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Storied Realities: A Case Study of Homelessness, Housing Policy, and Gender in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

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Abstract

Homelessness, as an inherently gendered phenomenon, places *women* who experience it in a doubly marginal position: not only are people experiencing homelessness often rendered "silent", but the form women's homelessness takes is often "hidden". This thesis explores the intersecting topics of homelessness, housing policy, and gender in Whitehorse, Yukon, highlighting the role of lived experience, narrative, and sharing stories in creating more effective and inclusive public policy. Through both critical feminist analysis and dialogic storytelling, this thesis considers the potential utility of narrative and ethnographic method in creating policy, the visibility of women who experience homelessness in broader political and social discourse, and "Canada's North" as a setting for innovative approaches to policymaking. Through interviews with people involved in the policymaking process in Whitehorse and participant observation in various service provision settings, this thesis calls for more meaningful engagement and collaboration in policy creation with women who experience homelessness.

Keywords

Women's Homelessness, Public Policy, Gender, Northern Canada, Lived Experience, Narrative

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This thesis would not have been possible without the wonderful and generous folks in Whitehorse who participated in my research. Thank you for showing me such kindness, and

for taking the time to share your thoughts and stories with me. I hope that I have done you all justice throughout this thesis. You have helped me learn and grow not only as an academic, but as a human being as well. Can't wait to see you all next time I'm up North!

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This process was anything but easy, but the people in my life have made all the difference through what might have otherwise been an impossible task.

Thanks folks!

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Preface

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.

"But which is the stone that supports the bridge?"

Kublai Khan asks.

"The bridge is not supported by one stone or another,"

Marco answers, "but by the line of the arch that they form."

Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds:

"Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me."

Polo answers: "Without the stones there is no arch."

-Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* 1972: 82

Chapter 1

1   Introduction

What business does 'story' have, worming its way into the realm of policymaking? Is there room for silty subjectivities and idiosyncrasies in the rigid linearity of a bureaucratic machine? The ability to create and transmit meaning across time and space is, arguably, a key function and capacity of narrative—one that human languages and cultures are founded on. Despite this, the prominence of narrative and embodied experience in shaping bureaucratic praxis waxes and wanes.

In Anthropology, however, the messiness, stickiness, and complexity of human existence expressed through 'story' is ubiquitous within our craft. The rhizomatic and often perplexing nature of experience underlies the stories people choose to tell, and is reflected by the context in which they tell them; the selection of some words, themes, and tones over others can render visible the structures and frameworks that entangle and engage both speaker and listener. Stories bind individuals to communities, and are always necessarily "dialogic"—that is, not only do they make communities, but as Michael Holquist writes "in so far as my 'I' is dialogic, it insures that my existence is not a lonely event but part of a larger whole" (2002: 36). I find particular utility in Donna Haraway's concept of the "Cyborg" here, with particular regard to women's experiences and voices—a central theme of this thesis:

> To be One is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God; but to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other. Yet to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial. One is too few, but two are too many (1991: 177).

The concept of the Cyborg highlights the frustrating unspeakability of being a "self" of complicated origin and occupying multiple identities; it provides a conceptual lexicon with which to render this complexity translatable. It also does the service of weaving together various feminist theoretical frameworks that I deploy throughout this thesis (most explicitly in Chapter 4). The Cyborg is a figure I identify with as an individual, though this "not-quite-human", "monstrous" or "abominable" imagery may not be so easily adopted or embraced by some, due to long histories of folks "in the academy" using monsters as motifs to represent and underscore racial and gendered Otherness (Calafell 2012). Feminist scholar Chantal Bourgault du Coudray, for example, explores the idea of "The Werewolf" as it has been deployed in the pursuit of this "monstrous Othering": "[monsters embody] a composite Otherness which [gives] expression to anxieties about working class degeneracy, colonial insurrection and racial atavism, women's corporeality and sexuality, and the bestial heritage of humanity" (du Coudray 2002: 7). The Cyborg, and my choice to deploy her as part of my theoretical framework, highlights the necessity for intersectional feminist analysis[1] (explored further in Chapter

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[1] Intersectional feminist thought is the necessity of considering how race and gender (but also socio-economic markers) come together to shape an individual experience (Crenshaw: 1989).

Kimbelé Crenshaw created the concept of "intersectionality" in 1989, and it is important to note that this approach to feminist analysis has grown exponentially over the past three decades. Bernadette Calafell and C.B. du Coudray also both work with intersectional feminist theories, and have produced more contemporary work specifically covering the topic of "monstrosity" and race using intersectional feminist thought.

See Crenshaw's paper: "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989): 139.

Calafell: "Monstrous Femininity: Constructions of Women of Color in the Academy" (2012)

du Coudray: "Upright Citizens on All Fours: Nineteenth-Century Identity and the Image of the Werewolf" (2002)

4): I see myself in the Cyborg, but also recognize that not all themes and images are appropriate for, or resonate with all individuals[2]. Lived experiences influence the way that we, as human beings, understand and interpret the world—the Cyborg feels right to apply to *myself* (as a white/settler Canadian), within the framework of a particular narrative. And, as anthropologist Robin Ridington suggests, "Stories are metonyms… they are parts that stand for wholes" (1999: 20).

Public policy, too, involves a dialogue—a co-construction between 'speaker' and 'listener', embedded in particular "radically historically specific" contexts (Haraway 2004: 67); it too is formed through the selective and purposeful inclusion and exclusion of some words, themes, and tones over others, and it too renders visible the structures and frameworks that bind those governed by them. Many anthropologists have begun to narrow in on the field of policy in the context of "governance and power", and have found the tools and methods of the discipline highly useful in examining and understanding the remarkable and curious social, political, and economic lived realities tied up in policy[3]. Situated at the nexus of social sciences and humanities research methods and theoretical frameworks, the work presented in this thesis is uniquely positioned to tie together multiple disparate fields of inquiry and study; this project

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[2] There are many women of colour who have produced figures or concepts that, to me, highlight ways of experiencing the world that draw upon similar themes to the Cyborg—themes of multiplicity, or existing in the space between worlds—using "non-monstrous" imagery. For further reading, and an example of a scholar who has produced amazing work on these themes, I would recommend Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera : The New Mestiza* (1987).

[3] *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power* (1997), edited by Cris Shore and Susan Wright is a good introductory volume to view a wide range of anthropological perspectives on policy. Though the volume was published over two decades ago, I find the ways the authors present various theories and arguments to be particularly insightful.

highlights the intersecting and overlapping characteristics of anthropology, public administration, narrative, and feminist research, and pulls them into a (sometimes uncomfortable, yet necessarily productive) dialogue.

Recently, there has been significant energy channeled into including people with lived experience of homelessness in policy conversations across Canada as part of homelessness reduction efforts across the world. Through discussions with policymakers in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory on homelessness, housing policy, and gender, I consider the ways in which narrative can be included in policy creation and implementation as an activist tool in conjunction with these efforts. I use my background in anthropology and narrative to argue for the transferability of knowledges rooted in lived experience to the realm of policy; this forms, I believe, the untidy space where 'policy' and 'story' can exist in (productive) commensurability.

1.1   Setting the Stage

The first book I ever read on the topic of "homelessness" was Jeannette Walls' memoir and sweeping bestseller, *The Glass Castle*. Walls' experiences existed in the complicated space between poverty and what I had always seen depicted as "homelessness". It had been assigned in my twelfth grade English class, not long after I had moved out of the car where my mother and I were living, and into a spare dorm room at my high school. In the memoir, Walls tells the story of her family, and their vicious cycle of having money, and then losing it, and having housing, and then losing it. Through the first-person narrative account, Walls describes scenes from her childhood framed in equal parts by family unity

alongside family dysfunction: disconnection alongside tender empathy. I did not simply *read* Walls' memoir: I also *lived* it; though only some of Walls' experiences and descriptions directly overlaid onto my own, all 289 pages made me feel and relive the echoes of my past through her words and experiences. It was the first book that had ever wrenched open the hard barrier I had erected between my day-to-day living self and my experiences of homelessness growing up. I saw these two "Alexes" as being wholly separate entities—the happy-go-lucky version of me that interacted in a dynamic and constant way with the world (and the one I desperately tried to believe was the "real" me), versus the "me" that I hoped was rooted firmly in the past. There are not, and never were, two Alexes: I am one whole, built up from 24 full and complete years of living in this world. My life as a child (and eventually as a young woman) whose experiences over a decade of life belong somewhere along the "continuum of homelessness" are not separate from my experiences as a student of anthropology; both feed into and inform one another. The category of "homeless" never felt like the right label to apply to my experiences[4]—media representations of homelessness too often feature the experiences of men, and specifically those who sleep rough outdoors (this is often called "absolute" or "visible" homelessness[5]). There is little opportunity for girls and women to see their

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[4] In progressive discourse on homelessness, the preferred term to describe someone experiencing homelessness is just that—"a person with (lived) experience of homelessness". Using homelessness as a noun instead of an adjective separates the person from the experience, rather than using the term "homeless person" as though the homelessness belongs to them, or forms an inalienable part of their identity.

[5] The various forms that homelessness takes are described as a "continuum"—comprised of "Visible or Absolute Homelessness", "Relative Homelessness", "Hidden Homelessness", and "At Risk of Becoming Homeless". Sometimes "Core Housing Need" also makes this list—meaning housing is not affordable, adequate, or suitable (Bopp and Hrenchuk 2007: 18). Yukon's *A Little Kindness Would Go a Long Way* Report, states: "There is broad consensus in the literature that homelessness in general, and among women in particular, represents a continuum of circumstances…the terms used to describe different aspects of this

experiences of homelessness represented or discussed, which renders their voices all the more invisible. *The Glass Castle* felt as though it was written with secret spaces and familiarities, just for me. It called to the dark and hidden part of me. Stories well told have the ability to move time and space, and mean everything and nothing simultaneously. I was both fascinated and horrified. When I read Walls' memoir, all of my memories and experiences came crashing back into sharp relief, demanding to be taken seriously. As it turned out, I did not take the demand seriously until I began my Master's degree, choosing to undertake a research project working (more directly than I expected) on the topic of homelessness.

