria. A coalition of social agencies now supports the projects of CAP-D, one of which is working toward a transition from GNAs to BNAs (Better Neighbor Agreements). CAP-D is working to have Victoria City Council include an amendment requiring all signatories to GNAs attend a workshop on stigma and discrimination in dealing with marginalized groups.

from being developed with comments such as “*if you build it they will come,*” suggesting this will only attract more undesirables to the neighborhood. These meetings leave service providers and homeless advocates defending the need for these services, rather than having a constructive space for dialogue about solutions to address the needs of all citizens living in the neighborhood. These forums need to be shifted from a space for complaining asking permission to provide services to help homeless people, to one about how to provide services in ways that meet the needs of *all* citizens.

The Community Action Plan on Discrimination (CAP-D) group, on which the Committee has an ally as member, facilitated passing of a motion by the City of Victoria in April 2015 that states “That the City of Victoria works to facilitate Better Neighbour Agreements, excluding those applicable to liquor licensed facilities, to include service users and to commit to building increased understanding and eliminating stigma and discrimination towards service users”³⁴ as a first step in promoting inclusion of service users voices in dialogues at GNA tables.

The Pandora GNA, coupled with City bylaw 10-061, has virtually banned people who are homeless from using the median (a sidewalk and a small patch of grass) in front of one of the largest social agencies in the downtown core (Bonet, 2013). A plan for a “garden to root out loiterers” using a boulevard –again the only available green space across the street from the largest shelter in the city is also underway. The plan is to make the boulevard inhospitable for shelter users through the use of “spiky plants” that will prevent sitting on the grass (Cleverly) under the ‘keeping order’ section of the local GNA.

³⁴ City of Victoria, Council Meeting minutes, April 30, 2015.

Though GNA preambles explicitly discuss neighbors working together for the benefit of all area residents and users, where activities of social agencies are involved, social agency management are signatories to the agreement and deemed to represent service users rather than including the voices of service users themselves. Though bar and restaurant patrons are not included in the development or monitoring of GNAs regarding these businesses, GNAs are implemented in vastly different ways. For ‘business’ the GNAs are more about the business operation such as hours and noise levels, whereas with social services GNAs may be more about managing the service users through the service provider. Indeed, the thrust of GNAs, including the following excerpt from the Pandora GNA, is to ensure that social agencies manage the behavior of users so as to minimize their impact on specific neighbors and surrounds,

Services such as those provided by Our Place are recognized as necessary and valuable in assisting disadvantaged individuals. Unfortunately, provision of such services may be accompanied by public disorder that can be difficult to control, calling upon residents, businesses and social agencies and the City to ensure that negative impacts to public and private property are minimized or eliminated.

(City of Victoria, 2009)

Though people who are homeless, precariously housed or living in poverty are most affected by GNAs, they had no voice at tables where agreements were negotiated (Bonet, 2013). Indeed, GNAs are founded on the existing stigmatization and marginalization of people who are homeless, and work to further stigmatize, marginalize and render invisible people who may be considered a source of ‘public disorder’, those who use social services, people who are homeless or living in poverty (Cross, 2015).

While going about their day, people who are homeless may also violate the Criminal Code of Canada and City bylaws and encounter intensified police scrutiny. People who are homeless often have few private places in which to conduct daily living activities. Thus sleeping, changing clothes, taking care of bodily functions, and socializing, including sexuality and consumption of alcohol or use of drugs, often considered private in our society, occur in public spaces (Amster, 2008; Laurenson & Collins, 2006). There are many implications for people who are homeless when life activities considered ‘private’ take place in ‘public’.

A perception that an individual may be homeless of itself may lead to a greater probability of being stopped and questioned by the police (O’Grady et al., 2011). Indeed, people who are homeless in Victoria are more often stopped, questioned or told to ‘move along’ by police (Herman, 2011). Victoria’s Chief Constable told a recent meeting of the Committee that police may enter the public areas of a social agency looking for someone who may be suspected of committing a crime such as a street robbery based on a witness description of the individual that he or she “looked like a homeless person” (2014a)³⁵. Clearly, social profiling by police occurs in the City of Victoria.

Consumption of alcohol in public is illegal³⁶ other than in designated outdoor areas of restaurants or at certain functions such as sporting events or concerts, neither of which people who are homeless are likely able to afford. Possession and use of specific drugs such as marijuana and opioids is strictly regulated in Canada. Licit and illicit use of these and other controlled substances³⁷ often takes place unobserved in private residences. However, when used by people who are homeless, such acts may be conducted in public and thus are more likely

³⁵ Author’s name removed for reasons of confidentiality.

³⁶ ‘Public drunkenness’ is an offence under Sec. 175 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

³⁷ Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (1996).

observed by passersby or police, leaving users more vulnerable to apprehension and arrest (Amster, 2008).

Sheehy (2004) argues that criminalization of homelessness through various forms of vagrancy laws, recolonization of First Peoples and exclusion of these and other groups is historically embedded in Canadian law, wryly observing that “our Criminal Code, enacted in 1893, and relatively unchanged today, was conceptualized, drafted, debated and passed exclusively by and for white men of property” (p.78). For example, public nudity is illegal and sexuality³⁸ more intimate than kissing may also be illegal depending on whether the individual(s) are observed by other members of the public. Sheehy (2004) observes that Canadian criminal law is highly exclusionary and that individuals who are poor, women or Aboriginal are more likely to be charged and prosecuted, especially for drug related offences. Indeed, other local legal concomitants exist that work to constrain access to resources by people with experience of homelessness; indeed, merely walking from one location to another in the city core can present a significant challenge for people who are homeless.

Several City of Victoria bylaws³⁹ regulate the use of public space and impact the ability of people who are homeless to move about the region/city or to stop, rest, or sit outside while journeying around town to various social agencies and support services. Parks regulation bylaw amendment 09-014 allows camping in city parks from 7 pm-7 am as a result of a Supreme Court

³⁸ Public nudity is illegal under Section 174 of the Criminal Code of Canada as is sexuality in public, under Section 175, that would constitute ‘indecent exhibition’. This includes exposure or display of genitalia, female breasts, and anal regions for a sexual purpose.

³⁹ These include, from <http://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/city/bylaws.html>, the nuisance bylaw (05-069), parks regulation bylaw amendment to allow overnight camping (09-014), and the streets and traffic bylaw (09-079), Section.103.

of Canada decision ("Victoria (City) vs Adams," 2008). Little leeway is given, however, and campers are roused at precisely 7 am by police to pack their belongings and move on⁴⁰.

The 'nuisance' bylaw, 05-069, allows police to move individuals along, confiscate belongings or ticket individuals at their discretion for activities police deem interfere with "the use and enjoyment of a public area or land he or she occupies"⁴¹ such as 'loitering' or soliciting (panhandling) in front of downtown businesses. Committee members report being asked to move along several times in a day, sometimes by the same officers. Many people who are homeless have come to expect these 'roustings' and move before they are asked to do so. As Ronin states, "I see them [cops] here they say [gesturing with his hand] 'get going, move along'. I see the same woman cop a little later she says, 'move along' [gesturing with his hand]. Third time I see her, we just smile [exaggerated smile] and wave at each other."

Ticketing individuals for bylaw offences seems to occur in 'waves' during specific periods or in response to the complaints of business owners (Shellie Gudgeon, personal conversation, March 12, 2014). Unfortunately, people who are homeless most often lose their possessions as they may be confiscated by police or by-law enforcement officers. As people with experience of homelessness often have little or no ability to pay any fine levied against them, City staffs often dispose of confiscated possessions. One result is that individuals who sleep 'rough' must again seek items such as tents, tarps, sleeping bags and backpacks key to camping outdoors. Many stories have been told at Committee meetings of individuals who after having had everything confiscated mourn only the loss of the last one or two keepsakes that remained in their possession. Barbie, an occasional member, related the following story.

⁴⁰ Please see: <http://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/city/bylaw-enforcement/temporary-overnight-shelter.html>

⁴¹ Thus the bylaw specifically includes both individuals and businesses.

Barbie kept all her belongings hidden in a corner of the small park where she slept. They remained untouched for several weeks. One day she returned to find her belongings gone, with several pieces of pictures strewn in the grass. She was angry and on the verge of tears as she spoke, “They [police/City staff] took everything, even the fucking pictures of my kids. I have nothing now.” “Not one picture?” I asked, “No” said Barbie, “not one”.

One of the most difficult bylaws for people who are homeless and live in poverty is an amendment that resulted in a massive change in the use of Pandora Green. Pandora Green, an area on the south side of Pandora Avenue where people attending Our Place congregate, has been a contested site for several years (particularly since a music school and concert hall moved onto the block). A tent city on the green in 2010 resulted in a bylaw change that significantly impacts the movements of social agency users and their ability to access the space for any use (Clarke, 2010). An amendment to the streets and traffic bylaw in 2010,10-061, says: “Between sunset of one day and sunrise on the next day, a person must not: (a) occupy a median by squatting, kneeling, sitting, or lying down on it; or (b) stand or walk on a median except while lawfully crossing a street”⁴².

This amendment was subsumed into the Streets and Traffic bylaw 09-079, which limits sitting, standing, walking, tenting, sleeping on or otherwise blocking sidewalks and medians anywhere in the area bounded by Cook, Pembroke, Store, Wharf, Government, Superior and Southgate streets, between these same hours. Essentially the entire downtown core of Victoria is under these provisions. These prohibitions do not generally impact individuals who are housed

⁴² Please see: <http://www.victoria.ca/assets/City~Hall/Bylaws/bylaw-09-079.pdf>, p.61-63. This bylaw covers panhandling, termed ‘soliciting’ in s.103.

and who may, for example, attend a concert at Alix Goolden Hall next door to Our Place, returning home by bus or car.

On one occasion, an information gathering session was planned by the Committee and VIPIRG for Pandora Green to ask about awareness of the Pandora GNA and challenge this bylaw. Food was served to people who were homeless and they were asked to fill out a short questionnaire on their knowledge of the GNA and the bylaw. I came early to help set up the food service, gather questionnaires, pencils etc. and generally prepare for the event.

As several of us were setting up a table and a flipchart, I noticed a police car with two officers, drive by. Johnny had told me we could expect “police action” that is, the police would drive by and check out what was going on. About five minutes later, the same car drove by again. At this point, I walked across the Green towards the car, smiled, and waved at the police officers. The officer driving the car frowned, and did a small wave as the car passed by. By this time there was a lot of action; about twenty people on the Green eating and chatting. I noticed a police van turn onto Pandora Avenue and slow down as it came towards the group. I looked up and started to walk towards the van. The van with two officers inside sped up and passed by before I reached the edge of the Green. Johnny saw this and approached me laughing saying, “Guess they didn’t want to speak to you”. There was no more police presence at the session. It seemed to me that my presence and perhaps that of other white, middle class people at the event had some impact on the behavior of the police officers. They had decided there was no need to stop or indeed, to continue to observe the event. Johnny and several other people with experience of homelessness said that was I and other “middle class types” as Johnny noted, not present, the police may have tried to disband the event.

Coffee shops such as those across the street from Our Place with tables and chairs on the sidewalk, for example, are specifically excluded from the provisions bylaw 09-079 if they are licensed by the City as a sidewalk cafe⁴³. This means that people who are homeless are extremely limited in the way they may use outdoor or ‘public’ spaces within the downtown core of the City in ways not experienced by business owners or people who are housed and not living in poverty.

Committee members report ongoing incidences of being ‘jacked-up’ in the downtown core of Victoria, notably in and around Our Place, a large multi-service agency on Pandora Avenue. In the language of the street community, a ‘jack-up’ is when an individual is stopped and detained at the sole discretion of a police officer in a public place, often with a request for identification. A ‘jack-up’ may be accompanied by a body search and questions regarding the movements, destination and ownership of goods in the possession of the individual. The intent of individual ‘jack-ups’ may be unclear, however, as a form of intensive policing they may serve to intimidate a person or group of persons who appear ‘suspicious’ and promote adherence to City bylaws as was the experience of homeless youth in downtown Toronto in a recent study (O’Grady et al., 2011).

Posts on the Committee website and log (2014)⁴⁴ document multiple patrols and ‘jack-ups’ by police officers in the 900 block of Pandora Avenue including on the median, on the street and in the courtyard and building (with permission of management) that have taken place since 2011. These frequent interactions between police and service users often result in patrons being “fish in a barrel” or easy targets for police intervention as one group member noted. Further, with

⁴³ City of Victoria bylaw 09-079, Section 103 (2) d, p. 61; where a business is licensed under the Sidewalk Cafes Bylaw.

⁴⁴ Author name removed for reasons of confidentiality.

frequent police patrols throughout the building Our Place patrons may eat and exit the area as quickly as possible to not encounter police, potentially leaving with unmet physical needs that might have been addressed at that agency. An excerpt from a question and answer⁴⁵ discussion with the Chief of Police of Victoria at a Committee meeting may help illustrate this point,

Q. Police routinely enter shelters and Our Place, which are viewed by users as homes. This creates tension and hardship. Are you prepared to enter into dialogue with Our Place concerning putting parameters around policing in such places?

- A. On a discussion of over-policing “predatory behavior of police at Our Place”⁴⁶, the Chief noted “No one likes to be policed...police are in the rule business”. He wants to know directly and at the time if officers are doing random searches and conducting shakedowns. He made it clear that he will not tolerate inappropriate police behavior. Later in this discussion the Chief said he would be willing to engage in dialogue with social agencies around “unfettered access” to their premises for example, Our Place. The Chief understands the protocol to be that officers have a warrant, attend at the front desk and then search for the individual in question- at least that is what he expects to happen. He does not approve of random searching of premises. He did say however that if a street robbery had taken place and that if the suspect “looked like a homeless person” then officers would go to Our Place and similar agencies to look for the individual. He also observed that potentially Our Place uses the police as “free security” when they do walk throughs. Then he also seemed to go the other way near the end, saying he also wants people to gain familiarity with officers going by on their beat, so maybe there is a reason to just "stop by", but admits he could be dead wrong on that idea and is very willing to discuss this further.

("Minutes, June 11, 2014," 2014)⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Questions were generated at the previous Committee meeting by allies and supported by members with experience of homelessness. Questions were posed to the Chief by an ally. Double quotation marks indicate a direct quote of comments made by the Chief of Police. These are excerpts from minutes posted on the Committee website. The Chief of Police is aware these minutes are public.

⁴⁶ This comment was made by ally.

It is apparent in the above comments from the Chief that walk-throughs of this social agency occur on a regular basis. Indeed, the Chief comments that the police are “free security” for the agency. Further, it is clear that though the Chief understands that a specific protocol should take place for stopping and speaking with a service user, their role as police officers, “in the rule business”, would take precedence in any situation.

The atmosphere at Our Place has been likened to a jail, “worse really, at least there [jail] you can have visitors” as one member with experience of homelessness observes or where, as Gill suggests, a “culture of fear” (2014, p.3) may exist. To avoid unpleasant encounters within the service agency, people often move outside. Yet, standing, sitting or resting anywhere on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue during daytime hours results in homeless or impoverished people being asked to “move along”, or moving of their own accord in response to regular police patrols in vehicles, on bicycles or on foot (2014)⁴⁸. As a result, people who are homeless have few options for a place to ‘be’, experiencing increasing criminalization (O’Grady et al., 2011) and ‘spatial marginalization’ (Laurenson & Collins, 2006). Gill observed “If individuals experience fear and anxiety due to police presence, [their reluctance to] access... services would likely compromise an individual’s wellbeing. Yet, if there are no other alternatives some service users will continue to access services but with the constant erosion of their sense of dignity” (2014, p. 19).

The Criminal Code of Canada, City of Victoria bylaws, GNAs, court prohibitions and broad discretionary powers given to police coupled with increased surveillance in the downtown area and targeting of ‘repeat offenders’ by police, often result in people who are homeless

⁴⁷ Author’s name is removed for confidentiality reasons.

⁴⁸ Author removed for reasons of confidentiality.

experiencing anxiety, fearfulness and anger as they encounter multiple stops, questioning, requests to move along or receive tickets for bylaw infractions as they walk from service to service (Herman, 2011). Through these statutes, agreements and police actions people who are homeless may be differentially targeted for law enforcement while using public space, experiencing direct outcomes of the criminalization of poverty (Gaetz, 2004b; Sheehy, 2004) and homelessness (O'Grady et al., 2011). Amster (2008) suggests that in increasingly regulating and moving people who are homeless out of public spaces, they have not only no place to rest or relax, they have no place to be; their very existence is criminalized.

Forced to access restrictive services and use outdoor spaces in a climate of stigma, discrimination and increased police surveillance because they cannot afford indoor places and life necessities, people who experience homelessness must live in ways perhaps not imagined by those who are securely housed. The following describes how this group of allies and people with experience of homelessness has responded to these conditions. The narrative is derived from historical documents of the Committee, focus groups and interviews with current and former Committee members, and participant observations of Committee meetings and actions.

A History of the Committee

By most accounts, the group began in the summer of 2006. Initially, the group was Ad Hoc, a 'spinoff' gathering of individuals from another community group interested in promoting the voices of people with experience of homelessness in efforts to address poverty and homelessness in the Capital Region. From the outset, housed members felt it important to meet on a weekly basis to stay in touch with the pressing concerns of people who are homeless. Meetings are a place where people with experience of homelessness may find brief respite from

‘the street’, obtain food, share their life concerns or update the group on events around town during the “News from the Street” portion of the agenda. This sharing of stories of structural violence is a central component of meetings aimed at providing opportunities for acknowledgement and support of members with experience of poverty and homelessness, while generating discussion and ideas for group work.

The group coalesced initially around the increasing numbers of people dying on Victoria’s streets each year and the need certain individuals felt to address this issue, and a concern that it was not being addressed by agencies. A report on street deaths in British Columbia was completed in 2014; eight years after the Committee began noticing the issue. The group had two goals, increasing awareness of homelessness in Victoria by “addressing the disconnect between what the public sees and what the homeless see” and, “to get the voices of the homeless heard” (Lyons, 2008, p.5) in addressing homelessness in the Greater Victoria area. Founding members included five housed allies, several with long activist backgrounds and two people with experience of homelessness. There was no written history of the Committee. Myron observes,

I think there were little moments about it before but basically it started in the summer of 2006, from a spin-off from the Community Co-operative Group. It was originally a group of theirs. The Committee for Community Co-operation with the Alliance and BW from CUPE was there...B.W. was connected to several other people and started out with them; dealing with this homeless crisis immediately... I came to some of their things but not right at the beginning. It took 5-6 months before we were going every time.

Committee meetings attract a range of people interested in addressing homelessness. ‘Members’ are anyone who attends a meeting and include people with experience of homelessness or who are marginally housed, housed allies, local politicians and occasionally, members of the public. People with experience of homelessness are invited to share their stories, concerns and ideas for addressing homelessness, participating in group work when interested or available. Sometimes people who are homeless come to vent and share their frustrations with ‘the system’ hoping for a place to be heard and demand redress. Housed allies aim to understand extreme poverty and promote change that effectively addresses issues identified by people who experience homelessness. The work of one member with experience of homelessness was key to the early development of the Committee. She facilitated the launch of several group events and was a regular member for seven years. Colin remembers,

There’s one person that really represented as the face of the [group] because of her longevity and attendance. And also because of all the amazing work she’s done over the years on the street. And so her voice was given a lot of weight because she had so much experience and had taken a lot of leadership and done a lot of work on homelessness in the region and had been personally affected by homelessness and poverty-related issues for so long...[she] has always shown quiet leadership in the way that she came about. She never demands leadership in a circumstance or situation. She only demands to have her voice as well as other voices heard. So it was never something she imposed on others. It was just a de facto making every Wednesday meeting for years and taking some responsibility for the organization at a higher level, whether it be to secure terms with [the landlord of the meeting place] or being the person with the key to lock the door.

The Committee has no membership roster or dues and no formalized organizational structure. A chair, a person with experience of homelessness whenever possible, is elected at the beginning of the meeting and he or she follows an agenda drafted by the secretary. Everyone is responsible for helping the Chair keep order within a meeting and provides assistance in calming the situation should an intense discussion threaten to escalate out of control. The secretary or designate, most often an ally, takes minutes and distributes them by email or hard copy at the meetings.

Meetings are currently held on the first and third Wednesday evenings from 7 pm to 8:30pm in a community meeting room of a downtown business. The second Wednesday of the month meeting is held from 1:30 to 3pm at Our Place, a downtown drop-in center. Evening meetings were chosen as a time when it seemed that the greatest number of people might attend and people with experience of homelessness would be less likely to miss a community meal or a bed for the night. The afternoon meeting developed from a series of 'Power Lunches' and was added so that people already at the drop in, and who did not feel comfortable coming downtown in the evening or who feared missing an meal or shelter opportunities could take part in the group. The group uses these spaces free of charge.

The Committee is funded through donations such as "Pass the Hat" at the end of each meeting, fundraising through friends and family members for a specific project such as the premiere of the documentary "Taking the Fall and Rising" and small grants of five hundred to a thousand dollars from a university based not for profit research collective for the initial phase of the documentary film and \$4000 from a local credit union for the MOTHERS tent-trailer project. "Pass the Hat" funds are principally from housed members, many of whom donate on a regular basis. Members with experience of homelessness donate smaller amounts when they feel able to

do so. Food, transportation and ancillary costs such as paper and printing for leaflets and paint for banners are provided by housed members. Members seek donations of food or goods whenever possible and most often housed members pay any smaller costs associated with a project or action. The group has a bank account with a small amount of funds. These funds are used for authorized expenses such as a contribution towards a community meal for activists or for a member with experience of homelessness to attend a conference or special event.

Many issues around homelessness have arisen in the past eight years and the group has addressed these concerns in various ways. The following is a summary of the group's major efforts between July 2006 and December 2013. This summary is not exhaustive and may omit some events the group has fostered or in which members have taken part. This summary was developed based on a review of documents, meeting minutes and information from individual and focus group interviews.

In late 2006, after some months of meeting at a local seniors' center, members began serving a series of meals, called 'Power Lunches' at a large downtown drop-in center, in part because the drop-in was not providing a noon meal at that time. Once-monthly lunches continued until late 2009 providing a forum where group members could speak directly to a larger number, on average 15-20 people, who were homeless or marginally housed and who were not attending group meetings. Having few people with experience of homelessness at meetings has always been a concern for the Committee. Members hoped that having a meeting at Our Place might also boost the numbers of people with experience of homelessness at Committee meetings.

Members heard the concerns of these individuals along with their ideas for addressing the issues raised. The most pressing concerns for people attending Power Lunches included the overwhelming need for safe, affordable, adequate housing; criminalization of homelessness through, for example, the City chattels⁴⁹ bylaw; perceived racism in service provision; the need for harm reduction services including a supervised consumption site; and the necessity of action to bring these issues to the attention of local and provincial governments. These issues continue to inform and to focus the group's work.

In 2007, the need for a warm place to be inside at night during the winter was at the top of many peoples' minds at Power Lunches. A small sub-group of the Committee along with a group of students from a local high school gathered a number of plastic mattress bags from a bedding supplier and gave them to people sleeping outside as a way to stay dry during heavy rains. Group members attended City Council meetings on a regular basis to apprise Council of concerns the group was hearing from people "on the street" including the need to expand the Extreme Weather Protocol sheltering service.

During the winter of 2007/08 a member with experience of homelessness patrolled downtown on numerous wet cold nights seeking those staying outside and assisting them to get to the shelters. This allowed the group direct knowledge of the numbers of people sleeping 'rough' and the hardships people experienced during wet and cold winter conditions. Members brought mock coffins to one City Council meeting to add a visual exclamation point to their presentation of issues with the extreme weather sheltering service and concern for the numbers

⁴⁹ This is a common term used for a Section 102 (1) (c) of the City of Victoria's Streets and Traffic bylaw 09-079 stating that "a person must not place or cause or permit to be placed on, above or in a street, sidewalk, or other public place waste matter of any description, including without limitation, litter, rubbish, garbage, offal, filth, or any noxious, offensive or unwholesome substance or matter". This bylaw allows police or city employees to confiscate and destroy any items they deem to contravene the bylaw.

of people dying during the winter months. Several observers noted that the pressure the group brought to bear on City Council on this issue seemed to influence decision-makers to initiate the Extreme Weather Protocol earlier in the winter and extend it later into the spring.

Spearheaded by a housed ally, Saturday morning Stands for Affordable Housing began early in 2007. Stands took place on the corner of Douglas and Pandora streets across from City Hall, continuing for almost two years. The goal of the stands was increased awareness of homelessness and the need for affordable housing. The possibility of forming a tent city in Victoria was raised by people with experience of homelessness at Power Lunches that year. Two Committee members investigated Seattle's experiences of tent cities and spearheaded a plan to develop a tent city in Victoria as an alternative to shelters and sleeping outside. Though the Committee proposed the opening of a tent city to City Council several times, all were set aside and no action taken.

The Mayors' Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness took place in 2007 (*Mayor's Task Force on Ending the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness, Executive Summary, 2007*). Chairperson Ted Hughes visited the group and members suggested that information shared by people with experience of homelessness contributed a perspective to the Task Force work that would not have otherwise been available to them. Members of the Committee felt that they were "brushed aside" according to Kate, by the Task Force, as little more than an information conduit to those people and organizations which eventually formed the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. Kate further offered, "We were a poor cousin" without influence, funding and therefore, little way to do the work such as housing advocacy and increasing awareness of issues of homelessness that the Coalition became well positioned and supported to accomplish.

