

Youth Homelessness and Social Exclusion:

A “Methods from the Margins” Approach

by

Jennifer Leah Robinson

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Social exclusion is the restriction of participation in one's community; it is the denial of access to rights, services, dignity and respect. Youth who are homeless experience social exclusion on numerous fronts, as they are marginal to the social, economic and civil worlds of Canadian society. This dissertation is a qualitative, participatory project on youth homelessness that prioritizes voice by employing a "methods from the margins" approach (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). During this project I worked with youth who have experienced homelessness (ages 16-25), first in focus groups (n=13) and, then, through interviews (n=30), to explore their views on topics connected to social exclusion. The youth guided the topics that I explored, which I connected to the features of social exclusion outlined by Silver and Miller (2003). Results of this study highlight that youth who are homeless do not describe their experiences in terms of social exclusion. The results of this work question the homogeneity of experiences of the youth in the age bracket of 16-25, and review findings through three specific age categories of youth being "not yet adults," "new adults" and "adults." My findings indicate that youth who experience homelessness perceive themselves to be more independent and mature than youth who have not experienced homelessness, questioning dominant constructions of both "youth" and "homelessness." Youth respondents also mentioned a number of other difficulties they experienced because of homelessness, including discrimination and limited opportunities for education and conventional employment and access to housing. This highlights the multidimensionality of social exclusion. At various points in the thesis I discuss youths' views on rights and social citizenship, pointing to the impacts of limited rights and social safeguards in a neo-liberal state. Recommendations are made for reducing the social exclusion of youth who experience homelessness through "housing-first" approaches to addressing homelessness.

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Dedication

*For Brandon, James and Curtis – thank you for forever changing
my world and reminding me, each and every day, of what is
important.*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Being labeled criminals, deviants, thugs, and pests, as homeless people too often are, erases my humanity; it places me in the realm of post human. I was human once, but that was before I allegedly chose to abandon civil society and its work ethic and become the despised 'street youth,' the mere echo of a person (Shantz, 2010: 179).

C. Wright Mills' (1959: 8) concept of the "sociological imagination" invites researchers to work between "the personal troubles of milieu," located in individual biographies and "the public issues of social structure," located in the institutional and historical possibilities of social structure. Homelessness is a private trouble embedded in public issues. It is a personal identity and a lived experience shaped by social structures, including, but not limited to, social supports, housing, education, employment, and citizenship. Its most common cause is poverty.

Those without sufficient economic resources struggle to meet basic needs, including food and shelter. In 2009, Ontario's poverty rate was 13.1%, or the equivalent of 1 689 000 people living in poverty. The Ontario child poverty rate was 14.6%, meaning 1 in 7 children lived in poverty (Mehra, 2012: 8). The Tri-Cities area (Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge, Ontario), where this study was carried out, has a persistent poverty rate of 10-11%. Those without adequate economic resources have difficulty obtaining or sustaining adequate housing. This is in large part because Ontario has the "worst record of all provinces in affordable housing" (8). In 2009, Ontario spent, on average, \$64 per person on affordable housing, compared to the average of \$115 paid per person by other provinces across Canada (25). The costs of poverty and homelessness are staggering, yet Canada's policy responses do

not match the most economical and humane approaches to addressing these social problems. Canadian taxpayers paid approximately 24.4 billion dollars in both direct and indirect costs for poverty in 2007 (Hughes, 2012: 4). Most of this money was invested in reactive measures, such as shelters, hospital care, policing/incarceration and social service responses, rather than in preventative services that would prevent poverty or allow for early intervention in cases where poverty was seen to be likely to develop.¹ This seems a curious, counterproductive strategy because present research indicates that the expenditure of funds on anti-poverty programs reduces the social and economic costs of homelessness (Hughes, 2012). For example, in estimating the annual costs of homelessness, Pomery (2005, as cited in Gaetz, 2012: 5) reports that the most fiscally prudent response would be to provide the homeless with affordable housing. According to his estimates, while the annual costs of responding to homelessness through affordable housing would range from \$5,000-\$8,000 per person, the annual per person costs of emergency shelters are \$13,000-\$42,000, with even higher costs (of between \$66,000 and \$120,000) likely if the poverty-stricken come to rely on institutions such as detention centres, prison and hospitals.

Ontario's lack of social investment in housing places many people in precarious positions; it is hard to obtain access to reasonable, safe, sustainable housing on a limited income. Single individuals under the age of 65 have the highest poverty rates in Ontario, yet have the most restricted housing options (Mehra, 2012: 23; ONPHA, 2012: 3). Many individuals and families rely on state supports, such as affordable housing, to avoid extreme situations such as homelessness. However, this

reliance on state supports is often not an adequate security measure as available housing supports are limited in comparison to the demand. In Ontario, as of 2011, there were 156 358 households on the waiting list for affordable housing, an increase of 26% since 2007 (ONPHA, 2012: 36). The average wait time for affordable housing in Ontario is approximately 3.4 years for a single person or a couple without children (35). As of December 31, 2011, there were 3280 households on the waiting list for social housing in the Waterloo region, with a waiting period for a housing unit of 2-3 years (33). In the same year, 395 106 Ontarians turned to food banks for help and 870 000 relied on social assistance (Mehra, 2012). Clearly there is a high and growing demand for social assistance to address the twinned problems of poverty and homelessness. Yet, at the same time demand has grown, the government has cut the rates of social assistance. For example, in 1986 the “total welfare income” (i.e., basic social assistance plus additional welfare benefits, plus child benefits, tax credits, the GST credit and resource rebates) of a single person on social assistance was \$9374; by 2011, this amount, in constant dollars, was \$7595 (Mehra, 2012: 40).

These expenditures are reflective of widespread Canadian responses to homelessness, at both an individual and policy level. On an individual level, those who experience homelessness, an extreme form of marginalization rooted in poverty, are often treated as though homelessness is a personal trouble. Individuals who experience homelessness are often constructed as blame-worthy for their social location and/or treated as “other”: as deviant, dangerous, or a nuisance. In Canada, from a policy standpoint, few social investments are made to prevent homelessness

or to intervene quickly and effectively when it occurs. Rather, Canadian governments have generally taken a reactive approach; individuals are forced to rely on emergency services, such as shelters and food banks, once all other resources are depleted.

The often negative portrayal of the homeless can be linked to broader views of poverty in developed, affluent societies, such as Canada. According to Gordon (2010: 33) “(t)he poor represent an unsettling reminder, especially to the affluent, of the darker side of economic restructuring that needs to be removed from sight.” Our understanding of homelessness is further confounded when the person experiencing it is young. In contemporary North America “youth” seen to be “dependent” on their parents (Coles & Craig, 1999). Giroux (2003) claims that youth are treated with distrust, often being granted only restricted privacy and personal liberties as determined by various adults and agencies. Certainly, youth have a diminished role in the public sphere and, as citizens, are often denied agency solely as a consequence of their “youthful” status. Accordingly, the “voices” of youth are rarely included in the debates regarding the policies and practices that are created for “their needs” (Boyce, 2001; Giroux, 2003). The limitations on the freedoms and powers of youth are even more severe for youth who experience homelessness or are “street involved.” They are viewed as “out of place,” in two senses of the phrase; i.e. not engaged in “normal” youthful activities and not living as they “should be:” with their parents (de Benetiz, 2003). The data that I gathered in this study indicate that the situation of youth who experience homelessness is additionally complicated by age distinctions.

According to Karabanow (2010), much of the current academic literature on homeless youth presents this diverse population as a stigmatized, exploited group that is in need of care and assistance. However, he reports that many studies frame their discussion of the appropriate formal aid that youth should receive within correctional or “law-and-order” approaches. Such approaches emphasize the “correctional and/or rehabilitative dimensions” of assistance and commend “attempts to remove [youth] from society to fix their pathologies.” In short, youth who are homeless are viewed as “menaces in need of punishment and correction” (140). What is troublesome about this negative construction, in my opinion, is the lack of understanding of homelessness as a public issue and the lack of youths’ voices in the discussion of such matters. The voices of youth, their perspectives and expressions, are rarely included in the starting points of discussions on homelessness. The term “voice” will be described in greater detail below. Certainly, youth are seldom included as collaborators in projects that focus on them; it is not common practice for researchers to ask marginalized groups what sorts of themes or topics researchers should examine and/or what they regard as appropriate solutions to the intertwined problems of homelessness and poverty they face.

Previous research on youth homelessness in Canada has been diverse. Scholars have explored the ways in which these youth enter and exit “street life” (Karabanow, 2004; 2008); their involvement in criminal and deviant activities (Baron, 2003; 2009; 2010; 2011); the strategies they use to manage stigma (Kidd, 2007; 2004); and the heightened vulnerability and victimization they face (Gaetz, 2004; O’Grady, Gaetz, Buccieri, 2011; Gaetz, O’Grady, & Buccieri, 2010). The

majority of Canadian research has been conducted in larger urban centres and/or provincial capitals such as Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, Edmonton, Halifax and Calgary; few studies have been conducted in smaller urban areas². Nevertheless, Canadian research on homeless youth has generally found that they occupy marginal social positions, with Gaetz (2004: 423) explicitly identifying this population as “socially excluded.”

I understand “youth homelessness” as a public issue and approach this phenomenon through a social justice lens. “Social justice” is a concept that has been used in a variety of ways and embraced by persons on both the ideological left and the ideological right (e.g., Dworkin, 2002; Mead, 1986; Murray, 1984; Rawls, 1999; Young, 2007, 2011). My dissertation addresses some of the tensions that exist between these differing approaches. I note that neo-liberalism, the dominant ideological approach to governing and social policy in Canada, has direct implications for individuals who experience homelessness. From a neo-liberal stance, “social justice” entails personal responsibility, encourages an entrepreneurial ethos and celebrates individual empowerment (Steger & Roy, 2010). Social justice, from this perspective, valorizes the promotion of individual responsibility amongst members of a community rather than collective responsibility, and advocates for minimal intervention from the state. The term “empowerment,” often a key component of social justice rhetoric, has been used under a neoliberal perspective “by corporations, international organizations, non-governmental agencies, and national states as a means for increasing productivity through capacity-building” (Basok & Ilcan, 2013: 6). As deployed by these agencies and institutions,

“empowerment” is best achieved by encouraging individuals to be responsible and self-sufficient. Further, neo-liberalism may be linked to conservative positions on “family values” and “community safety” through law and order approaches to crime and deviance (Wacquant, 2011). According to the neo-liberal perspective, social justice entails protecting society through the creation and application of rules and regulations that limit the role of the state in the market and social policies. “At its heart, neoliberalism is a political project with utopian overtones that seeks to restructure welfare states and reinstate class power” (Walks, 2009: 346).

My definition of social justice emphasizes collective responsibility and social inclusion and draws upon the writings of Iris Marion Young. Young approaches social justice from a collective responsibility position. In her view, “[i]t is wrong for some people to lack what they need when others are able to contribute to meeting those needs at relatively little cost to themselves” (2001:7). Her “social connection model” emphasizes that all share in the responsibility to maintain a fair background structure: “[m]y responsibility is essentially shared with others because the harms are produced by many of us acting together within accepted institutions and practices, and because it is not possible for any of us to identify just what in our own actions results in which aspect of the injustice that particular individuals suffer” (Young, 2011: 110). With explicit reference to the issue of homelessness, Young contends that “[d]ischarging my responsibility in relation to the structural injustice of homelessness might involve, then, my trying to persuade others that this threat to well-being is a matter of injustice rather than misfortune and that we participate together in the processes that cause it. We then would enjoin one another to work on

our collective relationships and try to transform the necessary practices” (112). According to Young (2007, 2011), members of society have a collective moral responsibility to address the basic needs of others. She is critical of an “individual responsibility approach” to justice inasmuch as it “encourages an isolated, atomistic way of thinking about individuals” (2011: 23). Thus, while neo-liberals such as Lawrence Mead (1986) and Charles Murray (1984) equate “personal responsibility” with “self-sufficiency,” Young (2011:23) insists that the championing of “personal responsibility” is insidious. She castigates conservatives, such as Mead and Murray, as well as “luck-egalitarians” and “responsibility-catering egalitarians” (i.e., liberal philosophers such as Ronald Dworkin, G.A. Cohen and Richard Arneson) for their rapt embrace of the rhetoric of individual responsibility. According to Young (2011:23), a strong emphasis upon personal responsibility is incompatible with social justice inasmuch as it “isolate[s] the deviant poor and render[s] them particularly blameworthy for their conditions, which then justifies the application of paternalistic or punitive policies to them.” My dissertation reflects my agreement with Young’s arguments. It also represents my attempt, as a citizen-activist, to act as a responsible citizen and seek to improve the lot of a societally disadvantaged group.

Young (1990:37) directs attention to the ways in which societies support two key values: developing individual capacities and participation in decision making over one’s actions. She frames social justice around the concept of autonomy – the freedom to be who one is. It is Young’s contention that “social justice” requires the recognition and social promotion of difference. In terms of collective responsibility, this means social justice entails more than the redistribution of goods

and opportunities in society: it is about the *control* over how good and opportunities are distributed. This requires a recognition of oppression and domination in society. Towards this end, Young recommends the adoption of a “logic of representation” which focuses on the rights of both individuals and groups to have their voices heard and to represent themselves to the state. Young argues that society has a responsibility to meet the needs of its members through the redistribution of goods and opportunities. She also advocates in the favour recognition and promotion of difference, acknowledging inequality, oppression and domination in the social order. These ideas about social justice resonate with me and influence my academic and community work.

My dissertation, an academic inquiry into youth homelessness, is a form of “advocacy research” (Gilbert, 1997). I am committed to “social justice” – which, by my preferred definition, requires that I treat people fairly, respectfully and humanely and work towards the elimination of all forms of social exclusion. Having worked directly with youth who experience homelessness for several years, my theoretical and methodological approaches were influenced greatly by my community experience. My commitment to social justice led me to this project, wherein I explore concepts of social exclusion and social citizenship with youth who experience homelessness. To achieve my objectives, I employed a “social exclusion” framework, as defined by Silver and Miller (2003) and used a “methods from the margins” approach, as developed by Kirby and McKenna (1989).

To understand how and why I approached this project in the way I did, I feel a bit of background information would help. I will start with a brief account of my

experiences collecting data for my Master's (MA) degree. For my MA, I interviewed youth in downtown Toronto about their experiences with employment training programs for homeless youth. I was new to the research endeavor with youth who were homeless, and quite admittedly, naïve in this process. Prior to my MA, I had worked with marginal and homeless youth, but in alternative schools settings. Never had I traveled the streets looking to speak with youth who were homeless. First lesson learned – “homeless youth” most often do not “look homeless.” Second lesson learned – there are grievous visible levels of poverty and inequality in Toronto. Even though I had taken my undergraduate degree in sociology, and worked with marginal youth and in a soup kitchen, there was something about the experiences in Toronto that startled me. Walking in the financial district with nicely dressed business people surrounded by wealth and opulence while individuals slept on the street over heating vents struck me as highly problematic. I found it particularly troublesome that passersby continued on their way and walked past the sleeping individuals as though these persons did not exist. I found it even more disconcerting to see homeless individuals ask passersby for change and be ignored or treated curtly by those they approached. These events led me to ponder our society's commitment to equality, fairness and justice. These events were also important for me as an academic and as an advocate. I began to explore what I could do that would allow me to blend my academic training with advocacy on behalf of the homeless.

For this project, I sought to explore whether youth who are homeless experience social exclusion. Having worked with youth who were homeless, I believed that the term captured some important aspects of their experiences.

However, I sought to explore if the youths themselves saw the term as useful and/or would employ it when describing their experiences. As such, I began with the academic concept of social exclusion upon which this project was to be built: a deductive approach. I introduced this concept to youth in focus groups and worked to build the remainder of the project inductively, allowing themes and questions to emerge from the data.

Throughout this work I refer to key concepts such as social exclusion and social citizenship. I chose to employ the term “social exclusion” with the reasoning that its antonym - “social inclusion” - is an integral aspect of social justice. Social exclusion, as I utilize the term, implies social injustice – unfairness, inequality, marginalization, discrimination, stigma and/or a denial of “social citizenship.” In the pages that follow, I examine the nexus between social exclusion and social citizenship. I consider how social exclusion might limit or restrict the ability of youths who are homeless to claim the rights that are associated with social citizenship and the implications of this situation in relation to the quest for social justice.

Although I perceive utility in the concept “social exclusion,” I acknowledge that this term has been described as woefully imprecise. For example, in lamenting that the term has been defined in many different and “all encompassing” ways, Prasad (2003:150) concludes, “[i]t seems that social exclusion is merely a metaphor, covering an unspecified range of problems.” Similarly, Levitas (1999:10) observes that “[p]art of the difficulty of finding indicators of social exclusion is that there is no agreed definition either of the phenomenon itself or of its main causes.” However,

while Arthurson (2003) charges that the term is “inadequate when merely used to describe pockets of poverty and disadvantage” and “as an academic concept ... provides little advantage compared to other widely used concepts, such as poverty,” she concedes that this term does, to its credit, “emphasize relational factors that shape material and cultural deprivation.” As she observes, “[i]n stressing the interconnected aspects of deprivation, the concept of social exclusion can be used to endorse policies that seek to adopt a multi-agency or ‘joined up’ government approach in which problems are not tackled in isolation but addressed at the source” (7).

As noted above, my work is influenced by my commitment to social justice as outlined in the work of Young (1999; 2001) who notes that social justice should not focus solely on meeting basic needs and the redistribution of goods, but also on recognition; i.e. the idea that members of society should be treated with respect and dignity. I acknowledge that there are several different versions of social justice, with each adopting ways to make society more just. My approach involves a political stance with particular views on equality and fairness that may differ from others. My approach to social justice is participatory in its approach and focuses on the forms of equality and respect that include the perspectives of those who are marginal, or “socially excluded.” I use “social exclusion” as an omnibus term that captures the key concepts of poverty, marginalization and injustice.

My dissertation focuses on the public issue of youth homelessness, as understood by youth (ages 16-25) who have experienced it in the Tri-Cities area (Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge) in Ontario, Canada. It is my contention that youth

homelessness should be understood as a public issue that, at present, is not appropriately addressed by Canada's federal and provincial governments. In Canada, youth who leave home, often not by choice, may face extreme poverty and marginalization. Further, I propose that youth who experience homelessness might also experience "social exclusion" (Silver & Miller, 2003). Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon that can include the denial of participation in social, economic, civil or cultural aspects of society. For example, an individual may be denied access to the labour market, to stable employment, to politics, etc. Social exclusion is linked to "social citizenship": the rights of an individual to social safeguards such as having access to the basic needs of life in times of need. Those who are socially excluded may have limited access to the rights of social citizenship. Inadequate state responses to youth homelessness are an example of diminished citizenship or restricted access to the rights of social citizenship.

Drawing upon the concept of social exclusion as defined by Silver and Miller (2003) my research attempts to explore youths' experiences of homelessness, in some respects at least, under their terms. The concept of "voice" is central to my discussion of youth homelessness. As used in my thesis, "voice" refers to "the right of speaking and being represented. "Voice" is the right and ability to make oneself heard and to have "one's expressions and perspectives available to others" (Britzman, 1989, as cited in Ashby, 2009: 2). Youth who experience homelessness have virtually no voice – that is, no say or input into the policies and mechanisms which various state agencies have put into place to help them. This is a problem because it denies youth the opportunity to express their ideas and have their concerns

heard about the policies and mechanisms that directly impact them. I want to empower and provide a space for voice to a group of people “who otherwise might be silent” (Bogden & Biklen, 1998: 204, as cited in Ashby, 2009: 2) A central aim of my work is to frame the project around the “voices” of youth, and to incorporate their concerns in their words into the academic literature on social exclusion. I worked within the tradition of participatory research to add to the sociological literature on youth homelessness and subjective views of lived experience. This entailed working with youth and utilizing their ideas, in their words, to frame many aspects of this project. More specifically, I used the “methods from the margins” approach developed by Kirby and McKenna (1989) to address the problem of youth homelessness from the vantage point of youth who have experienced homelessness. The methods from the margins approach emphasizes the need for reciprocity, intersubjectivity and reflexivity in the research process. It seeks to address power differentials between researchers and those that they study and to work “with” marginal groups, rather than “for” them (Alcoff, 1992)³.

In some academic and policy discussions, youth who experience homelessness are said to experience “social exclusion.” My youthful collaborators on this project did not describe their lived experiences using the term “social exclusion.” However, the impact of “social exclusion” is quite real in the lives of homeless youth. They have difficulty gaining access to for example, housing, employment, social assistance, formal protections from the state, and education (Allen, 2000; Gaetz, 2004; Gaetz, O’Grady & Buccieri, 2010; Karabanow et al., 2010). While these impacts are documented in the academic literature, I have also

directly witnessed the impact of homelessness upon youth during my many years of working directly with youth in various Ontario cities. My dissertation differs from other treatments of “social exclusion” because it examines the subject from the vantage point of youth who experience homelessness and credits these youths as experts who possess invaluable information about this phenomenon. While it is evident that youth who experience homelessness experience social exclusion, I asked them to identify the aspects of social exclusion that they considered to be the most significant, starting deductively with the concept of social exclusion. Following this, I built the themes and topics inductively with the youth, having the key concepts emerge from the data. In working with youth, I constructed a project on social exclusion using the themes that youth identified as most important in their experiences of homelessness. As mentioned, my dissertation is also an advocacy piece. It represents my desire to combine my academic training with my community-based volunteer work with marginal groups. While pursuing post-secondary studies, I remained committed to the communities in which I lived, volunteering with a host of different agencies. My work in the community humbles me. As a doctoral student whose research focuses upon youth who experience homelessness, I have been reminded daily of how privileged I am. I also recognize my indebtedness to the youths who have shared their insights with me. Their lived realities provide substance for the work that I do and may also provide me with a tangible benefit (i.e., a doctoral degree) that I cannot share with them. Nevertheless, I hope that my commitment to my collaborators, and to those who are similarly situated, is reflected throughout my dissertation.

My youth collaborators, the sample of youth in this project, are between the ages of 16 and 25, and have been without permanent, personal residence for some duration of time over the 12 months preceding the focus group or interview. In other words, they have experienced homelessness. I use the 16-25 age category as this is the bracket used by social service agencies⁴ to define “youth” who are homeless. Further, the youths in my study identified themselves as “homeless”; I did not impose this label upon them. Self-identification is a key aspect of the “methods from the margins” approach (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Youth defined the terms of their experiences with homelessness and I linked this to features of social exclusion. Building upon their observations, perspectives and insights, my research situates these youths within a matrix of structural conditions and social arrangements. I consider the impacts of homelessness both as a personal trouble and a public issue.

Gaetz et al. (2013) highlight that youth and adults experience different pathways to homelessness. A key difference is that youth are often leaving a “home” environment, through force or choice, where they have been “dependent upon adult caregivers” (3). Leaving home at a young age not only impacts a youths’ shelter, but often their family ties, friendships, education, and support systems (3). Additional reasons for youth homelessness include, but are not limited to: interpersonal violence, including abuse; poverty; homophobia; discrimination; and weak child protection systems (3-5). Therefore it is important to study youth as a special subpopulation of those who experience homelessness.

One of the ways my dissertation adds to the literature on youth homelessness is by noting age-related differences among “youth” in the experience of

homelessness. Youth who experience homelessness at 17 are likely to have very different experiences and perceptions of these experiences than youth who experience homelessness at age 25. These differences may, in part, stem from different societal expectations for youth of different ages. In tending to these differences, I report my findings using three age categories: 16-and 17-year olds (“not yet ‘adults’”), 18-year olds (“new adults”) and 19-25 year olds (“adults”). These age categories acknowledge that there are different legal markers of “adulthood” in Canada.

My research is novel in that it is grounded in the relationships that I forged with youth during the research process. The “methods from the margins” approach emphasizes the role of reflexivity and intersubjectivity, pressing researchers to be aware of their own social locations and exhorting them to build understanding through collaboration and relationships. To build relationships in the field, I engaged in two years of volunteer work with youth who have experienced homelessness in the Tri-Cities area. Once rapport had been established, I held focus groups with twelve youths at a local social service agency. The focus groups were designed to set the direction and tone of the project. Collaborating with these youth, I set the themes for the second stage of data collection, which included interviews with thirty youth. In my presentation of results, I intentionally limited my editing of the youths’ comments in the belief that doing so would violate a methods from the margins approach. However, it will be apparent within the results sections that, at times, the youths expressed their thoughts in ways that were convoluted or unclear. One of the benefits of building rapport and relationships with the youth meant I could, at times,

add context and clarity to their comments based on my additional knowledge of the youth's background or views on the matter. Together, we explored features of social exclusion, meeting the intersubjective requirement of methods from the margins. This is a novel approach to research with youth who experience homelessness.

In Chapter 2, the literature review that follows, I consider “youth homelessness” in a broad context. I begin by reviewing C. Wright Mills’ (1959) concept of the “sociological imagination,” as this sets the framework for exploring homelessness as both a “private trouble” and a “public issue.” To understand how and why homelessness is often constructed in negative terms, and as a private trouble, I address stereotypes of “the homeless” and link these stereotypes to social constructs of “the poor.” I next direct attention to the so-called “old” and “new” homeless and examine how these constructs are anchored in, respectively, individualistic and structural explanations of homelessness. I then move to a consideration of the social constructs of “childhood” and “adolescence” and suggest how these age-related social categories complicate our understanding of youths who experience homelessness. In the final section of this chapter, I briefly review previous research on youth homelessness and suggest how my research extends this body of knowledge.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the concepts “social exclusion” and “social citizenship.” I propose that it is useful to conceptualize youth who are homeless as socially excluded⁵ and to understand their exclusion as restricting their social citizenship. Social citizenship entails not just a set of rights, protections and safeguards allotted to citizens by the state, but also recognition as a valued

member of one's community (Fraser, 2010). It entails being treated with dignity and respect as a "citizen." Social exclusion restricts or limits social citizenship. To understand the relationship between social exclusion and social citizenship, it is necessary to understand the nature and role of the state in modern democracies like Canada. To contextualize current restrictions to social citizenship, I provide an overview of the shifting nature and role of the Canadian state, from a relatively generous welfare state liberalism to a more market-oriented neo-liberalism. I additionally review the literature on social exclusion and homelessness and consider anti-homeless laws in this context.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology that I use in this research and provides an overview of the project. As noted above, I decided to use a methods from the margins approach, because it prioritizes the voices of my collaborators in the research process and allows me to work with youth in what, I believe, is the most equitable way possible. Following my overview of methods from the margins, I outline how I conducted this research; two years of field work, followed by focus groups (N=12) and one-on-one interviews (N=30) with youth. The themes of this project were organized inductively using NVIVO. All themes were member checked with the youth.

I report the results of my research and discuss the implications of my findings in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 5 begins with a description of sample. I next present results on the intertwined themes of independence and dependence, noting that some youths claimed that their experiences of homelessness have made them more "independent" and "mature" than youth who lacked this experience. However, while

homelessness thrusts youth into adult-like roles, they are less notably “independent” than “dependent.” They simply shift their dependence from the family unit to the state, relying largely on the state and social service agencies for basic subsistence, including food and shelter.

Chapter 6 examines the relationship between age and homelessness. I note, for example, that when compared to “adults” and “new adults,” the “not yet adults” subset of my respondents spoke more positively about the shelter systems. In addition, I report that youth who have experienced homelessness distinguish between themselves and their older counterparts on the basis of age and express harsher opinions of older individuals who experience homelessness. Thus, while maintaining that youth homelessness was best framed as a public issue, they were apt to view the homelessness of older individuals as a private trouble, a consequence of the personal deficiencies of the older homeless. I conclude this chapter by considering youths’ reports of their experiences in adult-based shelters and their pleas for more youth-specific options.

Chapter 7, on the “rights and wrongs” of homelessness, I begin by presenting youths’ understanding of the “rights” they possess and the ways in which their rights as social citizens are restricted because of their age and/or homelessness. As well, I discuss how “not yet ‘adults’” (i.e. youths under age 18) are excluded in terms of social policy. This chapter also examines youths’ understandings of homelessness as a stigmatized identity and discusses the impact this has on their lives.

In Chapter 8, I summarize the main findings of my research and outline how it augments the scholarly literature on youth homeless in terms of theory, methods and research findings. To be specific:

Methodologically: my use of methods from the margins presents a novel way of exploring of youth homelessness and social exclusion. This approach requires the building of relationships with a marginalized group and the purposeful inclusion of their voices in all stages of the research process. Methods from the margins would seem a particularly desirable method for those who wish to combine social justice advocacy and academic research.

Theoretically: while others have applied social exclusion to youth homelessness, my work is innovative in that it teases out specific features of social exclusion and links them to social citizenship. It emphasizes that youth homelessness is a “public issue”: it entails exclusion from rights, protections and social safeguards - all of which are markers of social citizenship. It acknowledges the limits of using the concept of “social exclusion” with youth who experience homelessness.

Substantive Findings: While social exclusion is an applicable concept to explore youth homelessness, none of the youth in this project described their experiences with this term. I think this is an important finding, as homeless youth are described as socially excluded in both policy and academic work, however, youth themselves do not define their lives in such terms. Rather, the youth respondents used terms such as independence, dependence, poverty, stigma, and unfairness. It is clear that youth who are homeless have restricted access to resources and rights, and are treated unkindly by others. However, if the youth do not use or describe their

experiences in terms of “social exclusion” one may question the what the implications might be of framing homelessness in such terms. This is an important finding that questions the utility of “social exclusion” in reference to youth homelessness.

Although the youth participants did not use the term “social exclusion” they discussed topics that reflect being disconnected from their communities and having limited access to resources and rights. While my youthful collaborators perceived themselves to be more independent and mature than their domiciled peers, this claim was countered by their reliance upon the state for basic subsistence. Their discussions of social assistance, social service agencies and shelters also suggest the import of state investments in anti-poverty, anti-homelessness measures. Their experiences also highlight the limitations of extant services, and the hardships that homeless youths confront because of restrictive social policies. My work also suggests the utility of tending to the various legal benchmarks that signal “adulthood” when considering “homeless youth.” Although youths age 16 to 25 may all be labeled as “homeless youth” by social service agencies, “not yet ‘adults,” “new adults,” and “adults” may experience homelessness differently. Finally, I describe the limitations of my work, review various social policy options that have been advocated as solutions to homelessness and advance recommendations for addressing youth homelessness in a Canadian context. Underlying all of this is my belief that youth homelessness must be understood as a public issue rather than a private trouble.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Much of how we understand our daily lives is influenced by social constructions, by how groups create meaning in society (Cronley, 2010: 320). In contemporary Canadian society, the social construct “youth” as it is used by the general population, emphasizes the immaturity of persons below a certain age, conventionally defined as age 18. They are likewise seen to be dependent. Youth are understood to require adult guidance and supervision and to benefit from the socio-emotional and financial support adults provide. Yet, when the adjective “homeless” is affixed to the term youth, a different set of assumptions tends to hold sway. Rather than being viewed as a group that requires and is deserving of support, “homeless youth” may be stereotyped as delinquent and/or dangerous, in need of monitoring and control.

Social constructions of “homeless youth” are important. They impact our individual responses to youth who are homeless and influence our understanding and assessment of social policies and programs that target this subgroup of youth. Indeed, Cronley (2010: 320) notes that social constructions tend to be particularly influential in the realm of policy development, and claims that social policies are “based less on empirically derived knowledge and more on public perceptions of homelessness” (320). A good example of this is homeless youth. Youth homelessness is often understood as an individual trouble. It is commonly assumed that a subgroup of youth possess personal qualities or attributes that result in their becoming homeless. This view of youth homelessness faults the homeless for the misfortunes they experience. Yet, it is possible to understand youth homelessness

quite differently; i.e. as a public issue embedded in structural components of the social order. People become or remain homeless because in some respects “the system” fails them.

Throughout this dissertation, it will be apparent that I wish to position myself as an advocate for youth who are homeless. Although I recognize the potential value of individual-level explanations⁶ of youth homelessness, my focus is broader and directs attention to youth homelessness as a social problem or public issue. This research is anchored in my beliefs that all Canadians deserve adequate food and shelter and that homelessness entails a deprivation of a fundamental necessity of life. My literature review begins with an acknowledgment of my indebtedness to C. Wright Mills (1959) for his writings on the “sociological imagination,” and concepts of “private troubles” and “public issues.” Inasmuch as poverty is often at the base of homelessness, I examine stereotypes of the poor and suggest that these stereotypes help to render the homeless “socially excluded” and prevent them from claiming all of the benefits of social citizenship. I introduce the constructs of the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor and suggest how these and similar divisions frame understandings of homeless youth. I provide a brief review of scholarly findings on pathways to homelessness. Further, I note how social constructions of “youth” contour understandings of youth who are homeless in particular, and ultimately influence state policies on youth homelessness. In doing so, I emphasize that Canada’s current response to homeless youth may intensify the marginalization and social exclusion that these young Canadians experience.

The Sociological Imagination

According to C. Wright Mills (1959:6), the sociological imagination “enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise.” For Mills, the sociological imagination is “the most fruitful form of self-consciousness” for it represents

the capacity to shift from one perspective to another – from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to a comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an oil industry to the studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self – and to see the relations between the two (p.7).

However, Mills (1959:9) suggested that “[p]erhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between ‘the personal troubles of milieu’ and ‘the public issue of social structure’ and he identified this distinction as the “essential tool of the sociological imagination.” A “trouble,” as Mills (1959:8) defined the term, is a “private matter” that occurs “within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others.” As such, he writes, “the statement and the resolution of troubles properly lie within the individual as a biographical entity and within the scope of his immediate milieu – the social setting that is directly open to his personal experiences and to some extent his willful activity.” An issue, Mills (1959:9) contends, “is a public matter”: some value cherished by publics is felt to be threatened,” even though the “value” and the “threat” are often points of debate. “Issues,” Mills reports, “transcend the “inner lives” and “local environments” of individuals. They have to do with the

organization of many such milieu into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieu overlap and interpenetrate to form the large structure of social and historical life” (9).

It is helpful to distinguish issues and troubles through a structural lens. The distinction between “troubles” and “issues” refers to choice and opportunity in the social order. A personal trouble occurs when choices and opportunities are available to an individual, but are not achievable due to personal inadequacies or flaws. A person may choose not to pursue opportunities. However, a personal trouble can be considered a public issue when a choice or opportunity is present but cannot be utilized or obtained due to structural and/or historical conditions and is something experienced by many. For example, if a youth is unemployed in a strong economy, one might claim this is a choice, that he/she does not want to work or that the person lacks the rights skills, attitude, etc. This would render the youth joblessness as a private trouble. However, youth unemployment may also be explained through a volatile or limited labour market, linking this to structural features of society. When large numbers of youth cannot find work, then youth unemployment is a public issue.

Mills’ concepts are useful for they remind us to think about the broader social forces that impact our lives and those of others. As Mills (1959:24) notes, “[t]he first fruit of this imagination – and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it – is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate by locating himself within this period, that he can know his own chance in life by becoming more aware of those of all individual in his circumstances.”

Understanding the ‘Undesirable’ – The Poor, Poverty and Homelessness

In Canada, common understandings of “the homeless” often reflect negative stereotypes. Some people seem to think homelessness is a personal choice, or the result of “bad” choices of an individual. This constitutes homelessness as a personal trouble. For example, a study by Baldus and Tribe (1995) noted that by the time Canadian schoolchildren reach grade 6, the majority have “learned to recognize and classify people and their environment in a context of social inequality.” By this age children had already acquired negative attitudes towards poor people, expecting them to be disagreeable, unlovely, and unlovable. Likewise, Lips (2005: 31) reported that lower-class women were more likely than middle-class women to be viewed as “confused, dirty, hostile, illogical, impulsive, incoherent, inconsiderate, irresponsible, and superstitious.” Working-class males were stereotyped as chauvinistic, inarticulate “exemplars of old-fashioned, defiant, aggressive masculinity” (Lips, 2005). There is also evidence that these types of stereotypes may impact our beliefs about why the poor are poor and may result in unwillingness to support progressive welfare policies. Cozzarelli et al., (2002) examined the views of 206 middle-class undergraduates about the poor and found that their participants were more likely to attribute the poverty of both men and women to personal rather than external/cultural factors. Such studies support the idea that there are negative stereotypes of those who are poor and/or homeless.

Consistent with the ideology of “victim blaming” (Ryan, 1971), stereotypes locate the cause of homelessness in the putatively “dysfunctional,” “deviant,” or maladaptive characteristics of individuals. Stereotypes of homelessness blame the

individual and offer little consideration of the family, school, labour market, or other variables that may have contributed to youths' homeless status. The scholarly literature on citizenship and the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion offer partial explanations for such negative constructions of "the homeless." My dissertation focuses on youth who experience homelessness and their views of/experiences with social exclusion.

The problem of youth homelessness is tied to the state, as it includes the responsibilities and rights of the individual in relation to the state, and state-structured supports to address poverty and marginalization. The constructs "citizen" and "citizenship" direct attention to the relationship between individuals and the state (Adams, 2003; Brodie, 2002; Feldman, 2004; Palley, 2005). To be a "citizen" is to possess both rights and responsibilities. Stereotypes of "the homeless" suggest that these individuals avoid the responsibilities of citizenships (Feldman, 2004; Mitchell, 2003). Therefore, such individuals are conceptualized as social "burdens" and as "irresponsible" beings who are either incapable or unwilling to perform economically and socially "productive" roles. Further, these stereotypes subtly encourage those who are not homeless to believe that "the homeless" have forfeited their "right" to some or all of the benefits that "citizenship" confers. By stressing their apparent rejection of the responsibilities of citizenship, stereotypes of homeless individuals encourage the positioning of homeless people as Other (Sartre, 1943) or as "non-citizens." In affluent societies that revere materialism and consumerism, homeless individuals are viewed as "out of place." These values underwrite commonly held views that those who possess income, employment and housing

deserve our admiration while those who do not merit our disdain. Individuals who experience homelessness may be viewed as “deviants,” public “nuisances”, social “liabilities” and/or a “drain” on the public purse. Such views may also encourage people to support laws and social policies that fail to acknowledge the rights of the homeless and/or effectively criminalize their actions and lifestyles.

Homeless individuals constitute one of the most destitute populations in Canadian society. Yet, as Lyon-Callo (2004:15) observes, the current neo-liberal⁷ climate encourages limited supports from the state for those who are impoverished and offers little support for the consideration of systemic inequalities. Rather, neo-liberalism encourages individuals to view social inequities as the inevitable by-product of a social world in which certain groups “deserve” rewards and others do not. According to Morris (1994: 60), neo-liberalism works to direct attention away from structural inequalities and towards the putative failings of individuals who experience homelessness. Moreover, as Morris (1994:60) notes, a “kindly treatment” of poverty cannot co-exist with the disparagement of the poor; one or the other always prevails.

Neo-liberal ideologies encourage the entrenchment into the public consciousness of the twinned constructs of the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor. The former term refers to those who are not viewed as culpable for their own impoverishment and who are thus, considered “deserving” of state assistance (e.g. elderly widows, young children). The “undeserving poor,” on the other hand, are thought cause their own impoverishment through their “laziness,” “sloth,” “irresponsibility,” and/or “dissipated” lifestyles. They may be viewed as

dysfunctional individuals who become homeless due to factors such as substance abuse or mental illness or who elect to become homeless as a lifestyle choice. In examining the constructs of the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor, Cortese (2003: 67) emphasizes that political meanings permeate this language. The way these ideas are framed impacts public understandings of the homeless as legitimate or illegitimate claimants of state assistance and other forms of social justice. These understandings may reflect social policy responses to homelessness that provide for assistance to those deemed to be “deserving” and for the discipline of the “undeserving” (Feldman, 2004).

Further dichotomies related to the construction and treatment of homelessness include the public/private divide of public space and private space/property. The private realm, Mosher (2002: 45) explains, establishes a framework for social exclusion via the legal constructs of “private property” and “exclusive rights to possession.” Unlike domiciled individuals, the homeless do not possess a territorial space which safeguards their privacy and protects their dignity. As Mosher points out, those who lack property and privacy are often constructed as unworthy of controlling anything (49). They may also be cast as the fitting targets of subjugation and control by others.

Individuals who are homeless live their lives in very public settings. For example, if a homeless individual looks scruffy or smells acrid, it may be because she or he lacks the ready access the domiciled have to bathrooms, laundry rooms and all the paraphernalia that are found in these settings. Nevertheless, their appearance may suggest, to some, that homeless individuals are either indifferent to, or

contemptuous off, norms of hygiene. Similarly, youths who ask a passersby, “Do you have any spare change?” may be assumed to be lazy, or connivers who are seeking to satisfy their hunger for drugs rather than food or shelter. It is Feldman’s (2004: 10) point that under capitalism, homeless individuals are considered a “threat” as they are seen to have deliberately positioned themselves outside of the capitalist, consumerist reward system. For example, panhandling, the act of asking for change on the street, is now controlled through the *Ontario Safe Streets Act, 2000*. The person asking for change, often in a state of poverty, can be fined for engaging in such subsistence strategies. The criminalization of begging suggests society’s failure to recognize the dire circumstances that some Canadians confront daily. It additionally fails to acknowledge that begging is a survival strategy that the indigent have long employed in their attempts to survive (Cortese, 2003: 85). Homelessness, in this view, is an individual choice and a personal trouble. Moreover, it is a situation requiring “punishment” rather than “assistance.”

Mosher (2002: 52) argues that homeless individuals are often constructed as Other: as persons who stand outside of the existing social order and threaten its existence. It also contributes to the exclusion of homeless persons from both public spaces and consciousness (Mosher, 2002). The othering process additionally encourages constructions of homeless individuals as “other than citizens”: as persons who are not “entitled” to essential goods and services. Such constructions heighten the vulnerability of this group to economic, social and political marginalization and stigmatization (Feldman, 2004).

Homelessness and the homeless are also construed as “deviant.”

Homelessness violates the norms of the social order, as individuals who are homeless are constructed as not following the conventional means to, for example, make money, tend to personal hygiene, have secure places to sleep, etc. However, as Becker (1963: 9) reminds us, “deviance” is ushered into being by social reactions:

Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an “offender.”

For Becker, “(t)he deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label” (9). Further, Cooper (2004) claims that homeless individuals are susceptible to being viewed as nuisances and suggests that this reflects their lack of institutional power. The presence of the visibly homeless may be construed as an infringement upon the rights of housed individuals to walk through urban landscapes without fear of being assailed by homeless persons. Why should a housed individual be inconvenienced by the “choices” of homeless individuals? Cooper notes that homeless individuals may also be viewed as an impediment to the safeguards of capitalism, materialism and consumerism. Thus, they may be viewed as “obstacles” that hinder the ability of shoppers to consume. As non-shoppers, homeless individuals may seem to constitute “social junk” (Spitzer, 1975). These perceptions facilitate and exacerbate the marginalization of homeless individuals and increase their vulnerability to various forms of social exclusion. Thus, negative understandings of homelessness may reflect the valorization of the consumption norms within Canada as a developed,

affluent society, as homeless individuals are neither producers or consumers.

Homelessness as “other”, as “deviant,” as nuisance and as “obstacle” highlight the negative constructions of homelessness. In general, homelessness is cast in negative terms, however, this is further complicated when those who are homeless are young.

Despite pronouncements that paradoxically declare “children” to be our country’s “greatest national resource,” homeless youth are sometimes described as a population to be treasured than as an unruly and dangerous “mob” that requires “care” and control. In this context, the term “care” is a euphemism for “discipline” and the favouring of a correctional or law-and-order approach (Karabanow, 2010: 140). Claiming that adult society is generally fearful of the young, Schissel (2006:32) pointedly notes that if “the public views youth as dangerous and criminal they are less likely to be sympathetic to the increasingly dire economic situation that today’s youth face, and are more likely to favour law-and-order” approaches to youth misconduct rather than “social investment” programs. In like fashion, Karabanow (2010: 140) charges that street youth are commonly viewed by politicians, along with law enforcement and child protection agencies, as “menaces in need of punishment and correction.” Youth homelessness, much like homelessness in general, is cast as a private trouble based on individual choice, rather than a public issue with structural roots. Understanding the pathways that led one to being homeless may add clarity to the discussion of homelessness as a public issue and homeless youth as socially excluded.

The “Homeless” and Pathways to Homelessness

“Homelessness” can be defined in a variety of ways. Does “homeless” mean being without a personal shelter? A permanent shelter? A place to call home? Possession of one’s own bed? A place to shower? A place without friends or family? The term is obviously difficult to define. This section reviews the literature on the explanations of homelessness in general; a subsequent section addresses the explanations of youth homelessness more specifically.

Many scholars have attempted to define what being “homeless” means and what it entails. The Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012: 1) offers the following as a definition of homelessness:

(h)omelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it... Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other.