1.2 Whitehorse and Overview of Work

During the autumn of 2017, I spent nearly three months (from September to December 2017) conducting semi-structured interviews with policy analysts, NGO workers, government workers, people with lived experience of homelessness, and community leaders in Whitehorse—all involved (in different capacities) in the process of creating housing policy and other forms of public and social policy. Though the basic questions remained similar from interview to interview, conversations were fluid, flexible, and emergent. They were also mostly based on what people felt it was important for me to know about policymaking, homelessness, and gender in Whitehorse that may or may not

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continuum vary, but most in some way encompass [the wide array of circumstances women find themselves in]" (Bopp and Hrenchuk 2007: 17).

have been reflected in the basic questions I had prepared[6]. I also engaged in participant observation: this quintessential anthropological field method is sometimes referred to as "Deep Hanging Out", given its basis in meaningfully engaging with, living, and observing the quotidian life of those we work with. The research presented in this thesis is a feminist, anthropological analysis of homelessness, housing policy, and gender in the city of Whitehorse, with specific emphasis on the potential role of lived experience, narrative, and the sharing of stories in creating more effective and inclusive policy. Many elements presented within this work represent what were, to me, new and unfamiliar arenas. I had what I came to realize was a limited understanding of the minutiae and marginalia of day-to-day policymaking, but also a misguided image of what I would come to find in "Northern Canada" (a space heretofore mysterious and unknown to my southern Canadian self).

The themes that arise throughout the subsequent chapters constitute part of an overarching narrative, and form the basis upon which I argue that this case (and this narrative), one of policy creation in a 29,000-person northern center, is applicable far beyond the boundaries and borders of Whitehorse's city limits. From conducting over 30 semi-structured interviews with 27 individuals involved either directly or indirectly in

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[6] The questions I prepared prior to conducting fieldwork do not necessarily reflect the content of the conversations I had with participants in this research. I began conversations by asking questions such as, "What makes the experience of homelessness different for women in "the North?". From there, we would discuss things like the shortage of affordable housing in Whitehorse, movement in and out of the communities outside the city, how people with lived experience of homelessness are (or are not) currently involved in policy conversations in Whitehorse, or the NGO/Government relationships that exist in Yukon. The semi-structured interviews were emergent in nature, largely conversational, and extremely flexible— they were based almost entirely on what the person I was speaking to wished to talk about. For this reason, I have chosen to not include a list of specific questions used in interviews. It is important to note, however, that the role of narrative and "lived experience" in the policy creation process was discussed in every interview.

policy creation in Whitehorse, I came to notice some interesting themes and threads that resonate clearly within national and international discourses surrounding homelessness and advocacy.

1.3 Changing my Original Research Plan

When I arrived in Whitehorse, I wasn't sure if I should disclose the fact that I had experienced homelessness to those I was working with. This wasn't, as I envisioned it, a project on homelessness per-se; I thought I would be looking at things like the availability of housing stock, the climate (political, social, and meteorological), Social Assistance policy, human rights legislation, and public engagement in policymaking—homelessness, as I saw it, exists as one part of this ecology of related phenomenon. Therefore, I assumed that a cursory exploration of Whitehorse's policy landscape would not impact me personally or emotionally, in the way research directly on the topic of homelessness would. I thought I would "test the waters" for a future project, in which I would transplant my original research plan onto Whitehorse; I originally intended to work in my hometown with street-involved or precariously housed single mothers, on how they navigate policy landscapes to remain housed and provide for their families. I intended to do this project right up until my own mother called me, and confessed that she was having second thoughts on me conducting research in a city where we had spent nights sleeping in our car (she, significantly longer than I), seeking shelter in motels, or staying with friends until we overstayed our welcome. The experiences we shared in this city were part of a larger pattern that had mapped over my entire life, spanning both the cities I grew up in (one large, urban center, and one mid-sized center). We would have a

place, lose a place, stay with friends, stay in a motel, and repeat this cycle endlessly; two times, we ended up in emergency shelters—both times I was apprehended into foster care.

It wasn't these memories she was worried about bringing up, however; it was the fact that she didn't want people within her network of friends (some of whom have also experienced homelessness) to find out her secret.

I was floored. I had never realized that she had told her network of peers so little about herself and our past. So, out of love and respect for my mother, research in this city was off the table. I have also chosen to obscure and alter parts of our shared experiences to protect her identity. Left with no choice, I began figuring out another fieldwork option.

It was serendipitous that, shortly after this conversation with my mom, I received another phone call—from a mentor and friend living in Whitehorse. It had been a long while since we had spoken, and, during the conversation, she told me about her work in a high-level position within the Yukon Government, for the Yukon Housing Corporation. She ended up inviting me to conduct my fieldwork in Whitehorse, where she would introduce me to local policymakers and other invested stakeholders. At the time, I had a decidedly singular view of what a "policymaker" might look like, which, as I explore throughout the chapters that follow, was soon upended.

So, we hatched a plan: I was heading off to "Canada's North" to conduct research with government workers, heads of NGOs, members of the Whitehorse community, and policy analysts. Working directly with policymakers was an aspect present in my original research plan, but it had not yet come to fruition. Why? Well, breaking into policy circles

is tough in bigger metropolitan areas, and I had not yet secured my "in". I, as a person not long out of homelessness, was looking forward to conducting research that had the potential to invert pervasive subject/object, powerful/powerless binaries surrounding the concept of homelessness on their head.

1.4   Identi-cology and Positionality

My various bodies, identities, and experiences are important in understanding the research I undertook in Whitehorse. Though I normally resist applying labels to myself, lumping myself into categories for the benefit of others trying to understand "me", it is necessary in the context of this work for me to render visible certain aspects of my identity. I am a cisgender, female, white/settler Canadian in my twenties. I am currently a researcher and Anthropologist at Western University. I have lived in four Canadian cities, and experienced homelessness or precarious housing in two of them. Every aspect of my identity, appearance, and experience allows me into certain spaces, and bars me from others. I am "allowed" by my identi-cology—or, collection of often-discordant identities—to speak on some topics, and not on others; my whiteness, for example, affords me a high degree of privilege, and allows me access to many spaces and platforms from which to speak. I use this gift critically, and recognize that the experiences and opportunities I have had would likely be very different were it not for my heritage.

I do not feel "authorized" to speak on behalf of anyone, whether or not we share aspects of identity or experience: I can only do my best to amplify the voices of those who have

given me permission to share stories they have told me. There is not "one story" or "one truth" present within the pages of this thesis; rather, there are multiple strong and competing threads that form a vibrant (and, in many places contradictory) narrative. On the one hand, I wielded power being in the position of recording and writing the research I conducted with my policymaker friends. On the other, I, due to my lived history and experiences of homelessness, am part of what would otherwise widely be considered a "vulnerable" and "powerless" population, working with folks who were not only older than me, but almost always held positions of more political clout, and many possess significantly more years of education than myself. It was a complex situation to be navigating during my first foray into anthropological fieldwork.

1.5   Methodology

While travelling to "the North", a well-intentioned gentleman offered me a word of advice: he told me that, as a Southerner, I should practice caution in running up with a head full of southern-centric ideas and ideals, trying to change things. This was never my intention—anthropologists are making a concerted effort to decolonize their practice, and most do not rush into fieldwork with dreams of reformation. That is not to say, however, I went to do fieldwork without an explicitly activist agenda; the type of academic work I participate in presupposes that the thoughts, ideas, and motivations of researchers are *necessarily* political. What makes this a work of activist, feminist anthropology is the way it tackles "capitalopatriarchal" givens, and categories constructed by those on the powerful side of the dominant hegemonic narrative. Change and reform are not within my prerogative, as my understandings are inherently partial—they will always be this

way. Rather, I intend to take neat walls, erected between categories, and expose the ways in which they are leaky, flexible, and permeable; I wish to use this thesis, and my voice as an academic, to render visible things that may not appear obvious from the outset, and defamiliarize things that do. At the beginning of this thesis, I included an excerpt from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. In the excerpt, Marco Polo and Kublai Kahn are discussing a bridge, and how best to describe it—through the stones that comprise it, or the complete shape of the arch the stones form. I selected this particular quote for multiple reasons: initially, I was drawn to the "bridge" as a metaphor for the manner in which the components of this thesis work together—each section and each idea constitutes a whole to which they are all vital. On the other hand, the selection of the Polo narrative serves as an uncomfortable reminder of my own colonial position as a white/settler researcher in "Canada's North". Gerardo Mosquera offers exceedingly relevant insight on the topic of aesthetic value, ethnocentrism, and imperial conquest in his paper "The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems Around Art and Eurocentrism*"*, stating:

> Given that it has been demonstrated that the role of the viewer is fundamental in art and literature, this does not mean that one only sees from one's self and one's own circumstance, but also that reception is active and therefore capable of expanding. (1992: 41)

The allure of Italo Calvino's bridge metaphor—together with its almost romantic allusion to the imperialist explorer, Marco Polo, accentuates my positionality in the colonial

context of Whitehorse[7]; the Calvino excerpt *demands* that "radical historically specific" contexts are taken into consideration. The continued shift towards progressive research methodologies is necessary in order to uproot, unsettle, and render visible systems and structures that have oppressed, silenced, disenfranchised, and violated various bodies throughout time. Donna Haraway, on the topic of feminist and counter-hegemonic research praxis, elaborates on this idea:

> Rich feminist practice in science in the last couple of decades illustrates particularly well the 'activation' of the previously passive categories of objects of knowledge. (1991:199)

Natural, social, and human sciences—themselves "situated knowledges"—are complicit in the colonial, patriarchal, and neoliberal capitalist realities we find ourselves entangled in (Haraway 1991). In this context, Whitehorse provides an interesting challenge, given its sticky and complex relationship with colonization and violence at the hands of those who came to settle there. Within the Yukon, landmark land agreements have resulted in 11 of 14 Yukon First Nations achieving self-governance. These are Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (February 14th, 1995); Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (February 14th, 1995); First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun (February 14th, 1995); Teslin Tlingit Council (February 14th, 1995); Selkirk First Nation (October 1st, 1997); Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation (October 1st, 1997); Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (September 15th, 1998), Ta'an Kwach'an Council (April 1st, 2002); Kluane First Nation (February 2nd, 2004); Kwanlin Dun First Nation (April 1st, 2005); Carcross/Tagish First Nation (January 9th, 2006).