Many cite the Homeless Persons Memorial Vigil initiated in 2008⁵⁰ as one of the group's most visible accomplishments. The vigil takes place on December 21st, the longest night of the year, at the 'Whale wall', a now very faint mural painted on the side of the Chandler's building located at the intersection of Yates and Wharf Streets in downtown Victoria near the inner harbour. The vigil highlights not only the number of people who are homeless and die during our cold, wet winters but also serves as an indicator of the number of deaths that may be attributed to poverty. Many attendees gather for a meal and remembrances after the vigil, an opportunity to share food and stories of those who passed and those who remain.

In 2008, the Committee also formed part of a project entitled the "Multi-Opportunity Trailer/Homeless Emergency Response Shelter (MOTHERS) Pilot Project: Social enterprise and bidders in Victoria's street-affected community". This project was also known as "Tony's Trailers" after Tony Hoar, a local self taught builder of a variety of bike trailers approached the group with the idea of reclaiming abandoned metal shopping carts and refurbishing them for use by bidders (individuals who recycle goods found in garbage bins). These trailers would serve as both as a way for bidders to transport their finds and would convert in five minutes to a platform tent which would keep occupants off the ground and as a result, drier, though not necessarily warm⁵¹.

The Committee sponsored the MOTHER's Project along with a student-based research group VIPIRG, submitting a proposal to a local credit union. The group received a small community investment grant from the credit union for the project. Though only four trailers were made, recipients reported greater ease doing salvage work and less worry about where they

⁵⁰ For example, please see: <http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/remembering-homeless-deaths-on-longest-night-1.33320>

⁵¹ Please see for example, <http://www.commutebybike.com/2011/10/03/tony-hoars-video-series-on-converting-a-shopping-cart-into-a-bike-cargo-trailer/>

might spend the night, though the trailers were rarely used for sleeping. The project was featured in conjunction with work by Jutta Gutberlet of UVIC's Department of Geography (McGillivray, 2008). A public event showed videos chronicling the process of making and using the bike trailers. Tony's website received up to 150 hits a day after the debut of the trailers and subsequent media attention. Unfortunately, due to insufficient funds and difficulties in the trailer allocation process the group was unable to continue past the pilot phase. Despite these difficulties, several group members felt this project was in some ways "a lost opportunity" to do something practical and useful for people doing salvage work and a project some may yet wish to resurrect.

Several public actions took place in 2009. During "News from the Street," people reported many instances of having belongings confiscated by police when the individual was seated on the ground in front of a downtown business and not quick enough to move along when asked or when roused from sleep in a City park as a result of the City's chattels bylaw. Many people lost everything they owned, often more than once, as they not have \$150 to pay the fine levied. Committee members did whatever they could to help people get their goods and shopping carts returned. Sometimes a member would pay an individual's fine from his or her own pocket. In one action, Committee members gathered at Yates and Douglas streets with bags and suitcases to challenge the City Chattels bylaw. Though participants spent several hours on the corner and blocked pedestrian traffic, little else happened. At the very least as one member observed, the action brought some attention to the issue.

The most significant action of 2009 was several members attempting to 'crash' the May Day Parade. The parade is an annual event with commercial sponsors. Participants include many businesses, marching bands from numerous small cities in British Columbia and the northwest

United States. Not for profit agencies and other community groups, such as 4H, also take part. The Committee's formal application for participation in the parade was denied. Members brought a banner displaying in large letters the number of people who died on the street the previous year. Though unable to enter into the parade proper, the group received acknowledgement from spectators for their efforts to bring awareness to the issue in such a public fashion. It was "the most in your face thing the Committee has even done" according to one person and an event recounted with some relish by several others members.

A critical year for the Committee was 2010. A strategic planning session held in May with input from visitors from Vancouver's Carnegie Center, a long established drop-in on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, flagged a range of internal issues members felt needed addressing. Issues focused on dynamics within the group, accessing funding, influencing politicians and collaborating with other organizations. Though not formalized into a strategic plan, concerns such as anti-oppression training, how to increase attendance by people with experiences of homelessness and planning for future projects and actions grew out of this planning session and continue to influence Committee work.

Among the group's greatest successes, a "Gathering on the Green" occurred in the summer of 2010. The event took place on the highly contested Pandora Green, a traffic median and former green space on a block of Pandora Avenue used by many patrons of Our Place located there as well as members of the public for sitting, resting or conversing. A tent City had sprung up on Harris Green subsequent to the closing of the fixed-site needle exchange in 2008 where many users slept overnight on the surrounding sidewalks and public areas. When the campers were moved away from the area by police, they moved to nearby Pandora Green. Committee members provided moral support to tenters. The action was spurred by eviction of

the tenters from the Green and concern over City Council efforts to “beautify” the space, ameliorate business fears and decrease visible homelessness in the area.

Over one hundred people, Committee members, people with experience of homelessness, activists, representatives from anti-poverty groups and members of the public attended the Gathering for food, music and discussion. Many took advantage of an opportunity to share their concerns about the state of homelessness in Victoria on film, in individual interviews or at a speaker’s corner booth. Filming was part of the Transform Homelessness Advocacy Watch (THAW) project, and primarily the work of a Committee member with experience of homelessness. THAW began as a short film “to document key aspects [of] oppression... as seen through the eyes of persons directly affected. It will focus on the comments and attitudes of the public, the powerful and dominant society, in order to deconstruct and change the institutional and public discourse on homelessness and spur on united and effective action... [This may include] exposure of repressive police, landlord or service provider actions which might reduce somewhat the blaming of people in poverty and unhoused, and improve service delivery” according to a funding proposal prepared by group members. The group received an initial grant from VIPIRG for the project and some follow-up funds. With the help of many supporters including MediaNet, a not for profit film making group, the film was completed. The film documents numerous aspects of homelessness including social profiling and subsequent criminalization of people with experience of homelessness in the Victoria area.⁵² There was a public event to launch the film in the fall of 2012.

In May 2011, the Committee, along with the Victoria Coalition Against Poverty (VCAP) and several other groups cosponsored “Cracks in the Concrete” a weekend workshop and ‘teach-

⁵² The film is available at <https://vimeo.com/66911895>

in' to foster coordinated action among individuals and groups working on anti-poverty issues in Victoria. Though the workshop generated interest and energy for anti-poverty work, there was little follow-up on plans generated during the weekend. Though VCAP no longer operates, participating organizations continue work on anti-poverty efforts.

In 2012, the purpose of the Committee was described as “Bringing together homeless, formerly homeless, and housed allies to press for change” (see Appendix P,Q). To do so, according to the website (2015)⁵³, is to “Challenge the actions of our politicians, bureaucrats, service providers and the police” through various forms of education, lobbying funders, politicians and service organizations, participating in demonstrations and partnering with other groups with similar purposes when appropriate to achieve mutual goals. These goals include “ending stigma, discrimination and social profiling by police” and poverty alleviation through increasing income assistance rates and access for all to adequate affordable housing”. In 2012, a long-time housed member acting as secretary began sending more frequent invitations to politicians, decision-makers and other persons with ‘influence in the system’ to attend Committee meetings. Guests have included several City Councillors as well as a former MLA (just prior to the May 2013 provincial election) and MP Murray Rankin (three times). Representatives from the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), now known as Island Health, Our Place, the Victoria Cool Aid Society and AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI) have attended to discuss their services and respond to member questions and concerns. More recently, the Police Complaint Commissioner spoke about the complaints process against the police, offering ‘how-to’ information and answering questions. The Chief of Police has attended two

⁵³ Author removed for anonymity

meetings. High profile guests have proven successful draws generating greater participation by people with experiences of homelessness.

From late 2011 through summer 2013, the Committee addressed numerous concerns from service users about changes at a large social service agency that followed the retirement of the well-liked and respected former Executive Director. Based on these complaints, through a series of letters to the Board of Directors, the Committee challenged policy that allowed police seemingly unrestricted access to the drop-in and restricted access and food service to those under age nineteen⁵⁴. Letters to the Board resulted in several meetings with senior staff. Though the practice of not allowing families to eat together was eventually reversed for special occasions such as Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, police presence remains a significant and ongoing concern with ‘jack-ups’ outside the drop-in a regular occurrence. The Committee keeps a watchful eye, listening carefully to user concerns and bringing them to the current Executive Director and Board as necessary.

A housed member developed a website for the group in 2012. The site provides general information such as the anti-poverty charter, minutes, events, meeting times and places and a topical blog that members can respond to or post a topic of their choice. In late 2012, the group initiated ‘Street Meets’ or ‘Experiential’ meetings based on a process that works well at the Carnegie Center in Vancouver. These meetings were an effort to increase attendance by people with experiences of homelessness at Committee meetings. These ‘Experiential’ meetings

⁵⁴ Our Place policy is to serve individuals age 19 or older. However, longstanding practice has been that families may bring their children for a meal as there are few places where free meals may be obtained in the downtown core of Victoria. Subsequent to reports of inappropriate approaches to youth volunteers and Board concerns about the vulnerability of children at the agency, agency leadership decided that policy would be enforced and children would no longer be allowed to eat meals with their parents/guardians. Subsequent to Committee advocacy and members believe, in part because of Committee advocacy, Our Place returned to past practice that allowed families to eat together, at least on special occasions. The presence of youth under 19 in the drop-in is discouraged though some still attend.

specifically for people with experience of homelessness took place once a month on a Friday morning in the chapel of Our Place. This was an extra meeting in a month in addition to regular Committee meetings. The meeting was chaired by a person with lived experience of homelessness. One housed person/ally attended meetings to take minutes. Though many people with experience of homelessness attended the first meetings, getting people to meetings on an ongoing basis proved difficult. Without regular participation of people with experience of homelessness and pressure from the agency to discontinue or move the meeting to other times (Our Place wished to have the chapel for their own use), the group was unsustainable and was discontinued after four meetings.

Much of the group's effort in 2012 and 2013 focused on the THAW film and work with the student research collective (VIPIRG) challenging the Pandora Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) that limits the way in which people who are homeless (or perceived to be) may use the outdoor areas of one block of a busy thoroughfare. The 'short' film evolved into a feature documentary entitled "Taking the Fall and Rising" which was completed in the spring of 2013. "Taking the Fall and Rising" has been shown at several public events including an evening at UVIC sponsored by the student research collective and the local university's Poverty Law Club, a special event of "Movie Monday" at Eric Martin Pavilion⁵⁵ and numerous agencies in Victoria, at VANDU and Queerfest in Vancouver and ArtsWells in Wells, BC. The film has received generally good reviews while increasing awareness of the experience of homelessness in Victoria. The filmmaker, a member of the Committee with experience of homelessness, is formulating his next project.

⁵⁵ Eric Martin Pavilion (EMP) is the inpatient psychiatric facility for the local health authority, Island Health.

The group's alliance with VIPIRG on the GNA issue evolved from mutual concerns around the treatment of people attending a large social agency and utilizing Pandora Green. Criminalization and spatial marginalization of agency attendees seemed to increase significantly subsequent to the signing of the Pandora GNA in July 2009. VIPIRG (2014) notes on its website "The Pandora Green GNA came about as the result of the city paying a private consultant to get every property owner on the block in a room to decide on how to make them comfortable with Our Place expanding. People accessing Our Place were excluded from this process." Along with recent participation in research and information gathering events on the Pandora GNA, the Committee participated in efforts in fall 2013 aimed at challenging the current GNA and developing an inclusive process and content for a better Pandora neighborhood agreement. Committee members now attend two regular meetings around Pandora neighborhood issues adding their perspectives to those of business and agencies. The Committee was also involved in challenging a 'beautification' project at Rock Bay Landing, the largest shelter in Victoria. The project was based on terms of the GNA covering Rock Bay Landing that seek to keep people using the sheltering service from resting or sleeping on an area directly across the street from the shelter.

Though much effort was put into a second Gathering on the Green that took place in September 2013 few people attended. Lack of awareness of the event, timing that conflicted with other food services and a fundraising event at Our Place, coupled with communication issues may have contributed to the low turnout. Those who attended seemed to enjoy the festivities and several provided comments on illicit drug issues to the Speakers' Corner booth on the site.

A major achievement for the Committee in late 2013 was the December acceptance of a "Who We Are and What We Do" statement. The statement, drafted by a housed ally, lays out

group values, ways of working together and what work the group undertakes. Now when people ask who the group is they can be directed to this document. Another step forward was the development of an anti-oppression training session for early 2014. The last event of 2013, the Homeless Persons' Memorial Vigil saw its largest ever turnout of 65 people. According to a local minister, attendees wrestled with the deaths of some 150 people in 2013 living in poverty or who were homeless. Going into 2014 the group aimed to focus on direct actions against poverty and homelessness.

Summary

Within a social determinants of health perspective, a lack of safe, affordable housing coupled with income insufficient to adequately allow individuals to pay for housing, food and other daily living needs along with inadequate access to health services have been shown to severely impact current health and life options and limit future life chances (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010). Restrictive bylaw changes, coercive social agreements, ongoing surveillance, interruption and intimidation by police of people who have little choice other than to conduct an inordinate amount of their lives in public coupled with the necessity of interacting with a web of social agencies with both limited offerings and an often less than welcoming atmosphere form a set of conditioning or shaping elements. These elements together work to marginalize and exclude people who are homeless ensuring they must choose, often many times a day, among only life limiting options in order to survive. Freedom to choose life affirming options in daily life is severely limited. This is what (Farmer, 1996) refers to as 'embodiment' of structural violence; individual lived experience of social conditions. Farmer (1996) and Ho (2007) explicitly identify the range of lived experiences of poverty as structurally violent with devastating effects on the lives of those who experience them. These effects include increased

risks of serious health consequences such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, infectious diseases, parasites, and “most forms of extreme suffering from hunger to torture and rape” (Farmer, 1996)p.262). The social, political and economic context in the Capital Region of British Columbia, in which the Committee operates, may be seen as structurally violent for people who live in extreme poverty and experience homelessness.

The Committee has carried out a range of collective actions and efforts aimed at ‘pushing back’ against the outcomes of structural violence. Concern over the deaths of people who experience homelessness from exposure and a lack of adequate shelter and affordable housing led to the creation of the Homeless Persons Memorial Vigil. Insufficient affordable housing met with stands on downtown streets and meetings with politicians seeking their commitment to a national housing strategy and increased affordable housing. Police presence at Our Place and ‘jack-ups’ in the downtown core have drawn ongoing letters and meetings with the Director of Our Place and the Chief of Police. The highly contested Pandora Green has been used as a site of active resistance against bylaws that restrict the use of outdoor spaces by people with experience of homelessness and the GNA covering that area. The film “Taking the Fall and Rising” brought attention to the concerns of people who were homeless to some of the conditions in which they live.

The Committee has had many successful collective actions over its lifespan within a context that is structurally violent. How may this context have impacted the ability of people who are homeless to ‘push back’ and take part in these efforts? Specifically, what forms might participation in the Committee by people with experience of homelessness take and what forms might not take place and why? These issues are addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

The Committee as a Site of Resistance

The social, economic and political environment in the Capital Region is structurally violent in a multitude of ways for people who are homeless and live in extreme poverty. Individuals must navigate a gauntlet of sociospatial and policy-derived organizational barriers, and experience multiple stigmas and discrimination in a context of increasing criminalization of homelessness to access social services and meet their survival needs. In this chapter, I examine how the Committee reflects, is impacted by and resists this context with a view to understanding how structural violence shapes collective resistance by people with experience of homelessness.

I begin this chapter with a short characterization of members and describe how a typical Committee meeting may proceed. This first part of the chapter sets the stage for discussion of a range of successes and challenges the Committee face as a group of housed allies and people with experience of homelessness working to collectively ‘push back’ against structural violence. I discuss how unequal power relations may be produced and reproduced in the Committee and may constrain collective resistances and conversely, how some processes may mitigate hierarchical structures, supporting more equal power relations that may enhance collective resistance against structural violence.

The Members

Member numbers have varied little since the inception of the Committee in 2006. Core long term members, including six allies and two people with experience of homelessness, attended most meetings. Occasionally, there were ten allies and one member with experience of homelessness. One ally and two people with experience of homelessness have attended almost

every meeting since 2006. A further four allies and two people with experience of homelessness have taken part for at least four years, attending regularly.

Various allies have joined the group and stayed for periods ranging from a few months to several years. Members with experience of homelessness may attend regularly for a period, be absent for a few weeks or months and return. Some allies work while others are retired, travel, volunteer, or have family commitments. Some housed individuals and those with experiences of homelessness attend a meeting or two to ‘check the group out’ and do not return. Occasionally, an individual with experience of homelessness attends a meeting and stays with the group for a significant period, several months or more. People with experience of homelessness take a break from the Committee for many reasons including health and family issues or frustration with meeting processes.

Since 2013 the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH) has sponsored individuals with experiences of homelessness to attend Committee meetings as part of their work with the Social Inclusion Advisory Committee (SIAC). SIAC is made up of people with experiences of homelessness who contribute to GVCEH initiatives⁵⁶ with the aim to include the voices of people with experience of homelessness in the work of the GVCEH.

Though over 20 people participated, meetings usually drew around 10 people with as few as five attending on income assistance cheque issue day⁵⁷. Individuals sometimes came to the Committee with a personal agenda. For example, they seek to help a specific group of people

⁵⁶ Initiatives include the Speakers Bureau whose members give public presentations on experiencing homelessness and a group that produced the Street Survival Guide that details services for people who are homeless in the Greater Victoria area. Please see <http://www.victoriahomelessness.ca>

⁵⁷ Cheque issue day, sometimes known as ‘welfare Wednesday’ in the street community, is the day when income assistance recipients receive their funds for the next month. As it is also a day when people with extremely low incomes have some money, they may go to a restaurant for a meal and spend time with friends; thus it is generally not a good day for meetings.

experiencing homelessness such as those who have mental health or substance use concerns or have a strong desire to develop affordable housing of a specific type, e.g. communal houses. These individuals often take part in the Committee for a few months then move on to other volunteer work.

Long term members include two people with experience of homelessness, identified as activists and who are passionate about a range of social justice issues. Newer members include a younger activist and a man with experiences of homelessness who attended the Committee intermittently. Several allies have a long history of involvement on a range of issues in the Capital Region. A third member with experience of homelessness attended sporadically. One member had two short and devastating experiences with homelessness that propelled his involvement with the Committee. One member with experience of homelessness described himself as “born into poverty” and actively homeless off and on for several years as a teen and young adult. All members considered themselves ‘educated’, whether in the “university of life” as Johnny observed, or at the academy. A majority of allies hold advanced degrees in the humanities, education or social sciences. Members with experiences of homelessness often have some college or university experience. Members with experiences of homelessness were at best insecurely housed, with two actively experiencing homelessness during the fieldwork period. Allies were securely housed.

A small cadre of members forms the core of the group and shoulders most of the work. These individuals also have life commitments limiting time and energy available to the group. In summing what the Committee is, Lucy observed,

I think of the Committee as an unsponsored, unaffiliated, neutral support and

advocacy group. So unlike the Coalition⁵⁸, for example, the Committee in my impression ...doesn't have any ties to any particular interest base. It doesn't get any regular funding, it doesn't have a traditional or provincial organization structure. There's no chairs, there's no boards, there's no usual stuff. And I think that gives it an autonomy and independence that is unusual, a generic advocacy group rarely has so little structure...It really is an amorphous adaptable responsive type of group of people and it adds a support element which I think is uncommon.

One member provides much of the impetus that keeps agenda items moving toward completion. The group could face significant difficulty should this member relinquish ongoing duties, quit the group, experience serious health challenges or die. Should this individual no longer take part, the group may experience a serious challenge remaining viable in the community. Alice, added,

So there was the sense of attempting to give those who were experienced... a voice so that other people could listen. They've got to have a voice and we've got to raise ours. 'We' meaning 'the well to do'. Because in their terms of experiencing homelessness and trying to go around and find different places [to get their voice heard doesn't work well]. The Committee gets their voice and our voice to people who can take action.

The Committee focused on collective resistances as they understood that people with experience of homelessness had little power or voice in the system and little opportunity to promote change on their own.

⁵⁸ The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH), the amalgam of social agencies, government representatives and business partners spearheading work to end homelessness in Victoria is often locally referred to as 'the Coalition'.

Meetings: “It’s our thang”

Most regular meetings were held on weekday evenings in a smallish downtown room of a local community agency. A handful of people would arrive a few minutes early and stand on the sidewalk or sit on a bench waiting for the long term member with the key to arrive and open the door. The meeting room was small. People gathered around a group of old wooden tables that when pushed together formed a large square. The seats were old, hard and often splintering wood; difficult to sit on for more than an hour. The room could comfortably fit a dozen people at most. The tables almost filled the space and when people sat around them the room was crowded. Only those sitting at the south end of the table grouping and one person on the southeast and southwest corners could easily move around as these seats were essentially in a hallway. The balance of attendees sat on the north, east and west sides of the room with their backs nearly hitting the wall.

Anyone who brought food placed it in the center of the tables. People took something to eat as they chose. Food was most often cookies or bread. I usually brought bananas. On occasion others brought fruit. Members with experience of homelessness would often ask if there was anything else to eat. One individual regularly came and checked out the food and if seeing little, would ask, “Where’s the food?” When offered whatever was available, he would either take some, or comment on the lack of food and that people were hungry. Members often responded by looking down or away from him. He often left the meeting before it started, whether he had taken anything to eat or not.

An ally generally prepared and distributed agendas. I distributed minutes I had taken the week before⁵⁹. An ally would call out, “Who wants to chair?” The Committee always tried to have a person with experience of homelessness as a chair. Someone would add, “We need someone with experience to chair”. At that point someone with experience of homelessness might offer or be persuaded to chair the meeting. Group pressure (persuasion) included member statements such as, “C’mon [name] you chair” and “yes, why don’t you, we need a chair”.

Many times it was difficult to find someone to chair the meeting. An ally might be approached to chair on their first visit to the Committee. Allies would often say ‘yes’ and if ‘no’ might be asked to manage the speakers list, the important and sometimes difficult job of keeping notes of who was in line to speak. If no member with experience of homelessness offered or could be persuaded, an ally would be drafted to chair the meeting. Members with experiences of homelessness often forgot they were chairing and became deeply involved in discussions. If I was sitting beside a chair person with lived experience of homelessness, I would often offer to assist with the agenda items and monitoring the discussions. The assistance seemed appreciated as a chair would often say “oh, thanks” and look relieved when the meeting moved forward.

At the beginning of a meeting the chair would recognize that we met on unceded territories of the Lkwungen people and thank them for allowing us to meet on their land. The Code of Conduct,⁶⁰ though meant to be read aloud at the beginning of each meeting was often omitted with a member noting, “we know what they are, no cross-talking, wait your turn, be respectful” or forgotten. The chair would add items to the agenda as offered by attendees. Often individuals, a member with lived experience or ally, would attempt to speak to their additional

⁵⁹ Part of my arrangement for ‘giving back’ to the group was to take minutes at each meeting for the duration of the fieldwork.

⁶⁰ The Code of Conduct laid out the terms of respectful behavior and interaction in a meeting.

item at that point. Many times it took a few minutes for the chair to come back to the agenda. Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted or not, depending on whether the chair remembered this item.

A range of behavior was tolerated at meetings though not always easily or comfortably. Soiled clothing and strong odors were never mentioned. Intoxication was tolerated unless the individual was unable to take part in conversation, or physically or sexually inappropriate. If an individual became loud, abusive or continually used profane language, he or she was asked to leave and may be escorted outside. The individual could return to the next meeting and the incident was considered in the past.

Working Together: Moving Beyond “Us and Them”

Developing mutual understanding between housed and unhoused members and working to bring the voices of people with experience of homelessness to the forefront in efforts to ‘end homelessness’ in the region are key Committee values. These values formed the basis of community and connection many members found participating in the Committee. For some members, the sense of community in the group was also a source of learning, support and friendship. Several founding members played an integral role in the group with two having attended almost all meetings, often five a month, during the group’s eight year history. Johnny, a member with experience of homelessness, described meetings as “a group of people who otherwise wouldn’t normally be in the same room” working to create a space for all voices. June, an ally, added,

We actually have people that are on the street and some pretty close to going there and also that are in really sub-standard conditions and people that are

actually under normal conditions too. So do you know what? We run the gamut. We're not some elitist little paradise here.

The working part of the agenda began with "News from the Street", where members with lived experience shared their issues concerns and frustration. Upon reflection and analysis, I came to realize that these are stories of structural violence as they are lived out by individuals. Varying amounts of time were given to members to speak. New members or first time attendees with experience of homelessness were often given extra time to share their concerns. Many times new individuals came to either check out the Committee or had a pressing issue they wished the group to deal with such as having their belongings confiscated at a shelter, having their car (which they often slept in) ticketed or towed, an eviction or an unfair or abusive landlord. "News from the street" was one explicit way voices of people with experience of homelessness are acknowledged and valued. Colin observed,

We were putting the voices on the street as the first thing on the agenda, when you compare it to a meeting that might be taking place a hundred yards away at City Hall where people would get five minutes to comment at the end of the agenda time permitting, it really turned that process on its head and it really said that the reason that we're here is to hear these voices. So structurally it was designed to empower people whether you're a first timer or whether you'd been there for years to share what your impressions were of what was going on our streets. And I think that in some cases and in some meetings there's no doubt that that space was taken advantage of to some extent by people feeling that it was an opportunity to air all their life's woes in one shot and maybe take away from the time and space of others through that. But I found that most of the time it was effective and empowering people to talk about what had been going on, on the streets. And

in some cases it would be individual things, like you know, “I was hassled” or “I saw someone getting hassled.” But in some cases it was much broader about the death of individuals, the closure of a service, the lack of funding at an organization or otherwise.

