Private Dwelling in Public Space: Edmonton's Tent City

By

Erin Black

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Political Science

Fall 2010

University of Alberta

Edmonton, Alberta

Examining Committee

Dr. Lois Harder, Political Science, University of Alberta

Dr. Steve Patten, Political Science, University of Alberta

Dr. Bruce Ziff, Law, University of Alberta

Abstract

How are homeless individuals, who have no access to private space yet still have the same needs of dwelling as the rest of us, regarded when they exercise their right to dwell? This question guided my research of Edmonton's Tent City, which emerged during the summer of 2007. Interviews with twenty-two individuals, including with encampment residents, service providers, and state officials, informed a broader understanding of why the encampment emerged at the time that it did; how Edmonton's public spaces accommodate the homeless; and, how Tent City shaped municipal and provincial policy on housing and homelessness. Homeless campers saw Tent City as "home," while state management focused on excluding homeless campers from the downtown public space to restore order to the streets of Edmonton, as well as their positive public image. Tent City constituted a claim by homeless campers to occupy public space and be represented as part of "the public" but hitherto this has been met with increased strategies of dispersement and exclusion rather than with an expansion of citizenship rights. I argue that Tent City illuminates the state's preoccupation with regulating the visibility of homeless individuals rather than focusing on the dwelling needs of homeless campers.

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been completed without the assistance of many individuals. I would like to thank my supervisor, Lois Harder, for her continuous support and encouragement. I also appreciate the thoughtful and insightful comments by members of the examining committee, Dr. Steve Patten and Dr. Bruce Ziff, who provided new perspectives to my project and challenged me to consider the legal and policy dimensions of the issue of homelessness. Their ideas helped me to reflect on how I could expand the scope of this project in the future. I am grateful also to all who agreed to participate in this study, for without them the completion of this thesis would not be possible.

I owe many thanks to my friends and family, who have exhibited incredible patience and encouragement throughout the duration of this degree, including my fellow graduate students who provided insight, a listening ear, and friendship: Beesan Sarrouh, Ben Whynot, Surma Das, Chris Emmerling, Alexa Degagne, Greg Queyranne, Matt Gordner, and Katherine Mazurok; Julius Salegio, whose perspective deepened my understanding of the local political context of Tent City; my parents for their love and support, and especially my mother, Jean Kellogg, for engaging in many hours of discussion about some of the themes explored in this thesis; the Sikkes' for welcoming me into their family with open arms; my friends who have helped make my life in Jasper a tremendous experience: Marie-Claude Gosselin, Jodi Hawkins, Jessy Dion, Stephanie Tucker, Annie Arseneau, Chris Stach, and Audrey Piche, to name a few; and, my greatest cheerleader, Judy Morozuk, whose unflagging confidence in my ability to succeed at anything I try has been a source of great motivation. In particular, I would like to thank my dear friend and soulmate, Grant Sikkes, whose constant support has manifested in many forms. I am indebted to him for his assistance, as he has played a large role throughout this degree, from beginning to end.

I dedicate this thesis to all individuals who do not have the privilege of access to private dwelling space.

Table of Contents

List of Figures or Illustrations

Introduction

On Saturday, September 15th 2007, Edmonton's Tent City was forcibly closed, with the eviction of the remaining two dozen or so residents (Dumont 2007, 1). Moving day was a quiet affair, with local newspaper headlines focusing on interior design in posh Edmonton condominiums, the dangers of mould to personal health and efficiency in the workplace, and the provincial Conservative Party, which had surpassed the Social Credit Party's record of longevity to become Alberta's longest-governing political party. The encampment's closure received little attention from local media outlets. Staff members from Boyle Street Community Services were present to help residents move their belongings with the use of three vans from the Bissell Centre, but several residents who had accumulated furniture and other items during their stay at Tent City decided to leave them behind. Police officers with dogs stood by to ensure cooperation from the campers. Supporters brought lunch for the campers and provided charcoal and lighter fluid so that the evicted residents could mark the closing of Tent City with a barbecue. A handful of protesters stood with signs that read, "Homes for All" and, "Only a Tent for a Home – Edmonton's Shame," while the last of the residents packed up their belongings. Once the last of the campers moved out, a front-end loader caterpillar cleared the site of any remaining signs of habitation. The Alberta government locked the gate late Saturday afternoon, ending three months of struggle over homeless individuals' right to live on a grassy patch of provincial land in downtown Edmonton. With the help of state officials, fifty-eight residents had found some form of housing; others moved on with no specific plan in mind.

Tent City emerged in Edmonton's downtown during the summer of 2007. The first indication of a communal settlement of Edmonton's homeless population materialized when a small group of homeless individuals began camping in an inner city park in May 2007. Because bylaws prohibit public use of parks at night, police asked the group to move elsewhere. They relocated to the parking lot of the Bissell Centre, a community agency for the homeless but were once again evicted. Campers moved to a piece of

unoccupied provincial land located in Edmonton's downtown behind the Bissell Centre. This became widely known as Edmonton's Tent City.

Tent City was Edmonton's first major homeless encampment; at its peak, the encampment had more than 200 homeless residents. The following thesis tells the story of Tent City from a variety of perspectives: homeless campers who called Tent City 'home' for a short period of time; service providers who work closely with the homeless population; and, municipal and provincial officials who helped to manage Tent City or are involved with homeless policy-making. Each group of interview respondents understood the encampment differently; this results in the telling of three distinct stories about the rise and fall of Edmonton's Tent City. The diversity of perspectives provides a rich array of material through which to explore the complex circumstances surrounding the existence of Tent City and develop a contextual understanding of the ways in which homelessness is understood as a political issue in Edmonton.

I conducted interviews with three distinct groups of respondents in order to explore various understandings and perspectives of the encampment's existence. Michel Foucault talks about "regimes of truth" which tend to be produced and transmitted under the "control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)" (1984, 73) and which are implicitly connected to practices of power. Appeals to objectivity and truth aim to tell us "what is" in the world (Aguinaldo 2004, 130), but are always ideologically-based (Foucault 1984, 74). I do not make claims to present the truth of Tent City during the course of this thesis; rather, I present a collection of narratives that relate multiple and sometimes-contradictory experiences of those connected to the encampment, in an attempt to understand how these individuals and groups made sense of Tent City. The qualitative nature of this study provides us with the experiences of homeless individuals by allowing them to speak in their own voices. Their stories help us to better understand how state policy impacts its subjects, while also providing insight into whether the aims of state policy (as expressed through the voices of state officials) are achieved and how success is measured.

In this brief introduction, I outline my argument, the significance of the study, and provide a brief theoretical context for the work. I then describe my methodology, and supply a timeline of the major events that figured into Tent City's history. In Chapter One, I introduce the parameters of the debate surrounding homelessness itself. Through a review of relevant literature in Canada and the United States, I broadly outline the main bodies of literature on homelessness and public space. Chapter Two presents the data from interviews with Tent City residents; Chapter Three presents the data from Service Providers; and, Chapter Four reports on the data from interviews with State Officials. Chapter Five provides a general discussion about the significance of Tent City. Chapter Six is a conclusion and a reflection of the data as it relates to the aims of this thesis.

During the course of this thesis, I will argue that homeless individuals are denied access to full citizenship rights because of their lack of access to private property. The homeless figure not only contradicts Edmonton's professed identity as an "economic powerhouse and a hotbed for entrepreneurs" (Edmonton 2010), but it also transgresses dominant norms of behaviour in public places. Consequently, homeless individuals are subjected to punitive legislation that represses homeless behaviour and displaces homeless individuals from certain spaces; these function to eliminate the spaces where homeless individuals can physically exist. French philosopher Henri Lefebvre argues that space is not a neutral container within which social interactions occur, but is a product of social relationships which also reinforce those same relations. Therefore, space plays a factor in the attenuation or causation of homelessness. The social status of homeless individuals can be better understood by examining the broader spatial environment, and Tent City provides an occasion to explore the place of homeless individuals within Edmonton's spatial landscape.

This thesis highlights the oppressive spatial regulation of homeless bodies in public space. Tent City illuminates the state's preoccupation with regulating the visibility of homeless individuals, and state management of Tent City focused on excluding homeless residents from the downtown public space so as to remove any reminders of

homelessness and restore order to the streets of Edmonton. The violent spatial exclusion of homeless citizens from public space was achieved through claims that access to private homes will be provided through a Housing First (HF) approach; however, evidence from elsewhere suggests that HF is being employed by governments as a rhetorical tool to reduce current state expenditures on homelessness and monitor visible homelessness. There is a danger that HF will used to justify the removal of homeless bodies from public space and perpetuate their exclusion from the public sphere. In order to extend citizenship rights to society's most disenfranchised members, access must be granted to both public and private domains so that all citizens can move in and through public and private space relatively freely. Access to public space alone is insufficient, as the "right to sleep" in public space perpetuates the homeless condition; on the other hand, increasing access to the private domain exclusively enables policies which focus on eliminating visible homelessness from city streets and warehousing homeless individuals away from "the commons." We must focus discussions around establishing more inclusive terms of membership and norms of behaviour that will allow diversity to return to our cities and streets, reflected in the spatial environment. This thesis will document the negotiations over public space, as experienced and understood by various individuals and groups through the emergence of Edmonton's Tent City.

Significance of the Study

There are thousands of people in Edmonton alone who do not have access to a home, and who do not have the security of knowing where they will spend each night. This situation becomes especially precarious during the cold winter nights. Some will stay in emergency shelters while others will risk sleeping on the streets. Homelessness rates have increased significantly in Edmonton in recent years: prior to Tent City between 2004 and 2006, homelessness increased by more than eighteen per cent, from 2,200 to 2,600

individuals (Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing 2006, 1).[1] There has been steep growth upwards since 1999; between 1999 and 2006, homelessness rates in Edmonton grew by 279 per cent (Homeward Trust 2009). There is also an increase in the number of people who are at risk of becoming homeless (Parkland Institute 2007, iii). If these growth rates are not curbed, moderate estimates predict that Edmonton will be home to 6,500 homeless individuals by 2018 (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness 2009, 10).

The concept of homelessness is intrinsically tied to the concept of home and to a large extent they can be considered semantic opposites. Homelessness is constructed to be the "absence of home" and homelessness is always measured against the home. An inquiry into homelessness, then, must necessarily consider the dimensions of home. The common phrase "*there is no place like home,"* suggests that home is much more than a physical place to sleep at night. Home evokes a sense of security, a sense of warmth, or a sense of identity. Sophie Watson and Helen Austerberry's research characterized the central signifiers of home as: shelter, decent standards of living and material conditions, loving and caring social relationships, privacy and control, emotional and physical well-being (1986, 97). Home is demarcated territory with physical and figurative boundaries that ensure that inhabitants can control the access of themselves and others. If homelessness is considered the semantic opposite of home, then homelessness connotes poor material conditions, lack of emotional/physical well-being, lack of social relations, lack of control and privacy, and lack of a place to sleep (Watson and Austerberry 1986, 102).

Watson and Austerberry argue that the concept of 'home' embodies the dominant ideology of a society and constitutes the primary tool of societal organization (1986, 3). Closely associated with the family, the home is often said to promote the reproduction of social roles and relationships (Barrett and McIntosh 1982). The home is therefore,

---

[1] It is impossible to accurately count the number of homeless individuals at any time; this is better referred to as a "snapshot in time" of Edmonton's homeless population.

symbolically and literally, critical not only for our individual development but for the very preservation of the state. The historical roots of the notion of 'home' are firmly embedded in the discourse of the nation: the concept of "homeland" was initially deployed to promote a form of nationalism and patriotism aimed at protecting the land, wealth, and power of the ruling class (Mallett 2004, 65). Erin Manning argues that within the discourse of the nation there are fundamental connections between the home, security, and the politics of inclusion (Manning 2003, 33). The polarity between homed and homeless is a central factor in sustaining the coherence of the nation. The home is used to define "inside" and "outside," or "us" and "them." Visible homelessness is often held up as the feared "other" to remind members of the housed population what they might become if they stray too far from expected norms of behaviour. Home is therefore profoundly political, as well as personal.

While the concept of home generally evokes positive images or emotional responses, it is not necessarily so in every case. Literature on the gendered division of labour (Pateman 1989; Acker 1990) illustrates that for women, who are often more tied to the domestic sphere by way of a predetermined identity as a homemaker or caregiver, home can have very different meanings. Home is the setting where domestic violence and sexual abuse often occurs, of which women are most frequently the victims (Somerville 1992, 535). Home is often perceived as a place of privacy, but for women who suffer from domestic violence or sexual abuse this can mean that such crimes are allowed to continue without recourse. While there is insufficient space to properly discuss this subject, I refer to this in order to illustrate that many of our notions of home are rooted in dominant perceptions, which tend to ignore the experiences of some people. Therefore, establishing fixed meanings to the notion of home is difficult, if not impossible; the concept is complex and reflects contradictory normative ideals and perceptions.

Whether individuals have access to a home or not, all of us have the same basic human needs. My primary objective in this thesis is to explore how homeless individuals, who have no access to private space yet still have the same dwelling needs as the rest of

us, are regarded when they exercise their right to dwell. By dwelling, I mean all the private activities that are normally carried out in the privacy of the home: sleeping, eating, urinating, defecating, and intimate relationships (Feldman 2004). Tent City represented a claim by Edmonton's most disenfranchised citizens to occupy urban public space in order to meet their dwelling needs. My thesis examines the events of Tent City in an attempt to understand how the homeless, who contradict dominant notions of 'public' and 'private' space, are accommodated.

The research questions posed at the beginning of this study are:

1. Why did Edmonton's Tent City emerge during the summer of 2007?
2. How was Tent City understood and experienced by its residents, service providers, and state officials?
3. How do the events of Tent City inform an understanding of how Edmonton's public spaces accommodate the homeless?
4. How did Tent City shape municipal and provincial policy on housing and homelessness?

Background

The historical relationship between property (as a symbol of economic independence) and citizenship has remained pivotal in the liberal capitalist state (Arnold 2004, 23). Hannah Arendt notes that in ancient Greek society, a man could not participate in political affairs unless he owned a house (Arendt 1958, 30). Throughout history, the concept of human rights has developed in close connection with the concept of private property rights. Thomas Humphrey Marshall has argued that historically, civil citizenship provided rights "necessary for individual freedom," including liberty of the person; freedom of speech, thought and faith; the right to justice; and the right to own property (Marshall 1964, 71). Indeed, municipally in Edmonton, voting rights were granted on the basis of property rights until as late as 1983 (Edmonton 2008, 1) and now, in order to be eligible to vote in municipal elections, a residential address or mailing address must

be provided (Alberta 2007a). The emphasis on the category of work and participation in the market[2] as a central criterion of citizenship has resulted in the disenfranchisement of the poor and others who do not make an economic contribution (Arnold 2004, 22). Economic dependence undermines the notion of individual responsibility; as such, those who are considered to be economically dependent or irresponsible do not enjoy full citizenship rights (Marshall 1964, 29).

Liberalism has always rested upon the opposition of 'public' and 'private,' and this has formed the cornerstone of how Canadian society is organized (Watson and Austerberry 1986). The question of what belongs to the public domain and what belongs to the private domain, and how to balance the collective good with individual good, is at the core of political philosophy. While public and private can be defined and employed in various ways, public is always defined *against* the private. In this thesis, I understand the public sphere to be theorized abstractly as the space of the "commons", while the private sphere is perceived to be space of freedom from state or societal incursion. The public sphere is not completely analogous to public space but there is a close connection between the two, as public space provides the material location where the "commons" can gather and interactions can occur. Access to public space is critical in order to ensure inclusion in the public sphere. I define public space very broadly, and include within it those quasi-public spaces such as restaurants, shopping malls, and libraries. The private sphere is symbolized by the home. What I wish to emphasize here is that people must exist in a material place. Most citizens have a private place to which they can go, but the homeless are barred from all private property unless they have the explicit permission of the owner. Because the homeless exist solely in public space, its regulation is of critical importance.

---

[2] Early liberal theorists, including Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, argued for socially meaningful labour as a condition of political power, and as a justification for emphasizing the importance of property. In liberal writings, the home represented economic independence, and liberal theorists called for the protection of private property as a symbol of industriousness (Arnold 2004, 22).

Methodology

This study required a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell 2009, 4). One of the strengths of this approach is that it is flexible and responsive to information emerging from the data. The use of qualitative methods allows the research design to emerge and change as the data were collected, and it enables great depth of understanding through its focus on gathering thick descriptions of a social phenomenon (Eisenhardt 1989, 547).

In-depth interviews constituted the main source of data collection for this study. An interview guide was drafted for each group of interview participants (see Appendices A, B, C). In total, twenty-two individuals were interviewed. This number of participants was not established at the outset of the study but was rather arrived at throughout the course of the study, once I recognized that categories were “saturated” and no new information was being gathered (Charmaz 2006). A secondary pragmatic consideration was the limitation of both time and resources available to complete the study. Interviews were between thirty minutes and two hours in length, and sufficiently flexible to accommodate respondents’ time schedules and comfort levels. Interviews were conducted over a five-month period. The interviews were recorded, with the consent of respondents, to ensure an accurate account of the dialogue and then transcribed for use in data analysis. To ensure the security of the data and preserve confidentiality, all recorded materials were stored in a secure, locked filing cabinet accessible only to me. If respondents wished, I agreed to provide them with a copy of the final document.

Selecting Interview Participants

The approach to recruiting study participants from Group One (Tent City residents) involved the assistance of Bissell Centre staff members.[3] Located immediately next to Tent City during its existence, staff members came to know most of the residents due to the proximity of their workplace to the encampment. The Bissell Centre was therefore the most appropriate sampling frame for this study. I had volunteered with the Bissell Centre long before the research study had commenced, through which a respectful and cooperative relationship with staff, volunteers, and individuals who utilize the organization's services had already developed. Once the topic of the thesis was decided, I approached the Executive Director to brief her on the study and request assistance in locating Tent City residents. Using a nonprobability sampling approach, ten former residents of Tent City participated in this study. All participants were over the age of eighteen.

Given that many homeless individuals are focused on survival goals rather than on long-term planning (Murray 1984, 160), time schedules are often not kept and many do not wear watches. This made it impossible to arrange interviews in advance. In consultation with Bissell Centre staff, two different dates were selected to conduct interviews. The selected dates were chosen because they occurred at times of the month when use of the drop-in centre by clients is generally high. Two dates were necessary because it was not known how many residents would be using the drop-in services on any given day. Bissell staff mentioned the interviews to interested individuals in advance of the chosen dates but no interviews were scheduled ahead of time. On the days selected to conduct interviews, I arrived at the Bissell Centre drop-in at 9 am and staff members identified individuals in the centre who had lived at Tent City. Staff members approached these individuals and asked if they would be interested in participating in this

[3] The Bissell Centre is an organization that aims to meet the basic daily needs of those living in Edmonton with the least access to resources (Bissell Centre 2003).

research. If they agreed, an on-the-spot interview was conducted in a private room provided by the Bissell Centre, chosen because it was a comfortable and familiar environment for interview participants. Respondents were asked open-ended questions about various aspects of their experience living at Tent City. At the end of the interview, respondents were asked if they could identify other members of the target population in accordance with a purposive snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is appropriate when members of a population are difficult to locate and is used primarily for exploratory purposes (Babbie 2002, 179).[4]

Prior to the start of the interview, the study's purpose, potential uses of interview findings, and possible risks and benefits associated with participating in the research project were outlined to all participants. Participants were clearly informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw their consent at any point during or after the interview process, and the right to abstain from answering any interview questions or to end the interview at any point without penalty. All names were fictionalized to maintain confidentiality. I provided a ten-dollar honorarium to each interview respondent, in order to recognize his or her contribution to the study. Time was allotted before and after the interview for participants to discuss any concerns or questions. A phone was made available to participants in case they wished to call the Edmonton Distress Line at any point before, during, or after the interview if they experienced emotional or psychological distress. None of the participants asked to be withdrawn from the study although two participants did terminate the interview prematurely because they developed feelings of claustrophobia. Because they were accustomed to spending the majority of their time

[4] The sampling method used in this study does not permit any control over the representativeness of a sample for the whole Tent City population. Thus, findings can be taken as representing only the aggregation of the individuals who are patrons of the Bissell Centre and have limited applicability to the broader population of Tent City; however, more important in qualitative research is understanding complex human interaction (Marshall 1996, 524).

outside, sitting inside became uncomfortable for them.[5] Subsequent to the initial interview, one respondent sought out continued contact with me; this is believed to be because she had enjoyed telling her story to an interested listener and wanted to continue this relationship. We kept in contact by phone for several months after the initial interview, and met for a brief follow-up interview at a later date. All respondents were over the age of eighteen.

The approach to recruit study participants for Group Two (service providers who work closely with the homeless population) and Group Three (municipal and provincial state officials) also relied upon a snowball sampling technique. The logic behind choosing a snowball sample of experts stemmed from the premise that leaders in this field possess greater knowledge about other experts who work in this area. Respondents provided information about other individuals who would be appropriate to include as participants in this particular study. Group Two criteria for inclusion in the study was based upon some involvement with Tent City or contact with Tent City residents, or involvement with local issues of homelessness. Group Three criteria for inclusion in the study was based upon involvement with Tent City governance or the policy process relating to homelessness. Six individuals from Group Two and six individuals from Group Three were interviewed, all of whom were over the age of eighteen. An email was drafted and sent to individuals identified as desirable participants for this study, which was followed up with a phone call. A concise summary of the project, including its objective and intended use of the research findings were provided to prospective participants. If they agreed to participate in the study, interviews were conducted at a convenient time and location for respondents. Respondents were informed of the right not to participate without penalty or harm, the right to refrain from answering questions, and the right to withdraw from the

---

[5] This led me to reflect upon how I could have improved upon the interview process. If I were to conduct interviews again, I would make a greater effort to meet respondents in their natural environment and conduct interviews outside on the street; by their very nature, shelters and drop-in centres reflect power differentials between staff and patrons.

interview at any point without repercussion. All names were fictionalized to maintain confidentiality.

Background: History of Tent City

In order to give the reader an idea of how the events of Tent City unfolded throughout the summer, a brief chart detailing the significant moments of Tent City's existence has been included below. This timeline was drawn up according to media reports throughout the summer.

May, 2007: A group of campers set up in provincially-owned land behind the police station but were asked to leave as their encampment was in contravention of municipal bylaws, which prohibit public use of parks after 11 pm. Twenty-four homeless individuals then set up in the parking lot of the Bissell Centre.[6]

June 8, 2007: Capital Health Authority officials informed Bissell Centre staff that they would need to provide running water and portable toilets to the site in order for campers to remain. The Bissell Centre was given one week, until June 15, to provide these items, or they would be forced to evict campers from their property.

June 15, 2007: Bissell Centre staff evicted the group of twenty-four homeless people camping in a parking lot next to the centre. Campers moved to provincial land owned by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation. Capital Health Authority provided portable toilets, hand sanitizer and water to the site. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs provided an on site manager to oversee daily operations.

July 13, 2007: Reports indicated that the encampment held approximately sixty-seven tents, and swelled to more than 200 campers each night.

July 17, 2007: Reports indicated that gangs had moved in to the encampment. Police investigated two stabbings and officers seized knives, swords, baseball bats, batons, and evicted six Red Alert gang members from the site.

---

[6] See map on page 15 for locations of various encampments. A indicates the first location behind the police station; B indicates the second location in the parking lot of the Bissell Centre; C indicates the final encampment location behind the Bissell Centre.

July 31, 2007: The provincial government announced that Tent City would be shut down due to security concerns. Residents would be required to register and provide photo identification by the end of the week and no new campers would be allowed after that point. Private security guards from Beretta Protective Services International Inc. were hired to patrol the site twenty-four hours a day (three guards at night, two during the day) and construction began to erect a chain-link fence to surround the encampment.

August 1, 2007: Boyle Street Community Services and the YMCA were contracted by the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund[7] to help find housing for campers. Provincial employees working on site also sought alternative housing arrangements for campers.

August 2, 2007: The chain-link fence was completed with two gates; one which always remained open.

Aug 11, 2007: Ninety campers were reported to be living at Tent City. Twenty people from Tent City had been housed, four of whom were placed in the downtown YMCA location.

Aug 28, 2007: The Province of Alberta announced its plan to close Tent City on September 15, 2007. Twenty-nine residents had been found housing with the assistance of various service providers and officials.

September 1, 2007: More than seventy campers were reported to be living at Tent City.

Sept 15, 2007: Closing day. The remaining two dozen campers moved out of Tent City. Fifty-eight residents had been placed in shelters, apartments, or rooming houses. Others made their own arrangements to move elsewhere.

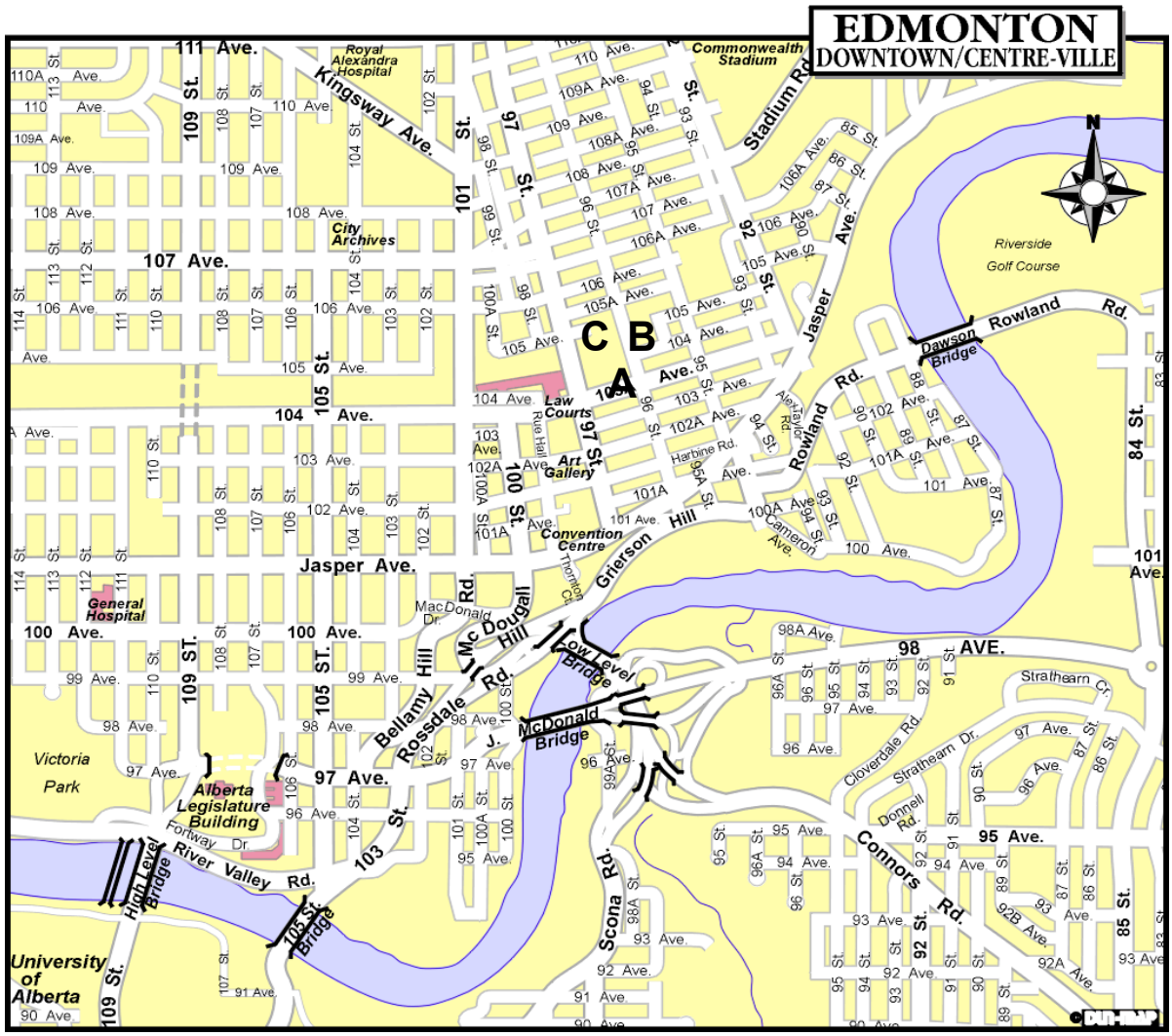
Sept 21, 2007: Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel announced the creation of a new committee to develop a plan to end homelessness in Edmonton.

Jan 29, 2009: The City of Edmonton announced the release of its Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, as articulated in *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.*

---

[7] The agency name was later changed to Homeward Trust.

March 16, 2009: The Province of Alberta became the first Canadian provincial government to endorse Housing First with the release of its report, *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years.*



Source: Public Works and Government Services Canada 2010

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

Introduction

Academic debates about homelessness in Canadian and American literature have addressed three broad themes, which will be discussed in turn throughout this chapter: first, the parameters of the issue (including the definition of homelessness and the characteristics of those who are homeless); second, explanations for homelessness; and third, spatial analyses of homelessness. The first section highlights that definitions are a matter of social construction, as evidenced by the shifting definition of homelessness over time. The way in which homelessness is defined has marked consequences for who "counts" as a homeless person and thus impacts the resultant size and shape of the homeless population. Because smaller numbers tend to demand fewer government resources to address homelessness, and conversely, larger numbers call for more economic and political resources, we begin to understand the ideological dimensions of ascribing meaning to a social issue. The second section highlights the two competing positions regarding the causes of homelessness: the individual perspective, which attributes responsibility for homelessness to the failings of the individual; and the structuralist perspective, which understands homelessness to be a result of broader social, economic, and political structures. The housing system (the lack of affordable housing), the economic system (the loss of full-time jobs and declining wages), and the political system (income assistance programs and the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill), are identified as the primary sources of instability contributing to the causation of homelessness. A third perspective, termed the "new orthodoxy," attempts to combine individual and structural explanations, while continuing to emphasize structural factors. The third section of the chapter reviews research which has examined the spatial dimensions of homelessness. Space is a critical consideration to homelessness not only because it reflects and reproduces social relationships of power; the regulation of public

space is of fundamental importance for homeless individuals given that they have no other space is available to them. Neoliberal prioritization of markets and consumption has resulted in the transformation of public space so as to attract investment. While some public spaces have become corporate-owned, other spaces have been reshaped to emulate private theme parks, limiting diversity and becoming more exclusive in nature. Laws commonly referred to as “anti-homeless legislation” prohibit behaviours which are commonly associated with homeless individuals, such as sleeping in public or begging, resulting in the exclusion of homeless individuals from public spaces, and thus, from inclusion as part of “the public.” The result is to reduce the number of spaces that homeless individuals can access while relegating them to marginal areas of the city. Homeless encampments are an assertion of resistance to such legislation and constitute a claim to the right to occupy public space. Homeless encampments reshape public space and present an alternative vision of society. They are therefore critical sites of negotiation over the meaning of space and the formation of citizenship.

Definitions of Homelessness

Homelessness, like the concept of home, can evoke various understandings of its meaning. Sometimes it is perceived as a manifestation of extreme poverty, while other times it is perceived as a mental health problem, an issue of social dysfunction, substance abuse, or the deprivation of social relationships. As David Hulchanski notes,

> Homelessness is an awkward term serving as a catchall for a contemporary form of severe destitution. It involves socio-economic arrangements that exist quite apart from those troubled by them. It is a term applied to different social, economic, and political realities, as well as realities in the lives of the people affected (Hulchanski 2000, 2).

Drawing a distinctive boundary between ‘homed’ and ‘homeless’ becomes even more challenging when we consider factors like family relationships, employment, and mobility. Historically, being ‘homeless’ did not mean being without shelter but referred to a lack of the usual social ties to family, work and community life (Shlay and Rossi 1992, 131). An unmarried person would have been considered homeless, as would widows, orphans, or

any unemployed person; whereas individuals lacking shelter (who were perhaps staying with family members or friends) would not be included within this definition. These examples draw attention to the fact that homelessness does not have an inherent or fixed meaning; rather, definitions are a matter of social construction (Bacchi 1999, 9).

Contemporary understandings of homelessness are primarily defined in relation to housing. However, defining homelessness as the absence of shelter still does not result in a fixed meaning of the term, as what is understood to constitute adequate shelter tends to shift over time. Watson and Austerberry (1986) have suggested a homeless continuum as a better way to conceptualize and encompass the varying degrees of homelessness. At one extreme of this continuum is the immediate lack of shelter. This is the narrowest definition and some researchers argue that it is too restrictive as its fails to recognize how individuals can float in and out of homelessness through shifting levels of housing security (Eberle, Kraus, Serge 2009). At the other end of the continuum, homelessness is not merely a lack of immediate shelter, but can also denote shelter arrangements that do not meet the criteria deemed essential for health, human and social development (Casavante 1999, 2). This situation includes individuals who are staying with family or friends, living in a hotel or other temporary accommodation, living in housing which is substandard or is in need of major repairs, or individuals who pay too much for their accommodation. All of the preceding arrangements are considered to be insecure housing as they can easily lead to literal homelessness. A homeless continuum then provides a way to understand how housing security and conditions are intrinsically linked to literal homelessness, and helps to illustrate how individuals can float in and out of varying degrees of homelessness over time. Another indicator of homelessness is the number of households in “core housing need.” This refers to housing which is in need of major repairs, is overcrowded, or costs more than thirty per cent of before-tax household income (Falvo 2003, 3). The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation maintains that housing should be adequate (with regard to the physical condition, not in need of major repairs), suitable (not overcrowded), and affordable (shelter and utility costs should be no

more than thirty per cent of household income);[8] if one or more of these criteria are not met, then the occupying household is facing housing insecurity, as there is insufficient control over the accommodations to guarantee maintaining them for an extended period of time (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2004). Throughout the course of this thesis, I adopt this CMHC definition to refer to minimum standards of housing needed to lift individuals out of homelessness.

Other definitions often distinguish between those who are sleeping rough (the literal homeless), the hidden homeless, and those at-risk of becoming homeless. According to Sabine Springer (2000), absolute homelessness is defined as people sleeping rough, meaning in the street or public places. Hidden homelessness refers to individuals living with family members or friends who would otherwise be living on the street or a shelter because they cannot afford any shelter for themselves. At-risk of becoming homeless refers to people who are facing the risk of losing their shelter either by eviction or the end of the lease, with no other possibility of shelter in view (Springer 2000, 480).[9] Springer also argues that a fourth category should be considered: the inadequately housed. Other researchers use the terms 'visible' and 'invisible' homeless, which roughly correlate to literal and hidden homeless respectively.

Enumeration of the homeless constitutes a significant impediment to homelessness research, as it is fraught with methodological difficulties. While most social research employs a physical address in order to access members of a population, this is problematic when it comes to the homeless. Another way to access homeless individuals is through services such as homeless shelters and soup kitchens; however, not all homeless individuals use these services. There is no method of knowing where or how to access a representative sample of the population. As such, while homeless counts can be important in providing a snapshot of the visible homeless population at a particular

---

[8] These three criteria constitute the National Occupancy Standard (NOS) for Canada.

[9] Prisoners and other individuals living in institutions facing their release who have no place to go are considered to be part of this population.

point in time, reported numbers can never guarantee an accurate depiction. In Canada, most empirical research focuses on literal homelessness because this segment of the population is somewhat easier to access (through soup kitchens, shelters, or counts which are conducted on the streets); however, no single definition has been systematically applied to all homeless counts or studies. Because most counts are conducted at the municipal level, the use of varying definitions and incompatible methodologies of enumeration between counts means that there is no way to compile this information into an accurate depiction of the extent of the issue across Canada. David Hulchanski argues that homeless counts are generally under-funded by governments, which impedes the ability of the count to reflect accurate numbers (Hulchanski 2000, 3). Most recently, the Canadian government has estimated that there are approximately 150,000 homeless individuals across Canada although advocates and activists maintain that because enumeration methods seriously underestimate the number of homeless, the actual numbers may be twice as high (Laird 2007, 12).

It is common for political and economic resources to be designated to homelessness based on the results of enumeration and generally, a larger estimate will lead to a larger number of services targeted towards the homeless (Begin *et al*. 1999, 10). Advocates often attempt to demonstrate large numbers of homeless individuals to emphasize the need for more government dollars, while other groups may try to downplay the numbers for similar political reasons. The intended use of information from a homeless count, therefore, can be used to frame the parameters of a particular study and can impact the resultant numbers. Disputes over the definition of homelessness are embedded in the policy implications for governments. Watson and Austerberry note that a particular choice of definition may change from one government to the next as it establishes who is counted as homeless and thus, who is eligible for assistance (1986, 13). Definitions of homelessness can therefore take on an ideological component to them as governments frame homelessness in a way that corresponds with their own political beliefs. Neoliberal governments will likely choose a narrow definition of homelessness, as

this will result in fewer individuals receiving government assistance and thus parallels a preference for a smaller role for government. A left-leaning government will be more likely to select a broader definition of homelessness. The choice of definition determines who will be counted and exerts greater influence on the demographic breakdown of the homeless population than any other methodological choice (Baker 1994, 477). As such, the way that homelessness is defined can reveal some of the political and ideological dimensions of the issue.

Composition of the Homeless Population

Considerable research has focused on determining the characteristics of those who make up the homeless population. It has been argued that a better understanding of who is homeless will allow governments to provide better services. However, much of this research has fuelled debate about homeless causation and has also drawn upon notions of "deserving" and "undeserving" poor. Earlier research tended to characterize the homeless as any "disaffiliated" person who lived in unconventional housing arrangements, housed or not. The new homeless are more diverse in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity, and this has led to a broader consideration of circumstances leading to their homelessness. The new homeless have been perceived more favourably than the former in that they have often been seen as victims of broader structural factors and thus, are considered to be part of the "deserving" poor. The old homeless were perceived as responsible for their own fate and therefore blameworthy and "undeserving." As our understanding of the composition of the homeless population has deepened, definitions of homelessness have shifted towards an emphasis on homelessness as a condition of circumstances and a lack of shelter rather than as a characteristic of persons (Hopper 1991, 29).

"Old" Homeless

Historical studies of the homeless population focused on residents of skid rows[10] in an attempt to determine the characteristics of those who made up its population. The disaffiliation school dominated the field of skid row scholarship, defining "homelessness" as anybody without usual social ties to family, work, or community life (Hopper 1991, 29). In contrast to contemporary understandings of homelessness, residents of skid rows were typically housed. The homeless subject of these studies was reported to be overwhelmingly white,[11] male, and single (Anderson 1923; Hoch and Slayton 1989; Swanstrom 1989). Other common characteristics included high rates of alcoholism, high rates of disability and mental illness, and overwhelmingly they were reported to suffer from "social maladjustment" with few or no friends (Rossi 1990, 956). The single homeless man was generally perceived as belonging to the "undeserving" poor as he was considered to be a social deviant. His lack of long-term friendships, family commitments, and a steady job was seen as an indication that it was impossible for him to make commitments elsewhere and that he was unable to participate in mainstream society. The perception that individual pathology was at the root of homelessness resulted in policies which focused on repression rather than relief and support (Hopper

---

[10] Around the turn of the 20th century, neighbourhoods known as "skid rows" emerged in most large American cities. These neighbourhoods were typically centred around one street which was close to transportation hubs and trade, and catered to the unemployed and the homeless. Employment agencies, cheap hotels and lodging houses, welfare agencies, missions, and other social services were often found within close proximity (Anderson 1923: 14).

[11] Most discussions of skid row ignored race, although several studies reported that African Americans constituted more than 20 per cent of skid row residents in New York City in 1955 (Hopper 1995, 736; Bahr and Caplow 1973). The lack of attention to race has been argued to be due to two factors: first, homeless advocates were predominantly white and were presenting the case of homelessness to a predominantly white media and political system. Second, civil rights organizations did not see much advantage in linking issues of homelessness to their cause (Blasi 1994). There may also have been concern that linking homelessness to a black "underclass" would do more harm than good, resulting in even greater stigmatization of the homeless (Rosenthal 2000, 122). The lack of attention to race should not suggest that race was not a factor in this phenomenon; indeed, I would argue that there were likely significant racial and ethnic elements of discrimination at work.

1991, 16). Emergency shelters formed the cornerstone of public policy efforts to address homelessness, which focused on enforcing deterrence through various forms of discipline (Wiseman 1979, 5).

"New" Homeless

During years of postwar prosperity and growth, research suggested that skid rows were shrinking in size and homelessness was on the verge of extinction. This resulted in a paucity of research on the subject and helped to justify urban gentrification and the destruction of skid row neighbourhoods across the United States (Shlay and Rossi 1992, 131). In the 1980s, it became apparent that a new type of homelessness had replaced skid rows: people who had no homes and were living on the streets. Increased visibility of this new type of homelessness, as well as an increase in the size of the homeless population, forced the issue back onto the policy agenda and understanding the characteristics of the homeless population again became a focus of many academics and researchers. Much of the evidence suggested that the composition of the homeless population was changing: more women and children were visible amongst those living on the streets and accessing shelters, as were families and elderly persons. Homeless individuals were no longer understood to be predominantly white; one of the first studies to consider ethnicity in Canada was conducted in 1987 by Bainbridge, who found, in an examination of Winnipeg homelessness, that persons of First Nation's descent made up the majority of those on the streets, and he concluded that they face multiple barriers in finding employment and housing (O'Reilly-Fleming 1990, 63). In Edmonton, the 2008 Homeless Count reported that thirty-eight per cent of the overall homeless counted, or 1156 individuals, were of Aboriginal descent (Homeward Trust 2008, 10). Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the homeless population across Canada, as well as in

nearly every group of vulnerability.[12] Mental illness also appeared to be more prevalent within the "new" homeless population, although the image of the mentally ill homeless individual has been a common historical perception. Recently there has been a considerable amount of research into the linkages between mental illness and homelessness and most Canadian studies report higher rates of mental illness within the homeless population than among the general population (Canadian Institute for Health Information 2007, 19).[13] In 2003, fifty-nine per cent of homeless individuals in Edmonton reported mental health problems (Canadian Institute for Health Information 2007, 19). What had been originally perceived as the problem of a few social deviants came to be understood as an issue that impacted a much larger segment of the overall population. While research suggests that homelessness has undergone a broad transformation, men still continue to comprise the majority of the homeless population.[14]

The perceived differences between the "old" and the "new" homeless also gave rise to a separation between the notions of the "very poor" and the "homeless" which resulted in differing policy approaches in the United States to address each subset (Wright 1997, 19). Homeless advocates employed discourses which created distinctions between "poverty" and "homelessness" as a pragmatic tool to gain policy attention (Blasi 1994, 568). Advocates' efforts have been described as a "politics of compassion" (Hoch

---

[12] Aboriginal people in Canada have higher rates of unemployment, poverty, incarceration, mobility, homelessness, health complications, and lower levels of education than non-Aboriginals (Assu 2008, 55).

[13] Rates of mental illness reported within the literature tend to vary widely. This is partly because studies employ varying definitions of mental illness. Most information about the homeless population is collected during homeless counts, but it is notable that volunteers are generally employed who are not trained to assess mental health problems; despite significant attention to the connection between mental illness and homelessness, there is still a great deal that we do not know (Golden *et al.* 1999, vi).

[14] Violence and sexual assault is a common experience on the streets. Two studies of homeless women in Toronto reported that almost half of the women surveyed had been assaulted at least once in the previous year, and stated that sexual harassment was a recurring experience (Ambrosio *et al.* 1992; Hardill 1993; Khandor and Mason 2007). Many women enter into relationships to protect themselves from the dangers of the street, thereby making up a larger proportion of the "hidden homeless." It is therefore not surprising that men continue to make up a greater majority of the most visible homeless.

and Slayton 1989, 208) because they presented the homeless as unfortunate victims of social policies; however, there were unforeseen consequences of these framing practices. Homelessness was framed as a (temporary) emergency needing policy assistance to address one single dimension of need: shelter. Thus, homelessness was assigned to the Federal Emergency Management Administration, which provides emergency shelter to temporary victims of hurricanes and other natural disasters, rather than to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or the Department of Health and Social Services (Blasi 1994, 568). Containment of the homeless, rather than the elimination of homelessness, became the priority of policy-makers through the construction of emergency shelters and the encouragement of job training (Hoch and Slayton 1989, 208). This emphasis on emergency relief helped to frame the evolving discourse through the concept of the "rights" of the homeless population, and advocates found themselves fighting for the right of homeless individuals to sleep in a public space or sit on a sidewalk (Wright 1997). In Canada, the federal Ministry of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) maintains primary responsibility for homelessness through the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) secretariat, from 1999 until 2007 when it was closed and replaced with the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). Many of the federal initiatives tend to be cost-sharing programs with the provinces or provide one-time funding rather than continuous support. The provincial and municipal levels of government are responsible for housing, but generally housing and homelessness are addressed separately (Leo and August 2005, 6). It is only recently that in Alberta, a new secretariat responsible for homelessness has been introduced to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. The American situation is somewhat different than the Canadian context, but the above point illustrates how bureaucratic responsibility for homelessness impacts the way in which homelessness is conceptualized and addressed, and explains in part why state responses have been adverse to long-term solutions.

While studies of the homeless population can be useful in determining appropriate and targeted policy response, we must be wary of applying this information to

underlying ideologies of homeless causation. Characterizations of the homeless in the academic literature have frequently been linked to notions of why homelessness occurs in the first place (Blasi 1990, 210). Historically it was thought that if a majority of homeless individuals suffer from mental illness, then mental illness must be an underlying cause of homelessness. Such characteristics are attached to populations without much consideration of the circumstances under which they are invoked (Hopper 1991, 27). Not only is this an oversimplification of causality, it fails to recognize that any enumeration attempts are bound to be inaccurate due to methodological difficulties and varying definitions of homelessness. Much recent research suggests that the characteristics that are assigned to homeless individuals may be induced by homelessness itself, rather than constituting a precipitating factor. For example, a CIHI study revealed that rates and severity of mental illness increase *after* homelessness occurs and so, determining cause and effect becomes tricky (Canadian Institute for Health Information 2007, 37). This reasoning also fails to account for the fact that there are many individuals who suffer from mental illness who are properly housed. Mental illness knows no class boundaries and not everybody who is mentally ill is homeless.

Whose Responsibility is it?

In order to understand how to eradicate homelessness, policies must be linked to research that can build theory, or that can test theory through research (Caragata 2006, 282). This has led to considerable research on who comprises the homeless population, the extent of homelessness, and what causes homelessness. Most research has invoked one of two particular theoretical perspectives, which are rooted in answering the question: whose responsibility is it? An individualist perspective attributes responsibility for homelessness to the homeless themselves and emphasizes personal characteristics or flaws, while a structuralist perspective focuses on broader political and economic factors that generate homelessness. More recently, both perspectives have come under criticism and a third perspective, sometimes called the “new orthodoxy,” has emerged which seeks

to combine individual and structural explanations. The debate over causation is fundamentally a debate over personal values, as homelessness is inherently connected to the question of "deserving/undeserving"[15] and is therefore made out to be a moral issue. The disputed terrain of this debate underlines the malleability of its parameters, in which the empirical evidence can be mobilized to correspond to a particular ideological perspective (Shlay and Rossi 1992, 145).