To be homeless is to be without a “home.” Hulchanski (2009: 2) defines “home” as “social, psychological space not just a house as a physical structure.” As such, “homeless” would also imply the absence of all of these physical and socio-emotional comforts and supports.

“Homelessness” is a social construct. It is therefore not surprising that the meaning of “homelessness” has shifted over time and/or that variant terms have emerged to capture or describe it. For example, in recent decades academics have often suggested that a distinction can be made between the “old” and “new” forms of homelessness. The former is described as more homogenous in its demographics but

not necessarily un-housed and the latter, as being more diverse in its membership and as experiencing a broader range of social problems that are associated with an “absolute lack of housing” and/or “living in shelters and related temporary quarters” (Rossi, 1990: 955). The “old homeless” have been described as a group which consisted mostly of single, transient men “with few or no ties to a family group” who lived “without the economic or social support [that] a family home normally provides” in poor quality, “Skid Row” type housing in urban areas (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto as cited in Hulchanski, 2009: 2). The lifestyle of the “old homeless” was illustrated in Anderson’s (1923) now-classic ethnography, *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man*. In examining the lifestyles of “hobos,” “tramps” and “bums,” Anderson depicted homelessness as occurring in geographically defined and isolated areas that were primarily inhabited by older, typically white males who occupied socially “deviant” roles with the status of “outcasts” (e.g., alcoholics, drug addicts) (Anderson, 1923, 1998). In Anderson’s work, the causes of homelessness were tied to lifestyle and portrayed as the result of a combination of factors including job scarcity, the limits of industry, discrimination, personality defects, life crises, and “wanderlust.” Thus, Anderson (1923) noticeably acknowledged the import of both micro- and macro-level factors in his explanation of homelessness.

In general terms, the “old” homelessness was understood as primarily impacting men, especially older white men, and as concentrated in distinctive urban areas (i.e., “Skid Row”). Women and children did not loom large in Anderson’s ethnography; rather, they were noticeable by their absence. In addition, the

availability of housing was not a central concern of Anderson's study. To employ C. Wright Mills' (1959) classic distinction, "homelessness" was not seen as a "social problem"; rather, was understood to be a "private trouble." This conceptualization shifted in the 1970s (the United States) and 1980s (Canada).

Hulchanski (2009: 3) observes that until the 1980's, Canada's governments focused less attention on "homelessness" per se than on the need for "rehousing." He notes that in the aftermath of WWII, Canada established a stable mortgage system, social housing and private-sector rental units and a strong social safety net. All of these developments were congruent with a Keynesian welfare state. In this country, "homelessness" would emerge as a "social problem" only in the 1980s, when Canada's social safety net began to unravel following government cutbacks to housing supports and other social programming. In the aftermath of Canada's shift from a Keynesian welfare state to neo-liberalism (Hulchanski, 2009: 4) "homelessness" also changed. In contrast to the "old homeless," who resided in dilapidated forms of housing in seedy areas of a city, the "new homeless" were bereft of any form of housing. As Rossi (1990: 956) observes, "the "new" homeless could be seen sleeping in cardboard boxes, in abandoned cars, or resting in railroad or bus stations or in other public places, indications of a resurgent homelessness of which hardly anyone could remain oblivious." The demographics of the homeless also changed. No longer was this population composed of adult white male inebriates; the "new homeless" included women, youth, families and ethnic and/or "racial" minorities.

The emergence of the “new homelessness” invigorated debates on the causes of homelessness, with some arguing that the phenomenon was the result of individual pathologies and others directing attention to social structural⁸ factors and the import of changes in law, economy, politics and/or ideology (Allen, 2000; Carlen, 1996; Jones, 1997; Wright, 1997). Nevertheless, Timmer (cited in Main, 1998: 43) reported that individualized explanations of homelessness prevailed in the 1990’s, with emphasis placed on the dysfunctional characteristics of those who were homeless (e.g., substance abuse, mental instability, slothfulness). The problem with this approach, Timmer observed, is that it ignored the structural forces pushed people into marginal social positions and, in turn, encouraged the exacerbation of substance abuse problems, depressive states and so on. It is also evident that a focus upon the failings of individuals discouraged consideration of how, for example, labour markets, housing shortages, and globalization had impacted homelessness.

Wright, Rubin and Devine (1998) outline three central approaches adopted by academics in their attempts to explain the causes of homelessness. “Conservative-traditional” theorists view the homeless as culpable for their dismal social and economic state. “Centrist-service” theorists likewise embrace individualistic explanations of homelessness, but their approach can be distinguished from the “Conservative-traditionalist” approach by its “therapeutic” rather than punitive posture towards homeless individuals. Thus, those who adopt the “Centrist-service” approach boldly announce that their intention is to assist and “reform” the homeless individual so that he or she will become a “productive” member of society. By

comparison, “social structural” theorists aim to evaluate and, ideally, eliminate the social, political, and economic forces which result in homelessness and the victimization and marginalization of the homeless (Wright et al., 1998: 13).

Individualistic Explanations of Homelessness

Baum and Burnes’ (1993) U.S. study, *A Nation in Denial: The Truth about Homelessness* is illustrative of the “Conservative-traditional” approach. It maintains that homelessness stems from the failure of individuals to conduct themselves as responsible and productive members of society. According to Baum and Burnes, homeless persons possess various deficiencies which prevent them from maintaining employment and obtaining/retaining housing and blames them for the social exclusion they experience. In their view, America’s homeless population in the early 1990’s primarily consisted of single white men⁹ whose downward drift was often precipitated by substance abuse, family instability, domestic violence and mental instability (1993:28). They claim that the rate of alcoholism among America’s homeless population was six to seven times higher than that of housed individuals; alcoholism, they note, led to the loss of jobs, families, and secure housing (17) . These researchers claim likewise that drug abuse is as common amongst the “new” homeless as alcoholism was amongst the “old.”¹⁰ It is Baum and Burnes’ contention that substance abuse and mental illness should be recognized as primary causes of homelessness (132).

In contrast, Mitchell (2003) suggests that explanations of homelessness which emphasize the failings of the homeless are limited in their utility. According to Mitchell (179), these types of explanations depict the homeless and/or the

potentially homeless as “wasted humans” who are beset by personal demons that prevent them “realizing any part of the affluence of the post-war period.”

Two Canadian studies are suggestive of the “Centrist-service” approach. The first, a longitudinal study of different “types” of homeless individuals and their housing trajectories in Canada (Aubry, Klodawsky & Coulbombe, 2012: 142), identified persons with substance abuse issues as the group which had the most difficulty obtaining stable housing. While this study did not examine the initial cause of homelessness amongst those they studied, it did suggest that exiting homelessness is more difficult for those who struggle with substance abuse. The second study, conducted by Finfgeld-Connett, Bloom and Johnson (2012), reported that 82 percent of their sample of 193 homeless women in three Canadian cities experienced at least one substance abuse issue. They also observed that it is not “unusual for substance abuse to emerge once a woman becomes homeless” (420). Both of these studies note that substance use complicates the transition from homelessness, and direct attention to the importance of tending to substance abuse among the homeless. However, neither identifies substance abuse as the main or sole cause of homelessness.

Johnson and Chamberlain (2011: 30) note that “(i)n the international literature, it is widely recognized that people with mental health issues are over-represented in the homeless population.” Their Australia-based study of homelessness questioned the temporal ordering of homelessness and mental illness, suggesting that mental health problems may be prompted by homelessness rather than the other way round. They claim that “framing mental illness as the primary

cause of homelessness renders homeless people as a series of unfortunate cases who need charitable support.” According to these scholars, this framing of homelessness “not only individualizes the problem of homelessness but depoliticizes it” (36).

Nevertheless, others speculate a causal link between mental illness and homelessness. For example, Rossi (1990) suggests that mental illness hinders functioning in the social world and, by doing so, is a precipitant of homelessness. Similarly, while, Baum and Burnes (1993: 24) observe that mentally ill individuals may be discharged from residential treatment centres before they are ready to live independently and without adequate provisions made for follow-up services, they do not linger on how homelessness may be impacted by policies of deinstitutionalization or other factors that reside beyond the individual. Rather, they fault mentally ill persons who become homeless and suggest that these individuals fail to use their prescribed medicines and/or seek out available treatments and services.

While mental illness and substance abuse may impact homelessness in various ways, it would be unfounded to claim that these are its sole or primary causes (Snow, Anderson & Koegel, 1994:461; Wright et al., 1998). As Lyon-Callo (2004: 46-47) explains, a focus upon reforming individuals may obscure consideration of larger, systemic factors such as medical and mental health support systems.

Structural Approaches to Homelessness

Those who favour the social structural approach to homelessness look to macro-level forces as causal factors (Wright et al., 1998). Arnold (2004: 99) argues

that those who portray homelessness as the result individual failings ignore the impact of broader social developments such as, for example, changes in the availability of affordable housing, the impact of globalization and shifts in the labour market.

From a social structural orientation, the major causes/correlates of homelessness in developed industrialized countries such as Canada and the United States include, but are not limited to: poverty, deinstitutionalization policies in relation to the mentally ill, underemployment/unemployment, the limit availability of affordable housing and the increasing restrictiveness of social welfare programs (Allen, 2000; Cortese, 2003; Lyon-Callo, 2004; O'Reilly-Fleming, 1993; Wagner, 1997; Wright, 1997; Wright et al., 1998). The social structural approach to homelessness emphasizes the importance of supports a nation provides to its citizens. It focuses, in particular, on the shift from post-war Keynesian social welfare policies to the emergence of neo-liberalism in Canada in the 1970's. In a Keynesian welfare state, they note, the government plays a central role in regulating the economy and providing social programs. As envisaged by economist John Maynard Keynes, this model of the welfare state proposed that governments intervene between their citizens and capitalism and engage in "a political compromise with the working classes":

This compromise included the goals of moderating the business cycle (to prevent a repeat of the unrest of the 1930s), helping rebuild the war-destroyed economies of Europe (to ensure the re-establishment of capitalism), and containing or diminishing the growing interest in socialism stemming from the experience of the 1930s and the devastation of war (Keynes as quoted in Teeple, 2000:400).

However, if the creation of the welfare state in Canada following World War II allowed for the amelioration of “the worst effects of economic inequality and...placate[d] resistance to all political and social implications of such inequality” (Teeple, 2000: 422), neo-liberalism notably strengthens the power of the private sector and limits the role of the state in governing the economy (McKenzie & Wharf, 2010).

According to Pulingham and Ternowetsky (1999: 85), neo-liberal ideology entails “a preoccupation with market conditions, active labour markets and employment policies and a retreat from the principle of full, or near full employment.” As governments shift to neo-liberal policies in the 1970’s, attention was directed to minimizing public expenditures and program costs. The rise, acceptance, and promotion of neo-liberal social policies in Canada coincided with the globalization of capital that directly impacted the labour market of many western (and non-western) nations (McKenzie & Wharf, 2010). Globalization is the process of integrating economies across international boundaries in social, political and cultural terms (Arnold, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Forrest, 1999). As Cortese (2003:55) explains, in the context of global markets, free trade, deregulation and privatization are vigorously promoted by governments and controlled/dominated by multinational firms with minimal or no ties to local communities. Arnold (2004: 97, 142) picks up this argument and claims that the new dynamics of globalization, as fostered by neo-liberal social policies, permit and promote an unstable service economy, exacerbating inequalities, particularly in the world of work. In Canada, the

combination of a weakened local economy pursuant to globalization and a more restrictive social safety net restrict upward mobility.

Broad and Antony (1999) claim that these developments are best explained with reference to a post-1970s reassertion of power by corporate capital and other dominant financial/economic groups. Keynesianism dominated in Canada from the 1940's until the 1970's, promoting state intervention in economic planning and the pursuit of full employment for citizens (Morris, 1996: 31). The current dismantling of the social safety net is thought to be reflective of the views of those in dominant positions who favour neo-liberalism over Keynesianism. Neo-liberal governments legislated to erode the social safety net, while policy directions shifted responsibility for the care of the community to local levels of government. Broad and Antony (1999) additionally maintain that these neo-liberal social increased the precariousness of life for marginal groups and increased the risk that many would experience homelessness.

Under neo-liberalism, individuals are expected to be self-sufficient and rely minimally on the state. One of the key components of economic well-being and sustainability is employment. However, broad shifts in the labour market over the past few decades have included lower percentages of high(er) wage positions; an increase in low pay, temporary, service, and part-time employment; lower levels of unionization; and, in some sectors, few, if any job benefits (Arnold, 2004; Forrest, 1999; Molloy, 2002; Tanner, 2001). Tanner (2001) notes that this trend coincides with structural unemployment, with unemployment rates persistently and perhaps, permanently, high because there are too many people to fill too few positions.

Moreover, Tanner (2001: 131) emphasizes that since the 1970's young Canadians have been impacted by these developments and experienced higher levels of unemployment than seen in earlier decades. Instability in the labour market may be related to precariousness in other aspects of life, including general economic stability and secure housing. Some groups, notably youth, are especially vulnerable to shifts in the labour market due to their age, lack of experience and limited education. Cortese (2003: 57) notes that pronounced labour market shifts in the 1990's left relatively few with employment security. More recently, in the 2008-09 recession, more than 400 000 jobs were lost in the Canadian labour market (Statistics Canada, 2009), increasing the risk of homelessness due to joblessness. Factors such as age, "race," class, gender, and educational level all impact the likelihood of precarious employment within the Canadian labour market (Forrest, 1999). For example, Arnold (2004: 97, 143) notes that, in relation to gender, women tend to fill many more part-time and contract positions than men. There is also a gendered income disparity in the wages earned by young Canadians, with females aged 15 to 24 earning only 78% of the wages of their male counterparts (O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004: 398). Among older Canadians, a comparable situation may be observed. In 2008 the average income of a woman in Ontario was \$31 600, while the average yearly income of a man in that province was \$48 600 (Statistics Canada, 2012). While women were less influenced by the recession of 2008-2009 than men, gendered income disparities persist (Statistics Canada, 2009).

In relation to "race" and ethnicity, it is evident that in Canada certain groups are more likely than others to experience low-waged employment and

unemployment. Murphy (2000) notes that Aboriginal peoples experience unemployment at two times the rate of non-Aboriginals and earn approximately one-third of the wages earned by non-Aboriginals. More recently, the National Council of Welfare (2011) reported that the unemployment rate for Aboriginals in 2010 was 14.3%, compared to 7.9% among non-Aboriginals. Chui and Maheux (2012) report that racialized persons living in poverty are more likely to be married, young, highly educated, immigrants and unemployed than their non-racialized counterparts. Their examination of 2006 Census data reveals that while Canada had an overall poverty rate of 11%, the poverty rate among racialized persons, was 22%. In like fashion, while the median income in Canada in 2005 was \$27 900, for racialized persons it was \$22 400.

Precarious employment positions and limited incomes may imperil the ability of Canadians to find and/or retain secure housing. Molloy (2002: 55) notes that inadequate wages place housing out of reach for many. As defined by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2007), a household in core housing need “occupies a dwelling that does not meet adequacy, affordability, and/or suitability standards and cannot afford acceptable alternative accommodation.” In 2006, 1.494 million households, representing 12.7% of the Canadian total population, lived in core housing need (Statistics Canada, 2009). The precariousness of secure housing for the poor is implicit in Statistics Canada’s attempts to measure “poverty” in the absence of a government-defined “poverty line” through the use of the “low income cut-off “(LICO). Based on this measure, a family which spends over 70 percent of its income on essentials is presumed to be living in an impoverished situation. Such

families have only 30% of their income to cover other needs such as health care (that is not covered by provincial plans, such as, prescription drugs), education (school supplies, trips, post-secondary education), transportation, or recreation. For example, in a Canadian city with a population between 100 000 and 499 999 people in 2006, the after tax LICO for 1 person was \$14 674 (Canadian Council on Social Development, n.d.). Although some may argue that the LICO does not truly measure “poverty,” a report by the National Council of Welfare (2011) reminds us that “(a)ll measures of poverty are relative. The issue is not so much about measurement as it is about value. How poor and excluded are we willing to allow some people to be in our wealthy society?” It is evident that possessing limited income drastically restricts one’s ability to obtain and sustain housing.

Limited income restricts housing options for the poor and affordable housing options are restricted by social policy and funding. The availability of affordable housing has been drastically reduced and restricted in Western states by neo-liberal social policies and the forces of globalism (Kladowsky, 2006: 110). For example, from the end of World War II until 1993, the federal government funded the construction of over 400 000 social housing units in Canada (Gloger et al., 2004). However, Hulchanski (2009: 56) notes that while the federal government made initial cutbacks to housing in 1984, all federal government funding for affordable housing was eliminated in 1993. In the wake of this shift in government policy, which saw the federal government offload housing responsibility to the provinces, many provinces opted to severely restrict or cut funding for housing altogether. According to Cortese (2003: 93), homelessness grew during this time period as all

levels of government ceased spending on affordable housing¹¹. Overall, the failure of all levels of government to develop and maintain appropriate housing strategies for the poor/disadvantaged has established an exclusionary system of housing which leaves many people susceptible to precarious housing or homelessness.

As Cortese (2003) argues, social policies which aim to reduce both the number of people on social assistance and the amount of benefits that people may receive, increase the risk of homelessness for all Canadians, whether young or old. According to Cortese, “people who sleep in doorways or live under bridges...are a sign of public policy’s failure to adequately respond to the needs of people without homes” (83). The shortage of affordable housing makes it difficult for those of modest means to obtain rental units for they must compete with an expanding population of persons and families who are effectively forced into the rental market and forced to remain there (Lefebvre, 2002). For those who are unsuccessful in the competition for affordable rental housing, the result may be homelessness. Moreover, although various studies have found that “solving homeless costs less than managing it” (Hughes, 2012: 4), this insight has escaped many Canadian politicians. For example, the Alberta government currently “pays \$1,200 a month to give someone a mat at a Calgary shelter when it costs between \$600 and \$800 to provide the same person with an apartment” (4). This limited and, some would say misguided, social policy response is reflective of negative constructions of homelessness purveyed by neo-liberals.

Constructions of Youth and Adolescence

Adolescence and Emerging/Early Adulthood: Constructions, Legislation and Regulation

Like the concept of “homelessness”, “adolescence” and “youth” are social constructions. Understandings of youth who experience homelessness are based in part on normative conceptions of “adolescence” and “emerging adulthood.” While dominant understandings of “adolescence” position it as a “naturally” occurring life stage that follows “childhood” and precedes “adulthood,” all three denote age-linked social constructions (Cote & Allahaar, 2006). The emergence of the “life stages” that are known as “childhood” and “adolescence” are associated with social, cultural and political transitions in the development of nations. By understanding that these terms refer to social constructions that are embedded in cultural, social and historical contexts, one may better appreciate the import and impact of dominant ideologies on youth who experience homelessness.

Aries’ seminal *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) noted that while “infancy” has always been recognized as a distinct stage of life, “childhood” was not. Rather, the idea of “childhood” emerged following industrialization, urbanization and modernization. According to Aries, “childhood” first took form in upper-class families in the 16th and 17th centuries and, in the centuries that followed, slowly permeated all social classes. Aries (1962) argued that prior to the “invention” of “childhood,” children were regarded as miniature adults and believe to reach “adult” status by the age of seven. The notion of childhood “innocence”/“purity” and their corollaries (e.g., the belief that children merited special protection; a conception of

“childhood” as a time period that required coddling in the bosom of one’s biological family) are, in a historical sense, relatively modern inventions. For example, Aries noted that in many European countries it was common practice, from the fifteenth to seventeenth century, to send one’s children away at age seven to be “apprenticed” in the home of another. Within these settings, children were expected to perform menial chores, receive instruction in manners and morals and, perhaps, learn a trade. Child-rearing was not seen as the prerogative of a child’s biological parents nor of the nuclear family; rather, it was envisaged as a communal rather than privatized accomplishment.

In like fashion, Cote and Allahar (2006) report that in the late 18th and early 19th centuries Canadian children from the age of seven onwards were expected to contribute to the welfare of their families. As they got older, they were given progressively more onerous responsibilities and expected to contribute to the well-being of their households (2006). Children were considered economic assets to the household rather than liabilities and regarded as “producers” rather than “consumers” of the family’s resources (Sutherland, 1976). The role of children within the family, however, shifted with the onset of formal education systems and the emergence of child labour laws which first limited, and then prohibited the use of children as a form of inexpensive labour.

In the 20th century, formal education became a more prominent feature of Canadian society and, by 1920, the majority of Canada’s provinces had established a system of compulsory education that required youths to attend school up until the age of 16 or completion of elementary school (Sutherland, 1976). This development

reflected and refracted changed understandings of the nature of children – from unruly and uncivilized “miniature adults” to “innocents” who required protection (ideally within the family) from a cruel and sometimes heartless adult world (Lasch, 1977). It also reflected an improvement in the living standards for the working class, permitting children to attend educational institutions rather than contributing, through their labours, to the economic well-being of their families . In addition, while common law cast children as the “chattels” or property of their fathers, children became “doubly dependent” upon their parents and the state. Children were to be protected and trained, but not to have autonomy. This stance endures and finds expression in the belief that the courts, as well as other social agencies should take “a protective stance toward children rather than empowering children to care for themselves” (Children’s Legal Rights, 1993: 342).

As evidence of this posture, one may consider the rhetoric of the “child-savers” during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in both Canada and the United States. These “moral entrepreneurs” were, in the main, white Protestant middle-class women who were concerned about the dangers that “improperly socialized” children (i.e., those of the working-class and/or immigrants) posed to the nation’s “moral fibre” (Strange & Loo, 1997; Valverde, 2008). Extending the ploy of their socially validated “mothering” role, these moral reformers identified themselves as simultaneously the guardians of children and of the nation’s moral virtue (Hunt, 1999: 96). In campaigns that explicitly or implicitly targeted children of the “dangerous classes,” they championed the “saving” of children from the savageries of “vice” (broadly defined) and the urgency of “civilizing” them within custodial

care settings that would emphasize the import of conformity to middle-class standards. According to Strange and Loo (1997: 48), children were subjected to a regime of “civilization” that employed education as the primary mechanism of resocialization and social control. The practices of “industrial schools” and “training schools” reinforced patterns of economic and racialized dominance (Carrigan, 1991). According to Strange and Loo (1997), the founding of the Children’s Aid Society (Canada) in 1891 and the creation of the Juvenile Delinquency Act in 1908 revealed similar dynamics and concerns.

Like “childhood,” “adolescence” is a social construct that “naturalizes” age-linked expectations. As Cote and Allahar (2006: 2) remark, “the current common sense view of ‘adolescence’ and ‘youth’ casts them as natural and necessary stages in the life course.” Sukarieh and Tannock (2008: 303) have gone so far to argue that “(t)hroughout capitalism’s history, youth have been constructed and reconstructed both as a social concept and a social group in service of the changing needs and interests of the wealthy and powerful.” In like fashion, Fasick (1994) ties the “invention” of adolescence to capitalism, shifts in the labour market and alterations in family structure. Lesko pointedly notes that the creation of “normal adolescence” emerged around the same time as did constructs of “wayward girls” and “juvenile delinquents” and argues that these constructs all served to promote the preferred definitions of privileged groups on how young adults should or ought to act. Youths who did not conform to middle-class standards of decorum, propriety and respectability were identified by various moral entrepreneurs as, variously, “feeble-minded,” morally disordered, “wayward” and/or in a “state of delinquency” (1996:

141). These scholars remind us that in the present day, our sense of social order and “normalcy” is disturbed when youth remove themselves from governing/regulating social institutions such as the family and the school. It is important to note that this sense of “disruption” is occasioned by our acceptance of a particular historical conception of adolescence.

The scientific “discovery” of adolescence is commonly credited to G. Stanley Hall (1904), a psychologist who promoted the idea of adolescence as a life stage characterized by “storm and stress.” Hall attributed the turmoil of adolescence to genetic make-up rather than to cultural influences. According to Cote and Allahaar, Hall was convinced of the “absoluteness of the evolutionary influence over adolescents and advised adults to stand back and let the process see itself through” (2006: 16). While this “storm and stress” model of understanding adolescence has been widely refuted, it continues to resonate within current discourses on youth (Schissel, 2006). Moreover, Cote and Allahaar (2006: 17) note that understandings of adolescence that are rooted in the assumption that this life stage is riddled with biologically induced psychopathologies and mental upsets are consequential. For example, this construction of adolescence implies that youth are best regarded as not competent to engage in independent decision-making. In addition, it provides “justification” for age-based limitations on rights (e.g., the right to marry, to make medical decisions, to enter into a contract).

Social constructions of adolescence additionally specify a desired-for or “normal” development outcome. However, while these “outcomes” are often depicted in universalizing ways, the annals of history suggests that they may

promote “ideal” outcomes that are gender, race, and class-specific (Lesko, 1996: 142). For example, research has noted that the *Juvenile Delinquents Act* (1908) was enforced in ways that not only enhanced the surveillance of youth but also promoted the continuity of the status quo: “children” were to emerge from “adolescence” as disciplined and productive citizens who did not threaten or rail against dominant ideologies. At the same time, however, it is evident with hindsight that the sexual improprieties of girls were more vigorously policed than those of boys and that the children of immigrants and/or the poor were more likely to be defined as “in a state of delinquency” than the children of the native-born and well-to-do (Carrigan, 1991).

Lesko (1996: 149) argues that the implications of dominant discourses of adolescence are clear: “to mass youth together with the terms ‘coming of age’ and ‘at the threshold’ [T]his coming of age reduces human subjectivity to one dimension – age – accompanied by a shadowy evolutionary image.” Somewhat ironically, however, those who advocate for especially vigilant forms of regulation and control over the young may ground their arguments in theories that emphasize either “nature” or “nurture” (Lesko, 1996:149). With reference to the former, Lesko (1996) notes that adolescents may be viewed as slaves to their hormones (i.e., “nature”) and their behaviours attributed to “raging hormones.” This conception would suggest that inasmuch as the actions of youth are not the result of rational decision-making, youths should neither be held accountable for their actions nor entrusted to make decisions for themselves. In consequence, this construction of adolescence suggests that all one can do is anticipate bad behavior from youth and make provisions for it, with the understanding that their troublesome conduct will

pass over time. In complementary fashion, accounts of adolescence which stress the import of “nurture” depict youth as strongly peer-oriented and inordinately susceptible to the practices and attitudes of others in their age cohort. To mitigate against the possibility that a naïve youth will be led astray by the ill-considered actions of their peers, parents and other adults are urged to increase their levels of supervision and control over youth.

Although adolescence continues to be understood as the “transition” zone between “childhood” and “adulthood,” the parameters of “adolescence” have changed over the years. For example, while many Canadian youth still lived in their family homes in 1900 and contributed, by their labours, to the economic well-being their families (Cote & Allahar, 2006:5). Clark (2000: 3) emphasizes that during this time period “Canada was still a largely agricultural nation that did not put much of a premium on education. Only slightly more than half of school-aged youngsters attended school on a daily basis and more than one in 10 people could not read or write at all.” Formal education developed as an essential and required component of Canadian society. He notes that in the decades that followed,

government support of education has made elementary and secondary education universally accessible across Canada, and helped to develop a sophisticated network of universities and colleges. In addition, a wide array of private sector business and trade schools has grown up alongside these public sector institutions. By the end of the century, people with university degrees outnumbered those with less than a Grade 9 education.

Continuing this trend, approximately 81 percent of Canadian youth between the ages of 15 and 19 attended school in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2008). In that year, the incomes of the vast majority of Canadians youth in this age group did not readily

allow youth to move out of their family homes and/or be economically independent. Moreover, the rate of both extended stays in the parental home, as well as returns to the family “nest” (i.e., the so-called “boomerang” phenomenon) have been increasing since the 1980’s in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2009). When compared to their same-age counterparts at the turn of the last century, Canadians remain in their parental homes until their mid-twenties and are less likely to contribute to the economic well-being of their families (Cote and Allahar, 2006).

There is growing evidence that globalization influences the social roles of children and youth (Finn, Nybell & Shook, 2010), making the transition from school to work more complicated. Cote and Bynner (2008: 258) note that labour markets are volatile and impacted by economic globalization, which has a direct bearing on youth seeking employment. In 2011, the national unemployment rate in Canada was 7.5%. However, the youth unemployment rate in that year for those aged 15-24 was 14.2% (HRSDC, 2012). Cote and Allahar (2006: 6) observe that the collapse of the youth labour market in the 1970’s and 1980’s, coupled with “credentialism” (Collins, 2007) have encouraged youth to spend increasing amounts of time in school and, simultaneously, extended adolescence. Jobs that once would have required a secondary school diploma now might require post-secondary education, keeping youth in school for longer periods of time. While Canadians with higher levels of education were more likely to find and maintain employment following the recession of 2008-2009 (Marshall, 2011), obtaining of these benefits necessitated extended years of education and an age-linked period of economic dependency.

Sukarieh and Tannock (2008) suggest that economic globalization now regulates youth through global neoliberal ideologies. According to these scholars, youth in the 1960s were seen in the western nations as “social dynamite” (Spitzer, 1975) - a threat to be contained. To combat this national “threat” and contain these “ticking time bombs,” Sukarieh and Tannock contend, various youth employment and allied programs were established. For example, the Youth Employment Network formed international alliances with the World Bank, the International Labor Organization and the United Nations to focus on job creation, employability, opportunities and entrepreneurship for youth (2008: 302). Governmental responses to unemployed youth continue to reflect neoliberal strategies (307). Instead of state assistance programs, governments in many western nations, including Canada, expect youth to exercise individual autonomy and engage in self-subsistence. While youth continue to be viewed as a “risk” population (Hyde, 2001), governing bodies now provide relatively little to this group in general, and unemployed youth in particular, in the way of social assistance. This may situate youth in very precarious positions should they find themselves without shelter or support.

In an age-stratified society, “youth” is a transitional status that straddles the categories of “childhood” and “adulthood.” The in-between and in-between nature of this age category is evinced by the fact that its occupants are denied full citizenship rights. For example, in Canada, the age at which an individual may marry without parental consent or court order is generally defined by the age of majority (usually 18 or 19). Similarly, the majority of Canadian provinces and territories specify a minimum age for a child to hold even a part-time job (generally 14 to 17) and

couples these age limits with a host of additional restrictions and exemptions. Provincial laws also decree that children of “school age” (which is defined in most Canadian jurisdictions as being under 16 but, in Ontario and New Brunswick, is defined as under 18) must attend school and may fine those who employ a child during “school hours.” In Ontario, for example, an employer who would do so faces a maximum possible fine of \$200. In addition, the number of hours that a “child” can work during a “school week” may be limited by provincial statutes. For example, in Alberta, “schoolchildren” under the age of 15 may work for only two hours on school days and for no more than eight hours on other days; in Newfoundland and Labrador, the combined total of a schoolchild’s hours of work and school attendance cannot exceed eight hours a day. Provincial laws may also prohibit the employment of “children” in certain types of occupations (for example, youths under 16 are prohibited from working in the fields of construction, factories or logging in Ontario) or stipulate that they may perform only a narrow range of tasks. For example, Alberta specifies that a child from 12 to 15 years of age may deliver newspapers, flyers or small goods for a retail store or work as an office clerk, messenger or in retail sales; in Newfoundland, a child under the age of sixteen may additionally work for pay by shining shoes or setting pins in a bowling alley. Collectively, however, these types of restrictions reflect dominant societal understandings of “youth:” first, as the dependents of adults who are both willing to, and capable of, providing them with the necessities of life (e.g., food, shelter, clothing) and, second, as situated in school (for progressively longer periods of

time) and thus preparing themselves for the assumption of adult roles and gainful employment.

Moreover, although the resources and social assistance that are available to youth vary across Canadian jurisdictions, there is additional variability in how a “youth” may be defined, with different age cut-offs employed. For example, in Ontario, one of the central sources of aid for youths in need is the child welfare system. However, as set out within Section 37(1) of Ontario’s *Child and Family Services Act*, a “child” under this Act “does not include a child as defined in subsection 3 (1) who is actually or apparently sixteen years of age or older, unless the child is the subject of an order under this Part.” Although this *Act* further stipulates that any youth under the age of 16 who is unprotected¹² may be brought into the care of child welfare agencies (Gaetz et al., 2010: 69), research has found that such placements are often problematic and that youth frequently fall through the cracks in the system (e.g., Ferguson, 2009; Fowler, Toro & Miles, 2009; Karabanow, 2008). For example, Bridgeman (2002) notes that while the child welfare system in Ontario does not place youth who are 16 and 17 years of age in care¹³, this age group is not eligible for social assistance. Moreover, if youth are 16 – 18 years of age and in state care, they can remove themselves from this form of guardianship, but are no longer eligible for assistance under the *Children and Family Services Act*. As a result, youths who are runaways or throwaways from parental homes may have few, if any, opportunities to access stable accommodation. They may be forced into “adult”- like roles in which they must assume total responsibility for their subsistence and survival. In Canada, those who are over the age of 18 are not

provided with any youth-related care or assistance options unless they are considered to be “disabled” in some way that is credited by their jurisdiction’s social welfare system. If this is not the case, they are legally considered adults and expected to access adult-oriented support systems.

This section has highlighted how the social construction or conceptualization of “youth” and/or “adolescence” influences an individual’s eligibility for various forms of state supports, as well as their rights and responsibilities under the law. Youth who experience homelessness are expected to be self-sufficient, but it may be unrealistic to expect self-sufficiency from a marginalized group who are marked by the stigma of homelessness and possess limited education and employment experience; all of these factors can be tied to social exclusion.

Youth Homelessness

According to Gibson, the social construction of the concept of “homeless youth” emphasizes “corruption and impurity” (2011: 3). Youth who are homeless are seen as being “out of place” and are disrupting the “established social order” (2). Karabanow’s (2004) overview of scholarly research on youth homelessness suggests that the phenomenon of homeless youth has long concerned North American “experts” in various fields and is discernible in the efforts of the “child savers” in both Canada and the United States¹⁴. In contrast, Gaetz et al., (2010: 14) report that concern with youth homelessness is more recent and arose, in large measure, alongside of discussions of the “new” homelessness in the 1970s. It is evident that attempts to establish a chronology of academic interest in the topic of youth homeless have resulted in the highlighting of different dates and events.

Nevertheless, there is less dispute that, until recent decades, homeless youth were largely viewed as pathological or “mentally disturbed” (Karabanow, 2004: 18). Since that time, and reflective of the conceptual shift from the “old” to “new” homeless, accounts of youth homelessness are now more likely to incorporate at least some consideration of structural factors than they were in previous decades (e.g., Gaetz et al., 2010: 14; Karabanow, 2004: 18-19).

The scholarly literature on homelessness and specific subcategories of homelessness, such as youth, has grown immensely over the past three decades, commanding the attention of academics in a variety of disciplines. In illustration: my August 2011 search of two scholarly databases, *Sociological Abstracts* and *Social Services Abstracts*, using “homeless youth” and/or “homeless adolescent*” as keywords yielded 349 articles and 38 doctoral dissertations which contained either or both of these terms in their abstracts.¹⁵ It also suggested a growing interest in this topic: while there were simply a dozen published studies in the 1980s, this rose to 70 in the 1990s and 230 in the first decade of the new millennium. Between 2010 and 2011 alone, there were no fewer than 75 scholarly articles published that addressed various facets of this topic. A second search of the same databases which used “street youth” as a key term found 130 articles which featured this term in their abstracts. The number of articles on this topic has also risen, from a scant 4 articles in the 1980s to 40 in the 1990s, 73 in the first decade of the new millennium and 13 in 2010-2011. A third search, which examined databases of dissertations for the same period of 2001-2011, identified 174 that featured the terms “homeless youth”

and/or “street youths” in their abstracts and, once again, revealed a steady growth of interest in these topics.

In addition, the breadth of academic inquiry has expanded. Thus, researchers have studied: “runaway” and “throw away” youths (e.g., Thompson, Pollio & Bitner, 2000), the nexus between youth homelessness and prostitution (e.g., Kidd & Kral, 2002; Tremble, 1993), the antecedents of youth homelessness (e.g., Fowler, Toro & Miles, 2009; Gwadz et al., 2009; Karabanow, 2006; Karabanow, 2008; Miller et al., 2004; Shane, 1989; Smith, 2008), and the heightened vulnerability of homeless persons (of all ages) to violent criminal victimization (e.g., Baron, 2003; Gaetz, 2004; Gaetz et al., 2010).

The pathways which may lead to youth homelessness are now acknowledged to be far more varied than “mental disturbance.” Studies have cited factors such as: child physical abuse (physical and sexual) and neglect; family violence; substance abuse; mental health problems; poverty; bullying; homophobia; learning disabilities and school failure; and residency in foster care settings and institutional care facilities (Bao, Whitbeck & Hoyt, 2000; Baron, Kennedy & Forde, 2001; Carlen, 1996; Collins, 2007; Fowler, Toro & Miles, 2009; Gaetz, et al., 2010; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Jones, 1997; Hyde, 2001; Karabanow, 2006; Kidd, 2004; Kladowsky, Aubry & Farrell, 2006; Laird, 2007; McRee, 2008; Smith, 2008; Whitbeck et al., 2001). Moreover, Karabanow (2010: 145) observes that even though homelessness may not be an ideal solution to any and all of its precipitating causes, some homeless youth perceive their lives on the streets to be safer and healthier than their pre-homeless lives. An earlier study by this investigator estimates that youth

make up roughly a quarter of the Canadian homeless population and finds that youth are more likely to run from negative home environments than to the streets¹⁶ (Karabanow, 2004: 2, 28; see also Karabanow, 2008). Other researchers have emphasized that the backgrounds of homeless youth are frequently characterized by violence, mistrust and physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse (e.g., Buccieri, 2010; Collins, 2007.; Farrell, 2005¹⁷; Ferguson, 2009¹⁸; Gwadz, et al., 2009¹⁹; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Janus et al., 1987; Kidd, 2007; Tyler & Bersani, 2008; Klodawsky et al., 2006; McRee, 2008²⁰; Miller, 2004; Van den Bree et al., 2009; Wingert, Higgit, & Pistock, 2005). Various scholars have emphasized the challenges confronted by those who are young and homeless, although these terms could be defined in different ways.

Given this situation, it is not surprising that youth confront a heightened likelihood of vulnerability and victimization. Indeed, Gaetz et al. (2010) maintain that homeless youth are the most vulnerable/victimized group in Canada. Various researchers have attempted to explain the heightened risk of victimization that is experienced by homeless youth through a “routine activities” theory or a “lifestyle” approach (e.g., Baron, 2003; Gloger et al., 2004; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; McCarthy, Hagan & Martin, 2002; Tyler, Hoyt & Whitbeck, 2000; Whitbeck, et al., 2001). Lifestyle and routine activities approaches suggest that certain social and ecological factors increase one’s potential risk of personal victimization. For example, an extensive Canadian study of street youth conducted by Hagan and McCarthy (1997: 46, 163) found that both male and female youth reported being attacked and beaten since leaving home, with youth who experienced homelessness

and who spent the majority of their time “on the street”²¹ having the highest risk of victimization. Further, sexual assaults on the street often occurred when street youth were squatting or sleeping in public spaces. Equally reflective of a “routine activities” approach, Baron (2003) reports that due to the cultural rules that structure street life, many youth settle disputes with the use of violence. When compared to non-street youth, street youth tend to engage in more deviant subsistence strategies²² and are more likely to associate with deviant peers; these behaviours, Baron suggests, increase the likelihood that street youths will experience both physical and sexual victimization (Baron, 2003; Whitbeck et al., 2001).

Gaetz (2004) attempts to explain the heightened vulnerability of homeless youth by considering their “routine activities” in tandem with the phenomenon of social exclusion. Gaetz contends that homeless youth experience insufficient access to shelter and employment, have weak “social capital²³” and very restricted access to public space (424). These factors, he argues, restrict the ability of youths to protect themselves from victimization. In his view, youth who experience homelessness are pushed to marginal physical, social and economical locations. Further, they experience weak guardianship and often have negative interactions with the police. These factors respectively limit their access to the conventional protections against victimization that domiciled individuals possess while simultaneously decreasing the likelihood that they will report their experiences of victimization to the police. Gaetz compared a nonrandom sample of street youth, aged 15 to 24 to a group of comparably aged youth in the 1999 General Social Survey (GSS) and found that street youth were more likely to report that they had been a victim of theft, robbery

or physical/sexual assault in the past year (81.9 percent versus 39.7 percent). Gaetz notes that this significantly higher rate of self-reported victimization means that street youth are forced to “live day to day with the real fear of theft, robbery, attack or sexual assault” (444). Carlen (1996: 6) claims that while a significant proportion of those who victimize homeless youth will never face sanctions, street youth may be susceptible to disproportionately harsh punishments when they are sentenced for violations of the criminal law.

Although children and/or adolescents who experience abuse or neglect in a “home” or “care” setting are commonly understood as deserving of empathy and assistance, those who leave these types of situations and, in doing so, become homeless, may evoke sentiments of fear, apprehension and disdain. As Karabanow (2010: 146) observes, homeless street youth are understood as “public nuisances, or worse, criminals that warrant increased control and punishment”; these perceptions, he charges, evince a lack of “understanding of the root causes of homelessness.” Similarly, Schissel (2006: 28) maintains that “experts” who lay emphasis upon, for example, the prevalence of mental illness, “risky sexual behavior” or substance abuse among homeless youth may, perhaps unwittingly, contribute to the demonization of this group. These social stereotypes, Schissel charges, operate as an “oppressive mechanism” and further entrench the stigmatization and social exclusion of an already marginalized group.

Researchers have described homeless youth in very different ways. Are homeless youth best understood as “victims of pathological families” (Smith, 2008)? Are they “at risk”? Are they “risky victims” (Bessant, 2001)? Are they “criminals”

(Baron, 2009)? Are they “deviants” (Martin, 2002)? Homeless youths have been “framed” in all of the above mentioned ways in the academic literature. My work augments this literature in a number of ways. First, in contrast to the deductive approach favoured by many researchers in this area, my research is started deductively and builds the central topics and themes around social exclusion inductively. I worked with youth to define and explore the terms of social exclusion that they claimed were most germane to their lived experiences. Second, although it is possible to understand youth homelessness as a “personal trouble,” my thesis emphasizes that it is also a public issue. Third, my research does not consider “homeless youth,” as this term is defined by Canadian social service agencies, as a homogeneous group. Although the mandate of social service agencies includes all persons ages 16 to 25, it is evident that the legal rights and responsibilities of a 16 year-old and a 25 year-old are not identical. Therefore, I distinguish between three age groups of homeless youth in my examination experience and of youths’ interpretations of homelessness of: 16 and 17, 18, and 19-25 years old, largely due to the rights and responsibilities tied to conventional citizenship.

Chapter 3: Social Citizenship and Social Exclusion

Homelessness brings indignities, restrictions and stigma to those who are homeless. Not only do they experience social exclusion, but also they are often understood by authorities and “mainstream” citizens as deviant, dangerous – as Other. They are often seen as willingly standing outside of the established social order.

In T.H. Marshall’s classic book, *Citizenship and Social Class* he described citizenship as “full membership of a community” and argued that all people were entitled to a “whole range” of social rights from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in social heritage and live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (1950:72,74). In the pages that follow, I argue that youth who experience homelessness do not have access to the full breadth of citizenship rights described by Marshall. Rather, they experience what Walker and Walker (1997:8) refer to as social exclusion. According to these authors, “social exclusion” is

a comprehensive formulation which refers to the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially from any of the social, economic, political, or cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society....Social exclusion is the denial of civil, political and social rights of a citizen.

The first point of exclusion for many youth stems from extreme poverty. Their status as poverty stricken leads them to be denied (or granted only restricted) access to rights, social services and supports that would help to alleviate the hardships that are tied to social exclusion. The safeguards that a state provides to its citizens and which buffer them from the ravages of poverty and homelessness are

connected to the concept of social citizenship. Unfortunately, Canadian youth who are homeless are often unable to access and/or derive benefits from these social rights.

Youth who are homeless do not readily fit into conventional understandings of social citizenship. Most people who experience extreme poverty - certainly youth who are homeless - are left on the margins of society, blamed for the social and economic positions they inhabit. When people are both poor and young, they are doubly marginalized. The social safeguards of the state are generally intended to provide for adults and/or their dependents. Youth who “remove themselves” from families and absent themselves from schools may not be guaranteed the same social safeguards.

In this chapter I explore the relationship between “social exclusion” and “social citizenship” in terms of the processes of denial and restrictions. I argue that those who experience homelessness are denied rights or have them only in restricted forms. They are not recognized as full members of the community in which they live. According to Laderchi, Saith and Stewart (2003), the concept of social exclusion directs attention to the marginalization and deprivation that some groups experience even in wealthy industrialized nations with comprehensive welfare provisions. The concept of social exclusion serves as a reminder of the multiple, often intersecting, forms of inequality that exist in affluent societies. My dissertation considers youths’ lived experiences of homelessness assesses the degree to which the concept of social exclusion helps us to contextualize theoretically such experiences.