Valuing lived experience and demonstrating respect for people who are homeless as individuals is fundamental to group values. Significant effort is aimed “at getting as much of their [people with experience of homelessness] view into the conversation as possible” according to Geoff, and supporting people with experience of homelessness in having a place to be heard and “feel they have something worthy to say”. Colin observed,

It takes a lot of patience to allow people who aren’t necessarily used to expressing themselves in a public setting or otherwise, whose voices have been quiet and made irrelevant for so long, to be able to give them space to talk and to share their stories... giving room for those voices where there isn’t room in our society otherwise... So the meetings themselves end up creating a safe space for people who might not otherwise have places to share these stories in any effective way.

A central aim is ensuring that the voices of those with experience of homelessness, especially those who are currently homeless, are given greater weight in conversation and decision-making. According to Colin,

So a less-educated but more formally affected voice like someone who is directly living on our streets was given as much time as someone who’d been studying homelessness and maybe having a Masters or whatnot. In other words, I think there was a good balance of individuals but it wasn’t being a white male that gave you more status in that kind of committee

because that could be balanced off by a woman who had been affected by homelessness and poverty for fifteen years. So the credibility of her voice would be as strong or stronger in dealing with any of the issues as someone ... studying homelessness and addiction.

At any given meeting, achieving a balance between dealing with agenda items and allowing space for people with experience of homelessness to tell their stories and share their concerns was often difficult to achieve. For example, an ally, though always interested in what individuals had to say, sometimes wanted to move quickly to the business of the meeting, especially if there was an upcoming event. Allies Roy and Alice observed that people with experience of homelessness may have different needs,

Like three or four who were, shall we say, housed and used to having a meeting where you have action. And then there's the other group of participants, ... who come in because it's warm, they want...they need, in my opinion, like something to eat and they need an ear.

If the meeting was moving 'slowly', another ally might also suggest moving forward with the agenda. A third ally might offer, "Let's give him some time" when an individual with experience of homelessness was speaking. Myron sometimes felt frustrated when he wanted to contribute and there was no space for him,

That happened at least a couple of times once or twice at every third meeting or something like that because there's some of the other people driving you mad and you don't have adequate space to give them. I don't think I should have more space than anybody else and I don't think I do. But...to be put down or shut down... offended...or struck against, not very often..but left out, yes.

On many occasions a member with experience of homelessness became frustrated and interrupted the meeting, going ‘off topic’ and speaking to several items on the agenda at the same time. One member with experience of homelessness often pointedly commented, “I can’t get a word in”. It took some effort, generally by one or two allies, to move the meeting back to the agenda. When the chair was able to regain control of the meeting, the agenda proceeded until someone else jumped into the discussion rather than waiting for a turn via the speaker’s list. Agenda items were eventually covered and actions agreed upon. Roy, an ally, spoke of the difficulties and rewards he experienced with continued participation:

It takes an amazing amount of dedication to stay with this kind of work. Because... it used to try [my] patience. When you’re dealing with people who live on the street, who have had really bad experiences with authority people and have had their belongings taken from them and you give them an opportunity such as this to come in and talk about it, they often, they aren’t very pleasant, they’re abrasive, they have an axe to grind and you give them a venue in which to speak. You better be prepared for a lot of stuff coming out. That anger and the resentment and the hurt and the upset, all of that. The fact that they showed up [at] some place where they want to make a difference, I mean that’s inspiring.

Believing the voices of people who were homeless were critical to solutions and strategies to end homelessness, the Committee aimed to include those voices in actions and efforts to ‘push back’ against issues of homelessness. However, moving from valuing inclusionary principles to implementing inclusionary practices consistent with these values is challenging. Few people with experiences of homelessness have experiences with meetings, especially in positive ways; they lack understanding of meeting processes and communication practices, often have difficulty

listening to others, especially those with different views and are often tired and hungry. Such challenges have been experienced elsewhere. For example, in regard to participation in meetings, a recent multi-site study on implementing Housing First principles in Canada formed a “caucus” of people with experience of homelessness to give researchers guidance on all aspects of the project’s Toronto site.

There were many similarities between these researchers’ experience and that of the Committee. People with experience of homelessness and mental illness who took part in the caucus had little or no familiarity with meetings with specific agenda items to accomplish and were unable to tolerate the opinions of others giving rise to off topic comments, disruptions and arguments that reduced meeting effectiveness (van Draanen et al., 2013). Addressing material needs, supporting dignity and respect, along with “expert facilitation and patience” were identified as necessary to meaningfully include people with experience of homelessness in attending caucus meetings (vanDraanen et al., 2013, p. 183). Indeed, the researchers suggested that a range of strategies was necessary to facilitate participation in caucus work (vanDraanen et al., 2013). Though they experienced ongoing difficulties in meeting processes, other factors arose within the group that supported inclusion of some members with experience of homelessness such as caring, openness to learning and development of supportive relationships.

An Atmosphere of Caring

Committee members “look out for” and care for each other in many ways. For example, a member who was sleeping rough in a local park reported his camp was demolished and his belongings stolen or confiscated. There was no security for his possessions even when he believed his camp was well hidden. If this individual wasn’t at a meeting for a few weeks, other

members asked if anyone knew his whereabouts or if something may have happened to him. Another member checked out his favourite haunts. If he wasn't found or heard from, a member with experience of homelessness made inquiries at different social agencies and would leave a message requesting contact. Eventually the member would surface and check in. Though he sometimes didn't seem to appreciate it, "Mind your own bloody business", the member always knew the group wondered how he was doing.

Myron 'couch surfed' for several weeks after a fire in his building. Income assistance for persons with a disability would not nearly meet his needs after losing almost all his possessions subsequent to the eviction. Though he found a new apartment, the rent is over \$100 more than his previous unit, leaving him only \$200 per month to pay utilities, food and cover any other costs he may have. Group members came together to assist, donating money and home furnishings to help him transition and settle in his new place.

Members with cars often offered rides to or from meetings to anyone who asked. Rides often served as opportunities to connect with members who were homeless, checking to see if help was needed. Phone calls and email support are also a common occurrence among members. Johnny offered,

Look at [former member], her and I are the most active from poverty. And look at our disabilities we have. Look at our ...our bad memories we both have because of our past. And we both have people who, thank God, there's always amazing people around to help, just help you keep going.

Emotional support often flowed both ways, from housed to homeless members and from members with experience of homelessness to housed allies. Members who are homeless or have

experience of homelessness and have access to a phone (for example, at a social agency), a free voicemail service at one agency or landline, a cell phone, email or Facebook (for example, access to free computers at the library or social agency) often have contact with other members housed or homeless, outside meetings. Sharing a meal or going for coffee takes place on a casual basis before or after meetings or events. Most often the ally paid, however, a person with experience of homelessness occasionally pay on the day income assistance monies were distributed. Myron's philosophy about group members supporting each other in this way is "It's a bit like...we offer a blessing to those who sometimes walk alone in the world and we show that friendship [is possible]...we don't normally have hope sometimes".

Johnny and Myron have benefited from their relationships with allies in the Committee and in turn, have contributed enormously to the life and work of the Committee. As Johnny commented above, "I have people who, thank God, there's always amazing people around to help, just help you keep going." Johnny sometimes had difficulty receiving assistance, and wanted to ensure there was a clear understanding between he and the ally that the support was given freely rather than as a response to "some sort of guilt trip." He speaks of a time when financial assistance allowed him to complete a project for the Committee:

So I asked A., "During this project when you're helping me and I'm calling you , I want to be really clear ...what help is about... Because otherwise it feels unhealthy power stuff. And oftentimes I'd feel too guilty and finally people would say, " we have to give money for you. Christ you're not eating, you're not well. I mean it's just the way it ended up being.

Johnny appreciates the support he received. A little later in our conversation he adds, "When you're on disability and you're poor and you don't have the family people around, all

these people helping you with this,... you're screwed. So you need a community". Johnny also understands the power that money provides, and by identifying and naming that difference, begins to address unequal power relations between him and the ally.

Johnny has lived both housed and waged and homeless. Friendships developed within the group help sustain his energy and financial support worked to mitigate outcomes of structural violence. Farmer (2004) might observe that Johnny lived the hunger, compromised health and emotional challenges, the 'strictures' poverty inflict and that those outcomes were lessened through support to pay bills, buy food and purchase vitamins not covered by income assistance. Johnny believed he could not have been an activist with the Committee without the support offered by allies. Indeed, Kraemer (2007) suggests that a key advantage privileged allies bring to activist work with individuals from a different social group is access to resources, including money and social connections.

Long time allies and people with experience of homelessness believe that efforts to promote tolerance, dignity and respect along with a willingness to listen and a desire to address lived realities of homelessness foster a compassionate and caring space within the group. A level of trust has developed among long time members such that in times when harsh words have been exchanged relationships continue. Geoff observes,

I think people are worried that if we have a shouting match at each other it becomes too personal and people will walk out and won't come back. But it hasn't seemed to happen. I mean there's been some real incidents with some people and they've all come back. That's what I meant about this community of acceptance. It's like a family in a way, isn't it? ... So we have family fights but they're still part of the group, aren't they?

Housed members comment they often receive as much from Committee participation as they gave. Kate offers, “Most people get a lot more from the Committee than they put in” while Geoff gets a “strong feeling of satisfaction” from his participation. Mona spoke of friendship and ongoing support, “I really appreciate the community. During hard times in my life people in the Committee have been some of the best people I’ve had.” Myron has received support and financial assistance from allies. When he was recently evicted from his housing, the Committee held a barbeque and proceeds were given to Myron. He thanked the group, whom he referred as “my friends”. Indeed, supportive relationships between allies and members with experience of homelessness may be one way effects of structural violence may be mitigated for members with experiences of homelessness. Such relationships can provide a fertile ground for solidarity that is key to collective resistance (Kraemer, 2007).

“We all learn here”

Group members from differing social locations provide fertile ground for learning and growth. Indeed, an openness and willingness to learn is a significant commonality among allies and people with experience of homelessness who participate long term in the group. As Myron commented, “we all learn here”. Kate adds,

I’ve learned such a lot. When you’re working as a volunteer... [at] the food bank or something like this...at a very different level, you are part of the system, you’re dishing stuff out. They’re handouts. You never get to meet people, not really. When you had a bit of time off or something, you’d go and sit down and talk to people. But you didn’t have much time.... You’re meeting such interesting people...and I think learning how other people survive and meeting them just as other people, you know, [how they are] stuck in more different ways than I’ve

got...just being able to meet and talk to people, that it's...a reality ...that you wouldn't see otherwise.

Myron believes that with the variety of people and perspectives in the group, he gets “a [different] point of view, a world view and a view that [there] is something that's bigger than you and you can transform things”. As a founding member, Myron has experienced a majority of the Committee's actions, fostering collective memory and an oral history of circumstances and events affecting people who are homeless in the region. He used this knowledge to help the Committee address these conditions by keeping issues such as the numbers of people who die each year “front and center” within the group, “people ...keep talking about it, keep track of the old or not so old...when street people die and they're thinking about what happened...and trying to do something”. He gets “a feeling of validation” from involvement in the Committee, believing his experiences and contributions are useful to others.

Myron has also learned from his experiences at the Committee that factors outside him contribute to homelessness. For example, in a discussion he and I had on the need for housing, Myron suggested, “You need to remove the profit motive out of every single aspect of housing, otherwise housing is a limited magic wand” but at least “You'd have a real handle on the problem. You wouldn't solve it tomorrow, but you know...[pauses laughing] that's another magic wand”. From this and his earlier statement, Freire (1995) might observe that Myron has begun the process of attaining critical consciousness through participation in the Committee. Indeed, he gained an understanding of structural violence not possible through lived experience alone.

Johnny wanted to improve his life situation and that of others through the Committee:

I got involved because, suddenly, there I was in the stigmatized world, back realizing what I didn't realize before, the 'us and them' thing. Like suddenly I was in a weird category because I wasn't one of those people who wanted to be pitied or needed anyone's help or guidance... I kind of knew what I needed and wanted and where I was at but at the same time I was one of them. Suddenly I was poor, almost homeless. I wanted to do something about it.

Johnny and Myron found meaning from their life experiences and Committee involvement and this contributed to their identities as activists. Both considered the Committee and other forms of activism they took part in their 'work' and contribution to social change. Kate finds that working with people who have been homeless helps her understand an experience she has not had and fires her passion ("I like being an agitator") for development of affordable housing and supports for people living in extreme poverty.

Several allies learned a lot of patience participating in the group. The need to listen carefully to the voices of people with experience of homelessness and ensure they are heard is a value of the Committee. Listening and moving through an agenda more slowly than they would wish, foregrounding the needs of people with experience of homelessness took time. People who are homeless often experience a lack of dignity and respect and do not feel heard in interactions with social agency personnel (Norman et al., 2015b) and it may take time for some individuals to feel comfortable speaking up in the group. Alternatively, given an opportunity to be heard, some individuals took as much time as allowed voicing their needs and concerns. Many required assistance in focusing their thoughts on the issues of greatest importance to them that day, also a finding of note in a recent study (vanDraanen et al., 2013).

June believed it was important to speak directly with people experiencing homelessness. She noted, “Well I get satisfaction because I’m talking with real people.” She continues,

[The Committee] is cutting edge because do you know any group that has homeless people and people that are really, really low income and people that are middle class, people better off... where we [all] actually have a voice... and we’re representing...we get real information from real homeless people... and examples of exactly what’s going on....

Colin perceived a common orientation to addressing homelessness has developed among a diverse group of people from listening and working together,

[I was] able to meet with a lot of people who are like-minded – maybe not like-minded on strategies to address the issue, but like-minded ... from an understanding and a grasp of the scope of the problem, and a common end goal of addressing the problem... not just by creating more housing but by finding ways to allow people to live lives that they felt would be filled with value and integrity. I think so much of our current strategies disempower people from that and don’t really meet people where they are at the moment.

Further instances of conscientization (Freire, 1995) have emerged in the Committee. Openness to learning and sharing with others has led to new understandings of homelessness for several allies. Openness to learning in community with others assisted one member with experiences of homelessness in validating his experiences by the Committee deeming them useful in addressing issues of homelessness. He also learned that ‘homelessness’ was outside of him, gaining a very different understanding of structural violence. Examining long held beliefs

can bring a change in awareness and potentially, a shift in power relations between allies and people with experience of homelessness.

Freire (1995) understands oppression as both external and internal; that is, people who are oppressed incorporate the beliefs and understandings held by oppressors into their self image; internalized oppression. Awareness and mutual understanding arising from relationships between people with experience of homelessness and housed allies may contribute to a shift, from middle class allies as oppressors and people with experience of homelessness as oppressed to a more fluid position where a shift to more equal power relations may take place. For Myron, surfacing and challenging long held beliefs contributed to such a change. He shed the notion that he was responsible for his experiences of homelessness.

Sharing and learning among Committee participants has also fostered development of an understanding of solutions and strategies to end homelessness that are inclusive of people with lived experience of homelessness. This reflects a ‘frame’ for Committee actions. Development of a ‘frame, or mutual understanding of contested issues and ways to engage with other actors around those issues can be useful in forwarding goals in a social movement (Benford & Snow, 2000). Indeed, the Committee Charter (Appendix P) and “Who we are and what we do statement” (Appendix Q) frame and continually inform Committee work. There have been many positive developments within the Committee for long term members, allies and those with experience of homelessness. Long term members also experience many challenges in working together.

Working Together is Not Always Easy: More on Meetings

I come back to meetings as this is the place with the most members present and the site where group dynamics are most visible. Kraemer (2007) asserts that when ‘privileged allies,’ those from the dominant social group, work with activists who experience the issue (here, homelessness), they bring resources and skills often associated with their status. Behaviors associated with privilege such as taking control, lack of commitment and hidden agendas often accompany education, financial independence and social connections that may support people who experience homelessness (Kraemer, 2007).

Several concerns emerged in interviews around members’ engagement during meetings. Many members had difficulty discussing these issues, referencing them obliquely or ‘sandwiching’ comments they felt critical between comments supporting the group. Newcomers, often allies, have expectations of a meeting process that forefronts planning and doing rather than listening and supporting. Colin related his experiences balancing the needs of people who are homeless and accomplishing tasks,

For me it took a developing of patience and empathy because it’s not like you would go into our meeting and you’d spend ninety minutes doing planning and action. There might be ninety minutes of listening to tales of police abuses on our streets and of hearing the childhood abuses people have gone through in the residential school system or otherwise. And then just thirty minutes of planning. And sometimes you’d leave with a bit of frustration that more, you know, that the suffering one might not be heard; and that if we didn’t come up with more action items in a meeting then [nothing would be done to address the concern].

The group addressed the tension between “doing and being” as Colin observed and as noted earlier, by placing “News from the street” as a standing item early in the agenda. Though this helped address the tension by making space for voices of people who were homeless first, tension remained as members with experience of homelessness felt they didn’t have enough time to speak and some allies pushed to get to the ‘action’ phase of the meeting more quickly. Keeping meetings ‘on track’ even with the most skilled chairperson was often difficult as members tended to interrupt and talk over each other. On occasion, people left the meeting when the process becomes too chaotic

Various factors contributed to the issue of chaotic meetings. While the intent is to have a person with experience of homelessness chair meetings as often as possible, this is often difficult to achieve. Few people with experience of homelessness attend meetings and fewer members whether housed or with experience of homelessness have sufficient skills to chair a meeting where persistence and strong opinions often prevailed. A recurrent result is much cross talking, interrupting and attempts to shift the topic to suit the speaker. Unless the chairperson is extremely diligent, the meeting often goes awry. Allies often will not intervene if a person with experience of homelessness is speaking even as they observe the meeting going off track. Indeed, several housed members have noted they don’t believe it is their responsibility to “take over the meeting” by cutting a comment short as that may appear to suppress people with experience of homelessness. Colin observes,

Like with any movement that’s completely open and inclusive, there’s a lot of room for disruption and there was a lot of times throughout the life of this committee, and it’s been around for a long time now, where there’d been more destructive forces that have come on, maybe well-meaning but a disrupting

process or literally causing other people to leave the group because they didn't feel safe in the space any more. [They left because] they felt that the process was broken.

Lack of psychological safety has contributed to frustration that resulted in both housed and homeless members taking a significant break or eventually leaving the Committee. Safety is critical, especially for members with experience of homelessness to contribute to the group and foster ongoing participation and developing connections to others. Connection to others has been shown to mitigate some of the stressors experienced by older homeless individuals (Holt, Christian, & Larkin, , 2012). Further, without a continued sense of safety in the group, the community and supportive relationships prized by long term members may be less likely to develop for newcomers, contributing to social isolation that may be experienced by people living in poverty (Stewart et al., 2009). Relationships between allies and members with experience of homelessness have a range of benefits such as emotional and financial support that mitigate structural violence and would not be available without opportunity for interaction at meetings. Members were aware of safety issues in the group and made several attempts to deal with it, with mixed success.

Two anti-oppression training workshops were held in early 2014 to address member concerns about unsafe meeting processes. The groups were facilitated by a professional organizer/trainer and a member, both with experience in anti-oppressive practice. The first workshop was well attended and the second drew about half the number of participants as the first group. Power and the potential for reproducing oppression of people in poverty in group processes arose in the workshops; however it was addressed in theory only. Though facilitators hoped the workshop would be an opportunity to address issues of safety and oppressive

behaviors in the group, no concrete examples were brought forward for discussion. Though the group planned further workshops none have taken place.

A change in meeting dynamics seemed to occur when two people with experience of homelessness sponsored by the Social Inclusion Advisory Committee (SIAC) of the GVCEH began attending Committee meetings. Following Sakamoto et al (2008), stipends received for meeting attendance acknowledged the skills and expertise these individuals brought to the group and the time they devoted to Committee work. In this way, provision of stipends worked to address power imbalances and include SIAC delegates in the Committee (Norman et al., 2015b). The presence of a further two members with experience of homelessness also changed the group dynamic, promoting more equal power relations between allies and people with experience of homelessness. That some members with experience of homelessness received stipends and others did not may also have presented some challenges to the group.

Providing a stipend to some people with experience of homelessness and not to others may have worked to increase inequalities, privileging some members of a marginalized group while further excluding others. An attempt to mitigate power relations and promote meaningful participation by providing a stipend to people with experience of homelessness may thus have an unintended consequence, reducing the likelihood that individuals who are homeless and not receiving a stipend would attend, and further restricting access to any benefits that may accrue from group participation. It was also not clear that all Committee members were aware that some people with experience of homelessness received stipends for participation in the group.

Knowledge that two members were 'paid' by another organization to attend the Committee may have acted as an added disincentive to those not receiving a stipend. A

‘privileged’ category of member with lived experience may have been created, one more likely to attend meetings regularly thereby more able to influence group work and decisions and receive other benefits such as ‘work experience’ as well as social, emotional and other supports from the group or individual allies. ‘Waged’ delegates were differentiated, perhaps unknowingly, from their unwaged counterparts, circumstances which may have worked to create a hierarchy of participation and influence in the group more nuanced than is currently understood. Receiving a stipend fostered SIAC delegate presence at Committee meetings, however, it remained unclear what effects differential participation among people with lived experiences of homelessness may have had on Committee processes. Thus, I wish only to point to out that such differences may have existed.

Dynamics within Committee meetings may have served to deter new members and to spur others to leave the group. Multiple disruptions leading meetings ‘off the rails’, may contribute to a sense that the group is disorganized. Though disruptions continued, core members continued to attend. Many allies were prepared to tolerate a level of personal discomfort, ‘holding back’ from taking control of the meetings in attempts to allow people with experience of homelessness to ‘take charge’, “leading from the back” as Kate noted, and not appear to dominate the group. Examination of the usefulness of this strategy may reveal more subtle workings of power within the group.

Freire (1995) suggests that in doing what individuals believe helpful, they may unknowingly contribute to the oppression of others. Such may be the case in the group. Several allies are aware of power differences between themselves and members with experience of homelessness. Though a ‘code of conduct’ outlining respectful interaction is on the agenda of every meeting, it has often not been followed. Allies often choose to stay in the background to

allow more 'space' for the voices of members with experience of homelessness, seemingly in an attempt to address unequal power relations. However, without intervention, disruptions, or attempts to dominate the meeting by members with experience of homelessness occurred and contributed to frustration in the group. Disrespectful interactions also tend to increase at these times.

Indeed, people with experience of homelessness can and do oppress their peers. A member with experience of homelessness who is allowed to speak at length on a topic unrelated to the group or which defames another member is oppressing their colleagues. These events have led to anger and hurt feelings that such interactions continued uninterrupted. In delaying speaking up when meetings go off track, allies may unwittingly produce and reproduce the power inequality they seek to alleviate and people with experience of homelessness may contribute to reproducing oppression of themselves and other people who are homeless. Freire (1995) suggests that one of the primary reasons for developing critical consciousness is those who remain unconscious dominate or subjugate others, often in ways they themselves were oppressed. 'Giving space' for members with experience of homelessness to speak or 'take charge' is significantly different from allowing verbal hostility to take place. A delay in addressing meeting issues may thus have led to further suppression of individuals who are already oppressed.

Several allies drafted a revised code of conduct addressing disruption and verbal aggression in meetings. The draft was reviewed by a member with experience of homelessness. After some discussion, the new code was accepted unanimously at a Committee meeting by allies and people with experiences of homelessness. The code explicitly stated that hostile and abusive interactions would not be tolerated and should any member have a concern with meeting

content or member behavior, they need only stand up, speaking is not necessary. Others in support of the standing member were asked to stand if willing to do so. Standing up acts as a signal to the Chair that an issue needs to be addressed. The Chair may address the participant(s) directly to resolve the issue or stop the meeting and allow a time-out for the parties to ‘cool off’ so the meeting might proceed. The new code had some success in reducing interruptions and more success in allowing space to identify and address process concerns.

Though interruptions and attempts to dominate the agenda have taken place at meetings, verbal aggression has not occurred since the new code was implemented. However, allies remain reluctant to address inappropriate behaviors of some people with experiences of homelessness in the group, particularly long term members. It may be that the allies’ reluctance to address such issues with members with experiences of homelessness, are rooted in a fear of exerting ‘power over’ these individuals. Over time, other members with experience of homelessness became increasingly willing to stand up when they had a concern. This meant that an individual may demonstrate they did not agree with what was happening in the meeting, with no need to articulate or justify the objection. It may have been that having observed individuals using the new ‘objection’ process, members felt more comfortable in showing disagreement with a meeting interaction.

Two allies commented it was not easy to “break in” and join the group. Lucy suggested “cliques” may exist that gave greater credence to some voices—both housed or with experience of homelessness—and more dismissive of other voices. She notes there is “definitely a hierarchy of expectation, a hierarchy of tolerance in the organization” that privileges specific individuals and seems personality dependent. That is, some individuals get more ‘air time’ than others, often long term members or those who try to dominate meetings.