Individualist Perspective

Those who subscribe to an individualist explanation of homeless causation tend to explain homelessness as a result of personal inadequacies or inabilities to participate within the social, political, and economic system. This is derived from an ideological conviction that we are all responsible for our own well-being. Within this perspective, explanations tend to separate into two distinct strands. The first strand views homelessness to be the result of personal decisions, and cites alcoholism, substance abuse, or social disaffiliation as key contributing factors, while homeless individuals are constructed as being lazy, irresponsible, or social deviants (Neale 1997, 49). Policy solutions to homelessness have questioned who is deserving of government assistance and public help; supporters of the individualist strand maintain that homelessness is a choice or reflective of a personal deficiency, in which case homeless individuals are "undeserving" of assistance. Solutions for homelessness tend to call for punitive policies that enforce a work ethic through workfare programs or incarceration. Favoured among

[15] Distinctions of "deserving" and "undeserving" poor have been linked to policy decisions regarding homelessness since at least the 16th century, when a moral distinction was invoked in order to determine who had priority need with regard to provision of government assistance (Himmelfarb 1984; Katz 1989; Handler 1992). The "undeserving" homeless were those who were judged to be at fault for their situation, as they were deemed able-bodied and employable. Their homelessness was seen to be a choice or a sign of moral failing, and they were therefore perceived to be a threat to the social order and work ethic of the time (Johnsen, Cloke, May 2005, 324). The "deserving" homeless were perceived to be homeless through no fault of their own, having fallen into poverty due to external causes. This group was normally comprised of children, widows, disabled persons, and the elderly. Such distinctions and debates continue today, influencing many social programs and policies in Canada (Moscovitch 1997; Caragata 2006; Bashevkin 2002).

academics in North America until the 1960s, the individualist perspective came under considerable criticism for its narrow focus. Critics argued that homelessness could not be fully understood or alleviated without placing it within its broader social, economic, and political context. This led to the emergence of the second strand, which gained credence in the 1970s and 1980s.

The second strand maintains that homelessness occurs due to personal characteristics but is reflective of a personal deficiency that prevents homeless individuals from being able to function "properly" in society. Because no rational person would choose homelessness, it is thought that homeless individuals must suffer from mental illness or disability of some kind. Proponents argue that this mandates an increase in the provision of services, rather than the invocation of punitive policies, as it is only through diagnosis and treatment that homeless individuals will be able to overcome inadequacies and learn to function normally in mainstream society (for instance, Hope and Young 1984; Redburn and Buss 1986; Baum and Burnes 1993) (Neale 1997, 49). Some argue that this focus on services recasts individuals as "deserving" of assistance while others assert that fundamentally, the debate remains the same and individuals continue to suffer the burden of stigma and blame (Miller 1991, 163).

Gary Blasi (1994) notes that in the United States, most research has been driven by individualist explanations, focusing especially on mental illness as a cause of homelessness (1994, 580). He argues that this is connected to the sources funding homeless research. More grant money has been made available from the National Institute of Mental Health than from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which inevitably impacts the focus of the research (Blasi 1994, 580). Coupled with sustained public perceptions of homeless individuals as alcoholics or addicts who suffer from mental illness, and American culture which tends to emphasize individual agency, the emphasis upon the individualist perspective is unsurprising (Blasi 1990, 215). In Canada, both the National Homelessness Initiative and the Homelessness Partnership Strategy have promoted research framed by an individualist perspective. Canadian

ideological allegiance to the issue of personal responsibility and emphasis on the importance of a strong work ethic, as well as the involvement of private institutions in social policy provision of resources, have similarly resulted in greater attention to the individualist perspective (Koenig 2007, 32). Homeless advocates and academics have published numerous structuralist assessments of the homelessness crisis in Canada, infusing the Canadian debate with some representation of the structuralist perspective (Koenig 2007, 33).

Structuralist Perspective

A structuralist perspective locates the reasons for homelessness beyond the individual, within broader social, economic, and political structures. Many who subscribe to structural explanations of homelessness argue that homeless individuals are paying the price for social decisions that are beyond their control; as such they are "deserving" of financial assistance and entitled to a voice in enacting structural change (Rosenthal 2000, 114). Three broad factors are understood to be responsible for engendering conditions of homelessness: the housing system, the economic system, and the political system. The most direct cause of homelessness then is simply a lack of affordable housing. There is considerable agreement within Canadian literature that the lack of sufficient affordable housing is a significant source of increasing homelessness (Novac *et al.* 1996; Reitsma-Street *et al.* 2001; Hulchanski 2002; Shapcott 2006a). Various writers have referred to homelessness as a game of musical chairs, stating that there is a structural imbalance between supply and demand, or a shortage of chairs relative to the number of people competing for them (McChesney 1990; Sclar 1990; Shinn 1992; Rosenthal 1994). This leaves some individuals standing without a chair at the end of the game. Homelessness occurs when the housing supply is insufficient to meet demand; individuals with low incomes who cannot compete in the housing market are the ones who will become homelessness. While there are multiple factors that impact the balance between supply and demand, the extent of homelessness is understood to be essentially a direct result of

this imbalance (Sclar 1990; McChesney 1992; Shinn 1992). The withdrawal of the federal government from the housing sector has been identified as a significant factor in the increasing shortage of affordable housing across the country (Golden *et al.* 1999; Hulchanski 2002). Prior to 1970 in Canada, virtually all housing policy was federal; subsequent policy changes allowed for condominium ownership and made private ownership more attractive for developers, while providing few incentives for building rental or affordable housing. According to Peter Marcuse (1988), "when housing is only provided for profit, those who cannot provide others with profit get no housing" (1988, 74).

Gentrification, involving the displacement of lower income groups by those with higher income levels, often directly leads to homelessness (Marcuse 1988, 75). According to Neil Smith, gentrification is the process "by which poor and working-class neighbourhoods in the inner city are refurbished via an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters – neighbourhoods that had previously experienced disinvestment and a middle-class exodus" (Smith 1996, 32). Such practices have been widespread across large Canadian cities, and have typically involved the "revitalization" of poor slum neighbourhoods by an influx of wealthier residents. This phenomenon often results in residential displacement for many of the poorer residents as well as the loss of single room occupancy units. The arrival of residents with higher income levels increases the demand for housing and pushes property values up, which in turn drives up the cost of rental units. Competition for the remaining housing units becomes intensified, forcing the costs even higher (Wolch, Dear and Akita 1988, 446). Housing availability for the poor falls, and those who are pushed out become homeless (Marcuse 1988, 75).

Economic shifts and government policies are widely considered to be pertinent structural factors in the causation of homelessness. Economic factors include the loss of full-time, manufacturing jobs and the growth in part-time, low-paid, precarious employment in unskilled labour, coupled with a decrease in real wages (Rossi and Wright 1987, 29). The extent and the nature of employment has changed, as have the relationships between employers and employees. Campaign2000 reported that in 2009,

thirty-five per cent of all jobs across Canada were considered "non-standard" or precarious – part-time, temporary, contract or self-employed (2009, 3). Precarious jobs have meant less job security and generally lower incomes. The structure of the labour market and government policy changes have led to increases in the incidence and depth of poverty in Canada, both of which are closely tied to homelessness (Golden *et al.* 1999, v).

The contribution of government policy to increasing homelessness is well-documented. The welfare state has been replaced by the neoliberal state, which is based on the primacy of the market and reduced government intervention. Across a wide range of social programs, eligibility criteria have become more restrictive and benefit levels have been reduced. The result has been decreased spending on income assistance programs and meagre benefit levels (Crane and Warnes 2000; Wolch, Dear, Akita 1988, 446). The introduction of workfare in Alberta during the mid-1990s coincided with the reduction of benefit levels by nearly half, in real dollars, of 1986 levels for individuals considered to be single and employable (National Council on Welfare 2008, 73-74).[16] Government policies impact both the housing system and the economic system. In Alberta, the lack of restrictions on rental increases for landlords and policies that enable landlords to convert rental units to condominiums have been cited as factors that restrict housing accessibility and thus contribute to homelessness.

According to the structuralist camp, the push to deinstitutionalize the mentally ill and the lack of discharge planning have also led to an increase in homelessness (Rossi and Wright 1987, 28). Health and Welfare Canada provides data indicating that between 1960 and 1980, Canadian provinces decreased the number of beds in psychiatric hospitals, from four beds per 1000 population in 1964 to one bed per 1000 population in

[16] Benefit reductions were not as drastic for other groups, but in all cases benefits dropped from 1986 rates (National Council on Welfare 2008, 73-74).

1979 (Sealy and Whitehead 2004, 1).[17] Provincially in Alberta, there were 4.1 beds per 1000 population in 1965 but by 1980-1981 this had decreased to 0.7 beds per 1000 population (Sealy and Whitehead 2004, 1). During the 1980s and 1990s, provinces focused on reducing the number of days spent in a psychiatric hospital: in 1985, 280 days of care were provided per 1000 population across Canada but by 1999 this had dropped to 196.8 per 1000 population (ibid). In Alberta, the number of days in care between 1985 and 1999 dropped by 38.5 per cent. The deinstitutionalization movement has not been accompanied by adequate discharge planning or community supports, which has exacerbated the problems of these individuals and made homelessness a more likely reality (Golden *et al.* 1999, 114). The Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health has claimed that there are serious problems of access to acute care beds, and has also noted that the lack of affordable housing in Alberta contributes to the backlog of people who are ready to leave institutional care but have nowhere to go (Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health 2000, 7).

These studies are varied in their explanations of homelessness but almost all of them attempt to contextualize homelessness as a condition that occurs as a result of broad social, political, or economic trends. Homelessness is seen as a function of a capitalist economy and as governments have shifted ideologically to endorse a neoliberal model of governance, there has been less willingness to intervene in the market. While the structuralist perspective has provided a deeper understanding about the causes of homelessness, by the 1990s, it was increasingly questioned as it could not account for the high numbers of people on the street that were exhibiting characteristics of vulnerability such as mental illness (Anderson, Kemp, Quilgars 1993). The individual/structural dichotomy of this debate has been challenged because of its propensity to oversimplify processes and events (Fitzpatrick 2005, 5), leading researchers to synthesize the two perspectives. Termed the “new orthodoxy” by Nicolas

---

[17] In real numbers, there were 47,000 beds in 1960 and only 15,000 beds by 1980.

Please (2000), this perspective continues to emphasize the structural causes of homelessness while trying to explain why some people may become homeless and not others.

"New Orthodoxy"

Working to move beyond the entrenched individual/structural dichotomies, a third perspective suggests that homelessness was the result of the convergence of many individual and structural factors together. The "new orthodoxy" asserts that while structural factors create the conditions which cause homelessness, people with particular personal issues are more vulnerable to these social and economic trends than others (Fitzpatrick 2005, 4). To invoke the musical chairs analogy, this perspective tries to account for *who* might be left standing at the end of the game. If there is a structural imbalance in housing supply and demand, then it is not a question of whether homelessness will occur but who will be left homeless. However, the extent of homelessness overall is seen to be a result of the availability of housing resources relative to needs (Wright and Rubin 1991; Koegal, Burnham, Baumohl 1996; Schwartz and Carpenter 1999). Factors such as mental illness, having sole responsibility for the care of a child, or a history of family violence (Novac, Brown, Gallant 1999; Neal 2004) can render some individuals less capable of competing for housing.[18] This perspective maintains that the most significant factor is the amount of affordable housing, but individual factors provide "increased risk" (rather than causes) of homelessness and a scope for human agency within a limited range of options determines whether homelessness occurs or not.

Jennifer Wolch, Michael Dear and Andrea Akita published one of the first studies of this nature in 1988. They claimed that homelessness is a condition too complex to be reduced to either individual or structural factors; life on the streets aggravates conditions

[18] These factors can also make it more difficult to compete for employment, which is often a prerequisite for housing.

of homelessness, and physical and mental health problems quickly surface or worsen after homelessness has occurred. They argued that the dividing line between those with a history of mental health problems and those without becomes much less distinct once homelessness is a reality (Wolch, Dear, Akita 1988, 443). Tim Dant and Alan Deacon (1989) similarly asserted that poor physical and mental health can lead to homelessness; once homeless, people suffer exclusion from work, family, and friendships, and this absence of supports renders them even more vulnerable to other structural factors (Dant and Deacon 1989). Several authors have referred to this as the "leveling quality" of homelessness, meaning that its consequences are so great that it negatively impacts the adaptation and coping capabilities of each individual drastically (Peressini 2004; Koegal, Burnam, Farr 1990). This leveling impact and increased vulnerability makes moving out of homelessness more difficult (Khandor and Mason 2007, 10). Recent literature has favoured the "new orthodoxy" as a more adequate explanation of homeless causation, as it helps to account for individual factors of vulnerability while emphasizing the structural root causes.

Spatial Perspectives

In previous sections, I have outlined the parameters of the debate about homelessness and some of the themes that have emerged from the literature; one of the strongest themes is the underlying cause of homelessness, and whether it is an outcome of personal inadequacies or the unequal distribution of resources stemming from the structure of the political economy. The last two decades have witnessed an increase in research, largely from the contributions of geographers, which has expanded the structuralist perspective to examine the role of space and architecture in producing the spatialized oppression of the homeless. It is useful to first explore the influential work of Henri Lefebvre, a French philosopher who expanded our understanding of the importance of space in reproducing the "social relations of production" (Lefebvre 1976). Prior to Lefebvre, it was generally thought that space was a neutral container within which

individuals interacted. Lefebvre helped to draw attention to the interdependence and interaction between space and social relationships.

According to Lefebvre, space is both a mode of production for society and a process that not only reflects social relationships, but it is fundamental in the production and reproduction of relationships of power. Human agents negotiate their way through social spaces, and while they are subject to spatial reflections and reproductions of power relationships, they have the capacity to upset the dominant order by exploring and expressing alternative forms of social space. Lefebvre views space in terms of three dimensions: *spatial practices* (which involves the production and reproduction of social relationships; space makes, and is made by, social action), *representations of space* (which is space conceptualized by authorities and then planned, shaped, and controlled to create an attractive landscape), and *representational space* (occupied and experienced space of inhabitants and users, where alternative visions can form and challenges to the dominant order can originate) (Lefebvre 1991, 33).[19] These three ways of characterizing space help to develop an understanding of space as a complex set of relationships with historical and political context, which are mapped onto the landscape (Wright 1997, 49). The interactions between space and social relationships, as described by Lefebvre, are a fundamental consideration in an exploration of the ways in which citizens, particularly marginalized citizens such as the homeless, engage with their public spaces.

Lefebvre views the active development of private property as reducing space to hierarchically organized landscapes; urban redevelopment schemes fashion an attractive environment for the consumer and an unwelcome environment for non-consumers (which includes homeless individuals) (Wright 1997, 55). As spatial arrangements reinforce and enhance social inequalities, various groups are displaced to the margins of the newly created social and physical spaces. This results in a series of social struggles that define,

---

[19] Homeless encampments can be classified as a form of *representational* space, which will be discussed later on in the chapter.

or redefine, the community and the understanding of who is legitimately included in various spaces. While space is systematically reproduced by the political economy in order to ensure the continuity of the mode of production and the dominant social imaginary,[20] there are still spaces that individuals and groups can actively subvert to meet their own needs. This is what Lefebvre characterizes as the "right to the city." He argues that, "the right to the city [involves] the right to claim presence in the city, to wrest the use of the city from privileged new masters and democratize its spaces" (Lefebvre 1996,194-196). Lefebvre develops this concept by further explaining that the right to the city involves two principal rights for urban inhabitants: the right to participation and the right to appropriation. The right to participation entails a right of all c*itadins*[21] to play a central role in any decision relating to the production of urban space. The right to appropriation entails the right of inhabitants to physically access, occupy, and use urban space, as well as to produce urban space that meets the needs of inhabitants (Purcell 2002, 103). These rights have formed the foundational tenets upon which subsequent researchers have advocated for the right of people to be present in and use the spaces of the city (Isin and Wood 1999; Mitchell and Staeheli 2006).

By the mid-1980s, researchers had begun to examine the spatial consequences of housing market trends (Barak 1992; Wolch and Dear 1993). Gentrification, in particular, became the subject of analysis from this perspective. Neil Smith focused on the eviction and displacement of existing residents, as low-income individuals are forced out of some spaces to make room for others and are instead relocated to other urban spaces.[22] For Smith, gentrification is symptomatic of broader trends of uneven development (1996). Zoning and housing policies supporting capital investment and

---

[20] The social imaginary refers to the established system of values, laws, symbols and institutions which govern society and transmit meaning to all citizens within a society.

[21] For Lefebvre, it is *citadins* who have the right to the city; this term fuses the notion of citizen with denizen/inhabitant (Purcell 2002, 102).

[22] Displacement from gentrification can cause a loss of social capital, challenges in terms of access to jobs and services, as well as loss of social capital – all of which can contribute to increased vulnerability, and thus, to homelessness (Blomley 2009, 582).

property protections were also re-examined from a spatial perspective; state policies which sanction certain market behaviours were found to shape the spatial manifestation of economic development as well as homelessness. NIMBYism[23] was also examined by researchers, and was found to have distinct spatial consequences for homeless individuals.

James Duncan (1978) published one of the first Canadian studies examining homelessness from a spatial perspective. He argued that 18th century practices of according citizenship rights only to those who owned property continue to survive today insofar as 'tramps' and undesirables are often excluded from public places (1978, 27). He developed the designations of prime and marginal space in order to understand which spaces are deemed appropriate for the homeless to occupy in a community, and which are deemed inappropriate. David Snow and Michael Mulcahy (2001) expanded upon Duncan's work to develop the classifications of prime space, marginal space, and transitional space. They defined prime space as any space within a community that is being used by residents, entrepreneurs, and politicians while marginal space has very little use value, exchange value, or political value and thus tends to be left empty. Transitional space often sits as a buffer between marginal space and another neighbourhood that is closer to prime space (Snow and Mulcahy 2001, 157). They argued that legislation challenging the presence of homeless individuals is most frequently enforced in prime spaces, as this is where consumption, business, and trade generally take place. This classification is used to explain why homeless individuals are less likely to be challenged over their occupation of marginal space. Talmadge Wright (1997) has employed a similar classification of space but termed instead as pleasure, refuse, and functional space. Wright explored how the meaning of space shifts with continued negotiations over its use, emphasizing that the meaning of space is not fixed

[23] Not-In-My-BackYard syndrome, commonly referred to as NIMBYism, is understood to be a community's efforts to exclude homeless individuals from their neighbourhood due to a fear that homelessness will negatively impact property values.

but is subject to contestation, thus enabling political opportunities to emerge by means of struggles over its use (Wright 1997).

Nicholas Blomley and Geraldine Pratt (2001) have expanded our understanding of liberal rights, arguing that there are distinct spatial and geographical dimensions to rights. Rights discourse has been a significant component of Canadian culture since 1982 when the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was entrenched, shaping the political landscape by establishing which rights receive constitutional protection. Blomley and Pratt observe that rights inhabit particular geographies and are both constituted by, and are comprised of, the delineated spaces within which they function (2001, 155). They point to multiculturalism (which is geographically dispersed across the country), the competing claims of English and French Canadians in relation to Quebec, and Aboriginal groups' land claims to illustrate that rights cannot be separated from the geographies which they inhabit (2001, 154). They identify five ways in which rights are geographical: rights are often about access to space or place; in liberal societies, the geographies of 'public' and 'private' shape access to rights; space naturalizes social relations; the politics of scale opens up new opportunities for rights or debates about rights; and, places are both defined and called upon in struggles over rights (2001, 154). Blomley and Pratt argue that the most significant of these is the division between public and private spheres, as these designations spatialize boundaries between 'inside' and 'outside.' Property rights in particular are illustrative of this; urban conflicts over public space often stem from different conceptions of property rights, such as whether private property rights trump rights of collective public space. To illustrate this point, Blomley and Pratt examine gentrification practices in Vancouver's Downtown East Side. While an exclusive and individualistic model of property underwrites the dominant property regime of this area, local activists have conceptualized an alternative vision of collective entitlement to property rights, which is embodied in the landscapes of art, graffiti, and the neighbourhood's history. This is what Blomley and Pratt call an oppositional property right: the right to exclude others is opposed by the right not to be excluded (2001, 158).

So, while dominant mappings of space can be exclusive and construct stark binaries of private and public space, or inside and outside, place can also be a site from which rights mobilizations occur and alternative social imaginaries are born. The politics of rights is constructed in and through space and place; rights are constantly being (re)negotiated, at risk of either being weakened or expanded. Space is therefore a critical site from which human rights can be examined and citizenship can be expanded (Blomley and Pratt 2001, 163).

Neoliberalism and Globalization

Broad shifts in governance have fashioned a neoliberal state in Canada, as in most western democracies. David Harvey has described the political economy as the "new regime of flexible accumulation" which is identified by its flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption (Harvey 1987). He notes that since the early 1970s, cities have been confronted with increasing competition on four different fronts: the international division of labour; their position as centres of consumption; control and command functions such as increased financial powers; and, competition for state redistribution of wealth (1987, 264). Often referred to as globalization, these pressures have contributed to increasing practices of gentrification and urban development, as well as increased social control over both public and private spaces within the city. For Harvey, this means increased class polarization as low-income populations become "trapped in space." It is members of the upper class who have the capital to command both the distribution of space (for instance, through housing arrangements) and ownership of the means of (re)production, as well as the power to exclude unwanted groups from the community (1987, 270). This continued process results in increasing competition over who appropriates and controls city spaces, thereby escalating the desperation of lower class populations. Neoliberal governance has resulted in the transformation of urban spaces and uneven development, as public space

is being eroded and replaced with space that belongs to the consumer or the business owner. This has been accompanied by increasing practices of segregation and exclusion.

Michael Sorkin (1992) has identified three characteristics that distinguish “the new American city” in a neoliberal era, which he argues is the basis for development throughout the world: the first characteristic is continually universalizing city spaces into that which is predictable and known; second is a rising concern with security, leading to new forms of segregation amongst city residents; third is an increasing similarity between cities and theme parks, as reflected in the architecture and city landscapes (Sorkin 1992). In a progressively unstable global market where capital is seen to be unrestrained, cities do what they can to make themselves attractive to global capital (Mitchell 1997, 323). Cities are investing in consumptive environments in order to construct marketable, ordered and controlled landscapes (Lefebvre 1991). The marketing of place has intensified processes which attract investment through mediums such as infrastructure, tourist attractions, cultural products, and general quality of life by portraying desirable images (Coleman 2004, 24). This is often referred to as the “disneyfication” of space and place, as cities attempt to replicate the controlled environments of a Disneyland theme park (Harvey 1987; Davis 1990; Sorkin 1992; Zukin 1991; Mitchell 1995). Planners of semi-public spaces like shopping malls have found that profitability increases when the diversity of space is limited (Sorkin 1992; Zukin 1991); unfettered social interaction is seen to threaten the norm of commodity exchange. This has resulted in efforts to suppress forms of ‘deviant’ conduct such as visible homelessness and crime. Some authors argue that this is resulting in the privatization of public space (Kohn 2004; Banerjee 2001), while others claim that public space is in danger of complete eradication (Sorkin 1992; Zukin 1995; Davis 1990). What is clear is that public space is becoming increasingly exclusive as “the public” is represented as uniform and harmonious. The transformation of public space is being executed in the name of security concerns, leading to what Sharon Zukin (1995) has referred to as “the aesthetization of fear” (Zukin 1995). It is against this background that urban planners and city officials have increased

the use of surveillance technology in order to promote a secure and “risk free” environment in order to attract investment and tourists. Samira Kawash (1998) argues that official meanings of public space are constructed to be natural and homelessness exposes this as an untruth. The homeless are constructed as a threat to the public emanating from elsewhere; in order to “secure” the public, acts of “containment, constriction, and compression” are enacted in order to continually and increasingly exclude the homeless from public space (Kawash 1998, 330). These practices effectively maintain the image of the public, but also threaten to simultaneously subvert the image of the public by revealing its rigorous production and enforcement (Kawash 1998, 334). We can see that neoliberalism has been accompanied by a general increase in the control of public space while the boundary between ‘public’ and ‘private’ has shifted. Space is being designed to facilitate consumption and investment activities, thereby surpassing the focus on free and democratic interaction between all citizens.

Stacy Warren argues that the development of these total consumptive environments have been accompanied by a shift in the meaning of citizen, whereby the citizen is now understood to be the consumer (1994, 91). David Sibley (1995) states that, “the boundaries between the consuming and non-consuming public are strengthening, with non-consumption being constructed as a form of deviance” (Sibley 1995, xii). Neoliberalism only sees one good citizen: the atomized and disembodied market player who is self-reliant. It ignores systemic processes or barriers such as racism or poverty, and places the onus singularly upon the individual (Brodie 2007, 159). Neoliberalism has also placed greater emphasis on the value of property and consumption; individuals who do not have the means to participate in a consumer society, such as the homeless and the very poor, are denied access to full citizenship rights and are excluded from consumer spaces (Christopherson 1994, 411). Those who cannot comply with neoliberal expectations of market participation are deemed immoral and irresponsible, and are punished by exclusion (Herbert and Brown 2006, 769). Thus, there has been a return to

an individualist perspective as the homeless are perceived as the "undeserving" poor while economic rewards and resources are linked to individual "choice" and effort.

Engin Isin (2002) refers to the city as a "difference machine" which generates citizenship through the encounters of various groups:

> Neither groups nor their identities exist before the encounter with the city. 'Women,' 'peasants,' 'Africans,' 'hooligans,' 'prostitutes,' 'refugees,' 'workers,' 'bourgeois' do not encounter each other in the city as though they existed before that encounter, but they constitute each other via the encounter. Nor does the city exist in a pre-defined shape or form as unity. The city is neither a background to these struggles *against which* groups wager, nor is it a foreground *for which* groups struggle for domination. The city is the battleground *through which* groups define their identities, stake their claims, wage their battles, and articulate citizenship rights and obligations (2002, 49-50, emph. in original).

For Isin, citizenship is a continuous process based on struggles which occur on urban space, whereby groups stake their claims to inclusion and citizenship. It is the interaction of groups which helps to define them against each other within urban space. Isin argues that there are stages of citizenship based upon several categories of "otherness:" citizens, strangers, outsiders, and aliens. Further, citizenship exists through the strategies and technologies exercised against other groups (Isin 2002, 36). From this perspective, homeless communities can challenge the norms of citizenship not only by fighting for legitimacy in the eyes of the state, but through their interactions with other groups. His argument points to the fact that citizenship is not merely an issue of inclusion or exclusion; one is not either a citizen or not a citizen. Rather, citizenship is determined through struggles which occur upon urban public space where different groups make claims for legitimate inclusion in society. While much of the literature about homelessness and public space tends to perceive the uniform oppression of the homeless by broader political and economic structures, Isin highlights that this uniformity of oppression is an oversimplification, and cannot be understood without referencing the interactions between various groups in the city.

Anti-Homeless Legislation

The visibility of homeless people in public or semi-public areas challenges the image of the city as an attractive consumptive environment (McCahill 1998, 52), prompting cities across North America to actively increase their regulation of visible poverty and homelessness as part of their efforts to construct aesthetically pleasing centres. Ideological shifts towards neoliberal governance have resulted in a wave of legislation across North America which seeks to sanitize space and regulate "appropriate" behaviour in public spaces. In the United States, laws prohibit behaviours such as sleeping in public, loitering, camping in public, sitting on sidewalks, begging, and even prohibiting citizens from feeding homeless people (Fang 2009). More than a dozen of Canada's larger municipalities[24] have enacted legislation which prohibits behaviours such as washing car windows for money (otherwise known as squeegeeing), panhandling, or camping in public (Collins and Blomley 2003, 40). Provincially, Ontario and British Columbia have passed laws that criminalize squeegeeing, panhandling, and begging. Penalties include fines up to $500 for a first offence, and repeat offenders can be fined higher amounts or receive jail sentences. While these ordinances do not explicitly target homeless individuals but prohibit such activities for everyone whether homeless or housed, they are predicated on the assumption that all citizens have an alternative (private) place in which to perform these activities. For individuals who are homeless and have no place to go, the effect is to essentially restrict the ability of individuals to be visibly poor in urban public space. This has prompted these initiatives to be characterized in much of the literature as "anti-homeless legislation."

This type of legislation has been the subject of a growing body of literature in recent years. Don Mitchell (1997) argues that anti-homeless legislation is fundamentally oppressive and violent, and compliance with such ordinances is often impossible. If a law

[24] Toronto, London, Vancouver, Halifax, Ottawa, Charlottetown, Winnipeg, Sudbury, Kingston, Oshawa, Calgary, Edmonton, Victoria, and Brandon have all passed municipal bylaws which target behaviours exhibited by homeless individuals (Klodawsky, Farrell, D'Aubrey 2002, 127).

prohibits sleeping in public, then it follows that any homeless individual without access to a home or a shelter would not be able to sleep. Physiologically, compliance with this is impossible and so the homeless individual must necessarily contravene the ordinance and survival itself is thereby criminalized (Mitchell 1997, 307). Such policies are often referred to as the "criminalization of the homeless" because, as Randall Amster explains, they make an entire group of people "criminal" for acts which were committed before the legislation was enacted and would therefore be better characterized as crime *invention* rather than crime prevention (2004, 116). David Schneiderman has questioned the constitutionality of such Canadian laws; for instance, the Ontario *Safe Streets Act* criminalizes panhandling and squeegeeing, and gives police officers the ability to arrest individuals without warrant. Schneiderman argues that these powers are, "either like legislative overreaction or intrusion into the criminal law field" (2002, 85). In the courts, the constitutionality of this legislation was questioned in *R. v. Banks* (2005) in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice but was upheld by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *R. v. Banks* (2007). Recently, a municipal bylaw in Victoria which prohibited homeless individuals from camping in the city's public parks and other public spaces was declared unconstitutional in the British Columbia Supreme Court ruling *Victoria v. Adams* (2008).[25]

Todd Gordon (2004) understands such legislation to be the re-introduction of vagrancy laws. In Canada, vagrancy laws were enacted in 1869, and targeted individuals who were perceived to be "able to work" but who "refuse(d) or neglect(ed) to do so" (Gordon 2004, 37). In other words, the able-bodied poor were the clear focus of vagrancy laws because they operated outside the norms of commodity exchange and did not

---

[25] Justice Carol Ross found the bylaw to violate s. 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which guarantees the right to "life, liberty, and security of the person, and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice" (Charter s.7). Justice Ross found that, due to a lack of sufficient shelter space, homeless individuals have a right to alternative shelter arrangements elsewhere. This ruling was the culmination of a campaign led by David Arthur Johnson, which attempted to establish the "right to sleep" (Koch 2008, 1). This marks a step in Canadian jurisprudence insofar as it places some limitations on governments' ability to exclude homeless individuals from public space, but it does not address fundamental issues relating to power and property.

conform to the standards of sobriety, work ethic, or discipline that was demanded by capital (Gordon 2004, 38). Gordon notes that recent anti-homeless legislation similarly targets individuals because of who they are, rather than because of any particular act that they have committed. He maintains that the true intention of these policies is to eliminate alternatives to the market for subsistence, reinforcing market participation as the only option for individuals.[26] Jackie Esmonde (2002) further argues that these ordinances entrench the boundary between those who comply with sanctioned market-behaviour and those who do not; those who do not comply are constructed as dangerous 'outsiders' (2002, 81). Such legislation relies upon stereotypes and constructs the homeless as a threat to the rest of the population.[27]

The exclusion of homeless individuals is achieved not only through the enactment of state policies that prohibit behaviours endemic of homeless individuals but through other methods as well; Mike Davis (1992) has examined the role of architecture in shaping the exclusion of homeless individuals from public space. He looks at Los Angeles, which has adopted measures intended to discourage homeless individuals from occupying urban public space. Such measures include barrel-shaped bus benches which make sleeping impossible, outdoor sprinklers which automatically turn on at night to make sleeping uncomfortable, and the removal of public toilets or water sources for drinking or washing. Sylvia Novac *et al.* (2006) have pointed out similar strategies in the City of Toronto, where many businesses have installed iron windowsill coverings in order to prevent homeless individuals from sitting on the windowsills, rounded chairs and benches which discourage lying down comfortably, and Toronto parks which have begun

---

[26] Teresa Gowan (2002) notes that the effect of anti-homeless legislation is not to redirect homeless individuals to participation the labour market; rather, the imposition of fines which they inevitably cannot pay ultimately results in furthering their marginalization and exclusion by circulating them through jails, making it even more difficult to integrate into "mainstream" society (Gowan 2002, 521).

[27] Barak and Bohm (1989) note that the association of homeless individuals with criminality achieves two aims: it strengthens the resolve of the ruling class to control and regulate them (1989, 278); secondly, these stereotypes act to displace attention away from evidence which suggests that homeless individuals are more likely to be the victims of violence rather than the perpetrators of crime (Barak and Bohm 1989, 284).

to close at dusk (Novac *et al.* 2006, 85). Davis argues that the elimination of public toilets is the most significant architectural design impacting the daily lives of homeless individuals and reinforcing their exclusion (Davis 1992, 4). He notes that urban designers in Los Angeles have opted for "quasi-public restrooms" located inside consumption centres like restaurants, art galleries, and office buildings; this gives consumers access to restrooms while preventing homeless individuals and other "undesirables" from using them. Kawash (1998) argues that the elimination of public toilets effectively reinforces the divide between the public and the homeless, forcing the homeless to violate social norms from what is purported to be the "proper" public subject:

> The homeless body is thus trapped by a circular logic whereby its initial exclusion further marks it as that which *must* be excluded: Unable to take responsibility for its bodily functions as a result of the city's disavowal of them, the homeless body is then shunned for its failure to adapt to the standards of social responsibility (Kawash 1998, 332, emph. in original).

Robert Ellickson (1996) argues that democratic ideals form the foundation for regulation of public spaces. He states that "a space that all can enter is a space that each is tempted to abuse. Societies therefore impose rules-of-the-road for public spaces" which are a foundation of freedom (Ellickson 1996, 1172). In order to be truly public, a space must be orderly enough that it is inviting for the greater majority of those who wish to use it (1996, 1172). He notes that the presence of panhandlers and other "undesirables" may be a nuisance and may act to deter some citizens from using space. This results in an imposition upon the freedom of some individuals and violates community rights to use public space. Ellickson argues that the vitality of public space is achieved through the exclusion of behaviours which violate social norms of civility. For him, the restriction of certain behaviours enhances public space as it eliminates disturbances and nuisances which cause others to leave. He understands panhandling to be a harm as it disturbs the privacy of passers-by; sitting on benches, although less offensive than panhandling, is still questionable as it monopolizes public space in prime urban locations; while the smell and appearance of homeless individuals constitutes a harm as it discourages others from occupying that space. Ellickson invokes a utilitarian

argument in which he weighs the harms of excluding street nuisances against the harms of allowing them to disturb and annoy the majority of the population, and concludes that it is right to banish homeless individuals from sight. His arguments have provided justification for anti-homeless legislation enacted across North America.

In an attempt to refute Ellickson and others who support the exclusion of homeless individuals from public space, Jeremy Waldron (2000) has introduced what he calls the *Complementary Thesis*. The complementary thesis highlights that Ellickson and others understand public space to be the *complement* of activities carried out in the private sphere, and arguments which support the exclusion of the homeless are based on the assumption that everyone who occupies public space has a home to which they can retreat (Waldron 2000, 394). While insistence upon regulation of the public sphere is reasonable for people who do have a private home, Waldron argues that it becomes very unreasonable for homeless individuals who have nowhere else to go. For homeless individuals, there is "an unavoidable failure of the complementarity between the use of private space and the use of public space" (Waldron 2000, 395). The only place homeless individuals may exercise sovereignty over their affairs, given that they have no private property, is on common or public property. This calls for the regulation of public space to allow for behaviours endemic of homeless individuals, given that this is the only space available to them. Waldron states:

> What is emerging – and it is not just a matter of fantasy – is a state of affairs in which a million or more citizens have no place to perform elementary human activities like urinating, washing, sleeping, cooking, eating, and standing around. Legislators voted for by people who own private places in which they can do these things are increasingly deciding to make public places available only for activities other than these primal human tasks. The streets and the subways, they say, are for commuting from home to office. They are not for sleeping; sleeping is what one does at home. The parks are for recreations like walking and informal ball-games, things for which one's own yard is a little too confined. Parks are not for cooking or urinating; again, these are things one does at home. Since the public and private are complementary, the activities performed in public are the complement of those performed in private. This complementarity works fine for those who have the benefit of both sorts of places. However, it is disastrous for those who must live their whole lives on common land. If I am right about this, it is one of the most callous and tyrannical exercises of power in modern times by a (comparatively) rich and complacent majority against a minority of their less fortunate fellow human beings (Waldron 1991, 301-302).

Strategies of Resistance and Response

Homeless individuals exercise personal agency during their daily struggles for survival. Recent academic scholarship has recognized that the homeless are conscious social and political actors and are not just passive victims of conditions of inequality (Lees 2003; Wagner 1993; Ruddick 1990). Wagner and Cohen (1991) have observed that researchers tend to study the poor and homeless at points of maximum disempowerment, which has reinforced the view that they are victimized, disorganized, and immobilized (1991, 544). They point out that institutions like emergency shelters and soup kitchens tend to enforce behaviours through a wide range of regulations which are designed to disempower individuals, so it is not surprising that studies conducted at these institutions document high levels of stress and disempowerment (Wagner and Cohen 1991, 544). Policies targeted at the homeless, such as those discussed above, necessarily generate a response from homeless individuals. The homeless find themselves on the margins of "the public" but they are very active agents in the negotiation of public space. When individuals are constructed as being "out of place" in a particular space, existence itself is resistance (Wright 1997, 182). While homeless resistance can take many forms, it is acts of spatial resistance which are of particular interest here; specifically homeless encampments.

Talmadge Wright (1997) draws on the examples of homeless encampments in Chicago and San Jose to illustrate that homeless encampments contest the "proper" use of space and alter the meaning of spaces, and can be a method of developing new collective identities. He talks about homeless "placemaking" in connection with homeless encampments, which occurs when homeless individuals "redefine the meaning of social-physical space and then act on those redefinitions" (1997, 255). In Chicago, encampment residents challenged authoritative strategies simply by holding on to the space they occupied (Wright 1997, 227). Through a series of complex interactions and resistance strategies by the residents, Wright demonstrates the active agency of homeless individuals in shaping the outcome of negotiations with state officials and securing some

access to public housing (1997, 251). In San Jose, encampment residents redefined their space as a collective home with "embedded meanings of family and community" (Wright 1997, 255). David Wagner (1993) conducted another study in which he illustrates how homeless encampment members in Portland, Maine developed alternative definitions of family, community, and work in order to resist marginalization (Wagner 1993). Both of these authors report that the spatial struggles between authorities and homeless populations influence homeless identities as well as dominant understandings of the social-physical space.

Neil Smith (1996) examines the struggle over Tompkins Square Park in Manhattan. Tompkins Square Park was used by hundreds of homeless individuals as a place to congregate or sleep regularly; but in 1988, a curfew was first imposed in order to prevent homeless encampments from emerging. Repeated police raids followed the eviction and police destroyed more than ninety shelters. In 1991, the City built a fence around the Park and attempted to redesign the area to include basketball courts and other recreational facilities, and stricter park regulations were implemented to exclude homeless individuals from using it. Smith outlines how an exclusive logic of public space motivated the evictions from the Park: "The new anti-homeless policy initiated by the City administration in 1991 was intended to 'take back' the parks, streets and neighbourhoods from those who had supposedly 'stolen' them from 'the public'" (Smith 1996, 221). This is illustrative of what Smith calls the "revanchist city;"[28] frontier rhetoric is used to communicate that disorderly spaces are frontiers that need to be conquered and "taken back" for the good of the city. Smith illustrates that authorities had adopted these ideals in

[28] Smith understands the "revanchist city" to be a reaction against the supposed theft of the city by homeless individuals which "expresses a race/class/gender terror felt by middle- and ruling-class whites who are suddenly stuck in a place by a ravaged property market, the threat and reality of unemployment, the decimation of social services, and the emergence of minority and immigrant groups, as well as women, as powerful urban actors" (1996, 211).

their attempts to re-establish control over Tompkins Square Park, when violence was perceived to be necessary in order to rid the park of its ills.[29]

Don Mitchell (1995) has examined the struggle over People's Park in Berkeley, California to illustrate that such struggles over public space are intrinsically connected to claims of identity and legitimacy (Mitchell 1995, 124). People's Park was the site of more than twenty years of struggle between the City of Berkeley, the University of California, activists, and homeless individuals. The University of California, which had ownership of the land, characterized the space as one of "disorder" that attracted undesirable characters and thus discouraged "legitimate" park users from occupying the space. In 1969, a fence was erected around the Park in order to exclude undesirable characters from using it; when this was met with mass protests, the Park remained open for public use. In the 1990s, a new development plan detailed the intended use of the Park: one portion would be maintained for "community use" and the central portion would be converted into volleyball courts and other recreation facilities so as to make room for students and middle-class community residents who had been excluded from using the Park (Mitchell 1995, 110). Notably, the volleyball courts made the Park unusable for sleeping. More protests ensued, this time for nearly a week. Mitchell argues that People's Park was not only a place of refuge for homeless and other individuals who had been excluded from mainstream society, but the act of taking and maintaining control over People's Park enabled them to be represented and legitimated to members of the housed population and the state. The importance of the Park as a public space was its status as a *taken* place: "[These spaces] serve as sites within which homeless people can be seen and represented, as places within which activism on homelessness can arise and expand outward" (Mitchell 1995, 125).

---

[29] Smith maintains that criminality itself is spatialized, insofar as it is identified with certain types of individuals (including minorities and immigrants, gays and lesbians, the unemployed, and the homeless) in the urban landscape (1998, 3). Because these groups are situated in particular spaces of the city, he observes that there is a spatial element to (perceived or real) criminal behaviour.

These examples underscore the importance of public places as sites of negotiation over what is understood to be the "public." While the dominant order maintained jurisdiction and control over how to appropriate these spaces, the homeless users of the space in question exercised a powerful voice in these struggles. The users of space are inherently powerful in that they are the ones who use the space and therefore determine how it is used. While dominant agents exercise control over spaces, an oppositional force can dispute such control and regulations, and it is through the claiming of space in contradiction to authoritative strategies that groups can fight for both physical space and social space in the political order. Susan Ruddick argues:

> For the homeless, this symbiosis between space and self has historically directed them to skid-row areas of the city, and subsequently expelled them from these areas as the meaning of these spaces was transformed through gentrification…The presence of the homeless in a gentrifying area or a post-industrial city space does not simply reinforce their stigma: it can undercut the tenets of the space itself, and its implicit ideology about leisure and wealth (Ruddick 1996, 49).

She suggests that the presence of homeless individuals in a gentrified area (or other areas where they are considered to be "out of place") subverts stereotypes to present a more accurate story of not only the homeless themselves, but also those who hold some responsibility for their situation. The claiming of public space by homeless individuals is one of the greatest acts of resistance possible, because such spaces have the potential to question the traditional strategies governing the community and expand understanding of who is considered to constitute the "public."

While state policies and architectural designs are reshaping public spaces as unfriendly to the homeless, homeless individuals are able to recreate those same spaces in order to meet their immediate needs. Homeless encampments represent claims to a democratic and participatory public space and can help to reconstitute urban public spaces as more inclusive. Encampments emerge at the gaps of both the private and the public domains, and reveal that homelessness itself occurs at the gaps of institutional structures of society. Homeless encampments are a claim not only to the right for homeless individuals to be represented in public space, but they mark a claim for the

need for (private) dwelling space. The following chapters will examine the case of Edmonton's Tent City, in light of some of the themes discussed in this chapter. My own investigation will explore Tent City as a struggle over the use of urban public space, and trace its development and significance through the eyes of its residents, service providers, and state officials. The next chapter presents the narratives emerging from the group of respondents interviewed who had previously spent time living inside Tent City.

CHAPTER TWO

Results: Tent City Residents

Introduction

Seven men and three women who had spent time as residents of Tent City were interviewed for this project.[30] Narratives from this group of interview respondents focused on the encampment as embedded with common signifiers of home such as privacy, shelter, and emotional well-being. Respondents also talked about the strong bonds that formed between residents of the encampment, often referring to one another as "family." Respondents spoke of the encampment as a community that was self-governing, with the help of a mayor and a leadership structure. Distinctions between private and public space were established to provide residents with some privacy, and agreed-upon rules of behaviour in the common areas helped to maintain peace and order. However, as the summer progressed there were two factors which they felt threatened their community: first, there was an increased presence of gangs and violent behaviour inside the encampment, and second was the increased institutional presence of the state. Private security guards enforced prescriptive regulations governing behaviour; these conflicted with the regulations established by residents themselves, and the community they had established began to break down. Once Tent City was dissolved, some residents found housing while others experienced few changes and resumed their homeless existence.

Because respondents discussed their experiences in Tent City in contrast to their lives prior to the encampment's emergence, the first section of this chapter provides an account of the respondents' lives prior to Tent City. This includes a discussion of the shelter system, which residents had widely rejected due to rigid regulations and inherent dangers, and a discussion of life on the streets which is also dangerous but allowed residents a greater sense of autonomy. The second section explores the emergence of

---

[30] Each respondent has been given a pseudonym, in order to attribute each quote to its speaker yet maintain the confidentiality of the respondents.

Tent City and what living inside the encampment meant for residents. The social-physical space was embedded with signifiers of "home" (Watson and Austerberry 1986), such as decent standards of living and material conditions, privacy and control, loving and caring relationships, and general well-being. The act of claiming space generated a sense of community, governed by rules and established criteria for membership. Once the state re-established control of the encampment, their community began to dissolve. The third section of this chapter examines residents' lives after Tent City had been shut down.

Life Before Tent City

The Shelter System

One of the challenges common to the experiences of the respondents I interviewed was finding an appropriate place to spend each night. The shelter system constitutes the primary form of providing protection for the homeless in Edmonton and across Canada; as such, many respondents had spent time in emergency shelters but most related primarily negative experiences with them. Inconvenient regulations, punitive treatment by shelter staff, and dangerous conditions were cited as some of the reasons why respondents perceived shelters as a last-resort option, as they preferred to stay outside where they could retain a greater sense of dignity and autonomy.

Shelter rules often contain some elements of a moral agenda. Lyon-Callo (2004) has argued that the common regulation prohibiting the consumption of drugs or alcohol in shelters originated in the belief that substance abuse is a factor that causes homelessness; therefore, if a client is consuming drugs or alcohol, they are considered to be unprepared to be housed or sheltered (2004, 59). Jackson noted that prohibiting the consumption of any substances inside the shelters was a large factor in deterring homeless individuals from staying in shelters. Such regulations were perceived to limit the autonomy of clients to make their own decisions:

> A lot of people won't stay in the shelters. A lot of people like drinking, they're alcoholics. And you can't drink while you're in a shelter…They've got a

> certain amount of time to live. You're gonna tell me I can't drink?...They're not bad drunks, they just wanna drink.

The moral agenda of shelters is normally behind regulations which require that men and women sleep in different sleeping quarters. Jessica objected to this practice, stating that being forced to sleep alone without her husband made her feel more vulnerable at night. "People at the Hope Mission, they used to have one spot where you could stay with your husband beside you. Then they changed that and they put another side in the Hope Mission just for women…I didn't like that. I felt insecure about all of that." For these reasons, she would only stay in shelters when absolutely necessary.