Having worked directly with youth for a number of years, I know the concept of social exclusion helps us to understand their lived experiences. I have worked with many youth who expressed frustration with the social assistance system, despair over the lack of affordable housing, sadness that they were shunned by others and annoyance, resentment and anger over their lack of agency and autonomy²⁴. It is my view that we can make sense of these often intense emotions and experiences by using the concept of social exclusion. That said, few people think about their daily experiences in such abstract theoretical terms. The youth with whom I worked are no exception. None of them used the term. Nonetheless, as I did the research for my thesis, I employed the concept of social exclusion as outlined by Silver and Miller (2003). According to Silver and Miller social exclusion is:

- Multidimensional: it incorporates both structural and individual dimensions;
- Dynamic: it exists on a continuum that ranges from inclusion to exclusion;
- Relational: it entails psychosocial factors such as rejection, humiliation and isolation;
- Active: it is caused, exacerbated or ameliorated by people or processes;
- Relative: it might vary across contexts (6-7).

Social exclusion provides a conceptual means by which I explored both the individual (or interpersonal) and structural aspects of youths' experiences with homelessness. My research seeks to understand how homeless youth understand

“homelessness,” recognizing that this phenomenon is both a public issue and a private trouble (Mills, 1959). It is my belief that a methods from the margins approach, as informed by discussions of social exclusion, facilitates an analysis of the multiple points of disadvantage that homeless youth confront.²⁵

To understand the role and utility of social exclusion as a concept, I begin this chapter by outlining the structural components of social exclusion through a historical overview of the development of citizenship rights. The next section provides an overview of the changing nature and role of the state and describes the implications such shifts have had on the social rights of citizenship. In particular, I consider the shift from the Keynesian welfare state characterized by interventionist policy and “passive citizenship” to that of the neo-liberal state, characterized by restrictive policy and so-called “active citizenship.” This shift, which occurred beginning in the 1980’s, had tremendous impact on the availability and accessibility of social rights in Canada. I then move to a more explicit discussion of social exclusion, outlining the history of the concept. Social exclusion often comes about as a consequence of poverty. I distinguish the similarities and differences between the two, arguing that social exclusion offers a broader approach to understanding deprivation and marginalization than the concept of poverty. I then provide context for my decision to apply Silver and Miller’s (2003) features of social exclusion in my thesis. The next section reviews a selection of empirical studies that have likewise used social exclusion as a guiding concept. I then discuss a number of topics relevant to the experiences of homeless youth, including crime, deviance, the

use of public space, and the regulation of homelessness through legislation. I end the chapter by discussing some of the limitations of the concept of social exclusion.

The Role of the State/Structural Components of Social Exclusion

Marshall's (1950) *Citizenship and Social Class* is notable in the development of citizenship theory. Marshall provides a historical overview of the development of citizenship and related rights in England. His overview explores how the development of rights may impact social class (and vice versa), noting that within capitalist societies there are inherent and inevitable contradictions between democracy, well-being and class. Marshall argues that there are three central components of citizenship – civil, political and social. “Civil rights,” as defined by Marshall, include the rights necessary for individual freedom, including liberty of speech, the right to own property and the right to justice. “Political rights” include rights to participate in the exercise of political power and include participation in both parliament and local government. “Social rights,” which consist of various forms of economic welfare, including educational and social services, are thought to constitute the basis of a “welfare state.” Marshall argued that “social rights enable the disadvantaged to enter mainstream society and effectively exercise civil and political rights” (as cited in Kymlick and Norman, 1994: 355)

Marshall relates the aforementioned rights to social stratification and indirectly notes that the aim of citizenship rights is not to eliminate all social inequality. Nevertheless, he questions how inequalities might be minimized with the development of citizenship rights. For him, the fullest expression of citizenship requires a liberal democratic welfare state wherein passive²⁶ citizenship dominates. In

this framework, social rights are paramount, but are contingent upon the structure of the state and the development of welfare states. As Esping-Andersen (1990) claims, few can challenge Marshall's suggestion that social citizenship constitutes

the central idea of a welfare state. This must entail the granting of social rights. If social rights are given the legal and practical status of that of property rights, if they are unbreakable, and if they are arranged on the origin of citizenship rather than performance, they will result in decreased individuals' reliance on engagement in the market (21).

However, the concept of social citizenship has not been granted such legal or practical status.

Esping-Andersen's (1990) influential writings on welfare states can be connected with Marshall's concept of social rights and discussions of social policy. They are connected as Marshall outlines rights in welfare states and Esping-Anderson offers a classificatory scheme for understanding the different philosophies welfare states employ in terms of providing services and benefits to citizens. Rights take on altered forms in different states. In *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Esping-Andersen (1990) offers a structural/empirical analysis of welfare state regimes²⁷. He categorizes welfare regimes into three major types: conservative, liberal and social democratic, each of which is characterized by a qualitatively different set of arrangements among the state, the market and the family. In the liberal welfare state, means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social insurance plans predominate. Benefits are directed to low-income, working-class state dependents. Social reform is influenced by traditional, work-ethic norms. Entitlement rules are strict and often associated with stigma. For example, those such

as single parents may be frowned upon as unproductive members of society and disparaged for relying on the state for subsistence. In this type of regime, de-commodification²⁸ effects are minimized and the state directly controls the parameters of social rights, establishing an order of stratification. Examples of this model include the United States, Canada and Australia²⁹.

Similar to Marshall, Esping-Andersen concedes that social stratification is an accepted part of liberal welfare states. Thus, there is an acknowledgement that while social policy should redress social stratification, it more often produces and reinforces it. The central point presented by Esping-Andersen is that stratification is a neglected matter in welfare states. Traditionally, most discussions regarding the welfare state have been guided by how the salience of class will diminish with the extension of social citizenship, as promoted by Marshall. These ideas are important to the present study, as social rights, citizenship and protections under the welfare state are central to understanding social exclusion and how youth are limited or denied the benefits of social rights.

Canada is a wealthy, developed nation with many resources offered to its citizens. As Canadians, we supposedly embrace difference through multiculturalism and prize rights through the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. While there are many things to be appreciative of in Canadian society, it is not without its injustices and inequalities. Although social citizenship has always been restrictive, more recent shifts to “lean” citizenship - fewer and more restrictive welfare state provisions - have further exacerbated such points of exclusion.

The Shift to Neoliberalism: Changing Rights and Responsibilities

Citizenship rights, especially social rights, are essential to welfare states (Epsing-Anderson, 1990; Marshall, 1950; O'Connor, 2002; Teeple, 2000). However, these social rights have become increasingly limited in neo-liberal states. Social rights are malleable and often different in practice from what is proposed in theory. Welfare states, developed by liberal governments “sought to cushion the hardship of the worst off people” (Basok & Ilcan, 2013: 68); they were established in response to difficulties located in the economy and labor market. They were designed to provide an assured minimum of social rights (O'Connor, 2002).

As Teeple (2000: 435) explains:

the welfare state refers to a capitalist society in which the state has intervened in the form of social policies, programs, standards, and regulations in order to mitigate class conflict and to provide for, answer, or accommodate certain social needs for which the capitalist mode of production in itself has no solution or provision.

In welfare states, the rights of citizens are “grounded in social citizenship” with state-guided welfare and social security and a great deal of state involvement in the marketplace (Basok & Ilcan, 2013: 68)³⁰. In contrast, Basok and Ilcan (2013: 71) note, neo-liberalism is market-oriented, with emphasis on economic growth through the so-called free market, privatization, and a deregulation of state control. Theoretically, with welfare states, citizens could rely upon the state in times of need, whereas in neo-liberal states, citizens are expected to be more or less self-sufficient.

In the Western context, the welfare state developed largely post-World War II (O'Connor, 2002; Teeple, 2000), and adopted a “Keynesian approach” to social

protections and accommodations. The modern “Keynesian welfare state,” as the name implies, is derived from the writings of economist John Maynard Keynes (O’Connor, 2002). While the premise of a welfare state was to include and assist all citizens, O’Connor (1993: 504) has cautioned that, in practice, welfare states provided “a tiered system of access to social rights.” Keynes’ central assumption was that the economy of a nation state could, and should, intervene to regulate unemployment and to provide social reforms as national programs. Social assistance should be made available to all who experienced economic hardship. From Keynes’ perspective, the economy was not self-correcting and should be stimulated in recessions through social protections (e.g., unemployment insurance, social assistance) and controlled in times of inflation (O’Connor, 2002).

In Canada, many national approaches to social protections and the social safety net emerged following World War II. Social reforms such as unemployment insurance emerged in the 1940s because of the high unemployment that occurred in the 1930s (Teeple, 2000). The “Keynesian welfare state” could be maintained for a period of time “due to ‘advanced Fordism³¹’ in national economies, a consistent demand for labour, rising real wages, expanding trade unions, and growing social strata and employment hierarchies” (Teeple, 2000: 448). As O’Connor (2002: 118) notes, the social necessities provided under the “Keynesian welfare state” reflected a shift in the base of social rights. Those who are considered citizens of the state should be offered social protections by the state. This construction of citizen, theoretically, expanded inclusionary measures of state protections. Importance was placed on social (and passive) citizenship rights providing income, housing,

education and health supports to those who were “citizens.” Under this framework, poverty and income disparity were not generally envisaged as the fault of the individual. Rather, as Kymlicka and Norman (1995) claim, the welfare state sought to ensure that every member of society felt like a full citizen of society³².

For 25 years after World War II, Keynesianism was the prevailing context for economic activity in Canada (Palley, 2005: 21). However, while premised on inclusionary social policies to provide support to citizens, its welfare state policies were never truly “inclusive” in the fullest meaning of this term. In the 1970’s, the economic backdrop of many industrialized states began to shift, with an international base of capital, stalled real wages and a rise in technological advances in the workplace (Teeple, 2000). Lower corporate taxes and deteriorating wages, tied to a global financial market, meant less capital (i.e., taxes) to fund the social provisions found under the welfare state. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the downfall of the “welfare state” in Canada seemed imminent. Lapavitsas (2005: 33) claims that the “Keynesian welfare state” was principally damaged by the economic crisis which followed the 1973-1974 “oil shock,” that included high levels of unemployment and inflation. Neo-liberalism began to replace Keynesianism during this time.

According to Palley (2005: 20) neo-liberalism “emphasizes the efficiency of market competition, the role of individuals in determining economic outcomes, and distortions associated with government intervention and regulation of markets.” As MacGregor (2005: 143) explains, neoliberal social policy emphasizes the market and promotes individualism and freedom of choice. From this position, the welfare state hinders and diminishes economic growth. While neo-liberalism promotes active

engagement in the labour market, the policies promoted under this framework intensify social exclusion.

According to neo-liberal ideology, those who experience poverty and unemployment should be held responsible for their social location and required to provide for their own economic well-being (Brodie, 1996: 377). The emergence of neo-liberal ideology coincided with shifts in conceptions of citizenship and rights. Keynesianism was largely framed in terms of passive social citizenship. This system was seen, as Kymlicka and Norman (1995) claim, as promoting sloth amongst the poor. Accordingly, those advocating a neo-liberal position suggested altering forms of citizenship from passive to active and a shift from “entitlement” to the “responsibility” of individuals to earn a living. As such, neo-liberals argued that the safety net should be made less encompassing and advanced a position on “citizenship” that emphasized a different balance of responsibilities and rights.

Neo-liberalism, Brodie (2002: 377) declares, has eroded social entitlements and aggravated poverty, economic insecurities and exclusion. In her view, neo-liberal governing strategies have further marginalized the social citizen and reversed the redistributive effects of post war social policies (378). This, in turn, has increased economic insecurity in Canada. Social programs are increasingly described as depleting an already strained revenue system rather than as an investment in citizens. Neo-liberalism, she (388) argues, works to “desocialize the social” and to undermine and replace the important social safety net constructed in the Keynesian welfare state. Shifts from passive to active citizenship and alterations in social safeguards have distinct and direct implications for those who experience homelessness.

The erosion of social entitlements in Canada, as linked to social citizenship, have arguably extended the scope of social exclusion. The post-war “universal” social programs which once putatively provided the foundation of social citizenship have been altered in ways that single out and stigmatize the less fortunate as lesser/non-citizens. Economic restructuring and policy changes have produced unequal and exclusionary societies (Bryne, 2005). During the post-war period, citizenship denoted civil and social rights that were not conditional on income. Theoretically, state-provided safeguards protected all citizens, including the poor. Neoliberalism altered this relationship between the citizen and the state³³.

Analysts use the concept of social exclusion to outline the processes of deprivation and marginalization in contemporary society. It is important to explore how youth fit into discussions of social citizenship and social roles. Participatory citizenship assumes that a “citizen” actively participates in the social life and civic affairs of a democratic society. Lister (1998: 27) claims that participatory citizenship is a reflection of human agency in the political sphere; the rights affiliated with citizenship permit individuals to act as agents. To be a citizen is to enjoy the rights, as outlined by the state, necessary for social and political participation. Citizenship also entails obligations and responsibilities. Such concepts are particularly salient for youth, as their transition to “adulthood” is accompanied by the bestowing of expanded rights and responsibilities. If they are excluded from civic and social engagement through homelessness, these transitions from “youth” to “adulthood” and the assumption of associated rights and responsibilities becomes more difficult. This transition has been made more difficult for youth under neoliberal frameworks

as there are now more strict criteria/limited access to social safeguards (Lister, 1998: 29).

Questions of citizenship are central to exploring the social exclusion of youth who experience homelessness. They are young and therefore are potentially or literally denied some rights. They are also homeless, which places them outside of dominant conceptions of citizenship in a market-based, consumerist society. There are also questions of how youth “fit” into, or are recognized in, the social and political worlds. Citizenship is central to the guarantee of civil, political and economic rights, so it is consequential. As Kymlicka and Norman (1995: 301) explain: “citizenship is not just a certain status defined by a set of rights and responsibilities...it is also an identity, an expression of one’s membership in a political community.” Beyond issues of rights and responsibilities, citizenship contributes to how a person views her/himself in relation to the social and political worlds in which s/he lives. These are important considerations for youth who experience homelessness, as they are in marginal social and economic positions with questionable access to protections and rights.

Outlining “Social Exclusion”

The European Union (1995) has described social exclusion a “process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live” (cited in Laderchi et al., 2003: 257). Le Grand argues that social exclusion occurs when a person is (1) a resident in a society and (2) for reasons beyond his or her individual control, cannot participate in the “normal” citizenry activities of that society, even though she/he wishes to do so

(cited in Laderchi et al., 2003). Laderchi et al., (2003) describe social exclusion as a socially defined, dynamic process that results in various deprivations, such as poverty. However, de Haan (1999:5) notes that social exclusion is distinct from “poverty” in that social exclusion facilitates the exploration of topics and experiences as public issues rather than private troubles.

A Brief History of the Concept of “Social Exclusion”

Rene Lenoir is generally credited with coining the term “social exclusion” in his 1974 writings about the French population (Burchardt, Le Grand, & Piachaud, 2002: 2; Sen, 2000: 4). Lenoir’s conceptual framing of social exclusion has discernibly Durkheimian overtones; he shares Durkheim’s concern with social order and social solidarity (Williams, 1998: 14).

Durkheim (1893) first approached the concept of social solidarity in *The Division of Labor*, outlining the implications of the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity and the increased risk of anomie in modern societies. Social solidarity was premised on the notion of social integration. Integration was a fundamental aspect of social organizations, and as Olsen (1965: 37) describes the “degree to which the component parts of an organization are interrelated so as to give unity or wholeness to the system.” Anomie means “without rules”, or “normlessness”, which occurs when social solidarity is disrupted. In the *Division of Labor*, Durkheim (1893) focuses on organic solidarity and functional integration, for him, anomie was the result of inadequate procedural rules for interaction. Durkheim also employs the notion of anomie in *Suicide* (1897), but in a different manner. In *Suicide*, Durkheim claims that stable social conditions are based on a collective consciousness which

defines social order and social relationships. As societies become more complex and dynamic these social controls weaken. In this view, social solidarity is based around normative integration, and anomie ensues when there are inadequate moral norms for social control. As Olsen (1965) claims, with anomie, there is a lack of social responsibility.

Following Durkheim, the Lenoir-inspired and/or “French tradition” regards social exclusion as a rupture of social, cultural and moral bonds (de Haan, 1997: 4). This concept of social exclusion was rapidly embraced by many concerned with social policy and its administration in France and elsewhere. Aasland and Flotten (2001: 1027) observe that the concept of social exclusion gained prominence in policy discussions in Europe and soon was preferred over the concept of poverty. In comparison to “poverty,” the concept of “social exclusion” was seen as encompassing a greater number of dimensions, inviting contemplation of social and economic disadvantage. The concept of social exclusion looks beyond material means and considers people’s ability to participate fully in a nation’s economic, political, and/or cultural life.

‘Social Exclusion’ and ‘Poverty’: Similarities and Differences

Social exclusion has been compared with and linked to poverty. While both address deprivation and inequality, a host of authors has explored the ways in which social exclusion moves beyond the often monetary-based analysis of poverty. For example, O’Brien et al (1997:2) and de Haan (1999) have independently queried whether the concept of social exclusion is merely a “repackaging” of the concept of poverty. Laderchi, et al. (2003: 245) observe that poverty may be approached in

two different ways that emphasize either monetary deficits (i.e., shortfalls in income) or capability (i.e., inability to function to adequate levels for social participation) (Laderchi et al., 2003: 253), questioning how social exclusion is different.

Room (1995), as cited in Burchardt et al., (2002:5) claims that for social exclusion to be distinguished from poverty it must meet three criteria. Social exclusion must (i) move away from income measures to consideration of the multidimensional aspects of deprivation; (ii) abandon a rigid, dichotomous understanding of deprivation (e.g., poor or not) and adopt a fluid or dynamic consideration of deprivation; and (iii) go beyond a focus on the individual and to a more structural analysis of social exclusion and its processes. Stewart (2006: 4) highlights several features of social exclusion, as the term is currently employed, which distinguish it from the construct of “poverty.” In his view, it is multidimensional; it explores power relations as the root of exclusion; it focuses attention upon process and agency; it can be a feature of groups; and it is relational. In comparison to the concept of “social exclusion,” which is lauded for its attentiveness to the multidimensional aspects of deprivation and vulnerability (O’Brien et al., 1997), the concept “poverty” is envisaged as limited in scope, an “impoverished” construct (Sen, 2000). While material deprivation remains central within discussions of “social exclusion,” this concept views economic deprivation as simply one aspect of denial. I have chosen to adopt social exclusion as a key concept in my dissertation because it permits detailed discussions of marginality, denial and restrictions based not only on economic standing, but also on age, civil, social and political standings.

Definitions and Traditions of Social Exclusion

As earlier noted, social exclusion has been defined in a variety of ways. O'Reilly (2007) offers a typology of different traditions of social exclusion, classified through paradigm associations and related moral discourses. O'Reilly credits Silver (1994) with identifying the traditions and Levitas (1998) with outlining the moral discourses affiliated with social exclusion.

In the first tradition, multidimensionality is key. The multidimensionality of social exclusion, O'Reilly (2007) explains, may begin with poverty but also accounts for deprivations in other aspects of social life such as health, education, and experiences of discrimination. In this tradition, social problems are defined and then labeled as components of social exclusion. Reimer (2004) and de Haan (1997) also employ the notion of multidimensionality in their applications of the concept of social exclusion. For Reimer (2004), social exclusion involves the idea that one may be excluded from different institutions, social groups, benefits or events. For example, it may involve exclusion from the labour force, housing, state benefits (e.g., social assistance), and/or citizenship. Indeed, individuals or groups may be deprived of several things at the same time so that they experience deprivation simultaneously in the economic, social and/or political spheres. While multidimensionality is a common feature of social exclusion, O'Reilly (2007) explains that the identification and labeling process is not guided by a specific paradigm and that this approach may be repetitive and heuristic.

In the second tradition, "organic integration" is key, where exclusion is defined as not "fitting into the natural order of things" (O'Reilly, 2007: 81). It is an

interpretive approach to social exclusion tied to the moral discourse of “natural rightness of the established community” (81). This approach is identity-laden and dualistic in terms of who is included and who is not. Reimer (2004) falls into this tradition by treating social exclusion as relational. It is relational because exclusion is based on power roles in relationships defining who excludes and who is excluded. Reimer (2004) also notes while poverty may lead to social exclusion for some individuals/groups, it can also occur in the absence of poverty and stem from an individual/group’s lack of integration into social networks, whether voluntary or involuntary (for example, new immigrants/refugees/deviant youth subcultures).

In the third tradition, “specialisation” is key, where exclusion is linked to barriers to individual freedoms. O’Reilly (2007: 81) ties this to neo-liberal economic analyses wherein unemployment and joblessness are “rational self-interested reactions to the work disincentives in welfare politics” (Silver, 1994:554-555 as cited in O’Reilly, 2007:81), meaning unemployment is a choice of the individual as a reaction to social policies. Under the specialization framework, the only forms of exclusion that should be of interest to the state are those concerned with discrimination. This tradition is linked to underclass and dependency theories. O’Reilly (2007) connects specialisation with interpretive and critical paradigms, however he notes that this approach is too individualistic to account for the structural components of social exclusion.

In the fourth tradition, where the concept of “monopoly” is key, the structure of the economy and unequal economic positions are regarded as the sources of exclusion (O’Reilly, 2007: 82). The moral discourse affiliated with this tradition is

that of citizenship rights which would promote equality. O'Reilly (2007) charges that this tradition is too focused on the economy and does not permit the consideration of intersections of inequality, such as gender and ethnicity.

The final tradition is the so-called "solidarity" approach, stemming from the tradition of French Republicanism. This tradition is based on the assumptions of a cohesive society centred on "fundamental equality of citizens in an external, moral and normative social order" (O'Reilly, 2007: 82). As noted earlier, in my brief discussion of the original conception of the term, social exclusion is viewed as a consequence of the rupture of social bonds. The moral discourse tied to this tradition views social integration as participation in paid work.

The relationships that compose social exclusion are those that mark the boundaries of who belongs and who does not. Yet, as O'Reilly (2007) notes, while "exclusion" is often discussed in detail, "inclusion" is often treated as "implicit and unproblematised" (84). Social exclusion should be considered in relation to social inclusion, noting the material base of social interactions (including poverty, deprivation and multidimensionality), individual value orientations (including the freedom to pursue one's own moral pursuits in society) and the group values in society (including identity politics and the struggle for recognition) (85-86).

Silver and Miller's (2003) outline of social exclusion would seem to envisage social inclusion-social exclusion as existing along a continuum that involves multiple processes, concepts and assumptions. For Silver and Miller social exclusion is defined through five principal features as previously outlined (6-7).

These features of social exclusion can occur separately or can overlap. The above five features, as compared to the previous definitions of social exclusion move social exclusion beyond a concept to a framework, as they include process, concepts, assumptions and practices that may constitute ways of viewing the world.

Applications of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is an attractive framework to employ as it holds potential to address marginality and deprivation in a variety of settings. This section provides some examples of how social exclusion has been employed in studies that have investigated the working poor in England, American children with incarcerated fathers, Canadian street youth who are victimized by crime, and homeless youth in Australia.

In a study of social exclusion and the “working poor” who live in subsidized housing in England, McDonald et al. (2005) sought to explore the impacts of social class and social position on youth transitions to adulthood. Their report used data from three previous studies on youth transitions, aiming to connect how the unequal social conditions that youth experienced could be linked to social exclusion. McDonald et al. employ the concept of social exclusion without providing clear conceptualization or operationalization of the term. That said, these researchers found that only a few of their respondents understood what the term social exclusion meant and even fewer thought it applicable to their lives. The researchers suggest that these findings might reflect the continuity in the lives of their respondents and suggest that, as a result of growing up poor, their respondents may have considered social exclusion a state of “normalcy.” While McDonald et al. sought to understand

the perspectives of their participants, it is noteworthy that they applied this concept to a population that did not view themselves as socially excluded. Thus, this study sought to examine “how the unequal conditions of class and place frame their biographies” (874). McDonald et al. interpreted participants’ subjective views on class positions as reflective of social exclusion.

In an investigation of whether or not American children with incarcerated fathers experience social exclusion, Foster and Hagan (2007) examined the children’s access to health care, secure shelter/homelessness and, among older youth, political participation. Exclusion on the basis of health care was measured by the number of uninsured respondents. Exclusion from secure shelter/homelessness was assessed via questions which queried youth on whether they had, for example, voluntarily or involuntarily left their family residence, resided in shelters or been homeless. Political engagement was measured by voter registration, voting activity, political party affiliation and participation in political organizations. Foster and Hagan combined these three variables to create a “social exclusion” scale. Their results indicated that homelessness was the most extreme outcome of having an incarcerated father, with females whose biological fathers were incarcerated especially likely to have left home and become homeless. Overall, Foster and Hagan found that 15% of the youth in their study experience social exclusion. Similar to McDonald, Foster and Hagan apply social exclusion concepts to a sample population who may not have identified themselves as such.

Using a routine activities approach, Gaetz (2004) employed a social exclusion framework in his investigation of street youth who had been victims of

crime in Canada. In this work, Gaetz (424) claims that social exclusion enables one to “explore the degrees to which personal histories of the individual intersect with certain political, social and economic conditions that restrict public access to spaces, institutions, and practices that reduce risk.” He explored social exclusion by focusing on: access to secure shelter, employment, social capital and public space. Gaetz found that social exclusion increases the likelihood that street youth will experience victimization by reducing their access to secure shelter, employment, social capital and access to public space. Comparing the experiences of a sample of street youth to those reported by youths of the same age (i.e. 15-24) in the 1999 Canadian General Social Survey (GSS), Gaetz found that street youth were far more likely to have been subjects of criminal victimization (81.9% versus 39.7% respectively). The higher rate of victimization means that youth who experience homelessness are forced to “live day to day with the real fear of theft, robbery, attack or sexual assault” (444). Those in marginal states are not able to avail themselves of the safety measures that many (housed) Canadians enjoy and may be further victimized once in contact with the police.

Savelsberg and Martin-Giles (2008) conducted a study of social exclusion and the cumulative effects of deprivation upon four groups of youth in Australia. These groups included: (i) youths, ages 13–18 (n= 15) with experience of homelessness³⁴; (ii) youth, ages 18-21, with experience of unemployment (n=30); (3) youth, ages 15-18, who were experiencing financial hardships (8 n=52); and (iv) youth, ages 16-21, who had breached the requirements of accessing social assistance over the prior 6 months (n=25). Their research used semi-structured interviews to

focus on the voice and lived experiences of the participants. Homeless youth identified unstable housing and diminished health as concerns, which were framed in a larger neo-liberal framework within the study. Further, drug use was identified by homeless youth as a means of coping with deprivation, marginalization and despair. The results outlined the need for social or government supports for marginal youth.

Overall, these examples show that “social exclusion” has been successfully used as a guiding concept in empirical studies, focusing on a host of key issues to link experiences to exclusion. These studies focus on how certain life experiences, such as poverty, housing concerns, parental incarceration, unemployment, lack of access to public space, poor health and deprivation can lead to experiences of social exclusion

Crime, Deviance and the “Other”: The Implications of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion has been associated with misrecognition or the labeling of persons as “comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem” (Fraser 2010: 27) Ruddick (2002:56) links misrecognition with “social death.” Social death, a term that derives from slave societies, is based on three central characteristics: lack of money or material goods; inability to enter into market exchanges; and existence outside of community and conventional support systems. Liggett (as cited in Ruddick, 2002: 56), in reconceptualizing social death as it pertains to homelessness, adds a fourth characteristic: not being needed. According to Ruddick (2002: 56), social death “[m]ust be maintained by the active patrolling of a figurative border between the homeless and other members of society, a border that reinforces the distinction between victims and agents, between those who are ‘homeless through

incapacity' and those who are 'homeless by choice.'" Those who are homeless "by choice" may be seen as those who are not needed. Those who are homeless through incapacity are treated more so as victims of circumstance. As I. M. Young (1990) observes, some groups of people, such as those who experience homelessness, are still "legitimately" treated like second-class citizens - a situation which produces "differentiated citizenship."

As individuals who experience homelessness stand in some measure outside of "civil" society, they are often misrecognized, criminalized and/or "Othered." Jock Young's (1999) writings on social exclusion, crime and the "Other" are relevant in considering the contemporary status of homeless youth in Canada. Young's (1999; 2002) treatises on crime and deviance in late modernity outline social exclusion in structural terms. Modernity, according to Young (1999: 32) was characterized by stability and homogeneity, with the modernist project built on the notions of reason and progress. However, he contends that late modernity is characterized by change and division, as associated with neo-liberalism. This shift, he argues, has created economic insecurities, fears of the unknown, and a resulting exclusionary orientation towards the constructed deviant Other. In general terms, Young outlines three layers or forms of exclusion: from the state, from the labour market and from civil society. He places particular emphasis upon exclusion from (social) citizenship and identifies relative deprivation and individualism as crime-producing factors in late modernity.

Young (1999) identifies the post-war period up to the early 1970s as a time of the "inclusive society": an era in which there was the promise of full employment. The state during this time period was interventionist, based on Keynesian economics

and there was an absolutist social order³⁵. In this context, the deviant Other was thought to consist of a tiny minority of career criminals. The causes of deviance and crime in this era were deemed to be largely individualistic. However, rather than excluding the deviant from the consensus-based social order, the goal was to assimilate the deviant so that s/he would be indistinguishable from the presumed majority of conforming citizens. In accounting for the changes that led from the purportedly inclusive society to the more modern exclusive society, Young (1999) identifies both the cultural revolution (with its emphasis on individualism) and the economic crisis of the 1970s as catalysts. According to Young, the shift from an inclusive to an exclusive society was also accompanied by an unraveling of the traditional forms of social control³⁶ and personal perceptions of safety. Young's analysis of these developments emphasizes the import of labour market shifts and, in particular, the rise of structural unemployment. Such shifts, he insists, leads to high expectations, both in terms of material security and self-fulfillment; however, when these expectations are frustrated, a series of positive and negative consequences ensues.

Young places particular emphasis on a heightened sense of “ontological insecurity,” a fear of the unknown, insisting that while “identity” was once seen as defined and secure, it is now blurred. This blurring, he charges, stems from the abundance of choices in late modern life. Because of such insecurities, Young (1999: 5-6) proposes, there is a distinct need for individuals to create what may be considered a secure base, particularly in terms of the deviant Other³⁷. As compared to the assimilative tendencies of the inclusive society, the exclusive society aims to

assert personal values and beliefs as absolutes. Young notes that “virtue” and “vice” are conceptualized in a binary framework that is punitive and exclusionary rather than malleable and assimilative (15, 16).

Connecting social exclusion and crime, Young explains that both the effects and causes of crime and deviance can be largely explained by a combination of relative deprivation and individualism (48). These factors are conditioned by economic precariousness in an insecure and seemingly unfair labour market and by ontological insecurity. The shifts that he outlines and the associated changes in crime and disorder have their roots in capitalism and alterations of society (26). As Young explains, exclusion occurs as a result of market forces which exclude vast sections of the population from the labour market (19). This is of central importance in understanding the exclusion of youth who experience homelessness inasmuch as this population faces numerous barriers to entry into the labour market, and, most especially, the most secure and economically rewarding “primary labour market.”

Young notes that exclusion denies some people access to the means by which they achieve material goods. Similar to the perspectives held by “strain theorists,” he suggests that the chronic relative deprivation of the poor/excluded may give rise to crime (52). Young claims that both the causes of crime and the increasingly punitive responses crime evokes emerge from the same source: dislocations in the labour market.

It is Young’s contention that a shift occurred during the last third of the 20th century in relation to the social reality of crime and the proposed strategies for its control (16). This shift involved the transition from neo-classic conceptions, the

scientific and rational approach to analyzing the cause and control of crime, to new actuarial approaches based on probabilistic models and risk calculation for crime management. He focuses on relative deprivation associated with the growth of individualism and the notion of the subjective state of deficit. We exist in a consumer culture, Young observes; as human beings we are creatures of comparison of have and have-nots, of those who can consume, and those who desire to consume, but cannot. As the availability of economic growth and prosperity diminish in an increasingly competitive market, the differences between the haves and have-nots become ever more noticeable. Young considers late modernity's combination of individualism and relative deprivation to be criminogenic. Young explains that exclusion in the market gives rise to exclusions and divisions within civil society. Exclusion is not simply based on a rise in intolerance; rather, some societies in late modernity promote diversity and difference, for example, Canadian society emphasis on multiculturalism. However, as Young claims, what societies are less willing to endure is "difficulty"; what societies cannot abide is what may be considered as dangerous classes and difficult people (64). Youth who experience homelessness stand outside dominant norms and therefore, may be considered "difficult." In the current stage of late modernity, central concerns are associated with the perceived risk of those who are "difficult."

To examine this issue, Young employs Goffman's (1971: 312, as cited in Young 1999: 71) notion of *umwelt*: "a core of (accomplished) normalcy with which individuals and groups surround themselves." Young notes that in late modernity personal perceptions of safety are decreasing while apprehension of risk is

increasing.³⁸ Young notes that human behaviour is always subject to evaluation and assessment and observes that there is no direct relationship between risk of crime and fear of crime.

Central to understanding the process of social exclusion is what Young terms as “essentializing the Other,” a process that leads to demonization and the creation of “monstrosity” (104-105). In order to deal with the ontological insecurities and diversity of late modernity, Young argues, individuals attempt to establish an exclusive zone which minimizes risk. This exclusionary zone provides solidarity to some while banning Others with different cultural and/or biological “essences.” Regardless of the presumed origins of these differences, this process of Othering represents an attempt to conjure ontological security into being. Those who are adjudged “different” and/or “difficult” are Othered, viewed as morally inferior and assigned responsibility for their devalued positions. As such, it is evident that essentialism is a core strategy of exclusion. As Young explains, essentialism provides for both the demonization of Others of society and assigning them blame for various social ills (110). The process of demonization facilitates the manufacture of monsters – those who are seen as essentially different and incorrigible.

Social Exclusion, Homelessness and ‘Proper’ Place

Cooper’s (2004) work on “nuisance” examines the relationship between social norms and the organizing principles of inequality, with a particular focus on the notion of harm. Harm, Cooper claims, is a powerful structuring mechanism. Cooper notes how the construct of “nuisance,” which contains strong normalizing

qualities, tends to be used against marginalized groups. Marginalized groups are labeled as a “nuisance” and subject to various means of social control.

In her writings, Cooper is interested in the ways in which nuisance sustains norms and inequalities by focusing on legal structures, public policy and discursive space. She notes the “nuisance” label has been affixed to various activities that are associated with the homeless youth, such as begging in public spaces and the actions of “squeegee kids.” Cooper links the nuisance label with the rights of propertied individuals to maintain a mental or cognitive space of safety – a space that is ostensibly challenged by the presence of homeless individuals in public spaces. As Kladowsky (2004) observes, the visibly homeless are increasingly likely to be viewed as, at best, a “nuisance” and, at worst, as dangerous. Martin (2002: 95) charges that fear of the extreme poor and fear of crime have become political commodities that are used to advance conservative social agendas³⁹. As Feldman (2004) argues, punitive policies aimed at the homeless seek to assimilate and “re-integrate” them as “productive” citizens. Social policies which emphasize personal responsibility, such as those which criminalize the homeless, ignore the structural constraints and facets of exploitation which characterize the capitalist economy and limit the engagement of those who experience homelessness (Cortese, 2003: 133). The structure of the social world leaves a notable portion of the population unable to achieve economic stability, leaving many in dire financial and social positions.

Mitchell (2003) observes that any discussion of “public space” is likely to evoke the dialectics of inclusion and exclusion, “order and disorder, violence and peace, and rationality and irrationality” (51). The term “public space,” which

suggests a space that is free to all, is, in actuality, a misnomer. “Public space” is a highly political, controlled and regulated space. It is a space, Wright (1997: 40) charges, wherein the privileged render the poor and disadvantaged invisible. Downtown city cores, once home to the disadvantaged, have now seemingly become spaces for the performance of middle-class lifestyles; within this setting the role of the ‘shopper’ reigns supreme. The regulation of public space, through mechanisms such as the *Ontario Safe Streets Act*, represents an overt attempt to remove the extremely poor from urban centres, and in doing so, ensure that consumers do not have to directly confront poverty in their daily pursuits.

Fitzpatrick and Jones (2005: 396) note that the actions of homeless individuals are becoming increasingly central to “community safety” debates and strategies, with claims made that the visibly homeless interfere with business and intimidate consumers. Thus, Hermer and Mosher (2002: 13, emphasis added) describe shoppers who are confronted by a homeless person asking for change as a “*captive audience...as vulnerable victims held hostage in their daily travels through public by disorderly individuals.*” This construction of events may be especially marked when the homeless person described is a youth, with homeless youth depicted as “dangerous locusts” in urban settings(16). The dress and conduct of homeless youth may be perceived as threatening to both dominant ideologies and middle class sensibilities and as warranting increasingly punitive strategies of control and regulation.

The presence of homeless youth within urban centres has prompted privileged groups to express fear that these centres will fall victim to chaos and

disorder. Wilson and Kelling's (1982) "broken windows"⁴⁰ theory proposes that visible disorder is both a signifier of an uncaring community and an inducement to increased chaos, disorder and crime. To combat this prospect, the benefits of social control are touted: disorder *needs* to be removed and chaos requires control⁴¹. One way of controlling disorder is to control space. Accordingly, as Wright (1997: 46) argues, space is used as an instrument of social control by the state as an organized response to crime, delinquency, deviance and disorder (also see Cohen, 1985). Increasingly harsh sanctions have been promoted and implemented to "ameliorate" space from various visible forms of "disorder," including homelessness. However, as Harcourt (2001: 126) queries, how did the "once losers of society... become so dangerous to our social fabric?" Treating disorder as abnormal and as a threat allows for and promotes policies which impose harsh penalties on the socially marginal (176).

The Use of Legislation to Create Social Exclusion: Anti-Homeless Laws

Mitchell (2003:181-182) argues that "anti-homeless laws reflect a changing conception of citizenship which, contrary to the hard-won inclusions in the public sphere that marked the civil rights, women's and labor movements in the past decades, now seeks to re-establish exclusionary citizenship as just and good." Anti-homeless laws restrict social interactions and forms of subsistence in public settings, and, in so doing, heighten the susceptibility of the homeless to social control efforts. Anti-homeless laws do not rectify any social inequalities and assist the homeless; rather, they are an attempt to purge this social group from public space. This is a fine example of social exclusion.

It is noteworthy that during the 1990s several cities in Western countries enacted by-laws which restricted begging in public spaces (Murphy, 2000: 15). For example, various cities in England embraced the “Change a Life” campaign, which encouraged people to give their spare change to charities rather than to the homeless. In like spirit, Ontario’s Conservative government implemented the *Ontario Safe Streets Act* (OSSA) in 2000, which prohibits certain forms of panhandling or, more formally, prohibits a person from being engaged in the act of “aggressive solicitation” in certain places. In doing so, the OSSA makes a very clear distinction between what is and is not tolerable public behavior. While the actions of charitable organizations, who solicit for their causes are deemed “acceptable,” the “aggressive” soliciting of those who seek “spare change” for themselves are not. Consider the irony: although charities that support the homeless are permitted to solicit monies from passersby, the homeless are prohibited from requesting monies on their own if they do so in a manner that can be deemed “aggressive” or “hostile.”

The Ontario government’s prohibition of soliciting monies in “a manner that is likely to cause a reasonable person to be concerned for his or her safety or security” marked the first time in over a century that any level of government in Canada enacted legislation which criminalized begging in public spaces (Fitzpatrick & Jones, 2005: 394; O’Grady & Greene, 2003: 1). The government of British Columbia quickly followed suit and, in 2004, that province passed a Safe Streets Act that was almost indistinguishable from its eastern counterpart. Given the imprecise and vague definition of “aggressive solicitation” within these Acts, it is at least arguable that any and all acts of panhandling may result in arrest and sanction.

Mitchell (2003) notes that no matter how dreadful it may be to claim that homeless people should be permitted to sleep in the streets, it is more abhorrent to claim that homeless people should not have this right at all. The legal restrictions which are placed on homeless individuals clearly represent an effort to regulate and control space. However, Mitchell suggests that they should also be viewed as attempts to eliminate the homeless rather than homelessness. Mitchell charges that the implementation and enforcement of such laws establishes a social order in which an entire class of people are not only marginalized but made placeless.

The *Ontario Safe Streets Act (OSSA)* may encourage the “misrecognition” and “social death” of the visibly homeless. Thus, Ruddick (2002: 55) warns that the *Ontario Safe Streets Act* is “not simply another slide in the painful, incremental social death of homeless people but marking more generally the metamorphosis of civic life itself in this province.” This Act would seem to encourage the literal and figurative banishment of the homeless. It is therefore not surprising that Ruddick views this Act as a harbinger of the social death of homeless individuals and their casting as a surplus and expendable population. Indeed, the enactment of such laws would suggest an exaggerated and especially insidious form of Nimbyism in which the “not in my backyard” response of the contented classes to those in need becomes “not in any space at all.” Moreover, Hermer and Mosher (2002) charge that legislation such as the OSSA attests to continuing efforts to dismantle the welfare state and point to the dire consequences for marginal groups, such as the homeless. Similarly, Mosher (2003: 172) charges that while laws such as the OSSA are best viewed as “anti-homeless laws” inasmuch as they diminish the freedom and rights of

homeless people, the erosion of these rights does not seem to concern those who have established these laws and who may proclaim themselves to be the “saviors of the urban landscape.”

O’Grady and Greene (2003: 2) identify the OSSA as at least partially responsible for the hardships that are experienced by homeless youth on Ontario. They note that the implementation of this Act led to a decrease in both the income of homeless youth and quality of shelter that they could access. O’Grady and Bright (2002) note that, prior to the OSSA, many youth who experienced homelessness panhandled and squeegeed for income. However, the OSSA’s criminalization of these activities was not coupled with the development and/or implementation of any programs that would have allowed street youths to gain income by alternative means. The situation that ensued “is a clear example of how marginalized and relatively powerless groups are being squeezed to the point of exclusion” (39). Echoing these sentiments, Gaetz (2004: 429) contends that the lives of youth who experience homelessness are highly regulated by the OSSA and that its provisions have forcibly removed youth from safer places to more marginal spaces in which they face increased risk of violence.

Limits of Social Exclusion

While the concept of “social exclusion” may be applicable to the study of youth with lived experiences of homelessness, it is not without its problems. Bryne (2005) notes that the often assumed counterpart to social exclusion is social inclusion, a term that is imbued with normative commitments to an ideal of citizenship and the presumed existence of a “caring community.” A “caring

community” would work towards the inclusion of those who are both socially and economically marginal. However, “inclusion” may be premised upon on terms of materialism and consumerism as definers of citizenship, and may distinctly lack a component of “caring.” As youth who are homeless stand in contrast to the established social order, there may not be a “caring community” in which such individuals might be included. At an individual and policy level, we need to care that individuals are excluded from central points of citizenship. However, this is often not the case. Bryne (2005: 3) observes that to counter social exclusion we need to focus on integration. Still, the notion of integration often omits fundamental issues of power, as those who are “excluded” rarely define the terms of their inclusion or integration (see also O’Brien et al., 1997). Accordingly, the application of a social exclusion framework can be seen as potentially oppressive if it fails to recognize that some groups are excluded and does not include the views of such marginal groups. However, while Braeckman (2006) acknowledges that social exclusion as a framework lacks conceptual clarity, he notes that this is equally true of such valued constructs as “freedom,” “equality,” “citizenship” and “democracy”.

Social Exclusion and Social Citizenship: Concluding Remarks

As previously mentioned, Marshall argued that “social rights enable the disadvantaged to enter mainstream society and effectively exercise civil and political rights” (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994:355). Social rights are key to social citizenship. Being a citizen denotes a sense that one belongs and will be protected by the state should s/he experience hardships. But some people do not possess these freedoms in Canada. They are socially excluded; they are denied access to rights and protections

and made to understand that they do not belong. Canada once promoted itself as a welfare state – a state that provided universal and relatively generous social safeguards to its citizens. The emergence of neo-liberalism in this country was accompanied by a shift the ideology of citizenship. Recent Conservative governments in particular expect people to be self-sufficient, to not rely on the state for support. This shift impacts individual and state responses to those who experience homelessness, heightening the likelihood that the homeless will experience social exclusion

This chapter noted that social exclusion is a consequential process which, in extreme cases, may result in misrecognition and social death (Ruddick, 2002); people are Othered and treated as, at minimum, a “nuisance,” perhaps even “dangerous” (Young, 1999). If social rights are the base of social citizenship, youth who are homeless may find that they possess these rights only in theory. In practice, they may find themselves unable to exercise these rights.