Lucy believed that gendered role expectations unrelated to member housing status also exist in the group and influenced group participation. For example, loud, verbally aggressive or disruptive behavior seemed more tolerated by male rather than female members. She noted that one woman was rebuffed many times in the group, with the group implying that “there’s no space for you. I’m just going to sit and wait until you finish ranting because you’re not saying anything of value and when you’re done, you can leave.” Mona observed that most commentary seemed to follow traditional gendered lines. For example, a male remarked on the perceived attractiveness of a female and another suggested that a female may need male assistance if a member was verbally aggressive. Neither Lucy nor Mona singled out gender role stereotypes as having a large influence on the group, only noting that they exist. Both suggested that the need to address basic life needs seemed to outweigh gender issues though gendered comments likely play a role in reproducing oppression. Other patterns may also reflect unequal power relations and impact group work.

A core concern of this research lay beneath the surface of these ongoing difficulties in Committee meetings. People with experience of homelessness often told horrific stories of structural violence. There was often little allies could do about concerns shared through stories though they wished to do so. “Being and doing” are very different. Allies often wanted to ‘do’, “plan and act” as Colin said and many times people with experience of homelessness wanted to be heard. Doing both kinds of activities in the same meeting can be extremely challenging as Colin noted. Further, people with experience of homelessness often came with an expectation that the Committee might do something for them, and finding that was often not possible, never returned.

Inclusion or Tokenism: Involvement of People with Experience of Homelessness

The Committee has long recognized and struggled with the need for greater involvement of people with experience of homelessness. People who are homeless in the Capital Region face many challenges in meeting their daily life needs and often have little energy left for other uses (Norman et al., 2015b). A contributor in a recent study offered, “You spend all of your energy just trying to put food in your belly. By the end of the day the last thing you want to do is... stand up for 500 people and fight that fight too” (Norman et al., 2015b, p. 13). Allies seem to understand that participation may be difficult. Colin observed,

In any committee where you’re dealing with homelessness, with drug addiction, etc., the people who you’re most trying to help, the key stakeholders, those that are street-affected, maybe have the least capacity to participate in their own empowerment. They’re just trying to survive on a day-to-day basis. And so that’s been a real challenge of getting the people who can most benefit from the work of the Committee to take a high level of involvement because they’re just struggling in their day-to-day existence.

On a visit to Victoria, a worker from the Carnegie Center⁶¹ in Vancouver suggested the Committee try having meetings only for people with experience of homelessness as Carnegie had much success with such an effort. Indeed, meetings where there were at least two or three people living in poverty for every person not in poverty has been recommended as one strategy to support more equitable power relations among participants (Worton, 2009). Carnegie representatives realized this might be more challenging in Victoria as the Committee didn’t have the same access to material and organizational supports such as free meeting space, coffee,

⁶¹ Please see: <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/carnegie-community-centre.aspx>

snacks and administrative help as is available to those who come to Carnegie⁶² and critical for meaningful participation (Norman & Pauly, 2013) or as resources to support a social movement organization of people with experiences of homelessness (Allen, 2009).

“Street Meets”, a general invitation by the Committee seeking people with lived experiences of homelessness to provide input on their needs and wants took place on an irregular basis, two or three times a year between 2011 and late 2012. In late June 2012, Mona proposed meetings exclusively for people with lived experiences of homelessness in an attempt to foster more open discussion by people with lived experience about their needs. The Committee hoped that by greatly reducing the presence of allies in these meetings, more people with lived experience might attend and feel comfortable sharing their concerns. “Experiential Groups” took place in the winter of 2012 and early 2013.

People with experience of homelessness determined that the best time to meet would be Friday mid-morning. Meetings were held in a downtown meeting room and food was provided. Advertising leaflets were handed out the day before the meeting. The only ally present at these meetings was the minute taker. The first meeting was well attended with members calling for action on the need for housing, police presence in the drop-in centre, and jack-ups on Pandora Avenue in front of Our Place for ‘drug use’. Fewer people attended a second and third gathering. Only a handful of meetings took place after that with the last two having only one attendee other than the chairperson and minute taker.

Low attendance was attributed to people needing to address more pressing needs such as seeing an agency worker for assistance, forgetfulness and some discomfort with the agency as a

⁶² The Carnegie Center is well established as a central meeting place with many programs and supports for people who are homeless as well as a safe space with credibility among people living in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

venue for meetings due to police presence. The agency pressed the Committee to relinquish the time slot and meeting room for other uses such as programs the agency wished to implement. With low attendance and waning interest by the facilitator, experiential group meetings ceased. The Committee has made no further attempts to have meetings exclusively for people with experience of homelessness since mid 2013.

“You don’t speak for me”

A perception held by some in the street community and mentioned on several occasions at ‘street meets’ or Experiential meetings was that the Committee did not represent the needs and wants of people who were homeless. This perception remained despite the group’s efforts to engage people with experience of homelessness in group work. Tensions within the Committee around who may ‘represent’ the views of people who are homeless and what that representation should look like remained unresolved and surfaced in various ways.

For example, a heated exchange took place between Johnny and another member at one experiential group meeting. At that meeting, a member with experience of homelessness took exception to a comment Johnny made loudly noting that Johnny did not represent his views and never would. Johnny replied, “I am not trying to represent you, you are here, say what you want”. The member swore at Johnny, left the meeting and did not return. A range of participants with diverse experiences of living in poverty might usefully address concerns of representation if organizers remember that “While ‘poor’ participants cannot represent all ‘poor’ people and initiatives cannot include all voices of the ‘poor’, initiatives need to remember the diversity of voices of ‘poor’ people” (Worton, 2009, p. 133).

Two individuals with experience of homelessness, long term members, emerged as natural leaders within the group, though at different times. Johnny cautions that though it is an end that the group works for, when members with experience of homelessness take on a leading role, he or she may be seen less as an individual and more as a symbolic 'homeless' person, "a shining knight" as one ally noted. This phenomenon has a potential for negative outcomes:

Housed people tokenizing the one person... "Always ask X." But doing it in a way that was token because it's like, "Whatever you say, we'll do. That's not always the best thing... That's the reverse of over- controlling. It's like whatever you want we'll do.... It's that whole thing about putting people up on a pedestal, they screw up and then suddenly, fuck X.

"Tokenizing" one person with experience of homelessness may also have had the effect of allowing that individual to dominate meetings. This individual often spoke in ways that were rude and disrespectful to other members. Though this individual perceived herself as encouraging authentic participation by others, saying what they truly want and need, that was often not the outcome. Though she recognized that she could be challenging to deal with "...people tell me that 'you're triggering [X]' and I know that happens....it's all good" yet, the member seemed unaware of her behavior. Farmer (2004) might suggest that the lack of energy and patience this member experienced may be a result of structural violence, of poverty and homelessness. Indeed, this member experienced ongoing inadequate nutrition, multiple health issues, poor health care and stress around unstable housing. These outcomes hamper or perhaps preclude this member's ability to contemplate behavioral changes that might help move her interactions from hierarchical to more equal power relations. A lifetime of experiences of structural violence can profoundly affect emotional as well as physical life. Use of non-nutritious

foods, tobacco and alcohol as compensation for a lack of agency in changing living conditions were among the outcomes of structural violence in one English town (Roberts, 2009). Impaired help-seeking behaviors and depression as a result of compensating behaviors added to the poor quality of life of these study participants (Roberts, 2009).

Having a ‘token’ person with experience of homelessness at the group may also arise from another form of structural violence. Johnny continues,

So if you don’t go to the meetings and speak what you want, then nobody knows what you want, right? You’re just going to leave it all up to X. Everyone just keeps leaving it up to X to be the one who goes and speaks. And they sat back and they went, “Good point.” In other words, don’t bitch about it. She’s the one speaks for all of us? Who the fuck, what’s that? We’re all here saying, “You all have to come. This is our meeting, the [Committee], housed and unhoused. This isn’t about leaders. You and Y are leaders in your community. Why aren’t you coming to the meetings?”

A focus on individuals rather than societal structures as responsible for structural violence is often normalized and naturalized (Taylor, 2013). Individuals may also be fearful of challenging structures such as agency policy and practice, becoming fearful and unwilling to take chances to speak out when food and shelter are at stake (Williams, 2005). In a climate of medicalization of homelessness and responsabilization of people with experience of homelessness for their unhoused state, ‘pushing back’ against structurally violent shelter practices was discouraged and found to be all but impossible in a state funded system in a small US city (Lyon-Callo, 2008).

The presence of two dynamic and articulate individuals with experiences of homelessness as leaders and, often, the public face of the Committee was useful for the group, lending credibility to the Committee's efforts through a person with lived experience of homelessness speaking on the Committee's behalf. In both cases, however, over time the individual became the 'go to' person with experience of homelessness, within the Committee as well as the public realm, drawing the ire of Committee members with experiences of homelessness. Similarly, tensions around who may be deemed to 'represent' people who experienced homelessness arose in "Let's Talk," a group primarily of people with experiences of homelessness and a small advocacy group in a drop-in center described by Wagner (1993).

"Let's Talk" sought to be a protest group though it also had a social service component. The group attracted a mix of actively homeless members, families and housed people "with suits and ties" (Wagner, 1993, p. 139). Tensions arose in "Let's Talk" when balancing a need for planning actions versus addressing immediate needs of homeless members. Leaders of "Let's Talk" were often criticized and challenged by other group members with experiences of homelessness as not representing them when these members disagreed with the leaders' decisions.

In a second example, Wagner presents the case of a man with experiences of homelessness, "Gaby". Gaby became the unofficial leader of a small drop-in group. Gaby's efforts were challenged by another homeless man. In the case of "Let's Talk", member challenges seemed to leave leaders undeterred, whereas "Gaby" stopped advocating for people who were homeless after he was criticized. Wagner (1993) speculated that these challenges to efforts at leadership may have arisen from mistrust in the motives of 'leaders' and fears they

were “too powerful” and might use such power against others who were homeless or that people, who were homeless preferred “spontaneous leaderless action” (p. 140).

People who experience homelessness often lack trust in service providers (Norman et al., 2015b). Developing trust with service providers in an environment where there was little trust was found to be crucial for people with experiences of homelessness in accessing health services (Pauly, 2014a). It may then be that a more general lack of trust in service providers felt by individuals in the street community may contribute to the fear of ‘leaders’ having too much influence that led to issues of representation encountered in this work.

Boiled Eggs and Bananas: Food as a Primal Need for Inclusion

Providing food at meetings was acknowledged as important and a way to support members with experiences of homelessness. Indeed, people who were homeless may attend a meeting solely to get something to eat. Whatever food is available is generally brought by allies and is dependent on how many allies attend, if they bring food, and whatever foods those individuals choose to offer. Amounts and types of food available at meetings vary considerably. Often sweets and baked goods outnumber fruits such as bananas or oranges and proteins such as boiled eggs and nuts. Many times there is no food at all. A lack of food means that people who are hungry and attend meetings seeking food are dependent on the largesse of housed allies to meet a basic need. Such dependence is a primal expression of unequal power relations that exist between people who are homeless and their housed counterparts (Norman & Pauly, 2013). Indeed, people who are homeless have come to the group seeking food and finding none, left the meeting seeking to meet their needs elsewhere.

The Committee values autonomy and does not seek operating funding from government sources (see Appendix Q). This means that the source of funds for the group is donations through “Pass the hat” at the end of each meeting. The Committee generally has less than one thousand dollars in the bank account. Funds are used sparingly, most often expended to support members with experience of homelessness in attending a conference or meeting. Donations are sought when larger amounts of food were needed, such as at the premiere of a Committee sponsored film. Funds were not used to provide food at meetings. I suggested several times that perhaps some Committee funds might be used for food. However, the suggestion was met with either no response or “we [allies] do that.” Further, when I observed that several meetings had passed with no food at all, an ally commented, “We’re not doing very well with that, are we.” Nothing changed, however, and food at meetings became increasingly sparse, especially when one ally who often brought nutritious food, began attending meetings less regularly.

A number of issues pertinent to understanding the ability of people with experiences of homelessness to ‘push back’ against homelessness arise in the foregoing discussion. People who are homeless must address their survival needs first (Norman et al., 2015b). If not addressed during the day, individuals sometimes sought to meet those needs at a Committee meeting. Hunger and participation are poor partners. People who are homeless often experience chronic food insecurity and have difficulty in accessing the basics of a nutritious diet (*Cost of Eating in British Columbia 2011, 2012*) and thereby experience chronic hunger and potentially, compromised health (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2015). If individuals did not obtain something nutritious to eat at a Committee meeting, they often sought to meet their needs elsewhere. Without providing at least adequate food and perhaps bus tickets, it may have been

less likely that people who experienced homelessness stayed for the whole meeting or if they stayed, contributed to the meeting.

An example may help illustrate the above point. One evening just prior to Halloween, I decided to take candy rather than bananas to a meeting. On that particular evening, a member who was homeless arrived late, having cycled some distance to the meeting place. He had not eaten all day. He expected food would be available at the meeting. There was no nutritious food available that evening. The member ate all but a few pieces of candy. He became agitated shortly after eating the candy; angry there was nothing healthy to eat and by his admission, experiencing a 'sugar rush'. His angry outburst about the lack of food led to an encounter with another member with experience of homelessness that, without intervention from an ally, may have resulted in both members being asked to leave the meeting. The member calmed down a few minutes later and remained for the balance of the meeting. The member's behavior was the focus of discussion, a lack of food though mentioned was not directly addressed by the group.

Farmer (2004) might suggest that the agency of people who are homeless is constricted or 'strictured' as they must spend their energy meeting survival needs. In the example above, hunger severely impacted a member's ability to take part in a Committee meeting. Indeed, he was almost ejected as a consequence of behavior rooted in hunger. If an individual cannot be at a meeting because he is hungry, he is excluded, unable to participate in organizing work of the group. In this way his political agency is constricted.

Participation in a collective action may be highly unlikely when individuals are hungry. Provision of adequate food at organizing meetings and events was found to be key in attracting participation of people who were homeless (Demirel, 1999). Further, as people who experience

homelessness may be less likely to take part in collective efforts, their resistances often remain on the individual level, with less impact than may be possible should they come together in a collective action (Piven & Cloward, 1979).

People who experience homelessness remained dependent on allies to address their material needs at Committee meetings. This reproduces unequal power relations in society that exclude people who experience homelessness from life necessities (Norman & Pauly, 2013). Further, as the Committee receives no government or other funding to provide material supports and seemed reluctant to use funds raised at meetings, it is likely that a most primal form of unequal power relations may continue. Inclusion must be initiated by those who are already included (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001), thus allies must take responsibility for addressing the basic requirements of participation for people with experience of homelessness attending Committee meetings. Without adequate material supports such as food, participation in Committee work may be unlikely for most people who were homeless (Norman et al., 2015b; vanDraanen et al., 2013).

Differing Needs, Differing Agendas

People who were homeless and new to the Committee often sought help with an immediate concern. Examples include having belongings thrown out at a shelter, an eviction, or an individual was 'jacked up'. Generally the Committee provides information and refers individuals to the appropriate agency. On occasion, the Committee has given token financial support to an individual. If the need is dire or the individual has nowhere to stay that night, an ally may provide a meal and drive the person to a shelter. However, the onus rests on the ally to make such a decision, carry it through and absorb any related costs. Individuals have left a

meeting in anger because they received no assistance or have not returned to the group when told no assistance was available. Kate offers,

People will come more with a deep concern and then they get really mad when you're not going to do anything about it...like find them a place to live.....we gave out bus tickets and the food and some money. But we couldn't really... we realized ..we could not do anything about it [their concern].

While allies wished to deal with more structural issues, people who were actively homeless and attended a meeting most often wished to address their particular circumstances and the crises that situation presented for them in their *life that day*. These are fundamentally different positions. People who experience homelessness live structural violence. Allies respond to structural violence. These are vastly differing needs and thus allies and many people with experience of homelessness have differing agendas. (Kraemer) argues that

In order to work in solidarity with members of the core grievance group in any given movement, those who would be allies today need to understand not only their own privilege, but also the interrelationship between privilege and oppression and its impact on intramovement dynamics.

(2007, p.21)

Understanding movement dynamics, in this case, the dynamics within the Committee is incumbent upon allies, not people with experience of homelessness. Inclusion begins with the included (Kennedy & Fitzpatrick, 2001). Conscientization that has begun in long term relationships in the Committee may be leveraged to further illuminate how structural violence is lived by members with experiences of homelessness and reproduced by allies, and what the Committee may do to address the effects of structural violence.

The Committee faces many challenges when it works to meaningfully include people with experience of homelessness in conversations on homelessness. Structurally violent processes shape the local context in the Capital Region such that people who experience homelessness are severely limited, constricted in the ways in which they can push back through collective actions. The Committee has undertaken a range of collective actions from writing letters to social agencies seeking policy and practice change to the Homeless Persons Memorial Vigil on December 21st. Geoff observes,

We've lobbied some of the social agencies like Our Place and Cool-Aid. We've lobbied them on various issues. And then we've always had a response which says, well we've resolved this problem. People are paying attention if they hear about these things now. So I think the Board of Our Place, for instance, is more sensitive to some of the needs basically because of the advocacy of this group. And the letter we sent to Rock Bay shelter about people sleeping on the mats...you know, the sleeping conditions there. They're more sensitive to that.

A core reality is that because of the impacts of structural violence, few people who experience homelessness take part in the Committee. Larger actions such as participation in an anti-poverty rally and the Vigil are attended by only a handful of people with experience of homelessness. The actions and efforts will be designed, carried out and attended by allies and long term members with experience of homelessness unless some aspects of structural violence are addressed. Providing for material needs of people with homelessness so they may attend Committee meetings to give input and feedback as well as take part in organizing work is critical.

The Committee faces many challenges. There is however one place and space, in Committee work, where ‘the tables are turned’, structural violence and unequal power relations are mitigated and people with experience of homelessness can push back along with allies in a collective act of resistance.

Challenging Systemic Power: “Going from I to We”

Most members felt the afternoon meeting held once a month at Our Place was a key time where allies and members with experience of homelessness worked together to address issues of concern to people who were homeless. Allies and members with experience of homelessness have stated many times that ‘Our Place’ was the best meeting of the month.

The group worked to make these meetings topical by having a speaker of keen interest such as the Chief of Police, Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislative Assembly. The Committee believed that the opportunity to engage with individuals who can affect the daily lives of people who are homeless may attract more people with lived experience of homelessness to the group. It was also an opportunity to hold such guests accountable for their action or inaction on addressing issues of poverty and homelessness. When special guests attended, dynamics were significantly different from other group meetings.

Guest-focused meetings tend to be more formal, with the speaker the only item on the agenda and a list of questions for him or her planned in advance. Few disruptions occurred at these meetings, and if they did, the member, especially a person with experience of homelessness, was allowed space to be upset or angry with a speaker, but not abusive. Over the past several years, skilled allies have increasingly been asked to chair these meetings to keep the process on track and ensure everyone has a chance to speak. An ally took detailed minutes. Other

allies assisted in keeping a speakers list and helped individuals stay on topic. People with experience of homelessness asked questions they devised or selected one from a prepared list. Guest focused meetings tended to be very “real” as Geoff observed. Guests hear directly from people with experience of homelessness about their concerns. Questions asked of a guest from experiential, policy and programmatic perspectives were direct and adequate responses expected. Speakers may not easily deflect questions or give rote replies.

At one meeting with the local MP, two men and a woman became upset, raising their voices during a discussion on housing, asking the MP “what are you going to do about housing?” The MP replied his party was going to do A, B, and C if elected. One woman, still angry, replied, “No, I mean what are you going to do for me”, pointing at herself. The MP was clearly taken aback at her vehemence and direct demand to him. As an ally noted at the end of the meeting, “He [MP] can’t say he didn’t know what it was like for someone who was homeless”.

The Chief of police faced questions about the social profiling of people who were homeless, jack-ups in front of Our Place and the ongoing presence of police at Our Place. Questions around social profiling and police presence at Our Place were posed by allies as it seemed people with experience of homelessness wanted to be present at the meeting, but did not want to ask these questions themselves. The Chief was, however, observed intently by members with experience of homelessness.

The Executive Director of Our Place was a guest at afternoon meetings several times. He faced multiple questions by people with experiences of homelessness about agency practices regarding storage of belongings, continual police presence on the premises, and staff “turning a

blind eye,” as Myron angrily observed, to drug use in the bathrooms so pervasive that “a woman had to wait over an hour to use the place because she was too afraid to go in”.

What factors alone or in concert may contribute to the effectiveness of meetings at Our Place? Further, how might power relations play out at these meetings in ways that enhance the ability of people who are homeless to ‘push back’ against power? How is structural violence addressed at these meetings? On the one hand, the basic needs of people who are homeless and attend the meeting were addressed. Our Place is centrally located and many people who are homeless attend a free lunch held on weekdays. The room was warm and comfortable. There were adequate tables and chairs and washroom facilities nearby. Participants may feel more relaxed and able to take part in conversation with a full stomach and a comfortable place to sit. No ongoing commitment to the group is required. An individual may attend if she or he is interested in the topic. Further, every person is ensured an opportunity to speak if they so wish and may leave at any time. Thus, people who are homeless are less likely to have to make a choice that would compromise their survival chances that day should they wish to attend the meeting (Norman et al., 2015b).

The Committee controlled the room during the meeting. People with experience of homelessness and their allies are the overwhelming majority of participants at meetings attended by guests. Indeed, at these meetings people with experience of homelessness may equal or on occasion, outnumber allies. Allies supported people who were homeless in asking questions and ensuring guests provided adequate answers. Allies leveraged every skill and tactic available to them including language (e.g. phrasing, diction and vocabulary), group facilitation experience, knowledge of government processes, and power and status (e.g. a former mayor) to ensure the concerns of people who were homeless were heard (Kraemer, 2007). Extensive notes were taken

and the group followed up on statements or promises guests made. Johnny termed this controlling the space and process “creating turf”, where an individual who may greatly impact the daily lives of people who are homeless came into a social and physical jurisdiction where that individual’s power was met and equaled. From another viewpoint, those in power were asked to come to the table of those with lived experience of homelessness.

Indeed, the relative power positions of people who are homeless and the guest may have been reversed in such a meeting since the Committee and people with experience of homelessness were ‘in charge’. This was in stark contrast to what may be considered typical power relations between people who are homeless and a program manager, executive director, board member of a social agency or police officer. This meeting was a place where people who are homeless may attend on a one time basis and contribute significantly to a conversation that affects them. They may resist oppressive practices in a straightforward manner, and with less likelihood of negative consequences such as denial of services at Our Place or jack-up or arrest by a police officer that may occur in a typical one on one interaction with powerful individuals.

Summary

It takes courage to ‘push back’ and ‘bite the hand that feeds you’, challenging individuals and organizations impacting your life *today* and who can decide if you will receive something to eat or a place to sleep. Courage may fall victim to fatigue and the more pressing needs of hunger and rest. Thus, many people who are homeless may attend Committee meetings to address an immediate need such as obtaining something to eat or seeking assistance with an issue affecting their stay at a shelter. These needs are more crucial than taking part, for example, in a stand for social housing. It is reasonable then that when people who are homeless attend a Committee

meeting and find little or no food and that the group can only advocate on their behalf with a shelter and has no ability to change policy, individuals may not choose to expend what little energy they have in attending meetings. Thus the Committee may be of little or no use to many people who are homeless, as it most often does not address their immediate concerns, embodied outcomes of structural violence. Indeed, the mandate of the Committee is to address systemic issues such as lack of housing, most often through raising awareness and advocating with social agencies for policy change at the local level. Thus the needs of people who are homeless may vary significantly from people with experience of homelessness and allies who are long term Committee members. Given these circumstances, the Committee as a group of activists and site of resistance faces enormous challenges attracting many people who are actively homeless or who have experience of homelessness. The Committee does not adequately address the most pressing needs of people who experience homelessness.

Processes within the group may work to produce and reproduce unequal power relations at the root of structural violence, potentially further constraining the ability of people with experiences of homelessness who attend the group to 'push back'. For example, bringing and distributing food at meetings depends on the tastes and largesse of allies rather than having a budget for providing nutritious items. Stipends given to people with experience of homelessness from another agency for taking part in the Committee supported these individuals. However, without such funding for other people with experience of homelessness, a stratified form of participation in the Committee may have taken place that favored participation by some individuals over others.

Patterns of relating among members that are sometimes disrespectful can create fear, anger and confusion, deterring more reticent individuals from speaking up and, potentially,

attending further meetings. Such behaviors may also produce and reproduce structural violence that people who are homeless may experience at social agencies. Structural violence marginalizes and constricts the lives and agency of people who experience homelessness, excluding them from the necessities of life, including political participation in their communities. People experiencing homelessness must be supported in material and processural ways to collectively push back against the processes that bind them and restrict their agency.

Importantly, that the group exists at all and that people with experience of homelessness attend is, of itself, a statement of a desire by some individuals to resist social processes that marginalize and exclude them from the necessities of life. Further, that the group continues and some people with experience of homelessness have attended for several or even many years suggests that meaningful and supportive spaces exist for these members within the Committee. Indeed, relationships between long term members with experience of homelessness and allies that developed over time provided a range of supports and mutual benefits that may have worked to mitigate some of the impacts of structural violence.