Many of the respondents had been banned from shelters, forcing them to remain on the streets. There was a sense that these exclusions were often unwarranted and reflected an abuse of authority by shelter staff.

> The way [shelter staff] handle people is not the way they should be handled. Especially if a person is drunk or whatever. Talk to him calmly or whatever, you deal with people in a certain way. And they threw me out in the middle of winter, in the middle of the night. I was on crutches with a broken ankle and I was kicked out of every other shelter so I had nowhere to go…I couldn't stand shelters after that (Jackson).

Ryan claimed that he had been wrongly accused of physically assaulting a staff member and was subsequently barred from the Herb Jamieson Centre (a shelter in Edmonton), despite his protests that he had not committed any wrongdoing. "I won't go and support places like that, so I sleep alone. Even Herb Jamieson, they said I kicked…one of the staff. How did I kick him when I got no leg?" He objected to submitting to harsh rules that, he claimed, often enforced stricter punishments than the offense warranted.

> [Shelter staff] throw you out, bar you, just because of something you said to them. That doesn't make no sense to me at all… Next thing you know, you go there again, they say you're barred from here. What did I do? I didn't get in a fight, I didn't scream at anybody or anything like that.

Chris felt that shelter exclusions are unfair and contradict their stated aim of offering a service to individuals who are in need of a place to stay.

> [Shelter staff] shouldn't even do that to the people. They should allow people inside. Because that's what they're for. They're supposed to be for homeless people to go there and warm up. Even on the coldest days they won't allow [my father] inside. They'll let him stand outside and freeze.

These comments corroborate with scholarly research that has found that shelter staff can often be hostile and antagonistic towards clients, failing to demonstrate an appropriate service ethic towards the clients (Wagner 1993, 102). Shelter staff have been known to enforce institutional rules based upon notions and perceptions of "deserving" and "undeserving" rather than uniformly for all clients (Liebow 1993, 86). Lyon-Callo (2004) has argued that, despite the best intentions of shelter staff to provide good service, the operations of shelter staff are embedded in a framework that understands the homeless as deviant and the governing practices of the staff reflect this (2004, 111). Regulations and exclusions are seen to be a technique of training clients, with the intention of producing passive and compliant subjects (Lyon-Callo 2004, 68).

Respondents objected to several other aspects of the shelter system. Shelters were described as violent and unsafe, and Matthew remarked that he had been physically assaulted several times while he slept. Some scholars have reported that shelters are actually more dangerous for clients than life on the streets, due to increased victimization and violence from other shelter guests (Hagen 1987). Matthew also spoke of the lack of storage space provided to clients, which resulted in somebody stealing his personal belongings from beside him while he slept. Finally, Jessica spoke of the need to avoid shelters, as it was likely that patrons would contract diseases due to overcrowding and poor ventilation systems.

Some respondents noted that it was sometimes necessary to stay in shelters in order to find warm respite from the harsh weather conditions outside. "I don't like [shelters] but I mean, it's a warm place. Especially when you get sick, right, like I am now. I appreciate it" (Kevin). However, finding space in the cold winter months was often reported to be impossible, and on the weekends there was nowhere for them to seek refuge from the cold.

> You go there [to the shelter], line up at 3 o'clock, by the time you get in line there's room for five people and you're the sixth person. That's frustrating. So then you go to the Hope Mission there, and they're already full. Then you go to In-Tox, they're full. Then you go to Herb Jamieson, they've got no space. So you end up walking around all night, just trying to find some place to sleep (Chris).

Sarah noted that because drop-in centres like the Bissell Centre or the Mustard Seed are closed on weekends, and shelters are closed during the day, there is nowhere to seek out shelter from the cold on winter weekends. “Because of it being winter, there’s no drop-ins open during the weekend. On Saturdays and Sundays they should have some kind of drop-in open for [the homeless]. Because they’re walking around…they don’t have no place to go.” Nonetheless, there was a general consensus among respondents that they preferred to sleep outside, barring an extreme situation or critical need to seek shelter from the elements. As Matthew clearly stated, “I’d prefer to be outside with the animals than inside being treated like an animal.”

The public shelter has emerged out of what was originally known as the “municipal lodging house.” Traditionally the role of the shelter was twofold: first, it functioned as an emergency stopgap measure, to be available only as a last-resort option for individuals who had exhausted all other avenues of assistance. Second, it was a place of respite or temporary aid for the unemployed during economic hard times (Hopper 1990). The first function was rooted in the belief that individual character deficiencies are the cause of homelessness[31] while the second perceived homelessness to be a temporary situation that would end as soon as the unemployed return to the labour market. Perceptions of individual pathology resulted in policies that focused on repression rather than relief while attention to the labour market resulted in an emphasis on rehabilitation. Coupled with the belief that relief efforts breed a culture of dependence, many shelters have emerged as a mix between a type of poor public housing (Desjarlais 1997, 30) and an institution that redirects clients back towards the labour market or to alternate sources of family support (Hopper 1990). Given that the public shelter originated as an institution of last-resort, it is unsurprising that respondents’ testimonies indicated that they had had negative experiences in shelters and their choice was to stay elsewhere.

---

[31] Individuals who frequented shelters were perceived to be without friends or family, suffering from physical or mental disabilities, addiction, or incapable to participate in the labour market; in other words, they were social deviants.

Life outside of Shelters

Life outside of shelters for respondents constituted sleeping outside, usually in Edmonton's river valley or in other areas that were located away from the city's downtown. Chris and Ryan spoke about how sleeping on the streets enabled them to retain a greater sense of autonomy and independence over their own decisions and Jackson noted that, on the street, there was no need to comply with senseless regulations and the close supervision of others. Brian spoke about why sleeping in a tent in Edmonton's river valley was his preferred choice:

> When you're out and about and want to go home and take your shoes off and turn the TV on or whatever, I'll be able to do that with an apartment. When you're homeless you don't have privacy. That's why I chose to tent away. I could go there and take my shoes off, though I didn't have a TV. A lot of people don't choose that, they choose walking the streets 24 hours a day or sleep in a laundry room. I can't do that.

The sense of privacy accorded to him by his tent was invaluable. Privacy and control is a fundamental component of the meaning of "home," as defined by Watson and Austerberry (1986);[32] Brian had indicated that he was attempting to replicate some of the conditions of being housed and living in his tent was the best option available.

Although the majority of respondents indicated that they preferred not to stay in shelters, sleeping outside came with its own set of challenges. The pursuit of food was difficult, and Brian expressed how lining up at various agencies for meals was degrading and resulted in a loss of self-esteem. "What is a typical day like? Waking up with hunger pains. Your first move is food. Always. There are a lot of places to get food but…It was really tough for me to go to the Herb Jamieson Centre and Hope Mission to eat, that sorta thing. [Because of] pride." Other research has found that people who use food banks often feel a sense of embarrassment, shame or humiliation (Hamelin *et al.* 1999; Tarasuk and Beaton 1999). Respondents expressed frustration at the lack of nutritious and

[32] Recall the discussion in the Introduction where the central signifiers of home, according to Watson and Austerberry, were laid out. Those signifiers are: shelter, decent standards of living and material conditions, loving and caring social relationships, privacy and control, and emotional/physical well-being (1986, 97).

diverse food options provided to them at these agencies. “We’re just trying to make a living, we’re just trying to survive. Trying to make enough money to eat. Sure they have soup lines, but that’s just soup…Not always good to have the same thing every day. You want to have something different” (Chris). Food bank clients cannot exercise much choice over the foods they receive and nutritionists have expressed concern over the poor quality of food items available through food banks (Kennedy, Sheeshka, Smedmor 1992; Pegg 2007). Food manufacturers often donate food that is past its expiry date and some scholars have found that food banks act as a mechanism for the disposal of products that are unsellable in the market place (DeVault and Pitts 1984; Tarasuk and Eakin 2005). Because the nutritional needs of food bank clients are not the primary concern of those who donate food and it is often perceived that “giving something is better than giving nothing” (Tarasuk and Eakin 2003), the meals provided in soup kitchens or shelters are often are of low nutritional value (Weicha, Dwyer and Dunn-Strohecker 1991).

Sleeping on the streets meant that homeless respondents had to face extreme weather conditions and were at greater risk of death. Kevin stated, “Homelessness is not fun. Especially in the winter.” Ryan spoke of the worst consequences of facing the elements during the winter:

> My buddy died a couple of days ago. He covered up with his plastic, so the snow or rain wouldn’t get him wet. And he died. And that was two blocks from here…He had himself covered up with that plastic and you gotta put some holes in it so the air keeps coming in and you’re not breathing in the, you know. Need that fresh air.

In 2007 alone, forty-seven homeless people living in Edmonton perished due to conditions of homelessness. While this number reflects the known number of all homeless deaths and not just those who died from exposure, it highlights that death is a very real threat in their daily lives; on the streets, homeless individuals are struggling for their very survival. One study revealed that mortality rates among Montreal street youth were nine times higher for homeless males and thirty-one times higher for homeless females than their housed counterparts (Roy *et al.* 2004). Another study found that men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four using homeless shelters in Toronto had

mortality rates which were 8.3 times higher than the general Toronto population; men between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four were 3.7 times higher than the Toronto population; and, men forty-five to sixty-four years of age had mortality rates that were 2.3 times higher than the broader population in Toronto (Hwang 2000). Clearly, the daily risks are high.

The weather is not the only risk that the homeless face on a daily basis while sleeping outside. Respondents described the streets as dangerous. Brian reported repeatedly being a victim of violent acts, and he spoke about the impact that such violence had upon his emotional well-being and mental health:

> I was assaulted and robbed three times since the summer. Being homeless, on the street…Because of that, I'm fearful of public places and people. People make me paranoid now. It was hard for me to go the Bissell Centre, the Herb Jamieson because of all the people. I stayed to myself so much that I began to get paranoid. The doc wrote me a letter for social services saying I need some help.

He started developing mental health issues as a result of being the victim of physical violence. On one occasion he was struck in the head forcefully, after which he began to hear music when there was no music playing, and he reflected that his organizational skills deteriorated. The relationship between homelessness and mental health has long been an area of study. While mental health issues are more prevalent among the homeless population than the housed population (Hwang 2001; Public Health Agency of Canada 2006), historically it was assumed that mental illness was primarily a causal factor of homelessness (Bassuk 1984). While it is true that such issues can precede the onset of homelessness, recent studies have found that homelessness itself can give rise to mental health issues and contribute to the continued duration of homelessness (Frankish, Hwang and Quantz 2005).

Gangs were discussed as one of the primary instigators of violence and were seen to be a major threat to the safety of squatters sleeping in the river valley, the parklands, or in various areas around Edmonton.

> Last year, a year ago, there was a gang going through the river valley, beating up people in their camps while they were sleeping. Taking sticks to them, booting them, just for the hell of it. Bunch of drunk punks walking

> around the river valley and beating people up while they were passed out or sleeping in the middle of the night (Jackson).

Brian reported a raw state of anxiety as a result of his exposure to violence on the streets. He became nervous about other homeless individuals who might want his possessions. His response was to further isolate himself.

> You always worry about other people who are in the same situation as yourself. They come by and they want something. They may want your blankets or they may want some food you have, or something. So that's another reason you don't want nobody to know where you are, why you camouflage [yourself].

As previously noted in a footnote, homeless women try to remain hidden in order to avoid sexual assault and violence on the streets, often by entering into relationships (Hardill 1993; Rowe and Wolch 1990). The strategy of remaining hidden therefore appears to be common to both homeless men and women, in an attempt to avoid the dangers of the streets. However, staying hidden meant that, in the event of an injury or health problem, there was no one to turn to for help:

> I got a First Aid kit and all that stuff in [my tent]…You worry about injuring yourself, slipping and falling and breaking a leg, cutting yourself. Who is there to help you if you break a leg? You gonna crawl out of the bloody ravine? That's a long crawl. So you worry about that. Especially in the wintertime (Brian).

Respondents who exercised concealment strategies noted that they were still very vulnerable, as they could not access any assistance of any kind and were completely isolated. Brian described homelessness as being very "lonely."

Respondents talked about the need to avoid avoiding law enforcement officials. Park rangers and police officers were reported to harass homeless individuals, confiscate all of their personal belongings, and order them to move along. Several respondents had had personal encounters with park rangers in the past. Jessica spoke of one such instance:

> I was sleeping, minding my own business. These rangers came by. And they started banging the top of our tent. My tent was all set up…I lost all my stuff. They [park rangers] didn't come there to help me. They came there to terrorize my tent and they told me to get the hell out of there. But as soon as I got out of there, I lost all my clothes and everything behind.

Chris related a friend's experience with park rangers, when they tore his tent down and appropriated all of his personal belongings, only to toss them in the garbage. He reflected on why state agents would confiscate someone's personal shelter and belongings.

> These [homeless] guys are [just] trying to survive. How can a guy survive when they don't want you to survive? They'd rather have you dead...These guys, to me, it's all about their hate. They don't have no love for ya, it's all about their hate. They don't want you there, it makes the city look bad.

For Chris, homeless sweeps reflected state attempts to deny the homeless any existence at all as they retained a primary focus on maintaining a positive public image.

Municipal bylaws in Edmonton prohibit the establishment of any kind of temporary abode in the river valley; anyone doing so may be subject to fines or physical removal (Edmonton 2003). Jackson questioned the logic behind these bylaws, proclaiming that they help neither the homeless nor the state. When homeless individuals are – inevitably – unable to pay the fine, they end up in jail, costing the state even more money.

> People need a place to sleep. The city, they go in there and they fine these people I forget how many hundreds of dollars because they're squatting or whatever. If they could pay the fine, if they had money to pay the fine, they wouldn't be living in a tent or a shanty or a lean-to or whatever, under a blanket under the stars. What kind of stupidity is that? It's not gonna solve the problem. You're gonna throw them in jail and you're gonna end up spending more money on them inside than if you let them stay where they're staying. They're not causing no trouble. They're not burning down forests or, you know. They just need a place to sleep.

The above comment by Jackson highlighted the senseless nature of state regulations that penalize homeless individuals for attempting to carry out the daily activities necessary for human survival. A growing body of research has consistently found that homelessness costs the state considerable expense if people are cycled through institutions such as hospital emergency rooms, emergency shelters, and the criminal justice system. One 2005 study examined four Canadian cities and found that the average cost of institutional responses to homelessness (prison/detention, and psychiatric hospitals) was between $66,000 and $120,000 each year per prisoner/patient (Pomeroy 2005). Another 2004 study compared the cost of institutional responses to homelessness in nine cities (including the institutional involvement of jails, prisons, and

mental health facilities) to costs for providing supportive housing. In most cities, jail and prison costs were at least double that of supportive housing (The Lewin Group 2004).[33]

Respondents felt that experiences in the shelter system eroded their sense of personal dignity and independence, which led most to consider shelters as a last-resort option only. Respondents maintained that they had more personal autonomy, greater control over their own lives and surroundings, and had more privacy on the streets. However, they still faced numerous challenges, including extreme weather conditions, difficulty locating food, threats of violence from other homeless individuals or gang members, and threats of dispersal and confiscation of their personal belongings from park rangers or police officers. The adversities they faced in their daily lives led respondents to describe the streets as stressful, dangerous, socially isolated, and demeaning. While life on the streets was permeated by struggle and hardship, it is noteworthy that respondents considered the shelter system to be equally odious. Respondents' discussions about their lives prior to Tent City provide the backdrop to understand how their lived experiences inside the encampment not only met their basic and immediate needs, but also allowed them to overcome some of the dangers and isolation of the streets.

The Emergence of Tent City

Several respondents noted that the eventual emergence of Tent City was a result of incessant homeless sweeps and evictions by police officers and park rangers and strict enforcement of municipal bylaws. Multiple evictions from the river valley, and from various areas around the City led to a sense that state agents would not allow homeless individuals to remain anywhere.

> Everybody was living behind the river valley and that, and all around [Edmonton]. They [park rangers] were kicking everybody out everywhere…I

[33] This body of research is later discussed in Chapter Five, as it has been recently invoked to corroborate a new policy approach called Housing First, which calls into question the cost-effectiveness of current institutional measures of "managing" homelessness.

> was living in the river valley but I got kicked out of there. Crossed here, in this vacant lot. Everybody was getting kicked out of everywhere (Jackson).

Jackson felt that the actions of state agents factored into bringing about the eventual Tent City, established behind the Bissell Centre.

> Before [Tent City] started, the rangers and the police were corralling everybody into one spot which would be behind the Bissell here…They were kicking everybody out everywhere and they were slowly moving them to back here. Which in the end, turned out to be a good idea [to start a Tent City]…The only place you were allowed to go was [behind the Bissell].

Kevin speculated that because the state clearly did not want homeless individuals sleeping in various areas around the City, as evidenced by the unremitting homeless sweeps, it was likely a conscious decision to open Tent City. "A lot of people were living…all over the city…Too many homeless people. The City decided, we might as well put them all in a group in a clearing. That's the way I picture it happened." While it is perhaps unlikely that police and authorities intended to gather homeless individuals in that particular location, these discussions highlight that authoritative strategies of displacement played a role in the emergence of Tent City. Andrew spoke of this continual process of evictions as exasperating, prompting him to finally set up his tent on a grassy piece of provincial land behind the Bissell Centre. "Finally I got fed up with [all the evictions], and said listen we're going to place our tent right here, and that's it." This marked the beginning of Tent City.

The establishment of a homeless encampment in Edmonton's downtown core led to new understandings of urban space. Three broad themes emerged out of discussions with respondents: Tent City represented a dwelling space embedded with meanings of home; a new community emerged out of the collective experience of redefining themselves to the physical terrain; and, state control mechanisms resulted in the deterioration of the community and the termination of their dwelling place. Respondents asserted that the sense of family that had been established persisted after the encampment had been shut down, enhancing their social networks and their quality of life.

Tent City Embedded With Meanings of 'Home'

I rely on Watson and Austerberry's research to understand the various facets of 'home.' They characterize 'home' as including shelter, decent standards of living and material conditions, privacy and control, loving and caring social relationships, and emotional and physical well-being (1986, 97). Respondents spoke of nearly all of these traits in connection with the encampment. The establishment of personal space that was private, a community to watch over residents' belongings and personal safety, and access to food, water, and bathrooms constituted some of the reasons why respondents described their experiences in Tent City as a time of considerable happiness and relative prosperity. Respondents often referred to other campers as one big "family" and it was clear that Tent City residents experienced dramatic improvements to their overall quality of life. By simply claiming a place to perform dwelling activities, Tent City residents helped to redefine the meaning of a particular social-physical space, contesting authoritative notions of "proper" uses of it in the form of a transgression (Cresswell 1996).

Shelter and Dwelling Activities

Homelessness has been characterized as not only being without a home, but without place (Kawash 1998, 327). Sweeps and municipal bylaws prevent homeless individuals from remaining in one place for very long; they must continually keep moving despite having nowhere to go. Sarah spoke of the some of benefits derived from having a shelter for refuge from the elements.

> Being homeless at that time, I thought [Tent City] was quite an experience. I thought, right on! At least, even if we're homeless, at least we have some kind of shelter. When it rained or something, you know, we had somewhere to go. Even if it was still outside, at least we had a tent to sleep in.

The basic daily needs of Tent City residents were met inside the encampment. The Capital Health Authority brought in portable toilets and a hand sink, hand sanitizer, and drinking water. The provision of toilets was an important material gain for residents, as they indicated there were few toilets available to them outside of Tent City. "At least at

Tent City, they had a place [for us] to go to the bathroom, they provided us with water, we had security" (Jessica). Respondents pointed out that the encampment's proximity to other services in the area eased their daily struggles and provided a space for them to conduct dwelling activities.[34] The location of the Bissell Centre, in particular, was frequently mentioned as convenient and many residents used Bissell services such as toilets and showers throughout the summer. Community agencies dispensed food hampers and provided meals to the encampment on a regular basis throughout the summer. The Mayor of Tent City and his wife discussed the luxury of eating moose meat and having entire cases of water provided:

> Andrew: We'd have some nuns and people drop off food, and donations. Like blankets, clothes.
> Louise: And Saturdays they'd come in with moose meat.
> Andrew: Hot dogs, fresher stuff. They'd come and bring us bottled water.
> Louise: Cases, not just bottles. Cases!

Tent City provided a space for homeless campers to conduct activities normally associated with the privacy of the home. Because homeless individuals do not have access to a private home, they must seek out alternative spaces in which to conduct these functions. Municipal bylaws prohibit such behaviours in public space, which results in many homeless individuals having to exist in a perpetual state of movement. Tent City enabled homeless campers to carry out necessary dwelling activities without fear of further displacement (for the time being), and the provision of toilets, water, and food donations to the site facilitated the ease with which they could meet their dwelling needs.

Privacy and Control

The collective eyes of the community provided residents with a sense of safety that did not exist on the streets or in the shelter system. Many of the residents worked during the day and were gone from the site, but they benefitted from knowing that their belongings would be safe and secure. "Everybody took care of each other in the end. If

[34] Dwelling refers to mean all the private activities that are normally carried out in the privacy of the home: sleeping, eating, urinating, defecating, and intimate relationships.

you weren't there, there was always somebody watching your tent or watching your stuff. It was good" (Jackson). Sarah made a similar comment: "If somebody was gone for a day, I'd keep an eye on their tent so nobody else would go in it." Jessica expressed that the strengthened sense of security inside the encampment came also from the ability to defend some personal space: "[Tent City] was much safer than cops coming over and invading people's privacy and ripping their tents up…It felt more safer over here 'cause it was looking out for everybody." She expressed that this sense of security and control over her personal surroundings allowed her to sleep soundly and undisturbed:

> [Hope Mission] would kick you out at six in the morning. I'd come [to Tent City] in the mornings and others would watch me while I slept…Nobody would bother me. And I felt safe there. To me, Tent City was safety to me. Because I would go from Hope Mission and go down to sleep there.

Sleeping on the streets was challenging, and one respondent divulged how valuable Tent City was to him in this regard:

> I was spending most of my time on the street, day in and day out. Fucking all day and all night, and then I finally would be so tired. Sometimes I wouldn't even sleep. Sometimes I would be so tired I would just wander around until I found a blanket or something. Just find a little place to crawl into. And a lot of times I would, especially if I was drunk, I passed out on the street. I could've froze to death. If they had a place like [Tent City] to go to call your home, then you wouldn't be wandering around the street all night (Jackson).

Jackson's comment alluded to the desperation that homeless individuals feel while sleeping on the streets: "People needed that place [Tent City]. And people do need a place like that. It's totally unsafe for people to live in the River Valley." The organic character of the community contrasted with the institutionalized nature of the shelter system and other homeless services; this also contributed to the ease with which residents felt able to respect and protect others, as Tent City was a manifestation of their own efforts and agency.

Loving and Caring Relationships

Tent City residents established bonds of trust and reciprocity with one another and respondents frequently referred to fellow squatters as their "family." Sharing whatever

resources they had at the time, campers talked about continually looking out for each other and assisting others in whatever way possible.

> If we were out of bread or butter we'd share – we were like a big family. And that's what makes it unique, okay. What made Tent City unique to me, is – we were together. And we helped each other. Come there drunk, we'd drag them home, put them to bed (Jessica).

This respondent employed familial terms when referring to the relationships that were established in the encampment. At one point during the interview, she spoke of protecting her "grandmother" and "grandfather," and she referred to herself as the "mother" of everyone: "And that was the weirdest thing about it all, is that everybody calls me their mom. I was well-respected in the community. That's what was nice" (Jessica). For her, these family relationships connoted respect, leading her to speak of her experience living in Tent City as one of considerable happiness. Tent City represented an expansion of residents' social networks; as a collective, residents found that they were able to acquire what they needed in their daily lives much more easily than when they had been isolated and dispersed. Thus, the social-physical space had been permeated with new meaning, reflective of the "family" that had been established there.

> It was like a big family. You got to know a lot of people that you never would have known if you were living in the River Valley…You'd have a little community, you'd have people that you can go to and say, this is your family. It might not be blood family, but it's your family. Everybody's happy. Takes care of each other. And that's what happened here. Everybody took care of each other in the end (Jackson).

> Everybody that was there, we were basically taking care of each other. We ate and we took care of each other. And it was like a big family…The most important experience I had at Tent City was all solid (Jessica).

The settlement of a group of homeless individuals in Edmonton's downtown core resulted in new definitions of the social-physical space, imbued with embedded meanings of home. Tent City began to break down the strict separations between public and private and residents began to enjoy some of the benefits derived from having a private place to call one's own as well as the benefits of living in a community, resulting in greater material and emotional gains for respondents. Ryan stated, typical of other respondents in this group: "[Tent City] gave me a place of security and happiness." Tent City residents

had collectively created a space where they were able to perform necessary dwelling activities, and "family" members protected each other. The process of establishing a claim to the social-physical space not only provided a dwelling space but also generated a sense of community and shared purpose.

Tent City as a Space for "the Public"

Respondents spoke at length about the organization of the encampment. There were clear rules of behaviour for all residents, there was an established order to the spatial arrangement of the site, and a leadership structure was implemented. Working towards collective goals allowed a sense of shared purpose to develop between residents, and a political community was forged. While homeless individuals were accustomed to being excluded from public spaces[35] and thus, from "the public," Tent City enabled residents to create a "public" or community of their own. The act of taking space had given residents the power to define community, and the collective presence of homeless individuals in one common space altered their understanding of what it meant to be *homeless*; they were no longer outsiders and were able to establish their own criteria of membership in the community.

Rules of conduct and limits of acceptable behaviour were established and mutual respect between campers helped to preserve and cultivate the community. Sarah reflected on the common understandings of appropriate behaviour in the encampment: "For the other tenants, it was basically like keep to yourself, don't go through other people's things. You keep an eye out [for each other]." It was understood that residents should not only respect the personal space and property of other residents, but that they should protect each other from external threats. Helping other residents was perceived as a positive characteristic of the community, and each respondent took pains to emphasize that he or she had embodied these traits during their time in the encampment. "We all

[35] The exclusion of homeless individuals from public space in Edmonton is evidenced through municipal bylaws and homeless sweeps, as discussed in the previous section of the chapter.

looked out for each other and stuff like that. The old people were very happy. 'Cause I took care of them" (Jessica). Enforcing respect for others' personal space and belongings helped to generate a sense of community, while watching out for each other's safety and maintaining the "common" areas of the encampment contributed to group solidarity. Individual behaviours that disturbed others in the community were deemed unacceptable: "Behave yourself. This is where we live. This is where you live. You live here, we live here. Don't make a big scene because you wanna come here and cause some chaos, because we live here" (Louise). These commonly understood rules helped to establish a sense that residents were part of a broader community and were working towards a shared goal: the preservation of the social-physical dwelling space.

Interview transcripts revealed that the majority of respondents employed certain turns of phrase when describing positive characteristics of both themselves and other residents inside the encampment: residents who were accepted members of the community "kept to themselves."[36] The idea of "keeping to oneself" seemed to indicate the reproduction of a middle-class societal norm. Housed individuals do not occupy public space in the same way that homeless people do; they can retreat into private space and then move between private property and public space relatively freely, while the homeless generally occupy *only* public space. This phrase was an expression of the desire to recreate a similar relationship between private and public space. The organization of the site space created distinctions between private and public space: each resident had a designated area and there were rules about when you could enter the area of another resident. "Everybody had their own tent up. Everybody had their own space. Nobody invaded anybody's space" (Jessica). This corroborates with the research findings of Talmadge Wright (1997), who reported that the organization of the social-physical space of a homeless encampment in San Jose provided the foundation for social life and community (1997, 270). The spatial organization of the site and its public/private

[36] Andrew highlighted this with the following quote: "The other residents [of Tent City] were pretty good people, they kept to themselves."

distinctions broadly indicated an aspiration for residents to gain legitimacy in the eyes of "the public."

A leadership structure of the encampment was established within the encampment. One of the first campers to set up his tent was appointed Mayor[37] and he acted as a liaison between campers to resolve conflicts, as well as between campers and community agencies. Several community leaders or "controllers" worked with the Mayor to enforce rules of behaviour. "We kinda kept it an organized situation. I was never the one that was Mayor of Tent City but still one of the leadership cast that people looked to. I worked with the Mayor of Tent City" (Matthew). Maintaining the site's cleanliness was emphasized and common areas were to be kept clean of litter and drug paraphernalia. The Mayor undertook additional responsibilities for cleaning up garbage in the common areas of the encampment and attempted to enforce these behaviours with other residents.

> I'd go to each tent and make sure their tents were good...around the tents, like beer cans and everything, pick them up. And the Bissell would give us bags and so we'd give each tent a bag to put their garbage in, instead of scattering garbage everywhere (Andrew).

His wife also assumed a leadership role in the community. She noted that, although she and her husband tried to enforce acceptable standards of cleanliness and behaviour, everybody was ultimately responsible for him or herself. "We're not the boss or nothing. But we're there to go walk around and make sure everybody's under control, and no violence. It was pretty good for a while" (Louise). Andrew spoke about some of his personal ideas about acceptable behaviour inside the encampment:

> The thing I hate worst is the needles. I don't like that. I used to freak out. When I saw a needle, or somebody in their tent or something I'd freak out. Say you know what, you guys can move today if you're gonna pile needles in front of your tent…I'd freak out, say if there's anybody doing drugs, at least pick this stuff up and throw it out – that's why these buckets are there.

---

[37] It appears that the leadership structure was decided upon democratically, as it was not the Mayor who appointed himself to the position but he was encouraged by other campers to assume the position: "All of a sudden [the other residents] started calling me Mayor of Tent City…And they're asking me, can I put this here? Can I put that there? Well, why are you guys coming to me? They said, well you're the Mayor" (Andrew).

> Then the Bissell can pick them up and they got a truck to pick up the buckets and they could empty them.

It appeared that other residents began to resent the Mayor's attempts to retain order and moderate behaviour and after a few weeks, his tent was slashed, prompting him and his wife to leave. Respondents indicated that the community had wanted the Mayor to leave, and this was communicated by damaging his tent.[38] "Our tent was slashed, so I said forget about [Tent City]…If my tent hadn't gotten slashed and that, I would've stayed" (Andrew). This indicates that camp dynamics were punctuated with power plays; Tent City's first Mayor overextended his reach of authority and tried to assume more power than the community was comfortable with, leading other residents to reject his leadership and membership in the community. Perhaps his leadership was perceived to transgress agreed-upon standards of behaviour, as he no longer "kept to himself" but more actively interfered in the personal affairs of others. The second Mayor lived in the encampment until its final days without incident. Matthew also spoke about some initial challenges in gaining acceptance into the Tent City community. It was not clear why this had been the case; however, over time, the community learned to accept him and he was able to assume a greater leadership role.

The experiences of these two respondents highlight that the assertion of community establishes criteria of membership, and contests are waged over who "belongs" in a political community (Staeheli 2008, 7). There is a politics involved in the formation of a community; the powers to define community also encompass the powers to exclude. Not only did Tent City residents lay a claim to the right to collectively occupy space; they *became* the public in the social-physical space. Lynn Staeheli (2008) argues that there is an intrinsic connection between community and citizenship formation, as

[38] It is interesting that, in communicating the Mayor's exclusion from the community, another standard of behaviour was transgressed: respect for personal property.

community often provides the site to cultivate political subjects and foster social capital[39] (2008, 7). Tent City constituted such a community where power relationships were reordered, so that Tent City residents appeared as legitimate members of "the public", rather than the status of outsiders to which they were accustomed. The act of taking of social-physical space enabled Tent City residents to not only establish a dwelling space to meet their immediate needs, but generated a sense of collective purpose and community. Negotiations over the meaning of "belonging" highlight the political nature of the Tent City community; residents were not just passive victims of structural injustice, but were active agents in the creation and configuration of the Tent City community. Tent City was a site from which an alternative vision of how to organize society and social-physical space emerged.

Tent City provided the space for homeless campers to be represented to the broader population. Individuals from the housed population brought food and donations to the encampment throughout the summer. Kevin understood these actions as an indication that residents had the support of the general public and he spoke about these interactions positively. "At first it was good, people were dropping off food. [Edmontonians] were on our side." And then, later: "People were bringing in food, like the community, and supporting us." This contact enabled homeless residents to forge links with non-homeless citizens and thereby fostered a sense of inclusion in the broader community, while moderating feelings of isolation. This sense of inclusion is supported by the scholarship on homelessness. For example, Don Mitchell argues that it is only in public spaces that groups can represent themselves as legitimate members of the polity (Mitchell 1995, 115), while Engin Isin observes that the interactions between various groups in urban public space are critical in determining citizenship, as they are defined

---

[39] Robert Putnam (2000) defines social capital as: "connections between individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue.' The difference is that 'social capital' calls attention to the fact that 'civic virtue' is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital" (2000, 19).

against each other (Isin 2002). Tent City provided the space for homeless residents to be represented to others, and these interactions accorded a sense of legitimation to campers.

Tim Cresswell (1996) defines the term outsider as someone who, "does not properly understand the behaviour expected of people in a town, region, or nation. Outsiders are often despised and suspected of being trouble-makers. They are people considered to be 'out of place'" (Cresswell 1996, 25-26). As Tent City grew, respondents noted that gang members increasingly became an established presence inside the encampment. During the early days of Tent City's existence, gang members would come to Tent City at night but as the summer progressed, they began to move in to the encampment. With these new residents sharing the social-physical space, the behaviours exhibited inside the encampment began to change. "People who didn't live in Tent City, they'd come there and try and make a party out of it, because a lot of people drank at Tent City, so let's go party" (Louise). Campers stated that night violence was escalating; reportedly, several residents had been threatened and gang members attempted to extort money or other goods from more vulnerable residents. Gang members' lack of respect for other residents' personal space and privacy was clearly an infringement of established standards of appropriate behaviour. As such, they were regarded as troublemakers and outsiders. "Once people started from the outside coming in and starting trouble with other people it got outta hand" (Andrew). Other respondents made similar comments.

> Gangs started invading [Tent City]…But it's when those fucking bastards started coming in that they ruined [Tent City] for us! We felt safe there and stuff, you know. When they started robbing my grandfather or my grandmother and my fucking family, well that was bullshit (Jessica).

Sarah spoke about how residents attempted to reorganize the site space in order to maintain physical distance from gang members. "There were a few of them, because they belonged to gangs it felt like – they had their own corner and we had ours." She went on to say that residents continued to respect the established understandings of appropriate behaviour, despite the blatant disregard of gang members. "We didn't get involved if [gang members] were having problems and all that stuff…I basically kept to

myself. I didn't get involved in any of the big groups. I'm just that way." This comment highlights the distinctive behaviours of gang members and "legitimate" members of the community. However, unlike other respondents, Sarah did not identify gang members as outsiders. She spoke of these acts of violence as perhaps an inevitable component of the continual process of negotiating codes of behaviour: "There was incidents. But you always have to expect that in a community."

Community was generated through enforcing respect for each other's private space and personal belongings, maintaining the site's cleanliness, and watching out for each other's safety. These general rules of behaviour constituted the criteria for inclusion in the community; any one who did not adhere to these understood norms would risk exclusion. Gang members were generally perceived as outsiders and a threat to the community, although residents did not have the capacity or power to exclude them. The newly established community was fragile; the behaviour of gang members and other "outsiders" threatened to break up the cohesiveness of the community. This represented the continuing struggle over redefining spatial meanings. At the heart of such struggles lies questions of control – who would ultimately control the social-physical space, and how would it be understood?

Tent City as Institutional Control

As a response to escalating violence onsite and a fear for the safety of residents, the state re-established mechanisms of institutional control to maintain order and increase security. A fence surrounded the encampment, photo identification was issued to all residents, and security guards patrolled the site continuously. Tent City residents had enjoyed a brief period of time when they had not been subject to authoritative strategies of control; however, as authorities implemented measures to reclaim control over the space, respondents reported that a significant shift in mood accompanied these measures, altering their experiences within the encampment. Whereas organized gangs had initially constituted the primary threat to residents' control over the social-physical

space; the state's institutional measures supplanted the gangs with farther reaching authority. The majority of respondents indicated that state measures had significant reverberations which were felt throughout the encampment, and which impacted residents' behaviours and understanding of the social-physical space.

Only Jackson expressed support for these changes, stating that they were effective in preventing "riffraff" from harassing other residents. He perceived that the state was there to help maintain the safety of the campers. "It was better, yeah. It was safer. Without the fence up, without security, you never know who is coming or who is gonna do what in the middle of the night. So it was all good because security was there 24/7. They kept the riffraff out." Other respondents had mixed views of the security measures. The requirement to show photo identification was seen as positive by one resident because it had not resulted in the exclusion of residents from Tent City; it was also perceived as having some benefit to residents in other situations. "I thought [the identification] was pretty good. At least then you could get access to Tent City" (Matthew). Other respondents saw the photo identification as an unnecessary regulation. "And now people started coming in with pictures, full pictures. And who lives there? Show a picture just to come stay there. And everything got outta hand" (Andrew). "They had to be given an ID card just to be allowed into that place. What the hell was all that about? Didn't make sense to me" (Ryan).

Respondents also had differing reactions to the presence of 24-hour security guards.[40] Two of the respondents welcomed the increased levels of security provided to the site, noting that the guards were able to protect residents against gang members and other undesirable characters.

> They ended up moving in security. That was a good thing. Slowly weeded out the bad. The people were still drinking and doing whatever behind the scenes, but it wasn't haywire with the security guards. They kicked the gangs out, the ones that were causing trouble. They didn't want anybody, they just wanted people who needed a place (Jackson).

---

[40] Three private security guards were hired from Beretta Protective Services International Inc. to patrol Tent City, funded through the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund.

Several respondents expressed disapproval with the decision to provide additional security guards to the site. Matthew observed that security guards had the authority to determine who was "deserving" and "undeserving" of entry into Tent City. He noted that he was shut out of Tent City because of his attitude, rather than because of any particular behaviour or action. Such exclusions were perceived to infringe on residents' personal autonomy. Matthew tried to re-enter Tent City after his eviction, only to be issued three citations for trespassing.

> [Security measures were to] try to prove and disprove who deserves and should be allowed into Tent City. One of the constables blacklisted me and put me on a list of people who cannot be let into Tent City because he didn't like my attitude…there was no reason for me to be ousted or blacklisted for being there (Matthew).

Kevin also reported negative interactions with security guards. He felt his personal space and dignity were violated when he was thrown out of Tent City without warning. "We started protesting and there was security guards there. They literally grabbed me and just pushed me. They grabbed my wrist, didn't touch my wife. But they literally dragged me out, pushed me out the gates. Said don't come back. My wife was angry" (Kevin). He declared that security guards "weren't nice" and did not treat residents with respect.[41] Sarah observed that the security guards' presence changed the general mood of residents throughout the encampment. "Everybody got along. Until the security guards came in there. And then everything changed because it felt like...our privacy was being invaded. Because we were homeless." She noted that security guards would violate personal privacy at their discretion. "When the security wanted to search your tent, you had to let them search your tent. They were basically there, security guards 24 hours a day." The little bit of private space that residents had claimed was being taken away as the social-physical space was redefined as "public" space and subject to the state's

[41] Note the similarities between respondents' perceptions of how security guards treated residents and how shelter staff treated clients.

authority. The newly established collective identity was being replaced by residents' previous, stigmatized identities of "homeless."[42]

The presence of security guards was accompanied by an emphasis on enforcing appropriate behaviours inside the encampment; however, the meaning of "appropriate" behaviour had changed. Standards of behaviour, as established by residents, were usurped by state norms and meanings. Violence was not tolerated, nor was the consumption of drugs. Jackson assessed security enforcement to be reasonable and understandable: "You could have your alcohol as long as you had it in your tent and you weren't causing trouble." Security guards evicted any residents who were consuming drugs, as it was understood that the need for drugs would prompt residents to disrespect the personal space of other campers.

> If you got out of hand, then you were outta there. There was zero tolerance for violence or anything like that. Any drug dealing, drugs were automatic – didn't matter if you were just smoking. If you got caught smoking crack or anything like that, you were gone. No ifs, ands or buts. That shit makes you crazy…People on crack, they'll rob you. They'll be digging around in other people's tents. [Security guards] didn't want that (Jackson).

Authoritative strategies of exclusion, frequently exercised in shelters and public areas that are considered to be off-limits for the homeless, were employed in an attempt to regain control over the encampment. While the Tent City site had previously been a "free" zone which was open to anybody, the photo identification and the security guards limited the freedom of campers to come and go as they pleased, and rendered their presence at the site dependent upon the approval of the security guards. Security guards enforced state understandings of appropriate behaviour within the campsite. Thus, the embedded meaning of the social-physical space began to change.

---

[42] Traditionally, police officers have protected public property and public spaces while private personnel have been employed to guard private property. Police officers receive standardized training in order to ensure that they are well equipped to deal with complex issues fairly on behalf of the public, whereas training for private personnel tends to vary from company to company (Tibbetts 2006). Private security guards were reported by residents to be overzealous in their surveillance of Tent City. State sanctioned violence was left in the hands of private individuals, and illustrates the ease with which "public" property can be contracted out to become "semi-public" or "private."

While respondents expressed mixed reactions to the increased security presence on site and the requirement to show photo identification, they were unanimous in their objections to the chain-link fence. Several respondents maintained that the fence gave the encampment the aura of a prison, and respondents felt as if they were being treated like animals. “[The fence] caged the people in. So you go to jail if you’ve done something wrong. But those people aren’t doing nothing wrong. They were treated like animals” (Ryan). One respondent noted that he thought that the fence was “degrading and demeaning.”

> I didn’t really like being penned in by the City police or the government. Treated like an animal. With them and their little fence-line there. I could understand the security but being penned in like an animal, that demeaned and lowered my feeling of individuality (Matthew).

Respondents identified the construction of the fence as the critical moment that indicated the social-physical meaning of the space had shifted again. Ryan said, “They made a good place worse. They did it to themselves. The own [sic] government did that. They made a good place go bad. [Tent City] started getting bad after [the fence]”. He further expounded that the negativity of the encampment established the justification needed for the state to shut it down and prevent any homeless encampments in the future. “That’s why Mandel said, no more of this. Never gonna be a Tent City again” (Ryan). Chris similarly stated:

> The only thing [the Province] did wrong was put up that fence. But they had figured that out already. They said next year, there’s gonna be no Tent City. So I knew when they put that fence up that there was gonna be no Tent City [in the future]…Tent City was good before they built that fence. Once they put up that fence, everything went to hell.

While the Mayor of Tent City had left the encampment by this point, he reflected on how the community had deteriorated since his departure and felt that this was a direct result of the new leadership:

> Once [residents] got mad at [the second Mayor] they wished I was still there. And then none of that would’ve happened. But like I said earlier, if my tent hadn’t gotten slashed and that, I would’ve stayed. But no, I passed it on. And then he screwed it up and people were getting mad at him. I wouldn’t have let that happen. Everything was going great, and then when I left it went downhill. Because this guy that did this, he was responsible. And he had the

> cops [there] and everything. If you're drinking, you're a crack or a needle user, then you get really paranoid (Andrew).

Several respondents observed that the imposition of these measures resulted in deteriorating interactions among residents. Chris felt that the construction of the fence provoked worse behaviour from inside the encampment: "[The fence] helped turn the people against each other. And that wasn't right. Wouldn't you want to keep peace, instead of having war?" He maintained that the fence was part of a deliberate strategy to break up the community established among campers.[43] "We didn't need the city to come and bring in the fence. That's what they didn't like – we had our own little community." Jessica claimed, similarly: "Before [the government] built that fence, [Tent City] was peaceful. That was the turning point." She explained why she was opposed to a fence surrounding the encampment. For her, this symbolized the state's ultimate power over her autonomy: "It felt like an invasion of space. I don't like fences. I grew up in a residential school. And I was in a penitentiary too for a few years. I just don't like fences. Kinda closes you in." Jessica recognized the fence as a manifestation of state control, which was constructed with the intention of containing and commanding those living inside Tent City.

It is noteworthy that respondents' reactions to the authoritative measures of the state were considerably more volatile than their reactions to the increasing presence of gangs inside the encampment. Several observations can be made: first, both gang activity and state measures were perceived to constitute threats to the residents' community; second, state measures were discussed at greater length by respondents than gangs (without prompting by interview questions); third, respondents expressed greater opposition to the increasing presence of the state inside the encampment than gang violence. Respondents clearly felt that state actions in particular were underhanded

[43] Wright has argued that the establishment of homeless collective identities can resist authoritative strategies (1997, 182).

and illustrated the state's continued lack of concern for the "poor man."[44] Perhaps state power was perceived as more negative because respondents were no strangers to physical violence, as many of them indicated during interviews. As a customary part of their lives, many respondents have developed strategies to cope with violence or avoid it. However, it is considerably more difficult to develop avoidance techniques when confronted with state strategies of control, as the state is organized and pervasive, and thus the scale of its power is much broader than that of gangs. Respondents' negative reactions to the state may also have stemmed from a sense of purposive injustice, whereas gangs were understood to attack at random.

A sign was placed on the fence requesting that public donations be redirected to 'legitimate' community agencies in the area, effectively suspending contact between residents and members of the broader community. Individuals from around Edmonton had been bringing food and donations to Tent City residents throughout the summer but once the fence surrounded the encampment and the sign went up, these donations – which had enabled residents to establish relationships with members of the housed population – and these interactions ended, reinforcing the social exclusion of residents from Edmonton as a whole. Kevin noted that the presence of community members had provided them with encouragement and a sense of support; their absence, therefore, left residents feeling isolated. "At first it was good, people were dropping off food. They were on our side. But as soon as the security guards were hired, everything started turning bad…[The community] weren't even in there, once the fence came up."

During the last month of Tent City's lifespan, provincial officials engaged with residents in order to attempt to find them alternative housing arrangements. Jackson and Sarah spoke of support workers' efforts to find housing, and both respondents perceived these measures to be positive and helpful. Jackson felt that a considerable number of residents had received assistance as a result of these undertakings. "A lot of people that

---

[44] As demonstrated by Ryan: "They [the government] are still not doing nothing to help the poor man out. They'd rather leave him in a gutter to die of filth."

were in Tent City got help from social services. They got help with a place, or with money to get around looking for a place. Or they'd help them get into a program. They helped them get into the YMCA for temporary, until they found a place." Provincial officials' presence inside the encampment was especially helpful for residents.

> Social services got involved near the end. They started helping people move into places. They came down and were setting up tables and chairs in there, interviewing people, helping people get on assistance. Talking to them about doing programs or whatever to help them get off the street. That was a really good thing…By them coming down [to Tent City] during the day and sitting there talking, instead of having them go over to this office which is way over there – it might not seem far to an average person but to a person who is down here, this is their world. The inner city is their world. It's like a big wall (Jackson).

Jackson recognized that it is challenging for homeless individuals to travel outside their environment to access services. Many homeless individuals often do not have the resources necessary to access services, such as money for transportation costs, knowledge of existing services, or adequate health to travel across the city (Kerr 2008, 21). Other studies have cited confusion, hassle, or long waits as factors that deter homeless individuals from accessing services, as well as having been denied the service in the past (Rosenheck and Lam 1997). This research points to significant gaps between service delivery and accessibility for homeless clients. Community-based services have been found to be more effective than office-based services for addressing complex issues for clients (Kerr 2008, 21). Jackson identified some of these barriers, pointing out that service providers were able to bridge this gap by establishing a presence inside the encampment. He spoke about how this enabled him to access existing government resources and supports to find housing, which resulted in placement in a permanent place of residence. Thus, the presence of social services at the Tent City site had long-lasting and positive reverberations that continued after the encampment was shut down.