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[7] In Chapter 2, I consider the idealized figure of the rugged, colonial, male explorer as it pertains to images and stories of "Canada's North"

These governments, alongside the Canadian federal government, the Yukon territorial government, and the municipal government of Whitehorse, form a complex ecology in which the interests, policies, and bureaucracies of 14 separate governing bodies, alongside a healthy network of NGO partners, influence and make decisions about everyday life in the territory. Whitehorse itself is nestled within the traditional territory (thus, exists under the purview of) two First Nations: Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwach'an Council. I will speak to the multi-government ecology further in Chapter 2. Due to the time and page constraints present within the context of a Master's thesis, I will only briefly touch on Indigenous homelessness and experiences that are of incredible relevance within Whitehorse. Approximately ¼ (23.3%) of the population of Yukon identifies as Aboriginal (Yukon Bureau of Statistics 2016). Indigenous peoples are vastly overrepresented in populations experiencing homelessness across Canada—"1 in 15 Indigenous peoples are homeless, this compared to 1 in 128 for the general population" (Thistle, Defining Indigenous Homelessness: "Listen and They Will Tell You" 2016). It is estimated that upwards of 80% of people experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse are Indigenous, and this number ranges anywhere from 15% (as in Toronto) to 90% (in Yellowknife) (Thistle, Defining Indigenous Homelessness: "Listen and They Will Tell You" 2016). This reality requires significantly more time, contextualization, and attention than I am able to provide in this Master's thesis. I will not expand significantly on this topic here—though I plan to revisit it through my future PhD work in Whitehorse. Rather, in Chapter 2, I will highlight and discuss other scholars doing remarkable work on the topic of Indigenous homelessness in Canada.

While conducting fieldwork, I was able to meet and interview individuals representing a diverse cross section of "stakeholder" groups from all across Whitehorse. All of the interviews I conducted were with individuals who, in some way, work in fields that intersect with housing policy or homelessness (such as gender equity, social assistance, social services, drug and alcohol services, or anti-poverty initiatives). Some of the participants in this study are engaged in frontline work or service delivery. Some work for NGOs, others work for First Nations Governments. Roughly half of the participants in this research work for the Yukon territorial government, across a wide array of policy or service areas. Due to the close-knit nature of this community, I have chosen to remove the names of participants from the quotes I include, using pseudonyms instead. However, due to the particular aspects of some people's biographies, it may be possible for those who know them well to spot them in the thesis. Even in reading formal reports from Yukon, I can sometimes tell to whom a particular quote belongs.

In this chapter, and throughout my work, I refer to all of the individuals who participated in this research broadly as "policymakers" though only a handful of them are engaged directly in the process of writing policy, or have official policy-related positions. The majority of participants in this research are primarily involved in advisory or advocacy work, which also often includes researching or revising policy, and supporting its evaluation. I spent hours sitting around social service centers, chatting and drinking coffee with these individuals, engaging in conversations about the role of personal narratives in policy work. I was even able to take part in the beginning stages of both policy creation and revision while conducting my research: this involved attending community "town hall" policy consultations, as well as brainstorming with the Yukon

Anti-Poverty Coalition to address Social Assistance policies in a letter to Health and Social Services. There are also instances throughout my fieldwork where my opinions and advice may have had an effect on policies produced or revised. It is difficult to determine precisely what that impact may be, if any at all. This process of "hanging out" was instrumental in understanding how policy *works*, through observing peoples' quotidian lives and interactions.

1.6   Advocating for Lived Experience

On the surface, I thought that this version of my project would be somewhat of a relief; homelessness was only going to be a guiding theme for the research I was to conduct in Whitehorse, rather than the sole focus of my project. It was not until the night before my flight to Whitehorse that images and memories started to surface in my mind, when I thought about the fact that I was about to interview a group of people who had the power to either relieve or worsen some experiences of homelessness through their relationship to various sorts of policies. According to anthropologist Raymond Apthorpe, policymaking can be considered a literary genre, with rhetorical or persuasive force, "realized in the dialogic engagement of particular people and particular utterances with one another" (Apthorpe 1997). At the heart of this quote lies a truth I would come to understand further into my fieldwork: policy is not a rigid, dusty tome, out-of-touch with all real-life meaning and context. It is instead contingent, and predicated upon relationships between people, organizations, structures, and community members; like other genres, it too has a 'poetics'.

I pursued this project in the hope I could find a way to give "voice to the wound"[8] that I had not yet found a way to address or heal; I spent many years hiding the fact that I was living in a state of homelessness, and a few more struggling to disguise that I had been apprehended into foster care. I was profoundly ashamed of these experiences, and, though I had been a child for many of them and a young adult for the rest, felt intensely and absurdly responsible for the situations I had found myself in. Though I understood Anthropology to be the route to my salvation—the space where I could begin to carefully explore and theorize experiences I had endured—I self-consciously wrote around the issue in classes and on assignments, coming close, but never fully putting my experiences directly into words; the voices of those who have experienced homelessness are often included as footnotes, asides, or block quotes in book chapters—even in sources meant to advocate for and humanize those experiencing homelessness—and, individuals with lived experience of homelessness are almost never in charge of their own narratives, or the narratives of their communities. It took time, and careful consideration for me to see that my own experiences are not only relevant, but essential to articulating my position in relation to the research presented in this thesis. My lived experiences are, in fact, inseparable from the knowledge I produce as an anthropologist.

In addition, I have included salient aspects of my own memories and experiences of homelessness in order to add a distinct voice, and separate narrative thread throughout this work. These narratives highlight pertinent experiences or thoughts I had in connection to writing or researching this thesis, and sometimes came in the form of

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[8] This concept is from Cathy Caruth's, *Unclaimed Experience*. Introduction: The Wound and The Voice: 1996. It refers to Freud's *Pleasure Principle* description of trauma as a mental wound.

flashbacks during the process of writing particular sections. In a foray into 'Anthropological Poetics', these sections produce a more harmonious whole with my observations from my fieldwork, and form a part of my fieldwork analysis and experience that, for me, is just as tangible as all other aspects.

I have chosen to frame subsequent chapters with these "representative anecdotes"[9] as a way of outlining the shifts in my own perception of experiences of homelessness, vulnerability, and trauma. Prior to conducting fieldwork, I had never been "allowed" to form community ties with other people who shared my experiences; the individuals my mother and I lived with at emergency shelters rarely spoke about the nuances of homelessness and life on the streets around me—I was a child at the time. My experience of homelessness outside our time at emergency shelters was of the "hidden" variety, which involved over a decade of staying in motels, couch surfing, staying with family, or sleeping in our car. This form of homelessness was alienating, and never provided me the opportunity to speak to other people in similar situations. I did not recognize the ways in which stories have efficacy in shaping experience and agency; I did not recognize immense power possessed by narratives to mobilize a community of activists to advocate for themselves.

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[9] Regna Darnell familiarized me with the importance and relevance of a well-selected story in making a point, and the phrase is attributed to Kenneth Burke in his article, "Four Master Tropes" (1941).

1.7   Framing Experience, Fieldwork, and Perception

Scattered throughout Anthropological works are stories of members of the communities we conduct research in mistaking our identities. Our positionality, experience, and *habitus* change the way we interact with the world, and the way that others perceive and interact with us. For Sharon Gmelch, who conducted fieldwork in Ireland with Traveller communities, it was being mistaken for a police officer researching a murder of a local man (2010). Other anthropologists have been mistaken for CIA agents, missionaries, or "misguided tourists". While I conducted fieldwork, I too felt the sting of having my actions and intentions misunderstood, though in a slightly different manner.

About one month into my fieldwork, I had scheduled a day with two back-to-back meetings. My first interview of the day was to take place at Family and Children's services; I was already nervous for the interview, because of my own experiences in foster care. Even walking into the building was a daunting task, though the glass doors and stern 90-degree angles of the foyer gave the same feel as any other government service building: not necessarily inviting, but certainly not harmless. I climbed the stairs to the lobby, and sat in the waiting room, imagining my mom sitting in a similar one over a decade ago, awaiting a meeting with our social worker where she would be told she was a neglectful, and unfit parent for not providing me with a home. Every time someone walked through the lobby, I could feel their eyes boring into me, wondering silently about what grave transgression I had made to end up in this room. After a while, I had to close my eyes and face the ground. I sat for a few more long minutes, hot and uncomfortable in my seat until my interviewee came to fetch me from the lobby.

The interview itself provided an interesting and engaging conversation, but I remained shaken from the stares in the lobby.

Not long after, I had another interview at the Social Assistance office—again located in an underwhelming government service building. Bundled up in the gaudy, red, yellow,

and turquoise ski jacket my mother's friend had given me from a shelter donation bin in preparation for my trip North, I stood inside the foyer of the building, trying to decipher the sign indicating which services and offices were on the building's upper floor, and which the lower. I walked through the glass doors, and into the lobby of the Social Assistance office: the intake staff sat behind a Plexiglas enclosed desk, as did the uniformed security guard, stationed on the opposite wall. The room smelled faintly like spilled liquor and bile. Two women also sat in the lobby, quietly engaged in conversation. The two staff members greeted me in a way that felt patronizing, gruff, and disdainful; it was clear my presence alone was an imposition. They asked me why I had come in, and I told them I had a meeting with Jeff, one of the Social Assistance team members. I was instructed to wait in the lobby while they checked in with him. Removing my objectively ugly jacket, black toque covered in pills, and massive backpack stuffed with fieldwork supplies, I sat down in the lobby. I caught the skewed glances and whispers of the staff behind the desk, as they un-subtly eyed my jeans, dress shirt and causal blazer. They called me over, with a demeanor that had completely shifted, and apologized: "we're so sorry about that, we thought you were meeting with Jeff T.," followed by, "you must be meeting with Jeff M.—he's upstairs". Smiling, they directed me politely and helpfully upstairs, where the administrative offices were located. It was incredibly hurtful to witness how the staff members' treatment of me completely changed as their perception of my identity changed.

These two interactions were notable for several reasons: on the one hand, I have found myself in many situations in the past in which I have felt smothered by the same oozing, choking tar of judgment. The feeling of desperate desire to sink into the floor never changes. Living with that sensation long-term shifts the way you feel about yourself—it makes you hyper-aware of how flaming hot your cheeks are with embarrassment, or how carrying your stuffed backpack and grocery bag on the bus makes you look, or even how greasy your hair is from not showering—even if the people around you do not notice. This constant, cloying self-awareness, and the elevated anxiety it produces in particular

spaces is perhaps the worst side effect of my childhood experience of homelessness. On the other hand, I cannot shake the fact that I am not alone in this experience. If I was made to feel this way by the people walking by in the Family and Children's services office, and by the Social Assistance intake staff, *others accessing these spaces are also made to feel this way.*

This conclusion is inescapable.