There are other processes that may work to address and potentially mitigate unequal power relations within the Committee. Caring, community and trust among long term members along with dedication to the group's goal of forwarding the voices of people who are homeless in conversations on homelessness, may provide an underpinning that may favor the group continuing irrespective of its challenges. Community was cited by a member with experience of homelessness as a key factor that allowed him to continue participating in the group and may have contributed to his emergence as a group leader. This foundation may also support the effectiveness of the once a month afternoon meeting at Our Place.

A confluence of factors at Our Place meetings fosters meaningful participation and social inclusion of people with experience of homelessness in the Committee. Participants have likely had a meal, the room is central and comfortable any time in the year, and immediate survival needs addressed. Many people who are homeless were already on site at Our Place, a skilled ally chairs the meeting, the meeting process is well managed, and participants had questions to ask should they wish to do so. Guests are on 'the hot seat' on Committee 'turf'. Power relations were more horizontal in this meeting. Indeed, guests articulated awareness of a difference in power dynamics in this context. In this space, people who were homeless directly engaged and challenged individuals who often exercised enormous power in their daily lives. Individuals were supported in voicing concerns.

Without addressing structural violence as it is lived by people with experience of homelessness in ways that, at minimum, support basic needs for meaningful participation, the agency of people who experience homelessness may remain severely restricted. Allies are in a position to provide some of the basic conditions needed for participation and, as they are already included, the onus is on them (us) to do so. Without these supports, people who experience homelessness are left few options to collectively challenge oppressive policies, practices and behaviors.

Chapter 6

The Context, the Committee, and Collective Resistance

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the research in three main areas. These reflections include thoughts on structural violence, the ‘funnel’ concept, collective resistances by organizations led by people with experiences of homelessness, and social inclusion in other organizations of people with experiences of homelessness. Then I discuss limitations and conclusions of the work including implications for policy and practice to foster inclusion of people with experiences of homelessness in collective efforts that resist structural violence. Finally, I provide some personal reflections on the importance of reflexivity to this research.

“So Where the Hell Are We?”

Reflections on Structural Violence

Current understandings of homelessness highlight the complex interplay of structural influences, systems failures and individual factors (Gaetz et al., 2013). Loss of affordable housing programs, inadequate income to cover housing and living costs, along with personal challenges such as job loss or illness have contributed to the numbers of Canadians facing homelessness (Pauly et al., 2013). An understanding of the role that structural violence plays in the lives of homeless people may work to shift this understanding to a more nuanced account of the myriad ways in which structures at all levels of government, and in the social service sector in particular, impact the daily lives of people who experience homelessness. When viewed through a structural violence lens, many policy changes at the federal, provincial and municipal levels may be seen to constrain the agency of people who experience homelessness;

systematically excluding them from the necessities of life, and, impacting how those necessities are experienced (Farmer, 2004). The effect is much like a funnel.

Consider policy at the federal level as the rim of the funnel. As federal policies change, they tend to flow downward to the provinces impacting a range of related policies, some of which are felt at the local level. Municipal policy is compounded and exacerbated by policy at the provincial level which further constrains the choices of people in poverty and who experience homelessness have in their daily lives. Policies and practices of social agencies further constrict the choices of people who experience homelessness. Thus, imagine if you will a swirling brew of policy at all levels of government that together interact with societal attitudes, flowing down and concentrating at the local level. The end result at the local level, the mouth of the funnel, is that people who experience homelessness are severely limited in their ability to meet daily life needs. They must do what is necessary to survive. Homelessness is a “full time job” that leaves little time and energy for anything else, including pushing back or resisting policy and practices that bind them, and reduce agency (Norman et al., 2015b).

I provide a short example to illustrate the way in which federal policies have impacted homelessness as one way that the funneling effect might work. Some of the changes that have taken place since the mid-1990s include: 1) cessation of the national housing program (Hulchanski, 2006), cancellation of the Canada Assistance Plan, and changes to health and social transfer payments which allowed provinces to make changes to welfare that severely limited access to benefits (McBride & McNutt, 2007), 2) changes to Employment Insurance reduced and limited benefits (McBride & McNutt, 2007), 3) housing policy incentives that privilege owning over renting (Hulchanski, 2006), and 4) gentrification of urban core areas that have reduced and often eliminated large areas of low cost rental housing (Chan, 2014; Harvey, 2009). These policy

changes were driven by neo-liberal shifts that emphasized leaner and less government involvement in health and social programs.

With the loss of federal funding and the lack of provincial funding, there is a dearth of affordable housing in the Capital Region (Pauly et al., 2013). Further, these authors note that “From 1970 to 1995, approximately 6,200 social housing units were created in the Capital Regional District (CRD), an average of 248 new units per year. Since the mid-1990s, the development of new social housing units in the CRD has slowed considerably. Pauly et al. (2013) note “between 1995 and 2007, a total of 990 social housing units were created in the CRD, averaging 82.5 new units each year” (p.8). Subsidized, supported housing, and rent subsidy options for people who experience homelessness and have mental health and substance use concerns have long waiting lists (Norman et al., 2015b). There are often shortfalls between the cost of housing, if an individual is able to find housing, and the cost of food (Pauly et al., 2013). This leaves few options for people who experience homelessness to become housed. Many individuals seek protection in the area’s sheltering system. On February 5, 2014, 1,167 people were enumerated in a one night count of those staying in sheltering facilities (Albert et al., 2014b). People with experiences of homelessness access a range of services provided in Victoria’s downtown area to survive.

There are a number of social service agencies that address the daily needs of people who experience homelessness, providing food, clothing, and medical care⁶³. Many of these agencies have service restrictions. For example, food banks may be accessed only once per month. People who experience homelessness most often walk from place to place to access services, often encountering intensified police surveillance. City of Victoria by-laws often further constrain

⁶³ Much of this is described in earlier chapters and revisited here as an example of the way in which strictures are created through the funneling effect.

people who experience homelessness as they may not sit on medians or otherwise ‘loiter’ in spaces now designated for commercial use—a process which Amster (2008) refers to as mallification. This is notable in the 900 block of Pandora Avenue, where police surveillance and jack-ups are a daily occurrence. City by-laws prevent sitting on the median in front of the large social service agency on the block and a neighborhood agreement mandates that agency personnel must ensure that people who are homeless spend as little time as possible outside the perimeter of the agency property.

The end result of these policies and practices is that people with experience of homelessness are not only unable to obtain the necessities of life, they are further restricted in how they may meet their survival needs. Though people with experience of homelessness have pushed back individually, for example against shelter policies, they have often found their suggestions ignored or worse, ridiculed; their efforts had little impact (Lyon-Callo, 2008; Norman et al., 2015b).

One of the greatest challenges of structural violence is that most often it is invisible. As the effects of structural violence are lived by individuals in a specific context that shifts and flows with the individual, it is difficult to “lay blame” and thereby common to attribute suffering to individual shortcomings (Taylor, 2013). Medicalizing homelessness may thus seem ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ in a setting where access to housing for people who are homeless most often requires a medical diagnosis and interventions to ‘fix’ the ‘case’ with ‘problems’, rather than consideration of a person who is living the outcomes of differentially applied societal structures (Lyon-Callo, 2012). Medicalizing and individualizing homelessness diverts attention from the structurally violent processes contributing to conditions that produce homelessness.

Interestingly, social agencies may also experience a form of structural violence. Agencies that provide services to people living in poverty are often organized in ways that reproduce oppressive structures (Dixon, 2014). Social agencies must often design, deliver and report on services within a specific framework set out by funders, or risk not receiving funding. There is often little opportunity for input from staff or service users within those reporting formats. These governing frameworks which enforce compliance to predetermined program requirements are the strictures that limit agencies and their staff (Lyon-Callo, 2008). This is a form of oppression and I argue; structural violence. That violence is reproduced by agency staff, albeit unintentionally, and it is profoundly experienced by people who are homeless, who have little choice but to seek out these social agencies to meet life needs.

How might structural violence be understood within the Committee, the site of this research, and its member's attempts to push back collectively with people who are homeless against issues of homelessness? What is clear is that structural violence is experienced individually while the Committee responds to structural violence systemically. Allies attending the Committee have stable housing and adequate resources to address their daily needs allowing time and energy to devote to other pursuits. Many people who are actively homeless and attend the Committee are focused on addressing their survival needs of that day. This difference is a key to understanding challenges the Committee faces in its operations and illustrates the impacts and challenges of structural violence in the work of people enacting collective resistance. Chief among these challenges are the differing needs of people with experience of homelessness and allies at Committee meetings.

People with experience of homelessness attending meetings need to meet their material needs to meaningfully participate in meetings (Norman et al., 2015b; Sakamoto et al., 2008).

Thus nutritious food is crucial for attendees with experience of homelessness to relax, focus, and take part in meetings. If a person with experience of homelessness cannot stay and take part in a meeting because they are hungry, there is little opportunity for them to become involved in any of the resistances or actions the Committee plans and carries out.

Committee membership is limited, and this has positive and negative impacts on the group. A small number of core members, allies and two members with experiences of homelessness are primarily responsible for organizational successes and carry the group mission forward. The work rests on a handful of people. The Committee also provides a caring, supportive and stimulating environment for these long time members. Indeed, mutually supportive relationships developed between people with experience of homelessness and allies worked to mitigate some of the effects of structural violence for members with experience of homelessness. Social, emotional and financial resources provided by allies have allowed some members with experience of homelessness to participate in the Committee in ways not otherwise available to them, such as making a documentary film.

With a small member base and few participants with experience of homelessness, opportunities for collective resistance in the Committee are limited. There is one space, a monthly afternoon meeting at a large downtown social agency, where many aspects of structural violence are mitigated for people with experience of homelessness. Adequate food (often a hot meal provided at the agency), a warm, comfortable centrally located space, supportive allies, and skilled facilitation foster creation of what one participant termed as “turf”. Though held on the premises of a social agency, it was clear to guests that they entered the Committee’s space.

Inviting a powerful guest to Committee ‘turf’ allows greater numbers of people with experience of homelessness to attend a meeting and question a politician, social agency manager, and others with influence in their daily lives. Indeed, these agencies can deny services and limit the extent to which survival needs are met. Attending to key aspects of inclusion and practicing good meeting processes (vanDraanen et al., 2013) allows participants to voice concerns and have their opinions heard, key aspects of inclusion (Sakamoto et al., 2008).

Reflections on the Committee as a Social Movement Organization

In this section, I reflect on the committee as a social movement organization. I consider how works describing involvement of people with experience of homelessness in social movements may inform an understanding of collective resistances by people with experiences of homelessness within a structural violence framework.

The Committee identifies as an “activist group” that seeks to include voices of people with experience of homelessness in pushing back against issues of homelessness. Indeed, the Committee seeks, through a range of collective acts, to address structurally violent systemic processes that marginalize people with experience of homelessness and exclude them from the necessities of life. The Committee has organized stands for housing, and taken part in rallies aimed at issues of poverty. These events take place more infrequently now than in earlier years. A limited and aging membership, acknowledgement of the group’s inability to consistently attract people with experience of homelessness, coupled with direct challenges of violent structures within social agencies that take considerably less time and effort to organize, may have contributed to this shift in Committee focus.

Committee work now focuses more on pushing back against policing and social agency policy and practices. The Committee seeks change from those who have power to alter violent structures, such as a policy that fosters differential access to meals at Our Place and another that allocates individuals to chairs rather than sleeping mats or a bed at a large shelter. I would also argue along with Williams (2005) that in the manner in which the Committee has organized, taken part in formal protests, brought concerns to local and provincial politicians, and influenced policy change at two large social agencies, it is best defined as a grass roots social movement organization.

Yet, as a grassroots social movement, the Committee has faced many difficulties that may lead some to question its grassroots status. Among these are limited participation by people with experience of homelessness, restricted membership and limited resources. These issues are not uncommon among organizations that seek to mobilize or involve people who are homeless in addressing issues of homelessness (Allen, 2009 ; 2009; Corrigan-Brown et al., 2009; Cress & Snow, 2000; Williams, 2005).

A primary concern for the Committee is limited participation by people with experience of homelessness. The people with experience of homelessness the Committee seeks to engage are the most vulnerable, living in the sheltering system or sleeping rough and least able to participate in protest (Corrigan-Brown et al., 2009; Cress & Snow, 1996; Wagner & Cohen, 1991b). Indeed, individuals in the sheltering system may eschew overt resistance as they fear loss of access to services crucial to survival (Williams, 2005). Individual resistance such as using a pseudonym, arriving late for a meal, refusing to comply with shelter rules, and challenging staff direction, are among many options for people who are homeless, depending on the situation and the individual involved (Scott, 1987).

A key issue related to participation may not so much be a disinterest but rather an inability to participate in collective resistances due to the need to survive. Indeed, the primacy of addressing survival needs contributed to Cress and Snow (1996) concluding that people experiencing homelessness may have little commitment to an activist organization. Yet, it may not be a matter of commitment to an organization (Cress & Snow, 1996, 2000) that is at issue, but that the need to make choices to survive outweighs an individual's desire to participate in an organization to push back against the conditions that limit participation (Corrigall-Brown et al., 2009). This would account, in part, for the differing needs and agendas of allies and people with experience of homelessness, other than long-time members, who attend the Committee.

Organizations of people who are homeless and/or poor have used various means to address resource concerns by providing adequate supports for participation. The Black Panther Party (BPP) offered programs during the 1960s and 1970s that met survival needs of potential members and “challenged social relations of scarcity” (Dixon, 2014, p. 30). Such programs offered food, clothing, and health services in black communities that followed ‘mutual aid’ traditions in African American communities. These efforts challenged systemic issues while serving the life needs of communities.

SAND, a shelter-user organization in Denmark, addressed material needs by lobbying for and receiving ongoing funding from the Danish national government that allows the organization to access office space, purchase food for meetings and obtain minimal staffing (Anker, 2008). The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) has for some years received funding from a local trade union to rent space, pay utilities, hire a staff person and provide coffee and snacks for members (Greene, 2005). OCAP focuses first on addressing material needs of members by

providing assistance to obtain welfare or disability services and housing and later recruited people to actions as they developed some connection to the organization (Greene, 2005).

Access to resources has been a significant issue for the Committee. The group seeks no operational funding. Funds for activities are dependent on small donations at meetings, fundraising from family or friends for specific events, or partnership with other groups also with very limited resources. The Committee paid a nominal amount for a poor meeting space for many years. The group now meets, other than the afternoon meeting, in a space that although pleasant and free (a meeting room in a funeral chapel) seems not acceptable by some people who experience homelessness. Several people who were homeless commented on feeling uncomfortable in the space and would not return. A key issue is provision of food at meetings. Participation by many people with experience of homelessness in Committee meetings may be hampered by a lack of food. To date, the Committee has chosen to rely on ally members to voluntarily supply food for the meetings rather than purchasing food. Purchasing food would require more financial donations or a source of funding.

At larger events, benefactor organizations have played key roles in providing resources for the Committee. These organizations provided material supports such as food, small amounts of money and use of their distribution networks as well as their knowledge of subject areas, such as Together Against Poverty Society's (TAPS) knowledge of the Residential Tenancy Act. A local women's activist group provided human resources (security) at information gatherings on Pandora Green and a community research group has provided small amounts of funding or food. Though these organizations are small, their support has been often been critical, making the difference between whether an event took place or not. Such informational, human, material and moral supports are among those accessed by previous social movement organizations of people

with experiences of homelessness that contributed significantly to such organizations' successes (Cress & Snow, 1996).

Allen (2009) suggests that people with experiences of homelessness who participate in activist efforts may be one or two steps removed from active homelessness, housed, perhaps precariously so, and by virtue of their housed status may have more ability to take part in resistive efforts. The 'downside' according to this author is that these individuals, by virtue of their distance from active homelessness, may not represent the needs of people who are currently homeless. Long term Committee members with experience of homelessness generally had not been actively homeless for some time, though several were precariously housed. Members seemed to stay in touch with the possibility of being unhoused and easily connected to their experiences when homeless. Indeed, without the pressure of a constant search for housing, coupled with material supports from allies, they had more ability to attend meetings regularly (Snow et al., 2005).

Mutually supportive long term relationships between allies and members with experience of homelessness emerged in the Committee. These relationships allowed people with experience of homelessness to take part in the Committee in ways perhaps not otherwise available to them. Access to social networks of allies (Wagner & Cohen, 1991a) and financial resources (Kraemer, 2007) have significantly contributed to ongoing Committee participation by these long term members. Indeed, long time Committee members with experience of homelessness identified their efforts with the Committee as meaningful work and reported expanded or shifted understanding of homelessness. Through their participation in the Committee, they reported that they had come to see the cause of homelessness to be primarily structural rather than individual.

Such instances of conscientization seemed more happenstance rather than a direct goal of the Committee.

It may also be that a sense of efficacy, of achieving group goals, may also have supported further ongoing attendance by these members (Corrigan-Brown et al., 2009). Further, these members identified strong relationships with allies as allowing them to do their work, providing a source of emotional support and friendship. Indeed, it may be unlikely the Committee would exist without allies and their resources; certainly there would likely be no ongoing participation by people with experience of homelessness in the group without the presence of allies.

Issues of representation, of who speaks for people who experience homelessness, arose in the Committee. Similar issues arose in “Let’s Talk”, a group in a northwestern United States city which was similar to the Committee and led to dissolution of the group only two years after it began (Wagner, 1993). In Seattle, of three organizations that coalesced around pushing back against homelessness issues during the 1990s, only one remains. Difficulties arose when an individual, often an ally, claimed to represent people who were homeless and carried an agenda forward when there was little interest from or participation by people with experience of homelessness (Demirel, 1999). Participation of a range of individuals who have been homeless is important for the Committee for two reasons. First, many voices will assist the Committee in understanding the diversity of experiences, needs and wants of people who are homeless. Second, a greater number and range of members with experience of homelessness will promote credibility of the Committee as understanding the needs of people who are homeless. Fostering meaningful participation of greater numbers of people with experience of homelessness in the Committee either directly, or through other types of engagement, then is a first step in exploring how the group may address the needs of a range of people who are homeless.

A better understanding of the possibility for and degree of participation by people with experience of homelessness in collective resistances may be facilitated by the approach taken here which attempts to bring together the concepts of structural violence, social movement theory and social exclusion as a dimension of health. People with experience of homelessness are understood to be socially excluded as they cannot access adequate housing, income and supports to address their daily life needs (Norman & Pauly, 2013). Farmer (2004) uses the concept of structural violence to point out how ability to meet life needs and agency are restricted. Structural violence severely narrows the choices of people who are homeless to a focus on survival (Norman & Pauly, 2013). A focus on survival within a ‘strain’⁶⁴ perspective of social movement theory facilitates understanding that people who are actively homeless may have little time for participation in collective action, and if they do so may compromise their ability to meet daily life needs (Corrigall-Brown et al, 2009).

Reflections on Inclusion and Organizations of People with Experience of Homelessness

The Committee is an example of an organization of housed allies and people with experience of homelessness that collectively challenges structurally violent processes that contribute to homelessness in the Capital Region. The organization has experienced significant challenges in attracting people with experience of homelessness to meetings, with the exception of one meeting a month. The group seeks to engage primarily people who are actively homeless and may have the most difficulty taking part in efforts at pushing back against structural violence. Individual agency may be limited to making choices among a limited number of survival options, rather than participate in political actions.

⁶⁴ Strain here is a measure of deprivation sometimes used in predicting engagement of people living in poverty or in this work, those who are homeless likelihood of participating in protest. A scale consisting of questions about food, having a place to sleep, clothing, protection from the elements among others is used to measure the amount pressure an individual experiences in acquiring these life needs.

Social inclusion, here understood as meaningful participation in decisions that affect you, is about shifting unequal power relations (Norman & Pauly, 2013). To encourage participation in a range of collective efforts pushing back against homelessness requires addressing at least minimal material needs for inclusion. If no material supports are provided, equalizing power relations cannot begin as the voices of people experiencing homelessness will not be heard at organizing tables. They simply cannot afford to be there.

Material needs might minimally include adequate food, bus tickets, a comfortable place to meet, washroom facilities and scheduling meetings at times when individuals do not risk missing a meal or a bed for the night (Norman & Pauly, 2013). Providing stipends to acknowledge the value of the perspective and expertise that people with experience of homelessness offer to an organization is a next step (Sakamoto et al, 2008). Further, people with experience of homelessness may have little experience in meetings with certain formats and expectations, and thus had few opportunities to learn specific meeting skills and communication practices. Developing meeting skills including respectful communication, taking minutes, and developing agendas, as part of activist training, worked well for SAND in Denmark (Anker, 2008, 2009). Such practices may assist in reducing the number of conflicts that occur at meetings. This work may also require facilitation by someone experienced in inclusionary practices (vanDraanen et al., 2013). Although there is an increasing body of literature on the need for inclusion, there is little guidance on how to shift from adopting principles of inclusion to implementing practices that foster inclusion of people who experience homelessness.

Some guidance on meaningful participation of people who are homeless in groups that work to forward their aims may be taken from other groups of people who have pushed back and become activists in advocating for their needs, such as the HIV/AIDS consumer movement

(UNAIDS, 1999). The “Nothing About Us Without Us” slogan arising from HIV/AIDS organizations, has strong support among drug user movements (c.f.L'ADDICQ, 2012).

Without the experience of homelessness themselves, housed allies offer at best only a partial view of the issues and lack authority to speak about lived outcomes of homelessness (Norman & Pauly, 2013). Allies can however, use “ their knowledge of the dynamics of privilege and oppression to help undermine the systems of dominance from which they spring” (Kraemer, 2007, p.23). This happened in two significant ways in the Committee. Financial support, trust and friendship mitigated some of the lived effects of poverty, structural violence (Ho, 2007), while providing a ground where relationships flourished and conscientization bloomed. Allies learned more about homelessness as it was lived, and members with lived experience learned that homelessness was not about them as individuals, but is outside them, rooted in societal structures that create and maintain poverty and homelessness. Second, the monthly afternoon meeting demonstrated that power can be shared in real and productive ways. Committee “turf” was a physical and psychological space, owned by the group for a two hour space each month. Guests, including the Executive Director of the agency in which the meeting was held, knew that during that meeting time, he was a visitor in another group’s space.

Conclusion

This study has illuminated some of the ways in which the social and political agency of people who are homeless in the Capital Region is constrained by structurally violent processes that oblige them to focus on daily survival and overwhelmingly limit their ability to ‘push back’ against policy and practices that contribute to their ongoing marginalization, social exclusion and homelessness. The study has also surfaced some challenges faced by organizations that include

both people who experience of homelessness and their allies. These findings may be understood in differing ways.

People who are homeless share their experiences with us, a critical and important contribution to understandings and solutions to homelessness and, tell us much more. The voices of people who are homeless tell stories of structural violence, even as the story tellers do not understand them as such. These stories assist in explaining why people who are homeless may not participate in social movements. They also provide evidence to show that current policies and practices, such as those that mandate low income assistance rates, force individuals to use a number of social agencies to meet their life needs. Those agencies have limits that further constrain the life choices of individuals who must use them. Such policies harm rather than support people who are homeless.

Allies also played an important role in the Committee. The Committee is hampered by policy and practices that contribute to the production and reproduction of structurally violent processes rather than mitigating unequal power relations. Shifting power relations is critical to addressing structural violence. Support for processes that actively facilitate conscientization can assist the Committee in leveraging its strengths. Group commitment to ongoing anti-oppressive training is one way to facilitate a shift to more equal power relations. Leveraging the dynamics of the once a month afternoon meeting that demonstrate more equal power relations among group members and applying them to all meetings may be a place to begin more regular shifts of power in the group.

Though the Committee faces significant challenges addressing these issues, there is also a practical way forward. The group has a positive base on which to foster greater inclusion of

people with experiences of homelessness should it wish to do so. Longtime members, allies and members with experiences of homelessness have much positive regard for each other. There is an example in the afternoon meeting of how power shifts can work well for the group.

The “News from the Street” portion of the meeting may be reframed as an opportunity for allies and long term members with experience of homelessness to ‘bear witness’ as a form of support for members with lived experience of homelessness. In the recent Truth and Reconciliation process with First Nations peoples, ‘bearing witness’ was a key form of support for and public airing of the assaults on the minds and bodies of Aboriginal people in Canada. Allies and long term members with experience of homelessness may need support to learn to bear witness in an appropriate way. The stories of structural violence shared by members with experiences of homelessness might be recorded and broad themes discussed with, for example, the mayor or other power holders. In this way individual experiences may have collective impact by informing a governing body of lived outcomes of policy initiatives that harm rather than help people who are homeless.

Further, alliances with other groups, such as an emerging national group of people with experiences of homelessness, the Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) may prove helpful to the group. The path followed by service user movements may also inform inclusionary goals that shift power relations on an ongoing basis. Established service user groups may assist the Committee in developing funding sources to provide material and other supports necessary to foster power shifts and enhance inclusionary practices. The role of allies remains critical in this process. Money, skills and social connections, assets of privilege, may be used to surface and mitigate inequalities in the group. Assets of privilege may be used to leverage opportunities to shift power

relations in simple ways. For example, an ally may know a business that may wish to support the Committee on a regular basis through provision of food for meetings or an ally may wish to spearhead an initiative that seeks funding ‘without strings’; contracts or reporting requirements the group feels may impede its ability to speak out on issues of homelessness. New ways of working together that enhance the lives of all participants may emerge and learnings resulting from these initiatives may contribute to solutions to homelessness in ways not yet identified. For example, a facilitated discussion(s) around expectations among people with experience of homelessness and allies about group efforts (a version of strategic planning) might provide a forum in which possibilities of different solutions to homelessness emerge. Such a space for affirmation, reflection and inquiry can be made safe and dynamic, providing the greatest opportunity for new ideas.