Chapter 4: Methods

Methodological decisions are not neutral. They reveal the underlying ideological and theoretical standpoints of the researcher(s) and guide the overall direction of research projects. As Joyner (2003: 7) contends, “all social research is conducted from a particular perspective that is embedded with assumptions and value judgments.” Becker (1967) claims that all sociological research holds some level of bias. We align our work and our positions with both our personal and political beliefs. The methodological choices I made in carrying out this project reflect my understandings of youth homelessness stemming from my experiences in the field and my commitments to social justice.

In this project, I employed a participatory approach; in particular, I used the “methods from the margins” approach developed by Kirby and McKenna (1989) to examine youths’ experiences with homelessness. Researchers who adopt a “methods from the margins” approach conduct research not just about marginalized groups, but *with* them and *for* them. Researchers work to build an intersubjective relationship with their project participants, which requires them to be both reflexive and critical (Carroll, 2004: 50). My aim was to unpack the central microsociological and macrosociological implications that the experience of homelessness has on youths’ lives in part by employing the concept of social exclusion. I understood some of these implications through my work with youth and my knowledge of the academic and policy literature. However, I sought to directly incorporate and build this project via the perspectives of youth who have experienced homelessness.

Various writers have noted that social exclusion is a broad construct and that it invites consideration of deprivation and marginalization. I sought to explore this concept through the use of qualitative methods that would allow the voices of an often “silenced” group - homeless youth - to be heard in academic work. Qualitative methods place emphasis on events, processes and structures of personal lives. I believe that they are well-suited for an endeavor which seeks to explore the lived experiences of a marginal and vulnerable population: homeless youth (Miles & Huberman, 2002). Qualitative methods also facilitate the co-production of knowledge between “researcher” and “subject” and, in doing so, may shift the power structures that mark the more traditional research process (Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach, 2009: 279). Karnieli-Miller et al., claim that there “is a need for less hierarchical and more reciprocal transparent frameworks” (285). My selection of qualitative methods reflects my personal desire to level the playing field in the research process.

The social sciences have long been dominated by logical positivism - approaches which emphasize the importance of “objectivity” and favours methods that retain the maintenance of clear distance between researchers and “subjects”, “establishing mastery over subjects... demanding the absence of feelings, and...enforcing the separateness of the knower from the known” (Hess & Ferree, 1987: 13). Kirby, Greaves and Reid (2010: 13) explain that positivism focuses on controlling physical/social environments and suggests that “truth” in the social world is available only through the pursuit of “objectivity” in structured research. Further, these approaches to social research are “sanctioned on the established power

relationship between the researcher and the researched” (Kirby et al., 1993: 13).

Various methodologists, perhaps most notably feminists, have long espoused qualitative research methods as uniquely favourable for the reduction of distance between researchers and “participants” (Morawski, 2001; Reinharz & Davidman, 1991). In seeking to prioritize this goal, my research employed “methods from the margins,” as developed by Kirby and McKenna in 1989. This qualitative methodology emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity, reflexivity, and participatory methods.

My aspiration for leveling the playing field builds upon Lyon-Callo`s (2004) contention that researchers who wish to eradicate social inequities should begin by trying to reduce hierarchical conditions and power dimensions in the research process. Youth who have lived as “homeless” persons experience marginal social positions and are often subject to oppression, subordination, and powerlessness. I did not wish to replicate these conditions in the research process. In this study, “homeless youth” were my collaborators. Their input and perspectives were central to this project, and I sought to carry out my research in ways that would be as respectful as possible of their voices.

My thesis was designed to explore the aspects of social exclusion that youth deemed most reflective of their lived experiences of homelessness. As previously noted, few, if any, people discuss their daily lives in terms of social inclusion and exclusion. It is therefore not reasonable to expect youth who are homeless to do so. Nevertheless, my project represented an attempt to work *with* youth in exploring the

applicability of a social exclusion framework to their lived experiences of homelessness and to privilege marginal voices in the production of knowledge.

“Methods from the Margins”

This project is framed as participatory research (PR). The aim of PR is to work “with” rather than “for” research participants. It seeks to legitimize the voice, experiences and knowledge of those who have traditionally been cast as the “objects” or “subjects” of research. PR emphasizes the importance of researchers working in tandem with those who are impacted by a particular social issue and jointly striving for social action and social change (Pain & Frances, 2003). Methods from the margins encourages the researcher to forge relationships with those they study, promotes the voice of participants as key founders of concepts, ideas and project direction and requires researchers to identify their own position and “conceptual baggage” in the research process. All of these strategies are believed useful in the quest to incorporate the insights of marginalized groups in the production of knowledge on youth homelessness. Kirby and McKenna’s (1989) methods from the margins provides guidelines on how to understand research rather than strict step-by-step instructions, facilitating a grounded approach to the research process.

According to Kirby and McKenna (1989), the ways in which knowledge and information are used are determined by privileged groups, such as academics and policy makers, whose claims to expertise are “credited” and/or who maintain positions that hold them as “credible” adjudicators/compiler of “truth” (15). Many individuals and groups are remote from the process of knowledge production; their

views are neither solicited nor credited as authoritative. Youth who experience homelessness and share information about their social realities with researchers may be viewed as less “knowledgeable” about their experiences than those who study them. Methods from the margins, a methodological approach that emphasizes reciprocity, intersubjectivity and reflexivity, seeks to redress this situation by encouraging those who are studied to share insights derived from lived experience and crediting them as experts. In contemplating the methods available to me, I harkened to Kirby and McKenna’s cautionary reminder that, “research that does not reflect and analyze the social context from which it springs serves only the status quo and does not enable us to interact with and change society” (67). For Kirby and McKenna, research from the margins involves four main tasks:

1. Unmasking: to question knowledge that currently exists in order to understand who created that knowledge, why specific concepts and rules were used and whose variant of truth has achieved currency;
2. Creating: to construct knowledge out of basic understandings that social reality is established by members of society. Those who are more marginal and those who are conventional producers of “truth” and “knowledge” experience the social world in differing contexts
3. Affirming: to develop an “understanding of the complex and subtle ways in which people on the margins are kept invisible and silenced” (97). This task works to ensure that those on the margins are participating in the research process in meaningful ways and that the process does not further silence the marginal group;
4. Sharing and reconstructing: to act as responsible knowers. These tasks look for the applicability of the knowledge created (97).

In the following sections, I focus on “creating” and “affirming” the voices and perspectives of my research collaborators, noting how I approached these tasks and deliberately attempted to (1) include youth as co-producers of knowledge; and (2) query the meanings of social exclusion. In a later section, I address “sharing and reconstruction.” Those who are in marginal positions rarely are considered producers of knowledge; youth who are homeless rarely have their versions of reality held as “truth.” Through my work with youth in the field, and my application of a methods from the margins approach, I worked to prioritize youths’ voices in the production of knowledge.

Decades ago, Becker (1967) challenged social researchers to identify “whose side are we on?” Becker described a “hierarchy of credibility” in the production of knowledge (241). He noted that in ranked groups, those who are positioned at the top, who possess power, are believed capable of founding truths; those who occupy lower rankings are seen as having incomplete or fragmented notions of the truth. Becker maintains that the ability to establish “truth” and “knowledge” are defined by such hierarchies, as is the right to speak and the right to be heard (167). Using methods from the margins, my dissertation aimed to alter the “hierarchy of credibility” by tending to, and crediting, the voices of youth.

Kirby et al. (2010: 37) contend that a researcher’s position in the social world can “limit or broaden” his/her understanding of conventional truths. Maynard (2004) recommends that researchers should be aware of their “intellectual biographies.” Who you are and where you are situated make a difference to the account you produce. In addressing the issue of intersubjectivity, Kirby et al. (2010:

38) emphasize that MFM necessitates an “authentic dialogue” between all involved in the research process. According to Kirby et al., reflexivity aids in this task. Reflexivity can be defined as “the capacity to locate one’s research activity in the same social world as the phenomenon being studied and to explain the nature of the research within the same framework you used to theorize about the objects of study” (2011: 39). Guba and Lincoln (1998: 199) argue that “research that relies on the interpretation of subject accounts can only make sense with a high degree of reflexivity and awareness about the epistemological, theoretical and ontological conceptions of subjects and the subjectivities that bear out on research practices and analytical processes.” By openly and honestly reflecting upon their social location, identity and life experiences researchers may be better positioned to critically assess their own position of power relative to those that they would study. Kirby et al., (2010: 39) advise that researchers should be clear and direct with their personal, ideological, methodological and theoretical choices in the research process. In undertaking this study and throughout the research process, I continuously considered my social locations in a reflexive context. I recognized that I am a Caucasian woman in my early thirties, from a middle-class, two-parent family, well-educated, married with three children. Although I have a long history of volunteer work with marginal groups, most especially youth experiencing homelessness, I lack direct experience of homelessness⁴². I also recognize that my ideologies include a strong commitment to social justice and the firm belief that the research I undertake must provide some benefit to those I study as well as to the wider community.

Alcoff notes that researchers confront at least two problems in “speaking for others.” The first is that “one cannot assume an ability to transcend location”; as Alcoff observes, there is “growing recognition that where one speaks from affects the meaning and the truth of what one says.” The second is that the practice of privileged persons speaking for less privileged groups is discursively dangerous (1991:7). Alcoff (1991:10) claims that there is no possibility of rendering positionality, location or context irrelevant to content and that researchers cannot maintain a neutral voice in working with power relations of domination, exploitation and subordination (10). She cautions that anyone who speaks for others should only do so out of thoughtful reflections on oppressive social relations, considering the social locations of both researchers and participants.

Researchers possess tremendous power in the production of knowledge about those who are socially marginal. When researchers make the private worlds of marginalized people public through their writings, the researcher is the one who retains the power of representation (Kirby et al., 2010: 39). This situation raises a series of questions. Is it possible to balance power? How can researchers best ensure adequate, appropriate and honest presentations of the information that has been provided to them by their participants? Kirby et al. claim that voice and representation are key to addressing power differentials in research (40). They observe that “voice focuses more on the representing and writing than upon the process of problem formulation and data gathering...Voice is the struggle to determine how to present the author’s self while simultaneously writing the respondents’ accounts and representing their selves” (40). By critically assessing the

positionality and social locations of researchers as well as those that they seek to investigate, the construction of voice and representation can be better contextualized in discussions of power relations. This also requires an open exchange of ideas and checking back with participants throughout the research process. This approach works to include and extend the voices of the marginal by deliberately enhancing their involvement in all stages of the research project, beginning with its design. Working within an empowerment framework can allow researchers to develop a more nuanced understanding of power and difference (Kesby, 2005).

“Methods from the margins” aims to work with individuals/groups who experience injustice, inequality and/or exploitation and purposefully include their voices in the production of knowledge⁴³. In building this method Kirby, et al., (2010: 77) acknowledge their debt to the writings of C. Wright Mills (1959) and his discussion of the “sociological imagination.” For Kirby et al., (2010), research is not envisaged as a mechanical activity but, instead, as an opportunity to understand and potentially transform social relations. By altering dominant means of knowledge production and research processes, Kirby and McKenna (1989) suggest, we can “explore the construction of social realities as public issues rather than private troubles and, in turn, alter social relations. In questioning knowledge production and including intersubjectivity in the research process, MFM challenges dominant positivist approaches to social research” (16).

MFM differs in significant ways from more conventional positivist approaches to social research (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Within positivist methods, participants are objects of study. Research is lauded as ideal when it is putatively

“objective.” Positivist methodologies caution against personal and political framings that are believed to “skew” the presentation of data. As Kirby and McKeena explain, within logical positivism the “researcher” is predominantly viewed as the “expert” in the process of inquiry (17). In some non-positivist paradigms, the production of knowledge is envisaged as a cooperative engagement between researcher and participants (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009: 279). McKnee, Delary and Brownlee (2003: 495) note that many academics lack transparency and reflexivity in their claims. This is tied to processes of power that are embedded in academia and research practices. According to these authors, there is a need for researchers to reconcile their a priori assumptions and assess *what* they think and *how* they came to possess their assumptions. With MFM, the researcher is exhorted to employ their research skills to include marginal groups with relevant lived experience in the academic production of knowledge. Methods from the margins guides the relationships built within this research project.

Framing the Project with Methods from the Margins

In my dissertation, I treated youth who have experienced homelessness as not the “objects” of my study, but as my “collaborators” as “experts” who could talk knowledgably of their experiences. These “collaborators” developed the central topics to be explored. By structuring this project to show fidelity to MFM, I sought to position the youths who were involved in my project as producers of knowledge. Doing so was congruent with my belief that “everyone is regarded as equally capable of providing arguments germane to the construction of scientific knowledge” (Longino, 1993: 113). As such, I initially asked youth to identify what, if any,

components of social exclusion were relevant to their lives. This was done through focus groups in which youth, with some guidance from me, discussed their experiences of homelessness.

The initial direction for this work, both theoretically and methodologically, was shaped by my concern with social justice. Joyner (2003: 7) defines “social justice” as efforts to improve the social conditions and quality of life of those who are “marginal” or oppressed. My approach to social justice is guided by the work of Iris Marion Young (1990) and Nancy Fraser (2010). Young (1990) maintains that social justice requires opportunities to exercise one’s capacities, express one’s experiences, participate in determining one’s action and the conditions of one’s actions. In short, Young’s work emphasizes the importance of agency and inclusion. She argues that the social world should be structured so that all individuals have equal rights and opportunities and each person is treated with dignity. For Nancy Fraser (2010), social justice is based around appropriate recognition in society. This entails an absence of stereotyping and othering. For Fraser, social justice is not just about access to/redistribution of resources in society. It also requires that people are treated equally and with respect. The quest for social justice directs attention to the issues of structural domination and oppression. The methodological choices I made were informed by such assumptions.

Locating Self in Research

Having worked as a volunteer with individuals experiencing homelessness (mostly youth) for a number of years, I felt that my twinned desires for social justice and equity in the research process could not be met by entering the field, extracting

the necessary information from a population of “subjects,” and exiting. I recognized that a limited degree of interaction and rapport between me and my young participants would predictably lessen the degree of their engagement. In addition, I appreciated that from a social justice standpoint, I could not proceed with this research unless I demonstrated accountability and commitment to my participants, as I view this as a sign of respect and treating people with dignity. Harding (1993: 62-63) argues that researchers often derive greater benefits from their research than those that they study. I was aware that I might derive various material and non-material benefits from the successful completion of this research. Yet, I recognize that, to no small degree, I share “authorship” of this project with my participants. Their insights inform this project. Their “lived reality” infuses this work.

The inequity of the situation struck me as vexatious. I was acutely aware that I owed my participants a “duty of care” that could not be satisfied by an “enter and extract” method of data collection. My engagement and rapport with the youth needed to be meaningful and to provide benefit to those involved. This encouraged me to become deeply engaged in volunteer work with this population. While I could provide my research participants with only minimal financial compensation, I was buoyed by my belief that I could assist them, and others who were similarly situated, by my purposive adoption of MFM and ongoing volunteer work with the homeless.

Overview of Current Studies – Adding to the Literature

Researching homelessness is fraught with methodological difficulties. Establishing an operational definition of “homelessness”, determining the most suitable means to construct a sample and, given the transient nature of the

population, accessing that population have been identified as some of the key difficulties (Fitzgerald, Shelley & Dail, 2001: 121). The task of defining “youth homelessness” is also difficult. As Zuker (2005) observes in rhetorically querying “Who is the child?”:

The answer to this question is perhaps more complex than one might anticipate. In fact, the tangle of legal regulations defining, delineating or impacting “the child” sets no one standard by which this junior status is consistently defined. Age of Majority and Accountability legislation pegs the graduation date from youth at the somewhat advanced standard of 18. Liquor laws commonly demand that no sales be made to individuals under the age of 19. Still other legal regimes (such as Ontario’s Child and Family Services Act) accord rights to individuals as young as 7 years old (e.g., for the purposes of consenting to adoption). Still other sources of law consider the issue apart from the matter of chronological standing and on the basis of capacity.

The simple answer to this difficult question is that there is no one legal definition of “the child.” Rather, there are a multitude of standards and definitions of “the child” for the purposes of the law in Ontario and in Canada, which makes understanding the many areas of the law that impinge upon the lives of young persons all that more challenging. Simply put, the definition of “the child” for the purposes of the law (and by inference the ascension to adulthood or license for the purposes of various legal standards) varies, and must be viewed and applied in the context (and frequently within the statutory or regulatory authority) in which it arises.

Defining “youth” is equally complicated. Is use of this term best applied to persons under the age of 16 or 18 or, perhaps, 21? In my study, the term “youth” refers to persons between the ages of 16 and 25. The age parameters I employ follow those used by social service agencies in the geographical area under study. However, inasmuch as my research revealed that the experiences of those who are legally “adults” differ from those who are not, I subdivided the youth in my sample into a number of age-based groupings.

Various researchers have emphasized the difficulty and/or impossibility of estimating the size of the homeless population, in Canada or elsewhere (Bessant, 2001; Murphy, 2000; Rossi, 1989). For example, Wright, Rubine and Devine (1998) directed attention to the “hidden homeless” and noted that many homeless individuals locate themselves in places that are not easily accessed by researchers (i.e. not on the street or in a shelter). Inaccurate statistics on the homeless can have direct impacts, as overestimates invite public cynicism and underestimates limit the services that are available to this population (Murphy, 2000)⁴⁴. Nevertheless, Rossi (1989) points out that random sampling cannot be used in studying the homeless inasmuch as random sampling begins with the generation of a general population list. No such list is available; no such list could be compiled. Access to homeless populations also presents distinct difficulties within the research process. As Lyon-Callo (2004) explains, homeless individuals often distrust of persons in privileged positions, particularly if these individuals are associated with service organizations. Further, street youth may fear detection and detainment, or being forced to return home (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997: 240). As Hagan and McCarthy explain, “the self-preservation of street youth dictates that they avoid meddlesome inquiring strangers...particularly older adults” (241). Moreover, due to the transient nature of this population, much research on homeless youth conducted is cross-sectional in design; tracking such individuals over periods of time would be extremely difficult if not impossible.

My use of MFM and the geographic location of my study distinguish it from previous Canadian research on youth who experience homelessness. Table 4.1 provides a sample of Canadian-based studies that have examined youth homelessness and resulted in reports published between 2000-2011⁴⁵. It should be noted that this table addresses Canadian research only and reflects my concern with social structures and policies are consequential for Canadian youth who are homeless. Though the contents of this table are not exhaustive, they are suggestive. For example, it is notable that the bulk of reported research has employed deductive methods. In investigating this often difficult-to-reach population, academics have commonly adopted a top-down approach and formulated a variety of research questions that they explored through survey questionnaires and structured interviews. Few pursued participatory approaches and, to the best of my knowledge, none employed a MFM approach. Only 14 of the 46 studies used solely qualitative methods and only 5 explicitly mentioned their use of participatory methods.

My research on youth homelessness attempts to augment the literature on the topic by both the novelty of its methodological approach and its discussion of the aspects of social exclusion that homeless youth felt to most germane to their lives. It is distinctive in other ways as well. MFM demands a high level of engagement between researchers and those they research. Using MFM required trust and intersubjectivity. This could not be accomplished in a short period of time. I started as a volunteer within the community to engage with youth, for this project and for personal reasons. Although my research project is now nearing its end, I remain committed to working in this field and continue to volunteer with homeless youth. I

developed deeper relationships with youth than might be possible unlike the more conventional research project strategy of enter, interview and exit. My work required as well a greater depth of engagement than is typical of more conventional studies. I know the youth personally, about their lives and concerns, and they know about mine. This is quite a different approach to the research process. However, MFM, in my view, requires more than a gathering of data. It demands commitment to those that one conducts research with and the community that they represent.

This work is also unique given the geographic location of the data collection. As noted in Table 4.1, the vast majority of Canadian studies on youth experiencing homelessness have been conducted in major urban centres (e.g. Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary). Conducting work in major urban areas is logical. Compared to smaller locales, these settings contain greater numbers of homeless youth and service agencies that deal with this population. Nevertheless the Tri-Cities area, where I conducted my research, is unique as the Regional Municipality of Waterloo is rather forward thinking with a nationally recognized Crime Prevention Council that focuses on social justice and being “Smart on Crime,” as opposed to being “tough on crime.” The area also houses a progressive Social Planning, Policy and Administration Unit of the Region of Waterloo. This unit conducts numerous studies in the areas of housing and homelessness, working towards a housing stability program. The Region also funds the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella group, a working group that focuses on education, advocacy, and the prevention of homelessness in the Waterloo Region, and Safe Haven, a youth shelter for those aged 12-15. Further, the Region supports a Housing Counseling program to assist

individuals in obtaining and maintaining housing, and a psychiatric outreach services, operated in a local soup kitchen. There are also male, female, youth and supportive housing shelters available across the Region.

Table 4.1: Canadian-Based Studies of Youth and Homelessness, 2001-2011

Author(s)	Year	Q	u	a	n	t	i	t	Method	Sampl e S i z e	Location	Year(s) Data Collected	PA R	Specific Youth Involve ment	Title/Topic
1 Baron	2003							Y	Structured interviews	400	Large Canadian City	May 2001 - August 2001	No		Street youth violence and victimization
2 Baron	2011							Y	Structured interviews	300	Toronto	June 2005 - January 2006	No		Street youths and the proximate and contingent causes of instrumental crime:
3 Baron	2010							Y	Structured interviews	300	Toronto	June 2005 - January 2006	No		Street youths' control imbalance and soft and hard drug use
4 Baron	2009							Y	Structured interviews	300	Toronto	June 2005 - January 2006	No		Differential coercion, street youth, and violent crime
5 Baron	2003							Y	Structured interviews	400	Large Canadian City	May 2001 - August 2001	No		Self-control, social consequences, and criminal behavior
6 Baron	2001							Y	Structured interviews	200	Edmonton	January 1993 - June 1993	No		Street youth labour market experiences and crime
7 Baron	2009							Y	Structured interviews	300	Toronto	June 2005 - January 2006	No		youths' violent responses to violent personal, vicarious, and anticipated strain.
8 Baron	2008							Y	Structured interviews	400	Western Canadian City	May 2000 - August 2001	No		Street youth, unemployment, and crime
9 Baron	2007							Y	Structured interviews	400	Western Canadian City	May 2000 - August 2001	No		Street youth, gender, financial strain, and crime:
10 Baron	2006							Y	Structured interviews	400	Large Canadian City	May 2001 - August 2001	No		Street youth, strain theory, and crime
11 Baron	2004							Y	Structured interviews	400	Large Canadian City	May 2000 - August 2001	No		General strain, street youth and crime
12 Baron & Forde	2007							y	Structured interviews	400	Vancouver	May 2000 - August 2001	No		Street youth crime: A test of control balance theory
13 Baron, Forde & Kennedy	2001							Y	Structured interviews	400	Large Canadian City	May 2001 - August 2001	No		Male street youths' conflict: The role of background, subcultural, and situational factors.
14 Baron, Forde, & Kennedy	2007							Y	Structured interviews	125	Midwestern Canadian City	May 1995 - July 1995	No		Disputatiousness, aggressiveness, and victimization among street youths
15 Baron, Kennedy & Forde	2001							Y	Structured interviews	125	Edmonton	May 1995 - July 1995	No		Rough justice: Street youth and violence
16 Buccieri	2010							Y	Interviews	10	Ottawa	2006			Harm reduction
17 Cleverly & Kidd	2011							Y	Semi structured interviews and self-administered survey	47	Hamilton	NA	No		Resilience and suicidality among homeless youth
18 Gaetz	2004							Y	Structured self-administered questionnaires and follow up interviews	208	Toronto	2001			Homeless youth, social exclusion and criminal victimization
19 Gaetz & O'Grady	2002								Structured self-administered surveys and follow up	360	Toronto	NA	Yes	6 peer outreach workers	Making money: Exploring the economy of young homeless workers

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				interviews						
20 O'Grady & Gaetz	2007	Y	Y	Self- report survey and interviews	360	Toronto	1999	Yes	6 peer outreach workers	Homelessness, gender and subsistence: The case of Toronto street youth
21 Gaetz, O'Grady & Buccieri	2010	Y	Y	Self- report survey and interviews	244	Toronto	January 2009 - July 2009	No		Crime and victimization
22 Gallupe & Baron	2009		Y	Structured interviews	300	Toronto	June 2005 - January 2006	No		Street youth, relational strain, and drug use.
23 Gharabaghi & Stewart	2010	Y		Interviews/Focus Groups	22	Ontario Central East	NA	No		Prospects and challenges for homeless youth
24 Karabanow & Naylor	2010	Y	Y	In- depth qualitative interview and quantitative survey	20	Halifax	NA	No		Street youth with information communication technology
25 Karabanow	2008	Y		Semi-structured interviews	128	6 Canadian cities	NA	No		Getting off the street
26 Karabanow	2004	Y		In- depth interviews structured and unstructured interviews participant and non participant observation	180	Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Guatemala City)	Mid 1990's to 2003	No		Getting off the street
27 Karabanow	2004	Y		Structured interviews/participant and non participant observation	65	Toronto, Montreal and Guatemala	NA	No		making organizations work
28 Karabanow	2006	Y		In- depth interviews	98	Toronto, Montreal, Halifax	Mid 1990's to 2003	No		Becoming a street kid: Exploring the stages of street life.
29 Karabanow, Hopkes, Kesley, Parker, Hughes, Gahagan & Campbell	2007	Y	Y	In- depth interviews and short quantitative survey	15	Halifax	NA	No		Can you be healthy on the street?: Exploring the health experience of Halifax street youth
30 Karabanow, Hughes, Ticknor, Kidd & Patterson	2010	Y		In depth interviews	34	St. John's, Montreal, Hamilton, Toronto, Winnipeg and Calgary	NA	No		The economics of being young and poor: How homeless youth survive in neo-liberal times
31 Keenan, Maldonado, & O'Grady	2006	Y	Y	Structured interviews	300 in Toronto, 62 in Tanzania, 90 in Ecuador	Toronto, Ecuador, Tanzania	NA	Yes - TO	TO - street youth research assistants	International comparative analysis of income generation among street youth
32 Kidd	2007	Y	Y	Survey and Interviews	208 (108 in TO)	Toronto and New York City	NA	No		Youth Homelessness and Social Stigma
33 Kidd	2006	Y	Y	Survey and Interviews	208 (108 in Toronto and 100 in NYC)	Toronto and New York City	NA	No		Factors Precipitating Suicidality among Homeless Youth: A Quantitative Follow-Up
34 Kidd	2004	Y		Semi-structured interviews	80	Toronto and Vancouver	NA	No		Qualitative Analysis of Street Youth Suicide
35 Kidd	2003	Y		Semi-structured interviews	80	Toronto and Vancouver	NA	No		Street Youth: Coping and Interventions
36 Kidd & Carroll	2007	Y	Y	Survey and Interviews	208 (108 in TO)	Toronto and New York City	NA	No		Coping and suicidality among homeless youth
37 Kidd & Evans	2011	Y	Y	structured survey with conversational interview	208 (108 in Toronto and 100 in NYC)	Toronto and New York City		No	28 verification interviews after thematic analysis	The meaning of home
38 Kidd & Shahar	2008	Y	Y	Semi- structured interviews and structured self-administered quantitative	208 (108 in Toronto and	Toronto and New York City	NA	No		Resilience in Homeless Youth: The Key Role of Self-Esteem

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				survey	100 in NYC)					
39 Kidd & Kral	2002	Y		Semi-structured interviews	29	Toronto	NA	No		Suicide and Prostitution among Street Youth: a Qualitative Analysis.
40 Klodawsky, Aubry & Farrell	2006		Y	Questionnaire	156	Ottawa	2002-2003	No		Care and the lives of homeless youth in neoliberal times in Canada
41 Miller, Donahue, Este, & Hofer	2004		Y	Questionnaire	110 (41 with youth)	Calgary	NA	No		Experiences of being homeless or at risk of being homeless among Canadian youth
42 O'Grady & Greene	2003	Y	Y	Structured self-administered questionnaires and follow-up interviews	50	Toronto	NA	No		Social and economic impact study of the Ontario Safe Streets Act on Toronto squeegee workers
43 Robinson & Baron	2005	Y		Semi-structured interviews	30	Toronto	2004-2005	No		Employment training for street youth: A viable option?
44 Rokach	2005		Y	Questionnaire	324 (113 with youth)	Toronto	NA	No		Loneliness in Homeless Youth
45 Stewart, Reutter, Letourneau, Makwarmba & Hungler	2010	Y		Group Interviews and interviews	Group Interview = 14, Interviews = 21			Yes		
46 Wingert	2005	Y		Interviews	12	Winnipeg	May 22 - September 26, 2002	Yes	4 street involved youth interns	Winnipeg street youth

The Project

Overview

This project is based in part on the perspectives of youth who have experienced homelessness in the “Tri-Cities” area (i.e., Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge, Ontario). Youth (n=13) participated in focus groups and individual interviews (n=30) that I conducted at three shelters for homeless youth. Some of the youth who participated in the focus groups were also participants in the individual interviews (n=7). I began my data collection after spending almost two years working as a volunteer at one of these sites. I started working as a volunteer with homeless youth at one of the three shelters in February of 2008. My formal data collection began in December of 2009 and ended in January of 2010. My volunteer

work at one of these sites allowed me to build rapport with the youth who attended these facilities.

As I originally envisaged it, this project would unfold in three stages. In the first stage I planned to conduct focus groups at one shelter, with youth reflecting upon their experiences of homelessness and social exclusion. This initial stage was to be a “pilot project” that engaged youth and acknowledged their expertise of the “lived reality” of youth homelessness. The outcomes of the focus groups would inform the direction of questions that I presented to youth during the final two stages of the project which would have them completing journals and interviews. The central data collection tool was to be journaling. I viewed journaling as a method that was particularly well suited to my adoption of a methods from the margins approach.

I had originally planned to provide my participants with a list of various topics that they might wish to discuss in their journals. I intended to stress that this list was suggestive, not exhaustive, and that all participants were free to address whatever issue(s) they chose. In issuing these instructions, my intention was to encourage my participants to identify the topics that were of the most important to them and provide them with the fullest possible opportunity to exercise control over the research process. Although topics/themes were to be established by their peers during focus group discussions, each youth would be able to write on any topic(s) that they saw of interest/relevance. However, due to a series of events, discussed in a later section of this chapter, I was unable to employ journaling as a method of data collection.

As I noted above, I began work as a volunteer at a local agency which provides services to homeless youth prior to beginning my research. My duties included greeting youth at the door of the agency, helping them with access items that the shelter provides to those who use the facility (e.g., clothing, food, hygiene products), cooking meals, helping them with the preparation of resumes, assisting them in their review of housing lists, and directing them to local agencies that could assist them with housing. Much of my time, however, was spent in time sitting and talking with them about their lives and situations. As I immersed myself in a setting that was hospitable to the homeless youth and established myself in a non-threatening role, I was able to meet, interact with and become known to various youth in the Tri-Cities area. I interacted with youth in a way that was non-threatening and non-invasive and allowed for the development of trust. While my behaviour may be construed as “manipulative,” my intentions were not to mislead the youth I interacted with but, instead, to forge a mutually respectful relationship with them. Moreover, it may be noted that, due to the transient nature of the homeless population, many of the youth with whom I built relationships did not participate in the research project.

The twenty-three months I spent as a volunteer, working with homeless youth, were central to my employment of MFM. My experiences allowed me to establish strong degrees of rapport with the majority of youths I encountered. Eighty percent of the interviews I conducted (i.e., 24 out of 30) were with youth I had come to know during my time as a volunteer; the remaining interviews involved youth I

did not know well. Not surprisingly, the data that I derived from the latter group of interviews were, in the main, less rich.

Sample Definitions

Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003: 82) observe that “the precision and rigor of a qualitative research sample is defined by its ability to represent salient characteristics.” While this project originated in my interest in youth who experience homelessness, I quickly realized that the terms “youth” and “homelessness” are difficult to operationalize. My reviewing of the literature on youth homelessness also alerted me to the fact that these terms have not been defined consistently.

The data collection for this project was conducted at three agencies in the Tri-Cities area that provides services to youth who experience homelessness. I was dependent on these agencies for gaining access to a population of homeless youth. In order to facilitate access I employed the age parameters they used, i.e. a “youth” is someone between the ages of 16 and 25⁴⁶. The definition of “homelessness” I employed follows Hulchanski’s (2009: 2) expansive definition of the term. Hulchanski emphasizes that “home” is “social, psychological space not just a house as a physical structure.” By extension, to be “homeless” implies the absence of all of these physical and socio-emotional comforts and supports (2). Bringing these two definitions together, I defined “homelessness” as persons aged 16 to 25 who lacked the social, psychological and physical space of “home” during the 12 months that preceded the start of my data collection. However, while I defined “homelessness” for the purpose of clarity within this project, I did not identify or label the youth as homeless. Those who participated in my project self-identified as experiencing

“homelessness” over the 12 months prior to the focus group or interview. Given that youth shelters in the Tri-Cities prohibit youths who are under the age of 16 from accessing their facilities, persons younger than age 16 were not included in my study.

To determine the eligibility of youth to participate in my study, I asked youths to describe their living situations over the past year; those who reported that they had experienced “homelessness” or “housing instability” were eligible for inclusion. In asking youth to describe their living situations, I sought to credit the perspectives of youth and to allow them control of the definition of themselves as either “homeless” or subject to precarious housing. Drawing upon the perspectives of youth recognized that “homelessness”/ housing instability could include: literal homelessness (i.e., living on the streets or in parks or wooded areas); “couch surfing” (i.e., moving from the home of a friend or family member to the residence of other friends or family members); and/or living in shelters or other temporary housing arrangements (i.e. incarceration, short stays in rooming houses or motels, squatting in vacant buildings). The self-identification process that I employed derived from my embrace of MFM. I sought to acknowledge that while some youth might choose unconventional living arrangements, they might not identify their experiences as indicative of homelessness. Further, I sought to avoid imposing my definition of homelessness upon others.

My study is based upon the responses of a non-random, non-representative sample of youths who attended one or more of three agencies in the Tri-Cities area that provides services for young people who experience homelessness⁴⁷. As Berg

(2001) explains, non-probabilistic sampling is useful when attempting to access hard-to-reach and/or vulnerable⁴⁸ populations. While my use of non-random sampling curtails my ability to generalize from the results, this form of sampling is consistent with the stratagems of my preferred MFM approach. For these reasons, my sample comprised a group of youth who used the services of the participating agencies and who referred to themselves as homeless or experiencing housing instability. Overall, my aim in conducting this research was to establish an authentic dialogue with youth and, in doing so, to engage marginal voices in the production of knowledge about the experiences of homelessness. The central research question guiding the overall process was “Do youth conceptualize and utilize aspects of social exclusion to define their lived experience?” The focus group discussions produced a set of questions focused on the following:

- How do youth experience poverty?
- What are their views of and connections to the state and state support? (i.e. what are the limits of social citizenship as tied to homelessness in terms of their access to safeguards, resources, and treatment in society)
- How are youths’ interpersonal relationships linked to the features of social exclusion?

Access to Organizations: Gatekeepers

I was able to access a sample of homeless youth through my volunteer work with local organizations. However, my ability to obtain the assistance of these organizations required that I adhered to their formal and informal rules. Gatekeepers

of organizations that serve vulnerable populations attempt in various ways to protect their clientele from potentially harmful conditions or events. As such, I was required to provide the gatekeeper at the agency at which I volunteered at with a document that indicated that my research received approval from the committee at the University of Waterloo that evaluates research proposals and ensures their conformity with ethical standards .

Accessing Site One

As a new resident of the Tri-Cities area, gaining access to a population of homeless youth through an agency that serves this population was a lengthy process. I was not established in the community; I had moved to the area to attend university and had no local contacts for agencies or groups who focused on homelessness. This required me to learn about the services that are available to homeless youth in the area, to become familiar with which areas are most frequented by youth⁴⁹, and to become cognizant of the perspectives of local state agencies that work with those who are homeless. Accordingly, shortly after my arrival in the Tri-Cities I explored the local community and municipal government websites. Much to my pleasure, I discovered that the regional government included social policy units that were dedicated to homelessness in the Tri-Cities area and that these units had produced a large number of reports on the topic. These reports included listings of all services provided for those who experience homelessness, including youth-specific agencies. This is where my access work began. I narrowed my exploration of local, youth-based agencies to those which were identified within these reports as providing

resources for youth experiencing homelessness. I then contacted the site which was identified as serving the highest number of homeless youth in the area.⁵⁰

My first attempt to gain access to this site involved “cold calling” the agency. However, my efforts were not productive. This did not surprise me as I recognized that my “student” status did not command esteem and that I lacked connections in the community and/or “name recognition” as a serious investigator of youth homelessness. I was an “outsider” (Becker, 1963). I recognized that in order to counter this status, I needed to establish contacts within the field. Having worked at the University of Waterloo as a doctoral student for a few years, my interest in homelessness had become known to a few of the faculty members. One of these professors generously invited me to attend a meeting of the Waterloo Region’s *Crime Prevention Council*. My attendance at this event proved fortuitous: through associations that I forged at this event, I was able to gain increasing degrees of access to homeless populations. For example, I met a number of members of the Crime Prevention Council (CPC), including its Executive Director, and, subsequently, worked with this group on a proposal that requested funding for a project on homelessness.

After discussing my own research interests with the executive director of the CPC, she suggested that I contact the agency that I had earlier approached and that I use her name as a reference. My use of the executive director’s name seemed to open the door to my involvement with the agency and I was able to secure a meeting with its executive director (ED). During our meeting, the ED stressed that researchers were rarely granted access to the youth who used their services. The ED

emphasized that youth should not be “subject” to “further exploitation” and felt it necessary to protect them from researchers who conducted academic studies that had little or no benefit for those they studied. The ED was emphatic in insisting that I establish myself with the organization by working with them as a volunteer for a minimum of 8 months, as this was a standard requirement for all volunteers. This time would provide me with the opportunity to build rapport with youth and permit me to provide service to the community. Three and a half months after I “cold called” site one, I was allowed to interact with the youth at that facility and began working there as a volunteer in February of 2008. As a volunteer I had to follow certain rules that are imposed upon all volunteers with that agency. Specifically, I had to agree that I would not discuss the youth with anyone outside of the organization or approach these youth outside of the facility. If a youth that I had met at this facility approached me outside of the organization I was required to report their doing so to a supervisor of the agency. In addition, I agreed that I would not give gifts to the youth that I met through the agency.

From February 2008 to December of 2009, I worked two evenings (i.e., from 6:00pm to 11:00pm) a week as a volunteer. I strove to be regular in my attendance and to maintain a consistent schedule so that youth would know who I was and when I would be at the site. The regularity and predictability of my attendance at the facility allowed me to develop significant degrees of rapport with the youth who routinely came to this site. Indeed, I developed strong and friendly relationships with many of the youth I encountered. For example, some youths told me that they had purposely come to the site on a certain day because they were aware that I would be

working and wished to speak with me and provide me with updates on their situation. I actively engaged with the youth and developed a sincere interest in their well-being. Although I did not develop friendships with all of these young people, friendships did emerge with some and these relationships were characterized by a pattern of mutual disclosure. Thus, some youth learned more about my life than others and gained knowledge of my multiple roles as a student, partner and parent⁵¹ and an advocate for a number of cherished causes. This reciprocal disclosure of information worked to build more equitable relationships. Over time, I felt accepted by both youth and staff and became increasingly familiar with the youth who frequented the site. This acceptance was crucial to me, both ideologically and methodologically.

Compensation for Participation

An honorarium was provided to each youth participant. It consisted of a \$20 gift card that could be used at local food establishments or for the purchase of bus tickets. In outlining my project initially to the ED, I noted that I wished to provide some form of material compensation to my youth participants. The ED directed me to explore options with a manager at the facility who was designated as my “point person.” The point person identified gift certificates for food establishments and bus tickets as the most appropriate honoraria. Later, the ED of the other sites where I conducted interviews would also voice approval of these types of compensation. When each participant was provided with the honorarium, they were asked to sign a receipt to acknowledge that they had received it.

Research at Site 1

In January of 2008 I sought consent from the ED to pursue research at this facility. To that end, I provided the ED of this agency with a copy of the research proposal that I had presented to both my dissertation committee and the University of Waterloo's Committee on Ethics. The ED directed me to a middle-manager of the agency who would review my materials and the terms of my research. On January 15, 2008, I received an email from the point person that informed me that my research plans had been approved. I was instructed, by the ED, to advise this "point person" of all of the stages of my research plans and to ensure that I obtained approval prior to commencing any of these stages. It was my understanding that these directions were primarily intended to avoid scheduling conflicts (i.e., to ensure that my efforts to collect data did not conflict with other planned activities or events at the site). When I met with the point person to review my research plans, we verbally agreed that I would begin by conducting focus groups with youth and that this preliminary stage would be followed, in turn, by member checking and journaling/interviews. The point person additionally informed me that I was not to take notes on what I observed at the site and that I was to report only on data that were collected through my use of focus groups, interviews and journals and for which I would have the written consent of the youth. Although I felt uncomfortable with the restrictiveness of these conditions, I agreed to them, aware from my first conversation with this site's ED that very few researchers were able to gain access to the agency's client population. Prior to each stage of my planned research, I submitted and received written clearance from, first, the ethics board at the

University of Waterloo and then, verbal clearance from the point person at site one. Unfortunately, a staffing change in the designated “point person” resulted in a host of unexpected events. These events complicated my data collection efforts.

Although I had received verbal and email consent from the point person in January of 2008 to carry out my research, the point person went on a leave of absence shortly after this meeting and was absent from the organization for a period of approximately one year. During her absence, four different people occupied, for varying lengths of time, the role of my designated “point person” with the agency. Following the appointment of each new “point person,” I met with the individual, provided them with copies of the materials that I had previously submitted and reviewed these materials with my new point person.

In August of 2009, I sought to implement stage 2 of my data collection following approval from the Research Ethics Board. At this time, the ED stopped all aspects of my data collection and, in an email that sent to me, stated the ED did not recall a second stage of the research process. The ED and I corresponded over email about the remainder of my project. I also provided the ED with an additional copy of my proposal and a scanned copy of the letter of approval that I had received from the agency. This document acknowledges that from November 18, 2008 the agency was aware that my research was designed as a multi-stage project that would begin with focus groups and proceed to journaling and interviews. This document, signed by the original point person, reads: “This letter is to acknowledge my support of Jennifer Robinson’s Social Exclusion project effective of this date. I have read the proposal

and understand the methods for collecting information for her research will include: focus groups, solicited diaries/journal entries and semi-structured interviews.”

On September 11, 2009, I was notified that I could proceed to the second phase of my project - contingent upon my acceptance of a new set of terms and conditions for data collection. These new conditions impacted most notably on my ability to employ journaling as a method of data collection⁵². I was also informed that I could collect data only until October 31, 2009.

Given the conditions, which unexpectedly restricted the methods that I was to use and the time I had to collect data, I reviewed my research plans with my thesis committee. Due to our shared concern over what the new set of conditions demanded, my committee and I agreed that I would not employ journaling as a research method. I subsequently informed the agency that I would not be pursuing journaling and would only be conducting interviews at their site. To compensate for the absence of journaling as a data collection method, I decided to augment my sample size by recruiting participants from other agencies that serve youth experiencing homelessness across the Tri-Cities area.

Accessing Sites 2 and 3

Sites 2 and 3 serve the same target population as Site 1. They were not originally selected as preferred sites because the number of youth they serve annually is much lower than that of Site 1. Sites 2 and 3 are two distinct agencies under the same umbrella organization, offering services they offer are differentiated on the basis of gender. Youths at sites 2 and 3 were included in the project only at the interview

stage because by this time the focus group stage of this project had already been completed.

I gained access to youth at the two additional sites with relative ease. After notifying the ED at the original research cite that I would be seeking to expand my population of youth by contacting other agencies, I contacted the ED of the umbrella organization that oversees the two additional sites. By that time, I had been in the field for 20 months, made many contacts with persons in the region who are concerned with the issue of youth homelessness, and worked briefly as a consultant⁵³ for the Region of Waterloo's Social Policy, Planning and Administrative Unit. In this capacity, I had conducted data collection and environmental scans for a study on "youth specific housing options" and written a draft report that detailed my findings. While engaged in this work I had met with, consulted and/or interviewed many senior management staff of housing/homelessness service agencies across the Waterloo Region.