Yukon is known for its laidback approach to clothing—even in what I would consider relatively official meetings, professional attire in the Yukon is tenderly referred to as "Yukon Formal"—jeans and a nice shirt. I felt like I had been let in on a little secret when my friend (who works for the Yukon Government) told me to not bother packing anything too fancy for meetings and interviews. This made my fieldwork significantly easier, because I did not need to go out of my way to pack extra, unnecessary (and, in regards to the winter weather and my lack of a vehicle, somewhat foolish) dressy clothes. Was my perception of the situation at Social Assistance clouded by my own experiences? Or is "Yukon Formal" a joke that only *some* Yukoners are allowed in on by virtue of their social and economic position? The way my identity as a human being intersects with my position as an anthropologist-in-training matters—it fundamentally shapes the way I approach and perceive the work I produce. I spoke to a man named Gary, who is heavily involved in policy conversations in Whitehorse, and has also experienced homelessness. Upon traveling to Winnipeg for the 2017 Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness National Conference (to be discussed further in Chapter 3), he told me that it was difficult to prepare for the conference, because he had to find funding to purchase formal clothing (nice jeans and a plaid shirt—quintessential Yukon Formal). This barrier to access even

Yukon's comparatively *in*formal formal spaces is present, even though, as I will discuss throughout the thesis, there are many excellent examples of meaningful collaboration with people who have experiences of homelessness taking place there.

A group of researchers looking at homelessness among women in the 3 northern territories reported in a 2015 article that, of the 61 women they interviewed, many suggested they felt dehumanized or "low" when accessing various social services:

> Income Support and social services were identified as having policies that acted as barriers. Women wanted Income Support and related services to be more empathetic, helpful and understanding of individual circumstances…. Women [also] wanted more services to help them with their daily needs including public washrooms, phones, healthy food and transportation. (Schmidt, et al. 2015)

Their report also included poignant personal testimonies from the 61 women who were interviewed in the process of forming the report, and one quote stood out, while reflecting on my experiences even simply walking through the doors of these services: *"You feel belittled, right? And they make it difficult for you and they make you feel like shit for being there. They make you feel like you're taking their money"* (Schmidt, et al. 2015). Where is the room in policy creation to address situations like these? In *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life,* Erving Goffman suggests the following, in regards to judgment and pre-conceived notions:

> If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from his *[sic]* conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the ones before them or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him. (1990: 13)

These barriers to access spaces and services—the glances, the marks of difference in attire, the judgement that goes deeper, and is more historically and structurally rooted, than a training or sensitivity module can unsettle—form a complex meshwork that entangles and ensnares. Changing one, or even a series of policies cannot cut us all free from the trap in which we dwell—this change *must* coincide with other, broader shifts in how societies operate, and how governments govern that take seriously the patriarchal, colonial, and elegantly brutal currents undergirding bureaucratic structures that often escape with little blame.

Here lies the rub: I use this thesis to articulate my very complicated position—on the one hand, I argue for and explain why people—specifically women—who have experienced homelessness should be included in (or, be "at the table" for) policymaking or political conversations surrounding things that impact their communities, and have often had their voices and opinions side-lined due to stigma and the forced label of marginality (highlighting examples from my fieldwork where I see Yukon making meaningful efforts to grow and incorporate collaboration into its day-to-day practices). On the other hand, I use this thesis to examine the realization of my own traumatic experiences, and explore the personal difficulties I faced while engaging in the research and writing of this thesis. The way I understand the applicability and utility of narrative is through the relationship I have begun to build with my own experiences; so, while this work has been incredibly difficult at times, I also think there is a way for me to effect change with my voice and memories, for a community of which I am a part.

I often find the manner through which homelessness is discussed in academic and political contexts to be inadequate, lifeless, and—more often than not—pitying, rather

than empowering. The facts and details that make academic research what it is, as well as the candid view into the lives of others that makes books and photos compelling often increase the distance between the reader/viewer and the "homeless person" on the other side. This is not just a crisis of representation, but a crisis of community and public policy. What does it mean to say that there are 150,000-300,000 Canadians experiencing homelessness each year? Or that the 2016 Whitehorse Point-in-Time count recorded responses from 219 people identified to be "experiencing homelessness" in the city (Council of Yukon First Nations 2016)? How can such numbers be mobilized to effect change in Canadian communities? Though quantitative data is incredibly valuable in assessing the scope and severity of homelessness, lost in the details of government statistics are ways of bridging the gap between those in power to affect change and those who have the knowledge (through lived experience) to make that change successful— though many communities (Whitehorse included) are in the beginning stages of building such relationships.

1.8 Outline of Chapters

My thesis is inherently interdisciplinary, and as such, exists in an unconventional conceptual and theoretical space. Through the process of conducting fieldwork, and subsequently through composing this thesis, I hope (on both personal and academic levels) to make theoretical and methodological contributions to the disciplines that my work sits at the interstices of. By bringing my own embodied experiences and findings from my fieldwork together with theoretical academic literature and policy reports, I

hope to articulate a narrative that anthropologists, activists for women's homelessness, and policymakers can all find truck with.

In order to accomplish these goals, I spend the Second chapter locating my fieldwork geographically: I begin by exploring "the North" as a site of contested and conflicting identities, and the shift in perception I underwent as a southern Canadian person conducting fieldwork in a northern locale. I also discuss the context of housing in Whitehorse, parsing out (largely for the benefit of a southern Canadian readership) exactly how this case study of homelessness, housing policy, and gender is not only relevant, but deeply applicable to broader discourse surrounding these quintessentially "urban" themes. In this chapter, I dissect key dichotomies that kept recurring throughout my research: northern/southern, rural/urban, and homeless/housed.

In the Third chapter, I explore why anthropology is an effective lens through which to study policy. I explore overlaps and points of intersection that allow anthropological methodology (specifically ethnography) to exist in dialogue with policy research, creation, and implementation. To accomplish this, this chapter considers the movement to include people who have experienced homelessness in policy-related initiatives, and the Canadian Lived Experience Advisory Council.

Chapter Four seeks to explore the question, 'Can policy be feminist'? I consider the concepts of feminism, positionality, and bias in the context of bureaucracy, and discuss why gender was not a large part of the conversations I had during my fieldwork. In this chapter, I will draw from my own experiences, my interviews and participant observation, and works of feminist theory and research (including key studies conducted

"North of 60" on the topic of women's experiences of homelessness). This chapter also explores the history of social housing and housing policy in Canada, and weaves in aspects of the history of homelessness; moreover, (through feminist critical analysis) this chapter highlights spaces in this discourse where women's voices and experiences have been conspicuously excluded. Expanding on the topic of "Lived Experience", I frame this discussion in terms of feminist standpoint theory, intersectional feminist thought, and Donna Haraway's concept of "Situated Knowledges". I also discuss the realities of traumatic memory and fieldwork, and conclude by considering what it means to live in a "Cyborg" body.

I conclude this thesis by discussing the ongoing nature of this project, and the future directions I will explore during my PhD research.

Chapter 2

2   An 'Urban' Issue, and the Issue with 'Urban'

While conducting research in Whitehorse, I discovered that constructions of "urban" and "rural" spaces and identities were more relevant than I initially considered. What spurred my interest in rethinking "the Urban", was the following conundrum: homelessness is widely seen as a quintessentially *urban* issue, with homelessness occurring in forms outside of traditionally urban spaces only recently garnering greater attention. Most volumes I have encountered on "urban theory" or "urban anthropology" inevitably devote at least one chapter to homelessness. University of Calgary researchers Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff and Alina Turner posit that this is because "[understandings of, and approaches to homelessness] evolved in an urban context" (Waegemakers Schiff and Turner 2014). They question whether non-urban homelessness is gaining attention because: 1) homelessness is on the rise in non-urban contexts, 2) whether the different forms non-urban homelessness takes are beginning to gain visibility, or 3) whether both are occurring simultaneously. An aspect inherent to "the Urban" is that it is the de facto space in which policy, and key governing decisions, is made; the question of Whitehorse's identity at the nexus of urban, rural and northern spatial and social politics is an interesting one to consider—it is, after all, called the "Wilderness City". I began to notice trends in the interviews I was conducting in Whitehorse, where people used their perceptions of space (and of "northernness" in general), in interesting ways to convey their understandings of policy practices and responses to (as well as factors shaping) homelessness—both in terms of bridges *and* barriers. This chapter will draw on feminist

geography, urban theory, northern history, and policy literature in order to explore these concepts further.

2.1   The Wilderness City

Plate 1: Emerald Lake

 "Not immediately appealing, Whitehorse rewards the curious"…

… states the *Lonely Planet* guide to Whitehorse (Lonely Planet 2017). What an interesting method of "selling" the points of appeal for a potential travel destination! However, contained in this description are some of the defining tropes informing desires for "Canada's North": it hints that travellers have to be tough, seasoned "explorers" to

approach "the North"—this is a destination most "fear to tread"—and those who do venture to "the North" are rewarded with some abstract notion of riches, treasure, or adventure virtually unknown to others. As feminist cultural geographers Pritchard and Morgan explain, travel guides describe "Canada's North" as a "blank space" on the map—a space upon which a (largely white and male) audience can write their own adventures, hearkening back to Klondike times and the untold riches of the gold rush—à la Jack London (Pritchard and Morgan 2000). This imagined masculine, rugged, colonial landscape renders invisible the imagined social, private, and therefore feminine-coded realities of people living in "the North"—itself a constructed category[10]. Canada's North is not constructed as a place in which people *live*; rather, "The North" as a conceptual category has become a landscape where a nebulous and somewhat abstract collective Canadian identity from elsewhere is written into existence—something I am also complicit in.

Whitehorse's informal moniker is "The Wilderness City"—a deceptively simple title that demonstrates the two key aspects of the city's identity that it must constantly oscillate between: Whitehorse is at once an "Urban Centre", and a city that hawks itself to tourists with its stunningly "wild" vistas—neither facet being factually incorrect or unrealistic. The city center butts up against the Yukon River on one side, and is cleaved on the other by scraggly, green cliffs. Driving into town at sunrise from the Alaska Highway, a "rush minute" of cars descends into the misty basin at the foot of the surrounding mountain

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[10] The gendering of landscape is a useful and exceptionally relevant conceptual framework for discussing Whitehorse's popular appeal (and "the North" more broadly), but will not be explored at length here. For further reading, see Pritchard and Morgan (2000); Little (2002); and Massey (1994)

range—illuminated in equal parts by the pinky-oranges of the cresting sun, and the brake lights of the vehicles ahead. This juxtaposition of two tropes that could not be more at-odds results in an interesting tension; "The Wild" is everything "The City" is not, but somehow, both exist together in Whitehorse as a harmonious crossing, or as if "The Wild" swallowed "The City" whole—even though, as Whitehorse News reporter Keith Halliday articulates:

> If you look at Google Earth's nifty time-lapse satellite imagery from 1984 to today, you see the city steadily expanding, eating away at the green on the screen. It's like a strangely unstoppable alien blob, relentlessly blotting out the hapless spruce trees in its path[…]
>
> […]Areas such as Marwell, McCrae and the airport business zone all show steady infill and expansion. New access roads creep into the forest like tendrils. Zooming in on downtown reveals lots of new construction, particularly at the north end around Shipyards Park and the condos behind Boston Pizza. The dump oozes outwards as forest disappears. Even the residents of the cemetery needed more space. (Halliday 2018)

Many Whitehorsians describe the urbanization, development, and expansion of Whitehorse (in a reality voiced by Halliday, and echoed by folks who participated in my research)–they reference new developments, housing projects, and infrastructure. The romantic Southern ideal of "the North" leaves no room for the runoff, the dust, or the detritus of cities—the unavoidable consequence of the presence of human bodies and complexities.