Future inquiry may, for example, trace how the group or similar organizations navigate transformation from ‘doing for’ to ‘doing with’ people with experiences of homelessness to further illuminate ways in which currently invisible power relations work to ‘keep things the way they are’, producing and reproducing structural violence. Further, Freire (1995) suggests that working with individuals who are oppressed, rather than doing for them, is a significant first step of conscientization, that will challenge the structures of inequality. The process of conscientization may surface new ways of working together that may prove fruitful and provide insights that contribute to ending homelessness in ways not yet known. Exploring the involvement of people with experiences of homelessness in policy development in life spheres affecting them, from interactions with social agencies, to policing, to the work of ending homelessness, may surface practices and further inclusionary options at a range of policy levels that address the needs and wants of people who experience homelessness.

Reflections on Reflexivity in Ethnographic Practice

There has been a call for greater interrogation of reflexivity in research relationships (Dowling, 2006; Etherington, 2007; Pillow, 2003). Reflexivity may be thought of as “a focus on how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis (Pillow, 2003, p. 176), My intent is to offer a glimpse of my own reflective and reflexive process and situate that in a call for a more nuanced appreciation for the challenges of reflexivity in ethnographic practice.

When I began this research project I wanted an experience of what I termed ‘real ethnography’; ‘all in’, fully embedded with the group I worked with. I wanted to make a difference, so I chose a politically engaged activist ethnography (Lyon-Callo & Brinn-Hyatt, 2003). Like many other things in life, I had no real idea of what being ‘all in’ actually meant. I read books on ethnography, examples of ethnographies, critiques of ethnography, how to take and analyze field notes and more. I also read about the importance of reflexivity in ethnography and how my ‘positioning’, my understanding of myself in relation to the power issues I was considering could and indeed would be reflected in the work I produced at the end of the research project. As described in Chapter 3 I have long been extremely reflective and continual reflectivity was the ground on which I came to understand the importance of reflexivity in ethnographic practice. I begin with a partial statement of my understanding of myself in relation to the work of this research project.

Entering into the fieldwork I understood myself to have power and privilege that people who experienced homelessness do not have. I am a white female. I had a home, adequate income, good nutrition and excellent health and an extensive education. These all indicate great

privilege. I took much for granted. I could easily get something to eat, go home, take a shower in privacy, watch television and go to bed whenever I wanted and not worry that someone would steal my clothes or assault me in the night. I had a door I could open, go in and lock behind me. This was not so for people with experience of homelessness I met during the research project. It was not that I didn't know these things from my previous work with people who experience homelessness, but there is a difference between knowing intellectually and embodied knowing about the experience of not getting enough to eat in a day.

Part way through graduate school, around the time I began the fieldwork, my personal financial status declined. I was having difficulty with finding enough work and supports to pay my bills and attend school. Over time financial concerns took increasing amounts of energy. I started to have a better idea of what it meant to make difficult choices. Should I get care for my sick cat or should I do repairs to my car? These are not the decisions of will I or won't I eat enough today, but they were not decisions I previously had to make. I still carried my enormous privileges of health, home, education and social connections. In my worst financial condition I was significantly better off than the people with experience of homelessness I knew who were housed, worked part-time and had a circle of friends. I began to understand privilege a little better.

Some participants with experience of homelessness freely acknowledged they used my privilege to benefit them when they could. At first I was angry, but then I thought, what would I do in that position? I think you do what you must to survive. There was a part of me that wanted to say hey, don't do that, I don't like it. There was another part of me that said, oh so what. That was a dilemma I faced on many occasions. After about six months I decided I would do what

seemed right in the moment, whether it was yes and doing something or no, I can't do that. I 'went with the flow' as the saying goes.

I took part in every meeting and event I could during the fieldwork. I talked to participants formally and informally, I faithfully filled out consent forms and did ongoing consents. I took notes and drew pictures. I understood these were the right thing to do. Participants assumed I knew what I was doing. I told them I was learning as I went. What became abundantly clear in the analysis and writing process was that I was the instrument of the research. Who I am and what I thought was important, through my theoretical lens, was what I wrote about. Though I had methodological signposts to follow, I was indeed, learning as I went. What is contained herein is a "reality jointly constructed at points in time by the ethnographer in conjunction with the people being studied" (Whitehead, 2004, p. 21). At best, it is only a partial understanding of the group.

I believe reflectivity and reflexivity are inextricably entwined. I could speak at length about my experiences of doing ethnography, how I felt about them (reflectivity) and how those experiences influenced what I said, did, and eventually what I wrote in this dissertation. My aim here is to give the reader a sense of how I worked during the research process that may assist in contextualizing what I have written. Without reflectivity, I would have no idea of how I influenced the research or how my positioning, for example, conditioned my thoughts and feelings, and thereby my choices as to what to include or not include in this work. I am not convinced there is a right or wrong, there is only what I did. I believe reflectivity provided greater clarity about rationales for my decisions. Further, I believe that reflectivity opened spaces for clearer decision-making in the research process.

I ascribe to the 'self-reflexive' view, to "recognize the otherness of self and the self of others" (Pillow, 2003, p. 181). Further, according to Pillow, this position highlights that I, the subjective, am part of the research process from beginning to end. There is no place in the research or writing process where my sense of self is not present. I have done my best to understand that process, through journaling, discussion of situations and feelings in my women's group and critical reflection with colleagues. I endeavored to make this work adequate to the aims I set out. Etherington (2007) calls for us to be more open and vulnerable as researchers, to "invite others to join with us in our learning about being a researcher as well as remaining human in our research relationships" (p. 599). Reflexivity in this way is not easy or comfortable work, it is however necessary. Without the effort of continual reflexivity I would have no faith in the work I produced. This reflection is truly a beginning place for deeper reflection and substrate for further reflexive encounters. I plan to write such an account in the near future.

References

- Abu-Lughod, L. (1990). The romance of resistance: Tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women. *American Ethnologist*, 17(1), 41-55.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1991). Writing Against Culture. In R. Fox (Ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (pp. 137-162). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Albert, M., Pauly, B., Cross, G., & Cooper, T. (2014a). *The Cycle of Impossibility: Pathways into and out of Family Homelessness*. Retrieved from Victoria, BC:
- Albert, M., Pauly, B., Cross, G., & Cooper, T. (2014b). *One Night Only report of those staying in temporary accommodation in greater Victoria : Facility Count*. Retrieved from Victoria, BC: http://victoriahomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FacilityCount2014_FINAL.pdf
- Allen, M. (2009). The political organisation of people who are homeless: Reflections of a sympathetic sceptic. *The European Journal of Homelessness*, 3(December), 289-299.
- Amoroux, C. (2006). *Conflict in Copenhagen: Urban reconfigurations, Disciplining the Unruly*. Paper presented at the The Right to the City and the Politics of Space, Breslauer Graduate Student Symposium.
- Amster, R. (2003). Patterns of Exclusion: Sanitizing Space, Criminalizing Homelessness. *Social Justice*, 30(1), 195-221.
- Amster, R. (2008). *Lost in Space: The criminalization, globalization and urban ecology of homelessness*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC.
- Amster, R., & Cook, D. (2010). Homelessness as non-violent resistance. *Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict*, 13-23.
- Anglin, M. (1998). Feminist perspectives on structural violence. *Identities*, 5(2), 145-151.
- Anker, J. (2008). Organizing homeless people: Exploring the emergence of a user organization in Denmark. *Critical Social Policy*, 28, 27-50. doi:10.1177/0261018307085506
- Anker, J. (2009). Speaking up for the homeless: Opportunities, strengths and dilemmas of a user organisation. *The European Journal of Homelessness*, 3(December), 275-288.
- Arthurson, K., & Jacobs, K. (2003). *Social Exclusion and Housing*. Retrieved from Australia:

- Aubry, T., Farrell, S., Hwang, S., & Calhoun, M. (2013). Identifying the patterns of emergency shelter stays of single individuals in Canadian cities of different sizes. *Housing Studies*, 2013, 3-12.
- Aubry, T., Klodawsky, F., Coulombe, D., & Mills, M. (2004, June 24-27, 2004). *Identifying different subgroups within the homeless population: Implications for housing policy and programs*. Paper presented at the Adequate Housing For All: Research, Policy and Practice, Centre fo Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.
- Bastida, E., Tseng, T.-S., McKeever, C., & Jack, L. (2010). Ethics and community-based participatory research: Perspectives from the field. *Health Promotion Practice*, 11(16), 16-20.
- Bell, J. (2015, August 5, 2015). Victoria City Councillors commit to input on tent city. *Times-Colonist*.
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611-639. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/223459>
- Bonet, S. (2013). Remembering the Beautification of Pandora Green. Retrieved from <http://www.vipirg.ca/?s=Bonet+2013>
- Brunner, E., & Marnot, M. (2006). Social organization, stress and health. In M. W. Marmot, R (Ed.), *Social Determinants of Health* (Second ed., pp. 17-43). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryant, T. (2009). Housing and Health: More than bricks and mortar. In D. Raphael (Ed.), *Social Determinants of Health* (Vol. Second, pp. 235-249). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press Inc.
- Burns, N., & Grove, S. (2009). *The Practice of Nursing Research: Appraisal, Synthesis and Generation of Evidence* (Vol. Sixth). St. Louis, MI: Saunders Elsevier.
- Calgary's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness 2008-2018, January 2011 Update*. (2011). Retrieved from Calgary, AB:
- Campbell, B. (2010). Neoliberalism cause of the worst recession since the 1930s...But will it be replaced (as it should) by neo-Keynesianism? *The CCPA Monitor*, 17, 10-13.
- The Canadian Definition of Homelessness*. (2012). Retrieved from Toronto, ON: www.homelesshub.ca/homelessdefinition/

- Canadian Definition of Homelessness,. (2012). Toronto, ON: Canadian Homelessness Research Network.
- Carroll, W. (1997). Social movements and counterhegemony: Canadian contexts and social theories. In W. Carroll (Ed.), *Organizing dissent: Contemporary social movements in theory and practice* (Vol. 2nd revised, pp. 3-38). Toronto: Garamond.
- Carroll, W. K., & Ratner, R. S. (1996). Master Framing and Cross-Movement Networking in Contemporary Social Movements. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 37(4), 601-625.
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/4121407>
- Chan, S. (2014). *Unveiling the 'Olympic Kidnapping Act': Examining Public Policy and Homelessness in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games*. (Master of Arts), University of Western Ontario - Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository. , London, ON. (Paper 2195)
- City of Portland. (2012). *Good Neighbor Agreements*. Portland, OR: City of Portland, OR
Retrieved from <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/article/413126>.
- City of Victoria. (2009). 900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement. Victoria,BC: City of Victoria.
- City of Victoria. (2012). Downtown Area Plan. Victoria, BC: City of Victoria.
- Clarke, B. (2010). Victoria looking to give busy boulevard's tent city the boot. *Globe & Mail (Toronto, Canada)*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/victoria-looking-to-give-busy-boulevards-tent-city-the-boot/article1378818/>
- Cleverly, B. (2013, November 30, 2013). Garden to root out loiterers gets nod from Victoria councillors. *Times-Colonist*. Retrieved from <http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/garden-to-root-out-loiterers-gets-nod-from-victoria-councillors-1.716285#sthash.6YIflxv2.dpuf>
- Cloward, R., & Piven, F. (1984). Disruption and Organization: A Rejoinder [to William A. Gamson and Emilie Schmeidler]. *Theory and Society*, 13(4), pp. 587-599. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/657236>
- Committee to End Homelessness Victoria. (2015). Committee to End Homelessness Victoria.
Retrieved from <https://ctehv.wordpress.com/>
- Condon, S., & McDermid, J. (2014). *Dying on the streets: Homeless deaths in British Columbia*. Retrieved from Vancouver, BC:

- Corrigall-Brown, C., Snow, D., Smith, K., & Quist, T. (2009). Explaining the puzzle of homeless mobilization: An examination of differential participation. *Sociological Perspectives*, 52(3), 309-335.
- Cost of Eating in British Columbia 2011*. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.dietitians.ca/Dietitians-Views/Food-Security/Individual-and-Household-Food-Insecurity/The-Cost-of-Eating-in-British-Columbia.aspx>
- Crehan, K. (2002). *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.
- Cress, D. M., & Snow, D. A. (1996). Mobilization at the Margins: Resources, Benefactors, and the Viability of Homeless Social Movement Organizations. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 1089-1109. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/2096310>
- Cress, D. M., & Snow, D. A. (2000). The Outcomes of Homeless Mobilization: The Influence of Organization, Disruption, Political Mediation, and Framing. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 105(4), 1063-1104. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/3003888>
- Cresswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cresswell, J. (2009). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Third ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cross, G. (2015). *Participatory Governance of the 900 Block Pandora and the Street Community*. (Master of Arts), University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- Croucher, K., Jones, A., & Wallace, A. (2007). *Good Neighbour Agreements and the Promotion of Positive Behaviour in Communities*. Retrieved from York, UK:
- Davis, D. (2003). Knowledge in service of a vision: Politically engaged anthropology. In V. Sanford & A. Angel-Ajani (Eds.), *Anthropology, Advocacy and Activism* (pp. 228-238). Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Demirel, S. (1999). "We're Not Activists": Grassroots Organizing among Seattle's Homeless Population. *Dissertation abstracts international*, 60(8), 3141.
- Desai, A. (2009). Sorting the poor: A study of the management of the homeless in mid-sized Canadian city shelters. *Masters abstracts international*, 47(04).

- DeVerteuil, G. (2006). The local state and homeless shelters: Beyond revanchism? *Cities*, 23(2), 109-120. doi:10.1016/j.cities.2005.08.004
- Dixon, C. (2014). *Another politics : talking across today's transformative movements*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Dowling, M. (2006). Approaches to reflexivity in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher*, 13(3), 7-21.
- Dunn, J., Hayes, M., Hulchanski, J. D., Hwang, S., & Potvin, L. (2006). Housing as a socio-economic determinant of health: Findings of a national needs, gaps and opportunities assessment. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 97(Supplement 3), S11-S15.
- Dyrness, A. (2008). Research for change versus research as change: Lessons from a Mujerista participatory research team. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 39(1), 23-44.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Etherington, K. (2007). Ethical Research in Reflexive Relationships. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, 599-616. doi:10.1177/1077800407301175
- The Fairfield Block: A Historic Building In Downtown Victoria, 1601-1609 Douglas Street, Victoria. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.collierscanada.com/13153#.VhrWMvIViko>
- Fantasia, R. (1995). From Class Consciousness to Culture, Action, and Social Organization. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21, 269-287. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/2083412>
- Farmer, P. (1996). On suffering and structural violence: A view from below. *Daedalus*, 1, 261-283.
- Farmer, P. (2004). An anthropology of structural violence. *Current Anthropology*, 45(3), 305-325.
- Farmer, P. (2005a). Bringing the past to the present: Family narratives of holocaust, exile and diaspora: The banality of agency: Bridging personal narrative and political economy. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78(1), 125-135.
- Farmer, P. (2005b). *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- Finley, S. (2003). The faces of dignity: rethinking the politics of homelessness and poverty in America. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 16(4), 509. doi:10.1080/0951839032000099525
- Foscarinis, M. (1996). Downward Spiral: Homelessness and Its Criminalization. *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 14(1), pp. 1-63. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/40239449>
- Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777-795. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/1343197>
- Frankish, C. J., Hwang, S. W., & Quantz, D. (2005). Homelessness and health in Canada: Research lessons and priorities. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96(March/April 2005, Supplement 2), S23-S29.
- Frankish, C. J. H., Steven; Quantz, Darryl. (2005). Homelessness and health in Canada: Research lessons and priorities. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96(March/April 2005), S23-29.
- Freire, P. (1995). *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Gaetz, S. (2004a). Safe Streets for Whom? Homeless Youth, Social Exclusion, and Criminal Victimization. *Canadian Journal of Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 46(4), 423-455.
- Gaetz, S. (2004b). Safe streets for whom? Homeless youth, social exclusion, and criminal victimization. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*(July), 423-455.
- Gaetz, S., Donaldson, J., Richter, T., & Gulliver, T. (2013). *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013*. Retrieved from Toronto, Canada: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/SOHC2013>
- Gaetz, S., Gulliver, T., & Richter, T. (2014). *The State of Homelessness in Canada*. Retrieved from Toronto:
- Gallant, G., Brown, J., & Tremblay, J. (2004). *From tent city to housing: An evaluation of the City of Toronto's Emergency Homelessness Pilot Project*. Retrieved from Toronto, ON:
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191.
- Gamson, W. A., & Schmeidler, E. (1984). Review: Organizing the Poor. *Theory and Society*, 13(4), pp. 567-585. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/657235>
- Gendlin, E. (1999). Implicit entry and focusing. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 27(1), 80-88. doi:10.1080/08873267.1999.9986899

- Gill, R. (2014). *Police Presence at Our Place*. class paper. Law. University of Victoria. Victoria, BC.
- Graham, H. (2004). Social determinants and their unequal distribution: Clarifying policy understandings. *The Millbank Quarterly*, 82(1), 101-124.
- Greene, J. (2005). "Whatever it takes": Poor people's organizing, OCAP, and social struggle. *Studies in Political Economy*, 75, 5-28.
- Gustafson, K. (2009). The criminalization of poverty. *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, 99(3), 643-716.
- Hallstrom, L. (2009). Public Policy and the Welfare State. In D. Raphael (Ed.), *Social Determinants of Health* (Vol. Second, pp. 336-349). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press Inc.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2009). *Social Justice and the City* (Vol. Revised). Athens, GA, USA: University of Georgia Press.
- Hayes, A., Gray, M., & Edwards, B. (2008). *Social Inclusion: Origins, concepts and key themes*. Retrieved from
- Herman, T. (2011). *out of sight: Policing poverty in Victoria Coast & Straits Salish Territories*. Retrieved from Victoria:
- Hines, K. (2014). Retrieved from <https://thawvictoria.wordpress.com/>
- Ho, K. (2007). Structural violence as a human rights violation. *Essex Human Rights Review*, 4(2), 1-17.
- Hodgetts, D., Radley, A. C. K., & Hodgetts, A. (2007). Health inequalities and homelessness: Considering material, spatial and relational dimensions. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 12, 709-725.
- Hodgetts, D., Stolte, O., Chamberlain, K., Radley, A., Nikora, L., Nabalarua, E., & Groot, S. (2008). A trip to the library: Homelessness and social inclusion. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9(8), 933-953. doi:10.1080/14649360802441432
- Holt, N., Christian, J., & Larkin, M. (2012). Maintaining Connectedness: Exploring the Experiences of Older Homeless Men Living in Hostel Accommodation. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 22(6), 485-501. doi:10.1002/casp.1130
- Hulchanski, J. D. (2000). A New Canadian Pastime? Counting Homeless People. Toronto.

- Hulchanski, J. D. (2002). *Housing policy for tomorrow's cities* (Vol. F27). Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Network.
- Hulchanski, J. D. (2006). What factors shape Canadian housing policy? The intergovernmental role in Canada's housing system. In R. Young & C. Leuprecht (Eds.), *Municipal-federal-provincial relations in Canada* (pp. 221-247). Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Hwang, S. (2002). Is homelessness hazardous to your health? Obstacles to the demonstration of a causal relationship. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 92(6; Nov/Dec 2002), 407-.
- Hwang, S. W., Chambers, C., Chiu, S., Katic, M., Kiss, A., Redelmeier, D. A., & Levinson, W. (2013). A comprehensive assessment of health care utilization among homeless adults under a system of universal health insurance. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103 Suppl 2, S294-301. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2013.301369; 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301369
- Isitt, B. (2008). *Housing for all: The social economy and homelessness in British Columbia's Capital Region*. Victoria, BC: Social Economy Research Hub.
- Kataoka, S. (2005). *Re-acting aesthetic politics: From City to Red Zone to Scenes of downtown Victoria*. (Master of Arts), University of Victoria.
- Kelkar, G. (1985). Women and structural violence in India. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 13(3/4), 16-18.
- Kemmis, S., & Wilkinson, M. (1998). Participatory action research and the study of practice. In B. K. Atweh, S; Weeks, P (Ed.), *Action research in practice: Partnerships for social justice in education* (pp. 21-36). New York: Routledge.
- Kennedy, C., & Fitzpatrick, S. (2001). Begging, rough sleeping and social exclusion: Implications for social policy. *Urban Studies (Routledge)*, 38(11), 2001-2016. doi:10.1080/00420980120080907
- Kingfisher, C. (2005). *How the housed view the homeless: A study of the 2002 controversy in Lethbridge*. Retrieved from Lethbridge, Alberta:
- Kingfisher, C., & Maskovsky, J. (2008). Introduction: The limits of neoliberalism. *Critique of Anthropology*, 28(2), 115-126.
- Kraemer, K. R. (2007). Solidarity in Action: Exploring the Work of Allies in Social Movements. *Peace & Change*, 32(1), 20-36.

- Kyle, T., & Dunn, J. R. (2008). Effects of housing circumstances on health, quality of life and healthcare use for people with severe mental illness: a review. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 16(1), 1-15. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=c8h&AN=2009753949&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- L'ADDICQ. (2012). Guideline for the inclusion of drug users. Montreal, PQ: L'ADDICQ, a project of the Québec Association for the Promotion of Drug Users' Health (AQPSUD).
- Laird, G. (2007a). Homelessness in a growth economy: Canada's 21st century paradox.
- Laird, G. (2007b). *Shelter: Homelessness in a Growth Economy: Canada's 21st Century Paradox* (9780973019735). Retrieved from Calgary, AB, Canada: <http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/www/lib/uvic/docDetail.action?docID=10185049>
- Laurenson, P., & Collins, D. (2006). Towards inclusion: Local government, public space and homelessness in New Zealand. *New Zealand Geographer*, 62, 185-195. doi:10.1111/j.1745-7939.2006.00069.x © 2006
- Leaver, C. A., Bargh, G., Dunn, J. R., & Hwang, S. W. (2007). The effects of housing status on health-related outcomes in people living with HIV: a systematic review of the literature. *AIDS And Behavior*, 11(6), 85-100. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mnh&AN=17682940&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Lemarchand, R. (1999). Review: Development Agencies and Structural Violence in Rwanda. *International Studies Review*, 1(3), pp. 160-164. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3186343>
- Lewis, S., & Henkels, D. (1996). Good Neighbor Agreements: A Tool For Environmental and Social Justice. *Social Justice*, 23(4), 134-151.
- Lyon-Callo, V. (2008). *Inequality, Poverty, and Neoliberal Governance: Activist Ethnography in the Homeless Sheltering Industry*: Higher Education University of Toronto Press.
- Lyon-Callo, V. (2012). Homelessness or the Violence of Poverty and Exploitation: Does It Matter? *Rethinking Marxism: A journal of Economics, Culture & Society*, 24(2), 215-220.