> [It was] easier for people, especially for people like me. That's how I got into the system. They came and I was like, okay I'll sit down and talk to them. They got me on assistance right away. So it's like, right on. By doing that, it helped me kind of put me on track. Slowly, slowly put me on track. They've been pretty helpful, especially with people who got on assistance from Tent City (Jackson).

Other respondents did not speak about the efforts by provincial officials to find Tent City residents housing during the interviews likely because they were not as fortunate as Jackson in finding housing as a direct outcome of Tent City.

Edmonton's Tent City was closed on September 15th, 2007. A sign was placed on the fence that read, "No replacement facilities will be provided. This property will be secured and no further access will be permitted. All personal belongings must be removed by this date." The fence remained standing around the encampment, even after Tent City had been closed. For most respondents, the encampment's closure was viewed as having been motivated by a desire, on the part of state officials, to maintain a positive image of the City rather than a desire to help homeless individuals in Edmonton. According to Chris: "[The City is] just trying to make themselves look good, and forget about everybody else…If they opened the gates today, there'd be a lot of people moving right back in there again. They don't want that. 'Cause the Mayor's trying to run for an election, I think?" Ryan made a similar comment:

> [The City] just didn't want nobody getting killed. It woulda made the Mayor look bad. It was already making them look bad already. That was why they put the fence up, said there's not gonna be another Tent City…to make the city look a little better...[but] it's always gonna be the same, there's always gonna be homelessness.

Jessica perceived that Tent City had been shut down because the state consciously intended to disrupt the positive dwelling space established by residents, or alternatively, she perceived that the state did not wish the Bissell Centre to be assisting homeless residents. Either interpretation indicates that Jessica felt that a greater amount of assistance was forthcoming from the Bissell Centre than from state officials.

> [Tent City's closure] had to do with government. Bissell basically covered our backs here, [and] they were [supportive] and all for [Tent City]. Because they were helping us homeless people. And the government shut [Tent City] down because they didn't want Bissell to cover our behinds [and help us]. Government controversy…They don't understand.

What is evident from these statements is that the state was perceived to be an antagonist to the aims of Tent City residents. There was an understanding among many respondents that visible homelessness was problematic for officials; thus, the closure of

Tent City appeared to be motivated by politics rather than by the needs of homeless residents.

Chris felt that state measures had been shaped by negative perceptions and stereotypes of homeless individuals, resulting in unnecessarily punitive policies:

> That was a very bad decision on the City's behalf [to close Tent City]. If it was still open there, and they hadn't controlled it, and they had let the people that are actually not doing drugs and not doing alcohol inside there, that would be a good decision. There's a lot of people out there that do not drink and do drugs and stuff like that. But they don't think like that. They do not think.

Chris felt that the state's understanding of homelessness was embedded in an individualist perspective, which sees homeless individuals as responsible for their own plight rather than the victims of broader structural factors. He felt that this perception shaped policy responses to Tent City to be punitive towards residents. Reiterating that the state perceived the homeless population to be largely comprised of drug addicts and alcoholics, it was clear that, in his view, state officials perceived homelessness to be a result of personal inadequacies or failures. He felt that this stigma was undeserved and erroneous, and he pointed to structural factors that had precipitated increasing homelessness rates.

> It's also the rental increases that have gone up that has increased the homelessness. Because I have some friends who had the rent gone up on them, they've lived in the same place for twenty years and all of a sudden, next thing they know, they're homeless! Living out on the street, because of the rental increases. What they need is a rental control board. Walk in there and say, hey this place is not worth what you're actually charging (Chris).

His comments corroborate with academic research which has found that when predominant understandings of homeless causality favour individualist explanations and the individual is seen to be responsible for his or her plight, then the homeless are perceived as "undeserving" of state assistance (Rosenthal 2000). Policies targeting homelessness under this perspective tend to gravitate towards punitive measures that enforce a moral work ethic through workfare programs or incarceration (Neale 1997). Conversely, when homelessness is framed as a result of broader structural factors beyond the control of the homeless individual, the homeless population has been more

frequently perceived as “deserving” of state assistance (Rosenthal 2000). Chris had pointed to a key debate about homelessness for many decades, and more importantly, had identified a key factor in the determination of how public policies are shaped.

The chain-link fence left standing after the encampment’s closure signaled the community’s loss of access to (limited) leisure space as well as Tent City residents’ access to dwelling space. Andrew remarked wistfully upon the loss of the park, and reflected upon the good times he had had, when he could use it as a place to relax and unwind.

> I like the park because I used to sit there before [Tent City] happened, used to sit there and smoke cigarettes and relax…And the cops would never bother us. But now it’s closed off. Kinda bothered because I remember the days I used to sit here...Relax in the hot sun.

Kevin observed that, despite the involvement of state officials to find residents housing, there were still thousands of individuals who were homeless in Edmonton. Although this particular Tent City had been shut down, the emergence of future encampments was inevitable unless homeless individuals were provided with alternative housing options. “[Tent City] is gonna happen again and again if they don’t have shelters, or better housing. And if you don’t have that, it’s gonna happen again this summer. People are gonna be pitching their tents all along the river.” Kevin pointed out that no real solutions had been found, compelling homeless individuals to occupy alternative spaces around the City. The struggle over space was not over.

Life After Tent City

Tent City’s closure meant that its residents were forced to find alternative places to sleep at night. Only one respondent who had been interviewed for this project had found housing with the assistance of provincial officials who had established a presence inside Tent City. During the interview, Jackson spoke about the process of finding housing:

> [Social services] helped me out with money, even though I didn’t have a place. They kinda – they were on my case for a while to get a place. And I ended up having to go look around and do things on my own. And try and stay sober to do it. But I’m glad they did it, because now I got my own place. I knew that was the case, as soon as I got my place then I’d smarten up…Now things are okay there, I don’t drink at home. No drugs.

Jackson admitted to having been in detoxification centres sixteen times to try to quit his drug habit while he was living on the street. He had been unable to successfully sober up until he moved into a place of his own. His ability to establish some private space was a key factor in enabling him to remain sober:

> It keeps me clean and sober actually. I come downtown. If I was to get a place downtown, then the amount of people that would be in and out of my place, it wouldn't be good. Not for me. Where I'm at now, I can go home and just be there by myself. Shut the world out. If I want to see somebody I'll go out and see them. I kinda like my own space. I'm just that way.

This comment echoes the narrative that respondents used to describe other Tent City residents while they were living inside the encampment. Residents were attempting to replicate similar distinctions between private and public space as exist for the housed population; for Jackson, then, acquiring his own place allowed him to enjoy the benefits of literal private space and to move between private and public space as a housed individual, and thus, a legitimate citizen.

Four other respondents interviewed for this study had found housing since the closure of Tent City, although not as a direct result of the efforts exerted by provincial officials inside the encampment. Andrew and Louise had been housed for fifteen months at the time of the interview. They had received financial assistance through the provincial Homeless Eviction and Prevention (HEP) Fund to help with the initial setup costs of the apartment. While their sense of general well-being and happiness had increased significantly since establishing themselves in a permanent home, initially they had faced challenges when their apartment was broken into, incurring considerable damage. Away from the city for several days, they arrived home to smashed windows, a broken-down door, holes in the walls, and a broken refrigerator. The cost of the broken items was not covered by the provincial fund and the couple spent the next six months eating dry foods and cereal until they could save enough money to replace the fridge. They also expressed frustration with the number of homeless individuals who would frequent their apartment, using it for their own purposes; they talked about moving to another place in the near future in order to re-establish a sense of privacy and personal space.

> Now that people know where we live, I'm thinking to myself it's time for us to move along again. I don't mind letting my friends stay on the floor, eat, I don't mind because they're homeless too, I don't mind helping them. But when it gets out of hand…you gotta put your foot down and say hey…Why can't you help yourself? (Andrew).

Despite these ongoing challenges, they preferred their apartment to Tent City. While they had enjoyed living in Tent City, maintaining a home appeared to have considerable status for both of them. They reported that since the acquisition of their new place, they had exerted efforts to remain sober so as to continue to inhabit it.

> Now I've got people coming up to me saying, why don't you start up another [Tent City]? I says, no. Because I got a home now. If you want to start something up, start it on your own. I've even told you guys yourselves, I've even asked you, try to find yourself a home instead of starting up a Tent City. Find yourselves a home! It looks good on you when you do get a home (Andrew).

Sarah had been living in an apartment for almost two months at the time of the interview. She was not fully satisfied with her living arrangements, as she noted that the building was run-down and considerable drug activity was common. She remarked that her landlord was attempting to remove drug dealers and drug activity from her building, which was gradually yielding a more comfortable place to live. She stated that she would allow her friends to stay with her when they had no other options, but unlike the previous couple, she did not express a lack of control over her own space. She spoke at length about the benefits of Tent City in establishing stronger community bonds; these bonds transcended the encampment and lived on in the streets of Edmonton. This combination of community and establishing some private space seemed to afford Sarah a great sense of personal happiness.

Jessica had been living in an apartment of her own for nearly seven months at the time at the interview. She was pleased about having her own place, although she spoke about the continual challenge of dealing with others who wanted to use her apartment to sleep. The night prior to the interview, she had asked a friend who was fleeing his crack dealer to leave her apartment. While she sympathized with him and wanted to help him, she expressed frustration at having the drama and violence of the streets follow her into her home. Her apartment had been vandalized several times, and

she had had significant problems with the facilities in her apartment. She reported that something was leaking out of her bathtub that made her nauseous whenever she entered the washroom; her landlord had failed to show up already on one scheduled occasion to repair this problem. At a later date, she reported more vandalism to her apartment at the hands of other individuals. Despite these challenges, she noted that her place met her needs more appropriately than had her previous dwellings in Tent City. While she had enjoyed living in Tent City and spoke of her experience there as a time of great happiness, she clearly stated that a homeless encampment was not a long-term solution to homelessness: “I also think that they shouldn’t have a Tent City. Everybody should have their own home.” Contact was lost with Jessica when she was eventually evicted from her apartment, reportedly because of another incident of vandalism.

Housing alone did not resolve all of the issues and challenges for these respondents. As discussed in Chapter One, homelessness exists on a continuum. Respondents’ reports of poor housing conditions, undesirable characters living in the buildings, transitory friends who were in and out of their homes on a regular basis, and vandalism to their personal property illustrate some of the challenges which persist even after being housed. While these respondents had been lifted out of “visible” homelessness at one end of the continuum, their housing arrangements revealed various degrees of residential insecurity and instability; as such, they had moved along the continuum but had not yet left homelessness completely. They were still at risk of returning to literal homelessness at any time, with the possible exception of Jackson. In order to ensure that individuals do not fall back into visible homelessness, housing arrangements must be adequate, suitable and affordable. The quality of housing provided is of critical importance; if housing meets these criteria, then considerable gains can be made in reducing levels of homelessness.

For those individuals who had not been able to find housing since Tent City, their lives were fairly unchanged. They resumed sleeping in the river valley or in other places around Edmonton. Kevin’s future housing arrangements were unknown. He was awaiting

a trial at the time of the interview to determine whether he would go to jail or not; if acquitted, he planned to leave Edmonton to rejoin his wife in British Columbia, who had found an apartment close to friends and family. For others, life after Tent City was not much different than it had been before. They remembered their time in the encampment as a brief but positive interlude, providing them with some respite from the challenges and threats they faced on the streets. Several respondents stated that, although they had felt the support of the broader community while they were living in Tent City, the encampment's closure meant that the issues of homelessness were once again forgotten. "There's a bigger problem than people realize, definitive need. Twenty-five, three thousand, five thousand people homeless in the city. Everybody else has their lives but nobody is actually doing anything to help get these people off the streets" (Matthew). There was a sense that the City and Province had also forgotten about the plight of the homeless. When asked to identify any state policies or programs that had been helpful in assisting the homeless outside of Tent City, Kevin captured the feeling of others in the following comment: "Is there any?...I don't see no programs. All I see is the shelters and the drop-ins being open. But I see nothing they're offering, they're just giving us a place to be warm." Kevin noted that the HEP Fund was a positive first step, but it was insufficient to address homelessness: "Giving [the homeless] money is good. What [the provincial government] started doing is paying damage deposits and that. That was a good idea. But still, there's no housing. There's a shortage."

Community bonds forged amongst residents living in Tent City persisted beyond the encampment's lifespan. This sense of community was transmitted through encounters at local service agencies and on the streets. "Tent City brought us closer together. All of us, before Tent City we were fighting. We were fighting because we didn't have no place to go…It brought us closer together. It kinda closed that gap. And we appreciate being friends more" (Sarah). Respondents valued their experiences at Tent City because of the autonomy, privacy, and community it had provided them. They had felt the perfunctory support of the housed population and they had access to clean water,

food, and washrooms. Tent City represented a brief time when residents could enjoy some of the benefits of having somewhere to call “home.” However, respondents shared the view that Tent City was not a long-term solution to homelessness and no substitute for adequate, suitable, and affordable housing. As Jessica stated, “All [the homeless] need is more housing…That’s all they need.”

CHAPTER THREE

Results: State Officials

Introduction

Six state officials were interviewed for this project, all of whom were women. The group consisted of key informants from the municipal and provincial levels of government who were elected officials or employed within the bureaucracy.[45] While only some respondents had been directly involved with the process of developing a policy response to Tent City, all members of this group were closely involved with the creation of homelessness policy in Edmonton or Alberta. A close reading of the interview transcripts revealed a pervasive understanding of Tent City as a problem that hindered officials from addressing homelessness in a more appropriate manner. Discussions were framed by the assessment that homeless encampments do not constitute a real solution to homelessness, making Tent City's closure necessary and inevitable. With this understanding, respondents spoke about management of the encampment as both positive and effectual. Respondents felt that measures taken throughout the summer had resulted in a very successful resolution to the issue, whereby the encampment was closed and urban campers were offered alternative housing. Other themes that emerged from the interviews focused on the learning opportunities presented to officials throughout the process of managing the encampment, and respondents also identified the strengthening of working relationships as a positive outcome. These relationships helped to establish more effective and collaborative policy approaches to address homelessness issues after Tent City. While Tent City was not perceived to have had a significant impact on state policy to address homelessness, there was much optimism about the future direction of policy which, at both the municipal and provincial levels of government, was focused on shifting towards a Housing First (HF) approach. This chapter will first discuss

[45] Each respondent has been given a pseudonym, in order to attribute each quote to its speaker yet maintain the confidentiality of the respondents.

the management of Tent City, the second section will explore what state officials learned throughout their involvement with the encampment, and the third section will examine how institutional relationships were strengthened. In the fourth and final section of the chapter, future directions of homelessness policy will be explored.

Management of Tent City

Tent City was Edmonton's first major homeless encampment in recent history. As such, its emergence took state officials by surprise. Respondents indicated that they were unprepared to deal with a large group of homeless individuals taking residence in Edmonton's downtown, and there was little awareness of what an appropriate policy response would look like. While state officials hesitated and deliberated over how to react, the encampment continued to grow until it had become a very large community. "One [tent] went up and then the second went up, because nobody was quite sure about whether we should take them down or not take them down, it just developed to the point where it became this small community that took on a life of its own" (Charlotte). A committee was established to determine how to address Tent City, which met on a regular basis throughout the summer. The committee was comprised of Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel, as well as representatives from several provincial departments, Capital Health Authority, Edmonton Housing Trust Fund, community agencies such as Boyle Street McCauley Services, and Edmonton Police Service. Because they were initially asked to respond to calls for a temporary, government-funded campground for the homeless when campers were evicted from the Bissell Centre parking lot (Ruttan and Zabjek 2007), the committee's questions formed around whether to support a homeless campground; and, if allowed to stand, how it would be managed. "There were discussions, should we have a piece of land somewhere where people can set up their tents? Well that comes with its own problems as well…There were in-house discussions here about, do we encourage that or not?" (Charlotte). Charlotte highlighted the multifarious perspectives and concerns brought forward at these meetings. She stated

that the immediate challenge of Tent City was the lack of alternative housing options for residents; in the face of few or no alternatives, how could officials respond fairly? Charlotte articulated one of the central concerns of state officials that summer: “Do you shut down a community that is built, just because it doesn’t meet what our thinking about what it should look like?” She noted that other committee members, primarily police officers, brought forward concerns about security and liability if somebody were to become injured, suggesting that the only option was to remove campers from this space. Rachel highlighted the disagreement among committee members about how to respond to Tent City: “There was a lot of counterpoint [in the committee] in terms of issues and discussion about what should happen…There was a bit of, I don’t want to say an impasse but certainly some real disagreement about whether or not [Tent City] should just be shut down.” Before developing a response to Edmonton’s burgeoning homeless encampment, committee members researched other Canadian and American jurisdictions that had dealt with homeless encampments to learn from their experiences. They also looked into alternative housing arrangements for campers, such as temporary structures which could provide shelter for residents until longer-term solutions could be found. While officials were well aware that there had been outdoor camping in various spots around Edmonton for many years, Charlotte highlighted that the location of this encampment – in the city’s downtown – meant that this issue was more of a concern.

> There are other places in the river valley where people do congregate. And there are other spots in northeast Edmonton, northwest Edmonton against the St. Albert border where there are Tent Cities. But there was nothing as visible as what this was in the downtown (Charlotte).

Two respondents noted that the high visibility of the encampment was significant because it provided members of the broader public with a deeper understanding of the seriousness and extent of homelessness across Edmonton. The presence of a homeless community in the city’s downtown prompted many people to exert pressure on elected officials to do something about it; state officials addressed this encampment, in part, due to the increased pressure they felt from the broader public. “[Tent City] was good because more and more people said [to elected officials], hey we have to do something

at that point" (Melanie). Audrey made a similar comment: "[Tent City] was very much a visibility thing [for state officials] – how can we do something about this and reduce people's angst?"

The committee was obliged to address two distinct categories of questions with regard to Tent City. First, the committee was tasked with the role of determining how to provide temporary supports for campers inside the encampment, and second, the ultimate goal was to ensure that this community would be terminated.

> There is the immediate issues management challenge around a bunch of people camping illegally, and the public health issues and the child protection issues and the safety issues that those people were experiencing were pretty significant…[Tent City] was a very dangerous place for people to be living…So how do you provide security and police it and how do you ensure the safety of children and how do you make sure there is safe drinking water and all these other things? And at the same time, make sure this doesn't continue. Because [Tent City] was absolutely not an acceptable response to the homelessness situation in the province and in particular, the city. So all those issues had to be managed (Leah).

Most respondents indicated that the committee was operating with the understanding that Tent City would ultimately be shut down; state officials intended to leave Tent City open only as long as was absolutely necessary. "There was never any intention to leave Tent City open, not to my knowledge anyways" (Vanessa). Tent City was seen to constitute substandard housing and was dismissed with arguments that government could never support it when safer alternatives for housing arrangements existed.

Carol Lee Bacchi (1999) has argued that a policy issue does not have an implicit or inherent meaning; problems are constructed and meaning is constituted within a broader frame of understanding (1999, 9). While 'poverty,' 'crime,' 'illegal immigration,' and 'homelessness' are examples of issues that may be on the political agenda and of interest to state officials, the designations give no indication of how the issues are actually defined. Bacchi maintains that each policy proposal contains an implicit diagnosis of what the 'problem' is, which she classifies as the 'problem representation' (1999). Problem representation shapes the resultant policy outcome, implicitly creating the 'solution.' For instance, if 'homelessness' were understood as "the state's failure to provide adequate housing for all citizens," the solution would target state housing

policies. If homelessness were depicted as "street people who willfully reject employment norms," the solution would target individual non-participation in the labour market.[46] According to R.B. Reich, "the most important aspect of political discourse is not the appraisal of alternative solutions to our problems, but the definition of the problems themselves" (Reich 1988, 5).

In order to properly understand the response of state officials to the phenomenon of Tent City, it is necessary to examine how they defined and framed the issue. A close reading of the interview transcripts reveals that most state officials perceived the underlying issue to be homelessness. While this may seem obvious to the reader, it is important to note the connection. Recall the discussion in the literature review about how homelessness is socially constructed, and how the definition of 'homelessness' has changed over time in accordance with the ideological leanings of governments (Watson and Austerberry 1986). Within the context of Tent City, state officials defined homelessness as 'a lack of shelter for individuals with multiple and complex needs.'[47] Not surprisingly, the policies being championed by state officials fit with that definition and advocated an HF approach, which focuses on the provision of permanent housing arrangements, as well as follow-up supports. Here, we can see the close connection between the policy frame (lack of shelter for individuals with multiple and complex needs) and the policy "solution" (provision of shelter and supports for individuals with multiple and complex needs). Tent City did not provide a "solution" of any kind to the issue of

---

[46] There are close connections between problem representation of homelessness and perceived causation of homelessness, as discussed in Chapter One. Note that the two examples provided correspond roughly to the structuralist and individualist perspectives.

[47] Charlotte encapsulated this policy frame in the following quote: "If you don't have enough income you can't afford a place to stay. Part of that also is that there are reasons you may not have enough income, or you can't hold a job. Why can't you hold a job? Maybe you don't want to work but on the other hand, a lot of it is that you can't work for certain reasons. One of those reasons is that you are not reliable…because you have mental health issues…And so you need to almost look at all of the different facets…if you don't deal with the mental health issues…the addiction issues…and the behavioural issues, then the [lack of] money is almost a side bar issue…But besides all of that, if you haven't got a place to put your head at night, then you don't get that ability and that pause to say, okay I want to change what is happening in my life – how do I do that?"

homelessness; the decision to dissolve the encampment fit within this particular policy frame and appeared to be an appropriate response. Further, Tent City was widely considered to be inappropriate: "It is not a place for people to live, in a tent, in the middle of your downtown" (Charlotte). Other respondents made similar remarks, emphasizing that downtown public spaces were unsuitable to accommodate dwelling needs. The decision to shut down Tent City was seen to be reasonable and inevitable.

Once it was established that Tent City would be closed, the follow up question for the committee became, how long would it be necessary to keep the encampment open? Charlotte mentioned that there was a concern that they not be seen publicly as simply evicting residents. "The issues then became around, well if [homeless campers] are there, it is not a place for them to be but we don't want to be seen as evicting people – to where, because they have no place to go." Another respondent made a similar comment, indicating that there was a need for state officials to try to provide more adequate shelter for residents before they could legitimately close the encampment:

> [Tent City] was never a good idea. It was an *ad hoc* location that grew…[Tent City] wasn't the right thing to have in the first place but just shutting it down and pretending that people were not going to go someplace else without trying to offer housing was, we all agreed, that wasn't the best solution (Rachel).[48]

The encampment was to stay open until alternative housing arrangements could be provided for Tent City residents. In the meantime, encampment regulations were established by which all campers were required to abide. The rules of Tent City were as follows: (1) No weapons; (2) No drug activity in common areas (meaning anywhere outside a tent); (3) No fire pits; (4) No public intoxication; (5) No fighting; (6) No campers under the age of 18; (7) No visitors after 11pm; (8) No hoarding (Vanessa). A security guard monitored the site during the weekdays and was responsible for enforcing these regulations.

---

[48] Here, again, we see that the policy frame shaped state officials' understanding of the appropriate outcome. If homelessness is caused in part by a lack of housing, then the policy response must incorporate the provision of housing.

Provision of Facilities and Food/Water to the Site

State officials recognized that there was a need to provide short-term supports to the encampment because, "you couldn't ignore that there was a group of people there that had some basic needs" (Charlotte). Drinking water and toilets were delivered to the site in order to ensure that basic sanitation standards were being met. Capital Health Authority visited the site daily to deal with any potential diseases or illnesses and to try to mitigate concerns about health liability issues. However, the provision of even basic services to the Tent City site sparked debate amongst committee members. There was considerable disagreement about whether the site should be provided with water, as some people felt that this would merely attract other homeless individuals to the site, thereby growing the size of the encampment.

> There was a lot of debate about water. We brought water to the site and we had fresh water on the site and refilled it all summer. And there were lots of people thinking that was the wrong thing to do. There will always be these debates about the right response…The water thing is interesting because, for many people, they might have thought it attracted [homeless] people (Rachel).

This reasoning is commonly known as the "magnet theory," which assumes that homeless individuals are drawn to a particular place in order to access food, water, services, or even lenient bylaws which allow the homeless to live more comfortably than in other cities. Proponents of the magnet theory fear that the existence of such incentives will induce large numbers of the homeless to flock to a place; the aim is to eliminate the incentives so that governments do not have to deal with a snowballing homeless population. This theory has often been the driving force behind ordinances which proscribe sleeping or sitting in public places, as well as behind governments' decisions not to provide better housing or service options (Johnson 1999). However, recent research has repeatedly illustrated that this fear is a myth. Homeless individuals have been found to be less mobile than is often perceived and therefore lacking the flexibility (and funds) to move easily to a new location (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty 1997, 37). Rachel stated that the ultimate decision to provide water to the site

was motivated by the desire to prevent residents from pilfering the private water supply of other community members.

> The number of people at Tent City who would have been trespassing on neighbours, they were getting their water from somewhere. They were getting it from somebody's back yard. They were getting it from some commercial location. [The decision to provide water] was to mitigate some of the impact it was having on the fact that there was that many people there (Rachel).

Food management was also an issue of consideration for state officials. Many individuals from the broader population dropped off food to the encampment over the course of the summer. State officials expressed concern that there were potential liability risks if anybody fell sick with food poisoning. Vanessa discussed the issue of health liability:

> Many people [came] to the camp to distribute food left over from banquets or well-intentioned church groups. People…[dropped] off food on the tables for the homeless and that [created] another problem from the health perspective as much of this fruit is cut up and left out in the open. We eventually stopped people from coming on to site to distribute food to the campers. This did not stop people from delivering food outside the fence but it did limit our liability in the event of food poisoning.

Media reports from the summer indicated that two residents fell sick from salmonella poisoning during the third week of July (Edmonton Journal 2007). Soon after this incident, officials decided to provide additional security measures to the encampment that interrupted the continual provision of foods to the site. The Health department posted a sign on the fence that surrounded the encampment, asking members of the public not to drop off food in order to mitigate the liability risks involved.

Security Measures

At the end of July, state officials made the decision to erect a fence around the encampment, hire three full-time security guards to patrol the site, create a system of registration so that existing residents were required to show photo identification when re-entering the site, and prohibit any new campers from entering the site. Rachel asserted that these security measures were imposed in order to ensure the safety of residents living inside Tent City. This corresponded with news releases and public media reports

from the summer. The increasing size of the encampment was escalating the volatility of the environment inside.

> If there's twenty people camping loosely together and they all know each other, when you get a bigger congregation of people, a fight breaks out. That fight may erupt into something bigger…So certainly [Tent City] became more and more risky for the people there. It was not a safe place to be (Rachel).

This volatility was further exacerbated by the increasing presence of drug dealers and gang members inside the encampment. Charlotte felt that these security measures were in accordance with the wishes of the residents themselves, who needed further protection.[49]

> That was all for safety reasons. And it was not the safety of the people outside, but it was the safety of those residents inside who were being seen as a target by some others on the outside who wanted to exploit that they were there...There was a bit of a criminal element that wanted to move in, and [residents] wanted to keep them out (Charlotte).

According to Leah, these security measures provided for the safety of the residents because they effectively created a space with structure and rules. This was part of a deliberate strategy to create a similar institutional environment as that of emergency shelters.

> What we did is we made Tent City like a shelter. There are a lot of people who were living in Tent City that didn't want to live in shelters. As I said, shelter spaces were available. There were rules, there was security, and there was registration – so people moved out. Some of the incentives that brought them there, a kind of unregulated free for all, [with] everything wide open, diminished over time (Leah).

While the previous chapter on Tent City residents clearly demonstrated the existence of an organized community with a leadership structure, common rules, and standards of behaviour to help maintain peace and order, Leah's comment reflects a perception of Tent City as an anarchic space that had no established rules or form of

---

[49] Media reports from the summer indicated that Tent City residents requested a meeting with Edmonton City Police to discuss the presence of gangs and increasing violence. At this meeting, campers asked for police assistance in apprehending gang members, as they reported that several individuals could be seen walking around Tent City at night carrying weapons such as swords, knives and guns. They expressed concern that a serious offence or death of one of the community members would result and asked the Police to intervene. While this meeting did not come up in any of the interviews for this project, it supports Charlotte's claim that residents wanted some form of protection.

governance. This raises questions about whether state officials are able to recognize forms of governance other than those sanctioned by state agents. Her comment reflects a perception of homeless individuals as deliberately rejecting rules and social structures, and indicates an understanding of homelessness that is rooted in an individualist perspective.

Because homelessness exists outside the established societal norms of work and home, homeless individuals are often associated with "disorder" and "lawlessness" (Amster 2004, 115). In this society, most people work because there is a need to pay for housing and shelter. There is little perceived choice in these matters (Marcuse 1988, 83). However, the homeless have defied these conventions and live somewhere outside of the traditional system. This has led the homeless to be socially constructed as embodying lawlessness, whereas the dominant culture is seen to represent order and lawfulness (Amster 2004, 114). The assumption that homeless individuals refuse to abide by the terms of the dominant culture results in law-and-order policing and punitive policies which target these signs of disorder in order to enforce compliance, or remove them from public view.[50] These policies, through various methods, attempt to remove the object of disorder – the homeless – from public spaces. The perception of Tent City as an anarchic space, and the construction of homeless individuals as lawless subjects, provided further justification for officials to dismantle the encampment entirely so as to restore order and discipline to Edmonton's public spaces.

The above comment by Leah also reveals that the intention of state officials was to refashion Tent City as a last-resort option for residents as she hoped it would prompt them to move elsewhere. Recall the discussion in Chapter Two about how shelters were designed to be uncomfortable and disagreeable so that homeless individuals would opt for alternative accommodation. Similarly, the creation of institutional rules governing Tent

---

[50] There is a further motivation for removing the homeless from public spaces: they are seen to undermine the discipline of the market because they demonstrate that there is, in fact, an opportunity to eke out a living outside of the formal wage market (Gordon 2005, 62).

City was intended to reduce the number of residents inside the encampment. While the security measures were initially presented as intended to maintain the safety of the residents, further discussion revealed that they served another purpose, and were a deliberate step towards the eventual closure of Tent City. “[A fence] was really going to be necessary if there was going to be a decision to close the site” (Rachel).

Search for Housing

The security measures did not receive a significant amount of attention from respondents. Most respondents focused their discussion on the search for housing arrangements, which was seen as a more significant component of the strategy to address Tent City. Additional support workers were funded so that they could be present on-site to work with willing residents in order to find them housing. Agencies like Boyle Street McCauley Services and the YMCA were awarded government funding, funneled through Edmonton Housing Trust Fund, in order to allocate outreach workers to Tent City. The intention was to identify the individual needs of residents and find appropriate housing and supports, which would continue after they had been housed. Respondents championed these measures as positive and constructive ways to respond to Tent City. They understood that they had a responsibility to offer services to try to meet the dwelling needs of residents. Some residents were found apartments, while others were put into emergency shelters or into addiction treatment centres. Money for damage deposits was provided through provincial programs like the Homeless Eviction and Prevention Fund, as well as Rent Supplement. There was a sense that the majority of the Tent City residents who were interested in finding housing had their needs addressed, with the assistance of the province and several service agencies.

> We were running a Housing First initiative, right? That’s what it was. We were taking people out of Tent City and we were housing them. We were providing them with supports, the YMCA was providing supports, as was Boyle Street Community Services providing supports. So we were running a Housing First initiative (Vanessa).

HF is believed to have developed in New York City in 1992 through a non-profit agency called Pathways to Housing Inc and led by clinical psychologist Dr. Sam Tsemberis

(Falvo 2009, 7). HF provides its participants with access to housing, underpinned by the belief that providing individuals with housing creates a foundation from which recovery can begin. Clients have access to an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team which can consist of a nurse practitioner, a social worker, a vocational trainer, an addictions worker, and a health practitioner once they are housed. Central to HF is the belief that empowering clients can enable them to take a primary role in their own treatment by recognizing the choices that are open to them, and implementing strategies to improve their lives (Falvo 2009, 7). This approach will be discussed in greater detail in the last chapter.

There were varying perspectives about how many individuals were housed, and several respondents were of the belief that all Tent City residents had been offered some form of housing. This was not actually the case; according to government reports, fifty-eight people were housed directly out of the Tent City site. Out of these fifty-eight residents, seventeen were placed in affordable housing units, twelve in apartments, ten in transitional housing at the YMCA, twelve in emergency shelters, while two were given bus tickets to stay with friends or relatives outside of Edmonton and two more were placed in hotels. Many of these residents did not stay in their original housing placement. Six months later, provincial reports indicated that thirty-eight residents were still housed in rental units, transitional YMCA housing, shelters, or had relocated out of town. Seven other homeless individuals, who had previously been provided with housing, were moved out of their housing in order to make room for Tent City residents. Residents were tracked only for six months after Tent City had been shut down; after that point, there were no records of where they ended up. Respondents in this group all agreed that they had addressed residents' needs to the best of their abilities, and this constituted a positive step for individuals who had been housed. When compared with other jurisdictions that had dealt with a Tent City of their own, respondents felt that the Edmonton case had been more successfully resolved.

> A bunch of things altogether led to a very peaceful and I think quite successful resolution of a really tough issue. I think they did better here in

> Edmonton than I had seen in Toronto or Victoria or other places. They went to the need, and took a little time to understand what was going on there and started chipping away at some of those issues. Many don't want to take the time to do that. It's easier to bring in the riot police or something (Leah).

Audrey noted that the search for housing for Tent City residents displaced other previously homeless individuals who had been housed, in order to make room for Tent City residents. She felt that the visibility of Tent City created an immediate pressure for the City and the province to find residents housing promptly. She suggested that officials were focused primarily on closing down Tent City to reduce the embarrassment felt by the province and the City than they were with addressing the needs of homeless individuals.

> Those individual cases, there was a concern because [Tent City residents] got preferential treatment in a way – all these hundreds of people that need help, but these individual cases were placed in Housing First because they…were seen as higher profile. Not just visible but higher profile. And that would dissipate this congregation of so many together, right? [State officials] wanted them to dissipate, just have a few here and a few there (Audrey).

Melanie made a similar comment: "So [state officials] then got [Tent City residents] into real housing. But [Tent City residents] also became the number one priority so other people didn't get in, because they got in. Because this is just [about]… all the people who scream the most." According to these two respondents, state officials had merely accelerated the speed with which Tent City residents could be considered for housing. It appears that the criteria to place homeless individuals in housing were 'stretched' so as to accommodate Tent City residents. While the housing needs of some residents were addressed, state officials had not yet exhibited much concern with addressing the housing shortages for the rest of the homeless population in Edmonton.[51]

---

[51] David Neal and Brenda Phillips (1995) argue that in the case of crises or disasters, it is important for governments to abandon bureaucratic norms and policies and instead practice flexibility because new, uninstitutionalized events generate new norms and behaviours, which existing bureaucratic policies are not equipped to address (1995, 330). While outside the scope of this research study, it would be interesting to investigate what constitutes a 'crisis' in the eyes of state officials, and whether Tent City was considered to fall under this category. If considered to be a crisis, then the prioritization of Tent City residents for housing would appear to reflect an adaptive and flexible approach concerned with providing the 'victims' the assistance and supports that they need. A

Once housing was found for Tent City residents who were interested, it was seen to be an appropriate time to shut the encampment down. Individuals from community agencies were emphatic about not overstating the significance of Tent City's closure by implying that the needs of all homeless individuals in Edmonton, or even all residents living inside the encampment, had been addressed, as Rachel discussed:

> There was certainly some tension from an awareness and public relations perspective about suggesting that because we have closed Tent City we have somehow dealt with the problem. There was certainly some concern from community groups that, be very clear that that's not the case. Just because Tent City is closed doesn't mean we have housed everybody that we needed to. That's a real challenge when you make decisions like that. The public relations side to it is very complicated.

Respondents viewed the culmination of officials' efforts – the peaceful and quiet closure of Tent City – as a mark of a successful resolution to the problem that had plagued them for most of the summer. Respondents employed economic arguments to explain the encampment's closure, noting that the resources being poured into the management of Tent City could be put to better use by locating more permanent housing for homeless individuals. Because the housing program was perceived to have been successful, there was no longer a need for Tent City. "There were a lot of resources being put into [Tent City]. It could be used in different ways, like helping them to find homes…Once you find somebody a house there is no need to stay in a tent" (Charlotte).

The policy frame adopted by state officials structured the policy response. Because homelessness was perceived as the underlying issue, the problem definition as a 'lack of shelter for individuals with multiple and complex needs' meant that any policy solution would attempt to address this. Tent City, understood to be an anarchic space rather than a community that accorded shelter, did not constitute a solution in consonance with the policy frame. State officials dismissed Tent City due to its "deplorable" living conditions and argued that government resources that were tied up in the encampment would be better employed in the search for more permanent housing.

---

further question for future research would be to investigate if Tent City and homelessness were both characterized as a crisis; if there were differences between them, why?

Tent City was constructed as hindering otherwise progressive state efforts. Because Tent City was perceived as a "problem," the decision to close the encampment appeared to be a sound solution, which would allow officials to continue their search for a better resolution to the issue of homelessness.

Learning Opportunities in the Encampment

Provincial employees were situated on-site throughout the summer to provide coordination services with various community agencies and to oversee the housing program for Tent City residents. The provision of front-line supports for the homeless was a relatively new orientation for them, which enabled officials to develop a greater understanding of the various measures needed to successfully house clients. Tent City was therefore instrumental in assisting state officials to overcome some degree of unfamiliarity with gaps in existing state systems, where respondents had previously assumed seamless services existed. Vanessa felt that initially, limited knowledge inhibited the housing program's ability to provide effective supports and services so as to facilitate a successful transition for Tent City residents from homelessness into housing.

> One of our big mistakes that I think we had in setting up people from Tent City was not adequately setting them up…The belief was that you could send people to the Bissell Centre or you could send people to all of these different agencies and they can just get whatever they need. That's not true, it doesn't work that way. It's not as easy – and I've tried – but when we started this, that was the belief.

The presumption that community agencies could provide furniture, kitchenware, beds, and other necessary items for setting up an apartment led state officials to rely on these agencies to assist Tent City residents. Throughout the process of trying to house residents, they realized that this was an incorrect assumption. Vanessa spoke about the challenges she confronted when trying to procure beds.

> You can't get beds from the agencies because there's a real bad bed bug infestation. A lot of the agencies don't want to take in beds…The agencies like the Edmonton Emergency Relief Society…can't take the chance of taking in beds with bed bugs and then giving out beds with bed bugs. So they don't do it.

This quote indicates a gap in coordination and communication between community agencies and state officials, as officials were unaware of some of the limitations on agencies in providing furniture.

> So then the other thing was to send them to Sleep Country. Doesn't work very good…How do you get the bed from point A to point B? These are homeless people. I didn't run into a lot with vehicles, and especially trucks. It doesn't work. So that was something we had to learn…We had to take a little more responsibility to help that person get set up than we knew. We learned.

The assumption that homeless individuals can act according to mainstream norms constitutes a significant barrier to effective service delivery. Vanessa indicated that as state officials developed heightened awareness of the need to provide transitional supports, the housing program was adapted accordingly.

Vanessa also discussed the process of acquiring dishware and kitchen supplies. She took Tent City residents up to the Bissell Centre store, which provides such items. She declared that the overall experience was "demeaning," given the limited number of items available and their poor condition.

> I did take a few people up to the Bissell Centre store. It was a very, very demeaning experience. I didn't like it at all…If you're a couple, you're allowed two knives, two forks, two spoons, two cups, two plates…It was out of the way too, it's up on 118th Ave…So I thought okay, I'll take you up there no problem. They picked out a little egg lifter and there was an elastic band around these ones [holding them together]. They get up to the counter and put it on the counter and [the staff] say, you're only allowed one egg lifter.

Vanessa observed that there is a significant gap between what homeless individuals need in order to be properly set up in an apartment, and what the agencies are able to provide.

> There's this mentality that you can get what you need [from the agencies]…You can get one frying pan, you can get one pot. That's not what you *need*…These are used frying pans and some of them are beat up! They weren't worth having. So you've got a used frying pan that everything sticks to. It doesn't work.

She noted that state officials had been previously unaware of agencies' inability to provide all necessary items. "When we were starting to set people up from Tent City…we just thought these agencies were able to provide all of these things. And they do provide them, but they provide them if they have them." Vanessa acknowledged that community

agencies had long been aware of the gaps in service delivery, and emphasized that it was her engagement in providing frontline supports that enabled her and other state officials to develop greater awareness of the various challenges confronting both agencies and homeless individuals.

> It's always been a frustration for the agencies. I think they knew about it more than we did…I guess at one level we knew about it…But we didn't realize the restrictions in going there and how it wasn't the do-all and be-all that we thought it was. So it was an education for us…We learned that the agencies have a role to play but they can't provide all the start-up that maybe the people need.

Because state officials were not prepared initially to address issues like the ones discussed above, many of the residents who were housed out of Tent City were not supplied with a bed or furniture for their apartment. State officials were under pressure to find alternative housing arrangements quickly and so they simply moved people into empty apartments. "We moved people anyways. But people were sleeping on the floor, which was inappropriate" (Vanessa). The failure to allocate funding to cover apartment start-up costs resulted in a program that was not equipped to properly support Tent City residents. Over the course of the summer, state officials developed the knowledge and the mechanisms to provide these missing pieces. Once they had a better understanding of some of the gaps in the support services offered by community agencies, they were able to refine the program by providing additional funds to assist with housing start-up costs. Vanessa asserted that Tent City had enabled officials to provide better services on an ongoing basis.

> If you look at some of the pilot projects that we've funded [since Tent City], looking at Rapid Exit[52] now with Hope Mission, we funded that component. So there are start-up costs now. So when their landlord recruiter finds a place for one of the people who are living at the shelter, they can help them set up.

---

[52] Rapid Exit Shelter Program is a provincial program that "seeks to reduce the amount of time that individuals and families spend in homelessness by re-housing single individuals or families in rental accommodations and providing on-going support. Landlords are recruited and supported by the service agency" (Alberta 2009). According to reports, eighty homeless individuals were moved into permanent and safe housing in 2008 through this program. Funded through Homeward Trust, it was carried out in partnership with Hope Mission and Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre (Alberta 2008).

Vanessa noted that one of the limitations of the housing program was the need to house people rapidly, to “get it done.” This had frustrated attempts to provide comprehensive supports that met the needs of the individuals they were trying to serve. Rachel reflected that the housing program was executed more like a “quasi-military operation” which failed to thoroughly assess the homeless campers they were supporting. She recognized that Tent City had presented an opportunity to better understand members of the homeless population, but that state officials had not maximized this opportunity as much as they could have.

State officials developed a heightened awareness of other barriers that homeless individuals face in qualifying for housing. Stipulations requiring that homeless individuals maintain sobriety in order to be eligible for housing were found to be ineffective as they merely perpetuate conditions of homelessness, rather than address it. Vanessa commented that, perhaps contrary to her perceptions prior to Tent City’s existence, many homeless individuals truly wish to end their homelessness and find a place to live. “One of the things I learned was that many of these people do want a place to live but can’t afford it, or that housing for many of the residents with addiction issues is contingent upon abstinence and that poses a problem with housing them.” Tent City allowed state officials to develop an awareness of barriers that homeless individuals face and limitations of existing services, and to learn how to work with them more effectively. This increased knowledge was an important tool in helping state officials to shape better programs that could better address the needs of the homeless population. Vanessa reflected on the importance of providing all the necessary supports for homeless individuals when housing them: “here you are trying to take somebody out of homelessness off the streets, put them into some place, but you can’t set them up for failure.” Housing must meet standards of being adequate, suitable, and affordable in order to be effective in addressing homelessness.

Building Relationships

Several respondents reported that one of the most positive aspects to emerge out of Tent City was the strengthening of working relationships among various individuals and agencies in Edmonton. Respondents emphasized that these relationships had not been in place prior to the establishment of Tent City but their formation was a significant step forward in their efforts to successfully address homelessness. A close reading of interview transcripts reveals three distinct levels of interaction that respondents felt had been strengthened as a result of working together to address Tent City: (1) Relationships among decision-makers (members who met over the course of the summer to decide how to address Tent City); (2) Relationships between the provincial government and contracted agencies (agencies which were contracted by the provincial government to provide additional supports on site); (3) Relationships between municipal and provincial levels of government.

Relationships among Decision-Makers

Respondents noted that the relationships forged between decision-makers were some of the most positive aspects to come out of Tent City. Leah recognized that it took time to develop the proper mechanisms to respond to Tent City because this was the first time a large homeless encampment had ever emerged in Edmonton's downtown. Settling upon an appropriate policy response took a considerable amount of time and these discussions had stalled their ability to resolve the issue expediently.

> [Looking back], maybe act a little quicker. I think that people were surprised by [Tent City]. I think it took a little time to establish the relationships that were required to be successful between the city and the police and the province and community agencies. It wasn't a problem but it was just, this was the first time (Leah).

Over the course of the summer these relationships were strengthened. Respondents discussed the positive benefits that came from meeting on a regular basis throughout the summer to develop an appropriate policy response to Tent City. The diversity of perspectives that came together around the table resulted in a heightened sense of

responsibility and ownership of homelessness, as well as an increased commitment to the issues, both individually and collectively. “I think there was the opportunity for everyone to get together in a room and recognize that we each owned part of the problem and we need to move collectively forward and we need to be more proactive as well” (Charlotte). Rachel spoke about the importance of getting all the key players around the same table in order to address any issue; Tent City had provided the impetus for this to occur.

> As a result of Tent City, some really significant decision-makers came together on a regular basis to solve a problem…Having the right few people in the room who are able to make a decision and execute, means everything to being able to operate quickly and being successful…The fact that those decision-makers sat around a table and contributed to that discussion, can continue to be part of that conversation about ending homelessness as a whole, is really fundamental (Rachel).

The relationships developed throughout the summer and persisted after the dissolution of Tent City. When the Mayor of Edmonton announced that measures would be taken to prevent a Tent City from emerging in Edmonton’s downtown again, a Summer Response Committee was formed, comprised of many of the same agencies and individuals that convened to address Tent City. The Committee established a protocol outlining everyone’s respective responsibilities in dealing with illegal campers around Edmonton. The Committee developed a plan in which the police would first approach campers to alert them that they would not be permitted to remain where they were, but they would be offered the opportunity to connect with outreach workers to access supports and services. Support workers would return to the location several hours later to follow up and offer assistance with locating alternative housing or other support services. While campers were under no obligation to accept these supports, they were required to move on. If they refused to move from that particular site, then the police would forcibly tear down their camp. This was perceived to be a supportive and constructive way of approaching the issue of illegal camping. “It’s easy to have the police come and roust people and say move along, you’ve got 24 hours and we’re going to tear down your tent and move you along. Now it’s, identify who they are, bring in Homeward Trust, and they

help advocate to get some services" (Leah). There was a strong feeling amongst respondents that Tent City had been the catalyst that mobilized decision-makers in order to determine how to manage urban campers. Over the course of the summer, stronger working relationships were developed which enabled better coordination of services for the homeless population.