Plate 2: Icy Bridge

In a series of interviews published in 2003, anthropologist and historian James Clifford[11] describes disciplinary borders that anthropology fights to wrestle back ground from: one of these contested boundaries is that where anthropology edges onto the terrain of "travel writing". On this topic, Clifford suggests the following:

> What's thrown out of travel and travel writing is, of course, the "literary," and with it the "subjective." Literary representation is personal, embodied, rhetorical.

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[11] I enjoy this excerpt from Clifford on the basis that his work influenced the trajectory of my writing in the early stages of developing this thesis. I appreciate the way Clifford has articulated these thoughts regarding embodiment, discomfort, and self in the context of fieldwork, though I recognize there are other academics whose work would also have fit well here.

It's that place where people talk about their feelings; they use the first person singular a lot; their bodies are visible, present. Think of all the discomforts, the sensual perceptions of the traveler—very different from those of the field worker, who in the classic ethnographies becomes invisible in the text, at least after the preface… All these trends can be understood as a return of that expelled "travel writer". (2003:11)

Upon returning to Ontario, I realized I had not taken pictures of the "city" parts of Whitehorse, only the "wild" that accompanies them. I recognize that for this, I am complicit in the propagation of tropes that overwhelm the southern Canadian imagination of "the North". One only has to look as far as my Instagram to see evidence of this. I walked everywhere in the city during my fieldwork. My post-interview shaky hands almost never left my mittens as I scurried between buildings throughout my days. I have little evidence of the "city" of which I speak—the one that my research is oriented around. Instead, I took pictures of the landscape around it when I had the occasion to go on hikes with friends, or the shots I snapped when I walked half an hour to the edge of town to take a picture of steam rising off of the Yukon River in the chilly winter air. I felt compelled to demonstrate that I had travelled somewhere beautiful, and somewhere rugged. My southern eye, and southern desires frame the photographs I include in this chapter.

Plate 3: S.S. Klondike at Dawn

Italo Calvino, in *Invisible Cities*, demonstrates the ways in which multiple meanings and relations can be mapped across the surface of one city (1972). In the book, Marco Polo[12] weaves elaborate tales of all the cities in the empire of Kublai Khan: "however the city may really be, beneath this thick coating of signs, whatever it may contain or conceal, you leave Tamara without having discovered it (14)," or, "it is the mood of the beholder which gives the city of Zemrude its form (66)" (1972). One realizes partway through the book, however, that Marco Polo speaks only of one city—his home, Venice. Each silver-

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[12] As discussed in Section 1.5, Mosquera's *Marco Polo Syndrome*—the romanticization of Eurocentric, imperialist narratives and aesthetics—is ever-present within Calvino's work.

tongued description distorts different elements or different ways of looking at the same space, but none are incorrect or invalid. Much like Polo's Venices, multiple Whitehorses exist as well. There exists a Whitehorse of excess, luxury, and shops stuffed with artisan treasures; reflected in this Whitehorse is its foil—where tight-lipped social workers watch on as a soon-to-be-homeless person vacates a unit they can no longer afford. Mirrored in the metropolitan, "Yuppie" Whitehorse—where I stumbled across an art gallery opening and had glasses of Cabernet Sauvignon thrust into my bewildered hand—the "Wilderness City" stares back.

Plate 4: Jeep Hood Reflections

2.2 The North in Popular (Southern) Conception

I was curious about the types of images and results that would populate a Google search of "Northern Canada", so I performed one. "The Canada Guide"—the first source after Wikipedia that comes up—suggests that anything above the 60th parallel is a barren wasteland: "'habitable' remains very much in the eye of the beholder"— it states, referring to even the three northern capital cities (Whitehorse, Yellowknife, and Iqaluit) (McCullough 2018). The guide leads with the following statement, hinting at tropes that define "The North" in southern Canada's collective consciousness:

> Small in population, mostly weak economically and often unbearable in weather, Canada's three northern territories are among the most isolated parts of the country, and are easily ignored by all but those who live there. For those tough enough to do so, however, northern living can be a source of great pride — a symbol of man's ability to overcome some of nature's harshest terrain in the pursuit of a traditional pioneer lifestyle a small number of Canadians have enjoyed for centuries. (McCullough 2018).

Here the masculine, colonial "pioneer" spirit is glorified—"the North" is predictable in its unpredictability; woven into this narrative is the meritocratic ethos of "pull yourself up by your bootstraps"—shades of which are present in this excerpt. The fourth link, after Wikipedia, "The Canada Guide", and Wikivoyage is "The Canadian Encyclopedia". This source, funded by the Canadian Government (and produced by Historica Canada—the same organization that created "Heritage Minutes", a documentary series spanning 1991-present day featuring 60-second films about Canadian history), is packaged in a significantly less sensational and aggressively dismissive form than The Canada Guide, but still approaches "The North" as an unknown and foreboding expanse of land. At one

point, it describes government workers in the territories as "likely to regard their service in the North as a tour of duty limited to a few years"—as though living and working there is somehow equivalent to military service (Bayly 2006). This entry begins by stating:

> In strictly geographic terms, the North refers to the immense hinterland of Canada that lies beyond the narrow strip of the country in which most Canadians live and work, but generally refers to the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and Nunavut (Bayly 2006)

This quote is accompanied by a map of Canada, demonstrating the country's regional "nordicity"—or, degree of "northerness"—a term coined by geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin in the 1970s (Graham 1990). (see figure 1).
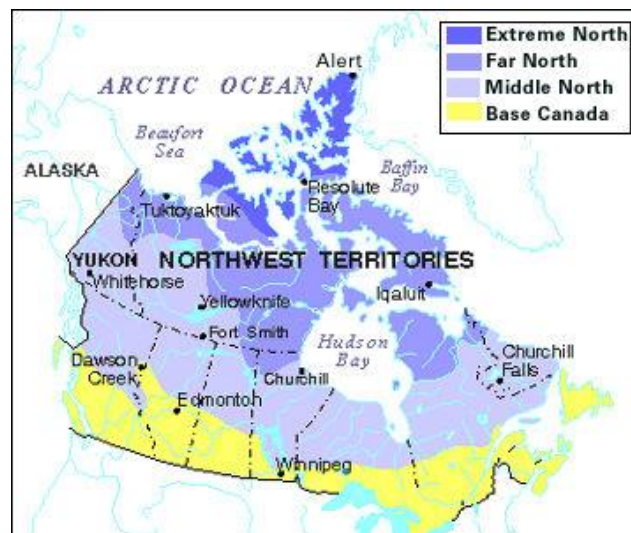
Figure 1: "Nordicity Map" **(Bayly 2006)**

Nordicity is not a fixed category, but rather a flexible and contextual one. Hamelin, through his work, explored not only the environmental realities of being "Nordic", but also the sociological ones: physical climate, level of permafrost or types of ice present,

road access, access to amenities; all inform a population center's "VAPO"[13] (Graham 1990). His work continues to be used to determine tax rates and government "isolation" pay rates throughout Canada's provincial and territorial norths. Together, these factors form the contingent and evolving reality of northern life.

The final paragraph of this entry reads:

> Progress tends to be equated only with industrial and technological advancement. Ultimately the form that northern development takes - political, social and economic - will reflect the beliefs that Canadians hold about the kind of society they want to build. In the North, however, the questions beneath the surface of our national life cannot be avoided. For many Canadians these questions make the North not simply a geographical area but a state of consciousness (Bayly 2006).

This sense of Canadian-ness is betrayed by the tensions that exist between the perceived southern 'self' and northern 'other'; the landmass "north of 60" itself existing as a conceptual *Terra Nullius*—the lives and realities of people living there are subsequently rendered silent.

2.3   Competing "Norths"

Whitehorse's inconvenient urban-ness, to a Southern Canadian audience, is often overwritten with the trope of the "wild North": as a spatial and conceptual category, "the

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[13] VAPO, or *Valeurs polaires,* refers to the "polar value" Hamelin would assign to northern spaces based on 10 pre-determined criteria. VAPO scores range from 200 to a maximum value of 1000, the highest of which would be given to the North Pole (Graham 1990). For a further analysis of this concept, I would recommend Graham (1990).

North" is a place of vast wilderness, sub-zero temperatures, and "*remote*"[14] population clusters. Whitehorse provides an interesting case for this reason—it is a large, urban center—for all intents and purposes, the largest city "north of 60"—but it also is often overlooked, or lumped into the homogenizing and totalizing category of "northern", within which it is further subsumed by "rural". Yukon Territory is home to over 37,000 people, with (depending on where one draws the line for the city's edge) 29,000 in Whitehorse alone (Yukon Government 2016). As noted in Keith Halliday's remarks above, the population of the Yukon has experienced significant growth since the 1980s (though less in the towns and communities outside of Whitehorse) (Halliday 2018). To southerners outside of Whitehorse, it seems as though the city of which they speak is not the contemporary, cosmopolitan city boasting attractive features and fixtures that I visited. Gerardo Mosquera (quoted in Chapter 1), describes this as further evidence of the "Marco Polo Syndrome", explaining:

> Ethnocentrism always suggests the naive vanity of a villager who… assumes that "the whole world is his *[sic]* village", believing everything originated there even if it were imposed on him through conquest. Eurocentrism is the only ethnocentrism universalised through actual world-wide domination by a metaculture, and based on a traumatic transformation of the world through economic, social and political processes centred in one small part of it. (Mosquera 1992: 36)

The idealized images of northern Canada originate "from somewhere"—existing in a spatial and temporal state that is "radically historically specific" (Haraway 2004: 67). In

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[14] I take up the use of this word critically in sections 2.4 and 2.5, and use it here only to highlight the salience of this problematic and "loaded" term within southern discourse surrounding "the North".

this context, the notion of "northern" as a bounded and discrete conceptual category must do a great deal of work to retain its structure, while "urban" and "rural" do not face the same pressures. Nature exists at the bounded edge of "The Urban", but instead of "us" being afraid of the dark woods looming, perhaps the woods quake in fear of "us".