- Lyon-Callo, V., & Brinn-Hyatt, S. (2003). The liberal state and the depoliticization of poverty: activist anthropology and "Ethnography from below". *Urban Anthropology*, 32(2), 175-204.
- Lyons, P. (2008). Innovative solutions to homelessness. *StreetNewz Victoria*, 5, 5.
- Macdonald, J., Raphael, D., Labonte, R., Torgerson, R., & Hayward, K. (2009). Income and health in Canada: Canadian researchers' conceptualizations make policy change unlikely. *International Journal of Health Services*, 39(3), 525-543.
- Marmot, M. (2005). Social determinants of health inequalities. *Lancet*, 365, 1099-1104.
- Mascia-Lees, F., Sharpe, P., & Cohen, C. (1989). The Postmodernist Turn in Anthropology: Cautions from a Feminist Perspective. *Signs*, 15(1), 7-33.
- Mayor's Task Force on Ending the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness, Executive Summary*. (2007). Retrieved from Victoria, BC: http://www.victoria.ca/assets/City~Hall/Documents/tskfrc_brcycl_exctvs.pdf
- McBride, S., & McNutt, K. (2007). Devolution and neoliberalism in the Canadian welfare state. *Global Social Policy*, 7(2), 177-201.
- McDonald, L., Donahue, P., Janes, J., & Cleghorn, L. (2009). Understanding the Health, Housing, and Social Inclusion of Formerly Homeless Older Adults. In J. D. Hulchanski, P. Campsie, S. Chau, H. S., & P. E. (Eds.), *Finding Home: Policy Options for addressing homelessness in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Cities Center, University of Toronto.
- McGillivray, P. (2008). Shelter on Wheels : A community partnership leads to "shelter in a cart" for homeless 'binners'. *Research and Discovery at the University of Victoria*, 8, 1.
- McInnes, D., Li, A., & Hogan, T. (2013). Opportunities for Engaging Low-Income, Vulnerable Populations in Health Care: A Systematic Review of Homeless Persons' Access to and Use of Information Technologies. *American journal of public health (1971)*, 103(2), E11.
- McNeill, E. (2011). *The Nation Union of the Homeless: A brief history*. The Homeless Union History Project of the Poverty Scholars Program. Retrieved from povertyinitiative.org
- Middleton, M. (2014). Housing, Not Handcuffs: Homeless Misrecognition and "SafeGround Sacramento's" Homeless Activism. *Communication, culture & critique*, 7(3), 320; 320-337; 337. doi:10.1111/cccr.12055 pmid:
- Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). *Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts*. Retrieved from Toronto, ON: <http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/>

- Ministry of Social Development and Innovation. (2015). Earnings Exemptions. Retrieved from http://www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2006/Earnings_Exemption.htm
- Minutes, June 11, 2014. (2014). Victoria, BC: Committee to End Homelessness Victoria.
- Mirchandani, K., & Chan, W. (2007). *Criminalizing Race, Criminalizing Poverty: Welfare fraud enforcement in Canada*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Morgen, S., & Maskovsky, J. (2003). The anthropology of 'welfare reform': New perspectives on US urban poverty in the post-welfare era. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 32, 315-338.
- Morrow, M., Hankivsky, O., & Varcoe, C. (2004). Women and violence: The effects of dismantling the welfare state. *Critical Social Policy*, 24(3), 358-384.
- Moss, P., & Matwychuk, M. (2000). Beyond Speaking as an "As A" and Stating the "Etc.": Toward Engaging a Praxis of Difference. *Frontiers: A Journal of Womens Studies*, 21(3), 82-104.
- Munhall, P. (2007). *Nursing Research: A qualitative perspective* (Vol. Fourth). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
- National Coalition for the Homeless. (2015). Retrieved from <http://nationalhomeless.org/>
- Niwa, S., & Foscarinis, M. (2004). *Homelessness in the United States and the human right to housing*. Retrieved from United States:
- Norman, T., & Pauly, B. (2013). Including people who experience homelessness: A scoping review of the literature. *International journal of sociology and social policy*, 33(3/4), 136-151. doi:pmid:10.1108/01443331311308203
- Norman, T., & Pauly, B. (2015). *Centralized Access to Supported Housing (CASH), Victoria, BC: Evaluation of a Single Point of Access to Supported Housing*. Retrieved from Victoria, BC:
- Norman, T., Pauly, B., Marks, H., & Palazzo, D. (2015a). Taking a leap of faith: Meaningful participation of people with experiences of homelessness in solutions to address homelessness. *Journal of social Inclusion*, 6(2), 19-35.
- Norman, T., Pauly, B., Marks, H., & Palazzo, D. (2015b). *Taking a leap of faith: Meaningful participation of people with experiences of homelessness in solutions to address homelessness*. article. Center for Addictions Research of BC. University of Victoria. Victoria, BC.

- Novac, S., Darden, J., Hulchanski, D., & Seguin, A.-M. (2002). Research Bulletin #11: Housing Discrimination in Canada: What do we know about it? Toronto, ON: Center for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.
- O'Grady, B., Gaetz, S., & Bucciari, K. (2011). *Can I see your ID? The policing of youth homelessness in Toronto*. Retrieved from Toronto:
- Pablo, C. (2014). Vancouver's housing co-ops face crunch. *Georgia Straight*. Retrieved from <http://www.straight.com/news/667286/vancouver-housing-co-ops-face-crunch>
- Parker, S., & Fopp, R. (2004). "I'm the slice of the pie that's ostracized...": Foucault's technologies and personal agency, in the voice of women who are homeless, Adelaide, Australia. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 21, 145-154.
- Parsell, C., & Parsell, M. (2012). Homelessness as a Choice. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 1-15. doi:DOI:10.1080/14036096.2012.667834
- Pauly, B. (2008). Harm reduction through a social justice lens. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 19, 4-10. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2007.11.005
- Pauly, B. (2014a). Close to the street: Nursing practice with people marginalized by homelessness and substance use. . In - Y. Gurguis, M, S. Hwang, & R. McNeil (Eds.), *Homelessness and Health in Canada*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Pauly, B., Cross, G., Vallance, K., Winn-Williams, A., & Stiles, K. (2013). *Facing homelessness: Greater Victoria Report on Housing & Supports 2012/13*. Retrieved from Victoria, Canada:
- Pauly, B., Jackson, N., Thompson, D., & Kerr-Southin, M. (2011). *Homeless and Hungry in Victoria: Fitting the pieces together. Greater Victoria Report on Housing and Supports 2011*. Retrieved from Victoria, BC: <http://victoriahomelessness.ca/get-informed/coalition-reports/>
- Pauly, B. M. (2005). *Close to the street: The ethics of access to health care*. (Doctoral dissertation), University of Victoria.
- Pauly, B. M. (2014b). Close to the street: Nursing care for people marginalized by homelessness and substance use. In M. Guirguis-Younger, S. Hwang, & R. McNeil (Eds.), *Homelessness and Health in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press.
- Pell, S. (2008). Making citizenship public: identities, practices, and rights at Woodsquat. *Citizenship Studies*, 12(2), 143-156. doi:10.1080/13621020801900101

- Phillips, L. (1996). Discursive deficits: A feminist perspective on the power of technical knowledge in fiscal law and policy. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 11(1), 141-176.
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 16(2), 175; 175-196; 196. doi:10.1080/0951839032000060635 pmid:
- Piven, F., & Cloward, R. (1979). *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage Books.
- A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness*. (2009). Retrieved from Edmonton, AB: <http://homelesscommission.org/index.php/overview>
- Pomeroy, S., & Evans, L. (2008). Housing as a mechanism in poverty reduction strategies: A brief review of international experience and implications for Ontario. Toronto: Ontario Nonprofit Housing Association.
- Purcell, M. (2009). Resisting neoliberalization: Communicative planning or counter-hegemonic movements. *Planning Theory*, 8(2), 140-165.
- Rabinovitch, H., Pauly, B., & Zhao, J. (2013). *Patterns of homelessness in Victoria*. Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. Victoria, BC.
- Raphael, D. (2007). *Poverty and policy in Canada: Implications for health and quality of life*. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.
- Raphael, D. (2009). Social Determinants of health: Overview and key themes. In D. Raphael (Ed.), *Social Determinants of Health* (Vol. Second, pp. 2-19). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press Inc.
- Reitsma-Street, M., & Wallace, B. (2004). Resisting two-year limits on welfare in British Columbia. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*(53), 169-176. doi:ISSN 0836303X
- Roberts, J. H. (2009). Structural violence and emotional health: a message from Easington, a former mining community in northern England. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 16(1), 37-48. doi:10.1080/13648470802425948
- Rose, N. (1996). Governing "advanced" liberal democracies. In A. Barry, T. Osborne, & N. Rose (Eds.), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism and Rationalities of Government* (pp. 37-64). London: University College of London.

- Rosenthal, R. (2000). Imaging homelessness and homeless people: Visions and strategies within the movement (s). *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 9(2), 111.
- Runnels, V., Hay, E., Sevigny, E., & O'Hara, P. (2009). The Ethics of Conducting Community-Engaged Homelessness Research. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 7, 57-68. doi:DOI 10.1007/s10805-009-9083-2
- Sakamoto, I., Khandor, E., Chapra, A., Hendrickson, T., Maher, J., Roche, B., & Chin, M. (2008). *Homelessness- diverse experiences, common issues, shared solutions: The need for inclusion and accountability*. Retrieved from Toronto, ON: <http://research.socialwork.utoronto.ca/hubpage/homelessness-3>
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (2004). Dangerous and endangered youth, social structures and determinants of violence. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1036, 13–46.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (2006). The primacy of the ethical: Propositions for a militant anthropology. In H. Moore & T. Sanders (Eds.), *Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Scott, J. C. (1987). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Seattle Housing and Resource Effort. (2015, November 2, 2015). Retrieved from <http://www.sharewheel.org/>
- Shannon, K., Kerr, T., Allinott, S., Chettiar, J., Shoveller, J., & Tyndall, M. (2008). Social and structural violence and power relations in mitigating HIV risk of drug-using women in survival sex work. *Social Science & Medicine*, 66, 911-921.
- Shapcott, M. (2009). Housing. In D. Raphael (Ed.), *Social Determinants of Health* (Vol. Second, pp. 221-234). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press Inc.
- Shaw, M. (2004). Housing and public health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 25, 397-418.
- Sheehy, E. (2004). Advancing social inclusion: The implications for criminal law and policy. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*(January), 73-95. doi:ISSN17077753
- Sherwin, S. (1998). A Relational Approach to Autonomy and Health Care. In S. Sherwin (Ed.), *The Politics of Women's Health: Exploring Agency and Autonomy* (pp. 19-47). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Shinn, M. (2010). Homelessness, poverty and social exclusion in the United States and Europe. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 4, 19-44.
- Sklair, L. (1995). Social movements and global capitalism. *Sociology*, 29, 495-512.
- Smith, N. (1996). After Tompkins Square: Degentrification and the Revanchist City. In A. King (Ed.), *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis* (pp. 93-107). New York: New York University Press.
- Snow, D. A., Soule, S. A., & Cress, D. M. (2005). Identifying the Precipitants of Homeless Protest across 17 U.S. Cities, 1980 to 1990. *Social Forces*, 83(3), 1183-1210. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/3598274>
- Solving Homelessness in British Columbia's Capital Region: A Community Plan. (2012). Victoria, BC: Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.
- Speed, S. (2006). At the crossroads of human rights and anthropology: Toward a critically engaged activist research. *American Anthropologist*, 108(1), 66-76.
- Statistics Canada. (2014). NHS Focus on Geography Series Victoria CMA. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Pages/FOG.cfm?lang=E&level=3&GeoCode=935>
- Steffen, C. G. (2012). (Dis)Empowering Homeless People: The Battle for Atlanta's Imperial Hotel, 1990-1991. *Journal of Urban History*, 38(4), 753-776. doi:pmid:
- Stewart, M., Makwarimbab, E., Reutter, L., Veenstra, G., Raphael, D., & Love, R. (2009). Poverty, Sense of Belonging and Experiences of Social Isolation. *Journal of Poverty*, 13(2), 173-195.
- Tarasuk, V., Mitchell, A., & Dachner, N. (2015). *Household food insecurity in Canada, 2013*. Retrieved from Toronto: <http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/>
- Taylor, S. (2013). Structural violence, oppression, and the place-based marginality of homelessness. *Canadian Social Work Review*, 30(2), 255-273.
- Thayer-Bacon, B. (1997). The nurturing of a relational epistemology. *Educational Theory*, 47(2), 239-260.
- Thayer-Bacon, B. (2003). *Relational "(e)pistemologies"* (J. Kinchloe & S. Steinberg Eds. Vol. 226). New York: Peter Lang Publishing Incorporated.
- Thomson, H., Petticrew, M., & Morrison, D. (2001). Health effects of housing improvement: Systematic review of intervention studies. *BMJ*, 323, 187-190.

- Thomson, M. (2015). *Vancouver Homeless Count 2015*. Retrieved from <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/vancouver-homeless-count-2015.pdf>
- Uitermark, J. (2004). Framing urban injustices: the case of the Amsterdam squatter movement. *Space & Polity*, 8(2), 227-244. doi:10.1080/1356257042000273977
- van Draanen, J., Harriot, D., Hwang, S., Jeyaratnam, J., Koo, M., O'Campo, P., & Stergiopoulous, V. (2013). Meaningful inclusion of consumers in research and service delivery. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 36(3), 180.
- vanDraanen, J., Harriot, D., Hwang, S., Jeyaratnam, J., Koo, M., O'Campo, P., & Stergiopoulous, V. (2013). Meaningful inclusion of consumers in research and service delivery. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 36(3), 180-186. doi:10.1037/prj0000014
- Victoria's Vital Signs: Greater Victoria's 2013 Annual Checkup. (2014). Retrieved from Victoria, Canada:
- Victoria (City) vs Adams, BCSC 1363 67 C.F.R. (2008).
- Victoria Extreme Weather Protocol. (2015, November 5, 2015). Retrieved from <http://vewp.net/>
- Wagner, D. (1993). *Checkerboard Square: Culture and Resistance in a Homeless Community*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Wagner, D., & Cohen, M. (1991a). *Moving Out of Homelessness: Resource Mobilization among a "Tent City" Community*.
- Wagner, D., & Cohen, M. (1991b). The Power of the People: Homeless Protesters in the Aftermath of Social Movement Participation. *Social Problems*, 38(4, Special Issue on the Underclass in the United States), 543-561. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/800570>
- Whiteford, M. (2011). Square pegs, round holes: Rough sleeping and service user involvement? *Practice*, 23(1), 45-58. doi:10.1080/09503153.2010.532547
- Whitehead, T. (2004). *What is Ethnography? Methodological, Ontological, and Epistemological Attributes*. Retrieved from College Park, Maryland:
- WHO. (2015). Social determinants of health. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/
- Williams, J. C. (2005). The Politics of Homelessness: Shelter Now and Political Protest. *Political Research Quarterly*, 58(3), 497-509. doi:10.2307/3595618

- Wolf, Z. (2007). Ethnography: The Method. In P. Munhall (Ed.), *Nursing Research: A Qualitative Perspective* (Vol. Fourth, pp. 293-319). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
- Wong, J. (2015, April 25. 2015). In Medicine Hat, Homelessness Is (Almost) Over. *Megaphone Magazine*.
- Worton, J. (2007). *Homeless Needs Survey*. Victoria Cool Aid Society. Victoria, BC.
- Worton, J. (2009). *"Poor" people's participation in poverty reduction*. (Master of Arts), University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- Yeich, S. (1996). Grassroots Organizing with Homeless People: A Participatory Research Approach. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52(1), 111-121.
- Yeo, S. R., C; Paradis,E.; Oudshoorn,A.; Nessa, B.; Mosher, J.; MacPhail, S.; Greene, S.; Gaetz,S.; Forchuk, C.; Casimir, C; Buccieri, K.; Bonnycastle, M.; Berman, H.; Arsenault,J.; Amponash, A.; Aguila, K. (2015). *A Framework for Ending Womens and Girls' Homelessness*. Retrieved from Toronto, ON:
<http://homelesshub.ca/resource/framework-ending-womens-and-girls'-homelessnes>
- Yin, R. (2011). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. New York, NY: The Guildford Press.
- Young, I. (2001). Equality of whom? Social groups and judgments of injustice. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 9(1), 2-18.

Appendix A

Introductory Script for Research- The Committee

As you may be aware, I am a graduate student at the University of Victoria, interdisciplinary in Nursing and Anthropology. I have worked with people who have experienced homelessness for over twenty-five years of my career. At this point in my life and career, I want to take a closer look at homelessness, the processes that create it and keep it going. Specifically, I am interested in how people with experience of homelessness collectively 'push back' against poverty and homelessness and how current social, economic and political conditions affect how they push back.

For my research project, I would like to study the work of this group, the Committee..... I am interested in how the Committee came to be, why people participate, what kinds of things the Committee has done, and is now doing, how individuals participate, and how some people who do not participate support the Committee. I would observe meeting and make notes about what is happening, observe events and make notes, interview a number of individuals who regularly take part in the Committee, examine meeting minutes, letters, films such as "Taking the Fall" etc. In essence, I want to try and understand how the Committee came to be, what it does, and how people participate in the group. As well, I will examine the challenges the Committee faces in doing its' work, particularly how living in poverty may affect individual participation in Committee efforts.

Today, I am asking for an agreement from those present to support this project in principle. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have about the research, confidentiality, anonymity and their limits, as well as the nature of 'informed consent' if you choose to participate in this project. I have also brought with me copies of consent forms I will use for observations, focus groups, and one on one interviews. I have also brought a separate sheet that lists what information I will record during observation, interviews and focus groups and how that will be used in the research.

Should members of the Committee consent to participation in the research, I would like to negotiate an arrangement with the group such that there is a fair exchange of value. I propose that I work as an unpaid staff person to the Committee up to 20 hours per week, for a period of four months as compensation for allowing me to do my research with you. We can negotiate, for example, some things that you would like to see happened during that period that I could help with such as funding applications, writing a history of the Committee or providing general administrative support such as writing letters, taking minutes, coordinating speakers etc., whatever works for all parties.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you, and if you agree, do my research with you.

Trudy Norman

Appendix B

Participant Recruitment and Consent Processes**In sequence:**

1. Meet with Committee- describe research and obtain formal group consent to research. See:
 - Introductory script for research (Appendix 2)
 - Verbal consent for research project (consent recorded in TCEH minutes)
 - Sample written informed consent for participant observation (Appendix 7), focus groups (Appendix 5) and one on one interviews (Appendix 6).
2. Begin informal observation of TCEH meetings. This will be ongoing during the entire data collection phase. See:
 - Verbal consent script- participant observation (Appendix 8)
 - Participant observation – areas of interest (Appendix 11)
3. Begin formal observation of activities. See:
 - Verbal consent script (Appendix 8)
 - Verbal description of field note process (Appendix 15) plus field note areas of interest (Appendix 11)
4. Conduct focus groups. Two groups will be held on the history of TCEH and collective/other actions of TCEH (range, type, outcomes, etc.). Please see:
 - Draft recruitment letter for email/in person focus groups (Appendix 3)
 - Introductory script focus groups (Appendix 9)
 - Consent form for focus group participants (Appendix 3)
 - Draft questions focus group (Appendix 12)
5. Conduct one on one interviews. See:
 - Draft recruitment letter email/in person (Appendix 4)
 - Introductory script (Appendix 10)
 - Consent form (Appendix 6)
 - Draft question list (Appendix 13)
6. Archival research will be undertaken. Written and electronic documents will be examined including local newspapers, minutes of meetings, workshop proceedings, websites and video recordings. Permissions will be sought to access emails and ‘Facebook’ conversations pertaining to TCEH meetings and related events.

Appendix C



**University
of Victoria**

Centre for Addictions
Research of BC

*Participant Consent Form
Observations*

Project Title: **Activism by People with Experience of Homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia.**

Researcher(s): Trudy Norman, Graduate student, Departments of Nursing/Anthropology, University of Victoria. Phone: 250 --- ---- or trudyn@uvic.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Bernie Pauly, School of Nursing, 250 472 5915 or bpauly@uvic.ca and Dr. Margo Matwychuk, Department of Anthropology, 250 721 6215

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- The purpose of this project is to explore how people who are or have been homeless participate individually and jointly in collective actions challenging ‘homelessness’.
- The objectives of the research are to:
 1. To map the ways in which oppression is lived out in the daily lives of participants.
 2. To describe and explain the range of collective actions of people with experience of homelessness in the Capital Region that focus on ‘homelessness’, and actions that are shaped by or reproduce oppression, illuminating spaces or places for actions that resist, challenge, or counter oppression.
 3. To illuminate the role(s) housed allies play in these collective actions by people who experience homelessness.
 4. To explore the involvement of individuals with experience of homelessness in collective action against ‘homelessness’, and how these actions may be constrained or facilitated by political, economic and social forces within the Capital Region of British Columbia.

This Research is Important because:

- Explaining participation in collective action against homelessness through the words of those who take part, including how and why people participate, how they understand their participation, and how participation may be affected by current social, political, and economic conditions, will contribute to our understanding of responses to homelessness. It will also contribute to understanding the ways in which people who experience homelessness perceive themselves and their actions within a context of oppression.

Participation:

- You have been asked to participate because you are attending a meeting or event sponsored by The Committee in Victoria.
- Participation in this project is completely voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your work with The Committee to End Homelessness or how you will be treated by me in the Committee or its activities.

Procedures:

- You are taking part in a meeting of or an event sponsored by The Committee in Victoria. I will be taking notes (see areas on sheet I am passing around) on the kinds of conversations occurring today and their content.

- Duration: 1.5 – 2 hours
- Location: Silver Threads Center, Our Place Chapel or TBA.

Compensation:

- You may at times receive refreshments during your participation in the Committee to End Homelessness or events associated with the Committee. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if this compensation were not offered, then you should decline.

Benefits:

- It is expected that the findings will have implications for understanding the nature of homelessness and people who experience it, while potentially revealing new ways in which underlying issues and processes may be understood and addressed, particularly meaningful participation of those who experience homelessness in decision-making processes.

Risks:

- It is possible you may experience some feelings such as embarrassment, sadness, or anger when discussing situations under discussion at The Committee.
- I am a trained counselor. I am able to identify and deal with emotionally upsetting situations participants may experience. Emotions, even high emotions such as anger are normal and may be expected. If you are unable to continue to participate, you may elect to leave the meeting or event. If you are particularly emotionally triggered by our discussion and so desire, I can refer you to a free counselor for ongoing support.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants:

- I may have a relationship to you as a member of the Committee.
- To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps have been taken. Your participation/non-participation in this research project will not be divulged by me to other members of the Committee. You will be able to partake of any refreshments/supports provided to events by me in the same way as members who are participating in the research. I will treat you in all ways the same as other members.

Withdrawal of Participation:

- You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence.
- Should you withdraw, I ask that I be allowed to use your data for the research. As much as possible, any information that may identify you will be removed or masked.
- If you withdraw by default, that is you leave town for example, I ask that I be able to use your data for the research. You may rescind this consent at any time in the future should you choose to do so.

Continued or On-going Consent:

- Your ongoing consent will be documented by the date and nature of the meeting and recorded in my research log.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

- As far as possible you will remain anonymous. However, it may be possible to discern your identity because of the nature of the information you have shared. Pseudonyms will be used in text descriptions of events. As well, other identifying information will be removed or changed to lessen probability of identifying particular information with you. Your information will not be shared with anyone other than my supervisory committee.

- If affected, you will be offered an opportunity to see such information as it will appear in text prior to submission of study results. I will make every effort to negotiate a mutually satisfying resolution to your concerns. Should no such resolution be attainable, the information/text will be removed from the final report.
- Once transferred to electronic storage, your data will be maintained in password protected files on a separate data storage stick that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Paper records and audio recordings will also be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The data will be maintained under secure conditions for a period of five years at which time it will be destroyed.

Limits to Confidentiality:

- Confidentiality will be limited in participant observation of meetings/events as all such meetings are open to anyone, including the general public, who wishes to attend. Any information shared therein may become public knowledge.
- Confidentiality is also limited by selection in that regular participants are comprised of a small group of people relative to the number of people who experience homelessness in the Victoria area thus, it may be possible to discern who has participated in meetings or events and what information they have shared. Housed participants who regularly participate in comprise an even smaller subset of members and are especially vulnerable to confidentiality limits.

Research Results will [may] be Used/Disseminated in the Following Ways:

- Dissertation, presentation at scholarly meetings, published articles, public report, and plain language summary to the Committee to End Homelessness. Results may also be published through the media and on the internet.

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;
- Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545
ethics@uvic.ca

Consent:

- Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you agree to participate in this research project. At each meeting or event where we are present again, I will again ask verbally if you give or continue to give your permission, I will record the date and time of your permission along with your initials in my research log. You are welcome to decide that you would agree to have your activities and comments to be recorded at some events but not others.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
----------------------------	------------------	-------------

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Waiving Anonymity and Confidentiality:

I agree to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results.

_____ (Participant to provide initials)

Use of Data:

I agree to the use of my data in should I withdraw from the research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I agree to the use of information contained in emails between the researcher and myself in regard to this interview (), in general emails relating to the Committee to End Homelessness () or on my Facebook account () that relates to this research project DATED FROM JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012. (Participant to provide initials in parentheses following data source).

Appendix D

Script - Observation and Field Note Process

In front of you is a list of areas in which I plan to take notes during Committee meetings and events. Collecting information in these areas will help me understand the way the Committee operates and how the work of the Committee is influenced by the social, political and economic context in which we live.

Please note that the information collected is strictly for research purposes and the anonymity of individuals will be protected as much as possible, i.e. what is said will be recorded, but who said it will be protected by me within the research process.

My participation in the Committee and reactions to that participation are also a source of data for the research. These self-observations will help me understand both the context of the Committee's work and the way in which I influence the research through my participation.

Do you have any questions or concerns?

Thank you.

Appendix E

Participant observations/field notes - areas of interest:

- Date/time/context
- Surroundings
- Type of gathering
- Number of people (males/females)
- Group composition (housed/unhoused/guests)
- Topics discussed/not discussed
- Specific situations discussed related to topics
- Group dynamics
- Behavioral observations of participants; individuals/interactions among participants
- Emotional reactions of participants
- Reactions of researcher during meeting/activity/interaction
- Reactions of researcher after meeting/activity/interaction
- Reflections of researcher after activity (reflexive/reflective)
- Data collection issues/concerns
- Thoughts for data collection/new data/changes

Appendix F

Verbal consent script-Participant observations

I am asking permission to record what you have said/done on this recorder/in my notes for this research project. I would like to remind you that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not will in no effect on your work with The Committee to End Homelessness, or influence how you are or will be treated by me in the Committee or at its activities.

I remind that your data will be kept in a safe and secure storage area and I will as much as possible preserve your anonymity unless you wish waive your rights to this. The confidentiality of your responses will be protected in any event. Should there be a significant possibility that you may be recognized through the data you have shared, I will contact you, show you any areas of concern in the text of the paper and negotiate a mutually agreeable solution to any concerns, including removing your data from the paper.

I now ask for your permission to record what you have said/done on this recorder/in my notes for this research project. If you give or continue to give your permission, I will record the date and time of your permission along with your initials in my research diary.

Do you have any questions about giving your consent to participate in this research project?
Do you now give you permission for me to record and use your information in this research?

Thank you.