> I think we have the services in place and the ability to coordinate and say [camping] probably isn't the best thing. And we can provide [the homeless] with options. I think that is where the difference is. Before [Tent City], it was harder for us to provide options. The options might have been there but they weren't coordinated (Charlotte).

Relationships Established On Site

Respondents discussed relationships that were strengthened as a result of establishing a presence at the Tent City site. Individuals involved with managing the camp or with providing services to residents were primarily from provincial ministries (Ministries of Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, Alberta Employment and Immigration, Capital Health Authority, and Mental Health Services) and community agencies who had been contracted by the provincial government to provide additional services to Tent City residents (Boyle Street McCauley Services and the YMCA). The formation of on-site relationships enabled greater coordination of services both during the lifespan of the encampment and following its dissolution.

> A lot of good things…came out of Tent City and that's part of it, is that ongoing cooperation between agencies able to expedite any reaction time to any emergencies that come our way…The agencies have the relationships with the government. I relied on the agencies to do this, and the agencies relied on the government to come up with some funding…The relationships that were built at Tent City…[led to] the acknowledgement that we were all working to the same end (Vanessa).

Respondents pointed out that effective policy approaches to homelessness issues require a multi-faceted response, given that the issues and needs of individuals are very complex. These relationships led to the development of the Shelter Option Strategy Committee, which was comprised of employees from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the Ministry of Employment and Immigration, the YMCA, and Boyle Street

McCauley Services. The Committee focuses on finding housing for families who are initially placed in hotels to get them off the streets.

> One of the policies in the province is, if there is a homeless family that comes forward for support, they're put up in hotels or motels…But how do we get them out of hotels, and what do we do? So we continued to work together even after Tent City and we started this Shelter Option Strategy Committee...Now if a family is in distress and has to be put into a hotel, we're all notified…We have housed a huge number of families out of that program (Vanessa).

Not all respondents agreed that relationships between the provincial government and contracted agencies had been strengthened, however. Audrey suggested that on the surface this appeared to be the case, but underlying these relationships were unidentified power issues which prevented agencies from articulating a dissenting opinion if they wanted to retain their provincial funding. She suggested that the goals of contracted agencies and the provincial government were in reality much more disjointed than other respondents had suggested. "One of the challenges or issues is, when you've got these agencies that are so reliant on government funding, an ability for them to actually say their piece because you don't want to bite the hand that feeds you" (Audrey). She argued that provincial and municipal levels of government were still failing to fund agencies sufficiently to enable them to provide effective services. "Personally, I feel we are not doing enough with the communities in terms of working with them on a regular basis, helping them strategize and deal with some of these issues, frontline issues. Get us out of our ivory tower" (Audrey). Melanie commented that cooperation between government and agencies often manifests itself in terms of financial resources. With this in mind, she argued that the relationship between agencies and government was not as solid as respondents above had suggested:

> The resources we get, the new resources are that eighty [homeless] people are going to get spaces through the Hope and Herb Jamieson now. Eighty people. We've got three thousand out there and they're going to fund eighty people. That's great, but that's [just] a start. Well that just tells you the lack of resources, when [the province is] funding eighty[53] and there's three

[53] Here, Melanie was referring to the province's Rapid Exit Shelter Program, which helped eighty homeless individuals find homes in addition to the provision of individualized follow-up supports.

> thousand just counted. There's a gap, there's a huge gap, and we've been saying that for more than ten years (Melanie).

She observed that a lack of funding from the province, the number of hoops agencies must jump through to access limited funding, and gaps in agency services due to minimal government support, were not a reflection of strong working relationships between the provincial government and the agencies but, rather, suggested that relationships continue to be quite poor while interests remain siloed and disconnected. Melanie noted that, currently, there is very limited government funding provided to agencies: "We are putting a lot of stress on our agencies and there are some agencies that are close to crumbling."

Several respondents indicated that relationships between the provincial government and agencies that had not been contracted by the provincial government to provide services to Tent City residents had not been strengthened. Comments during the interviews suggested that there was still a great deal of animosity between the provincial government and the Bissell Centre, for instance. One respondent described the Bissell Centre's role as one of "advocacy" over the course of the summer; this role was understood as antagonistic to the goals of the provincial government and the Bissell Centre was perceived to have consciously made efforts to impede the work of provincial employees, rather than working cooperatively towards a common solution.

> Vanessa: It was suggested that these [homeless] people move over to this property because it is provincial land and they are Albertans and, you should be able to be anywhere on provincial lands. So it was recommended that they move over here.
> Primary Interviewer: And that was by the Bissell Centre?
> Vanessa: Yes. It was advocacy at its finest. That's what they [the Bissell Centre] are…The recommendation was that they…move over to provincial lands because they are Albertans and it's provincial property…[That] is advocacy…To me, that's really how Tent City got going. It's not that they wouldn't have been camping. But they wouldn't have been camping together.

Clearly, relationships had not been strengthened between the provincial government and all community agencies in Edmonton. Leah commented that considerable efforts would have to be made in the future in order to improve working relationships, but she noted that the will was there to make that happen:

> The services have been very siloed, very isolated. Everybody's competing for a very limited dollar and we're trying to get people to come together. And that's easier said than done. At all levels – it's not just the community that has to have that happen, but at the province level as well (Leah).

While relationships between individuals working on-site were strengthened through interactions at Tent City, this may reflect how fragmented and divided they were at the beginning of the summer, rather than indicate a bridge towards collaboration.

Relationship between Municipal and Provincial Levels of Government

Several respondents felt that Tent City had impacted interactions between municipal and provincial levels of government. There were reports that provincial funding to municipalities was more generous after Tent City had transpired, and that provincial and municipal efforts became more aligned as there was an increasing sense that they were all working towards the same goal. According to Audrey, "In terms of negotiations, I think Tent City has created a lot more cooperation with the province in terms of creating the summer and winter response to homelessness and coming forward with some funding. It's a given now – we don't have to argue and fight." Audrey claimed that prior to Tent City's existence, provincial officials had been antagonistic towards municipal efforts. "Initially [provincial officials] kept saying, show us the numbers [of homeless], show us the numbers, show us the numbers. Well the [homeless] numbers are hidden, so how do you show the numbers?" The above comment by Audrey is indicative of the broader debate about enumeration,[54] and suggests that the provincial government had been focused on demonstrating low numbers of homeless individuals. However, Audrey felt that the advent of Tent City prompted provincial officials to be more supportive of municipal efforts to address homelessness. Melanie similarly commented that the province appeared to be much more cooperative in supporting municipal strategies following Tent City. This was

[54] Some groups try to demonstrate high homeless numbers while other groups try to deemphasize the extent of homelessness, in order to bolster a particular policy outcome (Begin *et al.* 1999).

perceived to be an important step forward, because jurisdictional wrangling about which level of government retains responsibility for housing and homelessness in Canada has plagued debates and hindered effective policy responses to homelessness for decades.[55]

Not all respondents agreed that relationships had improved between municipal and provincial levels of government. Vanessa felt that municipal officials continued to be adversarial when dealing with provincial officials, despite provincial employees' best efforts to bridge the gap:

> The province of Alberta already plays a huge role [in addressing homelessness]…I don't believe that there is municipal cooperation. Their comments are like: housing is a provincial responsibility; housing is a provincial responsibility; housing is a provincial responsibility…I don't disagree. But I also believe that it is everybody's responsibility. And that we do need to work together…Until municipalities realize that, and realize that they do have a role to play…they've got to be part of the solution, they just do.

Vanessa perceived that municipalities have been reticent to assume any responsibility for addressing homelessness because of the complexity of the issues; she argued that municipalities prefer to focus on affordable housing, which she felt was easier than engaging with homelessness. She noted that, "homelessness can be pretty easy to slam." Clearly, Vanessa did not feel that municipal and provincial levels of government were working together to address a common goal; rather, her comments indicate that mistrust between the two levels of government continues to linger, and relationships are still somewhat tenuous. However, another provincial respondent provided a different perspective; she articulated a commitment to build cooperative relationships with municipalities, which would begin with the provision of government funds to support municipal plans and initiatives to address housing and homelessness.

---

[55] The allocation of responsibility for addressing homelessness has been a highly contested issue in Canada. Interjurisdictional disputes are the result of historical involvement from all three levels of government in housing, despite the fact that the *Canadian Constitution* grants the provinces and territories authority over housing programs. David Hulchanski (2007) has argued that, "the jurisdictional issue appears to be significant only because politicians raise it when they do not want their level of government to be responsible for addressing a particular housing problem" (Hulchanski 2007, 4). Shifting responsibility for housing programs and fluctuating levels of government funding have meant that housing has vacillated as an overall government priority, which has exacerbated the homelessness crisis in Canada (Klodawsky 2009, 598).

> [Homelessness] is a problem that spans all levels of government. Everybody has a part to play. I think that when we say that as a province, the municipalities start to get all anxious that we are trying to download responsibility to them…We understand that, as a province, we have a primary role. Our primary role is in leadership on the issue and funding. And we're prepared to meet that. But we cannot do it alone…What we want to do is fund community plans and community initiatives…Municipalities are crucial (Leah).

This comment indicates consonance with municipal respondents quoted above, who had observed that relationships between the two levels of government were improving. It appears that gains were being made and commitments to a common goal were enabling municipal and provincial governments to work more closely together, although at the time of the interviews these working relationships were still in the process of being established. Municipal and provincial respondents all expressed frustration with the complete lack of engagement at the federal level and stated that, while they would be thrilled if the federal government assumed a more active role, for various reasons they did not anticipate that this would happen anytime soon.

Impacts on Policy

While Tent City was not perceived to have significantly impacted subsequent government policies, respondents felt that it contributed to a broader political climate which was receptive to addressing homelessness as a priority issue. Tent City strengthened public awareness of homelessness issues and shaped a social consensus of outrage that homelessness should be allowed to exist; this encouraged various players in the community to come together and resolve to address the issue.

> It all built on each other. To the point where Council, Community at large, the business community at large, and the not-for-profit sector, we all came together when the Mayor announced that the Homeless Committee…was where we need to be. Had we wanted to do that two or three or four years earlier, I don't know that we would have had everyone on side (Charlotte).

The personal commitment of Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach to the issue of homelessness was also perceived to be a significant factor in placing homelessness upon the policy agenda. Leah spoke about how the policy process is sensitive to the specific priorities of the Premier:

> The Premier will talk about [homelessness] as one of his top five. And he doesn't just talk about it in government. We have priorities that are set and progress gets tracked against those priorities, and Ministers get mandates around those priorities. Homelessness has come up routinely as a top priority. When it is the Premier's priority, it pretty well becomes the priority of his Ministers and all the rest of us…It's a very personal priority for him.

Tent City reinforced many of the policy measures that had already been established, but it underscored the reality and immediacy of the problem, and emphasized that expeditious action was required. "I think that what had happened with Tent City, it became more immediate that we should be doing something…It was that building of awareness, that reality that set in that Edmonton does have a problem, and it is a combined problem" (Charlotte). Tent City bolstered a policy direction that was already underway, established primarily by the Affordable Housing Task Force beginning in the spring of 2007 with the release of its report. The report recommended a provincial shift to a HF approach (Alberta 2007b), which respondents unanimously agreed was a strong, supportive approach that held significant promise for ending homelessness completely.

> On the macro level, [Tent City] didn't really have a significant effect on policy. The Affordable Housing Task Force is what really set those policy directions. On the biggest level, I think it also strengthened an understanding of the need for – we needed to move beyond just affordable housing. We needed to start looking at homelessness in a different way (Leah).

HF has gained considerable currency in recent years as a favourable policy approach in North America. The traditional standard model for housing homeless individuals in North America is known as the Continuum of Care or the Treatment First approach (Falvo 2008, 32). In this model, homeless individuals are continually assessed in order to determine whether they are "ready" to be graduated into the next stage of housing. Housing stages begin with emergency shelter and end with non-supported permanent housing. The conditions imposed upon homeless clients often involve complete abstinence from drugs and alcohol, as well as a requirement to participate in medical or clinical assessments. If clients do not meet the conditions, they can be expelled from the program completely (Tsemberis and Eisenberg 2000). HF is a shift away from this approach, instead recognizing that the best place to deal with such issues is in

permanent housing rather than on the street (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness 2009, 8).

> Unless people have a place from which they can manage their life, which is a home, all the rest of it becomes a bit extraneous. How do you manage your anti-psychosis medication unless you've got a cupboard to put it in or a cup to drink it out of? How do you get yourself cleaned up for a job interview when you're living in an emergency shelter? (Leah).

Respondents widely felt that HF was a promising philosophy based on the successes of other jurisdictions that had already made this paradigm shift.

> [Housing First] is a really fundamental shift. Some of the language we use is to move from managing homelessness to ending homelessness. Moving from finding people a place to sleep every night to finding people a place to live. And it's right at that level that everything else needs to change around it…So big challenges, but it is a new model and a new approach and we have certainly seen lots of success elsewhere (Leah).

Following the dissolution of Tent City, both the City of Edmonton and the province of Alberta officially endorsed HF. In January of 2008, the City of Edmonton released its Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, which espoused HF as the model that would shape municipal policies to address homelessness. The report highlighted the City's commitment to adopt a HF approach to homelessness and conveyed that growing rates of homelessness were a considerable concern in Edmonton and a priority issue for the municipal government. The Plan identified the chronically homeless (defined as persons who have been continually homeless for a year or more, or homeless multiple times over a several year period) as the target group for the City (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness 2009, 10). It established targets to help reach its ultimate goal of ending homelessness, including 1) the provision of permanent housing options for all homeless individuals by 2011; 2) the provision of sufficient affordable housing with appropriate supports for people who are homeless; 3) ensuring availability of emergency accommodation but decreasing the average length of stay at emergency shelters to less than seven days; 4) preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place; and 5) establishing a governance structure and implementation process for the plan (2009, 35). The Commission committed to producing an annual report card, which it would submit to all orders of government. Several months later, the province of Alberta adopted a similar

Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. Edmonton's Plan called for investment of nearly $1 billion over the next ten years while Alberta's Plan commits $3.3 billion to homelessness over the same timeline.

Respondents spoke about the logistical challenges in shifting to a new approach to ensure its success. While HF espouses a holistic approach to deal with homeless individuals, services and departments are not set up in this manner. Rachel expressed concern that this could lead to administrative challenges within the existing structure of state systems.

> We…need to recognize that some of the people that are homeless with the complex issues that they have, even when they're stably housed after a couple of years, they are going to need supports. So where do those resources come from?...At some point it's not a homelessness item in somebody's budget, it's a mental health outreach and support service line item, it's Alberta Health Services, it's community services, and other funds that would typically go to somebody who has a high need for support but is stably housed. We can't keep thinking we're going to be able to use homelessness initiative funding to support everybody forever (Rachel).

Audrey identified this as a challenge as well and suggested that it would be necessary to create a new department that could address all these issues in conjunction as a "one-stop shop." Questions were also raised around how to evaluate HF programs and determine if they were working as intended, and how to gather information in order to improve programs. Despite these challenges ahead, respondents conveyed a general sense that they were committed to ending homelessness and noted that the conditions in Edmonton and Alberta were ripe to make major and necessary changes in order to work towards the elimination of homelessness. While there was still a great deal of learning that needed to occur in order to understand how HF could be most effective, there was a commitment to work towards these common goals.

> We can devise systems that can mitigate the worst circumstances that exist today around homelessness…We did not have the type of homelessness we have today, even fifteen years ago. A good portion of that has to do with how…systems have restructured. I think that homelessness is a man-made problem; there are man-made solutions to that problem…The time is right to start changing our course (Leah).

State officials felt that the management of Tent City had largely been successful, marked by the peaceful closure of the encampment. The housing program not only

provided alternative housing arrangements for residents which were more appropriate to meet their needs, but it enabled state officials to learn about gaps in service delivery as well as the need to allocate funding for start-up costs in order to ensure a successful transition from homelessness to housing. The increased depth of understanding gained by officials over the course of the summer helped to facilitate better programs subsequent to Tent City's demise. Tent City brought many individuals together to try to address a complex issue, resulting in stronger working relationships that helped to facilitate more coordinated and more effective policy approaches on an ongoing basis. State officials developed institutional mechanisms to prevent another Tent City from emerging in the future, as attention was sharpened to street-level outreach and proactively dealing with urban campers. Respondents felt that Tent City was a manifestation of a much deeper problem and its emergence enabled state officials to develop the awareness, relationships, and acute focus necessary to address homelessness effectively. The following chapter chronicles the themes emerging from discussions with service providers, as they provide their own account of the events throughout the summer.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results: Service Providers

Introduction

The six service providers interviewed for this project were asked their thoughts on the significance of Tent City.[56] Their close work with the homeless population in Edmonton, as well as their familiarity with state policies and programs lends a unique perspective on the needs and demands of both groups (that is, the homeless population and state officials) and provides insight into how they interacted during Tent City's existence. Narratives emerging from this group of interview respondents focused on a wide range of issues, but respondents felt that Tent City was a natural consequence of political decisions that had been made in the past. Decisions at all levels of government had led to higher rates of homelessness and so the emergence of Tent City, they felt, was no surprise. While respondents felt that Tent City was merely a more visible manifestation of homelessness than that which was pervasive around the city, it was the encampment's high visibility which made it significant. Tent City allowed homeless individuals, who were normally hidden from view, to be seen by the broader Edmonton population and beyond. This visibility constituted pressure for state officials because a highly conspicuous homeless encampment is seen to be damaging to the public image of the City of Edmonton. Respondents observed that the state's primary mode of response consisted of authoritative strategies to remove the homeless population from public view, and they felt that there was more of a concern with erasing the presence of homeless individuals from public spaces than with addressing the underlying issues of poverty and homelessness. While recent municipal and provincial commitments to end homelessness using HF were perceived to be a positive step, they noted that until significant

[56] Each respondent has been given a pseudonym, in order to attribute each quote to its speaker yet maintain the confidentiality of the respondents.

government financial resources were invested into the plan, efforts to address homelessness would not progress very far.

Tent City as the Logical Outcome of Government Decisions

> [Tent City] was no accident. The cost of housing was ridiculous...[Tent City] was the visual culmination of what ten plus years of ignoring housing does to you. If you don't take it seriously, I am sorry Mr. Province, don't be shocked when all these people start tenting (Patrick).

The emergence of Tent City was perceived by service providers to be a direct result of government decisions. Respondents identified policy decisions at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government that were, in part, responsible for the homeless encampment. At the federal level, the lack of a national housing strategy or framework was seen as a critical deficiency which had resulted in fragmented and uncoordinated policies and programs across the country (Naomi). Patrick and Ethan emphasized that homelessness is a national problem and requires a national strategy. Provincially and municipally, governments do not have access to the same resources thus emphasizing the need for federal engagement and funding. While historically the federal government had taken significant leadership in the provision of affordable housing, spending cuts in the 1980s and the 1990s resulted in fewer numbers of affordable housing units being built and consequently, rising levels of homelessness.

> [Prime Minister] Mulroney started somewhere around [19]84 cutting out housing. The big cuts were in [19]93 [with] Paul Martin and then the province, everybody just left the building. Those were terrible years from [19]93 for at least three, four, five years. And that, in Edmonton, is when you saw [people living in cardboard boxes] on the street (Patrick).

Beginning in the 1950s, the federal government helped to create and fund a wide stock of affordable housing. By 1986, there were 253,500 public housing units built across Canada, with five per cent of them located in Alberta (McCaffee 2010, 1). However, the 1984 election of Brian Mulroney and the Progressive Conservative Party marked a change to this role. Over the next decade, the federal government cut nearly $2 billion from housing programs until 1993, when all federal funding for new social housing was withdrawn (Shapcott 2002, 3). In 1992, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

(CMHC), Canada's Crown Corporation and prime advisor to the federal government on housing policy, underwent a hiring freeze and limits were placed upon the amount of money available for new social housing (Wolfe 1998, 125). In the March 1996 federal budget, the government announced that it would transfer administration of all federal social housing programs to provinces and territories. This policy decision devolved responsibility for housing down to the provincial level and represented the end of almost any indication of a national housing plan, replaced primarily with *ad hoc* programs and provincial partnerships. The federal government not only reduced its direct spending on housing, but also cut transfer payments to provinces in the 1990s. This marked the end of fifty years of federal involvement in social housing programs (Hulchanski 2006, 230).

With the federal government taking the lead on cutting spending on housing programs and initiatives, the provincial government followed closely behind. By 1999-2000, provincial-territorial housing spending had dropped by twenty-three per cent, from $2.1 billion annually in 1993-1994 to $1.5 billion in 1999-2000 (Falvo 2003, 10). Naomi noted that the provincial government distanced itself from the area of social housing by creating arm's length agencies, thereby reducing its accountability for housing decisions to the public of Alberta.

> The province does as little as it can in terms of taking responsibility for actually building and being owners of housing. That is why they have Capital Region Housing [Corporation] – so they [the province] don't have to take responsibility...Capital Region...is an arm's length away so [the province] does not have to be responsible. That's an issue.

Respondents pointed to other provincial policies that impacted the rise in homelessness. Patrick felt that Premier Ralph Klein's personal politics and beliefs strongly influenced provincial policies. Guided by an uncompromising neoliberal ideology, his government placed emphasis on free markets and competition at the expense of the provision of social services. "Premier Klein had no interest in this area [of social programs], as evidenced by his own behaviour. And his behaviour reflected his government policy." Tessa noted that the rules governing social assistance were altered significantly under Premier Klein's leadership.

> I have seen how having Ralph Klein come into power, how it changed everything – the *radical* change that took place as a result of the Klein government. He was very punitive to people on social assistance, he slashed the welfare rates in 1993 and they were not raised again until this last year [in 2009]…And then as a result of the slash in welfare rates, he also made it harder for people to get on welfare. It was very punitive towards people.

A new provincial program, Supports for Independence (SFI), was introduced in 1990 to replace the previous Social Allowance Program. This marked the beginning of workfare programs in Alberta (Laxer 1995, 322). Recipients were taken off assistance and paid an employee wage (five dollars per hour) in exchange for labour services. Under SFI, eligibility was tightened, investigations into suspicious cases increased, and allowance amounts were cut. This new model resulted in significant declines in provincial welfare rolls, from 135,600 in 1994 to 103,700 in 1996 (Edmonton Social Planning Council 2007, 45). Welfare rolls continued to decline with each consecutive year, until they reached a low of 49,000 in 2006, or less than 2 per cent of the Alberta population (ibid). New program requirements were felt to have contributed directly to rising homelessness. Hailey reflected that punitive policies resulted from state perceptions that poverty is caused by individual character flaws such as laziness rather than need, and so programs were set up to be sufficiently uncomfortable for recipients that they would instead choose to participate in the labour market. However, rather than prompting individuals to return to the labour market, individuals were often forced into homelessness due to meagre benefit levels and few alternative options. Patrick underscored that federally and provincially, there had been a departure from funding social programs and as a result the social safety net, which had prevented individuals from falling into poverty, had eroded. “Our governments made decisions that had consequences....And it’s not just the lack of housing, it’s issues like minimum wage hasn’t kept up over the years. I think it’s a broader social security net issue.”

Other respondents spoke about community actions which were significant in the creation of homelessness in Edmonton. Tessa spoke about how community groups targeted specific low-income buildings and accumulated fines against them, with the

intention of ultimately shutting them down. Motivated by a desire to clear the neighbourhood of "undesirable" characters, the efforts of community groups prompted the closure of considerable numbers of affordable housing units throughout the city, leaving many of its former residents homeless. She told the story of one particular building which was torn down as a result of the pressure exerted by the Community Action Project (CAP), an "organization of volunteer residents undertaking resident-driven actions to improve the quality of life in their own neighbourhoods" (facebook page).

> Community Action Project wanted these people out of the community so they painted the landlord, they made him out like he was a terrible person. I spent a lot of time with that landlord talking to him, and the situation was that CAP put pressure on the City of Edmonton to have sixty-seven health inspections on that one building within a year. The health inspectors kept walking through it...A lot of these people that were CAP members bought houses in the community, old houses – this is the behind the scenes that isn't published in the papers. They wanted to get rid of the undesirable people from the community. So they went after the landlord and got all these fines so that eventually the place was shut down (Tessa).

Discrimination and racism were also perceived as exclusionary factors that prevented individuals from accessing available housing throughout the city. Naomi felt that widespread community discrimination against Aboriginal people had obstructed efforts to provide housing units for Aboriginal people. She related stories of landlords who had explicitly stated that they would only rent to non-Aboriginal people. This explains, in part, why considerably higher numbers of Aboriginal individuals comprise the homeless population than people from other ethnic groups.

Ethan pointed to the political decisions that had been made regarding the community where Tent City had emerged as a factor in the causation of Tent City. That particular community, known as Boyle Street-McCauley, has long been the poorest neighbourhood in Edmonton. He spoke about how the neighbourhood community plan had intended to redevelop the area with more affordable housing units. A series of motions enabled City Council to reverse the plan over the next few years, in order to make room for the construction of a parking lot instead; only one small piece of land was turned into grass. This was where Tent City emerged, prompting Ethan to refer to the encampment as an "incredible irony."

> When the Boyle Street and McCauley Community leagues did their area redevelopment plan in the mid-[19]90s, they...said, here is a rare case where, right in the heart of the city, we've got...a whole square block that could be thoughtfully developed and planned and designed, and used for housing and businesses – a nice little mix that would add to our community and make it a better place. Well there was never any funding to allow that work to go on.

The Boyle Street-McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) was unveiled in early 1994 as the culmination of the direct efforts and contributions of more than three thousand community residents. It called for $18 million in infrastructure improvements such as new water and sewer lines, repaved roads, and new sidewalks. The plan also called for more than one hundred rooming houses to be repaired and upgraded so that they met minimum standards of quality, and strategized how to provide more affordable housing units and greater public access to recreational facilities. City Council approved the Boyle Street-McCauley ARP and it was subsequently enacted into the municipal Land Use Bylaw.

> Around 2000-2001, the City and Province...started acquiring all the land in that block until they owned the whole block and...developed a bylaw that came out...to take that one piece out of the Area Redevelopment Plan and to rezone that whole block to turn it into parking lots for police and for the provincial government. And that's what they did...It was just so outrageous to let...these rich employees driving their cars from the suburbs have a place to park in downtown Edmonton. They stole that block of land from the people of that community and for the purpose they had always wanted for it (Ethan).

Media articles reveal that city park planners started to suggest changes to the Boyle Street-McCauley community design in 1997. They proposed that West McCauley Park, a "safe" park[57] in the Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood, should be closed to make room for a five-storey office building and parking lot instead. The park was turned into an office building and parking lot while Boyle-McCauley community residents were provided with some alternative green space one block away. In 2001, the Boyle Street-McCauley ARP underwent more changes, shifting it further away from its original plan to develop affordable housing. Alberta Infrastructure had bought up much of the land on the block

[57] Safe parks allow individuals to drink alcohol openly without worry of being hassled by the police.

and wanted to build a parking lot for employees of the Remand Centre and the Edmonton Police Service. A city-provincial proposal went before City Council to amend the ARP in order to create 258 parking stalls in the middle of the block, with plans to later develop another 205 stalls. Despite protests from the community, City Council approved the proposal and subsequently rezoned the block between 96th and 97th streets, saving only one small piece of land for the community. Community leaders had requested the development of a full park to act as a recreational space, but this never materialized. The land stood empty until Tent City emerged in early 2007.[58]

> The little concession [municipal and provincial officials] made in the end...is that they agreed that one little patch of land they wouldn't turn into a parking lot but they would make into grass...If the community ten to fifteen years before had been given the resources to do what they wanted with that land, that block would have been full of low-income housing where poor people would have been living, and little businesses. And so when I saw Tent City, all those folks moving in there...I thought, fuck well this is the absolute twisting of what the people of this neighbourhood wanted (Ethan).

Respondents in this group emphasized that political decisions had directly led to the emergence of Tent City in the summer of 2007. Political agendas favouring the market resulted in underfunded social programs. While Canada's housing system once had sufficient room for almost all Canadians, federal withdrawal from the area of social housing resulted in a lack of social housing throughout the country (Hulchanski 2002). The provincial government of Alberta imposed more cuts to housing programs in the 1990s, further exacerbating the problem. Municipal and provincial decisions to transform community space into parking stalls, rather than develop affordable housing units, enabled the inception of the eventual homeless encampment.

> Nothing in life is free. If you don't provide ongoing support in critical areas of society, you shouldn't be surprised that stuff comes back to bite you in the ass...Homelessness is not an act of God or an act of nature. It's a direct

---

[58] This piece of land was also the site of Edmonton's first public demonstration to call for more government investment in social housing. In the fall of 1999, one hundred people gathered immediately after Edmonton's first homeless count had been completed, where more than nine hundred homeless individuals had been reported in the City of Edmonton (Gurnett 2007).

> result of decisions we've made as a society. If we want to change that, we have to make new decisions (Patrick).

Tent City as Homeless Agency

The emergence of Tent City was perceived by service providers to be a response by the homeless population to growing social conditions of insecurity. Tent City exposed the inadequate service delivery and substandard living conditions experienced by the homeless and sent a clear message to state officials and beyond.

> What I did see was a group of people that made a statement to say, we need housing, we don't have it so we're making our own. What message did it take for us to get that? We're just going to pitch our home right here. They made the statement themselves. We need housing. They made it very clear. We need something different from what's there. And we need a place to stay. They weren't going to be invisible anymore (Olivia).

Service providers maintained that Tent City was established because homeless individuals utilized survival strategies employed every day on the streets. They were not acting any differently than they did on a regular basis; they were simply trying to meet their needs. In other words, people experiencing homelessness construct their own pathways through urban space that satisfy their need for survival by finding places to sleep and eat. Tent City simply became a more public manifestation of their pathways of survival. Tent City's location behind the Bissell Centre was ideal as it allowed residents access to the drop-in centre and enabled them to remain within proximity to other community services targeted towards homeless individuals. When discussing why Tent City emerged, Olivia stated:

> It's easier right beside Bissell where there's day supports, and there was an open lot right in the inner city. If they're down in the City, in the River Valley, they have to travel up. And that gets pretty exhausting when you don't have a place to stay, you're awake all night around safety and security...A lot of them were just trying to meet their daily living requirements. That simple. And to have [possessions] that they didn't have to move, every time they moved. They had a place.

Tessa speculated that the establishment of Tent City was connected to previous political activism that summer, which began with a three-day sleep-over at the beginning of May 2007. Approximately seventy homeless individuals camped out in front of City Hall to protest the lack of affordable housing around Edmonton. The sleep-over resulted in

City officials agreeing to provide 200 beds at Hope Mission for one additional month (Bhardwaj 2007, 1). An Affordable Housing Rally, organized by the Disability Action Force on Housing, took place on June 11 where participants used their bodies in their sleeping bags to form an “SOS” on the ground in front of the Legislative Buildings (Raise My Voice 2007). On June 27 a Housing Rally, attended by individuals experiencing homelessness and their advocates, took place on the steps of the Legislature. Another rally organized on August 18 began at City Hall and ended on the steps of the Legislature. This rally's intent was to protest the failure of the economic boom in Alberta to deliver adequate levels of affordable housing to those on the lower end of the earning ladder. Tessa maintained that Tent City residents were increasingly gaining a sense of empowerment through these actions, in addition to support from community agencies and increasing numbers of homeless individuals across the City. Homeless individuals gradually developed the confidence necessary to pitch a tent and establish a place of their own.

> A lot of the people that ended up in Tent City had been the same people that had taken part in that sleepover at City Hall. I think they were starting to realize that they could do something...about it...They had people saying, this isn’t right, they had some backing, they had some support...There was enough pressure on City Hall saying, you can’t keep doing this to these people. But also, there were more people than ever before homeless (Tessa).

Regardless of whether it was a conscious *political* act or not, pitching a tent exhibited agency on behalf of the homeless. While Tent City residents were concerned with meeting their daily survival needs, the message to others was clear: they needed housing. The collective pitching of many tents staked a claim to the right to dwell, in the only space that was available to them. Respondents understood that the encampment's existence in a highly visible downtown location constituted a new and different kind of political pressure on state officials.

Tent City as Visibility

> You being homeless is symptomatic of other things that are happening in life. You’re somebody who is the most visible example of a structural problem we have in society. That’s what the homeless are. They’re like the canaries in the mine (Patrick).

Homelessness is reflective of broader underlying social and economic inequities in society and indicates the state's failure to adequately address the issues or maintain the conditions through which all citizens are able to secure an appropriate level of well-being. Homelessness is shocking to those who are not homeless because it exposes suffering within a land of prosperity. This can lead members of the housed population, who would otherwise support the status quo, to question the capacity and efficacy of the system (Marcuse 1988, 70). Homelessness, therefore, causes or reinforces a legitimation crisis for the state. Peter Marcuse (1988) has argued that governments find themselves in a dilemma when trying to develop a response to homelessness. If a government ignores the issue then it appears illegitimate and unjust; if it attempts to address the issue seriously then it breaks the link between work and labour and risks rewarding behaviour outside of wage labour (Marcuse 1988, 85). A common response is to deny the extent of the problem so as to minimize the need for a policy response. Respondents felt that homeless individuals are required to remain hidden from public view in their daily lives so as to obscure the extent of the problem, and therefore alleviate the need to address it. Multiple state strategies ensure that homelessness is concealed and does not disturb the sanctity of public space or rules of public behaviour. In Edmonton, municipal bylaws establish standards of appropriate behaviour in public and provide a means of regulating the use of public space so as to not offend the sensibilities of other citizens and in an effort to maintain "order." Tent City's size and location resulted in considerable visibility and public attention, and exposed homelessness to Edmontonians and beyond.

The Bissell Centre attempted to generate greater visibility of Tent City in the media. The agency recognized that there was an opportunity to increase public awareness of homelessness and to draw attention to the state's poor response to homelessness in Edmonton evidenced by continual attempts to obscure the extent of the issue. When campers had set up in the Bissell Centre parking lot (before Tent City was established), Capital Health Authority required that Bissell Centre either provide facilities for campers or issue an eviction notice. Bissell did not have the financial capacity to provide facilities

and so staff communicated to campers that they would have to move elsewhere. Staff members felt that in this situation, the general population should be made aware of the number of evictions this group of campers had already suffered, and the lack of housing options available. Olivia reflected on the way the media was engaged:

> People had moved three times already. They had moved from Mary Burley Park to…behind Bissell. And then they went to Bissell East. And then we developed a press release and I actually phoned the Journal and said, do you want the main story before I release the whole thing tomorrow?...I'm going to go public with this. We need to bring the attention that this is not the right way of dealing with people.

Local media sources were instrumental in drawing attention to the authoritative strategies of the state to ensure that homelessness remained hidden. This helped to build the profile of Tent City in the community's consciousness. State strategies of control, generally hidden from view alongside the homeless population, were now subject to public scrutiny and became a source of public debate. Concerned with their public image, officials were incapable of continuing the process of evictions and were forced to explore alternatives other than merely shutting down the encampment.

> Because [Tent City] had reached such public profile at that point…[state agents] were thinking [they] can't move them again because the media was all over the place...We made it public enough that they couldn't keep bumping [homeless] people around and try to make them more invisible (Olivia).

After campers moved in behind the Bissell Centre and established Tent City, Bissell staff continued to highlight issues of homelessness in the media. They met with Tent City residents weekly to ensure that Bissell's message to the media was relatively consistent with the views of residents, and they also encouraged willing residents to tell their individual stories themselves. Respondents agreed that the media heightened awareness of the substandard material conditions experienced by the homeless population and drew attention to how poorly state officials had dealt with the issue.

The living conditions in Tent City shocked members of the housed population. Patrick noted that Tent City prompted Edmontonians to question Alberta's ability to fulfill its promise of the "American dream" to all citizens.

> The bulk of citizens said, this is unacceptable. We're the wealthiest province in the country, one of the wealthiest political places in the world! This is Alberta and it's supposed to be fucking paradise. This is clearly not paradise.

Some community members, as indicated through letters written to the *Edmonton Journal*, wanted state officials to enforce greater repression of a population they perceived as lacking the skills to participate in mainstream society or who flouted the conventional social order, while others implored the provincial government to provide more resources to these individuals who had evidently missed out on the benefits of the economic boom. Letters poured in demanding a "solution" to the problem.

Tessa asserted that Tent City's visibility enabled the broader population to learn about homelessness, and provided an opportunity to interact with the homeless community living there. Because Tent City encompassed aspects of organization and community which were familiar to the housed population, she perceived Edmontonians to be more comfortable approaching the Tent City encampment than they otherwise may have been if walking through the river valley:

> Some of the public at least started to see [the] homeless as individuals, based on the number of people that were coming to the Tent City site and offering support. They weren't from organized churches, they were individuals. They wanted to come and do something. I think a lot of people would do something if they knew what to do, if they knew how they could help. And [Tent City] offered them a place...One-on-one contact is important. Tent City was a safer place to approach these people because the tents represented some sort of organization, whereas just approaching somebody in a tent along the river valley trail might feel more dangerous.

Media reports of Tent City residents were not always positive. Media portrayals of Tent City were increasingly connected to images of crime, violence, and aberrant behaviour as the summer progressed.[59] Ethan argued that the media coverage of Tent City depicted negative images of homeless individuals, reinforced stereotypes, and acted to deepen their exclusion from the broader Edmonton community. He argued that Tent City's visibility made it easy to forget all the others who were also living in poverty and media equated the most visible homeless – residents of Tent City – with all homeless.

---

[59] Extensive media analysis was not a component of this research project and as such, this comment should be considered only as an observation resulting from media scans.

Characterizations of Tent City residents as alcoholics and drug addicts replaced more positive perceptions of members of the homeless population. Ethan expressed concern that this prompted others to ascribe causation to the homeless condition,[60] which reinforced the idea that the homeless were to blame for their condition and were therefore undeserving of assistance from others.

> The media coverage of Tent City reinforced that homelessness is these somewhat scruffy-looking people often who would talk to the media under the influence of substances and not be too coherent...So it just reinforced all the clichés...I think it did reinforce the public's popular perception of homelessness as being an issue of personal failure rather than of political and social failure. And that makes it tougher for very poor people to be treated with any kind of equity and decency in the community.

The media appeared to be a double-edged sword; on the one hand, it provided a useful tool for advocates to highlight the disciplinary strategies enacted over the homeless and it provided the public with a view of the desperation of fellow citizens living inside Tent City, when a homeless existence was otherwise effaced. On the other hand, reports of filth and criminality in association with the encampment shifted debate away from structural causes of homelessness and provided justification for the need to close down the encampment.

Official Response to Tent City

Although no formal policy response was forthcoming immediately following Tent City's emergence, there was a need to provide facilities for a large group of individuals living in one area. While these logistical considerations were being resolved, several respondents commented that there was another side to officials' responses. State officials tried to quietly sweep the campers out of public view and away from the focus of the media. Hailey reported that initially, a city official approached Bissell Centre in an attempt to have the campers removed and relocated inside the Bissell drop-in centre during daytime hours.

---

[60] Observing common symptoms (such as mental illness or addiction) and assigning causation are two very different things, and we must be careful not to conflate the two.

> A city official came to us and basically said, if you could just get them inside during the day. Get these people in your drop-in rather than on the street. Because it is on the street that we get these complaints from the public, etcetera. No. One, we're a voluntary service, we're not a jail. And what you need is to provide real help to these people so that they have a place to go (Hailey).

As an agency designed to provide homeless individuals with a place to relax and interact, the Bissell Centre is considered to be an appropriate place for the homeless, whereas outside in public areas they are "out of place." According to Hailey, this city official had hoped to return homeless individuals to their "proper" space (out of the public eye), curbing Tent City's visibility and alleviating some of the public pressure to act. State officials had offered to assist the Bissell Centre with its media and public relations messaging:

> [The municipal and provincial government] did offer to have us just refer media to them and their media people...They wanted to control the messaging, for sure. Absolutely. They weren't happy with us at all. Because we were saying yes, homelessness is a serious issue, and where do you expect these people to go?...They didn't want that out there at all.

Hailey noted that the Bissell Centre was repeatedly offered state funding to help close down Tent City. When prompted further, she stated that these offers had come from both municipal and provincial levels of government. "Exactly what I had to do with [Tent City] was...saying No to all of the people that wanted to pay us to help them get rid of Tent City. We were offered many opportunities to be part of getting rid of Tent City, and we were very busy turning that down." As a result, Bissell Centre staff could articulate their views freely – unlike many other community agencies. "Because we weren't funded to work Tent City by the various levels of government, we were one of the few agencies that [the media] could get sort of a position from. Because everyone else was kind of muzzled by their funding" (Hailey). This comment indicates that there may have another type of power at work: agencies funded by government sources were required to be consonant with the state if they wished to continue receiving government funds. This suggests that as state intervention in Tent City increased (including greater financial involvement), officials were able to exert greater control over these community agencies. Ethan noted

that funded agencies and state players worked very closely together to manage Tent City over the course of the summer: “Tent City came to be very controlled by government and a few social agencies and it became almost an institutionalized thing that just made me want to throw up, to be honest.”[61]

Tent City was perceived as an opportunity for state officials to begin addressing homelessness issues in a meaningful way. Tent City was the visual culmination of years of government disregard of homelessness and Patrick argued that Tent City provided a strong incentive for officials to alter their primary mode of dealing with homelessness. “It was the perfect congruence of something that visually drove home the issue.” He elaborated further:

> I think as human beings it is hard to respond to things abstractly...You need to have a living example of what the hell the problem is...So when it’s in the summer and they’re just all tenting, and these aren’t treeplanters who are treeplanting or working out in the bush for the summer, but these are people that are – and their stories are compelling. Obviously some have serious issues, others are less serious, but they can’t find a place. I think that gripped the public.

Respondents recounted that officials had invited several service providers from community agencies to attend meetings with state officials to explore strategies to address Tent City. Ethan was present at these meetings, and he seized upon this opportunity to suggest creative and supportive ways to respond to the encampment. “I [developed] a little proposal of several smaller campsites and how they could operate and how they could be acceptable to the public and would have been relatively low cost. But police and the provincial government wanted nothing to do with it.”

Several community agencies collectively presented a proposal to the City of Edmonton with suggestions about how to address Tent City. They argued that, given the lack of housing options available at the time, a few temporary encampments should be established in various parts of the city. They cautioned against allowing one large Tent

[61] Because of limitations of time and resources, it was not possible to interview anyone from these community agencies to glean their perspective.

City to develop, as this would become too dangerous and would inhibit campers' abilities to self-govern. Two respondents discussed the proposal during the interview:

> We were thinking at the time, if people naturally were camping in an area, it was to find out why they were camping there. Was it because it was close to a bus stop, close to their work? What was it? And if it made sense and if the resources were available, support them and keep it small (Olivia).

> We, right from the start, recommended to the government and the City in particular, that there be a few encampments set up. And to keep them no more than thirty-to-forty tents at the absolute most. In separate locations. But having them all in one location was just a formula for trouble...We knew right away that there would be trouble if it kept growing (Hailey).

The proposal suggested that the encampments be supported until November 1 2007, which would provide some additional time to develop medium and longer-term strategies to find sustainable housing with appropriate supports for campers. However, state officials rejected this idea outright. "They absolutely didn't want that encampment [Tent City], so they sure weren't going to allow any others" (Hailey).

Prior to Tent City's emergence, Ethan pointed out that provincial officials had been increasingly open to addressing homelessness as part of a continuum rather than simply focusing on street homelessness. Tent City effectively unraveled several constructive plans to address homelessness as media sources and officials narrowed their attention to only one particular kind of homelessness: street homelessness. "In the panic around Tent City, the focus came back to how can we manage and regulate and disappear the visibility of this kind of street homelessness" (Ethan). Officials were perceived to be primarily concerned with closing Tent City rather than addressing the needs of those living inside the encampment. Olivia, who had also been present at the initial meetings with officials, reflected on the intentions of the Committee:

> Their goal was to disperse. The committee was [concerned with] the politics of it, what does it do to the painting of the city…Nobody *said* it was a black eye on our community. But it just had that sense, that feeling that...we can't have a Tent City, it just cannot be...I always thought the question was, how do we help the people? But it wasn't around that. It was, how do we disperse the people? How do we break this up?

She commented that intention plays a significant role in shaping the eventual outcome. The committee's focus on excluding homeless individuals from that space predetermined that solutions would not be focused around housing, but around exclusion.

Because officials wished to find ways to dismantle the encampment yet maintain a positive public image, deliberations continued as they searched for the best way to achieve their goals. Olivia noted that prolonging the deliberation process allowed Tent City to grow, and it became increasingly disruptive. “Things took a twist. Nobody did anything in Tent City and then it became harder to manage...It grew...And it [became] a very tenuous situation.” Tent City swelled to more than 200 residents. Once drug dealers and gang members established a presence inside the encampment, there was an erosion of the community that was initially cultivated by campers, prompting many of the original campers to leave the site. “What happened is that after a few weeks some of the gang activity started to increase. They were not the original Tent City people” (Tessa). Tessa was of the opinion that the increasing size of Tent City did not result in greater violence but it merely impacted public perceptions. She maintained that even at its peak, Tent City was still safer for residents than the isolation and the violence of the streets: “This is just the nature of people. They were addicts, they were alcoholics, they were just practicing their lifestyle...If you get one hundred people in one place, it looks like more violence than if you have one hundred people in one hundred different spots.” Other respondents disagreed with this assessment, contending that Tent City became more dangerous as criminal elements continued to filter in to the encampment.

> Initially, when [Tent City] was smaller, [campers] could govern a bit better. But as it grew, it became much more dangerous...And then you get the different situations happening, from people who are working, people who are not, people with mental health [sic], people with addictions versus people who are drinking, people with multiple issues, people involved with crimes and gangs (Olivia).

Security Measures

While state officials claimed that security measures, including the fence, the 24-hour security guards, and the requirement that residents show identification were

necessary to provide protection for the residents against drug dealers and gang members, respondents felt that these measures were to implemented in order to strengthen institutional control over the encampment. There was some degree of understanding for the need to provide security on site and a recognition that photo identification helped inform officials about who was living there and who they were dealing with, which would also allow them to deliver targeted services to the homeless population. Tessa noted that the fence also helped to achieve these objectives: "[State officials] started keeping a census of who was there, and working with the individuals trying to find them housing. And you can't really do that if you have people coming and going all the time." However, she was alone in suggesting that there may have been some legitimate motivations behind the decision to construct a fence. All other respondents expressed that the true intentions behind the fence were to ease the process of evicting residents. Patrick maintained that the fence was the most extreme manifestation of social control exhibited by state officials in response to Tent City, but it was representative of a deeper mentality.

> There were legitimate concerns about people's safety and security but I don't believe that was the only thing underway. Part of solving Tent City was thinking about preventing it. There are two ways to think about prevention. There are those who would think, they will keep coming back so lock it up. Just like, if you want to deal with crime you can throw people in jail, or you can say, what are some other things that might prevent crime in the future? One view is to say lock them up or lock them out. I think the fence was part of the 'lock them out' mentality.