Heightened pressures to fit contradictory southern expectations do not end at the *concept* of "the North"—these ruptures and intensities have implications (policy and otherwise) across the territorial and provincial "norths". For example, in reading historian Michel Beaulieu's paper, *A Historic Overview of Policies Affecting Non-Aboriginal Development in Northwestern Ontario, 1900-1990*, I discovered that the divergent and various definitions or associations surrounding "the North" present in interviews I conducted in Whitehorse *also* exist in notions of "the North" as they appear in other parts of Canada (2013). In the paper, he explains that "State policies towards the northwest have not only reinforced a hinterland-metropolis relationship…and a sense of alienation; they have also been adversarial, and steeped in attitudes of colonialism that regional concerns are secondary" (2013: 94). One interviewee chuckled as he related to me the almost allegorical history of Dawson City architecture—Dawson being the second-largest Yukon municipality, with 1319 residents (Yukon Government 2014): he shared his bitter amusement about the impact of melting permafrost on the foundations of Dawson's buildings—many of which are now slanted, due to the newly malleable ground on which they sit. Cole, the interviewee, likened this to other instances of southern practices and approaches being downloaded onto northern locales—with disastrous results. Beaulieu outlines similar instances in regards to northern Ontario policymaking: "When policy did

move beyond resource extraction… systems were imposed…that might have worked for southern Ontario but [were] wholly unsuited for the north" (2013: 96)

Kenneth Coates, geographer, northern historian, and himself a northerner, suggests the following in regards to southern Canadians' awareness of northern spaces and peoples:

> A few hardy promoter-adventurers like Vilhjalmer Stefansson and Farley Mowat have been drawn to the northern environment, and, upon returning south, have popularized their visions of the region. Such visionaries, more romantics than pragmatists, remain propagators of an ideal that Canadians pay homage to, then consciously reject. (Coates 1985: 12)

Beaulieu and Coates both describe instances where the power dynamics present in the very real categories of North/South, and urban/rural come crashing together—though these realities are often defined by a Southern-centered audience. On this, Beaulieu says, "The relationship between the various "Norths" of Ontario and the provincial government seated in Toronto has been defined in numerous ways by those living in the "North" and the "South" (2013: 95).
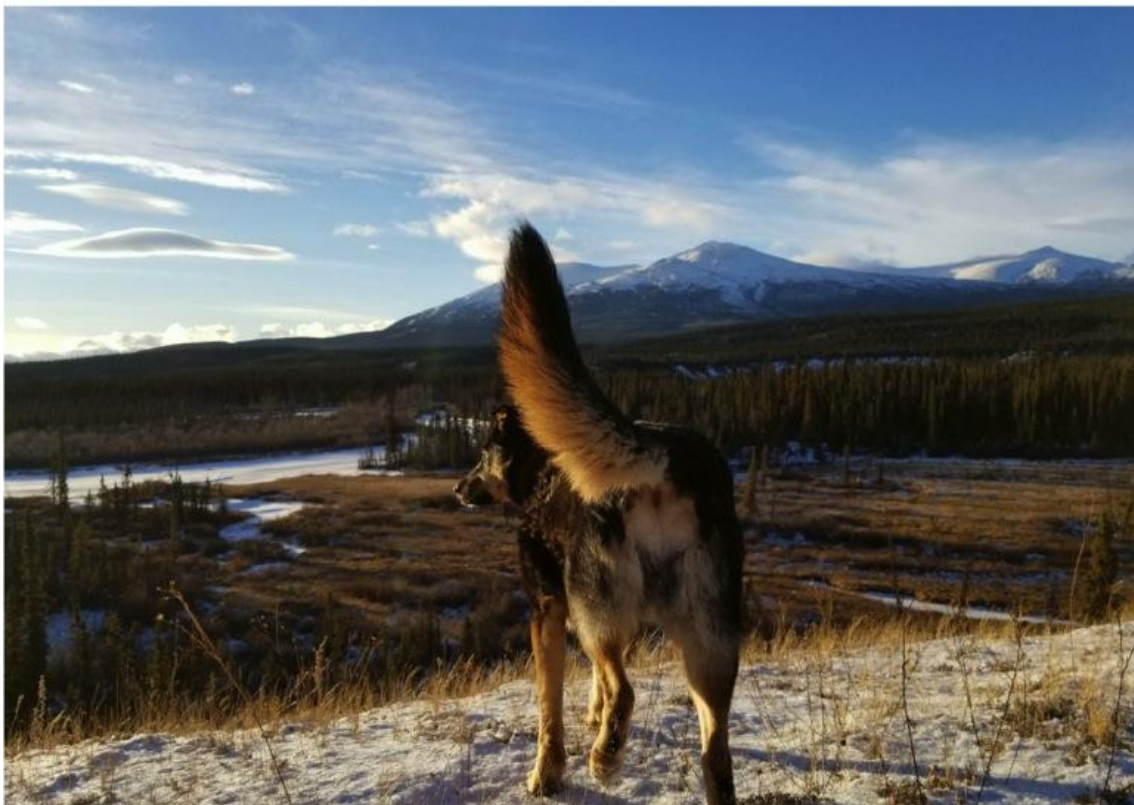
Plate 5: Down the Alaska Highway

This imagined rural/urban dichotomy impedes understanding fluxes, flows, and on-the-ground realities in both rural and urban spaces; these two main modes of demarcating known spaces exist in tense relation to each other, tied together in fractious and uncomfortable ways. Urban theorists have begun to consider the ways in which this traditional binary construction is problematic, and impedes proper understanding of regional relations; they suggest that rather than thinking of urban and rural as perfectly bounded and discrete entities, urban and rural spaces instead exist on a continuum. As is articulated in the University of Calgary study cited above, how one uses and defines the concept of "urban" depends largely on context—not only do the goals of the individual writer matter a great deal, but so too does the location from which they write. Statistics

Canada, for example, no longer uses the term "urban", abandoning it in favour of "small, medium, or large-scale population centre" (Statistics Canada 2016). Though Statistics Canada adopted this new standard of classification of urban and rural spaces officially in January 2017, they also explain that how these terms are applied is highly contextual—intuitively, "urban" is understood to reflect a large number of people living in high concentration, whereas "rural" indicates a space of much lower density. This seemingly straightforward breakdown is complicated when it intersects with other social and political factors.

2.4   "The Trouble with Remoteness"

As someone who grew up in southern-Canada, I knew very little about what Whitehorse and Canada's North were *actually* like prior to heading "North of 60" for fieldwork. How can you *know* a place you have never been, but have been taught to simultaneously fear and marvel at for your entire life? My exposure to romantic notions of the "bleak", "wild", and "dangerous" north came from depictions in T.V. shows, books, and movies; one of my childhood favourites was (I now see as an adult) a problematic, wildly colonial Canadian production called *Yvon of the Yukon*, in which a cartoon French sailor (Yvon), sets his imperialist sights on conquering new lands on edict from King Louis. He ends up in a fictional Yukon town called "Upyermukluk"—the show writers drawing on uncritical and stereotypical representations of Indigenous peoples to populate it. Many Canadian children grew up watching the program, which ran from 1999-2003 (Studio B Productions; Corus Entertainment; Alliance Atlantis Communications 1999). Revisiting the show as an adult, Upyermukluk is intended to represent a far smaller and more

northern Yukon locale than Whitehorse; Upyermukluk, however, acts as a synecdoche, standing in for the entire (very large) landmass "North of 60". Popular culture and media paints a picture for consumers—the bulk of whom reside in southern Canada—of a large, desolate void, where either very bad things happen, or very unimportant and irrelevant things happen.

There is something disquieting about the way "the North" is cast as something monolithic, foreign, and (most troubling of all) "remote"—a pattern in which *Yvon* is but one example. In a 2016 article entitled, "The Trouble With Remoteness", Roger Epp explores this phenomenon in the context of reporting on school shootings in La Loche (Northern Saskatchewan), and youth suicides in Attawapiskat (Northern Ontario). Epp argues that casting a locale as "remote" —to describe *physical* distance between *places*— becomes a way to describe *social* distance between *people*. Epp goes on to argue that alongside the label of "remote" comes "dangerous" and "uninhabitable", and these places become zones where it is unthinkable to raise a child, or where residents are seen as victims (worse yet, victims who deserve what happens to them in times of crisis or need) (2016). In the article, Epp describes the treatment of these two towns by urban, southern Canadian reporters:

> In each case, the spotlight was brief, and the solutions seemingly as elusive as the situations were urgent. Communities with complex histories and power structures were introduced by single adjectives: "isolated" or, more often, "remote." As if those words explained almost everything. The pathological treatments of remoteness quickly followed. (Epp 2016)

Epp follows this by explaining, "remoteness can be experienced as isolation, even as a trap; but it can also be a preference—a home" (2016).

Spaces thought of as being remote or "blank" are certainly not so for people who live there—one's home is the center of the world, though not every person has the power to define it as such: these inequalities fall along fault lines of race, class, and gender. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey, in *Space, Place and, Gender*, argues,

> The spaces of modernism which are most celebrated are the public spaces of the city…The spatial and social reorganization, and flourishing, of urban life was an essential condition for the birth of the new era. But the city was also gendered… in ways which relate directly to spatial organization. The public city which is celebrated [as the] dawn of modernism was a city for men. (1994: 233)

It seems, however, that "the public city" is limiting not just in terms of the people it allows to move freely within its boundaries… It is also limiting in terms of what spaces can be said to have acquired the trappings of "modernity"—cities existing in Northern spaces are routinely denied this capacity.

I realize that Whitehorse (and Yukon Territory, more broadly) is not a place that everybody "knows". I am regularly met with quizzical or puzzled responses when I say that my research is on homelessness, housing policy, and gender *in Whitehorse*. It is the last part that really seems to throw people off just as if I had said "on Mars". Though most of my colleagues in the Anthropology department chose to conduct research abroad (I have friends working in Peru, Madagascar, Kenya, Cuba, Mauritius, etc), one curious person spluttered, "but why did you go so *far*?".

Kenneth Coates, quoting the late premier of B.C., posits: "in 1903, British Columbia Premier E. Prior noted, 'Victoria is 3,000 miles from Ottawa whereas Ottawa is 30,000 miles from Victoria.' This attitude applies equally today in the Canadian North" (1985).

On several occasions, since returning back to Southern Ontario from fieldwork, I have been asked to explain how someone could be homeless in the North: "it's so cold there," people remark with incredulity, "why don't they [*read: "the homeless"*] leave?", or, "how does homelessness *work* up there"? Underlying these questions is an implicit accusation, and the same argument posed in "The Trouble with Remoteness". People who know what urban, Southern Canadian homelessness looks like have a hard time reconciling that image with their notions of "the North".