I first contacted the ED of Sites 2 and 3 in October of 2009. My initial contact was made via telephone. During these calls I provided the ED with a detailed explanation of my project and requested that I be allowed to invite youth who accessed the agency to participate in my research project. Further discussions with the ED followed via emails sent in October of 2009. I also provided the ED with documents that detailed my research plans and provided samples of the types of questions I proposed to ask youth. The ED of Sites 2 and 3 requested that I submit for review all of the materials that I proposed to use with youths in order to ensure that they contained age-appropriate language and word use⁵⁴.

Following a week of correspondence, and some minor wording changes to the consent letters and interview schedules, the ED granted me access to both sites during November and December of 2009. While I very much appreciated the opportunity to expand my sample of youth, I anticipated that the levels of rapport that I would be able to establish with youth at these sites would be less than I was able to achieve at Site 1, given that I neither volunteered with these agencies nor interacted with the youth at these sites for an extended period of time. This concern was borne out most notably in relation to the site which served male youth who experienced homelessness. Although I was able to quickly develop rapport with the sole female youth that I interviewed at Site 3, my efforts to establish rapport with the male youths were less successful. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the comments that the latter expressed during interviews were also less rich and detailed than those expressed by my female participant at Site 3.

Data Collection – Tools, Techniques and Ethical Considerations

In the end, this project ran in two stages. The first involved the pilot project of focus groups; the second stage involved semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. Under the terms of my agreement with Site 1, I was specifically precluded from taking notes on my observations of the youth at the agency. Further, financial compensation was provided through gift certificates in the amount of \$20 that were redeemable at local establishments⁵⁵. I personally bore the costs of providing these honoraria.

Stage 1: Focus Groups

As a data collection tool, focus groups are often used for soliciting background information about a general topic of interest, creating or expanding research questions, and assessing benefits or setbacks for program development, services or products (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007). Focus groups may also be used to confirm or challenge taken-for-granted ideas or assumptions about particular populations or social issues. If well conducted, this method can provide a rich body of data that is expressed in the words of the respondents. The researcher acts as a moderator or facilitator of discussions and has little input in the conversation or its direction. Maintaining this minimalist role permits the participants to retain power over the structure of the discussion and the overview of pertinent topics.

Focus groups are a cost-effective method (Bryman, Teevan, & Bell, 2009). They provide a researcher with data from a group of respondents at one time, which is beneficial at the beginning of a research project. Further, focus groups allow researchers to appreciate the ways in which particular groups, such as youth who experience homelessness, think and talk about a phenomenon such as social exclusion. The group dynamics created in focus groups are not readily observable via other data collection tools which tend to focus more on individuals (Bryman, et al., 2009). This was an important consideration for my project as I wanted the youth, in groups, to discuss and brainstorm the about relevance of social exclusion to their lived experiences.

Power dynamics are an important consideration when collecting data using a MFM approach. Morgan (1996) asserts that focus groups can create space for the

voices of marginal people and can work to alter the traditional power structures of the research process. This can be accomplished, as some feminist researchers have outlined, via the control given to respondents in the focus group setting, as they have more control over the direction of discussion and interactions (Kirsch, 2005). The value of focus groups goes well beyond listening to others in a group setting; Morgan (1996) suggests that focus groups can also serve as a source of empowerment for youth or as a tool in action and participatory research.

Roschelle and Kaufman (2004) observe that talking with youth in relaxed group settings where youths outnumber adults tends to minimize the perceived power differentials between (adult) researchers and their (young) participants. Further, they claim that such research settings “give voice” to those who traditionally have been marginalized. While I attempted to minimize power differentials between myself and my collaborators, I doubt that I was fully able to transcend the power differentials that inhere in the research process. In writing this dissertation, for example, I control the presentation of their ideas.

Ethical Considerations for Focus Groups

To ensure that the participation of my respondents was based on “informed consent,” I described my project using lay terms rather than academic jargon. van den Hoonaard (2001) has noted that the use of consent forms can be problematic, particularly in relation to qualitative research. If the researcher is attempting to establish rapport with his/her participants, the formalized process of obtaining a signed letter of consent may impede this process. Nonetheless, I thought it essential that participants were made aware of their rights and the risks, if any, of their

involvement in my research project. Prior to their involvement in focus groups, all youths were provided with an information letter that outlined the components of informed consent. It emphasized that their participation was voluntary and that they possessed the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time. It also noted that their ability to access services at any of the host sites would not be impacted by whether or not they participated in the focus groups. It additionally detailed what participation in the focus groups would entail. Each youth was provided with this detailed information letter and I reviewed its content with each potential participant. I also provided every youth with the opportunity to seek clarification and afforded each youth with the opportunity to ask me questions about focus groups or my study. The issues of confidentiality and anonymity were reviewed in detail with each youth, as these safeguards can be easily compromised within focus groups⁵⁶. I asked that youth not talk about the focus group discussions outside of the group so that confidentiality would be protected. I outlined the potential risks and harms of my research. I also noted that if matters of abuse⁵⁷ were disclosed during the focus groups, that I would have to report this information to agency staff⁵⁸. Youth were informed that, with their permission⁵⁹, the focus groups would be audio-recorded, and that direct quotes (without identifiers) would be used in the write-up of my project. All youth signed informed consent letters prior to participating in the focus groups. Three of the four focus groups agreed to be audio-taped. In the case of the fourth, which denied me permission to audio-tape, I obliged their preference and, instead of audio-recording their comments, made detailed notes.

In order to ensure that youth understood that my study was separate and distinct from the work of the agency, I emphasized in my interactions with each potential participant that their access to Site 1 and its services was not conditional upon their participation in my research project. I also explained, in detail, that the study was for a purpose that was unrelated to the activities and services provided by Site 1.

Recruitment for Focus Groups

Focus group recruitment began with a selection of dates, over a two-week period in February of 2009. I selected dates that I thought would maximize the opportunity for youth to participate in my study. Two weeks prior to the first focus group, I put up recruitment posters at Site 1 to alert the youth to these dates available for focus group participation. I also engaged in word-of-mouth recruiting while volunteering at the agency.

On each day that a focus group was scheduled, I arrived early at Site 1 and engaged in further word-of-mouth recruitment. I also made an announcement⁶⁰ that was directed to all of the youths who were in attendance at the agency during that time. I then waited for youth to notify me of their interest, if any, in participating. The focus group was set to begin approximately thirty minutes after my announcement. As such, youth had time to meet with me to express their interest in participation and/or ask additional questions about this component of my research. When the scheduled time for the focus group arrived, I asked all of youth who had expressed interest in participating to relocate themselves to a specific room within the facility.

Structure of Focus Groups

With each group, I introduced my intentions in undertaking this project in general terms. However, I emphasized that the main emphasis of the focus group was to talk about their daily lives and experiences of homelessness. I also noted that while I would act as a facilitator and guide the discussion, the topics were to be ones that they thought were important. Each group was invited to share their understandings of the term “social exclusion.” I asked the youths, “When you hear the words ‘social exclusion.’ what do you think of?” Using a flip chart, we brainstormed ideas⁶¹ of what social exclusion was and what it could mean. I maintained a neutral position in this discussion, avoiding the use of leading comments and/or gestures.⁶² In an open-ended format, youth discussed their lived experiences of homelessness and how their age had impacted their experiences. The focus groups ran from 1 to 2 hours. The focus groups were conducted at Site 1, in an onsite group facilitation room.

Focus Group Sample Composition

While the initial aim was to conduct two focus groups composed of between four to six youths, the pilot project ultimately involved the use of three focus groups and one individual interview. A single individual interview was included on the last day on which a focus group was held after one youth expressed a belated interest in participating in this phase of the research project. All of the youths who participated in the focus groups regularly frequented Site 1 and I had developed significant degrees of rapport with each of them. In total, a dozen youths participated in the focus groups: 5 in group 1, 2 in group 2 and 5 in group 3. With the addition of the

one individual interview, a total of 13 youth (10 males and 3 females) participated in the first phase of my research. Ten of the youth were, at the time of the focus groups, “couch surfing”⁶³, in shelters or on the street⁶⁴. The remaining three had recently obtained more stable forms of housing. The amount of time that these youth had spent homeless or precariously housed ranged from three months to eleven years.

Focus Group Data Analysis and Member Checking

Kirby and McKenna (1989: 129) note that “research from the margin requires intersubjectivity...and authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process in which all are respected as equally knowing subjects.” Accordingly, data analysis should give priority to the voices of those with lived experiences. The contents of the audiotapes that recorded two of the three focus groups were transcribed verbatim for analysis. For Focus Group 2, my detailed notes were typed and, to ensure the accuracy of my transcription, their contents reviewed with the two youth who had participated in this group.

Due to the open-endedness of the topics discussed within focus groups, the analysis of these materials was challenging. In reviewing the materials, I repeatedly listened to the tapes and/or reviewed my notes. After transcribing the tapes, and scrutinizing their contents in multiple readings, I finally felt confident that I had identified the dominant themes within the comments of my respondents. My data analysis was anchored in a “grounded approach” wherein the themes and theory development emerged from the data. The themes that emerged included:

- the advantages/disadvantages of street life,
- shelters and ‘Out of the Cold’ programs;

- the problematics of obtaining/maintaining employment, housing and social assistance;
- the perception that homeless youth experienced a greater vulnerability to discrimination and negative stereotyping/ than domiciled youth;
- the perception of governmental antipathy, apathy or indifference to the plight of the homeless in general and homeless youth in particular.

In addition, the contents of my participants' comments suggested that many lacked "legal literacy" – "the process of acquiring critical awareness about rights and law, the ability to assert rights, and the capacity to mobilize for change" (Schuler & Kadirgamar-Rajasingham, 1992: 17).

After determining the themes I would examine in detail, I sought to member check with the youth involved in the focus groups. In doing so, I benefitted from that fact that seven of the youth who had been involved in these groups continued to attend Site 1 and agreed to participate in the process of member checking. These youth agreed with the central themes that I had identified.

Stage 2: Interviews

Interviews should be tailored to each respondent, as this allows the researcher to gain a more detailed understanding of the material that each respondent provides (Weiss, 1994). The research aims of interviewing are to: develop detailed descriptions; integrate multiple perspectives; describe processes; develop holistic descriptions; learn how others interpret events; and bridge intersubjectivities (Weiss, 1994: 47).

Fine et al. (2003) note critical issues regarding the knowledge produced during the interview process. While researchers often ask others to reveal personal and intimate information about themselves, they seldom reciprocate. Thus, while respondents are asked to make themselves vulnerable, researchers often protect themselves from this exposure/vulnerability by donning the cloak of objectivity. This situation alone may serve to illustrate the tremendous power differentials that may exist in the research process. In working in a MFM approach, I was aware of the need for intersubjectivity and authentic dialogue in the interview process and aimed to work in an environment in which I had established rapport. However, I aimed to counter some of the problems raised by the use of interviews, as highlighted by Fine et al., by opening a reciprocal dialogue with the participants, engaging them in the formulation of the central research questions, and being open to mutual disclosure and discussion in the interview process⁶⁵.

Recruitment for Interviews and Ethical Considerations

At Site 1, the recruitment strategies that I employed to attract interviewees were markedly similar to those that I used in recruiting youths to participate in focus groups. I put up recruitment posters well in advance on central notice boards and posted a schedule for when I would be at Site 1 to conduct interviews. Given the time constraints that were imposed upon me by the ED at Site 1, I was at this site and available for interviews 4-5 days per week from September 12 until October 31, 2009.

While on Site, I was approached by many youths who were aware of my work based on word-of-mouth, or who had reviewed the poster. I also approached

others, informed them of my project and invited them to participate in the interviews. In every instance, I emphasized that youths' access to services would not be affected by their decision.

My recruitment of participants and data collection were impacted by the fact that, during this time period, the agency was short staffed and on a few occasions it proved necessary for me to reduce the length of my interviews in order to assist the staff in the running of the agency's daily services. Youth were generally aware of the days on which I would be performing my various roles on site (i.e., working as a volunteer versus as an interviewer). However, on occasion, when the agency was extremely short staffed, I felt myself obliged to abbreviate the length of the interviews that I conducted. To do otherwise, would have jeopardized the ability of Site 1 to provide youth who attend their facility with much-needed services.

At Sites 2 and 3, I posted no recruitment posters. All recruitment occurred through word-of-mouth solicitations by staff members. The youth were informed which days I would be in to conduct interviews and, if they were interested in participating, they were told to be available at the facilities during those particular days/times. For Site 2, this method worked well as several youth were interested in participating and attended time slots when I was on site. At Site 3, this method proved less effective. I was asked by the ED of Sites 2 and 3 to arrive at these sites well before the interviews were to begin in order to spend time with the youths and put them at their ease before beginning the interview process. Prior to any formal involvement in the individual interviews, all participating youth were required to give informed consent, following the same format at the focus group. All youth

signed informed consent to participate. All but three participants agreed to be audio-recorded.

Structure of Interviews

All interviews were one-on-one, face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Prior to each interview, I spent time explaining the project, referring to the focus groups and detailing how I came to formulate the questions that I would ask them. I informed the youth that the questions were developed from focus groups that were made up by their “peers;” after looking at the material from the focus groups, I established questions which I then asked their peers to review to make sure they were appropriate. Each interview was conducted in a private location. The interviews lasted from 15 minutes to 2 hours, with an average of 40 minutes. In keeping with MFM, I attempted to maximize the free flow of conversation within semi-structured interviews in order to facilitate dialogue and rapport and to balance the power of conversation in the research process.

Interviews: Composition of Sample

Overall, I interviewed 30 youth between the ages of 16 and 25: 24 from Site 1, 5 from Site 2 and 1 from Site 3. Seven females and twenty-three males were interviewed. The amount of time that these youths had spent homeless ranged from three months to eleven years (average 3.95 years). Their educational backgrounds varied widely. Three youths had completed grade 8; seven had completed up to grade 10; eight had completed up to grade 11; five had completed or were close to the completion of their high school diploma; three had pursued some college- or university-level education but had not completed the requirements for a

diploma/degree; two had earned college diplomas; and two were enrolled in “life skills” programs at school⁶⁶. The levels of education reported by youth in this project are consistent with those reported in other Canadian research in this area. At the time of my one-on-one interviews, ten had recently obtained housing; twelve were staying at a shelter and eight noted that they were “couch surfing” or living on the street. Only ten of the thirty youths were employed at the time of the one-on-one interview.

Data Analysis Procedures for Interviews and Dissemination of Results

All data were transcribed verbatim from the audio tapes. Data were entered into the qualitative data analysis program NVIVO and placed into separate project files based on the form of data collection (i.e., focus groups or interviews). Following the recommendations of Charmaz (2003: 512), my data analysis began with line-by-line coding to establish rough coding categories. For the interviews, coding began with a loose framework guided by categories of social exclusion (social, political, economic, age) and the definitions of social exclusion that had been established in collaboration with the youth. The open-ended comments entailed more reiterations of coding to establish themes. Once general coding categories were established, the data was recoded with focused coding, and more detailed coding categories added. In managing the data, I engaged in multiple readings to formulate the themes for further discussion. The data were grouped to establish general patterns through an “ongoing constant comparison” method. The entire coding process was conducted in tandem with “memoing”: the written explanations of coding categories and full justifications for how the codes were established.

While many of the themes that emerged echo observations that appear within the academic literature on social exclusion (e.g. de Haan, 1999), the youth provided a detailed account of the lived experiences of social exclusion. Emergent themes were parallel to those found in the focus groups and broadly based around:

- the independence and dependence of homelessness;
- the meanings of homelessness;
- age comparisons;
- vulnerability and victimization;
- limits on social citizenship;
- stereotypes and stigma;
- legal literacy;
- recognition as a valued member of one's community;
- moving forward to end homelessness

After a detailed construction of these themes, I engaged in member checking with fourteen of the youth at Site 1 who assisted in the refinement of themes. The nuances of these themes will be discussed in the following chapter.

In the next chapter as well as those that follow, I repeatedly include the verbatim comments of my participants. Consistent with a MFM approach, I quoted them without editing out grammatical errors, slang or profanity. From a MFM approach, editing their words would mean filtering out their voices and supplanting it with my own. I had no intention of doing so. "Cleaning up" their words would mean editing and changing voice. The themes that are presented are, when possible,

distinguished by age categories dividing up the 16-25 bracket to explore the potential differences in youths' experiences of homelessness in different age categories.

The results and discussion sections that follow explore how the experiences of homeless youth can be understood using the concept of social exclusion. The following sections also explore how the "sociological imagination," can be applied to the themes of my project. The experience of homelessness is often explained and constructed in individualistic terms. For example, "She didn't like the rules at home" or "He is just trouble" or "They made the choice...they can deal with the consequences." The structural factors surrounding youth homelessness (precipitating factors, the experience homelessness and the exiting process) are muted in societal discussion. Homelessness is very much constructed as a "private trouble" without consideration of whether a) it is, in fact, a public issue and b) if those experiencing homelessness can or do conceive of this "personal trouble" as a "public issue." The material that follows highlights the ability of youth to: act as experts of their lived experience; to highlight the structural influences and implications of homeless by packaging, in several instances, personal troubles as public issues.

Following the defense of my thesis, copies of my dissertation project will be provided to all three data collection sites. An executive summary of my findings will also be provided to each of these sites. A youth-friendly version of my findings, that will be presented in the form of a pamphlet, will also be made available to all three sites. The pamphlets will contain material similar to the executive summary, but in plain language. Posters will be put up in all three sites notifying youth that the results are available.

Summary of Methods

This project seeks to add to the current body of literature by using a MFM approach, working with youth to establish the focus of this project. I worked with youth, through focus groups, to define social exclusion. The themes that these youths identified were furthered explored with homeless youth in one-on-one interviews. Congruent with MFM, youth were consulted at multiple stages, from focus groups, to member checking, to reviewing transcripts and identifying themes. In Chapter 5, I discuss the results, focusing what it means to be homeless. Subsequent chapters outline the thematic presentations of how age influences experiences of homelessness and how social exclusion and social citizenship are linked to youth homelessness.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion Part One

The Independence and Dependence of Youth Homelessness

I begin this chapter by describing the sample of youths who participated in the one-on-one interviews. Following this, I outline their accounts of their experiences with homelessness, as themed by topic and by age. The results and discussion are presented in ways that are consistent with the methods from the margins approach, prioritizing youths' voices with minimal editing of their words.

While the term "homeless youth" may most readily evoke images of children in their pre-teen years and early adolescence, youth under the age of 16 are not included among the clientele of shelter services. The needs of this constituency are addressed under the provisions of Ontario's *Children and Family Services Act*. According to this legislation, youth under the age of 16 who leave home are not treated in the same way as their older counterparts. They are treated according to an official definition of "childhood" which stipulates that a homeless youth under the age of 16 can be taken into state care. In like fashion, at the end of their 25th year, a young person is deemed no longer a "youth" and is, therefore ineligible to stay in a youth shelter or as a claimant of support services that target homeless "youth." In consequence, 26 year-olds who are homeless must utilize the adult system⁶⁷.

It is apparent that the age parameters used by social service agencies to define "homeless youth" may challenge and defy taken-for-granted understandings of what constitutes "youth." One might anticipate significant differences in the life experiences and perceptions of those who are homeless and 16 and those who are homeless at age 25. However, if the definition of "homeless youth" that is employed

by social agencies imposes a similar status upon these persons, the comments of my participants make evident that “homeless youth” do not view themselves as a homogeneous group. Rather, they employ more refined, age-based divisions that distinguish among those who are homeless and “not yet adults,” “new adults,” and “adults.” My respondents claimed that persons aged 16 or 19 or 24 were not similarly regarded in law or in relation to social expectations (e.g., normative understandings of what persons of a certain age “should” or “ought” to be doing at a certain life stage). Accordingly, I employ three subcategories of “homeless youth.”

- **“Not Yet Adults”** (Persons aged 16 or 17 years): In general, persons in this age grouping are no longer subject to the provisions of Ontario’s *Children and Family Services Act*. Nevertheless, to obtain social assistance, a youth at age 16 or 17 must obtain parental confirmation of the fact that s/he is not allowed to reside in the family home. Persons of this age fall under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. However, they are no longer legally required to attend school in Ontario and cannot enter into legally binding contracts unless they meet certain conditions (e.g., leases for housing unless they have withdrawn from parental control).⁶⁸ Ontario’s *Human Rights Code* specifically states: “Every 16 or 17 year-old person *who has withdrawn from parental control* has a right to equal treatment with respect to occupancy and contracting for accommodation with discrimination because the person is less than 18 years old” (italics added). It further specifies that a “contract

entered into by a 16 or 17 year-old person who has withdrawn from parental controls is enforceable against that person as if that person was 18 years old.” Under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, landlords are prohibited from age-based discrimination and this prohibition applies to potential tenants who are 16 and 17 years of age who have withdrawn from parental controls.

- “**New Adults**” (Persons 18 years of age): Attainment of this age marks the onset of legal “adult” status as it is defined by the Canadian state (with the majority of the rights and responsibilities that accompany this status)⁶⁹. Persons of this age may vote in federal elections (and, in some jurisdictions, in provincial/territorial elections), enter legally binding contracts and agreements, are entitled to receive the full minimum wage, and apply for social assistance without having to prove special circumstances. They are subject to the provisions and prohibitions of Canada’s *Criminal Code*. This age is also generally associated with the achievement of a conventional marker of a significant youth transition: completion of secondary school.
- “**Adults**” (Persons 19 - 25 years of age) : At this age, a youth in Ontario can legally purchase and consume alcohol and tobacco products and participate in the “adult” practice of gambling. Once past 19, they are no longer “teenagers” but “adults.” Conventional understandings of this age group suggest

that they “should” either be pursuing post-secondary education or training or be employed.

The balance of this chapter begins with a description of the participants in my project. I then turn to a summary and analysis of my participants’ perceptions of homelessness in relation to the twinned themes of “independence” and “dependence.” In the course of discussing these themes, the youth addressed the following related issues:

- youths’ accounts on how they came to be homeless;
- perceptions of how their experiences with homelessness have forced them to be more independent;
- how the independence of street life is linked to youths’ dependence and social service agencies to meet their basic needs; and
- how the meeting of basic needs is largely contingent on the shelter system.

The youths’ accounts of how they became homeless suggest that this process may be framed in quite different ways. For some, it was believed to attest to their agency and “independence.” For others, becoming homeless signified a lack of personal power and dependence on others.

Table 5.1 Composition of Interview Sample

	Pseudonym	Age ⁷⁰	Gender	Current Housing Situation	Highest Level of Education Complete	Amount of Time Youth had Experienced Homelessness
1	Adam	21	M	Housed for 6 months	Grade 9	Since age 12
2	Ben	19	M	Shelter	Grade 11	Since age 17
3	Connor	25	M	Housed for 3 months	OSSD	Since age 17
4	Dan	17	M	Housed with 'older lady'	Grade 11	Since age 14
5	Eddie	19	M	Shelter	Grade 10	Since age 16
6	Flynn	18	M	On streets	Grade 10	Since age 17
7	Amanda	19	F	Shelters/streets	Grade 10	Since age 16
8	Greg	24	M	In a field	Grade 11	Since age 15
9	Betty	22	F	Couch surfing	College Diploma	Since age 21
10	Claire	22	F	Shelters	Life Skills	Since age 19
11	Henry	23	M	Housed	Grade 11	Since age 20
12	Ian	23	M	On streets	Life Skills	Since age 17
13	Josh	22	M	Housed	Some University	Since age 14
14	Ken	25	M	Couch surfing	Grade 10	Since age 16
15	Len	19	M	Shelter	Grade 10	Since age 11
16	Miles	22	M	Housed	OSSD	Since age 18
17	Nathan	17	M	Streets	Grade 8	Since age 17
18	Ogden	22	M	Housed	Some College	Since age 16
19	Diane	19	F	Couch surfing	Grade 10	Since age 16
20	Elaine	21	F	Housed	College (current)	Since age 19
21	Parker	23	M	Housed	Grade 8	Since age 13
22	Fiona	18	F	Shelter	Grade 8	Since age 16
23	Quinn	18	M	Shelter	Grade 11	Since age 16

24	Randy	23	M	On streets	College	Since age 16
25	Sam	17	M	Rooming house	Grade 12	Since age 17
26	Tom	22	M	Shelter	Grade 11	Since age 18
27	Ulmer	19	M	Shelter	Grade 11	Since age 18
28	Vic	19	M	Shelter	OSSD	Since age 18
29	Wally	17	M	Shelter	Grade 11	Since age 16
30	Gayle	17	F	Shelter	Grade 12	Since age 17

Overview of Sample Composition

I interviewed 30 youths: 23 were male and 7 female. This gender imbalance is typical of populations of youth who experience homelessness in Waterloo Region and beyond. In 2009, approximately 600 youth accessed emergency shelters⁷¹ in Waterloo Region, 74% were male (Regional Municipality of Waterloo, 2010). The average age of my sample at the time of interview was 20.4 years, 20.1 for females and 20.6 for males. The age and gender distribution of the youth is as follows:

Age & Category	Male	Female	Total
17 (Not yet adults)	4	1	5
18 (New Adults)	2	1	3
19-25 (Adults)	17	5	22
N=	23	7	30

When asked how long they had been homeless, youth reported periods of time which ranged from 3 months to 13 years. For many of them being “homeless” not only described their housing situation but also formed part of their identity. For the 17 year-old age group (N=5), 3 youths had experienced homelessness for less

than 1 year, with the remaining 2 experiencing homelessness for periods between 1 and 3 years. Experiencing homelessness alternated between staying with friends, living with family, being incarcerated, in shelters, and on the streets. Of the 18 year-olds (N=3), all of the youths had experienced homelessness for 3 years. For the 19-25 group (N=22), many experienced homelessness for much longer periods of time. While this current project deals with youths' more recent experiences, 14 of the 22 youth reported that they had left home before the age of 18. However, with the exception of Amanda, all of the girls 19-25 in my sample were legally adults when they became homeless. Two of my participants, both males, reported that they were 11 or 12 years of age when they first became homeless. There were some gender differences in this respect. Females became homeless at a later age than males, with an average of 17.7 years among the females (with 3 of the 7 youth at legal adult age [age 19-21] when they first became homeless) versus an average age of 15.9 for the males (less than 1 in 5 youth at legal adult age when they first became homeless). The young adult group reported they had been homeless for, on average, 5.09 years. Clearly the different age groups differ in length of time they have experienced homelessness. One may conjecture that the longer one spends in a position of "homelessness," the stronger impact this has on one's life, in terms of, for example, mental health, housing situation, educational attainment and employment circumstances and prospects.

My question, "How long have you experienced homelessness?" was a purposefully open-ended question which allowed youths to define the term "homelessness" as they saw fit. When youth self-identified as homeless, the term

was used in both the literal and figurative sense. Referring to themselves as “homeless” is to – without using the term – describe themselves as socially excluded, being removed from conventional ideas of “home” and the sense of security and/or family that “home” typifies. For some youth, notably the ones who had experienced homelessness for 9, 10 or 13 years, “homelessness” becomes a “master status”⁷² (Becker, 1963). On average, the youth involved in this project had experienced homelessness for 3.95 years (with much of this experience fluctuating through stages of housing stability). At the time of our interviews, 9 of the youth were independently housed in apartments or in rooming houses, 12 were relying on shelters and 9 were couch surfing or living “on the street.” The average age was 20.4 years. Based on their age, one would have expected that almost all of them should have completed high school, but over half of my participants did not possess a secondary school diploma. This finding is consistent with the reports of other studies that have investigated the educational attainments of homeless youth in Kitchener-Waterloo and elsewhere in Ontario (Regional Municipality of Waterloo, 2010; Robinson & Baron, 2007). Of course, the educational attainments of my sample varied by age. Thus, 4 of the 5 youths who were 17 years of age youth were attending school and in grades 11 or 12. This finding reflects the demands of the social service system, which requires youth to remain in school in order to receive social assistance⁷³. The three 18 year-olds in my sample had lower levels of education (none possessed more than a grade 11 education) and none was in school at the time of the interview. Of the seven 19 year olds, only one possessed a secondary school diploma, the remainder possessed fewer educational credentials

(most typically, the completion of grade 10 or, less frequently, grade 11) and one youth was working towards obtaining a secondary school equivalency. Among youth aged 20 to 25, 8 had not completed secondary school (although 2 had completed the secondary school “life skills” program). Three had a secondary school diploma, 4 had taken some college courses (with one youth enrolled in college at the time of interview) and 1 had taken some university-level courses.

Reasons for Homelessness

I got kicked out. (Short Pause). I got kicked out of my mom’s house when I was 16.

Flynn, 18

The literature is well developed about why youth experience homelessness (Fowler et al., 2009; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Karabanow, 2006; Kidd, 2007) Abuse. Neglect. Violence. Poverty. Family discord. Substance use and abuse. State care. The reasons my participants gave were consistent with the literature.

“Home life” is a sensitive topic among youth who experience homelessness; this was explicitly stated by youth during the focus groups. As youth navigate social services and social assistance, they are regularly asked to recount their life history, to explain why they are homeless. There is no central database of youth experiencing homelessness. At every new agency they contact in their attempt to access resources they go through “intake” procedures that require them to recount why they are homeless. These questions are intended to ensure that agency workers will understand the circumstances and needs of each of the youths with whom they deal. However, being repeatedly asked the same questions can be tiresome for youth. During the focus group discussions, youth reported that they disliked having to

constantly revisit their life experiences. Therefore, I asked youth to provide me with a brief summary of why they were homeless and told them they were free to “make it as brief as you want.” The most common explanation was “I was kicked out;” very few youths elected to elaborate on the specifics of their experience. Among those who did, some noted their own substance abuse problems or the substance abuse of their parents. Others reported that they had left home due to violent family experiences. Others referred to their dissatisfaction with experiences in state care (e.g., foster care).

Youth who experience homelessness are often described as being either “run aways” or “throw aways” (Kufedlt & Perry, 1989; Zilde & Cherry, 1992). Youth who run away are seen as fleeing negative experiences and as having made the “autonomous” “choice” to leave home. “Throw aways” – those who were expelled from their family home or place of residence are understood to have lacked any choice. An examination of the reasons why youth became homeless demonstrates the utility of considering this group as socially excluded. Did the youth make the “choice” to leave? If so, why? Leaving because of an abusive family is understood in different terms than leaving because a youth does not like the rules established by his/her parents. Likewise, a youth being “kicked out” of the house because the parents/guardians think she or he should fend for him/herself is quite different from being kicked out because of ongoing conflict or the youth’s use/abuse of alcohol or drugs. What further complicates these distinctions is the age category according to which homeless “youth” are defined by social services agencies. The age category 16-25 includes youths who possess a broad spectrum of life experiences and

expectations. However, one thing common across this is that under Ontario's *Children and Family Services Act*, sec. 31, a parent's obligation to provide financial support for a child of under age 16 is absolute (i.e., it does not depend on whether a kid lives at home or elsewhere). After the age of 16 the family is relieved of this obligation⁷⁴. Further, at 16 a youth may voluntarily leave the family home without being subject to the regulation of social service agencies like Children's Aid. At 16, youth are no longer obliged to attend school in Ontario.

Over half of the participants reported that they had been "kicked out" by their families. This experience may be linked to the "throw away" categorization of youth homelessness; that is youths' families asked/forced them to leave against the will/choice of the youth and made no effort to support them once the youth left home. The youth who elaborated on this experience of how/why they became homeless described an array of experiences and understandings of why they had been "kicked out." Others claimed that they made the autonomous choice to run away from home/care because of negative home experiences. Some youth noted that they did not like the rules at home or wanted a different lifestyle. Again, it is important to consider the ages of youth and their reasons for being "kicked out" or "running away." For example, before becoming homeless, one of the 17 year-old youths, Wally, was incarcerated. Upon his release, he was not welcomed back into his family home; instead, his parent directed him to a shelter.

Dan, 17, identified himself as both a runaway and throwaway since age 14.

As he recounts:

Like I ran away in grade 9, walked to (bookstore) on the weekends, then ran away a couple of weeks later. Got kicked out for running

away. Was sleeping outside like around for 3 months. I met my dad then we go to his house for a little bit, then he was a big sketch bag [untrustworthy person] and he like sold my ipod and my drum set and stuff on me so I ran away from there. And then was out and such. Out of the Cold shelter for a little under a year maybe um 4 months. Then um he [his father] said to come back and I didn't go to school really so I got kicked out. Then I was on the streets for about another good 6 months until about a week ago.

Dan's father was not present in his life while Dan was a child. Dan came into contact with his father only after he was kicked out of his mother and step-father's house and became homeless. From Dan's report, he did not have a positive relationship with his dad. Dan mentioned that his father was not someone he looked up to and described his father has having substance use issues. Instead of using the time that Dan spent with him to build a relationship, his father reportedly sold Dan's belongings.

According to Dan, homelessness is:

just really hard at my age 'cause I can't go back to my parents house (mother and step father). I've asked and they said no. They don't make enough money to support me again with all the other kids. So yeah....it's hard.

Dan's story is a great example of social exclusion. His experience of homelessness - like the experiences of others - begins with the family. But social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon. For his part, Dan admitted to repeatedly running away. He made a choice. However, he was forced into this situation by a structural factor. His mother and step-father were poverty stricken and could not afford to take care of him and the rest of his siblings. Dan's attempts to develop a relationship with his previously absent biological father were likewise unsuccessful and, by his account, not his fault. His father sold Dan's few possessions.

The stories of other respondents were similar. Sam, another 17 year-old noted briefly that he was kicked out of his home due to fights with his parents. Gayle reported that she ran away from home because of a physically abusive father. Two of the three 18 year olds in my sample reported that they had been homeless since the age of 16; the third, Flynn, had been homeless since age 17. Fiona and Flynn referred to themselves as being “kicked out” by their mothers and Quinn asserted that he had left because his parent were “too strict”: “(m)y parents wouldn’t let me out of the house past nine o’clock and they treated me like a child so I didn’t wanna stay.” While all of the 19 year-old youths in my sample identified themselves in terms that would allow us to classify them as throwaways who had been expelled from their family homes, respondents who were in the “adult” group provided a greater number of reasons when asked how they had become homeless. For example, Eddie, 19 at the time of our interview, was kicked out at the age of 16. As he explains:

Getting kicked out of my parents house I guess would be the one.
And not having my mom around to take care of me either. No
family to look after me. Shortage of family.

Eddie was kicked out of his father and stepmother’s house, claiming conflict with his stepmother. He did not talk about why his mother was not involved in his life, but did mention that he lacks extended family to go to for support. Eddie struggled greatly between the ages of 16 and 18 but hoped things would improve once he achieved adult status and could access adult social assistance systems. Others among my respondents referred to other factors that led them leaving home rather being throwaways or runaways. For example, Betty, at the age of 22, reported that she had

been homeless for approximately one year at the time of our interview. She explained that she had left home to live with her boyfriend in a common-law situation. Her boyfriend had an illegal drug habit. Betty also became a drug abuser and their addictions contributed to their becoming homeless. Prior to Betty's time on the street she was living at home in an "okay" family situation. Her boyfriend had experienced homelessness for a period of 9 years, off and on, when Betty joined him. Betty and her boyfriend Greg often stayed with their drug dealers if they could not find anywhere else to sleep. Another participant in this age group, 23 year-old Randy, was Aboriginal and informed me:

I was living up in Northern Ontario, so there wasn't a lot of jobs off reserve and there wasn't a lot of opportunity on the reserve. Like, a lot of youth my age were drinking and getting high and there wasn't really much, because I wasn't from the wrong family. There wasn't much work on the reserve and because of the kind of racist attitudes off the reserve and surrounding communities there wasn't any work so I just kinda left the North and came to the south.

Randy's report notes that he had moved from a reserve, where jobs were scarce, to an area where he hoped there would be more jobs. While Randy sought employment opportunities, which were still hard to come by after his move, he cycled in and out of homelessness. Randy reported experiencing almost "every type" of housing imaginable (e.g., having a private residence; residing with family members; living in a rooming house, a party house [a residence with several youth who spend the majority of their time drinking and/or doing drugs], in shelters on the streets). Ian, 23, had a much different experience with housing:

I got into a big incident with my ex and a domestic dispute so. (Pause). My landlord had to make a point about it so he just said basically, "Here's your rent and you can go find somewhere else." So. (Pause). And I haven't found anything yet.

Ian had lived with his common law wife and their child in an apartment. He had first experienced homelessness at age 16. When he was living with his common-law partner, he noted that he had been in the apartment for less than a month and before this was “bouncing around from place to place and on the streets.” Ian qualified as a homeless “youth” under the age divisions that are used by Waterloo Region in classifying the homeless, he was also a “parent” and a “common-law” partner.

“Youth” who are not just homeless but also have children in their care are in a particularly precarious position in terms of being socially excluded and illustrate some of the ways in which gender impacts social exclusion. Elaine, 21 at the time of the interview, was kicked out at 19. Her child was almost 2 years old when we spoke. As she accounts:

I didn't want to go home cause home was not a nice place. That's why a lot of youth run away from situations like that. ... When I was kicked out I was kicked out for the stupidest reason. I was pregnant... At some point you just don't have a choice where you stay anymore. So there's kids that miss out go through the system, lose the holes, end up on the streets or end up in jails... They become more delinquent. They become the adult offenders. And where do you think it all starts from? Youth. From when they're children. You can stop it there. Prevention for all crimes stops there. If you put the social system in place and available.

Elaine explains that after being kicked out, she couch surfed for months, often “not knowing where I was going to stay for the night.” Her story is a moving account of how the “double standard” of sexuality still influences the lives of young women. Becoming pregnant out of wedlock led to Elaine's homelessness; this is an example of relational social exclusion as the relations and expectations between “parents” and “children” altered her social position. Her case also highlights the age-related

complications of “youth” and “homelessness.” When she was told to leave home she was 19. She was not a dependent child; she was an “adult” with full rights and responsibilities as defined by the state. However, while defined as a “youth” by the social service agencies, she was legally an adult, responsible for the care of a child. At the time of our interview, Elaine was housed with her child and attending post-secondary school on a part-time basis. She was a single parent, attempting to obtain child support from the baby’s father through the family court system. Although defined as a “youth” by the shelter system and able to draw upon the resources of this system, Elaine adopted many “adult” roles; she was a parent, attended school, and worked through the family legal system to get child support.

Those of my participants who were 19 to 25 years old were less likely to offer accounts of being homeless that emphasized parental “misconduct.” This group talked, in large part, about being “kicked out” as the reason they were homeless. Eight of the 15 males claimed they were “kicked out” and three of the five females in this age group made the same claim. Nine youth in the 19-25 age bracket were 18 or older when they left home, and 8 youth in this age group left home before the age of 16.

I have framed this overview of “why” youth experience homelessness in terms of age-related social expectations about what youth “should” be doing. Youth whose situations did not accord with these societal expectations experienced a host of negative consequences. Interestingly, all of the 17 year-olds, while varied in the terms of the reasons they gave for experiencing homelessness, held on to their “youth status” and enrolled as high school students. Each noted negative aspects of

“family” as their reasons for homelessness. For the 18 year-old group, 2 were “kicked out” and 1 left as he did not like the rules or being treated “like a child.” Members of this group had recently achieved the legal status of adulthood and could be viewed in a broad sense, as being at an age when they “should” be able to be self-sufficient. Those over the age of 19 offered more varied accounts of their reasons for being homeless, often citing matters more linked to adult social roles requiring independence than those associated with youth: domestic disputes, family law, parenting, and employment. These matters are more closely linked to the adult world of responsibility than the roles and behaviours of “carefree” and dependent youth. Nonetheless, they were defined by social services agencies as “youth.”

If nothing else, this brief account of the pathways into homelessness highlights that while youth within the 16-25 age bracket have similar life experiences, their explanations for their respective situations and the points they think are important to highlight are different. Youth who experience homelessness are socially excluded, but their experience of social exclusion is far from homogenous. There are many reasons why youth experience homelessness; their situations are often the outcome of varied and often complex chains of events. Indeed, each youth has a unique story as to how she/he came to be homeless. Their accounts highlight both individual-level and structural causes, indicating that homelessness is both a private trouble and a public issue. Individualistic explanations may be tied to issues of substance use/abuse, whereas structural components are more connected to poverty, family structure/breakdown, unemployment and low education levels.

Experiencing Homelessness: Independence and Dependence of Street Life

When asked for their perceptions of homelessness/street life, the participants suggested there were both positive and negative aspects to this experience. Some saw homelessness as a catalyst for the acquisition of “independence” and as providing freedom from parental/familial controls. Nonetheless, not all welcomed being put in a position where they were seen as “adults,” a social role that demands self-sufficiency. This was particularly true of the youngest of my participants who, paradoxically, often asserted a desire for autonomy while insisting that because of their youthful age, they deserved assistance above and beyond what their older counterparts deserved.

Independence on the Street: Maturity and “Adult-Like” Roles

One theme that emerged in the focus groups and interviews was youths’ feelings of increased freedom and independence that came from being on the street. Conventional understandings of youth within the 16-25 age bracket indicate that they “should” be in school or employed and making a “healthy” and “positive” transitions into productive citizenship (Cote & Allahar, 2006). However, to make such “positive” transitions to the adult world, youth must be housed. Many youth saw their experiences of street life and homelessness as constructive character-building “benefits” that made them more mature than their peers. This sense of maturity might be linked to independence, which is a key component of neo-liberalism. In a neo-liberal state, individuals are encouraged to be independent and self-sufficient rather than rely on the state for supports. While youth who experience homelessness often rely on the state to meet their basic needs, the youth in this project saw

themselves as more independent and mature than their peers who have not experienced homelessness. Others, however, viewed their street lives as a struggle and what they did on the streets as a means of survival.

Among my participants, some valued the “freedom” of the street and emphasized that they were not required to adhere to conventional rules and norms. For example, in commenting upon the positives of street life, 17 year-old Wally noted: “I didn’t mind the freedom,...but I miss the responsibility.” At the time of our interview, Wally was staying in a youth shelter. When asked to elaborate on what part of responsibility he missed, he said “having to go to school and keep stuff clean and, I don’t know, have my dad trust me. I guess that’s what I consider responsibility.” Recall that Wally had been incarcerated and, upon his release, was not welcomed back to the family home. He wanted to regain his father’s trust and rebuild his relationship with his father. While Wally “didn’t mind” the freedom of street life, he yearned for the boundaries of more conventional teenage experiences of going to school and having family ties.

Wally was the only 17 or 18 year-old in this project to mention “freedom” as a positive feature of street life. Indeed, a number of youth in the 19 to 25 age category discussed “independence” in terms of “freedom,” but they did not always frame it in a positive light. Many “adults” described this freedom and form of independence on the street as character building, claiming that it made them more mature than their chronological age would dictate. This was Amanda’s (age 19) claim:

I don’t know, it (homelessness) makes you grow up really fast.
Being homeless makes you really grow up and get all your shit

together and stop being such a kid. Especially when you're trying to find things that you need. You have to, you know, dress good, yeah, not have attitude all the time with everyone and stuff like that, that's childish. Pretty much that when you're in a situation like this, it's a lot harder than people are trying to make it seem and that when you are homeless you have to work like a thousand times harder than anybody else to get these things that normal people have like housing, a place to live, and food especially when nothing's open and you're like hungry so you have to pan downtown to try and get some money for pizza and a sandwich.

Amanda had experienced homelessness from age 16. Her comments outline the shift to adult-like roles for youth once on the streets. She talks about the ability to take care of oneself, and notes the need for acting more mature. At the time of this discussion, she was into the second trimester of pregnancy and staying in shelters or on the streets. She was still in a relationship with the baby's father and since they were often prevented from staying in the same shelter, often slept outside even during winter months. At the time, there was no youth-specific shelter in the town they were in. In addition, the emergency adult shelters that were available were gender-specific or sleeping space was designated by gender. While the gender division is justified by safety concerns, it diminishes the capacity of those who are homeless to have intimate opposite-sex relationships. Those who are not homeless do not have social service workers telling them who they will/will not sleep beside. It is much different in the shelter system. In this case, persons are split by gender, assigned a bed and not allowed to exercise agency or autonomy. Further, such gendered arrangements overlook or deny the possibility of same-sex sexual relationships and/or to assume that same-sex relationships are somehow less threatening than opposite-sex relationships. The shelter system is constructed to

maintain a delicate balance between safety and autonomy for those residing at the shelter, but safety usually trumps. The quotation above from my interview with Amanda outlines that once on the street, and dependent upon street systems, one is no longer permitted to be a “kid.” However, while youths are expected to be “adult-like,” they are not provided with the opportunity to make an autonomous decision regarding their sex and sleeping arrangements.

Greg experienced homelessness and social exclusion for vastly different reasons than Amanda, but held similar views of taking on the adult responsibility of providing for his own subsistence. As he explains,

Some of the bad things about being homeless is you got to learn everything on your own, like from scratch, especially at a young age. Like being 15, “where do I go?”, “what do I do?”, or a lot of other questions you may find yourself asking yourself.