Appendix G

Recruitment letter- email/in-person- Focus groups

Dear -----:

My name is Trudy Norman and I am a graduate student in the departments of Nursing and Anthropology at the University of Victoria. I am conducting an ethnographic study entitled “Activism by People with Experience of Homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia”. Through participating in The Committee to End Homelessness and talking with its members and allies, I seek to gain an understanding of how participation in activism and collective efforts to ‘push back’ against issues of poverty and homelessness by people with experience of homelessness may be constrained or compromised by current sociopolitical conditions.

I invite you to take part in a group interview on (date) at (place) to discuss (e.g. the history of The Committee to End Homelessness since 2006). At the beginning of the group, you will be asked to sign a formal consent to participate in the research. You may decide not to participate at any time during the group and leave. Leaving the group interview will in no way affect your continued participation in the Committee or its efforts. The interview will be recorded with the permission of all participants. Names of participants will not be recorded and every effort will be made to remove references to specific individuals from the final report. In a group setting, I am not able to guarantee the confidentiality of your responses or your anonymity. I will however, encourage participants to respect other individual’s information in the way they wish their information be respected.

This study has received approval from the Ethics Board at the University of Victoria. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at trudyn@uvic.ca or 250 --- ---. You may also wish to contact my supervisors Dr. Bernie Pauly in the School of Nursing (bpaul@uivc.ca or 250 472 5915) or Dr. Margo Matwychuk in the Department of Anthropology (mmatwych@uvic.ca or 250 721 6215).

Thank you for your time,

Trudy Norman, MA, PMP

Appendix H

Introductory Script- Focus Groups

Thank you for coming to the group and meeting with me today. I appreciate your interest in participating in this research. The purpose of this project is to explore how people who are or have been homeless participate individually and jointly in collective actions challenging 'homelessness'. Explaining participation in collective action against homelessness through the words of those who take part, including how and why people participate, how they understand their participation, and how participation may be affected by current social, political, and economic conditions, will contribute to our understanding of responses to homelessness. It will also contribute to understanding the ways in which people who experience homelessness perceive themselves and their actions within a context of oppression.

The group is on ----- and will take approximately 1.5 hours. Please remember to help yourself to refreshments at any time. We will take a short break approximately 45 minutes into the discussion. Please take a look at the agreement to participate in the research that I have circulated to all of you. I will now read it aloud (read aloud). Do you have any questions? Please sign the forms and pass them to me. I would like to remind you that this session will be audio taped. I will also take some written notes as the discussion progresses.

Thank you.



Participant Consent Form Focus Group

Project Title: **Activism by People with Experience of Homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia.**

Researcher(s): Trudy Norman, Graduate student, Departments of Nursing/Anthropology, University of Victoria. Phone: 250 853 3228 or trudyn@uvic.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Bernie Pauly, School of Nursing, 250 472 5915 or bpaul@uvic.ca and Dr. Margo Matwychuk, Department of Anthropology, 250 721 6215

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- The purpose of this project is to explore how people who are or have been homeless participate individually and jointly in collective actions challenging ‘homelessness’.
- The objectives of the research are to:
 5. To map the ways in which oppression is lived out in the daily lives of participants.
 6. To describe and explain the range of collective actions of people with experience of homelessness in the Capital Region that focus on ‘homelessness’, and actions that are shaped by or reproduce oppression, illuminating spaces or places for actions that resist, challenge, or counter oppression.
 7. To illuminate the role(s) housed allies play in these collective actions by people who experience homelessness.
 8. To explore the involvement of individuals with experience of homelessness in collective action against ‘homelessness’, and how these actions may be constrained or facilitated by political, economic and social forces within the Capital Region of British Columbia.

This Research is Important because:

- Explaining participation in collective action against homelessness through the words of those who take part, including how and why people participate, how they understand their participation, and how participation may be affected by current social, political, and economic conditions, will contribute to our understanding of responses to homelessness. It will also contribute to understanding the ways in which people who experience homelessness perceive themselves and their actions within a context of oppression.

Participation:

- You have been asked to participate because you are a regular current or past member of The Committee in Victoria or a community ally of the Committee.
- Participation in this project is voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your work with The Committee or how you will be treated by me or perceived by other members of the group.

Procedures:

- I will ask a number of questions to facilitate the discussion. Your responses and those of the other group members will be audio taped and I will take some written notes. Notes or minutes may also be recorded on a flipchart.
- Duration: 1.5 hours Location: Boardroom, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness

Compensation:

- You will receive refreshments during the group and \$15 for your participation in the group at the end of the meeting.
- It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Benefits:

- It is expected that the findings will have implications for understanding the nature of homelessness and people who experience it, while potentially revealing new ways in which underlying issues and processes may be understood and addressed, particularly meaningful participation of those who experience homelessness in decision-making processes.

Risks:

- During participation in a group setting, it is possible that you may reveal more information than you wish to or say things which may not be accepted by other participants. I will remind everyone at the beginning of the group and as necessary during the interview, that confidentiality is not guaranteed in this setting and that participants should be mindful of this when they speak. Should an issue or argument arise during the interview over a particular piece of information, I will remind participants that this is the opinion of the speaker and that all opinions are valid and useful to the research project.
- It is possible you may experience some feelings such as embarrassment, sadness, or anger when discussing situations you may have participated in during your involvement with The Committee. The information I seek is about how those events affected you or influenced your participation in or association with TCEH. I am a trained counselor. I am able to identify and deal with emotionally upsetting situations interviewees may experience. Emotions, even high emotions such as anger are normal and may be expected. If you feel emotionally upset and wish to take a break from the group, you can go for a walk, get some water, have a 'smoke' or bathroom break etc. If you are unable to continue after a short break, you may leave the group. We may also stop the group and reschedule for another time. If you are particularly upset by our discussion and so desire, I can refer you to a free counselor for ongoing support.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants:

- I may have a relationship to you as a member of the Committee or within the Victoria community.
- To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps have been taken. Your participation/non-participation in this group will not be divulged by me to

anyone other than the members of my supervisory committee. You will be able to partake of any supports provided to the Committee or its events by me in the same way as those who are participating in the research. I will treat you in all ways the same as other Committee members or allies.

Withdrawal of Participation:

- You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence.
- Should you withdraw, I ask that I be allowed to use your data for the research. As much as possible, any information that may identify you will be removed or masked.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

- Due to the nature of the group setting, it is important to understand that there is a lack of anonymity and confidentiality in the collection of this data. You should adjust your level of sharing accordingly. I will remind participants about this point several times during the interview so that you may continue to make an informed decision as to what and how much to share.
- As far as possible, you will remain anonymous in the final presentation of the data. However, it may be possible to discern your identity because of the nature of the information you have shared. Pseudonyms will be used in text descriptions of events. As well, other identifying information will be removed or changed to lessen probability of identifying particular information with you. If affected, you will be offered an opportunity to see such information as it will appear in the text prior to submission of study results. I will make every effort to negotiate a mutually satisfying resolution to any of your concerns. Should no such resolution be attainable, the information/text will be removed from the final report.
- Once transferred to electronic storage, your data will be maintained in password protected files on a separate data storage stick that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Paper records and audio recordings will also be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The data will be maintained under secure conditions for a period of five years at which time it will be destroyed.

Limits to Confidentiality:

- Confidentiality is limited in focus groups because of the nature of the activity, i.e. others are present.. Although groups will typically include fewer people than may be present at public meetings, there is no guarantee that participants will not share information outside the group.
- Confidentiality is also limited in that generally people who often participate in meetings or events will be part of a focus group. Regular participants are comprised of a small group of people relative to the number of people with experience of homelessness in the Victoria area thus it may be possible to discern who has participated in a focus group and what information they have share. Housed persons who regularly participate in comprise an even smaller subset of members and are especially vulnerable to confidentiality limits when participating in a focus group..

Research Results will [may] be Used/Disseminated in the Following Ways:

Dissertation, presentation at scholarly meeting, published articles, public report, and plain language summary to the Committee to End Homelessness. Results may also be published through the media and on the internet.

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;
- Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545
ethics@uvic.ca

Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you agree to participate in this research project.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
----------------------------	------------------	-------------

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Use of Data:

I agree to the use of my data should I withdraw from the research: _____ (Participant to provide initials). I understand that should I not agree to the use of my data should I withdraw from the research, because of the nature of a group setting and the interactions I have had with other individuals it may not be possible to exclude all my data. Should this be the case, the researcher will make every effort to include in a summary, mask or otherwise anonymize any contribution I have made to a conversation. I agree to the use of information contained in emails between the researcher and myself regarding this interview () in general emails relating to the Committee () or on my Facebook account () that relate to this research project dated from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2013. (*Participant to provide initials in parentheses following data source*).

Appendix J

Draft focus group questions:

The purpose of the focus groups is to open a discussion on homelessness and start people thinking about how and why the Committee was started, develop some signposts for a history of the Committee and its work and serve as a segue for one on one interviews. I plan to hold this group twice, one for housed allies and one for people with experience of homelessness.

Topic: Homelessness and the history of The Committee :

- How did the Committee get started, and by who?
- What do you think the Committee is about? What does it do?
- Do you think the Committee is successful in its aim of working toward ‘ending homelessness? How? If you think the Committee is not successful, why not?
- What kinds of things has the Committee done to work toward ‘ending homelessness’?
- What do you think are the major things the Committee has accomplished, and why? How did those things happen? Are there other successes the Committee has had?
- Has the Committee been involved in something you would term ‘collective action’? What was that, when, what happened?
- What do you think works well about the Committee, and not so well?
- How do you see the Committee one year from now, what would it be doing? How would things work?
- What do you think are the causes of homelessness?
- What needs to be done to ‘end homelessness’? By who and why?

Appendix K

Recruitment letter - email/in-person- one on one interviews.

Dear -----:

My name is Trudy Norman and I am a graduate student in the departments of Nursing and Anthropology at the University of Victoria. I am conducting an ethnographic study entitled "Activism by People with Experience of Homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia". Through participating in The Committee and talking with its members and allies, I seek to gain an understanding of how participation in activism and collective efforts to 'push back' against issues of poverty and homelessness by people with experience of homelessness may be constrained or compromised by current sociopolitical conditions.

I invite you to take part in an interview of approximately 1.5 hours to discuss your involvement with The Committee. You will be offered \$25 to take part in the interview. At the beginning of the interview, you will be asked to sign a formal consent to participate in the research. You may decide not to participate at any time during the interview and leave. Leaving the interview will in no way affect your continued participation in the Committee or its' efforts. You will still receive the \$25 should you decide you no longer wish to participate in the interview. The interview will be recorded with your permission. Your name will not be recorded and every effort will be made to remove references that may identify you from my final paper.

This study has received approval from the Ethics Board at the University of Victoria. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at trudyn@uvic.ca or 250 --- ---. You may also wish to contact my supervisors Dr. Bernie Pauly in the School of Nursing (bpaul@uivc.ca or 250 472 5915) or Dr. Margo Matwychuk in the Department of Anthropology (mmatwych@uvic.ca or 250 721 6215).

Thank you for your time,

Trudy Norman, MA, PMP

Appendix L

Have you been a regular participant in the Committee over the past year?

If so, I am interested in speaking with you.

I am conducting a research study on the work of the Committee and how people with experience of homelessness and their allies push back and work to address issues of poverty and homelessness.

If you would like more information about the study or you have any questions or concerns about being part of the study, please speak with me.

Trudy Norman, MA, PMP

University of Victoria (250 --- ----)

Appendix M

Introductory script one on one interviews

Thank you for meeting with me today. I appreciate your interest in participating in this research. The purpose of this project is to explore how people who are or have been homeless participate individually and jointly in collective actions challenging 'homelessness'. Explaining participation in collective action against homelessness through the words of those who take part, including how and why people participate, how they understand their participation, and how participation may be affected by current social, political, and economic conditions, will contribute to our understanding of responses to homelessness. It will also contribute to understanding the ways in which people who experience homelessness perceive themselves and their actions within a context of oppression.

The interview will last approximately 1.5 hours. We can take a break at any time. Please take a look at the agreement to participate in the research that I have given you. Read aloud if desired. I would like to remind you that this session will be audio taped. I will also take some written notes as the discussion progresses. Do you have any questions?

Thank you.

Appendix N



**University
of Victoria**

Centre for Addictions
Research of BC

Participant Consent Form Individual Interview

Project Title: **Activism by People with Experience of Homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia.**

Researcher(s): Trudy Norman, Graduate student, Departments of Nursing/Anthropology, University of Victoria. Phone: 250 853 3228 or trudyn@uvic.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Bernie Pauly, School of Nursing, 250 472 5915 or bpaul@uvic.ca and Dr. Margo Matwychuk, Department of Anthropology, 250 721 6215

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- The purpose of this project is to explore how people who are or have been homeless participate individually and jointly in collective actions challenging ‘homelessness’.
- The objectives of the research are to:
 9. To map the ways in which oppression is lived out in the daily lives of participants.
 10. To describe and explain the range of collective actions of people with experience of homelessness in the Capital Region that focus on ‘homelessness’, and actions that are shaped by or reproduce oppression, illuminating spaces or places for actions that resist, challenge, or counter oppression.
 11. To illuminate the role(s) housed allies play in these collective actions by people who experience homelessness.
 12. To explore the involvement of individuals with experience of homelessness in collective action against ‘homelessness’, and how these actions may be constrained or facilitated by political, economic and social forces within the Capital Region of British Columbia.

This Research is Important because:

- Explaining participation in collective action against homelessness through the words of those who take part, including how and why people participate, how they understand their participation, and how participation may be affected by current social, political, and economic conditions, will contribute to our understanding of responses to homelessness. It will also contribute to understanding the ways in which people who experience homelessness perceive themselves and their actions within a context of oppression.

Participation:

- You have been asked to participate because you are a member of The Committee in Victoria or are a community ally of the Committee.
- Participation in this project is completely voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your work with The Committee or how you will be treated by me in the Committee or its activities.

Procedures:

- You are taking part in a one on one interview on ----- . I will ask you a number of questions to facilitate discussion. Your responses will be audio taped and I will take some written notes. A follow-up interview may be required to clarify your responses and allow you to view a transcript of your interview should you choose to do so.
- Duration: 1.5 – 2 hours Location: TBA

Compensation:

- You will receive \$25 (and at times refreshment) for your participation in this interview. Refreshments alone will be provided at follow-up interviews.
- It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Benefits:

- It is expected that the findings will have implications for understanding the nature of homelessness and people who experience it, while potentially revealing new ways in which underlying issues and processes may be understood and addressed, particularly meaningful participation of those who experience homelessness in decision-making processes.

Risks:

- It is possible you may experience some feelings such as embarrassment, sadness, or anger when discussing situations you may have participated in during your involvement with The Committee. The information I seek is about how those events affected you or influenced your participation in other Committee or activist events.
- I am a trained counselor. I am able to identify and deal with emotionally upsetting situations interviewees may experience. Emotions, even high emotions such as anger are normal and may be expected. I will take a break from the interview and offer you an opportunity to go for a walk, get some water, have a ‘smoke’ or bathroom break etc. If you are unable to continue after a short break, you may leave elect to stop the interview. We may then reschedule the interview for another time. If you are particularly emotionally triggered by our discussion and so desire, I can refer you to a free counselor for ongoing support.

Researcher’s Relationship with Participants:

- I may have a relationship to you as a member of the Committee to End Homelessness in Victoria.
- To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps have been taken. Your participation/non-participation in this group will not be divulged by me to other members of the Committee. You will be able to partake of any refreshments/supports provided to events by me in the same way as members who are participating in the research. I will treat you in all ways the same as other members.

Withdrawal of Participation:

- You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence.
- Should you withdraw, I ask that I be allowed to use your data for the research. As much as possible, any information that may identify you will be removed or masked.
- If you withdraw by default that is you leave town I ask that I be able to use your data for the research. You may rescind this consent at any time in the future should you choose to do so.

Use of Data:

I agree to the use of my data in should I withdraw from the research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I agree to the use of information contained in emails between the researcher and myself in regard to this interview (), in general emails relating to the Committee to End Homelessness () or on my Facebook account () that relate to this research project DATED FROM JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013. (Participant to provide initials in parentheses following data source).

Appendix O

Draft one on one interview questions:

The purpose of the individual interviews is to build on information gained from the focus groups and delve into individual reactions to and understandings of both TCEH efforts to 'end homelessness' and their participation in those efforts.

- What do you think the Committee does?
- Why did you get involved with the Committee?
- Do you think the Committee is successful in its aim of working toward 'ending homelessness? How? If you think the Committee is not successful, why not?
- Do you think the Committee could be more successful? How?
- Has the Committee done things you think are not helpful to people who are homeless? If so what, and why do you think they weren't helpful?
- Would you do things differently in the Committee? If so, what? How would you do things differently?
- What has been your involvement with TCEH? How long? What kinds of things have you done with the Committee?
- What do you get from participating in the Committee?
- Can you tell me about a time you participated in a Committee effort that you feel good about. What went well, why? No so well?
- Can you tell me about a Committee effort you participated in that didn't go well? Why do you think that happened?
- In regard to your participation in Committee events, have you ever felt 'put down' or that your rights weren't respected? How so, and when?
- Do you think that being (male, female, trans) has affected your participation in the Committee or how things went when you participated? How?
- Do you participate in other forms of activism or 'pushing back' other than the Committee? Can you tell me about them?
- Is there anything else you think I should know about the Committee, its work, your participation in the Committee or your participation in other local activist efforts?

Appendix P



**University
of Victoria**

Centre for Addictions
Research of BC

Participant Consent Form Email and Facebook

Project Title: Activism by People with Experience of Homelessness in the Capital Region of British Columbia.

Researcher(s): Trudy Norman, Graduate student, Departments of Nursing/Anthropology, University of Victoria. Phone: 250 --- ---- or trudyn@uvic.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Bernie Pauly, School of Nursing, 250 472 5915 or bpauly@uvic.ca and Dr. Margo Matwychuk, Department of Anthropology, 250 721 6328

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- The purpose of this project is to explore how people who are or have been homeless participate individually and jointly in collective actions challenging ‘homelessness’.
- The objectives of the research are to:
 13. To map the ways in which oppression is lived out in the daily lives of participants.
 14. To describe and explain the range of collective actions of people with experience of homelessness in the Capital Region that focus on ‘homelessness’, and actions that are shaped by or reproduce oppression, illuminating spaces or places for actions that resist, challenge, or counter oppression.
 15. To illuminate the role(s) housed allies play in these collective actions by people who experience homelessness.
 16. To explore the involvement of individuals with experience of homelessness in collective action against ‘homelessness’, and how these actions may be constrained or facilitated by political, economic and social forces within the Capital Region of British Columbia.

This Research is Important because:

- Explaining participation in collective action against homelessness through the words of those who take part, including how and why people participate, how they understand their participation, and how participation may be affected by current social, political, and economic conditions, will contribute to our understanding of responses to homelessness. It will also contribute to understanding the ways in which people who experience homelessness perceive themselves and their actions within a context of oppression.

Participation:

- You have been asked to participate because you are a member of The Committee in Victoria or are a community ally.
- Participation in this project is completely voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your work with The Committee to End Homelessness or how you will be treated by me or other members of the group.

Procedures:

- This form explicitly seeks permission to use information contained in email or on your Facebook account that is shared with me as a ‘friend’, and pertains to your participation in the Committee to End Homelessness.

Benefits:

- It is expected that the findings will have implications for understanding the nature of homelessness and people who experience it, while potentially surfacing new ways in which underlying issues and processes may be understood and addressed, particularly meaningful participation of those who experience homelessness in decision-making processes.

Risks:

- That information contained in emails or on your Facebook account may be damaging to you or someone else should the information become public. Please see anonymity/confidentiality section.

Researcher’s Relationship with Participants:

- I may have a relationship to you as a member of the Committee.
- To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps have been taken. Your participation/non-participation in this group will not be divulged by me to other members. You will be able to partake of any supports provided to events by me in the same way as members who are participating in the research. I will treat you in all ways the same as other members or allies. If you choose not to participate in this study it will have no effect on my current or future relationship with you.

Withdrawal of Participation:

- You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence.
- Should you withdraw, I ask that I be allowed to use your data for the research.

Continued or On-going Consent:

- Your ongoing consent will be recorded in a diary kept for this purpose on a once monthly basis to ensure your consent to using your information is current.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

- As far as possible you will remain anonymous however, it may be possible to discern your identity because of the nature of the information you have shared. Pseudonyms will be used in text descriptions of events. As well, other identifying information will be removed or changed to lessen probability of identifying particular information with you. Your information will not be shared anyone other than my supervisory committee.
- If affected, you will be offered an opportunity to see such information as it will appear in the text prior to submission of study results. I will make every effort to negotiate a mutually satisfying resolution to your concerns. Should no such resolution be attainable, the information/text will be removed from the final report.
- Once transferred to electronic storage, your data will be maintained in password protected files on a separate data storage stick that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Paper records and audio recordings will also be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The data will be maintained under secure conditions for a period of five years at which time it will be destroyed.

Appendix Q

Charter

This charter describes what the Committee believes must be done to END homelessness in Victoria. As a group, we believe that we can't end homelessness without ending poverty.

We reject the piecemeal, charity driven model that has created a poverty industry in our society that keeps people down, poor and in need.

Our charter is founded on a framework of human rights, where:

- **Everyone is entitled to a guaranteed annual income that is sufficient to pay market rates for basic shelter, food and clothing.**
- **Those of us with mental health and addictions are treated compassionately through our health care system, and not as criminals through the justice system.**
- **The Canadian tax system is solely responsible for redistributing wealth among Canadians.**
- **The myriad of inefficient and ineffective government agencies that keep the poverty industry flourishing by doling out insufficient subsidies to people based on need and disability, and giving grants to charities to do good deeds in their stead – are dismantled – because they are no longer needed.**

Appendix R

What We Do



COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 2013

A NEW AGREEMENT:

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO:

A. EVERY CITIZEN HAS A RIGHT TO A SUBSIDIZED OR AFFORDABLE HOME, HOWEVER SIMPLE, OR TO TEMPORARY SHELTER.

B. EVERY CITIZEN HAS A RIGHT TO BE TREATED FAIRLY, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION, BY EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE POLICE AND BY THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS.

C. EVERY CITIZEN HAS THE RIGHT TO A MINIMUM STANDARD OF LIVING.

TO THIS END, OUR COMMITTEE WILL:

1/ REMAIN AN INDEPENDENT, GRASS-ROOTS GROUP, WITHOUT GOVERNMENT OR CORPORATE FUNDING, OR TIES TO ANY ORGANIZATION BEYOND THOSE OF FRIENDSHIP AND COMMON PURPOSES.

2. PRESSURE CITY HALL, THE CRD, THE BC GOVERNMENT AND MLA'S, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND MP'S TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR HOUSING, TO RAISE DISABILITY AND OTHER ASSISTANCE RATES AND ALLEVIATE POVERTY.

3. ENCOURAGE THOSE LIVING IN POVERTY OR WHO ARE HOMELESS TO LEAD ANY EFFORTS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THESE RIGHTS.

4. EDUCATE OURSELVES AND THE SOCIETY AROUND US THROUGH PROVIDING ANTI-OPPRESSION TRAINING, USE OF OUR DOCUMENTARY (TAKING THE FALL AND RISING) AND BY JOINING AND WORKING WITH

LOCAL GROUPS LIKE THE GOOD NEIGHBOUR AGREEMENT GROUPS, CHURCHES AND OUR PLACE SOCIETY.

5. WORK WITH LIKE-MINDED GROUPS SUCH AS VIPIRG, TAPS, THE RADICAL HEALTH ALLIANCE, ACPD AND FAITH IN ACTION ON CAMPAIGNS, INCLUDING THOSE FOR SUPERVISED INJECTION SITES OR FOR ENDING THE FOOD BANK CHARITY SOLUTION.

6. HOLD DEMONSTRATIONS SUCH AS THE DEC. 21 VIGIL, THE OCTOBER DAY TO ELIMINATE POVERTY AND AUG 10TH PRISONERS' JUSTICE DAY AND PARTICIPATE IN OTHERS THAT SEEK TO REDRESS UNFAIR POLICY AND PRACTICES THAT INCREASE POVERTY.

7. WORK WITH CITY COUNCILLORS AND OTHER GROUPS TO END STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL PROFILING BY THE POLICE .

8. CONTINUE TO INVITE SPEAKERS MONTHLY SO THAT THEY HEAR OUR CONCERNS (not just tell us how well they are doing).

9. ORGANIZE AN OUTREACH TEAM THAT CAN FILM AND WITNESS DISCRIMINATION AND ATTACKS ON PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY .

10. LIAISE WITH GROUPS IN OTHER AREAS SUCH AS CARNEGIE IN VANCOUVER THAT WORK TOWARD ENDING DISCRIMINATION AND TARGETING OF PEOPLE IN POVERTY. TAKE PART IN ANY NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS THAT SUPPORT THESE ENDS.

11. AVOID BEING SWEEPED UP IN OTHER ISSUES THAT ARE NOT CENTRAL TO OUR MANDATE. TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER, ENJOY MUSIC OR FOOD TOGETHER, SUPPORT EACH OTHER AND HAVE PATIENCE!

12. FEEL GOOD THAT WITHOUT FUNDING OR OUTSIDE LEADERSHIP, WE HAVE ESTABLISHED OUR COMMITTEE AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE GREATER VICTORIA COMMUNITY.