Patrick denounced the treatment of homeless campers as a "problem" rather than as responding to them as human beings. "If you go camping, nobody puts a fence around your damn campground. I don't care if these are poor people or homeless, they are not animals." Security measures led some respondents to conclude that state officials perceived residents as "undeserving" of assistance.

> We would never allow, in any other part of our community, the presumption of guilt that was dumped on the people of Tent City by how monitored and how regulated their lives became. And their only crime was the crime of being too poor for having places to live that met our requirements (Ethan).

This comment underscores a critical consideration: were residents being protected from the crimes of the homeless, or were they being punished because they were homeless? Tessa captured the sentiment of other service providers in the following comment: “They said it was a safety issue [to put up the fence]. I think it was more of a safety issue for the City in controlling the situation.” Ethan argued that institutional measures had the opposite effect than that which had been intended. Rather than producing compliance in residents, the measures provoked more disruptive behaviour as residents sensed that their lives in the encampment were being undermined. They perceived that they were being punished and therefore responded with negative behaviour.

> When you do that kind of institutionalized control of people, you actually provoke worse and worse behaviour...So not only did you fail to prevent the bad that wouldn’t have happened anyways if you had let those people develop their own governance and so on, you actually encouraged more crime by the end of the summer.

Tessa observed that the fence had broader impacts beyond simply keeping non-residents out and limiting membership in the community; a sign was placed on the fence to redirect community support efforts away from the encampment. While residents had benefitted from interacting with housed individuals, these interactions were suddenly cut off as individuals were asked to drop off donations at community agencies instead. The efforts of the broader public were “channeled.” This was due to health concerns, as much of the food was spoiling inside the encampment. “[State officials] said that part of the problem was that they had too much food and the food was going rotten and spoiling. This is one reason they said they wanted the donations to be directed to the Mustard Seed or to the Bissell” (Tessa). Institutional measures helped mitigate concerns of legal liability. As levels of violence inside the encampment continued to rise, state efforts attempted to preempt any serious incidents from occurring.

> The biggest single reason for [institutional measures] was because of fear of legal liability. Big governments live in deadly fear of something that will get them in trouble. So you find other ways to justify it, we’ve gotta keep the people safe, or we’ve gotta regulate...And if there was an incident there and a murder took place or something like that, the city would also look bad publicly. So even though the measures weren’t very effective measures in my view in the end, they are the only thing that big systems like the police and the city bureaucracy know how to do (Ethan).

Other respondents maintained that the fence had negative reverberations for Tent City residents: it reinforced their social exclusion, as they were no longer able to interact with housed individuals; it lent the encampment an air of institutionalism, which provoked residents to respond with negative behaviour; and, it restricted their freedoms within the encampment. Service providers understood the fence to be a mechanism to control Tent City residents so as to enable the eventual closure of the encampment.

Officials' Efforts to Find Housing

During the last month of the encampment's existence, provincial officials began looking for alternative housing arrangements for residents. This was perceived to be a positive way to address Tent City because homelessness is fundamentally the lack of a permanent home. However, because officials' efforts were rushed, they were only met with partial success. A fraction of all residents were found alternative housing arrangements and respondents raised questions as to whether they constituted actual housing (for instance, several residents were placed in emergency shelters). Respondents perceived state officials to be unaware of who was being housed, what their needs were, or how to house them appropriately. Most of the individuals who were housed out of Tent City returned to the streets later on. Hailey argued that there was a need to provide sufficient resources, including resources to fund support services after housing had been found, or there was very little point in putting forth any efforts at all: “We need all the resources or there's no point.” While officials made concerted efforts to help, she recognized that inadequate government resources inhibited the process.

Hailey noted that the failure to provide sufficient resources meant that for many Tent City residents, housing was only a short-term reality. Individuals were not placed in suitable accommodations, and a lack of follow-up supports meant that many were quickly evicted. Olivia argued that when dealing with a hard-to-serve population, follow-up supports are necessary.

> I heard some people got into housing and were gone and evicted within a week because they trashed the place. [Officials] were trying to react. Saying,

> they need housing – so put them in housing. But that's not how you do it. Housing First means you have to put the supports to it… You don't just grab somebody and stick them in a house. There ya go, we just gave you a house. What more do you want?

Naomi reflected upon how these evictions may have impacted residents. She expressed concern that, for those residents who had gone through the housing process, only to be evicted and end up back on the street, they would feel that they were the ones that had failed. Officials' brief contact with residents reinforced that they were to blame for their homeless condition.

> A lot of these people…got housing, and they lasted two or three days and then they got kicked out. And then [the government] just gave up on these people again. So did we do them any favours? No. Did we teach them anything? No...You keep working to get [someone] to that next opportunity, and don't give up on [them]. Not, yeah you are a failure I'm not touching you…These people from Tent City – most of them are homeless again.

She noted that the housing program was more helpful for the state than for Tent City residents, as it set campers up for failure. She spoke of numerous social welfare programs that encompass a similar logic; created and run by individuals who are unfamiliar with the needs of the homeless population, the result is an entire system which is unsympathetic of homeless individuals and is inherently degrading, reinforcing that homelessness is a result of personal failure while providing insufficient support. She argued that state systems and programs reproduce power relationships of oppression exercised over homeless individuals, leading her to proclaim, "I don't blame them for using [drugs or alcohol]. Christ, the world is so mean to them, how do you get out of feeling so bad? And you're the one who is bad? So you're feeling bad because everybody else says you're bad – because you're poor."

A lack of resources was not the only identified cause for the officials' lack of success in housing residents out of Tent City. State officials working on site had never before engaged in the provision of frontline supports of any kind and thus were ill-informed about what supports would be necessary to ensure a smooth transition from the streets to more permanent housing. Officials learned through trial and error how to provide better support services.

> They had to learn along the way that getting people an apartment was only step one. They didn't have beds. Like, yeah. They don't have anything to put in their places. Yeah. These were middle management government employees who spent most of their lives in places like Standard Life Centre. And suddenly were commissioned to work out of a trailer…in Tent City and do something with these people (Hailey).

Officials were selective about which residents to consider eligible for housing. Hailey remarked that officials would only consider housing individuals who did not suffer from any mental health issues or addictions. Residents quickly learned that, in order to be considered deserving of housing, they needed to appear sober and mentally undisturbed. This corroborates with academic research that has documented the ability of homeless individuals to manoeuvre within systems as a resistant strategy of survival (Wagner 1993; Liebow 1993). Welfare systems, for instance, are often targeted towards the "deserving" poor; homeless individuals learn to present themselves in a way which will be perceived as favourable. They withhold information which would result in their exclusion and they shape their behaviour according to expectations (Wagner 1993, 89). State officials at Tent City were not always aware of the actual needs of residents they were housing, believing that all residents were sober and mentally healthy.

> [State officials]...had everybody register and talk about their addictions...So a couple of people thought they were going to get help, and actually said yes, I have an addiction problem. It turned out they were advised, well we can't house you because you have an addiction problem. So guess what? The next person when asked, do you have an addiction problem – oh no. What were they going to say? They wanted a house...So they basically sent these people to this place with all their behaviour issues and guess what? They acted like they act, and they got tossed out (Hailey).

Hailey referred to this process of dealing only with uncomplicated residents as "creaming." She argued that such an approach was inherently opposed to HF, which is intended to be capable of providing individualized supports to clients with complex needs. "What you're doing is in fact creaming the nice people who have the skills and the health and the well-being to manage themselves. What we need to be doing is the messier people that will take forever, and aren't okay just sending them off on their own." Hailey was critical of the way in which state officials had asked for residents' confidence, only to punish them for opening up. This approach was not in the spirit of community agencies'

philosophy of respecting people's dignity and choices. “Most of us are really, really reluctant to breach trust with people. Tell me everything, and then I’ll make sure that nobody gives you anything because you’re not fit.”

Tessa pointed out that several individuals (who had previously been homeless, and were maintaining their housing with the support of provincial funding) were moved out of their housing in order to make room for Tent City residents; some residents were given one-way bus tickets to live with relatives, while others were placed in emergency shelters. Such housing arrangements were not necessarily secure or permanent, leading her to question whether state officials had overstated the extent of their success in housing Tent City residents.

> When [the provincial government] closed Tent City they said, well you make sure everybody has a place to go – which is hogwash. Some of the people are still homeless. Where they sent them to sleep, which was supposed to be better than Tent City, was to the Women’s Shelter or to the Mission Shelters. It’s like, so much of what you read in the papers is the ‘acceptable’ version (Tessa).

The majority of Tent City residents did not receive assistance through the housing program but resumed sleeping on the streets after the encampment's closure. “Within days after Tent City had closed, we could walk by all the same people that, two weeks ago, had been on one piece of land in downtown. And were now living up and down all the alleys around there. So nothing really changed” (Ethan).

Naomi commented that officials had surprising success in housing approximately fifty-eight individuals out of the encampment when the vacancy rate was less than 1.5 per cent across the city (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2007, 25). She perceived this to be because state officials have greater influence whereas community agencies are generally thought of as representing undesirable clients who will pose problems for landlords.

> There were government people there that said, I can house them and found them places and they moved in. And then, well I don’t know what people are bitching about, I found them housing! These [provincial] government people…say, we need a place and the landlords say oh sure, and they jump to it! But I call and…they say, well I’ve got nothing and I don’t want your people. So there were some power issues that weren’t identified, of why the housing was found so quickly (Naomi).

Tessa agreed that the ability of provincial officials to locate housing quickly was somewhat remarkable. However, their involvement did not last long. Once Tent City had been closed, state officials resumed work life in their offices while community agencies again assumed primary responsibility for housing efforts. Tessa expressed disappointment that officials so quickly withdrew their efforts from this area: “It would be good if they [provincial officials] worked...with people all the time trying to find them housing. Because they did find quite a bit of housing…Since then [housing efforts] have just gone back to what it was before” (Tessa). Hailey observed that, although there were some problems with the housing program, interactions between homeless campers and provincial officials had provided an opportunity for officials to develop more awareness about the issues of homelessness. “By the end [state officials] were saying, we have to look at resources, we have to look at support, there’s mental health issues, addiction issues that are much more serious. There was much more insight in terms of the complexity.” However, there was still a sense that officials had engaged in the housing process only in order to facilitate an easy closure. Naomi stated, “They solved the problem. That's my view. Oh look, we housed them. And then, once [the homeless] were out of that area and they locked [Tent City] up, they couldn't go back [there]. So they don't care what happened to them.”

Closing Tent City

Respondents speculated that every state action that summer had been part of a broader strategy to close Tent City with as little protest as possible. By the time Tent City closed on September 15, there were only about twenty-five individuals remaining.

> One thing [state officials] knew was with fall coming on, always the number of people camping does start to change and some of those people start crowding in with other people, or going back to welfare and getting their housing allowance again so they can get a little rooming house place and that. So they knew that...if you try to close it at the end of July when it was packed, it would have been dramatic and the chance for some kind of extreme behaviour was much larger. But by slowly strangling it instead of a midnight raid, they avoided a lot of the problems for themselves (Ethan).

Ethan suggested that the decision to close Tent City on a Saturday was also a conscious decision, intended to reduce the media attention on the encampment's closure and thus the negative portrayal of state officials, as this was a source of embarrassment for them. "Saturday, the media have half the staff on duty that they have [normally] and they're covering a lot of things, so they can't hang around a long time. So you reduce the media coverage of the event." Every state measure had been part of a broader strategy to regain control over the space and reduce the size of Tent City so as to enable officials to shut down the encampment easily.

> All those pieces fit together. It was all their ways to figure out, now that this has happened, we've gotta say what is the least embarrassing way to deal with it. There were people early on that advocated going in right away and shutting it down fast. Have a day of embarrassment in the media, everybody being chased out, lock it up and be done with it. But in the end this other view won out which said, we'll let it atrophy until it's a small problem, and then [shut it down] (Ethan).

Residents were informed in advance that the encampment would be closed, and the presence of police officers and police dogs on closing day helped to ensure acquiescent behaviour from residents. Respondents agreed that Tent City needed to be closed because it had become too dangerous and because winter was approaching.[62] Tent City was a manifestation of a deeper problem requiring resources and strategies in order to resolve it; its closure enabled state officials to focus on providing the homeless population with adequate, suitable, and affordable homes. As Patrick stated: "Letting Tent City just exist forever would not have been an option, unless you're going to provide all the facilities needed for people living somewhere. But that wouldn't have been an option either."

After Tent City's dissolution, the fence was left standing. It served as a reminder that state officials would not permit an organized homeless community to exist there in the future. Respondents understood the fence to be representative of state disciplinary

---

[62] One respondent argued that government should provide a wide variety of housing arrangements to meet the wide-ranging needs of its citizens, including the option to camp outdoors in a dignified and respectable manner.

measures used to enforce social order and exclude homelessness individuals from public spaces.

> Going back there now, it's this completely fenced off piece of grass. That's odd. You don't see anywhere else in the city with that – and it's a high fence!...For me, that is symbolic...of one way to address homelessness. Which is, try to make it fucking impossible to get back to this piece of property (Patrick).

Post-Tent City

Closing Tent City was not the end of the story. Residents who had been evicted from the encampment and who had not been found housing were still in need of a place to sleep. Tessa observed that after Tent City was closed, there was considerable evidence that homeless individuals were occupying and using spaces in residential neighbourhoods.

> At least when there was a Tent City, people had a place where they were, everyone knew where they were, they had bathrooms. They weren't creating the problems in the neighbourhood like breaking into people's garages, sleeping in people's yards, nesting all over the place, leaving garbage all over the place…[Now] they don't have washrooms. Alleys, like the one behind where I live, you've got feces and urine all over it. It smells bad. People are peeing all over the place because there's no public washrooms (Tessa).

This comment indicates that the increased presence of homeless individuals resulted in numerous violations of social norms. Using someone else's private property, sleeping in public areas, and excreting in public are unacceptable behaviours. Tessa recognized that this situation could be rectified if state officials provided public washrooms and a place for homeless individuals to live and noted that Tent City had temporarily solved some of these issues. Once the encampment was dissolved, homeless individuals went back to creating their own space but this resulted in a seeming disregard for social norms. Such violations have often constituted one of the main reasons behind enacting ordinances that criminalize homeless behaviour (Ellickson 1996; Mitchell 1997; Waldron 2000). The argument is that such violations may prompt other street users to leave (Ellickson 1996, 1177). This logic may have strengthened officials' resolve to further disperse homeless individuals from downtown areas.

Respondents noted that, although Tent City had been dismantled, the possibility of another homeless encampment was not far from municipal and provincial officials' minds. The following spring, officials met in order to develop strategies to pre-empt future problems and prevent another homeless community from emerging.

> In the spring of '08, I remember there had been a meeting to check in to say, are we going to have another Tent City this summer?...That indicates to me, institutional radar is operating. When institutional radar is operating, that means there is enough of a concern that it is a priority. Institutional radar doesn't operate at a very high level unless it is a concern of the government or the bureaucracy (Patrick).

The primary strategy employed to prevent another Tent City was an increase in regulatory and disciplinary efforts in order to further disperse homeless individuals from downtown areas. City Council passed a bylaw amendment to fine aggressive panhandlers (Edmonton Journal 2009), signalling further efforts to criminalize the homeless population and remove them from public spaces. The number of police sweeps also increased in order to prevent homeless individuals from occupying downtown public spaces.

> [State officials] were not going to have a Tent City this year. They were going to make sure there was going to be a [homeless] clean up in the spring, and so anybody loitering, anybody drinking – [they] would tolerate no violence, they kept moving people around. Would there have been a Tent City? You better believe it (Olivia).

Officials' actions seemed to be effective in scattering the homeless population away from downtown public places. Hailey stated that, while disciplinary efforts would perhaps make things easier for state officials in the short-term by reducing the visibility of the homeless, such strategies were costly to taxpayers and did not do anything to address the real issues of housing and homelessness.

> All of those things make [homelessness] less visible; it does not solve the problem. And it's very expensive intervention. They all get fined, they can't afford their fines, they're absolutely scathing about being fined for sitting, and so they refuse even if they're dragged into court to pay the fine. So then they get jail time...Very expensive for taxpayers. It's a very, very bad way of preventing someone from camping in the city. Really expensive (Hailey).

Tessa pointed out that officials' attempts to prevent a Tent City had come at a significant cost to the quality of life of homeless individuals in Edmonton, as they no longer had

access to toilets or drinking water. Police and park rangers' efforts to conduct sweeps of homeless encampments had resulted in the confiscation of tents. This reflected a further erosion of homeless rights, primarily regarding privacy and personal belongings. “The City has been very vigilant in people’s tents being torn down immediately. There’s been zero tolerance of people with tents so there’s people camping outside without tents.” This observation is noteworthy. While Tent City had constituted a significant improvement in the quality of life for its residents, they were punished and subsequently prevented from pitching a tent to provide shelter. Hailey argued that heightened efforts to disperse homeless individuals made their lives much more dangerous. Being isolated in remote areas would make it more difficult to reach help, if they needed it.

> There’s probably more [homeless] people in the river valley [now]. And my fear is they are deeper in the river valley. They are more hidden. The scary part with that is, if they freeze to death, what year will they be found? I don’t want them hidden away in absolute, you can’t find them places. That’s not safe (Hailey).

Disciplinary strategies were not enforced everywhere around the city but focused on reducing the visibility of street homelessness in downtown or high use areas. “The police…forced people further afield. If they wanted a secret encampment or a single encampment, they have to go to Abbotsfield or someplace to find their spot. Around here, they were blitzing the area” (Hailey). Olivia made a similar remark: “If there is another [Tent City] it will probably be in the alpine areas. Where it’s less visible.” These comments correspond with academic research cited in Chapter One (Duncan 1978; Snow and Mulcahy 2001; Wright 1997); recall the discussion about distinctions between prime space, marginal space, and transitional space. Urban design demarcates spaces for various uses through zoning ordinances, such as consumer spaces, business spaces, and so on. These authors have found that, while homeless individuals are considered to be out of place in all urban spaces, they are tolerated less in prime spaces of consumption and this is where homeless sweeps and law enforcement of anti-homeless ordinances are most rigorously enforced. Conversely, the homeless are less likely to

suffer harassment from police in marginal areas.[63] While Tent City was not situated in a prime space of consumption or heavy use, its downtown location meant that it was considered to be inappropriate, in comparison with outlying areas around the City.

Housing First

Increased policing was not the only state strategy to address homelessness. Both the City of Edmonton and the Province of Alberta released Ten-Year Plans to End Homelessness following the dissolution of Tent City. The reports endorsed HF as a model to address homelessness and conveyed that growing rates of homelessness were a concern for both the municipal and provincial governments. The reports emphasized the need to provide affordable housing and individualized support services for the chronically homeless, rather than maintain people's homelessness through funding shelters and drop-in centres. Respondents were enthusiastic about the fact that both municipal and provincial levels of government had embraced HF and felt that this approach had the potential to fully end homelessness. Respondents wryly pointed out that service providers had been advocating the need to adopt such an approach for many decades. Patrick suggested that, had state officials consulted service providers earlier, they would have learned about HF much sooner.

> I know Housing First is all the rage now...but everything has its day in the sun and is trendy...I think even ten years ago organizations knew that you had to provide support, there just wasn't any money for it. The difference now is, it's sexy. And so governments are saying, I guess we'll have to provide money for supported housing, we'll call it Housing First. I think if you talked to people who have been in the field for twenty years, they'd say for years we've been saying we need to have somebody to provide ongoing supports beyond helping people pay the rent (Patrick).

---

[63] Further to this point, Naomi stated that other Tent Cities had been established around the city but, because they were not centrally located, they had received no attention from officials or media. This underlines that not all Tent Cities are considered problematic for officials or, at least, not to the same degree. "We have Tent City right now in Borden, that's where they all moved but they're not so visual and in everybody's face. They're more hidden away where there's not a big community or people complaining about it."

Respondents identified several key areas in which they felt the plans fell short. Naomi raised concerns about the Edmonton Plan's lack of attention to Aboriginal issues. As a significant portion of the homeless population, she argued that this lack of attention would ultimately prevent the City and the Province from ending homelessness. Aboriginal people would need to be given more opportunities to assume leadership positions and a role in addressing their own issues. She added that homeless individuals and service providers should be included in developing any policy solutions to homelessness. Tessa pointed out that the Edmonton Plan was based on current homelessness counts and failed to account for future homelessness growth; it was therefore not equipped to supply sufficient numbers of housing units and would be obsolete before too long.

While the Ten-Year Plans were perceived as a positive first step, it was noted that if they were not backed up by sufficient government funds, the plans would become stillborn. To this end, resources were perceived to be more important than any particular plan or approach to address homelessness. State officials had released numerous reports over the years which were intended to address homelessness, but they had not resulted in any significant increase of resources. At the time of the interviews, several respondents observed that there were few indications of increased government commitment to the issue. Patrick argued that there is no magic solution to addressing homelessness; only genuine commitment would produce solutions.

> We need an ongoing [government] commitment to affordable housing and homelessness…If that commitment is made, then I feel relatively confident that we can address this issue in a way that, over the long term will reduce the levels of homelessness...Programs come and go. And they'll have to change to reflect current realities. But the main issue is [government] will. If the will is there and the necessary resources which are needed are there, then we'll make a difference.

Patrick felt that the recent creation of a Ministry solely dedicated to housing issues was significant, because state engagement is reflected through institutional machinery.

> Real dollars have flowed in, there is this Alberta Provincial Secretariat now, there is actually a Housing Department. First they put in Municipal Affairs and Housing and then they carved it right out. And that's important, because when you have your own department, your own Deputy, your own Minister, your own ADMs, that's a re-engagement on an institutional level on an issue. That's power (Patrick).

Respondents largely felt that endorsements of HF by municipal and provincial governments were a positive step, but that in order to actually achieve the intended aim of ending homelessness, there was a need for significant government resources. Respondents expressed some cynicism about whether these plans would be followed up with sufficient funding, but firm conclusions would be impossible until it became clear how much governments were willing to allocate to the issue of homelessness.

Conclusion

The emergence of a homeless encampment in Edmonton's downtown was no surprise to service providers, given past policy decisions made at all three levels of government. Officials failed to take advantage of the opportunity that was presented by Tent City; when they could have addressed issues of housing and homelessness constructively, officials were preoccupied with the need to repress visible homelessness. Tent City was significant in its ability to underline the extent and seriousness of homelessness throughout the City of Edmonton, but respondents emphasized that until municipal and provincial governments developed a concern with finding real solutions, homelessness would continue to grow. An intention to suppress homeless behaviours and conceal homelessness would ensure that Tent Cities continue to punctuate the urban landscape as homeless individuals search for ways to survive.

> Tent City was a big red siren, a red light saying, if we don't do something and get serious about it, this is going to become more frequent, ongoing...That is one reason it gripped our community. People saw it as a symbol…that something is wrong…That was the power of [Tent City] (Patrick).

Tent City garnered a strong response from its residents, state officials, and service providers. The narratives emerging from each group of interview respondents differed significantly, revealing distinctive understandings of the 'rise and fall' of the encampment. Tent City residents focused their discussions on the social-physical space as a dwelling space, which constituted a significant improvement to their overall quality of life. When they were still able to maintain control over the social-physical space, Tent City

represented an ephemeral moment of prosperity and stability in their otherwise transient lives. However, the community came under strain once gang members had infiltrated the encampment, and it crumbled after institutional measures were established to regain control over the space although residents' social networks remained enhanced. Some Tent City residents had been fortunate enough to find more permanent housing accommodations, but most continued in their quest to find somewhere to call home. State officials understood the encampment as a space of lawlessness and disorder that was not an appropriate solution to homelessness. Despite the fact that Tent City was perceived as a difficult issue to address, state officials noted that it enabled considerable learning to take place within the encampment and also facilitated stronger working relationships. These processes contributed to more effective and collaborative policy approaches on an ongoing basis. The Tent City housing program, efforts to connect illegal campers to various services, and the adoption of HF indicated that officials were committed to addressing homelessness.

Discussions with these three groups provide the foundation to enter into a more in-depth examination of Tent City's significance. The following chapter will return to a spatial perspective of analysis introduced at the beginning of this thesis, and explore Tent City and homelessness in relation to public and private space. The spatial consequences of government decisions will be examined in order to understand the implications for homeless citizenship. Specifically, I will return to the question I asked at the beginning of the thesis: how are homeless individuals regarded when they exercise their right to dwell?

CHAPTER FIVE

Reflections on Findings

Introduction

The nature of negotiations over public space is critical for homeless individuals. By their very homeless condition, they necessarily exist in public space. As shelters are public institutions run by the state, they do not accord their clients any private space that is critical to the ideological division between public and private domains. Shelters are, rather, an intrusion into the very private lives of individuals, as clients must submit to regulations governing when and where they sleep, when they leave the shelter, and various other facets of their daily existence. Recall the discussion in Chapter One about the intrusive nature of emergency shelters. According to Kawash:

> Although shelters, soup kitchens, and drop-in centers technically provide places for the homeless, access is controlled and behaviour is regimented so that they would more accurately be described as places where the homeless are tolerated, temporarily and for short periods of time, and from which they are always subject to expulsion (1998, 327).

Whether homeless individuals stay in shelters or find alternative accommodations on the streets,[64] either by choice or by forced exclusion, they have no certain access to space that accords them any privacy. Because of this, they live solely or predominantly on public space and thus, the nature of rules governing public places is of critical import to their very survival. It is therefore essential to ensure that such rules are fair and just in their consideration of all citizens, including homeless individuals.

Central to our understanding of citizenship and democracy is the distinction between 'public' and 'private,' with the public sphere theorized abstractly as the space of the "commons," while the private sphere is theorized as the space of freedom from state or societal incursion. Citizens voluntarily participate in the public sphere and retreat into the private when they choose. These distinctions form core organizational principles in

[64] Recall Tent City residents' discussions about choosing a place to stay at night; they preferred to stay outside as they had more privacy, could retain a greater sense of dignity, and were not subject to the regulations of shelters.

modern society and the ordering of everyday life. While the public sphere is not immediately synonymous with public space, there is a strong relationship between the two: public space is the physical location where citizens gather and politics occurs. Public spaces are spaces for representation in the public sphere (Mitchell 1995, 115). The shape of our urban spaces designates who constitutes "the public" and therefore, who has citizenship. The exclusion of homeless individuals from urban public space signifies their segregation from "the commons," as they are denied the right to interact with others and participate in political life. Once they are banned from the gathering areas of the city, the homeless are excluded from the social imaginary (Mitchell 1995, 120).

This chapter will examine some of the threads embedded throughout the thesis in order to highlight the mechanisms that regulate the regimes of public space governing the lives of homeless individuals. We begin by first reviewing the parameters of public space, followed by an exploration of the consequences of government policies on the ordering of public space and the resulting rise of homelessness. Homelessness is not, at base, the result of individual outcomes or personal failings; rather, it is the product of structural factors that culminate in a lack of affordable housing. Situated in a political environment that favours market logics and gives primacy to individual self-sufficiency, consumption, and investment in the pursuit of capital, Edmonton's Tent City emerged when housing availability and affordability was critically low. The proliferation of homelessness is a contradiction in a society as wealthy as Alberta is, and Tent City constituted a transgression of the dominant understandings of appropriate behaviour. To mitigate this contradiction and restrict further discussion about the injustices of homelessness, municipal and provincial governments engaged in a strategy of slowly dismantling the homeless encampment so as to regulate the visibility of homeless individuals in Edmonton's downtown public spaces. By enacting legislation that further restricted the offending transgression – the homeless body – from encroaching upon public areas, visible homelessness was concealed through spatial eviction. New policy approaches purport to be more compassionate towards the homeless; however, further examination

reveals that these policies appear to be deeply rooted in a neoliberal framework focused on the removal of visible homeless from the streets, while simultaneously reducing state expenditures (for instance, funding for emergency shelters) and spuriously blaming the homeless for their condition. The underpinning tenets of HF that champion the provision of housing are promising; however, evidence to date suggests that this approach may not deliver on its commitment to supply affordable housing. Only by recognizing and addressing the structural factors in the causation of homelessness, most importantly the need for adequate, suitable, and affordable housing and by providing all citizens with access to public and private space will social and spatial justice be achieved, and legitimacy restored to the system.

Public Space

While contemporary democracy is founded upon the opposition of public and private, the divide between them is not fixed but shifts over time. Recent trends have witnessed the commodification of public space,[65] so that it no longer constitutes an open space for all citizens. The term "café-creep" has been coined as a way to describe the sale of public space occurring across North America for the last several decades, as it is gradually becoming the property of private developers and commercial ventures (Kohn 2004, 5). Town squares are being replaced with shopping malls or theme parks and public-private partnerships have resulted in private management of parks and playgrounds. In the United States, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are adopting responsibility for community services such as surveillance and policing, garbage removal, or road maintenance. As public spaces are becoming increasingly the property of the

[65] This is commonly referred to as the "privatization of public space" but this invokes a different use of 'public/private' than that which I have outlined above. I employ a conception of 'public/private' which understands the public realm in terms of political community and citizenship, whereas the "privatization of public space" employs a liberal-economic model (Weintraub 1997) to recognize that space is increasingly commodified, and is becoming the property of the market rather than the state. For the purposes of clarity, I refer to this as the commodification of public space or market space.

market, their previous intention of providing open space for "the public" and facilitating interaction is being replaced with the drive to generate profits.

Given the interplay between public and market space, it is useful to examine the characteristics that are endemic of each. Public space exists within a regime of property relations (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006), which are defined and protected by rights. Property is defined by a set of distinctive rules and practices that impact access and exclusion. Ownership of property constitutes the exclusive right of use and the right to exclude. Property can be owned by an individual, a corporation, or the state; each respective owner holds the right to exclude others from that property (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, 149). Sometimes there is a fee for service (such as in the case of theme parks or national parks) or a requirement for membership (such as residential community facilities) which impacts accessibility. Civil and political rights limit public property rights of exclusion;[66] if a corporate-owned place is considered the "functional equivalent" of a traditional public forum, legally it may be required to protect these same civil and political rights (Kohn 2004, 13). Thus, corporate owners often try to maintain the illusion of open accessibility while enforcing a set of unwritten rules in order to achieve underlying goals and maximize control of the space (Kohn 2004, 13).

While a great deal of public space has been eroded and replaced with space that belongs to corporate players, any remaining public space has become increasingly exclusive as the neoliberal state has refashioned itself as a market player. The neoliberal state subordinates public goods and the provision of social rights to the demands of free markets, private property rights, and individual freedoms and responsibilities (Harvey 2007, 22). Janine Brodie characterizes neoliberal discourse as marking the:

> Ascendancy of the market *over* the state and *inside* the state and, thereby atrophies the public, closes political spaces and further marginalizes the already marginalized – those very groups most likely to challenge the growing social inequalities that restructuring is creating (Brodie 1997, 235, emph. in original).

---

[66] Ultimately, the state can revoke these protections and assert a stronger right of exclusion.

With an overarching discourse of performativity, or the "competition state" (Jessop 2003, 38), neoliberalism only sees one good citizen: the disembodied market player who is self-reliant. It ignores systemic processes or barriers such as racism or poverty, and places the onus singularly upon the individual (Brodie 2007, 159). Those who cannot comply with expectations of market participation are deemed immoral and irresponsible, and are punished by exclusion (Herbert and Brown 2006, 769).

Neoliberalism has increased the need for highly regulated public spaces in order to maintain a sanitized and harmonious landscape to encourage consumption. Public space is portrayed as an organic whole. In this view, the homeless figure is ideologically constructed in opposition to "the public" and is perceived as a threat emanating from elsewhere that will disrupt the otherwise peaceful urban space. The image of the homeless body as a disruption to the harmonious urban social order is necessary in order to maintain the fantasy of public space; when the homeless figure is seen to transgress "appropriate" behaviour in public places and its presence is seen to upset the "normal" and peaceful urban community, the homeless figure becomes a positive embodiment of the unified urban space that would otherwise exist (Deutsche 2002, 278). However, this ideal can never be achieved because public space is not normally uniform.[67] The construction of a unitary urban space leads to conflict, as it requires the exclusion of some individuals and groups in order to maintain its harmonious image. Neoliberal governance has resulted in fewer spaces available for use by homeless individuals; once they are unable to access private homes, they are then prevented from occupying public and market space.

---

[67] Public space is the very product of conflict. It is the result of negotiations over what, and who, constitute that space. Such negotiations have not historically been inclusive or expansive. Inclusion of various groups within the public sphere has been won only through continuous social struggle. The ancient Greeks accorded citizenship rights by birthright and this could not be bought with status, wealth, or power (Isin 2002, 58). When groups of individuals (such as craftsmen and tradesmen) challenged the aristocracy and demanded a greater share in political decision-making, citizenship was opened and they gained a place in the public sphere, although it was still granted through birth (Isin 2002, 57). Over time, citizenship has been extended (formally) to various groups but only through continuous struggle (Mitchell 1995, 117).

Consequences of Government Policies on the Ordering of Public Space

The election of Ralph Klein in 1993 as Premier of Alberta ushered in a period of cutbacks to the public sector while government focused on the provision of favourable conditions for industry to invest in the province. Premier Klein tried to attract business to Alberta by promoting the "Alberta Advantage." The term refers to a strong economy, low taxes, and an environment that promotes entrepreneurship, innovation, and investment with minimal state regulation (Faid 2009, 1). Between 2003 and 2008, total investment in Alberta increased by close to $43 billion, until overall investment reached $87 billion in 2008 (Alberta 2010). Alberta is currently Canada's leading energy-producing province, with the second highest stock of oil reserves outside of Saudi Arabia. In 2006 alone nearly one-quarter (23 per cent) of all new jobs in Canada were located in Alberta; in 2007, close to 80,000 full-time jobs were created. Precipitated by the growth in oil sands projects and a soaring energy sector, the economic boom in Alberta attracted a dramatic migration of workers into Alberta to take advantage of the economic upturn. Population growth in Alberta averaged 66,450 persons per year (Faid 2009, 15). There were new users making claims on the city on two related fronts: more corporations and capital investment were in need of public (market) space; and, the housing market was impacted as there was an increase in the number of workers who were in need of a place to live.

The influx of new city users resulted in an increasingly competitive environment for existing public space and available housing. The increase of job seekers into the province resulted in growing demand for housing at a time when non-residential construction far surpassed the construction of new housing (Faid 2009, 15). Between 2006 and 2007, the purchase price of a new home in Edmonton rose by fifty-two per cent (Faid 2009, 15), or $100,000 (Conference Board of Canada 2007, 20). Wanting to take advantage of this demand, many apartment building owners converted rental suits into condominium units. More than 20,000 rental suits were converted into condominium units between 2002 and 2007 (Kleiss 2007). This further reduced the supply of apartments

available for rent, which in turn placed upward pressure on rental prices. Vacancy rates were negatively impacted, plummeting from 4.5 per cent in 2005 to 1.2 per cent by the fall of 2006 – the lowest recorded levels in five years (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2007, 25; City Forecast Committee 2007, 12). Declining vacancy rates opened the doors for landlords to increase their rental prices without fear of losing tenants or rental opportunities. Between 1996 and 2006, rental prices increased by more than sixty per cent on average until they were more than double the rates of inflation (Cummings 2007, 1). Low vacancies and lack of affordability pushed out individuals in precarious housing. Frequently referred to as Edmonton's housing crisis, this process contributed to increasing homelessness across the city.

The municipal government in Edmonton endorsed similar neoliberal ideology as policies reflected its prioritization of business and investment. For instance, there was a long campaign to tear down low-income, dilapidated housing in order to provide empty lots for potential developers (Gregoire 1999). The City of Edmonton started to "clean up" slum housing aggressively after 1999, when the provincial Municipal Government Act was changed to enable city staff to act more decisively with respect to derelict homes. The amended Act closed a loophole in the legislation that had allowed owners to jettison demolition orders simply by selling the property (Gregoire 1999). New demolition orders were fixed to the home, regardless of who owned it. Much of downtown Edmonton's older building stock was torn down, often branded as "renewal" or "revitalization" (Wiebe 2002, 36). City policies of demolishing derelict buildings were based upon a dual logic: an open parking lot was preferable to a run-down building, as transients and other undesirables would be prevented from sleeping inside, thereby alleviating issues of liability (Gregoire 1999). Secondly, the destruction of such buildings would increase the potential for economic development in the area. Reports indicated that the number of low-income houses demolished were generally three times higher than the number of homes

maintained and repaired (Edmonton 2007, 11).[68] While such initiatives could have been effective in enforcing minimum standards of housing for tenants, they ultimately resulted in an even greater lack of affordable housing for low-income inner city residents and merely shifted the problem from one area (poor housing) to another (homelessness). Low-income residents were displaced but because very little new housing was being built, there was nowhere for them to go.

During the 1990s, numerous parks were sold to make room for private developers. Provincially-owned parks were sold by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, along with public parkland, grazing tracts or forest land held in trust by the Crown (Edmonton Journal 1994). According to local media reports, the Klein government had planned to privatize all provincial parks across the province (Edmonton Journal 1994). While this plan was not carried to fruition, a considerable amount of parkland was sold in the process. For example, in 1997 West McCauley Park located in the Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood was sold off to a foreign-owned corporation named Alberta Marco Polo Development in order to build a five-storey office building (Thomas 1997). City land was also sold to private corporations, as was the case when Southgate Shopping Centre bought land in 2006 for mall expansion and more parking (Ruttan 2006). Other areas were turned into parking lots. Recall the discussion in Chapter Four about the piece of land where Tent City emerged; public land in the Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood was used to create parking lots for provincial employees and City Police, in disregard of the community Area Redevelopment Plan which had intended that the land be developed as a commercial/residential district with affordable housing units (Kitigawa 2001). The net result was significant corporate ownership of what had previously been considered public space. The loss of parks across the City and province reduced the public spaces available for homeless individuals, leaving them to find alternative spaces. In the Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood, one piece of grass was not

[68] In 2006, fifty-six homes were demolished while only twenty-seven were maintained or repaired; in 2007, the number of homes destroyed rose to 106 homes, while the municipality repaired only thirty-six (Edmonton 2007, 11).

transformed into a parking lot; this provided the space where Tent City eventually emerged.

The commodification of public space, and the increasingly competitive environment for private housing, resulted in rising homelessness leading up to the establishment of Edmonton's Tent City. The emergence of Tent City at the peak of Alberta's economic boom was not a coincidence – neoliberal policies focusing on the pursuit of economic development and investment had resulted in increasingly unattainable private space in the form of housing, while public space was sold or reshaped to accommodate consumer and corporate needs. According to estimates by Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing there were 2,600 homeless individuals living in Edmonton that summer, which was an increase of nearly twenty per cent from 2004 (Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing 2006, 4). Tent City emerged as a response to government policies that had narrowed public spaces available to homeless individuals, representing a claim by Edmonton's most disenfranchised citizens to occupy urban public space in order to meet their (private) needs.

Tent City as an Act of Transgression

The establishment of a homeless encampment in Edmonton's downtown during the summer of 2007 illustrates the continued negotiation over the use of public space. Tim Cresswell (1996) has argued that such moments of transgression reveal seemingly common-sense norms to be ideological. Places are deep repositories of meaning that reflect and reinforce social arrangements of power. Meaning is not inherent within certain spaces but it is socially created; landscapes help to reproduce and maintain social differences based upon intersections of class, gender, and ethnicity (Cresswell 1996). The understood social meaning of a space directs the behaviour of those who occupy or move through it. There are few opportunities to examine the ideological nature of norms in space but one method of doing so is to examine moments considered to be inappropriate in a particular place. Such acts transgress common understandings of

acceptable behaviour and draw attention to them, revealing how expectations of behaviour are shaped with specific interests in mind. Transgressionary acts are therefore powerful in their ability to expose unstated relations between ideology, social norms, and space. Once geography is revealed to be ideological, room is opened up for discussions about how place is structured (Cresswell 1996). This process of reaction and conversation enables further understanding of how social relations are structured and where power lies, and continues to affect the meaning of a place.

Because homelessness emerges at the interstices of society and disrupts boundaries between public and private spheres, it evokes a strong state response. Governments tend to deny the extent of the problem (this is the function of homeless sweeps, criminalization, and incarceration), isolate the problem (through invoking the individualist perspective and "blaming the victim"), or turn to what Peter Marcuse refers to as "specialism" (1988, 88). Specialism is related to "blaming the victim," but is dressed up as a concern with the characteristics of the victims. The specialist argument claims that if we can understand who is affected by a "special problem," then we will be able to find an appropriate solution. The result is to "separate the problem of homelessness out from the factors that caused it, to make it a special problem of a special group, not a result of more general, systemic factors" (Marcuse 1988, 88). Research into who makes up the homeless population, as discussed in Chapter One (recall the summation of the 'old' and 'new' homeless), constitutes such a response. Municipal bylaws in Edmonton explicitly forbid urban camping in public space as well as other behaviours that upset the public/private distinction (such as urination and defecation in public). City park rangers have remained vigilant in clearing homeless campsites each summer. For instance, during the summer of 2006 nearly 500 campsites in the river valley alone were cleared according to media reports (Zabjek 2007). The multiple evictions of homeless individuals from urban space leading up to Tent City's emergence made it clear that there would be no tolerance of homeless camping in urban public space. This illustrates the state's continual attempts to deny the extent of the problem in order to reduce the need for a

policy response, preferring to sink resources into continually dispersing the homeless population in order to obscure the issue rather than address it. The net result of such efforts is the enforcement of behaviours deemed appropriate in public space which, although it is never explicitly stated as such, aims to eliminate visible homelessness so as to restore order to the public sphere.

Individuals with power in society organize space in ways that work for them, while those without power are often excluded from spaces, which both reflects and reinforces their powerlessness. Expected norms of behaviour are often used to deflect attention away from fundamental issues of power and property and instead focus on the condition of the place itself. When rules are enacted which prohibit sleeping in public parks, this ignores the underlying problem of growing homelessness. Rather, the question is framed in terms of the quality or appearance of a place itself. Proponents of anti-homeless legislation claim that its focus on specific behaviours rather than on a particular group of people passes tests of constitutionality and fairness (Hitchen 2005, 3).[69] Anatole France has stated that, "the law in its majestic equality, prohibits rich and poor alike from begging on the streets and sleeping under bridges" (France 1922, 95). However, this is not actually the case: the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects certain fundamental freedoms, including the right to sleep in public as a form of protected speech and protest under paragraph 2(b) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.[70]

---

[69] Opponents of this type of legislation argue that the explicit intent is to target particular groups of people. The 1999 provincial *Ontario Safe Streets Act* prohibited aggressive panhandling or solicitation of others in public places, to which a group of charities expressed concern that they would no longer be able to solicit donations on the street. According to Attorney-General Jim Flaherty: "The Act is not aimed at solicitation that is courteous and takes place in a safe manner and setting…I am confident that charities will be able to continue their commendable work in accordance with the current provisions of the *Safe Street Act*" (Flaherty MPP 2000, 1, qtd. in Gordon 2004, 49). This quote clearly identifies the issue as not the behaviour itself, but as who is doing the soliciting.

[70] This was established in *Weisfeld v. R.* (1994). Seven tents were erected to protest cruise missile testing on Parliament Hill, and this was found to fall under the protection of the *Charter.* If individual activity is "expressive" and conveys a message, it constitutes "expression" under paragraph 2(b) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and*

Presumably, because the homeless citizen is not sleeping in public as an expressive form of assembly but out of necessity, the housed citizen who sleeps in public and who can return home utilizes the space differently than the homeless individual (Feldman 2004, 140). While setting up a tent in a shopping mall may be considered a form of political expression, a homeless Tent City is not viewed as a manifestation of peaceful assembly but rather as an obstruction of public space. This reasoning denies a homeless individual's ability and right to engage in political behaviour and protest, and also illustrates the dual logics acting upon different populations. Proponents argue that it is a particular behaviour that is being targeted, but deeper examination reveals that the issue is more often about *who* is engaging in that behaviour. The universalistic rhetoric of regulations governing behaviour in public space is revealed to be ideological rather than natural. Claims of neutrality mask the underlying biases of such regulations; it is therefore critical to pay attention to urban landscapes in order to determine in whose interests they are shaped.

Acts of transgression cast the focus to the relationship between space and ideology and draw attention to certain norms or expectations. The subsequent process of response and discussion illuminates the true motivations of those with power, as they either extend dominant understandings of behaviour in space or reinforce the established order and preclude alternative ideals with greater effort than before. Tent City constituted such an act of transgression. It challenged the notions of public and private, given that a community of individuals using public space as a place of dwelling contravenes some of the most basic social norms that help to organize society. The highly visible nature of the encampment revealed the squalor of a homeless existence and its presence raised questions about who has rights to space and what behaviours are acceptable in that space. Such visibility disrupts the image of the city as an attractive landscape for

---

Freedoms (freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication).

consumers and investors and threatens the value of private property, which is critical for the success of redevelopment (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, 151).

Tent City as a Space for Citizenship Claims

While respondents from all three groups spoke of numerous homeless encampments in various areas around the City, the Tent City encampment was anomalous due to its central location. The following comment by the Mayor of Tent City illustrates homeless campers' awareness that they were not intended to remain in public space: "Finally I got fed up with [being asked to move all the time], and said listen we're gonna place our tent right here, and that's it" (Andrew). He was "fed up" with the unremitting displacement enforced by police officers and park rangers. The Mayor of Tent City decided to challenge such regulations by placing his tent in a spot that was conveniently located close to many of the homeless services downtown. The act of claiming downtown urban public space illustrated not just passive acceptance or survival techniques, but was an assertion of power and agency. Homeless individuals contravened municipal bylaws to create their own dwelling space within a hostile city that could provide them with none. The establishment of a homeless community that was more permanent than the environment which homeless individuals were accustomed conflicted with the homeless identity as nomadic;[71] homeless residents shed their previous identities of "nomad" in exchange for that of "housed," and "community." Homeless individuals were in a space that was, at least for a short period of time, their own. However, the assertion of a "housed" identity by the residents conflicted with the

[71] Talmadge Wright (1997) discusses the connection between homelessness and nomadic identity. It is interesting to note that his discussion highlights state understandings of homelessness as based around their prior occupation (or lack thereof) of social-physical space. This reinforces the idea that homelessness is intrinsically related, both materially and socially, to notions of property.

logics of property and the market, which proclaims that it is impossible to occupy a space unless it is either rented or owned by the person occupying it (Wright 1997, 268).[72]

Tent City allowed residents to mitigate some of the challenges of life on the street. While homeless residents were accustomed to struggling just to meet their daily needs, Tent City enabled residents to access food and water with greater ease, and toilets were provided onsite. The spatial organization of the encampment accorded residents some privacy and greater control over their lives, and their collective presence resulted in a sense of community. Altogether, the social-physical space became a space of dwelling and "home" for its residents. Residents felt pride in their new space and took steps to ensure that it was well-maintained and ordered, as evidenced by rules of behaviour governing the common space, the leadership structure, and distinctions between private and public space. While it may not have been a conscious intent, attempts to replicate the organization of mainstream society represented a claim to legitimacy as part of "the public." Tent City became a gathering place for homeless individuals where a community developed. Sociability is an intrinsic characteristic of the public sphere; this helps to constitute the "commons" or the collective. As such, Tent City's function as a gathering place for the homeless population was critical in enabling them to be represented as part of the "commons." Tent City provided the space for a new "public," comprised of homeless individuals.