Greg, 24 years of age at the time of our interview, left home at the age of 15. He claims it was because he did not like the rules, and that he did like his drugs. He was a self-proclaimed drug connoisseur and would often stay with his drug dealers when he could not find other housing. Greg’s comments note the complication of facing early transitions into adult-like roles and learning to be self-sufficient. Instead of having family to provide support, Greg had to learn to navigate the shelter and support systems. Moreover, while he emphasized that he was not a “throw away” and had made the choice to leave home at a young age because of his fondness for drugs, his addictions placed him in many precarious positions and led to decisions that, in turn, led to social exclusion. Greg’s explanation of the cause of his experiences with homelessness could be framed as the consequence of personal

decisions he made. Substance abuse can be viewed as an individual flaw or a personal failing (Baum & Burnes, 1993).

Independence on the street can be linked to conventional understandings of youth transitions to more adult like roles. This theme of personal growth and maturity as independence is directly related to my discussion above of the social construction of youth and conventional transitions to adult-like roles. In the dominant view “youth” are to be protected by and are dependent upon social institutions (such as the family and education) organized by “responsible adults” (Lesko, 1996). However, youth who experience homelessness stand outside of this dominant understanding – indeed, they are often labeled as “deviant” or “difficult.” We seem to think that once a youth becomes homeless, this, first, must be the youth’s fault, and second, that because blame is individualized, she/he must be responsible for their own subsistence, and take on adult-like social roles. However, does this mean societal expectations in this context are the same for a 17 or 18 year-old compared to someone in their early twenties? The maturity youth perceived themselves as developing due to homelessness was linked to what they had “learned” on the street or the skills they “developed” because of their experiences with homelessness. To highlight some comments from youth:

You learn a lot of different things, like you know, when, how to survive in different ways like when you’re in a shitty situation, you can go out and try to make the best of it.

Fiona 18

good side (of street life) – I’m independent, responsible for self –
You learn how to be an individual – you don’t have mom or dada –
You take care of self at a young age – to become responsible

Connor, 25

First, a point of interest is that the above ideas were expressed during discussions with youth about the “positives” or the “good things” about their current experiences. This may highlight the multidimensional and dynamic components of social exclusion. For example, the youths’ comments highlighted the individualized or “private trouble” of homelessness, as they expressed a willingness to take responsibility for themselves. The independence of street life meant they needed to learn how to survive. As homelessness transitions youth from inclusion to exclusion, some adopt the position of taking on “adult-like” roles and the neo-liberal philosophy of being independent and self-sufficient.⁷⁵

Some youth viewed gaining and learning independence as a positive aspect of homelessness. It may be argued that youth of similar age who have not experienced homelessness may also view independence as a positive in personal growth and transitions to adulthood. What makes this situation more complex is the context in which independence is acquired. My participants discussed independence and the assumption of adult roles in terms of being able to meet their basic needs in life. Fiona, at 18, describes independence as a means of survival. Connor, 25, suggests that “independence” is fostered by necessity and an absence of parental supports. Although Connor was “kicked out” at the age of 17, at the age of 25, he was advocating the virtues of responsibility and independence. This is telling of the gravity of the social exclusion homeless youth experience. Youth who are homeless stand outside of “proper place,” (Mitchell, 2004); they are reconstructed as deviant and or difficult and expected to take on adult-like social roles even to meet the basic necessities of life.

Why, in a developed, wealthy country like Canada, do we have youth talking about “survival” or, like Fiona, struggling to make the best of “shitty situations”? My participants’ use of the term “survival” is suggestive of the social exclusion they endure. It is unlikely that a person who feels like a valued citizen with rights and safeguards, who feels they are appropriately recognized in society, would talk about his/her daily existence in terms of “survival.” Josh, 22, adds context to this:

Instead of living with a perfect family for like 20 years, you go see all the messed up things first, like, it’ll be a lot easier to live with when you’re older right. That’s what I was thinking anyway.

As Gaetz et al., (2010) note, homelessness thrusts youth into newly defined social roles. The conventional wisdom holds that youth are not to be in constant harm’s way, not to be experiencing trauma, deprivation and marginalization; that is, they should not be socially excluded – certainly not to the extent that some of my participants describe.

Beyond learning to be independent, several youth identified one of the “positives” of homelessness in terms of a lack of monetary responsibility; as they noted their lack of participation in conventional economic activity.

I guess you don’t really have to worry about paying bills and stuff, right? And there’s a lot of places you can go for help, right? So it’s not that bad...

Betty, 22

Some things that are better about it is that you’re a free spirit, you know, you’re not tied down to nothing, you got no bills to pay. It’s kind of like being a little kid all over again, you know? Cause you don’t have no worries. You just worry about what meal goes in your stomach and whatever else.

Ian, 23

There's no upkeep. I mean, you're kind of like, in a sense, a free agent in society's point of view. You don't have to pay any bills, you don't have to pay any rent, I mean, as long as you have a job or some source of income and I did have a job when I was homeless too, so...I mean some people would look at that as kind of funny, but, it was actually not as bad as I thought it would be.

Miles, 22

I don't have to worry about bills as much, like T.V, electricity, water, heat ,hydro, I don't have to worry about that stuff as much anymore but at the same time you like I wish I could have a house to pay hydro at. You have a lot more free spending money.

Ben, 19

As youth move beyond teenage years, it is reasonable to expect that they would move out of their parents' homes and start paying for rent, utilities, groceries, etc. The above quotes indicate that at least some of my participants were happy not to have to fulfill the conventional expectations of the capitalist social order, such as paying rent, or other similar bills. All of these comments were made by youths in the 19-25 group. Ian's comments challenge the idea that youth who are homeless must transition into adult-like roles in terms of conventional responsibilities. In his view, at the age of 23 being homeless is like being a "kid" all over again due to the lack of responsibility. Miles, 22, discussed the aspects of being a free agent, and noted that homelessness was not as bad as he thought it would be. However, Miles, unlike Ian, also reported that he did have a job and tied his remark re: homelessness not being "as bad as he had thought" to the qualifying phrase, "as long as you have a job or some source of income." Ben, 19 comments that it was "nice" to not worry about paying bills, but he also noted: "I wish I could have a house to pay hydro at." It is interesting to note that youths' identification of the positives of street life include the absence of responsibility for paying "housing" related bills. At the same time, their

comments recognize their need for money if they are to meet their basic subsistence needs on the street.

Independence to Dependence – It Just Looks a Little Different.....

While several youth highlight independence and a lack of responsibility as positives of street life, many also note their indirect⁷⁶ or direct dependence on the state via shelters and social support systems for survival. While some youth may claim to savor the lack of bills and responsibility while experiencing homelessness, there is no denying that basic needs must still be met. Without housing or income, having a choice in meeting such needs is simply not possible; being homeless places restrictions on how one can meet the most basic of needs. If a youth uses the shelter system, they are assigned a bed – they do not choose where they sleep in the shelter. If they rely on food banks or agencies for meals, they can eat only what is given to them, often without choice. Youth are dependent on social service agencies, often supported by the state, to meet basic needs while experiencing the “independence” of street life.

Although youth who experience homelessness may claim that they live an independent existence “on the street,” their “independence” is limited. Although no longer dependent upon their families for financial support, they are dependent upon supports provided by the state. When dependent on others for their basic subsistence, youth’s agency is often diminished. In the following quote, Ben, 19, expresses his frustration over his need to conform to the shelter’s schedule:

It’s hard to hold a job and like at night it’s like fuck I want to lay in my bed, I just want to be in like a house. You wake up and have to wait till a certain time to shower, like I said I have the money, so I

can eat whenever I want to, that's a good thing. I think that's the most important thing in life. If you like what you eat.

Ben's comments reflect the difficulties of experiencing homelessness and social exclusion through the lack of agency around meeting basic needs. Youth who are homeless often lack choice in meeting their basic needs. Shelters and soup kitchens are not restaurants. You eat what is prepared or you do not eat. You sleep where you are given a bed or you do not sleep in the shelter. This is a clear distinction in the transitions to adulthood, regardless of age bracket, between youth who experience homelessness and those who do not. It is arguable that youth do not choose to be homeless (in the most direct sense) yet the "choices" presented to them once experiencing homelessness are distinctly restrictive.

Dependence on Shelters

Being without shelter sits at the core of the experience of social exclusion for youth. To be without a "home" is to lack control over a private sphere where one can possess agency and exercise autonomy. Youth who experience homelessness lack a safe space for themselves and their personal belongings. Youth shelters were established to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness (Collins, 2007: 93). Such emergency supports are important because, as Gaetz (2004: 429) explains, being without shelter limits one's autonomy and control in life, forcing one to live one's private life in public.

In the Waterloo Region where this study was conducted, there are a number of shelter options for those who are homeless. However, most of the resources are available only to adults; they are few facilities for youth. Waterloo Region has 5 main shelters for the homeless; only two are youth-focused and both provide

services to the 16-25 age group. Of the approximately 175 beds available in emergency shelters across the Region⁷⁷, 30 of these beds are designated for youth. The youth in this study spoke at length about their experiences with Waterloo Region's shelter system. Those who experienced homelessness for longer periods of time had more extensive experiences with the shelter system, which is reflected in their comments. The youth expressed a number of concerns about the shelter system.

While shelters provide resources for those who experience homelessness, they also perpetuate various forms of exclusion. As Lyon-Callo (2004: 155) states "the sheltering industry serves as an apparatus for reinforcing and reifying the dominant discursive understandings about homelessness." The shelter system helps to define the homeless are and regulates their actions through rules and procedures. Many of the youth discussed their concerns about the shelter system in terms of exposure to violence and crime. Some were also critical of their access to shelters and the rules that shelters imposed upon those who use their services. In the quotations that follow, some youths in the 19-25 age category, those who had been homeless for longer periods of time, share their views on shelters and those who use their services.

Me personally, I just wouldn't do that (use shelters) because I know that I would probably, there would be some issue or I wouldn't get along with somebody and it just wouldn't work. I mean I lived with roommates before and we ended up hating each other. So I don't think, like a shelter where I'm living with complete strangers would have worked on any level.

Miles, 22

I can't handle shelters they are too emotionally unstable so I won't go there. I'd rather live on the streets. Thanks. I can't live like that in those rooms. There's no accomplishments in shelters – got tired of it. Wanted a room. Seriously, I'm the type who will die in the cold. Right. Fuck it.

Parker, 23

They're okay. But, like, say you had a problem with someone. Just this person really doesn't like you or wants to beat you up every time. And you don't want to always have to fight someone because you know that's just getting you angry and making you live that life style again, right? Like, the only thing is, you can't prevent him from not going there because he's homeless just like you, you know. That's the one thing, you know, like, these people, some people have to, they like, people just come to shelters just to, like, fight with people. They're there because they need a place to live but at the same time they're gonna beat the crap out of you sometimes, like this isn't with everyone, but with some people, you know? Like a bully, almost. Like, shelters, they feed you. You get a PNA [personal needs allowance] there if you're accepted to welfare. They have TV, they have beds. You know, it's a place to live until you get your head out of the gutter, I guess, or whatever you may call it.

Eddie, 19

Miles, at 22, based on his past experiences with roommates, felt he could not handle the structure of random assignment in the shelter system. Instead, Miles turned to couch surfing, with the consequent lack of stability about where he would be able to sleep each night. On one hand, the assignment of sleeping arrangements is a responsible tactic in the shelter system given the means by which this system is structured and required to function. If every client had choice, there could be chaos. On the other hand, inasmuch as shelters provide youth with limited choice, those who use shelters might become acutely aware of their marginality and the extent to which they are socially excluded. Parker and Eddie identified additional features of the shelter system which they perceived as problematic. Parker, 23 charged that

those who stay in shelters are too “unstable” to associate with and claimed that, for that reason, he would prefer to spend time on the streets rather than go to a shelter.

Eddie, 19, maintained that “some people have to, they like, people just come to shelters just to, like, fight with people” and that the presence of these “bullies” made staying in a shelter dangerous for others. His comments underscore a downside of living in a shelter youth must confront persons/situations with which they are not comfortable or which they perceive as dangerous.

Many youth in the 19-25 group who were critical of the shelter system reported that, on occasion, they were forced to find alternative sleeping arrangements - couch surfing or, after panhandling, staying in a motel room. Rather than depend entirely on the shelter system, they sought out different means of “survival.” In contrast, the 17 year-olds in my sample, relied more heavily on shelters and other sources of charitable support.

Of the five 17 year-olds in my sample, 3 were staying in shelters at the time of the interview. Sam, 17, thought the shelter was “okay.” He remarked:

Thought it would be a lot worse than it is. It’s pretty easy here. I have my own room, good food, and the guys are usually okay.

Wally, also 17, gave positive reviews of shelters:

They’re amazing. We need more.

Gayle, 17, on the other hand, was not so positive. However, Gayle came to the shelter system after fleeing parental abuse. Her story is quite different from Sam and Wally’s. Gayle felt herself to be restricted and limited by the shelter system and wanted to get out.

I don't wanna be in this house forever. You know what I mean? Like I don't wanna be, I wanna get out so badly. But like I know that it's the only way out [referring to living in a shelter to get out [of an abusive home]]. It's not like it's gonna be like your education as much as I dislike school, it's gonna be getting a good education and getting a good job and getting the hell outta here.

Gayle was staying in a youth-oriented shelter at the time we spoke and wanted to spend as short an amount of time there as possible. However, she felt that she lacked alternative forms of support and that her only choice was to stay at a shelter. In commenting upon the shelter systems, Fiona, 18, and Quinn, 18, expressed largely positive views. Fiona noted, "at first, I thought they were disgusting kinds things, but now that I'm in one, it's actually, like, I like it. It's something very good to have." Both the 17 and 18 year-olds in my sample tended to emphasize the utility of shelters and portray them as a useful, albeit temporary, form of housing. While they did not see shelters as an ideal form of housing, they seemed to be more receptive to staying in, and being dependent upon, shelters than youths in the 19-25 age grouping.

While shelters provide temporary sleeping accommodations and supports to youth, they also present risk. The academic literature notes that those who live in shelters may face a heightened risk of victimization by both violent and nonviolent crime (Kidd & Evans, 2011; Garrett et al., 2008). Youth identified the fear of being victimized as one of their central concerns in staying at shelters. In shelters, conflict resolution often occurs through violence, as this is the means for survival on the street (Baron, 2002). Further, those who experience homelessness often have limited access to material goods and resources. Clothes, shoes, cell phones, jewelry, etc. are

limited and sometimes hard to come by. For a number of reasons, theft is quite prevalent in shelters. There is also a risk of violence. As some of the youth observed:

The violence, the drugs, you know, I've seen girls raped there, I've seen some hideous things happen at different places.

Len, 19

The shelters aren't that good. A lot of people would rather sleep on the street than stay in the shelters. There's a lot of drug use that makes some people uncomfortable, plus there's also a lot of risk because you're in a room with four people and your stuff gets stolen if you don't keep an eye on it. So, in that respect, the shelters aren't too, too good, but the Out of the Cold program is always utilized by people and it's always there and some places, some of the Out of the Cold workers who are there just kind of abuse their power but...generally it's pretty good.

Randy, 23

These types of comments were only made by those in the 19-25 group. However, it seems likely shelters may also expose their younger counterparts to persons who employ violence, or engage in substance abuse or perpetrate property crimes. In noting that some youth would prefer to sleep on the streets than in shelters, Randy's comments underscore the limited choices that are available to homeless youth. Both environments present youths with a heightened risk of victimization (O'Grady & Bright, 2002). I think this speaks volumes to the exclusion youth endure once experiencing housing instability. The emergency shelter system was created to provide a safety net for those who experience homelessness. They are set up as a "last resort" of the housing system, when a youth has no place else to do. The fact that some youth find it prudent to avoid using shelters is both telling and troubling.

One may ponder why homeless youth who are younger age viewed shelters in a less negative light than their older counterparts. It could be that the 19-25 group

had more extensive experiences with the shelter system and that these experiences exposed them to the dangers that can exist within these settings. It appears that as time passes and length of time homeless increases, youth display the relative feature of social exclusion, revealing how experiences with the shelter system varies across contexts. When first experiencing homelessness, shelters might be viewed more positively. However, as the duration of homelessness extended, youth held more negative views of shelters. It was clear in discussions that many youths were dissatisfied with the level of safety that shelters provided.

While this concern was most likely to be expressed by older youths, it was also expressed by those who were under the age of 18. Gayle, a 17 year-old who resided at a shelter, was highly critical of the homeless support systems and the state's provisions for youth in need. In many ways, Gayle's story is a classic tale of how a youth can become socially excluded. At 17 she ran from home because of an abusive father. Family could not, or would not, take her in, so she went to the shelter. As Gayle left home at 17, she was not protected under the *Child and Family Services Act*, and was not eligible for protections or supports from social service agencies. The shelter was her only option. While at the shelter Gayle worked part time. However, the amount that she could save was restricted by the *Ontario Works Act*. She clearly highlights the issues of age categories and restrictions once a youth becomes homeless. Here are some relevant passages from my interview with Gayle:

I almost feel like I should've left home before sixteen because then I would've gone under Children's Aid. Okay, but now, I can't. I couldn't just because my situation. I couldn't and being stuck in this position is really, really, really, frustrating cause I feel, I always felt like, okay, well, you know what, if I, like, do the right things, if it's the right path, somebody's gonna take care of me. The

government's gonna take care of me and it's totally not true, they really don't care about you....

I'm so angry at Canada right now. I feel betrayed by my Canadian government. I felt like I've been listening to them for so many years, I've been going to their friggin stupid, biased Catholic school for the past seventeen years of my life...I've been sitting at my house getting the shit beaten out of me by my dad, and finally when I leave, you know, you're gonna friggin put this stuff on me where I can't even do anything. I'm stuck here in this house, where I can only save eight hundred dollars, I can't get out of that kind of debt. What if I wasn't going to go to University? What would happen to someone like me if I wasn't going to go to university? What if I was going to the workplace. I'd be screwed...

No, but after you're 16 you're an adult? Are you kidding me? Like, I'm not supposed, as far as I'm concerned I'm not supposed to be dealing with this stuff until like I move out of my house which would normally, you move out of your house when you go off to college or university or if, you know, you get married or something like that. So yeah. That's not very nice. 16 year olds aren't adults...stupid government. Like, we're not adults. Are you kidding me? People at 16...you know what I'm trying to say. It's stupid.

Gayle truly believed that once she fled her abusive home the state would support her and help her through this difficult time. She found she was wrong. First, there are no protections from Family and Children Services once you are 17 in Ontario. This is what she is referring to when she reports that one is considered an adult at 16. The social service categorization for supporting homeless youth is 16-25 in Ontario. The Canadian state does not define a youth as an adult until they reach the age of 18. Single youth without dependents under the age of 18 cannot access social assistance without emancipation from parents or parental confirmation that they are not permitted home. Yet the children and youth protective services end at 16 in Ontario. Gayle was not ready for these transitions to adult-like roles and feels, quite strongly,

that she should not be experiencing them at her age. In many ways she is excluded. Gayle is a prime example of what can happen to youth who flee abusive homes. She holds conventional goals and values, and aspires to post-secondary education. However, in the shelter system, while she works, she must pay a portion back to the system to compensate for her housing. If she wants to save money, she can save no more than \$800, which is far less than what is needed for first and last month's rent. Gayle did not seek full adult-role independence but thought she could depend on the state. When it was not forthcoming in the form she expected, she felt betrayed.

Independence and Dependence: Summary Comments

This chapter explored youths' views on some key aspects of homelessness and street life. The themes of independence and dependence on the street offer a nuanced overview of youths' experiences of homelessness, offering some insight and linkages to the features of social exclusion. At no point throughout our discussions of the positives and negatives of street life did any of the youth employ the term "social exclusion." They did, however, refer to experiences that I think can be connected to the theoretical concept of "social exclusion," namely that it is relative and multidimensional; that it includes psychosocial factors and both structural and individual dimensions. Youth discussed their independence while experiencing homelessness - they referred to the development of strength and resiliency, to a building of character on the street, highlighting individual approaches to their situations. However, they also acknowledged ties to the structural side of homelessness; the need to rely on the state to meet basic needs such as food and shelter. A key point, as presented in this chapter, is the complexity

that age brings to homelessness and how age influences one's perspective on key aspects of support, such as shelters. The connection between age and homelessness is elaborated on in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Results and Discussion Part Two

Homelessness and Age – The Difficulties of being a “Youth”

It's not like these little “I just don't get along with my family, they don't understand me” apathetic teenage views that people are putting stereotypes on them (inaudible) or just “they don't care about anything.” Well yeah I'd love people to realize after their teenage days, I'm pretty sure they cared about nothing too.

Gayle, 17

I've been treated pretty much like dirt. People look down on you, cause, you know, “What are you guys doing downtown?” Like, “you should be in school” or “you should be working” or all this. People are just constantly hound on you and usually find it's the rich, like the higher upper class people that make your life hell. At least they made mine and my friends' life hell.

Amanda, 19

I have noted in several places in the discussion and analysis above that those who have not experienced homelessness are likely to view homeless people in negative terms. Indeed, when the person experiencing homelessness is youthful, he or she is often further vilified as someone to be feared – an outsider - rather than someone in need of assistance (Gibson, 2011). It is my view that, in many ways, homelessness contradicts notions of social justice, of equitable treatment and appropriate recognition of disadvantaged individuals in advanced nation states such as Canada (Young, 1990). There is a lack of collective responsibility to care for those in need. Further, youth who experience homelessness seem to accept the neo-liberal view that they should be self-sufficient and independent, even though they rely on the state for their basic subsistence. We lack appropriate forms of

recognition and redistribution of goods and opportunities that might address inequalities, oppression and exclusion in the social world (Fraser, 2010).

What follows is an overview of my participants' discussion of such issues as maturity and resilience – capacities they claim to have developed while experiencing homelessness and which they frame as positive aspects of being homeless. One interesting feature of their analysis of homelessness is their view of older homeless people. Their remarks indicate clearly how the “excluded” might also be “excluders.” Some of the youth viewed their peers and older homeless individuals in negative terms and/or as the “other.” As discussed in the previous chapter, youth also provided lengthy overviews of their experiences with the shelter system. In this chapter I elaborate on their views on age-based shelters. This discussion will detail some of the problems that being “young” adds to being homeless.

Maturity and Resilience – Growing Up Whether You Want to or Not

A theme that emerged in discussions about street life among my participants was their claim that they had experienced personal growth and maturity as a consequence of being homeless. Indeed, many youth claimed to be more mature and resilient than their peers who had not experienced homelessness⁷⁸.

I find myself more mature than them [youth who have not experienced homelessness]. I really do. I feel that I've, especially in the last two years or so, year and a half or so, really become more of an adult. More mature, you know.

Len, 19

Kids my age are very immature and don't have their priorities straight. Like, I have people that I know that would rather go drinking than go work on their school work, cause drinking is more important than their school work. I'm like, what the, what are you

thinking? Wasting your money and your time. They think that life experiences (inaudible) older than I am. Actually I'm older maturity wise. Cause I've got life lessons nobody else has... But, like they don't have, a lot of people I've seen don't have the maturity that people that have more life experience. I've had it harder.

Elaine, 21

Youth who haven't experienced homelessness will see things in a different sort of analysis. Whereas I feel like those who have been homeless have a really good class analysis and understanding why they were the target of the police coming and pulling them over and why this landlord won't let these people, won't let them live there, as opposed to another youth who'll just be like "oh fucking adults don't like youth" and just kind of a analysis.

Randy, 23

More mature. I have...I don't know, more...a wider perspective of the way the world works. Instead of people who still live at home with their parents and don't have to worry about anything. I always gotta figure stuff out and what I'm gonna do and I'm used to that, but other people don't even know what it's like yet. So I guess it's good for me because I'm learning, instead of, being ignorant until I get kicked out by my parents and (inaudible). That's my point of view.

Wally, 17

Youth who experience homelessness must develop skills and individual capacities including identity and self-esteem without the benefit of conventional supports to help them do so (Aviles & Helfrinch, 2004: 332). According to some of my participants, experiencing the marginality of homelessness and the necessity of being self-sufficient with very restricted means to do so accelerates maturity. Over and over again, they repeated the refrain: once you are homeless, you are expected to

sustain yourself. You are expected to “grow up” and “be an adult.” You now have to provide for yourself. This was a consistent theme amongst all 3 age groups (i.e., 16-17; 18; 19-25). Len expresses his belief that he is more mature than his peers who lack the experience of homelessness. He perceives that as someone who is homeless he must mature if he is to sustain himself and take on adult roles. Elaine offers the opinion that “kids her age” who lack experience of homelessness “don’t have their priorities straight.” The distinction in wording itself is interesting, as she refers to her peers as “kids” but points to her own need to act as a mature adult. Elaine notes that she has had it harder, and because of this, sets her priorities accordingly. This also ties into a variety of features of social exclusion, namely the dynamic side, where social exclusion is a process from integration to exclusion. Experiencing homelessness and this shift in “proper place” lends itself to progressing towards social exclusion (Mitchell, 2003). This also ties into the active component of social exclusion where social exclusion is caused by people and processes (Silver & Miller, 2003). How youth are reconstructed and expected to be self-sufficient once homeless can be considered an active aspect of social exclusion, being tied to societal roles and expectations.

Randy offers unique insights into the structural, multidimensional and active comparisons of homeless youth. According to Randy, youth who experience homelessness are better prepared than other youth to use a structural analysis of their situation, suggesting that they understand the causes of exclusion to include social class as well as age. He maintains that when compared to their domiciled peers, youth who have experienced homelessness are more aware of the class-based

structure of the social order. As such, he argues, homeless youth are more likely to understand their experiences with agents of social control, such as the police, or access to housing (the behavior of landlords) in ways that go beyond an adult versus youth dichotomy. Randy emphasizes the class-based structure of these interactions, highlighting the context in which he felt social interactions and discrimination occur because he is young and homeless. Although Wally did not offer a class-based analysis of homelessness, he stressed how his experience of homelessness had broadened his world view, making him less “ignorant.”

As noted in the previous chapter, some youth perceived the experience of homelessness as building character, resilience, and maturity. This, again, falls very much in line with societal expectations of youth who are homeless. Most people think that they left home of their own free will, a choice, with full acknowledgement of the outcomes and implications (Gibson, 2011). Accordingly, from wider views, youth who make this “choice” should be held accountable for their actions and should be responsible for sustaining themselves. Many of the youth have adopted this same view. They attempt to be self-sustaining and rely on their own skills to obtain the necessities of life. However, instead of pursuing conventional employment or education, or relying on family, youth who are homeless rely on state supports, social service agencies and/or “unconventional” means of income generation.

Age Comparisons

I friggin hear kids all the time be, like, at school, like
“oh I have to work and I this project” and I go “shut

up”. I don’t even have a friggin house and I have this project and I have to work on.

Gayle, 17

With the growth of credentialism and changes to labour markets, adolescence has been extended and more youth are living with their parents for extended periods of time (Statistics Canada, 2009). This has changed societal understandings of youth and the expectations placed upon them. Or, at least this is the case for youths who are housed and retain conventional ties to family and/or the education system. Expectations are quite different for youth experiencing homelessness. I had numerous conversations with youth about age distinctions and whether they viewed age as influencing the degree to which they felt socially included or excluded. A number of revealing remarks stemmed from these conversations, including remarks they made about youth who have not experienced homelessness and older homeless individuals.

The Waterloo Region has a number of post-secondary institutions in close proximity. Accordingly, many of the youth who have experienced homelessness have contact/engagement with youth attending post-secondary institutions. In our discussions of stigma and discrimination, many of the youths I interviewed expressed their views on interactions with youth of similar age, but in different life circumstances. Some of the “adult” group expressed:

I’ve met some college friends and you know, some stuck up, rich college women and, no disrespect, but I think sometimes, you know, I go with my friends and you know, they’re not the, they’re bad ass looking people and I mean, you know, some girls like that and some girls are like “ehh.” You know what I mean and show, like, no sympathy, but I wanna say to her like “girls, do you have

the knowledge I do, came where I came from, and been through what I been, and walked in my shoes, I don't think you woulda survived till then. You'd have been one of those victims of the streets. It woulda ate you alive.

Henry, 23

The closest to struggle they get to is University. And they're looking for a place to live. That's the closest they got to it.

Len, 19

Compared to university kids – if street kids could only have the chance. University kids have mom and dad paying for everything... There's a difference between book smarts and street smarts. They are not independent. Dad pays for everything and they don't learn. Many of us work any jobs. Many are manual labour. It's hard work but they pay well. We work for what we get and because of this we take better care of what we have. We don't take things for granted. University kids look down on us. We look different. We can't wash our clothes everyday so we might have to wear the same thing three days in a row. They look down on anything they consider different. University students don't have to be responsible for the damages they do to their places.

Adam, 21

In accounting for their perceptions of youth who are in school, the youth hold some of their own negative views. Henry views college students as having lesser degrees of personal strength than those who have experienced homelessness while Len views university students as leading lives that are free from struggle or hardship. Some of the participants believed that all university students came from privileged backgrounds, were generously funded by their parents and therefore did not need to work. This, however, is obviously not the case. As the youth conveyed negative stereotypes being thrust upon them by those in post-secondary institutions, some youth also held negative or incorrect assumptions of different lifestyles and social positions of post-secondary students. Homeless youth responding in this manner

were all of an age that they “could” be enrolled in or finished some form of post-secondary education, However they have had very different life trajectories. Adam notes that “street kids” are capable of pursuing many options, if only given the chance. If offered a different path in life Adam might have enrolled in post-secondary education. However, he experienced a serious drug addiction which led to his being homeless, on and off, for a period of 9 years. Contrary to stereotypes in mainstream culture, according to which those who are homeless are “deviant” and “difficult,” some of my sample note the opposite; i.e. that some youth experiencing homeless have or would have the desire to do more and “be more” but are constrained by housing instability at a critical age in life. Most of the participants expressed an interest in returning to school, but felt that their current social locations limited their life choices or forced them to postpone this option. This may be tied to social exclusion as youth see themselves as excluded/restricted from educational opportunities. It is difficult to pursue education when one does not have stable housing. The structure of the education system and social assistance system limit their inclusion in such institutions.

Outside of discussing post-secondary students, the participants further distinguished themselves from their peers who have not experienced homelessness. Some youth conveyed that youth who have never experienced homelessness are lucky and privileged. In some ways, their discussions can be linked to their social exclusion as the participants could note how other youth have material goods, access to resources, and are recognized as members of the community. Notably, it was the younger youth (17, 18 and 19 years old) who focused on this topic. The younger

youth have spent less time homeless and on the street than the older youth and, as such, may be closer to “conventional” ties. For example:

I don't know. They just got a lucky break I guess. You know? Like, me when I was younger, right? Me and my parents didn't get along too well, and maybe if I woulda stayed at my parents and wouldn'ta got kicked out at an early age, maybe I woulda finished school, maybe I woulda got a good job right off the bat, gone to college or something..but it didn't happen like that, so this is where I am. Just livin...

Nathan, 17

If they have, like, if they're not homeless I think they have more opportunities for jobs cause they have, like they have a place to stay and like the phone numbers and everything where they can always be reached at. But when you're homeless, like, you may have a cell phone but you may not have it for very long and you don't exactly know where, like, if you're staying in shelters you don't know when you're really gonna get kicked out and stuff. You (inaudible) know, like...I don't know. But for people that have their own place and then, like, and then they have to be out, if they get kicked out of (inaudible) they have to be out for like, one night, it's terrible for them because they don't know what's it's like. They think it's like tragic. I don't know I never thought it was terrible, terrible. Cause, I don't know, you gotta make the best of what you got. So...

Fiona, 18

Well, I'm not even sure. I guess they're kinda lucky. They're more clean cut. They, but then they start doing stupid shit, like, you're an idiot, stay at home, you guys are stupid. One of my friends wants to be homeless. I'm like, you're an idiot, man. You have a parent, like, his dad has a Porsche, man.

Dan, 17

You don't have welfare; you don't have access to housing really. You've got student welfare, but if you choose not to go to school you can't get a house and if you've got no place to live you can't go to school. Another thing is, you know, sometimes you don't

really want to be friends with anybody on the streets because you don't know if these people are really bad people or not, right?

Eddie, 19

Youth are in a process of “becoming,” being guided and shaped by social forces, which aim to help them become active and “productive” citizens (Cote & Allahar, 2006). Youth experiencing homelessness are not granted the protection of home, something often deemed essential for positive development in the process of making the transition to adulthood. Some youth, as outlined above, discuss features of exclusion based on age and their experiences of homelessness, noting that those who do not have their lived experiences are “better off” or “lucky.” Nathan, for example, says that youth who have not experienced homelessness are “lucky.” Experiencing conflict in the home, Nathan was “kicked out” at a young age, and has not pursued education, having only grade eight at the age of 17. His accounts might be linked to the multidimensionality feature of exclusion, noting that had his parents not kicked him out at a young age, he might have acquired more education, faced better job prospects and more options for housing. Limited education and a lack of housing are very real restrictions in bettering his position. Limited education restricts employment options, which restricts income, which restricts the obtainment of material goods, basic subsistence, and, of course, housing.

Fiona had experienced homelessness for 2 years. At age 18, she possessed a grade 8 education. Fiona claims that youth who have not experienced homelessness enjoy greater opportunities, access to resources, better social interactions and engagement with conventional society. Fiona outlines the simple advantage of having a phone number at which employers might reach her when she applies for a

job. Eddie discusses the difficulties that homeless youth experience, in particular structural restraints that are placed upon youth because of their age (under 18) and because they live in unstable housing situations. This theme was emphasized by many of my participants and attests to the multidimensionality of the social exclusion that homeless youth experience.

Homeless youths also shared their views on older individuals who experience homelessness. Frequently, during interviews they made reference to the cyclical nature of homelessness. While youth understood that they either were homeless or had experienced homelessness, they always saw a way out. They viewed their homelessness as a temporary condition and believed that their housing situation would improve. The cause of this improvement was left unspecified/uncertain in many cases. Nevertheless, youth seemed optimistic; they believed that they could better their social position. In contrast, when referring to older homeless adults, my participants often referred to this as a life situation. In the view of my participants, for older homeless adults, homelessness was not a process or a stage in life but a destination – a permanent situation. In some cases, youth referred to older adults' situations as a form of motivation to for them; a spur to better their own positions. None wanted to spend their life in the cycle of homelessness, substance abuse, violence and incarceration. For example:

You know, there's some, those adults that have really, a lot of them are pretty messed up and doing drugs and getting out of jail and shit. I don't think it's fair to the youth to always be around that.

Eddie, 19

They [older homeless individuals] need structure and resources. Where you are required to do things. It's the requirements, you're supposed to do, that help do it. Like, if you wanna come in and take advantage of the resources and do it, by all means, do it, but I'm getting sick and tired of people saying, using the resources just to use it. You know, they stay there for thirty days, they get their check, they go blow it all on crack, they go live in a tent for a month, and they come back. And they're back in a shelter. And that could be some sixty-five year-old man that just got out of jail and has no place to go, you know? Who goes back to his wife 'cause he's on a domestic charge and gets arrested again 'cause he's not supposed to be around his wife. You know what I mean? My heart goes out to the older people. They're the ones who need it (resources) the most.

Len, 19

I don't think, I think actually people feel more sorry for us because we're younger and they be more helpful, 'cause if you're older they expect you to have your life together. By then there's no excuse for it. Like, we're young right now, right? It's not like we have kids or responsibilities that we have to do. People like that should have their own, they should have a place and stuff. Obviously they did something really bad to be continuously homeless at 40 for like, 20 years. That is a whole different story. Like, if you see me in 20 years and I'm on friggin' (city downtown street name), shoot me.

Betty, 22

While youth were at times sympathetic and empathetic towards older individuals who experienced homelessness, they often pointed to this group as an exemplar of how not to lead one's life. Again, in a somewhat paradoxical twist, they saw members of this group as largely responsible for their own social locations. Adult homeless individuals were some youths' anti-role models. They envisioned their futures as much brighter than the lives of the homeless adults they knew. While Len expressed sympathy for older individuals and felt that they desperately needed resources, he also portrayed them as addicts, criminals and wife-abusers.

Meeting the Basic Need of Shelter – Age Considerations

I'd rather sleep in the streets than go to the shelter because the shelter's not...the streets are more safer than the shelter.

Elaine, 21

Appropriate sheltering options for youth who experience homelessness are limited. The sheltering network, while developed with good intentions, is fraught with difficulties, including how to establish who will be permitted to use services and who will not. Is it suitable and/or beneficial for a youth who is homeless to be housed alongside adults in a shelter? As noted in Chapter 5, at the time I carried out my study, there were few youth-specific shelters in Waterloo Region. In many cases, youth who chose to access the shelter system were forced to rely upon shelters that also served homeless adults. This setting heightens the likelihood that youths will be exposed to violence, drugs and mental illness (Feldman, 2004). In the next section of this chapter I discuss first, youths' experiences with the adult-based shelter system and then, youth-specific options. My participants' comments suggest that homeless youth perceive a need for age-graded responses to homelessness and believe that a "one size fits all" shelter model threatens their safety and well-being. Many of the youth gave quite detailed reports of their experiences in the adult-based shelter system:

[in reference to certain shelters in Waterloo Region] They don't let in people who are under 18, not even to eat. So if you are a 16 year-old starving kid you can't go in. They had an "under 18-only" church for a while but no one knew about it – just me and my friends. It was word of mouth advertising but no one went there. It closed before the winter was over. There needs to be more youth specific stuff – but there is a lot of bureaucracy around it... For the

adult based – you’ve got those grubby old men – the 50 year old homeless guy who thinks he knows everything.

Adam, 21

The Out-of-the-Cold programs I stayed at because I don’t like the [adult shelter] down here. None of the lockers lock, people will rob your shit, they’ll take blankets off your bed for some stupid reason...There’s a lot of people coming straight from the [rehab clinic]there which could be pedophiles, perverts, shit like that, so, you will end up fighting if you don’t like those people...You will end up knocking them out and they will call the cops on you and you’ll be arrested for it. So I prefer not to go there.

Ogden, 22

[female shelter] was okay but it was over crowded. So shit got stolen. Like I woke up one morning and my shoes are gone. No shoes, my wallet was gone, my health card, everything. I started taking my pillow out of my pillow case and stuffing everything in it and sleeping with it...with my shoes on...They don’t really have secure spaces, people break and enter. It’s not really secure at all. You can have somebody, like, take your phone, use it, and rack up your bill. That’s an example, I know that’s happened to a couple people in there. Nothing’s secure. Sometimes, like, one of my friends [inaudible] actually, said, “I’d rather sleep in the streets than go to the shelter,” because the shelter’s not...the streets are more safer than the shelter.

Elaine, 21

And, [female adult shelter] there’s just a bunch of crack heads there. I hate to say it but it’s true. They’ll steal anything that they can get their hands on.

Claire, 22

I don’t know, I really don’t like staying there. I stayed there once and I woke up and there was a crack head smoking crack beside me in his bed, right? So I just said, “screw that” and just left...I don’t know, I think it’d be alright, right?

Nathan, 17

Most of them are like idiots. Like, they like drink sherry every day, just, what’s the point, you turn into an idiot, I don’t like it. That’s

why I didn't stay at (adult shelter). I went there one day and I saw all the Sherryheads in there.

Flynn, 18

[Adult- based shelter) Sorry... some of the people are really really really nice there but they're either super nice or they're out to get you and they're gonna rob all your crap 'cause, they just don't care who you are. All they do is smoke crack and...one time my cell phone got stolen right out from my pocket when I was sleeping, I don't know how it happened, but...yeah and then this one guy, I'm not gonna say his name but he used crack, right? And I was talkin' to him at the soup kitchen and he was like, "yeah look at this new phone I got" and I was like, "that's my cell phone, man." It was my cell phone but nothing I could do now, the deal was made I'll get beat up and hurt if I even try to take it back so...pretty much when people steal your crap, and when people, after they bang needles and stuff they get anxious 'cause they don't have any more so if you're in their way or you're standing in the snack time line too long, if you're right in front of them and you're taking your time, setting up with your little thing to eat for snack time, they get really angry and they get all pushy and shovey and stuff like that.

Dan, 17

In large part, age restrictions are based upon the funding sources of each shelter. Shelters can serve only the population they are mandated to serve. Otherwise, they might jeopardize their future funding. Adam notes the hardships that this situation can create for homeless youth. In his view, the region needs a greater number of youth-specific services and suggests that the provision of these programs is forestalled by "a lot of bureaucracy." For his part, Adam stereotypes the adult homeless who use shelters as know-it-all "grubby old men" and Ogden describes the adult system as populated by addicts, "pedophiles" and "perverts." Elaine identifies herself as a victim of a nonviolent crime that took place in an adult shelter and suggests that her experience was common.

Claire and Nathan describe the occupants of adult shelters as “crack heads.” Crack cocaine is a freebase form of cocaine, and often considered the most addictive form (Hanson, Venturelli, & Fleckenstein, 2011). Addictions are prominent among those who use the shelter system, and youth who are housed in adult shelters are often exposed to drug use and its aftermath, which includes violence and crime. In a sense this forces youth into a situation of social exclusion; Nathan chose to leave the shelter system rather than be housed alongside a “crackhead.” Many of the youths noted that hard drugs can negatively impact one’s life and several reported that they had made efforts to avoid drug users/drugs. Youth might avoid staying in shelters and believe that in so doing they will limit their exposure to drugs and safeguard them from the temptations of “hard drugs.” However, I would note that much of my participants’ discussion of drugs in the shelter system referred to the adult, rather than the youth, shelter system.

While Dan’s comments express his negative assessment of the adult shelter system, he makes another insightful point. He notes that violence and theft occur because of a sense of anonymity in the shelters. People do things to you – take your possessions, etc., - “cause, they just don’t care who you are.” Shelters, intended to provide support and security, often create a form of isolation and anonymity. In discussing the positive aspects of experiences of homelessness, some youth made the point that there was amongst them a sense of community and caring. These ideas of community and caring, according to Dan, are not present in the adult shelter system. When there is no sense of community or identity, it is easy to be victimized, because people “don’t care who you are.” Garrett et al. (2008: 436) have noted that youth

underutilize the shelter services that are available to them. The comments of my participants suggest a possible explanation for this. Youth who experience homelessness have often experienced abuse or victimization at home. Once they leave, shelters should be a place where they can go for protection and support, but they can become another source of victimization and trauma. This raises questions about the utility and appropriateness of the age category of 16-25 for “youth homelessness.”

Youth-Oriented Shelters and Services

Mixing youth and adults in the shelter system may exacerbate the social exclusion that is experienced by homeless youth by heightening the likelihood that they will experience victimization and isolation. After my participants had shared their perceptions of the adult-based shelter systems, they discussed youth-specific housing and identified the benefits and drawbacks of this service. Having youth-specific services acknowledges that homeless youth are unique in their social locations. Being “young” may place individuals at increased risk of exclusion in terms of access to services, housing, recognition and rights. Having youth-oriented services may provide a buffer to these forms of exclusion. What follows is some of the youths’ assessments of youth-specific shelter systems, both in positive and negative terms.

But I think that out of the youth though, there’s positives and negatives for like an all-youth shelter. If it was an all-youth shelter, there’d be a lot more fighting between teenagers but then you could also make good friends too.

Dan, 17

It's been pretty good but if you have an issue, it's really hard to get it resolved. If you're a youth, nobody, like, believes you and stuff.

Wally, 17

They're messed up. A lot of stuff goes missing and drama and rumours about this person and stories about that person and fights and just drama overall. And you don't have a lot of freedom there either. Like they always have to know where you are, where you're going, who you're going to be with and how much money you're spending and whatever like that and I don't like that. So I make my money hard working for it, I'm going to do what I want with it. That's the way [youth shelter] was, they took all your money from you.

Ian, 23

Dan's comments suggests that while an all-youth shelter might be a site of many fights and other forms of conflict, it could also provide a setting where youth could forge friendships with their similarly aged peers. Moving from a "home" setting to a youth-specific shelter might be a challenging transition for many youth. Youth are expected to live with and "get along" with many others. The problem is that while they share the common experience of homelessness, they are not homogenous in backgrounds, experiences and opinions. Many come from a place of trauma. Building positive peer relationships is something that requires much work and many of them find it difficult.