After returning from fieldwork, I was doing some online research on a database that collects and makes available resources, research, and information regarding homelessness in Canada. In one recent post, a researcher was posting her responses to questions submitted on the database's question form. I immediately recognized someone whose question was being answered as one of the people who participated in this research. The question he had posed, however, surprised me: he asked, "Is there any qualitative research available on homelessness in Yukon?". The reason I was taken aback by this question was that he, alongside his hardworking colleagues, has produced a great deal of excellent qualitative research (*and* quantitative research) on homelessness in the territory. Though I can never be certain of the motivation behind this question, it seems to me that reflected in this query is the internalization of the narrative that has been sold regarding "the North"—where validation comes from Southern Canadian recognition or contributions. This tension was reflected in many conversations I was a part of in Whitehorse: there are many progressive and thoughtful approaches to not just homelessness, but policy in general taking root in Whitehorse today.

2.5   Indigenous Homelessness and Northern Canada

Considering these factors, the following question still remains: how do I presume to make a study, based in a smaller-sized urban center, generalizable to other places and communities? I argue that the ways in which images and notions of "the North" are constructed keep a Southern Canadian audience largely unaware of the applicability of a case study that takes place in a northern urban center—especially one deemed to be "remote". Roger Epp elaborates on this notion by stating, "[the word remote is sometimes] invoked either in place of, or together with, other words like reserve or First Nations or Indigenous. As a substitute, remote sometimes serves as polite, non-racialized code for ideas too raw for public discourse. Better to talk about *remote* communities. *We know what that means*" (Epp 2016).

Further, migration from "remote" places is often framed as a vast escape from rural spaces to "the city". Much like cities in the south, Northern cities experience population inflows *and* outflows: people from small communities outside Whitehorse move back and forth from their home communities regularly. Epp tersely describes this framing by southern audiences: "from this perspective, living in a remote community is not only proof of an unwillingness to confront root problems; it is the root problem. Short of out-migration, there can be no brighter future" (Epp 2016).

Social Geographer Julia Christensen explores this idea as it exists in Northwest Territories: in *No Home in a Homeland,* Christensen discusses the complex realities of Indigenous peoples who are experiencing homelessness in Northwest Territories (2017). On urban migration, Christensen notes, "remoteness, however, although manifest in the distance between communities, is also a social construct given that physical distances are

reinforced by social policy that emphasizes urban life and locale" (2017: 42). In regards to Indigenous homelessness, Christensen frequently deploys the concept of 'uneven geographies' that reflect "layers of social, economic, and infrastructural unevenness that shape northern geographies of homelessness" (2017: 42). This unevenness undergirds experiences of homelessness for Indigenous peoples in southern Canada as well: I was fortunate to meet Indigenous historian Jessie Thistle in October, 2017, and to hear him speak about the new Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada—which Thistle authored (Thistle 2017). This definition fills in some of the context neglected by other studies on Canadian homelessness: in it, he discusses the profound and ongoing impact that colonization and the subsequent displacement from land, community, and culture have had on Indigenous peoples:

> Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families, and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships. (Thistle 2017)

Directly confronting systems, structures, and institutions that interact to create the issue of homelessness faced by Canadians is not a common approach. Though understandings of homelessness have shifted significantly from the 1980s and 90's victim-blaming pattern, rooting the cause of homelessness squarely in individual pathology, I still find subtle shades of these judgments in contemporary literature on homelessness. For instance, many of the profiles or portraits of people experiencing homelessness that

appear in reports or documents on homelessness are framed as though pure tragedy is inseparable from those experiences or identities: being a struggling single mother, a veteran, a child coming out of foster care, experiencing mental health issues, or surviving childhood sexual assault are not explanatory devices for one's homelessness—because all of these adjectives are meant to provide metonymic evidence of one's "pathway" to homelessness. An array of "isms" escape unobserved—sexism, racism, colonialism, ageism, ableism, neoliberalism, paternalism—these institutions appear less often as paving stones on the "pathway" than corresponding individual identity markers. It is much "simpler", for example, to provide trauma therapy to a former foster child than to fix a flawed system resulting in millions of apprehended children in the nebulous space of child welfare and the fractured families it leaves in its wake.

2.6   Misconceptions

As someone who grew up firmly in Southern Canadian cities, my understanding of Northern Canadian realities was limited. Prior to leaving for Whitehorse, I was told (by other southerners) that it would be incredibly cold in Whitehorse, and to make sure I was eating fruits and vegetables (which I was told would be difficult to access); I even brought a box of gluten free granola bars, in case I could not find items to accommodate for my food allergy. Also on my list of uncertainties were such wonders as: will I experience 24 hours of darkness as we near the solstice? (No, because Whitehorse is not far enough north for the sun to not rise at least partially during the winter—on the shortest day of the year, Whitehorse averages about five and a half hours of sunlight); and, will I have access to Wi-Fi while in Whitehorse? (Yes). As soon as I verbalized

these questions, I felt quite silly—but think it is worthwhile to keep in mind that a time existed where I did not have such answers.

Plate 6: Evening Hike

Towards the beginning of my field research, I was fortunate enough to attend a housing meeting with representatives from NGOs, territorial, First Nations, and municipal governments, as well as local industry leaders. At this meeting, some of the key housing issues plaguing Whitehorse were considered; what was interesting, however, was that this was not exclusively a *housing* meeting—the web of what was to be considered a *housing* issue was exceptionally broad. In this meeting, and in subsequent meetings of the same individuals, we discussed the fact that money directed from health into housing would

benefit not only housing, but also health; we considered the impact of Marijuana legalization on housing legislation; on addictions and wraparound Housing First services; on how housing professional employees in Yukon communities outside of Whitehorse was perceived by community members living in housing need; of sending permanent mental healthcare workers to communities; of zoning and building restrictions and future housing projects in the area to provide the housing *supply* for Whitehorse's skyrocketing housing *demands*. Whitehorse, I was told, is investing considerable time and effort in addressing what I refer to as an "ecology of needs" for those living in housing insecurity, or interacting in some way with Yukon Housing Corporation. This "ecology" lies in opposition to models traditionally used in providing care and services to those experiencing homelessness, involving addressing peoples' needs in isolation from one another (i.e. requiring mental health treatment prior being allowed to access housing), as well as not allowing people to actively choose the services they receive.

Many of the conversations I found myself a part of during my fieldwork revolved around Yukoners experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness. In Whitehorse, I heard this "ecology of needs" as faced by housing insecure individuals variously called "Housing First with Supports", "Housing with Wraparound Services", and the "'Every Door is the Right Door' approach". All of these terms represent an effort to meet a Housing First[15] mandate, while simultaneously meeting the complex and oftentimes multiple needs of individuals needing to access housing. HF is a popular and widespread approach to homelessness that has 5 key components:

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[15] Hereinafter HF

1. Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements

2. Consumer choice and self-determination

3. Recovery Orientation

4. Individualized and client-driven supports

5. Social and community integration   (Homeless Hub 2017)

HF models have been criticized by service providers, advocacy groups and academics for the way they approach homelessness as though it exists in a vacuum, separate from other issues; HF with Supports has often posed the answer:

The key tenets of HF do appear to be progressive, and they address *individual agency and autonomy* and the issue of chronic homelessness—something that has gone long ignored. HF, however, has been linked to higher rates of depression and suicide among those housed, as well as higher rates of overdose in those who inject drugs intravenously; isolation from communities, friends, and families has a serious impact on overall health and wellbeing (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009: 312). HF proponents met these very real criticisms with the "HF with Supports" model[16]. This is the form of HF being discussed in Whitehorse, where services and support, as requested by the individual being housed,

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[16] Many critics of HF practices neglect to mention the gendered realities of support through HF programs: as Heffernan, Todorow, and Luu articulate, "The 100,000 Homes Campaign in the United States, based on a Housing First model, serves as a cautionary tale. The program housed 105,000 people. It was deemed a resounding success but here's the problem: of the people housed, 80 per cent were men. No new affordable housing was built" (2015). In future research, I intend to build my understanding the HF with supports model in Whitehorse as it relates to gendered experiences.

are provided in tandem with housing that meets the HF requirements identified above (Smith and Doberstein 2015).

Researchers at the University of Calgary released a report outlining and exploring approaches to rural homelessness and implementing HF initiatives in non-urban spaces. In this report, issues of rural and urban distinctions became quite apparent. Though the researchers made efforts to explain that their data was not only preliminary and based on data collected from one interview conducted in each of the 22 rural centers described. They are clear to address the need for further research to be conducted on homelessness in this context. Included in this report, is information from an interview done with *one person in Whitehorse.* No contextualizing information is given about the interviewees from the study, though the authors say, "Most participants in the study worked in non-profit or government positions in the homelessness or broader social services sector, or volunteer leaders, often from faith communities," followed by "this study relied on one interview per community, which may have lead to individual reporting bias and thus potentially skew findings" (Waegemakers Schiff and Turner 2014). It is almost inevitable that I would have interviewed the one representative the authors included from Whitehorse during my fieldwork. Problematically, the positionality of the one person interviewed matters a great deal when considering what the "main issues" involved in HF feasibility are in a given community. It would be absurd to think that one person doing work in Toronto, Vancouver, or even London would be able to relay the "main issues" regarding homelessness and HF in their city—so why are these "non-urban" population centers (themselves products of complex contexts and histories) not allowed the same nuance? Unsurprisingly, gender is not a key point of consideration throughout this report,

aside from a handful of glancing remarks regarding "women and children fleeing violence". The report also mentions "in *remote and Northern*[17] communities, economic growth strained housing stock even further because of the severe lack of available housing in such areas as Old Crow, Iqualiut, Yellowknife, and Whitehorse" (Waegemakers Schiff and Turner 2014). Old Crow, a Yukon community of 245 residents, does not experience the same realities as Whitehorse simply by virtue of being "*remote and northern*"—though, as was explained earlier, I would speculate that the two communities would not garner the same "VAPO" score (Yukon Government 2014). Joan Scott, in an often-cited article entitled "The Evidence of Experience", suggests that the danger present within privileging the experience of one person (as self-referential Truth) can obscure or essentialize the experiences of the entire group to which that person is seen to belong (Scott 1991).