Tent City was instrumental in illuminating the existence of the homeless to the broader Edmonton population. Instead of rendering the homeless invisible, it highlighted the material conditions of their existence and presented some of the injustices of homelessness. Tent City opened up space for discussion about homelessness as local

---

[72] The occupation of public space did not mean that homeless campers were any less homeless than they had been previously; they were still dependent upon the provincial government to allow them access. Indeed, Kawash has pointed out that to be not homeless requires not only finding a dwelling place, but involves the ability to "sustain some tenable position in relation to property," in the form of an enforceable private property right (Kawash 1998, 335).

and national media reported on the encampment throughout the summer.[73] It also facilitated interactions between homed and homeless individuals; because Tent City was fixed in time and space, it was closer in nature to the organization of the broader community than homeless individuals' previous existence on the streets. Rowe and Wolch (1990) have observed that interactions between homed and homeless individuals can provide essential material and emotional resources and can bolster self-esteem (1990, 196). Housed individuals came to Tent City and established contact with some of the residents, providing them with food, clothing, or other supports. This is a matter of some significance, as it allowed homeless individuals to connect with members of the housed community, legitimizing their inclusion as part of "the public."

Edmonton's Tent City subverted the 'proper' use of social-physical space and altered its meaning. The transgression was dependent on the original meaning of the space, reflected in the fact that it constituted a critique of the injustices of homelessness. Having established some control over the space, homeless campers were able to make demands as citizens (Feldman 2004, 103). By replicating features of mainstream society, a new homeless "public" was formed as homeless campers asserted the right to be considered as legitimate citizens, rather than as outsiders or outlaws.

Official Reactions to Tent City as an "Out of Place" Phenomenon

State officials claimed that the issue with Tent City was that it constituted an inappropriate solution to the problem of homelessness, but this failed to recognize that there are no legitimate public or private spaces for the homeless. Such statements focus on the quality or condition of the space itself and ignore underlying power dynamics. Tent City threatened the potential of attracting investors, consumers, and workers to Edmonton, as well as private property values. It was important to shut the encampment down quickly so as to restore the City's positive image. While the decisions to surround

[73] Media provides a space for discussion and representation of images of "the public," and thus provides a point of entry into the public sphere (Mitchell 1995, 120).

the encampment by a fence, hire private security guards, and issue photo identification were framed around the need to provide greater security for the residents, ultimately these actions were executed in order to ensure a smooth and ordered closure of the encampment. This was achieved by gradually limiting access to it. Eventually, strategies of exclusion forbid all persons – homeless or otherwise – from occupying the social-physical space. The Ministry of Infrastructure owned the piece of land where Tent City stood; the provincial government exercised its right to exclude others from the site, reducing and ultimately prohibiting any access to the space. Nicholas Blomley (2000) has argued that the right to exclude entails a violent act:

> Expulsion…entails a right. The powers of the state can be invoked to assist in that expulsion. Police can be called to physically remove a trespasser; injunctions prepared, criminal sanctions sought. As such, expulsion is a violent act. Violence can be explicitly deployed or (more usually) implied. But such violence has state sanction and is thus legitimate (Blomley 2000, 88).

The institutional measures of control effectively dismantled the homeless community that had been established and disrupted the dwelling habits and networks of mutual support that had been forged within the encampment. State actions to reclaim control over the social-physical space disregarded the private space that residents had established for themselves and delegitimized their right to create a "home" for themselves. Wagner (1993) has argued that when homeless individuals are separated from their social networks, this fosters greater dependency upon community agencies and the state; community agencies then seek to help homeless individuals overcome these dependencies and regain independence (Wagner 1993). Wagner further argues that the subcultures and the networks of the homeless should be recognized by the state and utilized in order to nurture independence, as this would be a more effective form of assistance than that which is currently offered in the form of shelters and social assistance. While homeless campers had found considerable benefit from establishing themselves as a member of a broader community, state actions dissolved the community inside the social-physical space, returning many campers to their previous state of isolation and disconnection from the broader community. The locked fence that remained

standing around the Tent City site after its closure is symbolic: its exclusion of those who do not “belong” reinforced the opposition of the homeless from the legitimate public; simultaneously, it enforced a particular depiction of “the public” through the eviction of undesirables (Kawash 1998, 323).

Officials’ efforts to find residents alternative housing before closing the encampment were laudable; however, there was insufficient time to conduct a thorough search. The search for housing began on August 1, 2007 and lasted for six weeks before the encampment was closed on September 15, 2007. In this time, fifty-eight homeless campers were found housing, or twenty-nine per cent of the overall number of Tent City residents that summer (around 200 campers, at its peak). Out of the fifty-eight individuals who were housed, several were placed in shelters while others were given bus tickets to stay with friends or relatives outside of Edmonton. Neither one of these situations meet the criteria of adequate, suitable, and affordable housing. Campers could well have fallen back into visible homelessness at any time as couch-surfers have little control over the length of their stay and such living conditions place them in the category of the “hidden homeless.” Assuming that the housing arrangements of other residents met the standards of being adequate, suitable, and affordable, this marked a significant improvement for them. However, for the remaining campers who were not provided with any alternative shelter facilities, they lost the right to some public space when Tent City was dismantled and the space was cordoned off to prevent future access.

Acts of transgression upset the status quo and appear shocking, threatening, and deviant (Cresswell 1996, 176). Tent City was perceived by the state to be a threat to the dominant social order, and officials responded accordingly. By transforming the social-physical space into an empty and secure area, officials were attempting to re-establish the normative boundary between public and private and restore legitimacy to the state. After Tent City was shut down, there was considerable concern about the need to prevent such a transgression from occurring in the future. This concern with prevention was manifested in terms of increased control over public spaces. Increased homeless sweeps

reinforced the exclusion of the homeless population as they were relegated to more "marginal" spaces of the City. Punitive policies dispersed homeless individuals camping in public places and re-established the rigid oppositions between homed and homeless. Police force was intensified to dissuade the homeless from using certain public spaces, and the belongings of homeless individuals were confiscated more regularly. The confiscation of personal belongings is a distinctive form of violence that is enacted in public space. It is analogous to the violation of the body of the homeless. As Nigel Thrift (2007) states:

> [C]lothes are not just ornamentation and display, they protect from the weather, provide resources for all kinds of specialist situations, and they produce particular corporeal stances. Similarly, houses provide a safe environment which wraps the comforting aura of familiarity around bodies. Thus, things redefine what counts as vulnerable (Thrift 2007, 239).

Kawash (1998) has pointed out that macrolevel displacement of homeless communities or encampments is repeated at the microlevel of the individual body (1998, 326), evidenced through the confiscation of personal belongings. The destruction of a person's home and the confiscation of personal belongings are part of the same process which makes room for the consumer citizen and excludes others. These actions occur in public space and make a statement about the "appropriate" use of public space. Kawash argues that state attempts to remove the homeless from public spaces constitutes an effort to squeeze the homeless body until it is so small that it disappears (Kawash 1998, 329), erasing homelessness altogether in order to "secure" the public. However, she states that these efforts themselves constitute a contradiction, which cannot be resolved:

> The resultant contradiction between a material body that most certainly occupies space and the denial of any place for such a body cannot be resolved; nonetheless, an attempt at such resolution is continually enacted through violent processes of containment, constriction, and compression that seek not simply to exclude or control the homeless but rather to efface their presence altogether (1998, 330).

Kawash speaks of a "tumult of dispossession" which leaves the homeless with little else except their body and their possessions. The meagre provision of food at soup kitchens, the lack of public toilets, and the lack of privacy provided at shelters illustrate some of the ways in which the homeless body is squeezed and reduced until it occupies

a space as small as humanly possible (1998, 333). Evictions from public space and the confiscation of personal belongings constitute further acts of violence enacted over homeless individuals in order to deny their material existence. State efforts to displace homeless individuals from certain spaces in the city through increased policing effectively reduce the space in which homeless individuals are able to be. They are then relegated to marginal areas of the city that are less visible; but, the public is never "secured." The only way to secure the public and achieve a harmonious public space, according to this ideology, would be to eliminate homelessness completely.

State officials claimed that post-Tent City actions, which focused on removing "illegal urban campers" from certain public spaces, were not violent or destructive as there was an offer to be connected to various services. They characterized these actions as supportive and pronounced that this was an "opportunity" for homeless individuals to access assistance. One respondent even used the term "advocate" to describe the role of Homeward Trust, who offered to coordinate services for homeless individuals who had been evicted from public space. State officials established a team approach to address the needs of homeless individuals, involving Edmonton City Police, government Ministries that administer welfare services, health services, and legal services. This type of approach blurs the distinct roles between policing, service, and security (Fang 2009, 26) as all become engaged in the removal of the improper body from urban space in the name of providing welfare supports. The linking of welfare services and policing obscures the violent acts of displacing homeless individuals; indeed, such violent acts do not become justifiable once they become a component of welfare services. This implicates the state to an even greater extent in the violence exercised over the homeless. Not only is visible homelessness denied through the use of law to forcibly remove the homeless body from public space, but the material violence inflicted upon the homeless during this process is also denied.

Central to the consideration of social and spatial justice for the homeless, there are further questions that must be asked about this "new" policy, which displaces

homeless yet offers to link them with services: what are the alternatives that are being offered? If the homeless are being displaced from certain public spaces, where are they to go? Are they gaining access to private space, in the form of adequate, suitable, and affordable housing? Respondents indicated that support workers would help facilitate the search for permanent housing, but if they met with no success, then the homeless would be placed in emergency shelters. As previously discussed, shelters do not meet the criteria of adequate, suitable, or affordable housing, nor do they provide clients with any access to "private" space. Thus, redirecting urban campers towards shelters while further restricting their access to public spaces does not constitute a legitimate or just policy. If shelters were the primary institution to which urban campers were redirected,[74] then it would appear that state officials were concerned with maintaining the status quo and the related optics.

After Tent City was dismantled, a municipal bylaw was amended to permit increased policing of "aggressive" panhandlers, to be punished by fines. Aggressive panhandling is defined as those who "obstruct, threaten, insult, or contact" people; also forbidden is repeatedly asking for money after initially being refused or panhandling while drunk (Edmonton Journal 2009). This marks a further tightening of regulations of public space and of "appropriate" behaviour in that space. Such legislation evokes images of homeless individuals as threatening and situates the homeless in opposition to "the public." Illustrative of this is a recent Edmonton police report, which claimed that panhandlers increasingly focus on vulnerable citizens who have already handed over money; when they do not hand over more money panhandlers often resort to cursing, spitting, or chasing them (Edmonton Journal 2009; Mowatt 2007). This effectively constructs panhandlers as the dangerous offenders and housed individuals as victims. Anti-panhandling legislation helps to produce a culture of fear which contributes to the perception of a need for greater security against the homeless; this "othering" then

[74] I was unable to locate any concrete statistics during my research that would indicate the type of facilities being provided to urban campers, beyond the discussions of respondents.

provides the justification for excluding homeless individuals from public spaces (Mosher 2002). Because there are already laws in place that deal with assault and aggressive behaviour, anti-panhandling legislation functions more to reinforce stereotypes than to prevent threatening behaviour (Gordon 2004, 48). From a spatial perspective, Tent City did not result in significant gains for the homeless in Edmonton. Strategies of control over urban spaces were heightened and homeless behaviours were further criminalized, which cast homelessness as a threat and, thus, deepened the divide between "homeless" and "public."

Policy Directions: Housing First

State officials emphasized that while Tent City had not resulted in any significant policy changes at either the municipal or the provincial level, it was effective in generating greater support for a movement already underway. The movement they spoke of was a shift towards HF. This provided the underpinnings for both the municipal and provincial Ten-Year Plans to end homelessness which were adopted soon after the dissolution of Tent City (municipally, HF was endorsed in January, 2008; provincially, HF was adopted in October, 2008). Several agencies in Edmonton have recently initiated programs based on HF, including Crossroads Downtown,[75] the Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre,[76] and Boyle Street Community Services and Bissell Centre.[77] While Ten-Year Plans are not identical to HF, there are important connections between them. Ten-Year Plans are grounded in an HF perspective, and both policy concepts focus primarily on

[75] Crossroads Downtown is a new project which began in December 2008; it is designed to help women and transgendered individuals who want to leave prostitution and the streets. Crossroads Downtown provides a place for up to eight women at any given time, who can stay there for up to a year. At that point, they are expected to move out into permanent housing (Homeward Trust 2009, 1).

[76] The Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre has employed HF since it opened in 2006, and reports having housed more than 350 people since then. Clients sign a housing agreement outlining their responsibilities, and they must agree to having a support worker (Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre 2007, 1).

[77] Boyle Street Community Services and Bissell Centre both offer programs aimed at finding and maintaining permanent homes for individuals and families (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness 2009, 31).

moving the chronically homeless off the streets while encouraging coordination among community agencies and jurisdictions in order to ensure that all homeless individuals can access the services they need to stay housed (Klodawsky 2009, 599). The argument is that a very small portion of the homeless population (around ten per cent) consumes an inordinate amount of public resources in the form of emergency hospital visits and shelter space due to mental illness or addiction issues (Shea 2007). Research suggests that supported permanent housing for society's most desperate individuals is more cost-effective and will reduce the expenditures of the state. Ten-Year Plans to end homelessness do not actually intend to end homelessness completely; rather, they focus on ending homelessness for the most visible portion of the homeless population. The shift to HF is significant, as it focuses on the provision of private space in the form of permanent supported housing. HF has the potential to meet the underlying needs of homeless individuals; if homeless individuals are provided with housing that is adequate, suitable, and affordable, this will constitute a significant step in the goal of alleviating homelessness.

Although HF is generally referred to as a "new" way to address homelessness, there have been elements of this philosophy in place in some community agencies both in Canada and the United States, and homeless advocates have been championing the need for additional affordable housing for many decades (Kraus, Serge and Goldberg 2005). However, historically politicians have remained largely unconvinced that this should be the preferred approach as this would require considerably more government investment and they fail to see the decreased long-term costs for health care, prisons and policing (Hulchanski 2002, 2006; Shapcott 2006b, 2007). The model originated in the United States and was championed by former President George W. Bush. In 2002, George W. Bush revived the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) and appointed Philip Mangano as its director to begin traveling around the country to promote the development and implementation of local, state, and national Ten-Year Plans to end homelessness. By the end of 2008, more than 860 American cities and counties

partnered in 355 Ten-Year Plans to end homelessness with the help of Mr. Mangano, most involving a broad group of stakeholders such as business associations and conservative organizations from the private sector (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness 2009b). In Canada, the City of Toronto was one of the first cities to endorse HF in 2006; its *Streets to Homes* (S2H) program was implemented after the dissolution of a Tent City in 2004 (Klodawsky 2009, 599). This program constitutes the largest and most developed example of HF in Canada (Falvo 2009, 2). S2H has served as a model for many other Canadian municipalities and between mid-2007 and mid-2008, S2H staff traveled to twenty-three Canadian municipalities to disseminate their knowledge with other state officials. Several municipalities, including Edmonton, sent staff of their own to Toronto in order to learn from S2H officials and implement HF successfully in their own locale (Falvo 2009, 29). Edmonton and Alberta are not alone in their endorsement of HF: Calgary and Red Deer recently embraced HF, along with other Canadian cities such as Toronto, Lethbridge, Sudbury, Ottawa, London, and Victoria (Falvo 2009, 29).

Soon after HF was first developed and promoted in the United States, the Bush administration cut funding for affordable housing. The Section 8 Voucher Program (or Housing Choice Voucher) provides rental assistance to low-income households and has been the primary component of the federal government's affordable housing efforts since the 1970s (Orlebeke 2000). In 2004, the federal government proposed to transfer responsibility for administration of this program to individual states, while converting it into a block funding program with funding levels that were drastically cut (Sard and Fischer 2004). It is well known that a lack of affordable housing is a critical factor in the causation of homelessness,[78] and HF purports to provide supportive housing to homeless

[78] Recall in Chapter One the discussion of the musical chairs analogy to understand homeless causation. A shortage of chairs relative to the number of people competing for them leaves some individuals standing without a chair, at the end of the game. The chairs are analogous to the housing supply; the extent of homelessness is a direct result of any imbalance between supply and demand. Individual factors such as mental illness or addiction can render some individuals less capable of competing for

individuals. It is therefore curious that funding for affordable housing was cut at the same time that HF was introduced.

The speed with which HF has swept the continent is astounding, and is similar to rapid policy transfers that have occurred in other social policy realms (Peck 2002, 2005). Jamie Peck has identified this "fast policy transfer" as characteristic of neoliberal projects (2002, 397). While processes of policy transfer are not new, it is the rapidity of the process that distinguishes it within the current neoliberal system. Peck identifies two features of the policy development process which are becoming increasingly common. First, he notes that the process is becoming increasingly dominated by "ideas from America" (2002, 398); secondly, there is a growing tendency to adopt "off-the-shelf" solutions that are imported from elsewhere rather than implement locally-grown policies which take longer to develop (Peck 2002, 398). The policy process, in other words, is becoming more globalized. The American experience has been constituted as a new type of neoliberal standard; however, "off-the-shelf" solutions exported from the United States tend to produce an essentialized and decontextualized policy model that cannot adapt to a different political or economic environment. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that HF can respond to the local context in Edmonton and Alberta.

In Canada, the federal government recently provided support to the Mental Health Commission of Canada to explore the benefits of HF for those living with a mental illness, across five Canadian cities (Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver) (Javed 2009). While there were additional resources provided to municipalities under these various federal programs, this did not extend as far as the re-engagement of the federal government in the provision of new social housing. Governments have chosen to focus on supporting the efforts of municipalities, rather than

---

housing and thus may impact *who* is left standing at the end of the game but it is the supply of affordable housing units that determines *how many* will be left standing.

on constructing additional permanent, affordable housing units.[79] While the linkages between the American model and the Canadian context are still somewhat speculative, these initial observations suggest that HF will ultimately constitute more rhetoric than real solutions as the lack of affordable housing has not been addressed.

The National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) was implemented in 1999 as a federal response to the mayors of Canada's major cities' claim that homelessness was a "national disaster" (Falvo 2003, 3). NHI aimed to promote the efforts of local agencies and municipalities and reduce duplication of effort, so as to improve the efficient use of community services and resources (Klodawsky 2009, 600). In 2007, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) replaced NHI. Edmonton received some funding through this program for local organizations to develop support services for the homeless; similar to NHI, this program focused on streamlining community efforts so as to reduce duplication and improve efficiency. In speaking about HF, Beyond Shelter, the national leader in the development and promotion of HF strategies made the following comment:

> Evolving in an era of shrinking resources, the HF approach places great emphasis on reducing duplication of effort and maximizing the effectiveness of community resources. By situating homeless families within the larger community, the program fosters human connection. The methodology is a cost-effective model that coordinates many existing systems and services, rather than creating new ones (Beyond Shelter 2010).

This comment could easily be an account of Canadian federal programs. However, neither the United States nor Canada has emphasized the need for the creation of long-term affordable housing units, although both federal governments have supported HF as a model to address homelessness. The lack of attention to building more affordable housing is an issue of considerable concern; further, the emphasis on reducing costs in an effort to streamline effectiveness suggests that HF may not deliver on its promises to provide housing for a needy population.

---

[79] In October 2008, the provincial government of Alberta through the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness estimated that $3.3 billion ($300 million per year) is needed over 10 years to end homelessness; in early 2009 it delivered only one-third of these funds and significantly cut funding for low-income renters and existing housing programs (Gurnett and Kolkman 2009, 14).

Economic Argument

Much of the discourse surrounding HF has focused on issues of affordability and cost savings potential for governments. It is argued that the chronic homeless, who constitute ten per cent of the overall homeless population, consume fifty per cent of state resources related to homelessness, including emergency medical services, psychiatric treatment, detoxification facilities, shelters, and courts/law enforcement/corrections facilities (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness 2009a, 4). Proponents of HF look at the cost of the current system, which operates primarily under a Continuum of Care model.[80] Homeless individuals are treated through several institutional systems and the literature normally refers to the following systems as bearing a significant part of the costs of addressing homelessness: hospital emergency rooms, the justice system, and emergency shelters. The Edmonton Ten-Year Plan cites research which has found that these types of institutional responses to homelessness cost taxpayers between $66,000 and $120,000 per year (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness 2009, 23) while supportive housing through a HF approach is estimated to cost between $35,000 and $45,000 per year (Pomeroy 2005).

American cities and states report significant savings after implementing HF: for example, Massachusetts has reported a sixty-seven per cent decrease in annual health care costs per person after being housed and Sioux Falls/Minnehaha County has reported a fifty per cent decrease in per person costs for health care, law enforcement, and other county services. Governments in Portland, Oregon reported savings of more than $16,000 per person per year, while governments in Denver, Colorado reported savings of $31,545 per person per year (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness 2009, 23). These research findings are compelling; HF appears to address some of the problems governments have been facing with a visibly homeless population, while at the

[80] The Continuum of Care provides housing in graduated stages, once homeless clients prove that they are ready to move on the next stage. Homeless individuals begin with emergency shelters and end with permanent housing (Falvo 2008, 32).

same time reducing overall costs to the system. There is another component to the cost-savings argument: HF aims to ensure that individuals helped under this model will be able to reintegrate into the world of paid employment, at which point there will be no need for continued government funding (Shea 2007, 1). HF emphasizes savings in several ways: first, by reducing inefficient state expenditures in a Continuum of Care Model; second, by focusing only on the most visible of the homeless instead of the entire homeless population; and third, by asking the "able-bodied" and employable to cover the costs of their supportive housing once they are employed (Fang 2009, 8). It would appear that market logics are firmly embedded in the discourse around HF.

New Definitions of Homelessness

Definitions of homelessness, as discussed in Chapter One, are a critical component in determining who is counted as a homeless person and thus who qualifies for assistance. HF targets one particular type of homeless individual: the most visible, otherwise known as the chronic homeless. The ICH defines chronic homeless as someone who is "homeless for a year or more or multiple times over a several year period;" they are also "disabled by addiction, mental illness, chronic physical illness or disability, or developmental disabilities;" and finally, they have "frequent histories of hospitalization, unstable employment, and incarceration" (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness 2009a, 2). Edmonton and Alberta adopt similar definitions in their respective Ten-Year Plans. This focus on a small portion of the homeless population redefines 'homelessness', as our understanding of who constitutes the homeless is narrowed exclusively to one particular subgroup.

The chronically homeless are widely considered to suffer from challenges such as mental illness, alcoholism and drug abuse, and psychological or emotional disturbances and these individual characteristics are understood to be the primary reasons prohibiting them from maintaining permanent housing and which contributed to their homelessness in the first place (Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness

2008, 14). While the ICH attributes homelessness to factors such as poverty, a financial set-back or release from an institution with no resources to reintegrate (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2009, 1), other Ten-Year Plans ascribe varying amounts of responsibility to the individual for his or her homelessness. The Alberta Ten-Year Plan, for instance, cites poverty, mental illness, physical illness, or addiction as causes of homelessness (Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness 2008, 14). What appears to be common amongst all these plans is the understanding that, while there are varying reasons behind homelessness, it is necessary to address the *individual* causes underlying someone's homelessness. The discourse around Ten-Year Plans propagates the medicalization of the homeless; solutions are presumed to be situated in therapeutic-style programs that can address the individual deficiencies and limitations of each client through specialized treatment. Homeless individuals then become subjects of diagnosis in a casework framework. The focus on medicalization and the adoption of a "disease model" of caring for the homeless effectively depoliticizes the issue of homelessness while structural conditions receive little attention (Lyon-Callo 2004).[81] HF resorts to strategy of "specialism," in that it understands chronic homelessness to be a special problem of a particular group. While proponents of HF claim that this is a new and innovative approach, in many ways it merely continues to recycle and reapply themes that have long been employed in social policy approaches to homelessness, namely the individualization of responsibility. The "disorder" of a select few individuals is seen to be solvable by providing treatment on a case-by-case basis.

Given the new definition of homelessness, enumeration attempts will start to generate very different outcomes than their predecessors. The new classification systems focus on one particular aspect of homelessness while ignoring those who are periodically homeless or constitute the hidden homeless. Emphasis on data information systems stems from the ICH and is a critical component of most Ten-Year Plans. Much federal

[81] Lyon-Callo (2004) argues that inside shelters, homeless individuals similarly become subjects of diagnosis so as to understand the individual reasons for their homelessness (Fang 2009, 14).

funding in the United States is now contingent upon an annual homeless count by municipalities; this is the first time that municipalities have been required to conduct a homeless count in order to qualify for funding through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (Fang 2009, 9). Given that Canada does not currently have any official data regarding the extent of homelessness across the country, and that municipalities conduct homeless counts with varying methodologies and definitions, an emphasis on data collection does indeed sound like a good idea. However, enumeration can be employed as a way to delineate ideological principles (Watson and Austerberry 1986). Engin Isin (1998) claims that record-making is a key component of neoliberal regimes, in conjunction with calculation, monitoring, and evaluation (1998, 174). By redefining who comprises the homeless, individuals are differently constituted as subjects of government. It is not surprising that many American cities have reported significant declines in their homeless populations;[82] these technologies of government ensure that this will be the outcome.

Reduction of Shelter Services

Concerns have been raised that HF's narrow focus on the chronically homeless will prohibit other homeless individuals from qualifying for assistance or accessing services. As Paul Boden, executive director of Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) has stated, "You're pitting one segment of the homeless population against another" (qtd. in Law 2007, 3). In New York recent evidence suggests that, despite having adopted HF in 2004, the numbers of homeless are higher than ever before. In September 2009, there were more than 39,000 homeless adults and children sleeping in shelters (Markee 2009, 1). New York has adopted a new policy of "streamlining" the homeless shelter process, which has resulted in fewer individuals who qualify to use

[82] For instance, Philadelphia reports that it has witnessed a fifty per cent drop in chronic homelessness; Portland, Oregon cites declines of seventy per cent (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness 2009, 11); while Asheville, North Carolina cites that its homeless numbers have been reduced by twenty-six per cent, all as of 2009 (Fang 2009, 20).

shelters, and many families with children are now being denied shelter space (Kaufman 2007). The logic has been that there are other family members or friends with whom they can stay; restricting eligibility for shelters has therefore had the effect of shifting responsibility of support away from the state and onto the family or the market. Reports indicate that this has forced many families with children[83] to stay with relatives in an overcrowded living situation, or alternatively find a place to stay every night under New York's "emergency" clause, which provides overnight accommodation in the event of a crisis. While HF claims to focus on the provision of housing and is often incorporated as a component of Ten-Year Plans to End Homelessness, evidence from New York reveals that this has narrowed eligibility for existing homeless services as it is the chronic homeless who are now considered to be deserving of government aid.

Critics have raised questions about the motivations behind shifts to HF. There have been concerns about the way in which government funds have been withdrawn from emergency shelters. Soon after Toronto implemented its S2H program, more than three hundred shelter spaces across the City were eliminated, resulting in government savings of approximately $5 million per year (German 2008, 4). This resulted in a paucity of shelter spaces that cannot accommodate all of Toronto's homeless population. In 2007, Street Health (a non-profit community agency in Toronto that focuses on the physical and mental health of the homeless and underhoused) conducted a survey of more than three hundred homeless people in Toronto and found that thirty-nine per cent had been unable to access a shelter bed at some point during the winter months of 2006 (McQuaig 2007, 1). Toronto street nurse Cathy Crowe has argued:

> The planning and funding of homeless services are now focused on removing the visible homeless from the streets while at the same time reducing shelter beds, limiting emergency services for people who are homeless such as during extreme hot or cold weather, and seriously underfunding homeless services such as day shelters and meal programs (Crowe 2007, 1).

---

[83] In July, 2007, reports indicated that there were more than eight hundred families who checked in for emergency stays in New York shelters (Kaufman 2007, 1).

Philadelphia also reduced its transitional housing and shelter beds over the past five years after adopting HF, resulting in a system that is operating at capacity and cannot accommodate all the homeless individuals who are in need of a place to stay (Law 2007, 4). This is troubling, as Edmonton already has a shortage of shelter beds relative to the overall homeless population in the City.[84] While shelters are far from an ideal solution, it is important to provide a wide range of services and forms of accommodation to satisfy the range of needs of individuals. Particularly worrisome is the possibility that shelter spaces will be reduced without constructing additional affordable housing units. This would narrow the already-limited options of homeless individuals.

Often cited in HF literature is the importance of addressing chronic homelessness due to its visible impact on a community's overall safety and attractiveness (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness 2009a, 3). Many of the communities and jurisdictions that have adopted HF have also enacted anti-homeless legislation that criminalizes homeless behaviour in public places and attempts to remove them from public view through punitive enforcement. For instance, soon after Toronto launched its S2H program, the City introduced new legislation prohibiting sleeping in public areas and terminated any programs which provided the homeless population with subsistence items such as food and sleeping bags (McQuaig 2007, 1). As previously discussed, in Edmonton, anti-panhandling ordinances were also enacted very close to the time that HF was adopted. There is concern that HF's rhetorical commitment to the provision of affordable housing will only act to obscure the extent to which it is focused on reducing homeless individuals' access to urban public space.

In Toronto, the City's S2H program has acted as a model for other Canadian municipalities, including Edmonton. While it has reported to be largely successful, there are several aspects of the program which are concerning. Unlike New York City's Pathways to Housing Program, S2H does not stipulate that participants' rent will be no

---

[84] Edmonton's shelter system can only accommodate forty per cent of the counted homeless population (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness 2009: 52).

more than thirty per cent of their income; as a result, an average of forty-one per cent of participants' income goes to cover the cost of rent (Falvo 2009, 26). In 2007, sixty-seven per cent of participants reported that they did not have enough money to live on after rent was paid (Falvo 2009, 26). These affordability problems have consequences for their overall well-being, and two-thirds of participants reported that they regularly ran out of money to buy food. Cathy Crowe has proclaimed that the condition of housing offered to people through S2H has often been less than adequate. Participants have been placed in:

> Small, cramped rooms and tiny basement apartments, crumbling walls and ceilings, old lead paint, asbestos insulation, parasites like bed bugs and lice, broken plumbing, and little choice in the tenants with whom you have to share. I wish there were statistics on how many Streets to Homes rooms were located in known crack houses (Crowe 2008, 1).

Thirty-nine per cent of all participants were placed in shared accommodation – either in a two or three-bedroom apartment, group shared accommodations (mostly individual rooms with shared common spaces), or a rooming house. When surveyed about their satisfaction with the program, participants in shared accommodation frequently reported difficulty with roommates, and quality of life indicators were generally lower. According to the City's post-occupancy survey report:

> Those in shared accommodation are less likely to feel secure about their housing, are far more likely to move, and need more help from their follow-up workers to relocate. People in shared accommodation frequently reported issues with roommates/ housemates that made it difficult to keep their housing. Most quality of life indicators also showed less improvement for those in shared accommodation (Toronto 2007, 2).
>
> Those in shared accommodations are less likely to have reductions in the use of emergency services, and are more likely to have been arrested since being housed (25% compared to 12%) and to have used an ambulance (28% compared to 14%) (Toronto 2007, 52).

Many of the benefits touted to be a result of HF (such as less use of institutional services) were not met when program participants were placed in shared or poor accommodation. The City of Toronto's reliance on shared accommodation was reportedly due to a lack of sufficient housing units throughout the city, and a lack of funding (Falvo 2009, 27). These findings suggest that, in order to effectively house individuals, considerable funding will

be required; otherwise, trying to cut costs without the provision of proper facilities may result in a speedy return to the streets.

While Toronto's S2H program has been largely successful with reports indicating that eighty-seven per cent of its clients have remained housed (Falvo 2009, 25),[85] those who did not remain housed had been placed in shared accommodation (Falvo 2009, 27). This underlines that attention to the conditions of housing is critical to ensuring that individuals are not vulnerable to losing their housing in the future. Not all housing will effectively lift individuals out of homelessness; individuals sleeping on a friend's couch, or in a place that is overcrowded or requiring major repairs, have not fully escaped homelessness. Any of these situations increase the likelihood that they will return to literal homelessness than others whose housing is adequate, suitable, and affordable. A narrow definition of homelessness, and inattention to the conditions of housing, will not be effective in mitigating homelessness, as individuals will return to the streets quickly as they are removed.

While sufficient numbers of affordable housing units would go a long way towards reducing the numbers of homeless individuals, the above discussion provides many reasons to be cautious about the motivations behind HF. Edmonton and Alberta's plans are still in the beginning stages of development making it difficult to arrive at firm conclusions; however, the original model emphasizes the benefits of reducing state expenditures, redefines the homeless narrowly and continues to specialize the homeless through a medicalization framework while failing to address the need for more affordable housing. HF has emerged within various cities at the same time as government funding for existing services has been cut and anti-homeless legislation has been enacted. There are indications that HF is focused more on clearing visible homeless from the streets than it is with the provision of decent housing and may be appealing because it offers an easy solution to homelessness. Visible homelessness threatens the neoliberal agenda of

[85] The follow-up support period for the program was twelve months past the initial housing. After this period, individuals were left to their own devices and rates of housing were unknown.

development, and cities exert considerable efforts to construct an image of public spaces as purified and harmonious. One of the most critical dangers of HF and its discourse around “chronic homelessness” is its disregard for the structural causes of homelessness and, in particular, the lack of affordable housing. The Edmonton Ten-Year Plan explicitly identifies the lack of affordable housing as a cause of homelessness, and commits to securing a small number of supported housing units (800 units by 2012; 1650 units by 2019; the development of 1000 units of permanent housing by 2014), while the Alberta Plan commits to the construction of 8,000 new housing units by 2019. These numbers will not accommodate all of the homeless that have been counted, but the recognition that housing plays a role in the creation of homelessness is critical to developing effective solutions.

HF is a very attractive approach in theory. If it were divorced from its neoliberal context and retained its focus on housing, its implementation could be positive. Regardless of the way in which it is implemented, it will still be insufficient to end homelessness as it commonly claims to be able to do. Addressing homelessness will require substantially more government resources to fund the construction of permanent adequate, suitable, and affordable housing. Resources would be better focused on ameliorating structural factors in the housing market than by targeting a narrow population base. Ultimately, what is needed is a greater supply of affordable housing so that people do not become homeless in the first place.

Conclusion

The emergence of Tent City in Edmonton’s downtown during the summer of 2007 underlined homeless individuals’ need for dwelling spaces within a society that has provided them with none. The Tent City site provided an opportunity to foster mutual recognition between homeless campers and other citizens by declaring the universal need for a dwelling space. It illustrated that the needs of housed citizens and those of homeless individuals are not in conflict as is often assumed, but are congruent. That is,

homeless campers were merely seeking out a place to dwell, which the broader population also requires. The recognition of our common need to dwell in some place will begin to break down the antagonistic binary of homed and homeless. Because the encampment transgressed normative ideals of 'public' and 'private,' state officials perceived the encampment as a threat. Officials focused on the destruction of the homeless community and subsequent to the encampment's closure, reinforced the normative ideal that dwelling activities are properly carried out only in the privacy of a home, while outside the home they constitute an act of criminality. While this was tempered by attempts to connect homeless individuals with alternative housing arrangements, the fortification of normative expectations of behaviour in public and private space effectively resulted in public spaces which were less welcoming of the homeless. The social and physical exclusion of the homeless population was further entrenched as homeless campers were effectively punished for their attempts to create a space to dwell within the urban landscape.

Any solution to homelessness should build upon the efforts of homeless individuals and work with them to develop dwelling spaces that meet their needs and which are adequate, suitable, and affordable. Common stereotypes of homelessness as marginal, deviant, and criminal act to reinforce the relationship of dependency between the homeless and various state institutions, and which effectively prevent them from re-entering mainstream society as they come up against the limits of this identity (Takahashi, McElroy, Rowe 2002, 308). What is needed is a softening of *representations of space* so that the public sphere is broadened to reflect a diverse public, rather than a purified and harmonious public. Spaces reproduce expected spatial practices and hierarchical social relations; open public spaces are therefore critical in order to build a democratic and inclusive society. Dwelling activities must be considered appropriate not only in the private domain, but must be acceptable in the public domain as well. This does not mean that governments should start constructing and supporting Tent Cities that emerge anywhere; indeed, because we live in such a cold country, it is important that

dwelling places are properly insulated and heated, in order to provide citizens with necessary protection. The point of emphasis here is on the *type* of public sphere we wish to create and portray, whether it appears to be sanitized and unified, or reflective of greater diversity. The ideal of a unitary public sphere does not unify, but rather fragments and divides; its insistence on a harmonious image reinforces the exclusion of undesirable characters such as the homeless. Its deception attempts to hide a social problem that, unless it is addressed, will continue to grow. A more diverse public sphere will not only extend to homeless individuals the "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1991), but will allow the state to recognize and address homelessness without necessarily losing its legitimacy. Strategies of denial, isolating the problem, and specialism have done nothing to solve homelessness, as evidenced by Tent City's emergence; such responses promise that homelessness will continue to be problematic for the state and that homeless encampments will emerge with increasing frequency. A diverse public sphere is the first step to creating a more meaningful sense of belonging as it is opened to the multiplicity of identities within the city.

The need for a broadening of appropriate dwelling places is important for another reason: citizenship is currently designated on the basis of home, which acts as a symbol of financial independence and presumes economic contribution through participation in the labour market (Arnold 2004, 17). The link between citizenship and home essentializes the meaning of home and depicts it in monolithic terms. It is dangerous to idealize the home site, just as it is dangerous to idealize public space; both processes result in greater exclusion and fragmentation as binaries are reinforced and society becomes divided into categories of 'insider' and 'outsider.' We must return to the question posed at the outset of this study: what precisely is a 'home'? The meaning of home, like homelessness, is not fixed but shifts over time. It has numerous facets which may refer to, for instance, a particular identity, family relationships, privacy, or security. Home is an individual experience, but its intrinsic connection to citizenship sanctifies 'home' in a

"home-centred society" (Kumar 1997, 229).[86] The utopian image of home denies the experiences of those who suffer injustice within the home site; home fits into a nexus of patriarchy and consumption, oppressing and suppressing even as it is deified. An emphasis on ownership and economic status distort what it means to be *political* in the public realm, and as Arnold succinctly states, "economic activity is not only misconstrued as political activity but precludes what is truly political: public debate and dissent, the exercise of power divorced from economic imperatives, and a sense of political community" (Arnold 2004, 27). In other words, the problem of homelessness, or the public life, is also the problem of home, the private life (Kumar 1997, 231).

Conflicts over public space are essentially struggles over opposing ideologies about how society should be organized. Tent City was a *representational space* that enabled new forms of resistance and identity to emerge, where new configurations of social justice were imagined and articulated. It drew attention to the oppression and violence enacted over the homeless and fostered an alternative vision of space and society. It was met by opposition from state officials and was ultimately shut down in the pursuit of the restoration of "order" to the streets of Edmonton, but there are reasons to remain hopeful. Definitions of public space and "the public" are not fixed and immutable over time but are the product of conflict and struggle and are constantly subject to renegotiation. Tent City constituted a particular moment within an ongoing historical struggle over the meaning of public space; it provided a point of entry from which we can continue to engage in discussion over the configuration of public and private spaces, the allocation of citizenship rights, and the need for all citizens to dwell in some place. Spaces of resistance will continue to provide the material space from which to contest oppressive boundaries of private property and public propriety and from which to assert alternative imaginings of democracy.

---

[86] Joseph Rykwert observes that the word 'home' in Indo-European languages, derives from a word meaning "a settlement or a village" and home therefore implies a "communal and neighbourly manner of dwelling" (Rykwert 1991, 57).

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to answer how homeless individuals are regarded when they exercise their right to dwell. Dwelling refers to all the activities that are normally carried out in the privacy of the home which are necessary for human survival: sleeping, eating, urinating, defecating, and intimate relationships. Tent City constituted a reinterpretation of dominant spatial practices by homeless individuals in an effort to meet their immediate dwelling needs. An examination of the events of Tent City, including state reactions to its emergence, enables a greater understanding of how the act of dwelling by homeless individuals is perceived by the state. State officials emphasized that Tent City was not a solution to homelessness, thus failing to recognize that Tent City constituted a dwelling space and that homelessness at base, is a lack of a home or legitimate dwelling place. Homeless campers transformed the social-physical space into a dwelling space in order to meet their needs but, because the encampment transgressed normative boundaries between public and private, the state exerted efforts to regain control of the land and restore proper "order." State actions focused on the primary need to re-establish the proper use of space, rather than sustained attention to the dwelling needs of homeless campers. Subsequent to Tent City's closure, the chain-link fence remained standing to surround the social-physical space where the encampment had been, symbolizing the virtual annihilation of the space. Homeless citizens in Edmonton continue to be subject to structural violence as the spaces available to them are either destroyed, or law legitimates their forcible removal from public space. The denial of place is achieved through the violent eviction of the homeless body in order to attenuate the challenge that it represents to the neat separation of public and private in late capitalism.

The state accounted for this exclusion from public space by claiming that homeless campers would be provided with access to alternative private space, which was seen to constitute a more appropriate dwelling location. This claim effectively obscured

the spatial violence enacted over homeless campers, but it contained an implicit recognition that homeless individuals are in need of a legitimate dwelling space. The provision of water and bathrooms to the encampment reflected recognition of the dwelling needs of homeless campers. There were some efforts made to provide homeless campers with alternative private spaces, resulting in a small number of individuals who were housed out of Tent City. While this was ancillary to the primary focus of dismantling the encampment, state officials' engagement with housing campers provided an opportunity for them to consider more fully what it means for homeless individuals to dwell, and what is needed in order to generate satisfactory conditions of housing. These conditions were not always met: the placement of homeless campers in shelters, hotels, with friends or family members, or in apartments without furniture illustrates continued inattention to the adequacy or suitability of housing. Tent City revealed the state's propensity to disregard the dwelling needs of homeless campers in Edmonton; yet, concurrently political space was opened to advocacy for homeless individuals' dwelling needs in the future.

Tent City highlighted the conflicting ideals of state officials who wished to create a relatively homogenous and uniform urban space, and homeless inhabitants who asserted their right to live according to their own preferences. State actions conveyed that dwelling spaces outside a normative ideal would not be tolerated; as such, the struggle was framed to address the proper use of space. This was no different than state strategies employed prior to Tent City's advent – recall the numerous evictions of homeless campers leading up to the encampment's emergence, first from provincial land behind the police station, then from the Bissell Centre parking lot; concurrently, homeless sweeps evicted urban campers from the river valley and other urban areas. The summer's events culminated in the eviction of homeless campers from Tent City. For those who did not gain access to private space through the housing program but returned to life on the streets of Edmonton, evictions continue to be a routine aspect of their existence, as the homeless body has been constituted as "out of place" in the urban

landscape. Tent City illustrates that homeless citizens are continually excluded from public spaces when they exercise their right to dwell. Dwelling needs must be recognized and sanctioned not only for those who are economically self-supporting; until there are sufficient dwelling spaces for all citizens, Edmonton will continue to struggle with the contradiction of visible homelessness.

It is interesting that the themes emerging from each group of interview respondents were distinct, with each group offering a unique perspective about the larger social order and existing power structures. While Tent City residents articulated the lived problems of homelessness and understood Tent City to be a momentary respite from their daily struggles of survival, officials approached the encampment as a policy quagmire as they grappled with multiple and conflicting pressures upon the state. Service providers problematized state policy approaches and identified state actions, past and present, which had contributed to higher rates of homelessness. These varying perspectives illuminate two significant issues in relation to knowledge production and the policy-making process: first, they undercut the notion that the experience of dominant groups constitutes “common sense” and illustrate that that which is common sense to one group may well be fundamentally oppressive to another group. While state officials perceived the regulation of behaviour in public space to be perfectly reasonable and necessary so as to maintain an ordered society, necessitating the closure of Tent City, this conflicted with the experiences of homeless individuals who were relegated to marginal city spaces in the polity because they could not meet dominant expectations of behaviour due to their lack of dwelling space. Second, the meaning produced by each group about the encampment speaks to the challenges inherent in creating effective policy and policy implementation. Homeless policy is created by individuals who are not homeless themselves and these narratives indicate that there is a considerable disconnect between the perspectives of state officials and homeless individuals, or between the intention informing policy and its effects. The question then becomes, how can state officials create effective policy if their experiences and perspectives do not

match up with those whom they seek to regulate? How can officials anticipate the effects of policy when they are so far removed from it? This gap speaks to the need to measure state policy against the positions of those who are the subjects of policy, in particular when the subjects are oppressed groups in society. While interviews revealed that officials had spent considerable time with policy-makers from other cities attempting to acquire knowledge about HF, the contrasting narratives among interview respondents indicate that it would be more beneficial for officials to collaborate with homeless individuals and service providers. Vertical collaboration (between officials and homeless individuals, for instance) could offer a rich array of meanings and perspectives from which to gain a complex understanding of homelessness. Because knowledge is socially situated and is grounded in human experience, horizontal collaboration (that is, collaboration among policy-makers) will generate similar forms of knowledge and will have a tendency to reinforce the partial view of state officials. This is not to suggest that there is no utility or value in consulting with other policy-makers; however, I argue that state homelessness policy will be more effective when the perspectives of other groups are incorporated to a greater degree.

Moving Forward

This thesis is far from complete in its discussion of the complexities of homelessness within public space. During the course of the research, several issues have been raised but not addressed in detail. Homelessness and poverty are not only an economic problem, but are constituted at the intersections of class, gender, race, and sexuality. My thesis has only briefly mentioned these intersecting axes but there is a critical need to examine the plurality of identities within the homeless population. Future research should explore the implications for public policy delivery for homeless women who are largely represented within the “hidden homeless”; are homeless women still able to access needed services? How might we rethink the public-male and private-female dichotomies in order to provide better public policy? Finally, how do public spaces create

a gendered landscape and how might this be redesigned so as to attenuate the gendered nature of public space? Further research should explore how place acts to magnify other disadvantages such as disability, ethnic background, or age. Aboriginals are overrepresented in the homeless population in Canada by a factor of about ten (Hwang 2001, 230) and in Edmonton they comprise thirty-eight per cent of the homeless population (Homeward Trust 2008, 9). How do the needs of Aboriginal homeless individuals differ from non-Aboriginals, and how can public policy adapt to meet the needs of homeless Aboriginals? How must public space be structured to ensure that inclusionary efforts are meaningful? Above all, the uniform construction of the homeless subject must be broken down. Exploring these questions will begin to provide further insights with regard to the multidimensional nature of peoples' experiences of homelessness.

There is a need to extend this analysis to examine the politics of scale. While I have focused on municipal and provincial levels of government in this thesis, there has been little attention to the federal role in the creation or attenuation of homelessness. Homelessness is a nation-wide issue in Canada, and the federal government has come under severe and persistent criticism from the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights for its lack of action with regard to homelessness. In 2006 the Committee referred to Canada's affordable housing crisis and homelessness as a "national emergency" and called upon Canada to honour its international obligations as established by the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*[87] (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2006). The lack of official data about the extent of homelessness across the country, the absence of a national strategy to address homelessness, and the withdrawal of federal engagement from the construction of

---

[87] The *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* was drafted in 1966 and proclaims: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right" (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Article 11.1).

affordable housing units has shifted responsibility for housing and homelessness to lower levels of government without providing equivalent resources to ensure that the issue can adequately be addressed. Further research should explore the role of the federal government in relation to other levels of government in addressing homelessness, and ask what type of framework is necessary to facilitate better vertical collaboration between all levels of government.