Ian moves the discussion beyond interpersonal conflict by pointing to the structure of youth shelters. He notes that the policy guidelines used within the shelter system require youths who are employed to pay a portion of their earnings back to the system. Moreover, as Gayle noted above, youths who reside in shelters are also subject to rules that specify how much they are allowed to save. Ian's comments suggest that – ironically – staying in a shelter restricts a youth's ability to become

self-sustaining. Youth shelters are funded through *Ontario Works*, which provides shelters with a monthly allowance of \$376 for each resident. Under the guidelines of *Ontario Works*, the youth who are receiving benefits are limited in what assets they may possess. Based on 2012 funding guidelines, individuals receiving *Ontario Works*, including those in shelters, may possess \$599 only in assets before monies are to be returned to *Ontario Works*. In the Waterloo Region, \$599 is rarely enough for the first and last month's rent needed to secure housing⁷⁹.

Youth reported that violence/drugs were more pervasive in adult than youth shelters. As previously noted, some of the strongest critiques of the adult-based system were youths' exposure to violence and substance abuse. Such exposure might re-victimize youth or may expose them to readily available hard drugs (namely crack or meth).

[Referring to youth shelter] I had one of my game systems out and I could leave it out for a week on end and nobody would take it. (in the adult shelter), if you leave a book out, they take it...(youth shelter), they're much more strict and people weren't allowed to stay there during the day. They had to be out doing, like, work or whatever or volunteer or looking for a place and if you steal something, they'll search your room no matter what.

Claire, 22

I think they're great. (Adult shelter) and (Out of the Cold programs), right, ...you go in for dinner at five o'clock, register and you gotta be out by seven in the morning. Wake up every day at seven. And there's here [youth shelter] which is much better 'cause it's sixteen to twenty four [age group to use the services] and there's, you know, less drugs. You can't have drugs in the [youth shelter?] or anything like that. I like it here. I been here for roughly, again, six months. And it's just meeting new people, new guys, everybody's friendly. Have to be friendly living here that's for sure. No violence, no nothing here. Which is [inaudible] 'cause I'm not a violent person.

Tom, 22

I think youth should be separate from adults. Just because, you know, there's some, those adults that have really, a lot of them are pretty messed up and doing drugs and getting out of jail and shit. I don't think it's fair to the youth to always be around that.

Eddie, 19

Claire and Tom emphasized that neither theft and drugs were tolerated in the youth-based shelters. According to Eddie, inasmuch as there are “a lot” of “pretty messed up” adults at adult shelters, youth should not be housed there. Although homeless youth may be stereotyped as “dangerous” and “deviant,” these youth appreciated the structure and social control that is exercised in youth shelters. Nevertheless, while appreciative of the services that shelters provide, they could also be critical of the social policies and politics that surround them.

They could build a shelter for ages sixteen and under but I don't think the government will put money into it. I don't think they would. They'd be like “Oh, if your parents file a missing persons report they're just gonna take you home, if they kick you out you're staying on the street.” ‘Cause you can't be under sixteen at the [adult shelter] or anything like that.

Quinn, 18

I just feel like, I feel like [youth shelter] is a really good thing, but I kinda feel like at the same time it's sort of a really bad thing because it's sort of like you're putting everyone in a house, like, no matter what their situation is. So they can have like my sort of background situation or they could be like, just like,...sort of like, rude people that just got kicked out of their house for being jack asses, I mean jerks. Or they can be, like, you know, actually have like legitimate reasons to leave their house and they all get stuck in one house and it's just...I don't think that's very fair [inaudible]. I also feel like I'm working and, Ontario Works will only let me [inaudible] they only let me save eight hundred dollars in my bank account before I, the rest of the money I save has to go to them to pay down my rent for living at [shelter] so how am I supposed to save that money to get out of Ontario Works if you're only gonna let me save eight hundred dollars in my bank account. I have to move to [transitional housing] and...I

can't, that's a lot of money to live there, you know what I mean? It's still a lot of money and I'll have like a hundred dollars to get by maybe, not even. And I just don't think that's fair at all...I can't, I can't. I'm not over 18 I've never experienced that. If I had to lump them into one category, I'd look into their individual situations and, you know what, I would say, okay well, you know, this person, okay, this person left home because her family was abusive. This person left home because she just verbally, did not get along with her mom so she was kicked out. This person left home because her parents were drug addicts. This person left home because her family was very religious and, you know, didn't let her do anything and made her do these ridiculous customs, right? All legitimate reasons to leave home. ...So if these are all legitimate concerns, right, you know, like, they should all get what, like, the pay, like 535 dollars a month...alright they start off here this is a transitional shelter.

Gayle, 17

I think that they need, like I said again, bring programs they had, youth programs like, even this one here at the [youth oriented services], and move that into adult. Continue the process you're doing now. Because these programs here are helping now, but they don't help us later. And then, you know, they need to continue. Because opportunities like this will make it great.

Len, 19

It is evident that at least some of my participants contextualized homelessness as both a “public issue” as well a “personal trouble.” These youths emphasized the need for government funding and support. Quinn is critical of current responses to youth who leave home before age 16. If apprehended by officials, these youth will be returned home or placed in protective care under the *Children and Family Services Act*. Quinn suggests that it might be wise to consider strategies that provide these youths with additional protections and options.

Gayle finds the “one size fits all” response to youth homelessness frustrating. This is, in part, because Gayle was actively battling the social exclusion that is often associated with homelessness. Despite her background and living situation, Gayle

attended school daily and was employed in retail at the time of our discussion. She had planned her future, which included obtaining her own residence and going to university. She had two barriers in place. First, she was only 17 and, second, she was homeless and in the shelter system. Len acknowledges the benefits of youth-based services and suggests that they would be usefully extended to the adult population. While services for youth are limited, they are much more plentiful than what is offered to the adult population. Several of the youth were alarmed by the prospect of being homeless at 25 for they were aware that at this age the bulk of services ceases.

Although youth recognized that the shelter system provides resources for those in need, they were also conscious of its limitations. Youth lack agency and autonomy within the shelter system. While youth seem appreciative of the social control measures that make youth shelters safer environments than adult shelters, they also perceived youth shelters to be unduly restrictive. Youth criticized provisions of the *Ontario Works Act* that, they claimed, made it difficult for them to move into more stable forms of housing. While youth appreciated available supports and resources, they desired to possess a greater degree of options in relation to education, housing and employment.

Summary of Age Considerations

Some youth embraced, albeit loosely, this new construction of their “proper place” addressing that they indeed needed to be more mature and resilient than youth who have not experienced homelessness. As well, youth made distinct comparisons between their own lived experience and those who are in post-secondary education.

Youth flipped stereotypes back to this group, noting that youth in this category are privileged and lack adversity in their lives, which is not the case for all. Youth also discussed others who are the same age that have not experienced homelessness, outlining that such individuals are “lucky” and lack struggles in their lives. However, youth talked about their negative views of older adults experiencing homelessness and their constant struggle and adversity, however, they framed this in individualistic terms and claimed that such individuals were their motivation to improve their own social locations. The youth in this project constructed the homelessness of older adults as a “private trouble.” Lastly, youth provided an overview of the complications embedded in the shelter system based on age. Adult-oriented shelters were highlighted as a negative environment for youth, with many opportunities for further victimization and isolation. In turn, youth advocated for more aged-appropriate youth based shelters as a directed response to youth homelessness.

Chapter 7: Results and Discussion Part Three

The Rights and “Wrongs” of Youth Homelessness

Rights, Protections and Legal Literacy: The “Political” of Social Exclusion

None. What right do you have when it comes to politics when you're sixteen? None. What right do you have to politics when you're nineteen? None. You know. What right...you know, you're gonna sit around and [inaudible] things, you know, but you don't have a choice of what goes on, you know?

Len, 19

The “political” forms of social exclusion are important considerations in discussions of age and housing, as we explore youths' knowledge of access to rights and formal protections. Canada is a democratic society, but one that is guided by neo-liberal ideologies. We have rights and responsibilities as citizens, and, reciprocally, should expect safeguards and protections from the state. Being young and being without a home complicates this relationship. The Department of Justice Canada (2009) has explicitly noted that for our system of justice to function in a way that is “accessible, efficient and fair,” it is essential that all Canadians be informed about the law and its workings. This knowledge was considered important for several reasons. These include:

- People who are aware of the laws that govern them are less likely to be in conflict with the justice system.
- People who come into contact with the system for whatever reason – as an offender, as a victim, as a witness – may not be aware of their obligations or where to get information about their situation.
- Research has shown that information and education are important aspects of crime prevention.
- Every member in a democratic society has a need and responsibility to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and of the rights of other members in that society.
- Knowledge about the law can help people better identify the kind of legal advice or assistance they may require.

- Having access to information about the law and how to access legal and social resources in the community can be especially important to people who are at a disadvantage because of language barriers, economic reasons, reasons of discriminations, etc.

Canadians who are socially marginal might face especial difficulties and confront systemic barriers that frustrate their attempts to obtain timely and accurate information about the law - its contents and its workings. The comments of my respondents suggested that homeless youth number among this group. Echoing the findings of the *Aboriginal Legal Education Needs Survey 2006-2007*, homeless youth frequently voiced comments that suggested: a distrust of the legal system and legal authorities because they felt they had experienced oppression and unfair treatment; a lack of sure knowledge on the content of Canadian laws and legal rulings; and, not least of all, a feeling of disconnection from the society in which they lived due to a lack of awareness of what resources were available to them and/or a lack of readily-available access to these resources (Native Counselling Services of Alberta et al., 2007:10).

In general, my respondents recognized “rights” as a safeguard against arbitrary state action. When asked about the importance of rights, some of the youth claimed:

Because then everybody would just be like puppets and the government would be trying to control us and make us do like dances or whatever.

Claire, 22

I don't know, I guess it would prevent less crime and if everybody knew what they were entitled to do what they're not, then.

Ian, 23

Yes. Because without rights I might be dead right now. Without rights I might be in jail right now for some stupid thing, for something so small, for mouthing off to a police officer I might get beaten up. I wouldn't have a place to live, I probably wouldn't even be here right now today. I'd probably be dead...if there was no rules, no laws. Fair laws, though.

Eddie, 19

Cause if we didn't have that, people would be gettin' arrested for no reason. And charged on false stuff and, I don't know. More racism that there is now.

Flynn, 18

The comments of these respondents suggest that they perceive the importance and utility of rights in Canadian society. Nevertheless, none of the youths in my study could identify or articulate with any precision or accuracy the rights they possessed as Canadian citizens. Moreover, while their comments suggested a greater familiarity with the content of criminal law than other forms of law, much of the knowledge they possessed seemed to be experientially based and/or derived from American-based, law-and-order themed television shows. For example, Adam, 21, remarked:

With the cops you need to know your rights when being arrested. If you are too high and you don't understand why you are being arrested – they can't throw you in jail. If you are too high they take you to detox instead. You need to learn your rights and you learn them quickly on the streets.

Various studies have reported that youth who experience homelessness may be subject to increased surveillance by the police (Gaetz et al., 2010; O'Grady et al., 2011). Knowledge of rights can aid in youths' interactions around formal protections and law enforcement. For example, Adam clearly highlights that it is essential to know one's rights when interacting with the police in order to avoid rights violations.

My collaborators perceived that being homeless limited their ability to exercise the rights they possessed as Canadians.

If you're homeless you don't have access to all your rights. [inaudible] in my opinion. Cause you have the right to basic essential needs...where's your basic essential needs then? There isn't any...They tell you to go to the soup kitchen. ...It's not like that it's a [inaudible] but thinking like someone worse off in a situation than I am, you know...people who try to sleep and don't sleep because they can't because they're on a park bench. There's no rights there. And you don't even have a nametag because you don't have any other ID, the only proof [inaudible] but in order to get ID you really need to do something. Because people don't know who you are, cause if you're homeless you go from city to city... Within Canada what can we do? Cause what they're doing isn't enough. We don't have a social networking system. They say we do. But there's no, also not as safeguarded as they say. How do you wanna get homeless people off the streets into apartment when apartments and housing is so high and you're giving them so little.

Elaine, 21

And when you're homeless, because you always have the harassment by police, the biasness of the landlords, and the full weight of the judicial system coming down on you. So there's been instances where youth who are, have a history of being homeless and interaction with the law because they go hand in hand, where they get in trouble and maybe it was for like, selling drugs, but what the judge doesn't know is that they were selling drugs so they could pay their rent because they're on welfare and they're trying to cover this and make food so it's a crime of poverty as opposed to somebody trying to make a multi-billion dollar industry off it. And where they'll actually lose their housing, get into jail and then start from square one again.

Randy, 23

Elaine's comments suggest that she believes that the "rights" of Canadians include the right to having their "basic essential needs" provided for by the state. However, while parents are charged with providing the necessities of life to their young children, youth who are older confront the realities of a restricted social safety net under neo-liberalism. Randy's comments suggest a nascent awareness of the divide

between the “law in the books” – the formal protections that are contained in federal/provincial/territorial human rights code - and the “law in action” (Pound, 1910). His comments also direct attention to the stigma of homelessness and how the poverty that underlies it can result in various forms of social exclusion.

Housing as a Right?

While housing is a basic need, it is not considered a fundamental human right in Canada. According to Laird (2007: 5), “Canada’s lack of national strategy on housing and homelessness is one of Canada’s greatest economic and cultural liabilities.” As Randy’s comments above suggested, being without housing is not only a form of social exclusion in itself, but also works to perpetuate other forms of exclusion. Other participants also perceived that homelessness perpetuates social exclusion by limiting one’s ability to acquire an education and to participate in the formal economy. This theme was consistent among all three age categories. For example:

It’s hard to work when you are homeless. This is one of the biggest fights we have, trying to find work. How do you wake up for work when you don’t have an alarm clock or look for work when you don’t have an address?

Adam, 21

Because, if you, like, I don’t know, it’s just hard. They’re [potential employers] too judgmental on your appearance I think. I think that’s what a big part of it is, is your appearance.

Ian, 23

Worked for a bit but I just didn’t seem stable enough as you’re homeless, problems happen, you get picked up for being in the park in the middle of the night, you get thrown in the drunk tank, you can’t make it to work. Eventually the boss is gonna figure out that you’ve been sleeping in the park.

Ogden, 22

I don't have, like, proper clothes or anything to wear to , like, an interview or anything. I have nothing clean. I don't have any money to get it. So...

Quinn, 18

Just kind of the well, where are people gonna shower, what kind of services are only open certain days, certain days and certain hours and having to keep, like, hygiene and the ability to shower and change your clothes and access to clean clothes is really hard plus if you're working you also have to worry about where am I sleeping tonight, okay I gotta night shift so I get off at nine, where can I go sleep, there's no place to sleep during the day. Like, you go to the soup kitchen you could sleep there for a couple hours but, just the completely nomadic lifestyle you take it's really hard to hold a full time job.

Randy, 23

I've never had a job and it's been hard trying to find a job because I have no ID but I finally just got it all back so now I'm just working on making a resume and then I'm gonna go out and try to find job.

Flynn, 18

Well, it's kind of hard to do because, like, if you have welfare, like, I can, worry you'll be, if I like fill out all this paper work that I need to do, I can get welfare, but still welfare's only gonna pay you so much to get another, to get your own place, so really all you're getting is enough to get a room and that's not what I really want because I have, I have a cat and I have [inaudible] I've got all this stuff that I can't just have a room. You know? So it's kind of hard and getting a job is kinda hard because you don't always have the right clothes or, you know, just, you don't have a real address or whatever. You can use, like, you can use other people's addresses and stuff. It's really hard too.

Fiona, 18

All of these participants clearly believed that their housing situation had negatively impacted their ability to obtain employment. The majority of my respondents also recognized that they lacked the types of credentials that lead to well-paying jobs. For example, Len remarked:

I have a criminal record so it prevents me from getting in unions like, it's so hard to get a good job now. Especially, you know what I mean, without an education and without...Like a good job. I could get a job working the [convenience store], sure, but that doesn't pay the bills, you know. That's what makes it hard.

Gayle, 17, who aspired to be a lawyer, felt that their career ambitions were being thwarted by the requirements that the government placed upon youth who receive financial assistance. As she claims:

Generally, Ontario Works gives you, if you don't work, Ontario Works gives you, like five hundred and thirty five dollars a month on average, alright? So, then, they take three hundred dollars of that money, okay, so you're left with like two hundred dollars a month for everything and that's not, less than two hundred dollars a month...I don't know, can you live on less than two hundred dollars a month? I'm seventeen years old, I can't live on two hundred dollars a month and what's even more unfair is that I'll be working for this money. Tons of kids, tons of people that are in there don't even work for that money. And I work, I just, I work for it so, like, even, like the little tiny bit of extra money I get, which will just, cause I work part time out of school, will be, I'll be able to save it up, so like, I'm basically working for like fifty or sixty dollars a month extra just to save up, maybe. If I can afford it.

Gayle perceived that the system was unfair and created a situation in which she was “basically working for like fifty or sixty dollars a month extra just to save up” enough monies for a deposit on an apartment of her own. Gayle feels that although she is being supported by the state, this support restricts her future opportunities.

Although *Ontario's Human Rights Act* prohibits landlords from discriminating against potential tenants on the basis of age and contains provisions that explicitly forbid discrimination against those who are 16 and 17 years of age who are living away from their parents, my participants repeatedly reported that they, or their peers, had been discriminated against on this basis. What follows are

clear examples of how age can impact social exclusion. Youth who are “not yet adults” are especially limited in their housing options.

Age definitely makes it harder. At 16 if you are lucky enough to get a place, you need your parents’ signature. If you’re a bit too loud, you’re kicked out. Many street kids don’t know the Landlord Tenant Act – they are young and get manipulated. The last guy tried that with us. The place was mouse infested and every time someone took a shower it rained in my kitchen. But this guy gave was the time we needed to get my shit together – but he does owe me \$1300.

Adam, 21

Being a teenager, well not a teenager, but young adult, and having my aspects and people just kinda look at me and they’re like, no, right?

Henry, 23

Probably because alot of people stereotype against young people. Like “Hey, they’re young, they’re on welfare, they’re probably gonna go blow their money or party and be loud all night and cause disruption for the rest of the building”...probably just a bunch of that all combined.

Amanda, 19

Yeah. Alota landlords wouldn’t rent to me when I was younger because they said “this isn’t a good environment for you” so I was like “where do I go?” Nobody wants to see a 16 year old move into a crack house. And you don’t even know they’re crack houses because they’re all just rooms, but...until you move in and you see the activity that goes around.

Greg, 24

Although formally protected against discrimination in housing, the majority of youths in my study seemed unfamiliar with the protections that exist. Among those who were aware of these protections, this awareness seemed vague at best. For example, their comments did not suggest an awareness of the steps that one must undertake in order to file a complaint under the provincial Human Rights legislation. While protected by law and Human Rights codes, the homeless youth who

participated in my study most often lacked familiarity with the contents of human rights legislation or felt ill-positioned to pursue redress through their formal complaints mechanisms.

Formal Protections and Vulnerability

Persons who experience homelessness live a substantial portion of their private lives in public spaces. This situation increases the likelihood that their conduct will be subject to police scrutiny and social control. Allen (2004: 1) charges that this situation dampens the likelihood that the citizenship rights of the homeless will be respected: “When one can no longer inhabit public space, be arrested for one’s status rather than a crime, and only exercise political power with extreme difficulty, one cannot be said to be a citizen.” Many youth across all three age categories reported negative interactions with the police.

I see police very hard on homeless people. Very hard and, like, rough and rude. I’ve see them pretty brutal. Like they’re not very nice to youth at all that are on the street. Or even guys that are so drunk and sick that they can’t help themselves. They’re up puking on the street and they just kick them and say you gotta get up and keep moving or they throw them in jail. They couldn’t take them to a detox centre to clean up?

Ian, 23

I don’t know, sometimes you get the cops, shit like that, they just look at you and they’re like “oh this stupid street kid, right, he’s not good” so they fuck with us all the time...for no reason...Oh yeah. They’re very bad. There’s this one cop, every time he sees me, ten people could jay walk with me, you know. People I don’t know, rich people, other people, but he’ll pick me out of everybody who just jay walk in front of him and then he’ll even jay walk to come and give me a ticket.

Nathan, 17

I don’t think they’re understanding at all because they pick you up, they keep, continuously harassing you, they know your face from the street, they continuously follow you around looking for a

reason to pick your ass up...myself I've got a certain group of friends. Every time a police officer sees us walking with someone they don't recognize seeing us with, we're stopped, so that they can ask who our friend is. And everybody has their name run just because they don't know that one extra person. Which I wouldn't find very understanding at all. And the fact that we can walk down the street and be drunk and get thrown in a drunk tank where there is a guy coming out of the bars hammered as hell, they'll let him walk home. We come out of the bar hammered as hell and we go straight to a drunk tank because they know us. I don't think that's fair in any way. We're trying to do the same thing as everybody else trying to walk. Would you like me to jump in a car all drunk and try and drive? I don't think so.

Ogden, 22

I don't think the cops exactly understand, like, cause what we were arrested for the last time was looking for a place to sleep and be warm and stuff and if it's an abandoned building and like, they don't understand that, you know, like, [shelter] wasn't gonna let me in if I just went in. Like, it was court ordered that I go so they made sure there was a bed, that's the only way I got in right away, so like, it's hard to get into some shelters because there's not always a bed to sleep. And I don't think they understand, like, you know, just because we're in somewhere doesn't necessarily mean that like, it's always [inaudible] this and that, just, sometimes, some people decide to break stuff. But me if I go into somewhere it's just, it is just to stay, it's not like I break anything. I don't know. I don't think they should be so harsh. They don't understand [inaudible]. They've obviously probably never been homeless cause sure they've had to go to school and everything so they obviously had something. So...I don't know. That's what I think.

Fiona, 18

But I have had some instances with cops get a little too carried away and smash your head of a cruiser previously, like before the summer, in other cities and stuff. And here. Not this year, but other times. Yeah they're a little, I don't like the police. Two or three did once, that's it...People wouldn't rebel against them and hate them so much. Every cop here wants to prove something. They're all new to the force or working with someone being trained and they just wanna...you know what I mean, they don't realize these are our fuckin' streets, this is where we sleep. You guys just are just making sure we don't do anything bad. So, get out of our face otherwise. They've all got something to prove. They wanna come in the station at the end of the day and say

'Look Sarge, I did this today, I caught this guy, meanwhile this guy really shoulda just been left alone..I've had cops roll up beside me at two o'clock in the morning, I'm high on crack and have crack on me, like right in front of (local spot) this happened, I was with [girlfriend] one night for example, and he's got his window down, he's drivin' maybe four kilometers an hour looking at me. I'm like does it look like I've got any fuckin' candy. And then they just keep, they go off, like just, don't bug me. I don't want them botherin' me.

Greg, 24

They stopped me and [boyfriend] all the time and just give us a hard time because we're walking around because we've got nowhere else to go. So they think that we're automatically up to something and not good because you're walking around [name]street...because that's like, where everyone hangs out. But, yeah. We even, when [boyfriend] got arrested that didn't even happen, we gave [friend] , you know little [friend] that hangs here, we gave him some weed to roll and I had to pee real bad, so we go over, trying to go pee in one of the stores, none of them would let me, all of a sudden these two cruisers come up and they're "you're under arrest". I was like "what?". But they separated us right away and we both had the same story cause it was true, but we were like "no we're not drug dealers, we're just rollin' a joint and I started cryin, I was just like [inaudible] cause I didn't have any money. So they had no proof of us drug trafficking, there wasn't no money really. So...

Betty, 22

I think that they don't. I think they need to have an exercise where [inaudible] they have nothing but the clothes on their back and you can stay out on the streets for a few days. Tell me, how'd you get by? You have no access to your bank card your bank accounts, anything, you ID all gone. You're not allowed to touch anything else, you just have to stay out there and do [inaudible] where you're wet, you have holes in your shoes and it's really bad weather or something. You have to keep warm and you have to stay warm and you have to find a place and then tell me why we find, then you try to tell me why it's wrong for me to break in to an apartment building and sleep in their laundry room. And then we get charged for it. Yes it's wrong, but they don't understand the reasonable factor of death. [inaudible] they can still [inaudible] but they don't see the other point of view. They need to do that exercise.

Elaine, 21

And the police just kind of interpret youth who are homeless as people who don't like rules, who fain on authority and just kinda wanna fight authority whenever they have the chance so they kinda take it personally as an attack against them, like "oh you're just a youth so you don't know what you're doing because if you did know you wouldn't be homeless right now." They don't look at it as like a social issue but more as an issue of that individual with whoever they were there, like, the belief is there I feel from the police, that it's just like, youth don't, "you didn't like the rules your parents gave you so you left. And now you're going to follow my rules.

Randy, 23

The overwhelming majority of my respondents felt that, due to their homelessness, they had been treated unfairly by the police. They perceived that the police lacked empathy for those who were homeless and stereotyped homeless youth as problem kids. As Randy remarked, "the police just kind of interpret youth who are homeless as people who don't like rules, who fain on authority and just kinda wanna fight authority whenever they have the chance so they kinda take it personally as an attack against them." In like spirit, Elaine rhetorically challenged the police to consider themselves in a situation in which "you're wet, you have holes in your shoes and it's really bad weather or something. You have to keep warm and you have to stay warm and you have to find a place and then tell me why we find, then you try to tell me why it's wrong for me to break in to an apartment building and sleep in their laundry room." The youth in my study did not, in general, perceive the police as guardians and protectors of *their* rights. As Heisler (2005: 667) notes, while citizenship "figures in the assurance or denial of rights, economic benefits, social services, education, due process of the law and opportunities to affect political decisions... it does not guarantee equal fairness, justice, economic well being, dignity or the respect of public officials or fellow citizens." The comments of my

participants suggest a similar divide between the “rights” that they possessed in theory and in practice.

Deviant, Dangerous, and a Nuisance –The Wrong Type of Recognition

It’s weird. You always look down on homeless people until you are a homeless person. All of a sudden you look around and there’s people looking down on you and it’s like, you know? It’s really eye-opening to become homeless. It’s the worst feeling in the world. Or one of the worst. You know, it’s like at that point you really don’t want to admit it at first, and say you’re not a part of it, then all of a sudden you become a part of it.

Len, 19

Being homeless can end “youth” and force young Canadians to take on adult-like social roles and responsibilities (O’Grady et al., 2011). Nevertheless, recognition of the struggles that these young people face might be overshadowed by a variety of negative stereotypes that suggest that they are in general, “deviant” (Schissel, 2009) and dangerous individuals who refuse to abide by the norms of “civil” society. (Mitchell, 2003; Gharabaju & Stuart, 2010: 1685).

This section addresses my respondents’ understandings of power, stigma, social order and social exclusion. Homeless youth recognize that others may view them as deviant, threatening and/or a nuisance, and discuss how these perceptions impact them in their daily lives. My respondents were also aware that they lacked institutional and social power and spoke of how their powerlessness influenced their interactions with agents and agencies of social control. Feldman (2004) has noted that those who are constructed as a “nuisance” are often viewed as disposable and/or treated disrespectfully as “non-persons,” without concern for preserving their dignity. Such treatment is illustrative of the relational aspects of social exclusion, as

outlined by Silver and Miller (2003). Part of being “included” as a member of society and a “citizen” is recognition: recognition of one’s rightful place or positioning within the social order. Unfortunately, this recognition is something that is often denied to those who experience homelessness.

Cortese (2003: 85) observes that “cultural ideology defines the behaviours and survival techniques of the homeless as bizarre, illogical, random, ill-calculated, paradoxical or impetuous” and suggests that these evaluations attest to the “bias and ignorance” of the “dominant culture.” Mosher (2002: 52) notes that homeless individuals are constructed as “others” who constitute a threat. These negative social constructions are fateful. In this section of the chapter, youth voice their perceptions of how they are viewed by their peers, by dominant institutions, and by the larger social order. Their sense of how others view them can have tremendous influence on their own sense of self. It also guides their perceptions of themselves as members of society and as being socially included or excluded. In general, my respondents felt that homeless youth were not well understood by society. They continuously reported that those without personal experience of homelessness did not understand the reality of homelessness and how this social location impacted the daily lives of those who experienced it. In discussing this theme, some youths seemed entirely preoccupied with the problems they had personally experienced. However, others perceived a link between the personal problems they experienced and larger social ills.

The fact that only some of my respondents thought in structural terms is not surprising. I would ask that each of my readers imagine him/herself in a situation

that is comparable to the situation of my respondents. Just for a moment, put yourself in a position of trauma and despair. No money, no food, no shelter. Nowhere to go and feeling completely unsafe. You ask for help, for guidance, for assistance. However, your calls for help go unanswered. You are ignored, shunned, avoided. You are treated curtly and rudely. In this situation, you might also be consumed with your own problems and think them unique to only yourself and, perhaps, a few other unfortunates. Yet, at least some of the young persons that participated in my study did see beyond their own situation and, in effect, asked if these types of conditions were at all tolerable in a country that prides itself on safeguarding human rights and equality? Inasmuch as youth who are homeless are often perceived to have “chosen” this “lifestyle,” it is not surprising that people some believe that homeless youth “deserve” to be treated badly - shunned and marginalized. My participants perceived that many of those they encountered viewed homelessness as an indicator of a personal, moral failing and believed that that the homeless should be wholly responsible for their subsistence.

Peter Marin (1991/1995) has attempted to understand the attitudes that underlie society’s hostility towards the homeless in general and homeless males in particular. He reports that while homeless women and children may be viewed as victims of unjust circumstances, homeless men more often evoke contempt and violence. In explaining this situation, he suggests that a society that grants agency *to* men also demands agency *from* them. Thus, he writes, “[m]en are neither supposed nor allowed to be dependent. They are expected to take care of both others and themselves. And when they cannot do it, or ‘will not’ do it, the built-in assumption at

the heart of the culture is that they are *less than men* and therefore unworthy of help” (Marin, 1991:490). Nelson (2010:218) also observes that “[t]he predominant attitude of most Canadians towards the (male) unemployed can be summed up in three words: “Get a job.” However, while Marin (1991) suggests that homeless women and “children” are viewed with greater compassion than homeless men, the comments of my respondents suggests that this was not always the case. In our discussions, many youth noted the negative stereotypes and ideologies that impact understandings of youth homelessness. For example:

You see a lot of the bad things. Like you see people stereotype like what a homeless person should look like and they are bummy and stuff and do drugs and everything, but it’s not always like that. It’s not, I don’t think I look totally like a druggie or a bum. I don’t. I try not to. I don’t know.

Fiona, 18

Just a lot of people won’t give you the time of day if you are homeless. You’re asking for spare change and they tell you to go fuck yourselves. They tell you to go get a job. But, you apply for a job being homeless, half the people don’t want to give it to you because they think you’re not reliable, right? So it’s harder to find jobs than these people make it out to be. No one willing to give you a chance. You get really pissed off at society.

Ogden, 22

The comments of these youth illustrate the active component of social exclusion and the relational side of rejection, isolation and humiliation (Silver & Miller, 2003). Youth are well aware of social stereotypes of the homeless and the stigma of homelessness. Fiona is aware of what “homeless” looks like in the eyes of the public. She works to conceal this identity by not falling into stereotypes of what a person experiencing homelessness “should” look like. Ogden also acknowledges these negative perceptions of homeless youth and shows his awareness of neo-

liberalism's preferred response to society's have-nots. However, he also emphasizes the difficulties that homeless people face when they attempt to find employment.

Other respondents signaled their awareness of the "get a job" response to the homeless that is championed under neo-liberalism by pointing to additional difficulties. For example:

Some other people just think of it as "this person doesn't want to get a job, blah blah blah, they're just bums," "they can't get a house because they don't want to hold a job" or whatever. So...but some people can't hold a job because of said [sad?] mental disabilities and what not. And maybe addictions of certain kinds.

Ken, 25

I would pretty much say they're pretty ignorant to it, cause just from my own experiences, like, they expect you to be able to do pretty much anything they can do and if you can't then "what's wrong with you", so...I've had a few people expect such highly things from me when I've been homeless and...it's like, it's kind of hard to do. Like, you go be homeless and get all these expectations and see how easy it is for you, but...Like, by the general public or...yeah, I've been treated pretty much like dirt.

Amanda, 19

Each of these youths challenged societal understandings of homelessness.

Ken suggested that while the general public may think that "homeless people" should "go get a job," their lack of employment is not always a choice or a personal trouble. Rather, unemployment can also signify a public issue and a lack of necessary social supports for those who confront mental health problems and substance abuse issues, and that the youth unemployment rate is double the adult rate. In addition, Randy earlier noted that while he had left his reserve in an attempt to find employment, he had been unsuccessful. While Randy's unemployment may be the result of many factors, including his lack of a college/university degree, it may also reflect larger social ills. For example, findings that from 2006 Canadian

census indicate that even though “unemployment rates dropped and employment rates rose for people who identified as an Aboriginal person between 2001 and 2006, substantial gaps remained between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons” (Statistics Canada, 2008). For example, the employment rate for Aboriginal people aged 25 to 54 was 65.8 percent in 2006, compared to 81.6 percent among non-Aboriginal people. Similarly, while the unemployment rate among core working-age Aboriginal people was 13.2 percent in 2006, among non-Aboriginal peoples, it was 5.2 percent. Mosher (2002) and Gaetz et al., (2010) have also urged that attention be paid to the structural components of homelessness. Amanda’s comments speak to the marginalization and misrecognition that homeless youth experience. Based upon my respondents’ comments, it would seem that homeless youths are often treated as non-persons.

Youth who experience homelessness may also be constructed as “difficult” or “dangerous” (Karabanow 2010; Young, 1999). As youth in this position stand outside dominant understandings of youth, they live in a world of the “unknown.” Like other marginalized persons who are cast as Other, they may not only be viewed as “different” and/or “difficult” but as morally inferior and marginal. My respondents perceived that others viewed them with disdain and contempt. For example:

When I am panhandling people don’t want to talk to me. If they see you 30 feet away for that 30 feet they are thinking of ways to ignore you. They are thinking of 1000 ways to say no.

Adam, 21

It’s easy for, like, [inaudible] to try to go and panhandle up ten dollars and two out of ten people will just walk by you like you’re a nobody. So, like, sorry but only if you knew you’d probably give

me like a fuckin' dollar I asked you for, you know what I mean? If you really knew what the money was going towards...but it all boils down to they don't trust people cause of drugs and...not all homeless people are drug users. They're not all homeless because they use drugs. Sometimes it's just your situation in general.

Greg, 24

Adam's comments suggests that he perceives that others view him with loathing and intentionally seek to avoid him when he panhandling. Greg's comments suggests that he perceives that the public views him as a "nobody" and stereotypes "all homeless people [as] drug users." However, as he emphasizes, "[t]hey're not all homeless because they use drugs."

Greg's feelings of being misunderstood and misperceived by the public were echoed in the comments of many of the other youths who participated in my study. These feelings can have a tremendous impact. Youth who experience homelessness do not have conventional safeguards and protections. Although their peers accept them and constitute a support system for them, Hagan et al., (2002) note the instability of these associations. Overall, youth experiencing homelessness have few stable forms of protection and few sources of positive reinforcement. As such, the treatment they receive from others may incur or intensify a perception of themselves as "deviant," socially marginal, worthless - a legitimate object of social exclusion. In the following comments my respondents show their awareness of how others perceived them and attempted to reshape these understandings:

Think I am treated differently because of the way I look. When you have a Mohawk and piercings you're looked at like you are a delinquent. But street youth are better mannered than other youth our ages. Even [name] and [name] - they may seem a certain way, but they are always yelling at people to be better mannered.

Adam, 21

Yeah, that's totally a biasness on, a lot of people face that, where, certain social situations I been in where you're sitting there, nicely dressed and dealing with, like, students are really good for this, where you're just kind of hanging at a party or something and they're like, "what do you do?" and they find out, you tell them, and they'll say "oh yeah" so they kinda look at you a bit different and then they find out you're homeless and right away it's kind of like, "Where's my stuff?" and just kind of, putting their, checking their pockets and...or if you're walking down the street and somebody, you're walking past, like a woman and she grabs her purse and pulls it to the front of her, just kind of how people look at you. If you're sitting down on King Street panhandling people walk by scream at you "Get a job!" so a lot of that is present.

Randy, 23

The comments of these youth suggests that they are keenly aware of how they are viewed by others. For example, Adam emphasizes the wrongfulness of judging people on the basis of their physical appearance and reports that he has been misjudged and treated poorly "because of the way I look. When you have a Mohawk and piercings you're looked at like you are a delinquent." In attempting to counter this assessment of himself and others who are similar marked, he insists that many youth experiencing homelessness are better mannered than youth without this experience. Randy's comments speak to the stereotypes that link homelessness with deviance and criminality and suggests how that this impacts his interactions with his peers who are not homeless. He reports that when his status as a homeless person is revealed, people become fearful of him and "right away it's kind of like where's my stuff? and just kind of, putting their, checking their pockets."

Youth who experience homelessness are often constructed as public nuisances, as urban obstacles to consumerism. In responding to this stereotype, homeless youth urged recognition of the context and causes of homelessness

(Cooper, 2004; Karabanow, 2004) and sought to counter the framing of their extreme poverty as a “moral failing” (Galabazi, 2010). As one youth emphasized:

Things that happen, you know. And a lot of people don't realize that those things are happening, but they're happening, you know? And the reason we don't realize what's happened, things are happening, 'cause we don't hear about em. You know? You don't hear about what the actual problems are. Homeless people are forgotten about in the news. You know? You won't hear stories about what happened to homeless people. They're forgotten about. They're in some cemetery somewhere that the government pays for and that's the end of their life. You know? I don't say, “How do I die?” I say “How did I live?” you know? And that's what really needs to happen. You know, you really get that effect. You know, their story needs to be told. But no one knows that story 'cause they don't actually look at those people.

Len, 19

Len perceives that poverty and homelessness are not considered to be important social issues by Canadians and the Canadian government. The homeless, he charges, are “forgotten about. They're in some cemetery somewhere that the government pays for and that's the end of their life.” In large part, this may be because matters of poverty and instability are framed in terms of individualized explanations rather than in structural terms. Homelessness is a “nuisance,” a drain on the public purse, an infringement upon consumers' rights to go shopping without fear or anxiety. Other youths voiced similar opinions:

And I know there's people obviously think about it and understand about it, like a lot of people...even myself. When I was working and [type of work] I'd see a lot of people flying [holding up a sign at an intersection asking for money or food]. I've done it a few times and it's fuckin' embarrassing...but I see people flying. That never give them change and like, “fuckin' bum, get a fuckin' job!” And turns out I had to do that, it's like, now every time I see them it's like...I feel the exact same thing that they're feeling, right there. So I give them change, a lot. So yeah. A lot of people know about

it that have experienced it, but I think you have to be experiencing it to actually have true sympathy or empathy for it.

Ben, 19

Like, when I hear people yell “get a job!” and “do this!” and “do that!” they don’t know what it’s like to have to be on that corner and have to live from day to day and get what you can get done with nothing. Like, I always say to them, “I’d like to see you in my shoes for a day and see how you feel. You’d walk up to me and shake my hand if you stayed in my shoes for a day, considering what I’ve put up with,” and stuff like that.

Ian 23

Much more things done about it [homelessness]. They think that we’re grubby and disgusting and just downright ugly little things that need to be swept under the carpet. Meanwhile, it’s not true. This needs to be brought out to light. And the stupid ministers or whatever need to get off their fat butts and do something about it. I don’t like the government.

Claire, 22

Ben and Ian clearly were aware of negative attitudes towards the homeless. Their comments also suggest that both had firsthand knowledge of the “three word” (i.e., “get-a-job”) response to homelessness (Nelson, 2010). Ben also admits that, when he was employed, he was guilty in the past of responding in a similarly dismissive way when confronted by homeless people who were “flying.” However, he reports that as the result of his lived experience of homelessness, he now displays sympathy and empathy for others who are “flying a sign.” Ian suggests that if others had similar lived experiences of homelessness, their views and interactions with homeless individuals would also be marked by greater compassion. For Claire, however, the solution to the problems that the homeless face cannot be solved by changing the attitudes of Canadians one at a time. She insists a need for much more to be done at a structural level. She perceives that, at present, the homeless are viewed as “grubby and disgusting and just downright ugly little things that need to

be swept under the carpet.” However, she insists categorically that “it’s not true. This needs to be brought out to light. And the stupid ministers or whatever need to get off their fat butts and do something about it.” According to Claire, something needs to be done at the government level to address homelessness and improve the desperate plight of homeless Canadians.

Fraser (2010) notes that misrecognition, the denial of dignity and respect, is integral to social exclusion. My respondents reported that they were excluded from society in a variety of ways. They perceived that they were often treated as non-persons - as if they simply do not matter.

There’s nothing I like about being homeless. I’ve stayed at [adult shelter] just down the road which is filled with homeless people. It’s not...I don’t know the greatest feeling. When you’re homeless you gotta get used to the disappointment. That’s what you are feeling.

Tom, 22

I guess by society you’re seemed somehow less of a human being.

Miles, 22

Once you’re in a shelter, you’re the lowest of the low, no matter who’s looking at you, you know? Just having like people looking down on you all the time when there’s not a necessary need to be doing it. They should be helping you, not looking down on you.

Josh, 22

There is much pathos in Tom’s comment that “When you’re homeless you gotta get used to the disappointment.” It would seem tragic that in a country as rich as Canada, youth who are homeless should perceive that their only option is to “get used to the disappointment.” Nevertheless, Miles also perceives that Canadians view the homeless as “somehow less of a human being” or as “legitimate” objects of exclusion. His comment records his perception that among members of Canadian

society, an absence of housing also diminishes one's humanity. Josh expresses his perception that "once you're in a shelter, you're the lowest of the low, no matter who's looking at you." Josh perceives that those who experience homelessness are positioned at the very bottom of Canadian society. However, he charges that Canadians "should be helping you, not looking down on you."

In discussing their perceptions of how homeless youth are viewed and treated in Canada, other youth reported:

The underprivileged are swept aside. Thanks. Misunderstood. Completely misunderstood.

Parker, 23

(T)hey (the general public) really don't understand. If you put yourself on the streets then, I guess, who cares, it's your fault...some people, if it's really not their fault, they messed up but their parents won't take them back and stuff like that...I don't know. People really don't understand.

Dan, 17

Parker highlights, albeit briefly, the impacts of misrecognition, of being swept aside and excluded from social order due to a lack of understanding. Dan urged consideration of the background factors that resulted in youths becoming homeless rather than a rush to judgment. His comments suggest that he did not believe that many youths "choose" to experience homelessness. To the extent that young people "choose" homelessness, they do so reluctantly and because of a dysfunctional negative home life, or in his case, a youthful mistake.

Youths repeatedly directed attention to the experiences that they had endured while homeless. Given that Canada has consistently ranked high when measured by the United Nations on the "human development index" (a measure of national

development), these situations they describe are almost unfathomable. Nevertheless, their comments make evident that some young Canadians suffer extreme deprivation in the new millennium and feel that their sufferings are ignored. For example, when I asked 22 year-old Ogden, “Do you think the general public understands homelessness?” he replied:

No fuckin’ way. None of them even bother to look at you in the eye. They don’t bother to stop and ask a question. They walk, they ignore, they just keep on going like you’re not there. Now if one of them was to be on the street having a really bad fuckin’ day, ask you for a dollar, and you told them to go fuck off, they’d probably sit crying in a corner somewhere. I don’t think any of them spent a night out in the fuckin’ winter’s cold. Sleeping in a ditch or an alley, using a bottle to keep warm, even though it lowers your body temperature it makes you feel warmer which makes it easier to sleep outside. But general public, most of them have never had to go through anything like this in their life.

Ogden reported being ignored, marginalized and excluded by those he asked to help him. He suggested that if people had a greater understanding of homelessness, these types of responses would be less common. Mayers (2001: 61) points out that ignoring the plight of homeless youth places them in “precarious spaces” where their feelings of personal value and self-esteem can be damaged. The continuous stream of affronts to human dignity that homeless youth report illustrate the active components of social exclusion.

A number of youths believed that if Canadians had a better understanding of homelessness and the homeless, their situation would be less bleak.

I just wish everybody would stop being so judgmental. Like, I wish they would just, like honestly what I said earlier, just step in our shoes for a day and see how it is. Like, it’s not fun. Not at all.

Ian, 23

I don't think they [the general public] understand or have any sympathy towards it. They think that you put yourself in that situation. Some youth do, some youth don't. But you have to think about that, regardless whether they put themselves in that situation or not, you don't know the background behind them. You don't understand. I'm not saying you, but society in general.

Elaine, 21

They don't understand at all. You can't understand it unless you've experienced it. They don't know what people are actually going through. They can say they understand, but they don't.

Ulmer, 19

I would tell them maybe instead of just pre-judging people that you should get to know them and get to know their back story then make a judgment on them. And keep in mind what would happen, what would you do if that happened to you, like, you know, how would you react if you had to leave home when you were, like, sixteen or fifteen years old. How would you react? Would you be able to stay strong and keep your focus on school? And keep your focus on work? When the government is taking half of your money, you have practically no time to do school, because your mind is, you know, where, how am I gonna afford this, how am I gonna afford that? Or would you get sucked into the whole "screw it, everyone thinks I'm a reject of society, no one believes in me, I'm just gonna act like they want me to"? Would you be able to rise above that? No?

Gayle, 17

All of these youths question, to varying degrees, the extent to which those who have not experienced homelessness can understand what this situation entails and/or those who are homeless. Can one understand homelessness without having experienced it? Perhaps not fully, but many of my respondents believed that interacting with homeless youth would be quite productive in altering pre-conceived notions and stereotypes about this group and lessen the degree of marginalization and social exclusion they experience.

Elaine, Ulmer and Gayle, like many others in my sample, believed that the general public does not understand and does not empathize with youth experiencing homelessness. These youths also suggested a need for people to consider the background as well as social factors that led to homelessness before assuming that homeless youth “choose” to be homeless. Gayle, for example, challenged those who would criticize homeless youth to consider the challenges youth face and to acknowledge the strength and resilience of those who persevered in the face of adversity.

For my respondents, being subjected to the negative judgments of others was obviously a constant reminder of their social exclusion. For example:

My parents look down on me because of it [homelessness]....They say they don't but I can feel it and sense it. I know the way they look at me, I can see it in their face.

Ian, 23

Yes – throwing me away as a friend or family. I'm not good enough.

Ulmer, 19

Actually with everybody. Everybody that doesn't...everybody that has never done drugs or doesn't smoke cigarettes, that's never been homeless, all, everybody...unless they work here or something...they'll treat you differently. They'll like, look down at you and they'll try to, they think they're helping you but they're really not. They're just making it worse. Like they'll rub it in your face and not even know. They're like, oh I'm gonna go home and take a nice hot bath and lay in my water bed, and I'll be like “thanks man.” Sucks.

Dan, 17

Some adults treat me differently. They look at me with disgust.

Flynn, 18

If I don't have, like, a shower or clean clothes on and I feel like shit and I'm like, oh my god everyone is staring at me. They know I'm homeless. I remember me and [boyfriend] were just sitting on the

ground one day and this girl, drunk, coming out of a bar she's like "Oh look, homeless people!" and I was so embarrassed. Like, so embarrassed, like, I wanted to fuckin' just hide. But we were just sitting there because we had nothing to do, right? And she's like, no it wasn't, it wasn't homeless people, shit, oh it's "Street people" like meaning homeless, but whatever she said. I was just like, oh my god, I wanted to die. It's embarrassing. I think it's more embarrassing than anything.

Betty, 22

The comments of my participants are poignant reminders of the human costs of social exclusion. They also suggest how being the target of stigma and the negative judgments of others can be internalized into the self. For example, Betty's comments make clear that when passersbys treat the homeless as objects of mirth, their comments can be deeply hurtful to those who are their targets. Betty possesses post-secondary education and did not experience homelessness until her early 20s. Unlike many of the youth who were involved in my study, Betty described herself as having had a generally positive home life. She also admitted that prior to becoming homeless herself, she had negatively stereotyped those who were homeless. For Betty, "homelessness" was clearly a stigma label and she actively attempted to "pass" as a person who was not homeless. As her comments note, she was terribly embarrassed when people identified her as being homeless: "I was so embarrassed. Like, so embarrassed, like, I wanted to fuckin' just hide.... I was just like, oh my god, I wanted to die. It's embarrassing. I think it's more embarrassing than anything." Betty maintained that being homeless has given her a completely different perspective on those who are homeless.

Other youth elaborated upon the impacts that the negative judgments and discrimination they confronted had upon their lives. As many academics have

outlined, the street is a space where youth experience a heightened risk of victimization (Gaetz et al., 2010). Kidd's (2007: 296-297) examination of the impact of stigma on self-esteem with youth reports that social stigma negatively impacts mental health, including self-esteem. My participants' reports noted that the negative reactions of others had prompted them to experience feelings of extreme sadness, isolation, depression and despair. For example:

Totally been judged before. It just makes me feel really sad. Sometimes it makes you feel like when you're out panhandling and people tell you to "go fuck yourself" or tell you that "get a job", you know, like it's that easy to get a job, you know. That just really hurts me, almost to the point that I didn't care any more. I just wanted to live on the streets, maybe drink booze and just do everything, just that feeling of negativity getting put onto you by people that are judging you because they don't know nothing about you. If they can't judge you, they can't, they don't know nothing about you, you're just asking them for change. You know, when you're walking down the street, maybe say you're clothes are a little dirty, people look at you then quickly look away or something. It's harder to get women, girlfriends because you're not clean.

Eddie, 19

You know, you figure, you'd figure that after all this shit that has happened that someone would take care of me, but no. It's like nobody, it's just, it's the worst feeling in the entire world. It's like everyone has just given up on you and everyone is expecting you to fail. It's awful, I hate it so much.

Gayle, 17

It's just a disappointing feeling you get in your gut and it just sucks the life outa ya. You get depressed. I get really depressed.

Tom, 22

Eddie's remarks suggest that the negative reactions that homeless youth experience may encourage them to seek comfort in alcohol or engage in other self-destructive acts. Gayle's observation that "It's like everyone has just given up on you and everyone is expecting you to fail" is equally troubling. Regardless of whether or

“everyone” has actually “given up” on Gayle or others in like circumstances, W.I. Thomas’ (1928) reminds us that “If men [sic] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” Thomas’s famous theorem alerts us that if people believe something to be real and true, regardless of whether this is objectively the case, they will act upon their belief in such a way as to produce real consequences. As such, stereotypes of the homeless may set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1968:475-480).

Summary

This chapter examined first, the legal and political forms of social exclusion. It was clear that while youth saw the importance of having rights, they could not articulate them. Further, the youth discussed their limited access to the basic rights of a citizen, including feeling protected by the police. Instead of feeling like they could access formal protections, they felt as though they were the targets of front-line police officers. In the second section of this chapter, I outlined the stigma and discrimination the youth faced through discussions of how they have been constructed as dangerous, deviant and/or a nuisance. Rather than having support systems to assist youth in poverty, they are socially excluded with limited access to rights and resources.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Moving Forward

This dissertation aimed to work with youth, following a methods from the margins approach, and explore their views on a number of social exclusion-related items. By employing a methods from the margins approach, I sought to explore how youth experience homelessness and frame such experiences as both a public issue and private trouble. I questioned if youth who experience homelessness construct their lived experiences in terms of the language of social exclusion. Although my respondents did not employ the term “social exclusion,” they recounted experiences that seem to illustrate each of the elements of social exclusion outlined by Silver and Miller (2003). Most notably, the youth in this project highlighted the multidimensional, relational and active features of social exclusion.

Multidimensional examples include the youths’ individualistic views of being independent, yet structural dependence on the state for basic survival. Relational examples include youths’ overviews of stigma and discrimination, and how they feel homelessness is misunderstood by those who have not experienced it. Active examples include the process of being social excluded, through difficulties with housing, education, employment and access to social assistance.

As I carried out my research, youth acted as my collaborators in the production of knowledge. I elected to use focus groups and interviews in the belief that these methods would provide my participants with myriad opportunities to voice their thoughts freely and at length and to have their voices heard. In designing my project, I felt that it was not desirable to employ a more traditional “enter-extract-exit” form of data collection. I wanted my work to reflect my understandings of

social justice and my commitment to community-based work. I wanted my work to reflect the importance I place upon equitable relationships. I sought to construct my research in ways that enhanced the possibility of rapport between myself and my participants and recognize their invaluable contribution to my work. I am dedicated to community engagement and remain actively involved in working with homeless youth to pursue social justice. My commitment to this population predates my entry into graduate studies and I have spent over a decade working with these too-often marginalized youth. I sought methods that would give centrality to their insights. It is my belief that youths' voices are rarely heard when issues that impact them are discussed by policy makers, academics and those who labour in social services. My work represents an attempt to build an academic study around the voices and perspectives of youth.

As noted throughout my dissertation, Canada's approach to governing and social policy is informed by neo-liberal ideologies that emphasize individual responsibility and self-sufficiency. Canadian social policies are reactive in their responses to homelessness, offering - at best - minimal assistance and then only when an individual has exhausted all other resources. Further, neo-liberal social policies and responses to homelessness work to regulate the behavior of individuals. As Sommers (2013:369-380) explains, such policies, including municipal by-laws that regulate the location of shelters, safe streets acts, and the practices of private-sector shelters work to reinforce socially and economically responsible behaviours of youth who are homeless. This individualized and minimalist approach, I argue, is harmful to many, especially youth who experience homelessness. Rather than an

individualistic approach, we should adopt a collective responsibility to respond to social injustices such as extreme poverty and exclusion. To address such inequalities, I turn again to Young's position, where she states that "[m]y responsibility is essentially shared with others because the harms are produced by many of us acting together within accepted institutions and practices, and because it is not possible for any of us to identify just what in our own actions results in which aspect of the injustice that particular individuals suffer" (2011:110). The causes of homelessness do not rest entirely or even primarily at an individual level. The causes of homelessness are largely structural and the harms of homelessness are perpetuated by neo-liberal social policies. Blaming individuals for homelessness does not offer solutions. Telling those who are homeless to be "responsible" and "self-sufficient" while criminalizing their actions or use of space through legislation, such as safe streets acts, does little to reduce or minimize their exclusion from many aspects of mainstream society. Such actions merely perpetuate social exclusion as they have serious consequences for the individual and can be taxing on systems, including the criminal justice system (Chensay, Bellot & Sylvestre, 2013). Through my work I hoped to, as Young notes, "persuade others that this threat to well-being is a matter of injustice rather than misfortune" and to encourage a collective effort to address the social exclusion of youth who experience homelessness.

While homelessness in general is a significant social issue, I felt it was important to focus specifically on youth. As Gatez et al. (2013) explain, the causes of homelessness are unique for youth and require careful consideration. Many youth who are homeless have experienced some form of trauma, including abuse or

neglect, discrimination, homophobia, poverty and weak child protection services (3-5). Further, youth who leave home also leave connections to social supports, education, family and friendships (3). If a youth leaves home because it was a negative or harmful environment, how can we expect them to be self-sufficient and responsible once on the street? While homeless, youth have limited access to essential resources, including shelter, food, clothing, etc., and may have difficulty meeting basic needs. Considering youth leave home for particular reasons, I would argue that it is socially irresponsible to expect youth, especially those who have experienced some form of trauma, to be self-sufficient. As Young (2011) notes, we have a collective and moral responsibility to assist those who have experienced such harms.

Youth homelessness is a complex topic. The needs of homeless Canadians in general, and homeless youth in particular, are many. Yet, recognition of their “right” to receive social assistance and support has been slow in coming. It would seem that many Canadians feel that the homeless are culturally “legitimate victims” (Weis & Borges, 1973), people who “deserve” ill-treatment. As documented throughout this project and reported in a number of other Canadian-based studies (for examples, see work by Kidd), youth who experience homelessness are often treated unkindly by the general public, because of some combination of misunderstanding, fear, or general disdain. Governmental responses to homeless youth, such as Ontario’s *Safe Streets Act*, are equally unkind and suggest that homeless youth are less often seen as “victims” than as young-offenders-in-training. In addition, youth who are homeless lack social safeguards. They may be dispossessed of the rights of “social

citizenship”, however limited they may be in a neo-liberal state. Canada’s treatment of youth who experience homelessness would seem to contradict its claims of being committed to equality and inclusivity. The reports of my respondents suggest that Canada must still travel some distance in order to achieve equality and inclusivity for homeless persons.

I viewed my doctoral research as an opportunity to work, albeit in a small way, towards the goals of equality and inclusivity. I sought to include youths’ voices into my project in meaningful ways. Prior to my formal data collection, I invested much time and energy in working in the field with homeless youth. I recognized that my research demanded extended reflexivity, mutual disclosure, and intersubjectivity.

I believe that my research makes a meaningful contribution to the scholarly literature on youth who experience homelessness. To the best of my knowledge, my research is the first to employ a methods from the margins approach to investigate this population. This method encourages researchers to work with marginal groups, as well as for them, and to include their voices in notable ways in the research process. In my research, my participants were not positioned as “research subjects;” rather they were my collaborators who worked with me in the production of knowledge. My dissertation is based upon materials that were developed through focus groups with youth that discussed homelessness and social exclusion. Although I introduced the concept of social exclusion, the youth added context and direction; they defined what social exclusion meant in their lived experience of homelessness in terms/ideas that were of importance to them. The themes presented in this work were the ones that were deemed most important by these youth. The process of

conducting my research was challenging in various ways; however, I found it meaningful and, in the end, I believe that the contents of this work are reflective of the voices of youth.

I wish to emphasize, once again, that while my study attempted to record youth's views on social exclusion, at no time during this study did a youth refer to him or herself as "socially excluded." Rather, they reflected on topics and experiences that I linked to social exclusion. There are a number of explanations for why my respondents did not identify themselves as "socially excluded." First, while terms such as "sexism," "racism" and "homophobia," "discrimination" and "harassment" are now widely used by both laypersons and academics, the term "social exclusion" is more apt to be used by the latter than the former. Given that my collaborators were not steeped in the literature of the social sciences, it is not particularly surprising that they would be unfamiliar with this term and not use it when describing themselves. Second, I believe that few people understand their daily lives in terms of "social exclusion" or "social inclusion" and that even fewer would identify themselves as being "socially excluded." While the homeless youth in my study were willing to share their feelings and experiences of marginality, they did not seem eager to embrace "socially excluded" as a master status. Rather, youth expressed hope for the future and preferred to frame their homelessness as a temporary experience in their lives. I used the term "social exclusion" as an omnibus term that would encompass youths' experiences with poverty, that led often led to their homelessness, marginality and exclusion. I felt "social exclusion" offered the

opportunity to discuss “social inclusion” as a starting point to address youth homelessness.

Although youth did not identify themselves as socially excluded, I could easily fit their reflections upon their experiences into discussions of social exclusion and social citizenship that populate the social science literature. As noted above, social citizenship entails access to social safeguards and the right to being treated with dignity and respect. The absence of these conditions is reflective of social exclusion. The reports of my collaborators suggest that they do not enjoy all of the rights associated with social citizenship. Homeless youth confront misrecognition and the provision of limited supports from social services and/or state supports. Future research may build upon these findings and explore the limit that the homeless, young and old, experience in relation to social citizenship.

I believe that my research additionally contributes to the scholarly literature on homeless youth through its exploration of how these youths conceptualize “independence” and their views on what constitutes “maturity.” Many have suggested that youth who are homeless are seeking freedom from societal rules and signaling their willful defiance of these rules by their immersion in street life (Gibson, 2011). Although this might be true in some cases, this was not the norm for the youth who participated in my research. Although youth noted that being homeless erased their need to pay rent, this was not always a responsibility that they desired to escape. Their comments also suggested that the “independence” that they achieve on the street is at least somewhat illusory. My participants were, in the main, estranged from the social institutions of family, education and employment.

However, if my respondents were “independent” of these institutions, they were dependent upon the state and charitable organizations. Entering into these new forms of dependency might be necessary if youths are to satisfy their most for basic subsistence needs. However, they also paradoxically limit the ability of youths to achieve independence via education and/or employment.

Throughout my dissertation, I have emphasized that experiencing homelessness at a young age complicates the transition from “childhood” to “adulthood.” This is especially true of those youth who are under the age of 18 when they become homeless, for current social policies do not adequately address the needs of this group. Youth who are 16 and 17 years of age in Canada are in social safeguard limbo in terms of their ability to access state supports. They are dependent upon a system that offers them little in terms of support and which heightens the likelihood that they will experience social exclusion.

This work also notes that while youth who experience homelessness are victims of social exclusion, their actions and attitudes can also contribute to the social exclusion that is experienced by older homeless Canadians. This was a clear marker of the excluded becoming the excluders. Several youth commented negatively on older homeless individuals, reconstructing them as ‘other’, deviant and dangerous; as exemplars of what not to be. In this light, many youth used the older homeless individuals as motivation to change their life, as they did not want to end up as members of this group. This is a striking point; it denotes that youth interpreted their experiences of homelessness as temporary, rather than as a master status and a permanent path in life. These negative constructions of adult homelessness led

youth to be highly critical of the adult shelter system, as youth were exposed to violence and substance use in such environments. However, youth in the younger age brackets were less critical than the older youth (19-25) of the shelter system.

Although the youths in my study advocated for youth-only-based services that could be tailored to their needs and potentially provide them with a safer environment, my research found that homeless youth drew distinctions among members of their own group. Thus, I noted that homeless youth could negatively stereotype their same-age peers who were not homeless. Although homeless youth protested being negatively stereotyped by non-homeless youth, they also viewed some of their same-age peers, and most especially university/college students, in equally disdainful and stereotypical ways. This finding was interesting as many of the youth in this project were at an age where they could, or should, be engaged in further studies. Future research may profitably explore the social stratification systems that develop among homeless and street youth.

While past studies have explored homeless youths' interactions with police and the criminal justice system, few have questioned youths' knowledge of their rights in the system, and their basic human rights. While youth in the focus groups could not articulate an understanding of their basic rights, I discovered through member checking that several youth noted that knowledge of basic rights should be included as a topic for further discussion. The results of my research show a lack of legal literacy amongst the youth. The youth expressed a rudimentary and, at times, incorrect understanding of their rights in the justice system and their protections as tenants. Youth did express how, as youth, and as youth who are homeless, they have

a limited voice in the political and legal systems. In linking rights to recognition and having “proper place” in the social order, youth also conveyed that they are constructed as deviant, dangerous and a nuisance, extending social exclusion and restricting social citizenship.

Although I believe that my study is novel in many ways and contributes to the scholarly literature on youth homelessness, I must acknowledge its limitations. First, one should note the small sample size. While this is comparable to other qualitative works that have studied youth experiencing homelessness, a sample size of 30 does not provide results that are generalizable. However, in adopting a qualitative, methods from the margins approach, this was not the initial intention of this work. This work aimed to work with youth and provide space for voice. Through an emphasis on voice, the layered forms of social exclusion emerged in the project. Given the time dedicated to this project, a larger sample size would potentially diminish the rapport and relationships built in the field, and restrict the space for voice in the results and discussion.

Second, there was a shift in the rapport and relationships built with youth for Sites 2 and 3. As outlined in the methods chapter, I had to change my intended forms of data collection. This required me to rethink and rebuild part of this project. I decided to augment the sample from Site 1 with samples drawn from two other social service agencies. While this added to the numbers included within the sample, the rapport and relationships at Site 2 were notably different than at Sites 1 and 3, with much smaller numbers.

The third notable limitation stems from the application of methods from the margins. While a novel and engaging means to approach research projects, the lack of direction on how to address voice was difficult to work through in the results and discussion sections of this dissertation. The use of methods from the margins approach allows researchers to provide a detailed overview of theoretical approaches to research and calls for equitable treatment of voice in the end product of projects (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). However, it is not made clear *how* the researcher is to be equitable in the presentation of voice. One strategy I chose in reporting my results was to not edit youths' comments, with the belief such editing would constitute the usurping of their voice. For me, this was not a great concern, as I know the youth, their stories, their backgrounds, and can immediately add context to their quotes. From an outsider's perspective, however, some of the youths express themselves in a way that is confusing, indirect, even nonsensical. The question arose as to whether I should I edit their words to make the youth sound more intelligible. I chose to leave their comments in their original form as it best fit my understanding of methods from the margins. It does no credit to the youth and their voice if I edit it.

Moving Forward

We need to find more productive and preventative measures to address youth homelessness in Canada and around the globe. At the time of writing, Canada's response to homelessness is generally reactive in structure. We lack a national housing strategy and social safeguards that could act as a buffer to homelessness. Further, as many of my participants noted, those who are 16 or 17 years old and homeless confront various barriers that limit their access to resources and services.

Current policies force those who experience homelessness to rely on emergency services once all other resources have been depleted. If one is a youth and homeless, it is likely that their personal resources, if any, are meager.

In a wealthy state such as Canada, more should, and can, be done to provide preventative and interventionist approaches to youth homelessness. As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, the costs of incarceration range between \$66 000 - \$120 000 per person per year. Supportive housing costs between \$13 000 and \$ 42 000 per person per year, and the cost of affordable housing is lower still: between \$5000 and \$8000 per person annually. One might ask: Would it not be reasonable to provide an individual with housing rather than perpetuate the cycle of poverty and incarceration? Surely, from an economic perspective, investing in social housing makes sense. However, in a neo-liberal state which valorizes “self-sufficiency,” calls for supportive and affordable housing fall on deaf ears. As evidence of this, it is noteworthy that on February 27, 2013 Bill C-400, *An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians*, was defeated in the House of Commons.

It is evident that youth homelessness is a social issue that demands redress. First, we need to reduce the stigma that surrounds youth homelessness. Although homelessness is a “private trouble,” it is also a “public issue.” According to Mills (1959:8) issues “have to do with the organization of many such *milieux* into the institutions of society as a whole... An issue is a public matter: values cherished by publics are felt to be threatened...An issue, in fact, often involves a crisis in institutional arrangements.” Youth who are homeless stand outside dominant social

institutions. They do not follow the conventional paths in their transition to adulthood, and because they stand outside of the “norm” they are constructed negatively. While some of my participants believed that it was impossible for those who have not experienced homelessness to fully grasp what homelessness entails, most perceived a need to counter stereotypes of the homeless with factual knowledge. They believed that if Canadians were better informed about the reality of youth homelessness, including the background factors that are associated with “runaways” as well as “throwaways,” they would be empathetic and, in turn, more ready to support progressive welfare policies. Altering public opinion on this social issue is one crucial first steps in re-directing policy responses to homelessness.

Addressing youth homelessness is a complicated task. Solutions to youth homelessness do not come in a “one size fits all” model. To be most effective, services and supports for youth who experience homelessness need to assist youth “where they are.” Meeting youth “where they are” addresses the individual and policy needs of a socially just approach to homelessness by providing both resources and recognition. Some of these youth might require support with mental health issues. Others might require expert assistance to combat addictions or post-traumatic stress or the aftermath of victimization in their families of origin and/or on the street. However, it is arguable that the very first step must be the prevention of homelessness, which is lacking in Canada. Quilgars, Fitzpatrick and Pleace (2011) report that, in the United Kingdom, the Department of Communities and Local Government put forth a plan to end “rough sleeping” by youth (i.e., youth homelessness) by 2012. While this initiative did not end youth homelessness, it

offered up a variety of strategies that would seem worthy of consideration by Canadian politicians and policymakers. This initiative noted ending youth homelessness required addressing the problems that exist in the home environments that youth come from. Thus, it recommended the provision of supports, specifically the extended availability of welfare, to poor families with teenagers. These supports are intended to help low-income families house their teenage children and recognizes that the prevention of youth homelessness requires discouraging youth from leaving their homes. In homes that are marred by conflict, it commends the use of “respite” arrangements that allow the temporary separation, and “cooling off,” of warring family members. It additionally recommends that youth be provided with transitional housing which supports youth and offers them “second chances” in their attempts to reach independence (Quilgars et al., 2011).

In Canada, Calgary, Alberta offers the first city-wide approach to ending youth homelessness (Calgary Homelessness Foundation, 2011). This approach acknowledges that youth need tailored, individualized plans to help them exit from homelessness. The plan offers little in terms of preventative measures, but rather offers a comprehensive strategy to work with youth once they become homeless. The *Plan to End Youth Homelessness* in Calgary includes: building a coordinated system to prevent and end youth homelessness with shelters; outreach services; transitional housing and permanent housing with supports; a coordination of youth-based services; additional numbers of housing units and supportive homes that are dedicated to youth; and influencing public policy (Calgary Homelessness Foundation, 2011). Similarly, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association

(CHRA) (2012) claims that youth homelessness should be a national priority that requires a tailored response. To address youth homelessness the CHRA (2012) suggests that approaches should engage youth; reflect the diversity of youth who experience homelessness; transform systems, including the criminal justice system and children's aid; provide housing options; and provide education, employment and training opportunities.

In Canada, government policy responses to homelessness at all levels – federal, provincial and municipal – have been sporadic and ineffective. However, it is possible to address homeless nationally. A prime example of this is Finland. The *Finnish National Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness* aims to rid the nation of all shelters and hostels by following a 'Housing First' approach to homelessness (Kaakinen, 2012). "Housing First" approaches to homelessness aim to provide housing first (not just shelter) for individuals, and then provide services as needed (Gaetz, 2012). It is argued that individuals are in better positions to move forward if they have the basic need of housing met, and met with regularity, unlike the shelter system. Gaetz outlines the core principle of housing first as: no housing readiness requirements; choice in the type and location of housing; individualized support systems; harm reduction approaches to substance use; and social and community integration. Finland is a prime example of the successful use of "Housing First" approaches to homelessness (2012: n.p). The Finnish approach treats formerly homeless individuals as "normal citizens rather than as clients or patients" (Kaakinen, 2012 :n.p). In efforts to build a housing first approach, this initiative is working to convert all current hostels into supportive housing units.

When this approach to homelessness was established in 1985, there were 2121 individuals staying in shelters in Finland. In 2011, this number was reduced to 144, a drastic reduction in the number of people requiring emergency services. Moreover, as Kaakinen (2012) reports, this system has cut the use of social and health care services in half. Finland is a prime example of how “Housing First” can work as a national response to homelessness.

There are a number of Housing First initiatives in Canada, however, they are based locally, not nationally, and address adult homelessness, mental health and substance use. The *Mental Health Commission of Canada* is currently undertaking a ‘Housing First’ approach for individuals who are homeless and with mental health concerns via a project entitled *At Home/Chez Soi*. Projects are currently under way in Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Moncton and Montreal. According to the *Mental Health Commission of Canada* “Over 2000 homeless people are participating across the country. Approximately half of them are receiving housing and support services and approximately half have access to the regular supports and services available in their communities. The project is providing meaningful and practical support for hundreds of vulnerable people.” The project estimates that 100 people currently have homes through this initiative. Data will be available from this project when it is completed in 2013. For its part, the Waterloo Region has a program entitled *SHOW – Supportive Housing of Waterloo*, a 30-unit apartment building that adopts a housing first approach. *SHOW* takes on a harm reduction approach to housing; that is it acknowledges that individuals use alcohol or drugs, however, maintain that supports should be provided to such individuals to minimize the risks of their substance use.

While we have local options for “housing first” approaches to addressing homelessness, these initiatives are geared towards chronically homeless adults.

Ending youth homelessness should be a national priority. Unfortunately it is not. While it may seem like a remarkable task, addressing and reducing homelessness is possible. I suggest that in order to address homelessness in a meaningful way we need to develop more preventative measures, and where prevention is not possible, adopt a Housing First approach to reducing homelessness. Addressing youth homelessness from a “where they are” position falls in line with a “Housing First” approach. It may sound audacious to suggest that a youth who is homeless, but is also addicted to heavy drugs, be given housing – but what are the other options? Incarcerate the youth? Let the youth sleep on the streets? Initial evaluations of a housing first approach indicate that this model of addressing homelessness is successful. If youth homelessness cannot be prevented, we should look to policy responses that fulfill the basic need of housing, and advocate for housing as a national priority.

The results of this dissertation might act as a starting point for several areas of future study. First, the novelty of researching homeless youth as social citizens and/or examining the limitations on their social citizenship could be further explored. Youth discussed their experiences with a limited form of social citizenship. This could include access to state supports and how such access is more complicated based on age and experiences of homelessness. Future work could also explore youths’ legal literacy, both in terms of the justice system and general human rights. My research revealed that youth have very limited, or misguided knowledge of their

rights, yet such rights are central to moving forward and transitioning out of homelessness. A final, and central point to move forward on this topic would be to further explore the 16-25 age category of youth homelessness. Many studies leave this age bracket unquestioned, yet this is a vast age group tied to many divergent social expectations. Youth under the age of 18 are (socially) expected to be in secondary school. Youth over 18 up to 25 are expected to be employed or enrolled in post-secondary education. The experiences of youth in this age bracket are vastly different, not only in terms of societal expectations, but in terms of social and legal rights and access to services. Youth 16 to 25 are not a homogenous group. Future work on youth homelessness could take a more age-graded approach to explore the differences in experiences, perspectives and treatment of youth within this age bracket.

Endnotes

¹ It is important to note that while poverty is a key factor in homelessness, the causes of youth homelessness extend well beyond the sole indicator of poverty. Youth homelessness is often influenced by a negative home environment, which may include, for example, abuse, neglect, issues with addictions, poverty, high conflict homes, etc. Youth may also be in state care before experiencing homelessness. The causes of homelessness differ for adults, as while abuse can be a precursor to homelessness for some, there are additional issues that explain adult homelessness as compared to youth homelessness.

² This is logical, as more resources are available for youth in larger urban centres. More youth tend to gather where there are more services, making access to this population easier.

³ Other qualitative works address power imbalances, voice, and advocacy in the research process.

Methods from the margins is one options of many that adopt this approach to the research process.

⁴ Similar age definitions are used across Ontario

⁵ While previous works have explored youth and social exclusion, the term is utilized without rigorous attention to detail of ‘what’ social exclusion looks like or entails. My work is novel in that it presents a detailed application of the features of social exclusion as defined by Silver and Miller (2003).

⁶ Individual level explanations may include aspects of, for example, mental health or addictions. I do not challenge that youth who experience homelessness hold individual barriers to securing housing. However, I take an approach that adopts a “housing first” philosophy, meaning that despite individual issues/concerns, all individuals should have secure housing.

⁷ Broadly defined, neoliberalism extols little involvement of the government in the economy, limited state supports and the individualization of responsibility for self-care and subsistence.

¹⁰ Baum and Burnes do not offer any comparative statistics on substance use between those who experience homelessness and those who do not.

¹² Section 37(2) of Ontario’s *Child and Family Services Act* specifies that a “child is in need of protection where,

(a) the child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person’s,

(i) failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or

(ii) pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child;

(b) there is a risk that the child is likely to suffer physical harm inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person’s,

(i) failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or

(ii) pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child;

(c) the child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited, by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should have known of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child;

(d) there is a risk that the child is likely to be sexually molested or sexually exploited as described in clause c;

(e) the child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering and the child’s parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, the treatment;

(f) the child has suffered emotional harm, demonstrated by serious

(i) anxiety,

(ii) depression,

(iii) withdrawal,

(iv) self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or (v) delayed development,

and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the emotional harm suffered by the child results from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child’s parent or the person having charge of the child;

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- (f.1) the child has suffered emotional harm of the kind described in subclause (f)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv) or (v) and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm;
- (g) there is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subclause (f) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) or (v) resulting from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child;
- (g.1) there is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subclause (f) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) or (v) and that the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to prevent the harm;
- (h) the child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, treatment to remedy or alleviate the condition;
- (i) the child has been abandoned, the child's parent has died or is unavailable to exercise his or her custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care and custody, or the child is in a residential placement and the parent refuses or is unable or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody;
- (j) the child is less than twelve years old and has killed or seriously injured another person or caused serious damage to another person's property, services or treatment are necessary to prevent a recurrence and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, those services or treatment;
- (k) the child is less than twelve years old and has on more than one occasion injured another person or caused loss or damage to another person's property, with the encouragement of the person having charge of the child or because of that person's failure or inability to supervise the child adequately; or
- (l) the child's parent is unable to care for the child and the child is brought before the court with the parent's consent and, where the child is twelve years of age or older, with the child's consent, to be dealt with under this Part.

¹³ According to Ontario's *Child and Family Services Act, 1990* youth over the age of 16 and under the age of 18 can request services of child welfare agencies. It is not clear what services can be access and given youths' potentially limited understandings of legislation, this may be difficult to pursue. <http://www.oacas.org/pubs/oacas/papers/reviewcfsa10may12.pdf>

21 Protecting Vulnerable Children, Report of the Panel of Experts on Child Protection, March 1998, pg. 52

22 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Child Maltreatment 2007*, Chapter 3

23 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *AFCARS Report 2006*.

24 British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, *Evaluation of Youth Agreement Program, 2002*

¹⁴ While the "child savers" were interested in the well-being of youth and concerned with wayward or delinquent activity, and with youth who lacked stable housing, it may be noted the term "homelessness" was not part of their vocabulary.

¹⁵ Social Science Abstracts provides information on materials published from 1980 onwards. Sociological Abstracts covers materials published since 1952. My search of the Sociological Abstracts database did not yield a single article or dissertations on the topic of inquiry that were found that was published prior to the 1980s..

¹⁶ For example, in Karabanow's (2004) study, two-thirds of his sample reported some experience of the child welfare system.

¹⁷ US source

¹⁸ Ibid., p.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.

²⁰ Ibid., p.

²¹ This includes being in public spaces and sleeping outside rather than in shelters, community centres or at friends

²² Which can include illegal means of subsistence (drug dealing, theft, etc) or quasi-legal forms such as panhandling or squeegeeing

²³ Social capital can be defined as ‘the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:119)

²⁴ As a small and simple example of youths’ frustration over their lack of agency and autonomy, as a volunteer I spent many hours in the kitchen cooking dinner for youth. As the agency was stocked by the food bank, we often had very limited options for meals. I would prepare what I could based on availability of food. Many youth were often frustrated by a lack of choice in what they ate for dinner and expressed this concern. Some youth were creative in their restricted agency, understanding that if they told me they had a food allergy I would find alternatives to the meal I was preparing, which I always asked the youth to provide input on.

²⁵ This project adds to the body of literature on social exclusion as it is inductive and participatory, permitting the youth of interest to define central concepts of “exclusion” to be included as points of evaluation.

²⁶ Passive citizenship entails having rights without the obligation of set responsibilities. For example, one can obtain social assistance without having to engage in the labour market.

²⁷ Esping-Andersen uses a broad approach, focusing on welfare state regimes rather than single welfare states.

²⁸ Decommodification refers to the degree to which welfare services are not tied to the market.

²⁹ Esping-Anderson characterizes Austria, France, Germany and Italy as conservative and strongly corporatist welfare states. In this regime type, the conceding of social rights is left unquestioned. However, status differences remain. Rights, therefore, are attached to class and status. Private insurance and occupational fringe benefits play a truly minimal role. In this context, the perpetuation of the traditional family role is promoted and the state will only interfere when the family’s ability to tend to others is exhausted.

The third and smallest regime cluster, the social democratic regime, is composed of countries in which the principles of universalism and de commodification of social rights are promoted. This encourages a welfare state that enhances equality of the highest standards, rather than one of basic necessities. The focus is on individual independence, which makes it an irregular synthesis of liberalism and socialism. As Esping-Andersen (1990:28) claims, the most prominent trait of the social democratic regime is its combination of welfare and work. It is genuinely committed to full employment guarantee. However, the right to work has equal status to the right of income protection

³⁰ Basok and Ilcan (2013) note the development of the welfare state as connected to Fordist production, with the male bread winner and the concept of a family wage.

³¹ Fordism entailed the development of a system of mass production, which signified modernity. Fordism redefined production and consumerism.

³² This is often noted as “passive” citizenship as it is based on passive entitlements with few, if any, formal obligations to obtain such entitlements.

³³ As the Federal government cuts funding and downloads responsibilities to provinces and territories, individuals’ access to social safeguards may vary across Canada.

³⁴ The definition of homelessness employed is derived from Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2001). As Savelsberg & Martin-Giles, 2008:20, emphasis added) report “*primary homelessness* .., describes individuals who are without conventional accommodation; *secondary homelessness* ... describes individuals who frequently move between temporary forms of shelter or who are staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, and ... constitutes the largest group of homeless young people; and finally *tertiary homelessness*, ... describes individual who live in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis, wherein accommodation is not self-contained, and individuals do not have security of tenure” .

³⁵ The social order is viewed as just and in the best interests of all.

³⁶ Unraveling of the traditional forms of social control stems from the perceived lack of attachment to dominant institutions.

³⁷ According to Young (1999: page), everyone in late modernity is seen as a “potential deviant.”

³⁸ Similar claims are advanced in other works, for example Beck’s (1992) “risk society” and Furedi’s (2002) writing on the “culture of fear”.

³⁹ Sensationalist accounts of rare events are often used strategically in promoting a “law and order” approach to social marginality. For example, in New York City, the 1999 attack on “ideal victim” (Christie, 1983) Nicole Barrett became a residual resource for those who sought to promote Giuliani’s ‘quality of life’ campaign. Hurley (2002) notes that Giuliani’s campaign was dominated by law and order philosophies, led to mass arrests of marginal groups and gross violations of civil rights.

⁴⁰ Also see Kelling and Coles (1996) *Fixing Broken Windows*

⁴¹ Harcourt (2001) refutes Wilson, Kelling and Skogan’s glowing assessment of “broken windows” policing.

⁴² Methods from the margins is similar to feminist standpoint theories as they both consider knowledge as socially situated and that research should begin with the lives of those who are marginalized (Harding, 1991; Smith, 1990). However, based on my work with youth prior to this dissertation, I sought to employ a method that youth may more readily connect with. Given the similarities between feminist standpoint methods and methods from the margins, I thought the latter would be a good fit for this project.

⁴³ *Methods beyond the mainstream* is an updated version of *Methods from the margins*. The ideas are similar between the two versions, with a difference of more inclusive language in the title.

⁴⁴ Such concerns are prominent for quantitative oriented studies, however the issue of counting, population size and estimation are not as momentous a concern for qualitative approaches to homelessness research.

⁴⁵ This chart was developed using the online database of Sociological Abstract, searching Canadian sociological studies on youth homelessness since 2000. It was limited to published articles in peer reviewed journals.

⁴⁶ Similar age brackets have been used by other Canadian researchers, including Baron (2009; 2003), Gaetz (2004) and O’Grady et al. (2010).

⁴⁷ This is an important consideration as youth who seek the services of agencies are a sub group of the homeless population and are not representative of all those who experience homelessness.

⁴⁸ Individuals or groups who are socially, economically, or culturally isolated

⁴⁹ This was an important consideration as youth who are homeless are often difficult to locate. BY utilizing the centre that is used most by youth, I increased my opportunity for reaching more youth.

⁵⁰ Having conducted research in Toronto, Ontario for my MA research work, I was aware of the problems that I potentially confronted in attempting to locating homeless youth in an unfamiliar region. For example, I was aware that service agencies, in their attempts to safeguard the populace they serve, might restrict or deny access to researchers and, most especially, to student researchers. Further, I was aware that homeless youth are not easily identifiable; despite stereotypes, youth who experience homelessness do not always “look homeless.” The visual identification of homeless youth is difficult. For these reasons, I opted to begin with an environmental scan of available resources in the Tri-Cities area.

⁵¹ Some of the youth quipped that I regularly gave them the ‘mom stank eye’, a phrase which I actually found endearing and flattering, given its’ inclusion of the word “mom.”

⁵² Under the original set of conditions that the agency had imposed upon my use of journaling, it was agreed that journaling would take place on site with the youth allowed to access their journals whenever I was also at the facility⁵². The point person and I agreed that journals would be kept in a locked location (locked filing cabinet in a locked office) within their agency and that I would have access to this filing cabinet. In the event that a youth consented, in writing, that their journal could be accessed by other agency workers, another staff would be permitted to take the youth’s journal from the secure space for the express purpose of handing it directly to the youth and, later, returning it to its original location. These stipulations were intended to forestall the possibility that someone, other than myself, would be able to read the contents of the journals; this concern had been expressed to me by various youths within whom I had early discussed my methods of data collection. Following a youth’s report of the completion of his/her journal, my plan was to transcribe their entries verbatim, keeping the verbatim records indefinitely, and either returning the original to the youth or destroying the copy after a set 6 months. These details were to be set out in the consent letters that each youth would be asked to sign, prior to participating in this portion of my research. However, these arrangements were later deemed by the agency to be unsatisfactory and they specified new conditions.

⁵³ This position was held from October 2008 to January of 2009.

⁵⁴ Concern in relation to word use stemmed from the Executive Director's belief that the phrase "homeless youth" was unacceptable and should always be replaced with the phrase "youth who experience(d) homelessness."

⁵⁵ The honorariums consisted of gift cards for local coffee shops or fast food restaurants or i bus tickets.

⁵⁶ Anonymity is compromised within focus groups, as there are multiple people present. Each youth involved in an individual focus group was aware of the others who participated and the comments they voiced. As such, I emphasized to my participants that what was discussed in the focus group should not be shared with others outside of that setting .

⁵⁷ This includes a youth being a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse.

⁵⁸ First, anticipating the possibility that a youth might experience distress or discomfort during the focus group process, I prepared a list of the addresses and phone numbers of counselling and services agencies that provide assistance to youth and ensured that this list was readily available for distribution to any youth who experienced distress. I was required under the terms of my agreement with Site 1 to disclose any report of abuse to their paid staff.

⁵⁹ If consensus could not be reached within the group on the permissibility of audio taping, I did not audio tape the focus group.

⁶⁰ The drop in space at site 1 is a large room, so announcements were made in the drop in space after asking for the youths' attention.

⁶¹ The youth expressed their ideas and I wrote them down on the flip chart.

⁶² For example, expressions of approval such as "great idea!", "yes!", or physical gestures, such as head nods, that indicate agreement.

⁶³ Couch surfing is considered moving from friend to friend until they can no longer stay there.

⁶⁴ The 10 youth couch surfing, in shelters or on the streets often combined these arrangements

⁶⁵ While each respondent was presented with the same series of questions, the youth in Site 1 felt emboldened to ask me numerous questions during the interview period. For example, they queried me on my roles as a mother and as a student, future aspirations, politics, sports, music, favourite TV shows and food preferences . None of the questions they asked were offensive and I attempted to respond to their questions as honestly (and succinctly) as I could. My doing so represented my belief that the ideal relationship between researcher/participant should be non-hierarchical. Given that I asked my participants questions and hoped that they would provide me with answers that were honest and thoughtful, I felt it only fitting that they should also enjoy the opportunity to ask me questions and receive honest and thoughtful answers. .

⁶⁶ Life skills programs attempt to prepare students for daily living beyond high school, under the assumption that they will not be pursuing post secondary education.

⁶⁷ The 16-25 age bracket is not universal amongst social service agencies that work with youth who are homeless. Some agencies, for example in Toronto, end services for youth at age 24.

⁶⁸ In relation to housing – while a contract *is* enforceable *by* the minor it cannot be enforced *against* the minor (i.e., it is only "voidable" *by* the minor). Similarly, if the contract is, for example, for a hotel room, a kid of 16 or 17 who has withdrawn from parental control *can* definitely enter into a contract.

⁶⁹ There are a few variations in the rights and responsibilities of those who are 18, for example while there is no federally defined age-limit for smoking/drinking and these are defined by the provinces/territories and, in Ontario, the age limits for engaging in the "adult" "pleasures" of smoking and drinking is set at age 19, the age limit for both in Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec is 18 (with the territories having, in general, an age of 18 for smoking but 19 for drinking). Similarly, in terms of voting in provincial elections, you can do so at 18 in Alta, MB, Ont, PEI, Quebec, Saskatchewan – but only at 19 in BC, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, NWT, Nunavut, Nova Scotia & the Yukon.

⁷⁰ Age at the time of interview

⁷¹ Emergency Shelters provide temporary housing and services to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness

(<http://socialservices.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/communityprogramssupports/domiciliaryemergencyshelters.asp>)

⁷² Some youth expressed this through making all/most of their references about their personal identity as tied to street life/street smarts.

⁷³ Information available through the Region of Peel outlines that a single persona would receive \$636 per month for basic needs and lodging from Ontario Works (<http://www.peelregion.ca/ow/applying/allowance.htm>)

⁷⁴ Under s. 43(2) of the CFSA, S. 65 of the CLRA and s. 31 of the FLA, while a child of 16 can voluntarily withdraw from parental care, that child may – or may not – lose their right to receiving financial support from their parents. For example, under S. 31(1) of the FLA, it is at age 18 that a parent’s obligation to provide financial support to a child ends unless that child is in school full-time. Similarly, the FLA provides that in recoveries against a minor for necessities, a person who has a legal obligation to provide support for that child will be jointly and severally responsible for any debt that the child incurs. So, if a child of 17 enters into a lease, the parent is not as free and clear as your sentence implies. Although the FLA is imprecise re: how the responsibility for the debt will be apportioned between the child and parent, the courts will tend more closely to the parent’s – versus the child’s – ability to pay in quantifying who is to pay what.

⁷⁵ Although this independence is markedly contradicted by the youths’ necessary reliance on the state for basic subsistence.

⁷⁶ Indirect means that the state funds organizations that the youth rely on.

⁷⁷ This does not include additional beds made available during the winter months from the ‘Out of the Cold’ program.

⁷⁸ Of course, this may be based on stereotypical views of youth who had not experienced homelessness: perhaps a binary view of “us” and “them.”

⁷⁹ This information is based on published materials available from the Peel Region in Ontario. Similar publications could not be located for the Waterloo Region, but it is presumed that the amounts for assistance and assets are similar.

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