This thesis has also raised questions with regard to the role of an organic community in affecting policy change. Further research could explore whether homeless encampments are more likely to impact public policy within a certain political context or under certain conditions. How have Tent Cities developed elsewhere in Canada? There is a need to examine the implications for policy so as to enable the development of effective solutions to the issue of homelessness.

WORKS CITED

Acker, Joan. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender and Society* 4, no. 2 (1990): 139-158.

Aguinaldo, Jeffrey P. "Rethinking Validity in Qualitative Research from a Social Constructionist Perspective: From 'Is this Valid Research?' to 'What is this Research Valid For?'." *The Qualitative Report* 9, no. 1 (2004): 127-136.

Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health. *Good People...Good Practices...No System.* Discussion Paper, Edmonton: Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, 2000.

Alberta. *Investment.* February 8, 2010. http://www.alberta-canada.com/economy/745.html (accessed March 13, 2010).

—. *An Affordable Plan.* 2009. http://www.housing.alberta.ca/An%20Affordable%20Plan.cfm (accessed April 27, 2010).

—. “New Program Finds Housing for Edmonton’s Homeless,” news release, November 5, 2008.

—. "Local Authorities Election Act." *Queen's Printer*, s. 49, 2007a.

—. *Housing First: An Investment with a Return in Prosperity.* Report of the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force, Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 2007b.

Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness. *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years.* Plan for Alberta, Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 2008.

Ambrosio, Eileen, Dilin Baker, Cathy Crowe, and Kathy Hardill. *The Street Health Report: A Study of the Health Status and Barriers to Health Care of Homeless Women and Men in the City of Toronto.* Toronto: Street Health, 1992.

Amster, Randall. *Street People and the Contested Realms of Public Space.* New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2004.

Anderson, Isobel, Peter Kemp, and Deborah Quilgars. *Single Homeless People.* London: HMSO, 1993.

Anderson, Nels. *The Hobo: the Sociology of the Homeless Man.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Arnold, Kathleen R. *Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity: The Uncanniness of Late Modernity.* New York: State University of New York Press, 2004.

Assu, Sonny. *Hope or Heartbreak: Aboriginal Youth and Canada's Future.* Horizons, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Ottawa: Policy Research Initiative, 2008.

Babbie, Earl. *The Basics of Social Research.* Belmont, California: Wadsworth Group, 2002.

Bacchi, Carol Lee. *Women, Policy and Politics: The Construction of Policy Problems.* London: Sage Publications, 1999.

Bahr, Howard M. and Theodore Caplow. *Old Men Drunk and Sober.* New York: New York University Press, 1973.

Baker, Susan G. "Gender, Ethnicity, and Homelessness: Accounting for Demographic Diversity on the Streets." *American Behavioral Scientist* 37, no. 4 (1994): 476-504.

Banerjee, Tridib. "The Future of Public Space: Beyond Invented Streets and Reinvented Places." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 67, no. 1 (2001): 9-24.

Barak, Gregg. *Gimme Shelter: A Social History of Homelessness in Contemporary America.* New York: Praeger, 1992.

Barak, Gregg, and Robert M. Bohm. "The crimes of the homeless or the crime of homelessness? On the dialectics of criminalization, decriminalization, and victimization." *Contemporary Crises* 13 (1989): 275-288.

Barrett, Michele, and Mary McIntosh. *The Anti-Social Family.* London: NLB, 1982.

Bashevkin, Sylvia. *Welfare Hot Buttons: Women, Work, and Social Policy Reform.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

Bassuk, Ellen L. "The Homelessness Problem." *Scientific American* 251, no. 1 (1984): 40-45.

Baum, Alice S., and Donald W. Burnes. *A Nation in Denial: The Truth About Homelessness.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1993.

Bawarshi, Anis, et al. "Media Analysis of Homeless Encampment 'Sweeps.'" 2008. http://faculty.washington.edu/stygall/homelessmediacoveragegroup/ (accessed March 17, 2010).

Begin, Patricia, Lyne Casavant, Nancy Miller Chenier, and Jean Dupuis. *Homelessness.* Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1999.

Beyond Shelter. *Housing First: Ending Family Homelessness.* 2010. http://www.beyondshelter.org/aaa_initiatives/ending_homelessness.shtml (accessed March 7, 2010).

Bhardwaj, Ajay. "Rain Won't Flush Away Homelessness, Crowds Clear in Front of City Hall." *Sun Media*, May 4, 2007.

Bissell Centre. *Campers Evicted Today - Nowhere to Go.* News Release, Edmonton: Bissell Centre, June 15, 2007.

—. *Welcome.* 2003. www.bissellcentre.org (accessed March 10, 2010).

Blasi, Gary L. "And We Are Not Seen: Ideological and Political Barriers to Understanding Homelessness." *American Behavioral Scientist* 37, no. 4 (1994): 563-586.

---. "Social Policy and Social Science Research on Homelessness." *Journal of Social Issues* 46, no. 4 (1990): 207-219.

Blomley, Nicholas. "Homelessness, Rights, and the Delusions of Property." *Urban Geography* 30, no. 6 (2009): 577-590.

—. "'Acts,' 'Deeds,' and the Violences of Property." *Historical Geography* 28 (2000): 86-107.

Blomley, Nicholas, and Geraldine Pratt. "Geographies of Human Rights." *The Canadian Geographer* 45, no. 1 (2001): 151-166.

Brodie, Janine. "Reforming Justice in Neoliberal Times." *Studies in Social Justice* 1, no. 2 (2007): 93-107.

—. "Meso-Discourses, State Forms and the Gendering of Liberal-Democratic Citizenship." *Citizenship Studies* 1, no. 2 (1997): 223-239.

Campaign2000. *2009 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada: 1989-2009.* Ottawa: Campaign2000, 2009.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Housing Market Information: Rental Market Statistics.* Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2007.

—. *An International Comparison of Housing Need Indicators in Australia, Canada, England and the United States.* Socio-economic series 04-032, Ottawa: Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation, 2004.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s. 7, Part I of the *Constitution Act, 1982,* being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982* (U.K.) 1982, c.11.

Canadian Institute for Health Information. *Improving the Health of Canadians 2007-2008: Mental Health and Homelessness.* Canadian Population Health Initiative, Ottawa: Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2007.

Caragata, Lea. "Housing and Homelessness." In *Canadian Social Policy: Issues and Perspectives*, edited by Anne Westhues, 267-290. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006.

Casavante, Lyne. *Counting the Homeless.* Research Report, Parliamentary Research Branch, Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1999.

Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis.* London: Sage, 2006.

Christopherson, Susan. "The Fortress City: Privatized Spaces, Consumer Citizenship." In *Post-Fordism: A Reader*, edited by Ash Amin, 409-427. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

City Forecast Committee. *Edmonton Socio-Economic Outlook 2007-2012.* Edmonton: City of Edmonton, 2007.

Coleman, Roy. "Images from a Neoliberal City: The State, Surveillance and Social Control." *Critical Criminology* 12, no. 1 (2004): 21-42.

Collins, Damian, and Nicholas Blomley. "Private Needs and Public Space: Politics, Poverty, and Anti-Panhandling By-Laws in Canadian Cities." In *New Perspectives on the Public-Private Divide*, edited by Law Commission of Canada, 40-67. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003.

Community Action Project Edmonton. 2010. http://www.facebook.com/pages/Community-Action-Project-Edmonton/152375510137?ref=sgm (accessed March 28, 2010).

Conference Board of Canada. *Metropolitan Housing Outlook Summer 2007: In-Depth Housing Analysis for Canada, the Provinces and Eight Metropolitan Areas.* Economic Performance and Trends, Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2007.

Crane, Maureen, and Anthony M. Warnes. "Evictions and Prolonged Homelessness." *Housing Studies* 15, no. 5 (2000): 757-773.

Cresswell, Tim. *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches.* 3rd. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2009.

Crowe, Cathy. *Toronto's Streets to Homes Program Just US Homeless Czar's Mistake.* July 17, 2008. http://missionlog.wordpress.com/2008/07/17/toronto-streets-to-homes-program-just-us-homeless-czars-mistake/ (accessed March 7, 2010).

—. “Dismantling Downtown.” *Cathy Crowe Newsletter #31.* Internet newsletter. Toronto Disaster Relief Company. Toronto, February 2007.

Cummings, Jeff. *A Housing Crisis Fix? Mayor urges residents to turn extra rooms into rental units.* Metro Edmonton. April 13, 2007. www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca (accessed March 7, 2010).

Dant, Tim, and Alan Deacon. *Hostels to Homes? The Rehousing of Homeless Single People.* Aldershot, Hants: Gower Publishing Company, 1989.

Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles.* London: Verso Press, 1990.

—. "Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space." In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, edited by Michael Sorkin, 154-180. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992.

Desjarlais, Robert. *Shelter Blues: Sanity and Selfhood among the Homeless.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Deutsche, Rosalyn. *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics.* Cambridge, Massachussetts: The MIT Press, 2002.

DeVault, Marjorie L., and James P. Pitts. "Surplus and Scarcity: Hunger and the Origins of the Food Stamp Program." *Social Problems* 31, no. 5 (1984): 545-557.

Dumont, Linda. "Campers of Edmonton's ‘Tent City' evicted August 15th." *Street News Service*, October 15, 2007: 1-2.

Duncan, James. "Men Without Property: The Tramp's Classification and Use of Urban Space." *Antipode* 10, no. 1 (1978): 24-34.

Eberle, Margaret, Deborah Kraus, and Luba Serge. "Results of the Pilot Study to Estimate the Size of the Hidden Homeless Population in Metro Vancouver." *Homelessness Now*, May 2009.

Edmonton. *The City of Edmonton.* 2010. www.edmonton.ca (accessed March 25, 2010).

—. "An Introduction to Edmonton's Municipal Elections and Election History." *edmonton.ca.* September 20, 2008.

http://www.edmonton.ca/CityGov/ElectionHistory/Intro%20to%20Edm%20Municipal%20Elections.doc (accessed March 25, 2009).

—. *Safedmonton 2007 Annual Report.* Edmonton: City of Edmonton, 2007.

—. *Bylaw 2202: Parkland Bylaw*. City of Edmonton, 2003.

Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness. *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.* Plan for Edmonton, Edmonton: City of Edmonton, 2009.

Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. *Out in the Cold: A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton.* Homeless Count, Edmonton: Homeward Trust, 2006.

Edmonton Journal. "Panhandling Targeted in Bylaw Amendment." *Edmonton Journal*, February 5, 2009: B6.

—. "Salmonella hits two tent city residents; "Being homeless is harmful to your health." medical official says." *Edmonton Journal*, July 22, 2007: B2.

—. "Land sold out from under Albertans?" *Edmonton Journal*, November 29, 1994: A12.

Edmonton Social Planning Council. *Tracking the Trends: Social Health in Edmonton.* Written by Annette Wickenheiser, Edmonton: Edmonton Social Planning Council, 2007.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. "Building Theories from Case Study Research." *The Academy of Management Review* 14, no. 4 (1989): 532-550.

Ellickson, Robert. "Controlling Chronic Misconduct in City Spaces: Of Panhandlers, Skid Rows, and Public Space Zoning." *Yale Law Journal* 105 (1996): 1165-1248.

Esmonde, Jackie. "Criminalizing Poverty: The Criminal Law Power and the Safe Streets Act." *Journal of Law and Social Policy* 17, no. 1 (2002): 63-86.

Faid, Peter. *Poverty Reduction Policies and Programs: Extending the Alberta Advantage.* Social Development Report Series, Community Services Consulting Ltd., Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 2009.

Falvo, Nick. *Homelessness, Program Responses, and an Assessment of Toronto's Streets to Homes Program.* CPRN Research Report, Social Housing Services Corporation , Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2009.

—. “The ‘Housing First’ Model: Immediate Access to Permanent Housing.” *Canadian Housing.* Special Edition (2008): 32-35.

—. *Gimme Shelter! Homelessness and Canada's Social Housing Crisis.* Pamphlet, Toronto: The CSJ Foundation for Research and Education, 2003.

Fang, Anyu. "Hiding Homelessness: 'Quality of Life' Laws and the Politics of Development in American Cities." *International Journal of Law in Context* 5, no. 1 (2009): 1-24.

Feldman, Leonard C. *Citizens without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy, and Political Exclusion.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

Fitzpatrick, Suzanne. "Explaining Homelessness: A Critical Realist Perspective." *Housing, Theory and Society* 22, no. 1 (2005): 1-17.

Foucault, Michel. *The Foucault Reader.* Edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

France, Anatole. *The Red Lily (Le Lys Rouge).* Translated by Winifred Stephens. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1922.

Frankish, C. James, Stephen W. Hwang, and Darryl Quantz. "Homelessness and Health in Canada: Research Lessons and Priorities." *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 96, no. 2 (2005): S23-S29.

German, Beric. "Sweep the Streets! Toronto Adopts Bush Homeless Czar's Plan: Another View of 'Streets to Homes' Program." *Cathy Crowe Newsletter #48.* Vol. 48. Internet Newsletter. Toronto Disaster Relief Committee. Toronto, Summer 2008.

Golden, Anne, William H. Currie, Elizabeth Greaves, and E. John Latimer. *Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto.* Report of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, Toronto: City of Toronto, 1999.

Gordon, Todd. "The Political Economy of Law-and-Order Policies: Policing, Class Struggle, and Neoliberal Restructuring." *Studies in Political Economy* 75 (2005): 53-78.

—. "The Return of Vagrancy Law and the Politics of Poverty in Canada." *Canadian Review of Social Policy* 54, no. Fall/Winter (2004): 34-57.

Gowan, Teresa. “The Nexus: Homelessness and Incarceration in Two American Cities.” *Ethnography* 3, no. 4 (2002): 500-534.

Gregoire, Lisa. "Razing the eyesores: Residents living near derelict houses have been fighting for years to have them torn down. They're magnets for crime and fire hazards, but the city has been accused of not doing enough. Now, with a new law on the books, things are about to change." *Edmonton Journal*, July 25, 1999: F1.

Gurnett, A.J. "Tent City Site was Once Designated for Affordable Housing." *Edmonton Journal*, August 6, 2007: A19.

Gurnett, Jim, and John Kolkman. *We Must Do Better: It's Time to Make Alberta Poverty-Free.* Edmonton: Edmonton Social Planning Council, 2009, 1-18.

Hagen, Jan L. "Gender and Homelessness." *Social Work* 32, no. 4 (1987): 312-316.

Hamelin, Anne-Marie, Jean-Pierre Habicht, and Micheline Beaudry. “Food Insecurity: Consequences for the Household and Broader Social Implications.” *Journal of Nutrition* 129, no. 2 (1999): 525S-528S.

Handler, Joel F. "The Modern Pauper: The Homeless in Welfare History." In *Homelessness: A National Perspective*, edited by Marjorie J. Robertson and Milton Greenblatt, 35-46. New York: Plenum Press, 1992.

Hardill, Kathy. *Developing a Methodology for Survey Research with Homeless Women.* Toronto: Street Health, 1993.

Harvey, David. “Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610, no. 1 (2007): 21-44.

—. "Flexible Accumulation through Urbanization: Reflections on 'Post-Modernism' in the American City." *Antipode* 19, no. 3 (1987): 260-286.

—. *Social Justice and the City.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973.

Herbert, Steve, and Elizabeth Brown. "Conceptions of Space and Crime in the Punitive Neoliberal City." *Antipode* 38, no. 4 (2006): 755-777.

Himmelfarb, Gertrude. *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age.* New York: Knopf, 1984.

Hitchen, Amber Marie. "Safe Streets Act: Discourses around Legislating Citizenship and Public Spaces in British Columbia and Beyond." *Variegations* 2 (2005): 1-11.

Hoch, Charles, and Robert Slayton. *New Homeless and Old: Community and the Skid Row Hotel.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.

Homeward Trust. *Crossroads Sanctuary...* Edmonton Journal. August 19, 2009. http://www.homewardtrust.ca/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=65&cntnt01returnid=127 (accessed March 7, 2010).

—. *Homelessness in Edmonton.* Homeward Trust 2009. http://www.homewardtrust.ca/homelessness-in-edmonton (accessed April 27, 2010).

—. *A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton: 2008.* Homeless Count, Edmonton: Homeward Trust, 2008.

Hope, Marjorie, and James Young. "From Back Wards to Back Alleys: Deinstitutionalization and the Homeless." *Urban and Social Change Review* 17, no. 2 (1984): 7-11.

Hopper, Kim. “Taking the Measure of Homelessness: Recent Research on Scale and Race.” *Clearinghouse Review* 29, no. 7 (1995): 730-739.

—. *Homelessness Old and New: The Matter of Definition.* Understanding Homelessness: New Policy and Research Perspectives, Nathan Kline Institute, New York: Fannie Mae Foundation, 1991a, 9-41.

—. "Public Shelter as ‘a Hybrid Institution’: Homeless Men in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Social Issues* 46, no. 4 (1990): 13-29.

Hulchanski, J. David. *Canada's Dual Housing Policy: Assisting Owners, Neglecting Renters.* Research Bulletin #38, Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, 2007.

—. "What Factors Shape Canadian Housing Policy? The Intergovernmental Role in Canada's Housing System." In *Municipal-Federal-Provincial Relations in Canada*, edited by Christian Leuprecht Robert Young, 221-250. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006.

—. *Housing Policy for Tomorrow's Cities: Discussion Paper.* Discussion Paper, Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc., 2002.

Hulchanski, David. *A New Canadian Pastime? Counting Homeless People.* Discussion Paper, Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, 2000.

Hwang, Stephen W. "Homelessness and Health." *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 164, no. 2 (2001): 229-233.

—. "Mortality Among Men Using Homeless Shelters in Toronto, Ontario." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 283, no. 16 (2000): 2152-2156.

Isin, Engin F. *Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

—. "Governing Toronto Without Government: Liberalism and Neoliberalism." *Studies in Political Economy* 56, no. Summer (1998): 169-191.

Isin, Engin F., and Patricia K. Wood. *Citizenship and Identity.* London: Sage, 1999.

Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre. *Housing First.* Charitable Visions Foundation. 2007. http://www.jphawc.ca/jphousing.htm (accessed March 7, 2010).

Javed, Noor. "Mentally Ill Get Housing in Study; 565 Toronto Homeless Will Enrol in Research." *Toronto Star*, November 23, 2009: A4.

Jessop, Bob. "Changes in Welfare Regimes and the Search for Flexibility and Employability." In *The Political Economy of European Employment: European Integration and the Transnationalization of the (Un)Employment Question*, edited by Henk Overbeek, 29-50. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Johnsen, Sarah, Paul Cloke, and Jon May. "Transitory Spaces of Care: Serving Homeless People on the Street." *Health and Place* 11, no. 4 (2005): 323-336.

Johnson, Becky. "Debunking the Magnet Theory." *HUFF (Homeless United for Friendship and Freedom).* July 1999. http://www.huffsantacruz.org/StreetSpiritSantaCruz/128.Debunking%20The%20Magnet%20Theory=7-99.pdf (accessed March 12, 2010).

Katz, Michael B. *The Undeserving Poor: From a War on Poverty to the War on Welfare.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1989.

Kaufman, Leslie. "New York City Says They're Not Homeless, But They Stay Nightly in Shelters." *New York Times*, September 4, 2007: A18.

Kawash, Samira. "The Homeless Body." *Public Culture* 10, no. 2 (1998): 319-339.

Kennedy, A., J. Sheeshka, and L. Smedmor. "Enhancing Food Security: A Demonstration Support Program for Emergency Food Centre Providers." *Journal of the Canadian Dietetic Association* 53 (1992): 284-287.

Kerr, Donna. *You Never Know if You're Going to Wake Up Dead: Living Without a Home*. Edmonton: Bissell Centre, 2008.

Khandor, Erika, and Kate Mason. *The Street Health Report 2007.* Toronto: Street Health, 2007.

Kitagawa, Myles. "Council fails to honour shared vision: Parking lot plan, theatre both blind to community needs." *Edmonton Journal*, May 21, 2001: A15.

Kleiss, Karen. "A Way Into the Market: Nothing Wrong with Condo Conversions but Do Your Homework before Closing the Deal." *Edmonton Journal*, August 18 2007: I1.

Klodawsky, Fran. "Home Spaces and Rights to the City: Thinking Social Justice for Chronically Homeless Women." *Urban Geography* 30, no. 6 (2009): 591-610.

Klodawsky, Fran, Susan Farrell, and Tim D'Aubry. "Images of Homelessness in Ottawa: Implications for Local Politics." *The Canadian Geographer* 46, no. 2 (2002): 126-143.

Koch, David. *Victoria Allows Homeless to Sleep in Parks.* The McGill Daily. October 16, 2008. http://bullsheet.wordpress.com/2008/10/16/victoria-allows-homeless-to-sleep-in-parks/ (accessed March 8, 2010).

Koegal, Paul, M. Audrey Burnam, and Jim Baumohl. "The Causes of Homelessness." In *Homelessness in America*, edited by Jim Baumohl, 24-33. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1996.

Koegal, Paul, M. Audrey Burnam, and Rodger K. Farr. “Subsistence Adaptation Among Homeless Adults in the Inner City of Los Angeles” *Journal for Social Issues* 46, no. 4 (1990): 83-107.

Koenig, John. *Spaces of Denial and the Denial of Place: The Architectural Geography of Homelessness in Victoria, BC.* MA Thesis, Victoria: University of Victoria, 2007.

Kohn, Margaret. *Brave New Neighbourhoods: The Privatization of Public Space.* New York: Routledge, 2004.

Kraus, Deborah, Luba Serge, and Michael Goldberg. *Homelessness, Housing and Harm Reduction: Stable Housing for Homeless People with Substance Abuse Issues.* Research Report, Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2005.

Kumar, Krishan. "Home: The Promise and Predicament of Private Life at the End of the Twentieth Century." In *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, edited by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, 204-236. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Laird, Gordon. *SHELTER: Homelessness in a Growth Economy: Canada's 21st Century Paradox.* Calgary: Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership, 2007.

Law, Violet. "Too Much of a Good Thing?" *Shelterforce: The Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Building* (National Housing Institute), no. 149 (Spring 2007): 1-7.

Laxer, Gordon. "The Privatization of Public Life." In *The Trojan Horse: Alberta and the Future of Canada*, edited by Gordon and Harrison, Trevor Laxer, 101-117. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995.

Lees, Loretta. "The Ambivalence of Diversity and the Politics of Urban Renaissance: The Case of Youth in Downtown Portland, Maine." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 3 (2003): 613-634.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Writings on Cities.* Cambridge, Massachussetts: Blackwell, 1996.

—. *The Production of Space.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

—. *Everyday Life in the Modern World.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Press, 1990.

—. *The Survival of Capitalism.* London: Allison & Busby, 1976.

—. "Space and Politics." In *Writings on Cities*, by E. Kofman and E. Lebas, 185-202. Cambridge, Massachussetts: Blackwell, 1996 (1973).

Leo, Christopher, and Martine August. *The Federal Government and Homelessness: Community Initiative or Dictation from Above?* Winnipeg, Manitoba: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2005.

Liebow, Elliot. *Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women.* New York: The Free Press, 1993.

Lyon-Callo, Vincent. *Inequality, Poverty, and Neoliberal Governance.* Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004.

MacIsaac, Daniel. "Still no place to call home: Number of Homeless Getting Worse Since the Closing of Tent City." *Sun Media*, September 27, 2007: 1-2.

Mallett, Shelley. "Understanding Home: a Critical Review of the Literature." *The Sociological Review* 52, no. 1 (2004): 62-85.

Manning, Erin. *Ephemeral Territories: Representing Home, Nation, and Identity in Canada.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Marcuse, Peter. "Neutralizing Homelessness." *Socialist Review* 18, no. 1 (1988): 69-95.

Markee, Patrick. *NYC Homeless Shelter Population Reaches All-Time High.* Briefing Paper, Coalition for the Homeless, New York: Coalition for the Homeless, 2009, 1-13.

Marshall, Martin N. "Sampling for Qualitative Research." *Family Practice* 13, no. 6 (1996): 522-525.

Marshall, Thomas Humphrey. *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964.

McCaffee, Ann. "Housing and Housing Policy." *The Canadian Encyclopedia.* 2010. http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0003865 (accessed April 7, 2010).

McCahill, Michael W. "Beyond Foucault: Towards a Contemporary Theory of Surveillance." In *Surveillance, Closed Circuit Television and Social Control*, edited by Clive Norris, Jade Moran and Gary Armstrong, 41-65. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.

McChesney, Kay Young. "Absence of a Family Safety Net for Homeless Families." *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 19, no. 4 (1992): 55-72.

—. “Family Homelessness: A Systemic Problem.” *Journal of Social Issues* 46, no. 4 (1990): 191-205.

McQuaig, Linda. "We Allowed Rich to Win Class War." *Toronto Star*, June 1, 2007: AA8.

Miller, Henry. *On the Fringe: The Dispossessed in America.* Lexington, Massachussetts: Lexington Books, 1991.

Mitchell, Don. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space.* New York: The Guilford Press, 2003.

—. "The Annihilation of Space by Law: The Roots and Implications of Anti-Homeless Laws in the United States." *Antipode* 29, no. 3 (1997): 303-335.

—. "The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, no. 1 (1995): 108-133.

Mitchell, Don, and Lynn A. Staeheli. "Clean and Safe? Property Redevelopment, Public Space, and Homelessness in Downtown San Diego." Edited by Neil Smith and Setha Low, 143-176. New York: Taylor and Francis Group LLC , 2006.

Moscovitch, Allan. "Social Assistance in the New Ontario." In *Open for Business, Closed to People: Mike Harris's Ontario*, edited by Diana Ralph, Andre Regimbald and Neree St-Amand, 80-91. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997.

Mosher, Janet. "The Shrinking of the Public and Private Spaces of the Poor." In *Disorderly People: Law and the Politics of Exclusion in Ontario*, edited by Joe Hermer and Janet Mosher, 41-54. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002.

Mowatt, Const. Jim. "Panhandlers Prey on Vulnerable." *Edmonton Journal*, July 3, 2007: A19.

Murray, Harry. "Time in the Streets." *Human Organization* 43, no. 2 (1984): 154-161.

National Alliance to End Homelessness. *Homeless Prevention: Creating Programs that Work.* Washington: National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2009.

National Council on Welfare. *Welfare Incomes, 2006 and 2007.* Ottawa: National Council on Welfare, 2008.

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. *Access Delayed, Access Denied: Local Opposition to Housing and Service for Homeless People Across the United States.* Washington: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1997.

Neal, David M and Brenda Phillips. "Effective Emergency Management: Reconsidering the Bureaucratic Approach." *Disasters* 19, no. 4 (1995): 327-337.

Neal, Rusty. *Voices: Women, Poverty, and Homelessness in Canada.* National Anti-Poverty Organization, Ottawa: NAPO-ONAP, 2004.

Neale, Joanne. "Homelessness and Theory Reconsidered." *Housing Studies* 12, no. 1 (1997): 47-62.

Novac, Sylvia, Joe Hermer, Emilie Paradis, and Amber Kellen. *Justice and Injustice: Homelessness, Crime, Victimization, and the Criminal Justice System.* Research Paper 207, Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, 2006.

Novac, Sylvia, Joyce Brown, and Gloria Gallant. *Women on the Rough Edge: A Decade of Change for Long-Term Homeless Women.* Ottawa: Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1999.

Novac, Sylvia, Joyce Brown, Alison Guyton, and Mary Anne Quance. *Borderlands of Homelessness: Women's Views on Alternative Housing.* Toronto: The Women's Services Network, 1996.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights." Article 11.1 December 16, 1966. http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm (accessed March 16, 2010).

O'Reilly-Fleming, Thomas. "No Home in their Native Land: Homeless Canadians as Marginal Persons in the Social Order." *Critical Criminology* 2, no. 1 (1990): 55-74.

Orlebeke, Charles J. "The Evolution of Low-Income Housing Policy, 1949-1999." *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): 489-520.

Parkland Institute. *The Spoils of the Boom: Incomes, Profits, and Poverty in Alberta.* Edmonton: Parkland Institute, 2007.

Pateman, Carole. *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989.

Peck, Jamie. "Struggling with the Creative Class." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29 (2005): 392-405.

—. "Neoliberalizing Space." *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 380-404.

—. "Neoliberalizing States: Thin Policies/Hard Outcomes." *Progress in Human Geography* 25, no. 3 (2001): 445-455.

Pegg, Shawn. *HungerCount 2007.* Toronto: Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2007.

Peressini, Tracy. "Canada's Homeless: Patterns and Policies." In *Social Inequality in Canada: Patterns, Problems, and Policies*, edited by Edward Grabb, Neil Guppy James Curtis. Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2004.

Please, Nicholas. "The New Consensus, the Old Consensus and the Provision of Services for People Sleeping Rough." *Housing Studies* 15, no. 4 (2000): 581-594.

Pomeroy, Steve. *The Cost of Homelessness: Analysis of Alternate Responses in Four Canadian Cities.* Final Report, Focus Consulting Inc., Ottawa: National Secretariat on Homelessness, 2005.

Public Health Agency of Canada. *The Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness in Canada 2006.* Ottawa: Miniser of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2006.

Public Works and Government Services Canada. *2010 (Downtown) Edmonton City Map.* May 5, 2009. http://rehelv-acrd.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/plans-maps-2-eng.aspx?p=0&c=2699 (Accessed April 9, 2010).

Purcell, Mark. "Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant." *GeoJournal* 58, no. 2-3 (2002): 99-108.

Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone.* New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

R. v. Banks (2007) ONCA 19 (CanLII) Docket: C43259 (2007).

R. v. Banks (2005) 162/01 (O.J. no. 98) 52 (2005).

Raise My Voice. *SOS Affordable Housing Rally.* 2007. http://www.raisemyvoice.com/sosrally/sosrally.html (accessed March 7, 2010).

Redburn, F. Steven, and Terry F. Buss. *Responding to America's Homeless: Public Policy Alternatives.* New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986.

Reich, Robert B. (ed). *The Power of Public Ideas.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Reitsma-Street, Marge, Josie Schofield, Brishkai Lund, and Colleen Kasting. *Housing Policy Options for Women Living in Urban Poverty: An Action Research Project in Three Canadian Cities.* Research Report, Ottawa: Status of Women Canada, 2001.

Rosenheck, Robert, and Julie A. Lam. "Client and Site Characteristics as Barriers to Service Use by Homeless Persons with Serious Mental Illness." *Psychiatric Services* 48, no. 3 (1997): 387-390.

Rosenthal, Rob. "Imaging Homelessness and Homeless People: Visions and Strategies Within the Movement(s)." *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless* 9, no. 2 (2000): 111-126.

—. *Homelessness in Paradise: A Map of the Terrain.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

Rossi, Peter H. "The Old Homeless and the New Homelessness in Historical Perspective." *Psychology in the Public Forum* 45, no. 8 (1990): 954-959.

Rossi, Peter H., and James D. Wright. "The Determinants of Homelessness." *Health Affairs* 6, no. 1 (1987): 19-32.

Rowe, Stacy, and Jennifer Wolch. "Social Networks in Time and Space: Homeless Women in Skid Row, Los Angeles." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 2 (1990): 184-204.

Roy, Elise, Nancy Haley, Pascal Leclerc, Barbara Sochanski, Jean-Francois Boudreau, and Jean-Francois Boivin. "Mortality in a Cohort of Street Youth in Montreal." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 292, no. 5 (2004): 569-574.

Ruddick, Susan. *Young and Homeless in Hollywood: Mapping Social Identities.* New York: Routledge, 1996.

—. "Heterotopias of the Homeless: Strategies and Tactics of Placemaking in Los Angeles." *Strategies* 3, no. 3 (1990): 184-201.

Ruttan, Susan. "Homeowners Urge Council Not to Sell Land Near Southgate Centre." *Edmonton Journal*, November 28, 2006: B3.

Ruttan, Susan, and Alexandra Zabjek. "'We need to have a much better plan for homelessness than tents'; Mayor says city should have an interim plan in the next week or so." *Edmonton Journal*, June 16, 2007: A3.

Rykwert, Joseph. "House and Home." *Social Research* 58, no. 1 (spring 1991): 51-62.

Sard, Barbara, and Will Fischer. *Passing the Buck: The Administration's 'Flexible Voucher Program' Would Compel Housing Agencies to Impose Deep Cuts in 2005 and Subsequent Years.* News Release. Washington: Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2004.

Schneiderman, David. "The Constitutional Disorder of the Safe Streets Act: A Federalism Analysis." In *Disorderly People: Law and the Politics of Exclusion in Ontario*, edited by Joe Hermer and Janet Mosher, 79-90. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002.

Schwartz, Sharon, and Kenneth M. Carpenter. "The Right Answer for the Wrong Question: Consequences of Type III Error for Public Health Research." *American Journal of Public Health* 89, no. 8 (1999): 1175-1180.

Sclar, E.D. "Homelessness and Housing Policy: A Game of Musical Chairs." *American Journal of Public Health* 80, no. 9 (1990): 1039-1040.

Sealy, Patricia, and Paul C. Whitehead. "Forty Years of Deinstitutionalization of Psychiatric Services in Canada: An Empirical Assessment." *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 49, no. 4 (2004): 249-257.

Shapcott, Michael. *Fourteen Cents a Day Won't Build Many Homes.* Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2007.

—. *Federal Role in Housing: Constitutional and Legal Issues.* Backgrounder, Toronto: Wellesley Institute, 2006a.

—. *The Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto.* Toronto: Wellesley Institute, 2006b.

—. *Housing for all Canadians: A Nation-Wide Crisis Requires a National Solution.* Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, 2002.

Shea, Michael. "In Search of a Home." *Modesto Bee.* ProQuest. January 10, 2007. www.modbee.com (accessed March 7, 2010).

Shinn, Marybeth. "Homelessness: What is a Psychologist to do?" *American Journal of Community Psychology* 20, no. 1 (1992): 1-24.

Shlay, Anne B., and Peter H. Rossi. "Social Science Research and Contemporary Studies of Homelessness." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18, no. 1 (1992): 129-154.

Sibley, David. *Geographies of Exclusion.* London: Routledge, 1995.

Smith, Neil. “Giuliani Time: The Revanchist 1990s.” *Social Text 57* 16, no. 4 (1998): 1-20.

—. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City.* London: Routledge, 1996.

Snow, David A., and Michael Mulcahy. "Space, Politics, and the Survival Strategies of the Homeless." *American Behavioral Scientist* 45, no. 1 (2001): 149-169.

Somerville, Peter. "Homelessness and the Meaning of Home: Rooflessness or Rootlessness?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16, no. 4 (1992): 529-539.

Sorkin, Michael (ed.). *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1992.

Springer, Sabine. "Homelessness: a proposal for a global definition and classification." *Habitat International* 24, no. 4 (2000): 475-484.

Staeheli, Lynn A. "Citizenship and the Problem of Community." *Political Geography* 27, no. 1 (2008): 5-21.

Swanstrom, Todd. "No Room at the Inn: Housing Policy and the Homeless." *Journal of Urban Contemporary Law* 35, no. 1 (1989): 81-108.

Takahashi, Lois, Jaime McElroy, and Stacy Rowe. "The Sociospatial Stigmatization of Homeless Women with Children." *Urban Geography* 23, no. 2 (2002): 301-322.

Tarasuk, Valerie, and George H. Beaton. "Household Food Insecurity and Hunger Among Families Using Food Banks." *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 90, no. 2 (1999): 109-113.

Tarasuk, Valerie, and Joan M. Eakin. "Food Assistance Through "Surplus" Food: Insights from an Ethnographic Study of Food Bank Work." *Agriculture and Human Values* 22, no. 2 (2005): 177-186.

—. "Charitable Food Assistance as a Symbolic Gesture: An Ethographic Study of Food Banks in Ontario." *Social Science and Medicine* 56, no. 7 (2003): 1505-1515.

The Lewin Group. *Costs of Serving Homeless Individuals in Nine Cities.* Chart Book, Prepared for: The Partnership to End Long-Term Homelessness, Falls Church, Virginia: Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2004.

Thomas, Don. "Inner-City Workers Fight to Save Transients' Park." *Edmonton Journal*, March 16, 1997: B3.

—. "McCauley Park Defended; City Planners Criticized for Recommending Land be Developed." *Edmonton Journal*, March 14, 1997b: B1.

Thrift, Nigel. *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect.* London: Routledge, 2007.

Tibbetts, Janice. "Private Guards Need Regulation, Law Panel Says." *Edmonton Journal*, July 26, 2006: A5.

Toronto. *What Housing First Means for People: Results of Streets to Homes 2007 Post-Occupancy Research.* Toronto: City of Toronto, Shelter and Housing Administration, 2007.

Tsemberis, Sam, and Rhonda F. Eisenberg. "Pathways to Housing: Supported Housing for Street-Dwelling Homeless Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities." *Psychiatric Services* 51, no. 4 (2000): 487-493.

United Nations Economic and Social Council. "Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Thirty-Sixth session." May 26, 2006. http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/87793634eae60c00c12571ca00371262/$FILE/G0642783.pdf (accessed March 16, 2010).

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. *The 10-Year Planning Process to End Chronic Homelessness in Your Community: A Step-by-Step Guide.* Toolkit, Washington: United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2009a.

—. *Good...To Better...To Great: Innovations in 10-Year Plans to End Chronic Homelessness in Your Community.* Washington, DC: United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2009b.

Victoria (City) v. Adams (2008) BCSC 1363. Docket 05-4999 (2008).

Wagner, David. *Checkerboard Square: Culture and Resistance in a Homeless Community.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1993.

Wagner, David, and Marcia B. Cohen. "The Power of the People: Homeless Protesters in the Aftermath of Social Movement Participation." *Social Problems* 38, no. 4 (1991): 543-561.

Waldron, Jeremy. "Homelessness and Community." *University of Toronto Law Journal* 50, no. 4 (2000): 372-406.

—. "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom." *Journal of UCLA Law Review* 39, no. 1 (1991): 295-324.

Warren, Stacy. "Disneyfication of the Metropolis: Popular Resistance in Seattle." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 16, no. 2 (1994): 89-107.

Watson, Sophie, and Helen Austerberry. *Housing and Homelessness: A Feminist Perspective.* London: Routledge & Kega Paul, 1986.

Weicha, Jean L., Johanna T Dwyer, and Martha Dunn-Strohecker. "Nutritional and Health Services Needs among the Homeless." *Public Health reports*, July-August 1991: 364-374.

Weintraub, Jeff. "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction." In *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, edited by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Wiebe, Christopher. "Lost Capital: An old Edmonton warehouse holds a valuable lesson about downtown revitalization." *Alberta Views: Perspectives on a Province*, January/February 2002: 34-40.

Wiseman, Jacqueline P. *Stations of the Lost: the Treatment of Skid Row Alcoholics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Wolch, Jennifer R., Michael Dear, and Andrea Akita. "Explaining Homelessness." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 54, no. 4 (1988): 443-452.

Wolch, Jennifer, and Michael Dear. *Malign Neglect: Homelessness in an American City.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.

Wolfe, Jeanne M. "Canadian Housing Policy in the 1990s." *Housing Studies* 13, no. 1 (1998): 121-133.

Wright, James D., and Beth A. Rubin. "Is Homelessness a Housing Problem? ." *Housing Policy Debate* 2 (1991): 937-956.

Wright, Talmadge. *Out of Place: Homeless Mobilizations, Subcities and Contested Landscape.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.

Zabjek, Alexandra. “More People Living in City Parks: Rangers can only Shift Squatters from Place to Place.” *Edmonton Journal,* August 8, 2007: A1.

Zukin, Sharon. *The Cultures of Cities.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

—. *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991.

APPENDIX A

Preliminary Interview Questions

Group One: Tent City Residents

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? What is a typical day like for you?
2. How long have you been coming to the Bissell Centre?
3. Can you describe your experience living at Tent City? What was a typical day like?
4. Why did you decide to live in Tent City?
5. When you lived at Tent City, how did you understand your role?
6. Were there any rules about Tent City? Who imposed those rules?
7. Were there any organizations that were involved with the governance or interactions of Tent City? If so, what were those organizations?
8. Why do you think Tent City emerged last summer? What were the factors that caused it?
9. In your opinion, why was Tent City closed?
10. Do you think it was a good idea to close Tent City? Why or why not?
11. Have you experienced any changes in your life since Tent City closed? If so, can you talk about those changes?
12. How do you feel about sleeping in shelters?
13. In your opinion, are there state measures or programs which have been helpful to homeless individuals? If so, what are they?
14. In your opinion, are there state measures or programs which have been not been helpful to homeless individuals? If so, what are they?
15. What additional measures could be undertaken to support homeless individuals?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B

Preliminary Interview Questions

Group Two: Service Providers

1. What has your own involvement been regarding issues relating to homelessness or Tent City?
2. Can you talk a little bit about the services your organization offers?
3. What do you see as the most pressing issues for homeless individuals?
4. In your opinion, what are the factors that caused Tent City to emerge last summer?
5. In your opinion, what are the opportunities and challenges that arose due to Tent City's emergence?
6. In your opinion, why was Tent City eventually closed? Do you think this was a good decision? Why or why not?
7. Do you think Tent City impacted public perceptions of homelessness? If so, how?
8. Do you think Tent City impacted state perceptions of homelessness? If so, how?
9. In your opinion, did Tent City impact subsequent government policy?
10. In your opinion, what government and community strategies have been effective in supporting the homeless?
11. Have there been any government and community strategies that have been ineffective in supporting the homeless? If so, what are they?
12. Do you think there are still issues that need to be addressed regarding homelessness? If so, what are they?
13. What additional measures could be undertaken to further support individuals experiencing homelessness?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX C

Preliminary Interview Questions

Group Three: State Officials

1. What has your own involvement been regarding issues relating to homelessness or Tent City?
2. How important is homelessness as a government priority?
3. Do you perceive any gaps in government programs or policies to address homelessness? If so, what are they?
4. In your opinion, why do you think that Tent City emerged at the time that it did?
5. In your opinion, what were the opportunities and challenges that arose due to Tent City's emergence?
6. Can you talk about the management of Tent City?
7. What factors contributed to the decision to eventually close Tent City? Do you think this was a good decision?
8. Several policy-makers have been quoted as saying that there will never be another Tent City in Edmonton again. Why do you think this is important?
9. What measures and actions will help to achieve this goal?
10. Did the phenomenon of Tent City impact subsequent policy negotiations or decisions? If so, how?
11. How can government policies target not only people living on the street, but the hidden homeless?
12. In your opinion, what are the most significant municipal or provincial programs and policies to address homelessness? Why do you understand these programs to be the most significant?
13. What role do you see the municipal/provincial/federal governments playing to address homelessness?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

Research Project: **Edmonton's Tent City and Homelessness**
For:
Master of Arts Thesis
University of Alberta Department of Political Science

Student Investigator: Erin Black

Supervised By: Dr. Lois Harder, University of Alberta Political Science

You are invited to participate in the Research Project on Edmonton's Tent City and Homelessness conducted by Erin Black at the University of Alberta. The purpose of this project is to create new knowledge about a relatively new phenomenon across Canada, Tent City, and to understand the interactions between the homeless community and state officials.

You would be interviewed at a mutually agreed upon time and location, and asked to provide some background information regarding your own experiences with Tent City, the impact of Tent City on perceptions of homelessness, and services gaps or barriers that you have observed.

This session will take about 60 – 90 minutes,[88] and will be audiotaped in order to keep an accurate record of your comments and advice. Your identity will not be disclosed to the supervisor of this project, or to anyone else. The interview data, including tapes and transcribed information from interviews, will be stored in a secure, locked filing cabinet that is accessible only to the researcher. Tapes and transcribed interview data will be destroyed by June 1, 2010 unless you request the tape containing your interview be destroyed by an earlier date.

The research findings from these interviews may be used in scholarly journals, book chapters, periodicals, other publications, and/or presented at conferences. The final paper may also be shared with community organizations and people close to homelessness with the object of enhancing knowledge about homelessness and Tent City, and strategies that could be undertaken to address homelessness.

Your participation is voluntary and you can choose to stop at any time without penalty. If you are willing to be part of this session, please sign and date the following agreement.

[88] The time allotted for interviews with Tent City residents was 30 – 40 minutes rather than 60 – 90 minutes for service providers and state officials.

Research Project: Edmonton's Tent City and Homelessness
For:
Master of Arts Thesis
University of Alberta Department of Political Science

Student Investigator: Erin Black

Supervised By: Dr. Lois Harder, University of Alberta Political Science

Interview Format:

Interviews are estimated to take 60 – 90 minutes. Prior to the interview, there will be time to discuss any questions or concerns. Following the interview, any questions, concerns, or issues regarding the interview process or contents will also be discussed.

If you wish to receive a copy of the final paper please indicate this below and arrangements will be made to provide one to you. There will also be a presentation of the research results at a later date, which you are invited to attend.[89]

Rights of Research Participants:

I have been informed that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I have the right not to participate. I am aware that I can cease the interview at any time and/or refrain from answering questions without penalty. I have been informed that I will be given a ten dollar honorarium in appreciation of my time and participation.[90] I am aware that this honorarium will be granted even if I choose to withdraw my consent during the interview process or after the interview has been completed. I have been informed that the honorarium will be given even if I pass on questions. The honorarium will be given to me immediately after the interview process has been completed, even if I cease the interview early.

As a participant I have been informed that I am assured 100% anonymity. I have been told that my name and any information that could be used to identify me will be omitted from the final project or any other public distribution or discussion of the findings. I have been told that my identity will not be disclosed to the supervisor of this project, or to anyone else.

I understand that interview data, including tapes and transcribed information from interviews, will be stored in a secure locked file cabinet that is accessible only to the researcher. Tapes and transcribed interview data will be destroyed by June 1, 2010, unless I request the tape containing my interview to be destroyed by an earlier date.

The purpose of the research project has been given, and the interviewer identified. I understand that the data collected from the interview will be integrated into the researcher's M.A. thesis. I have been told that research findings may also be used in scholarly journals, book chapters, periodicals, other publications, and/or presented at conferences. I have been told that the final paper may also be shared with community

---

[89] The presentation was intended for Tent City residents who presumably would not be interested in receiving a large, printed document but who may still be interested in hearing about the research findings.

[90] The ten-dollar honorarium was only provided for Tent City residents. This sentence was removed from the consent form for other interview respondents.

organizations and people close to homelessness with the object of enhancing knowledge about homelessness and Tent City, and strategies that could be undertaken to address homelessness.

Do you have any objections of these uses?
_____ I have no concerns about this research or this interview.
_____ I object to some aspects of this research or this interview (please specify)

If I am not satisfied with the study procedures I am aware that I can contact the supervising professor Dr. Lois Harder at (808) 956-8743 or lharder@ualberta.ca.

Would you like to receive a copy of the final research project?

_____ Yes. If so, you can contact me here: _____
_____ No. I do not wish to receive a copy of the research paper.

I agree to participate in an interview as part of this research project. I have read the above information and understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time. I have received a copy of the Consent form.

Primary Researcher: Erin Black

_____ _____
Name of Participant Signature

_____ _____
Name of Interviewer Signature

_____
Date