2.7   A Housing Action Plan

In September 2017, the long awaited Housing Action Plan for Whitehorse was released. During a meeting regarding the implementation of the action plan, a question was posed that I heard on several occasions throughout my time in Whitehorse—is Yukon a totally unique case, requiring totally unique political and social approaches, or are "we" (those in charge of making policy decisions) reinventing the wheel by touting Yukon exceptionalism? I doubt that a firm answer to this question will ever be discovered,

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[17] Emphasis mine

because both situations apply simultaneously. Like any other province or territory, local political, historical, social, and economic realities make everyday life and politics look slightly different, while still operating under federal guiding legislations.

Plate 7: Fish Lake

Chapter 3

3   Regulating Bodies and Metaphors of Public Discourse

Anthropologists have long conducted research in the field of public policy; they study power dynamics, state governance, political discourse—any and every aspect related to the making, implementing, or revising of policy. Alternatively, Anthropology also provides a handy mechanism with which to study positionality, experience, and subjectivity—ours is a discipline based upon recognizing the power of situated knowledges, understandings, and narratives. Through conducting my own research at the intersection of several distinct and seemingly disparate fields of study, this chapter explores the interesting places in which policy, narrative, and anthropology can inform one another, and where their key methods and metaphors overlap.

3.1 Narrative and Policy Work

> The present is not a static moment, but a mass of different combinations of past and present relations. To say I perceive them as a whole means that I see them surrounded by their whole lives, within the context of a complete narrative having a beginning that precedes our encounter and an end that follows it. I see others as bathed in the light of their whole biography.
>
> *Dialogism*, Michael Holquist: 37

> I wish to apologize no longer for using my self as an instrument of perception in the practice of my discipline
>
> *Anthropological Poetics*, Regna Darnell: 277

It was late September when I arrived on my Air North flight to Whitehorse; I arrived just in time for the 13th Annual Poverty and Homelessness Action Week[18], as well as the tail end of the Yukon Government's budget advisory sessions for the newly elected (as of November, 2016) government's upcoming years in office. My timing could not have been better, as the theme of this year's PHAW was "sharing stories" in recognition of their power and efficacy in changing minds, changing discourse, and changing policy. PHAW consists of a week of "activities sponsored by a wide cross-section of organizations, individuals, businesses, churches, schools, and media" (Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition 2017). I attended and participated in *every* activity, including a handful of events where I was the only attendee (aside from event organizers, and regular service users). One day—on International Day for the Eradication of Poverty—this participation involved campaigning for "Chew on This", a day of starting conversations and handing out petition cards for Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos to ask for a "rights-based poverty strategy" that addresses income, employment *and* food security, as well as healthcare, housing, and early childhood education—all inherently tied up in ending poverty (Dignity for All 2017). Several of us marched around downtown during lunch hour, handing out brown paper bags with an apple and a petition card to passersby, outside of the Elijah Smith government building. Another day, I crewed the clothing donation area for Whitehorse Connects—a semi-annual event where marginalized Whitehorsians can come to one location in order to access a variety of services, including obtaining legal assistance, using the internet, eating a hot meal,

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[18] Hereinafter PHAW, a weeklong Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition initiative, brings together a wide cross-section of the Whitehorse community to participate in events and the provision of services to raise awareness and provide services to those experiencing homelessness and/or poverty in the city.

listening to live music, finding new clothing, getting foot care, or having a haircut. Towards the end of the week, I participated in a round of "housing trivia", in which the other participants were clients of the organization hosting the event. Alongside questions regarding tenant rights and responsibilities in the newly updated Yukon Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, there was one question that stood out to me: the question listed an assortment of housing situations, asking us to identify which forms of accommodation are considered "homelessness". The other trivia participants (some of whom were experiencing housing insecurity themselves) quickly identified things like "sleeping rough outside", or "sleeping in a bike locker" as homelessness, but did not immediately say the same about "living in overcrowded housing with family" or "couch surfing" as also being recognized forms of homelessness. These forms of homelessness are often referred to as "hidden homelessness"[19], and occupy an end of the continuum of homelessness that is burgeoning in terms of current literature and research. Many individuals who live in "hidden homelessness" do not recognize or publically acknowledge that they have, in fact, experienced homelessness; they may say that they have "fallen on hard times", or that they need to "get back on their feet", but might not necessarily apply the label to themselves. This invisibility, as described in a Rural Ontario Institute Report on Homelessness, is the result of multiple, intersecting factors: respondents to their 2017 survey suggested that hidden homelessness is invisible because

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[19] Hidden homelessness refers to living situations that exist outside circumstances traditionally associated with homelessness: as stated above, this could include staying in overcrowded conditions, staying with friends and family, or couch surfing. Though these living situations can be experienced by anybody, hidden homelessness falls along gendered dimensions; these are forms that women's homelessness is more likely to take. I will explore hidden homelessness further in chapter 4, but I would recommend reading the three reports on Women's Homelessness from northern Canada described there.

people do not access services, do not define themselves as homeless, services do not meet their needs, they are not seen by others as homeless, or are not deemed eligible for services (Kauppi, et al. 2017: 50). There is a significant gap between the academic and advocacy work that is being done on hidden homelessness, and the people who experience it—and I say this as someone who existed in that gap for many years. How can you fix an invisible problem?

I understand what it means to not know how to explain your living situation. For most of my life, my experience of homelessness was so "hidden" I did not even know I was experiencing it. I considered myself to have "been homeless" three times in my life— twice when my mother and I stayed in emergency shelters, and once when we slept in our car, having no place else to turn. It was only within the last two or three years that I came to recognize that the rest of my childhood was also spent homeless; we rotated between renting a home, staying in the spare bedrooms or on the couches of friends and family, or living in motels. The frequency with which we rotated through these stages increased and decreased, but moves were always inevitable and disorienting. I did not have a name for the way my family lived, but I would beg my mom for us to just stay in one place: I did not realize that there were structural reasons why we could not. These inherently tenuous and temporary ways in which we found ourselves housed all fall along what I now recognize as the "hidden" end of the continuum of homelessness.

The "hidden" nature of these forms of homelessness renders the experiences of those living this reality invisible in multiple ways; first, there is no physical, visible presence of these individuals in public and obvious ways—they are less likely to access social services than those experiencing "visible" homelessness, as well as by virtue of the places in which they live: in motels, in temporary or overcrowded accommodations, with friends and family, for example. Second, the experiences and stories of those experiencing "hidden" homelessness have largely been left out of studies on homelessness: it is hard to

quantify, hard to spot, and even harder to solve. People are less likely to apply the label of "homeless" to themselves, both because they may be unaware of the expanded definition of homelessness, as well as the averseness some may have in applying such a stigmatized label to themselves. Homelessness, it appears, is not a problem defined by those experiencing it, but rather those who observe and are tasked with "solving" it. As one participant stated during an advisory meeting of frontline workers, "our attention is on those who are closest to death", referring to those who visibly occupy outdoor or public spaces by sleeping rough, who engage in the use of substances, or are in the midst of mental or physical health crisis. I will always find it difficult to reconcile this argument with my own experiences—intervening and making policy that targets only one group of people means that others are unlikely to have their unique needs addressed—which, as I explore further in Chapter 4, very often excludes the needs and voices of women. As more than one participant told me, homelessness and housing crises exist in two modes, akin to hospital intake triage: the first mode, and the most financially "burdensome" is the "emergency care" mode. This is where, as suggested above, the most dire cases get addressed. The second mode is one of prevention, and early intervention. A recent policy brief drafted by a team of Canadian homelessness advocates also addressed this issue:

> As we turn towards a reimagined national strategy on homelessness, the Government of Canada has an opportunity to show leadership by closing the front door, through supporting a shift to homelessness prevention. This means stopping the flow of individuals and families into homelessness, and at the same time being unwilling to wait for such persons to find themselves in desperate situations— situations that can cause irreparable harm—before we help them exit homelessness. The renewed national strategy on homelessness can help make the

> shift to prevention through supporting communities to act quickly and creatively, to prevent homelessness before it ever begins. (Gaetz, et al. 2017)

Both systems, emergency and preventative alike, are necessary due to the failure of structures designed to care for and protect citizens.

3.2   Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness

At the end of PHAW, I had my first "official" interview with Judy, a woman who would later become somewhat of a mentor and role model. After our long and fascinating conversation about women's experiences of homelessness in the north, and Judy's own contributions *to* and understanding *of* the Whitehorse policy landscape, Judy asked me why I had decided to study homelessness. So, I shared part of my story with Judy: I told her that my nearly two decades in and out of homelessness, and multiple experiences with foster care had made me insatiably curious about the subject. I told her that, in anthropology, we're encouraged to think of a thorny, messy problem we see, or a burning question we have, and find a way to answer it. I told her that this—to map out the policy landscape in relation to women's experiences of homelessness—is my "Wicked Problem", because many policies currently fail to align with real-world experiences.

Upon hearing this, Judy asked if I was going to be presenting my research at the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness[20] National Conference in Winnipeg the following week. The conference draws thousands of participants each year, and

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[20] Hereinafter CAEH

represents policymakers, frontline workers, activists, and members of communities who have experienced homelessness from all across Canada (even drawing folks from the United States and New Zealand). This conference brings people together to engage in conversations on how to end homelessness, and encourages dialogue between people who might not otherwise be in the same room: people from all regions of Canada are represented, and conference organizers aim for approximately 15% of attendees to be people with lived experience of homelessness. Many of the people I would end up interviewing would be in attendance. When I said that I had wanted to attend, but had not been able make it work due to the high cost of attending, Judy (with the backing of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, as well as organizers of the conference itself) rallied to send me to Winnipeg, after knowing me for only a few days. The weeklong conference ended up being one of the pivotal moments in shaping my understanding of homelessness and advocacy, and determining where the space for narrative lay in determining policy.

It feels as though "the poor", "the homeless", or "the vulnerable" are not meant to speak; the understanding they have of their reality is thought to be as impoverished as the bodies they live in, and the traumas they have "universally" faced keep them so "brittle", so "unstable", that to speak about them would most certainly cause gratuitous suffering and irreparable harm. This, Gayle Salamon argues, is why there has (to date) been no concerted effort to establish a corpus of "poverty theory"—the voice of the "knowing expert" (one who is typically not poor themselves) has, historically, been sufficient (Salamon 2010). People who have experienced poverty and homelessness occupy the position of 'silent subject'—one who is discussed, rather than one who discusses.

Seminal texts that have defined people living in poverty in popular conception still continue to have impact: take Oscar Lewis' 1966 work, *The Culture of Poverty*, for example (Lewis 2010). This text has gouged lasting scars into the way people experiencing poverty are perceived and represented—including associations related to the term this work coined: "The Culture of Poverty". This term, and some of his egregious conclusions (i.e. people living in poverty are "lazy", have no appreciation for "high Culture", don't believe in the "sanctity of marriage", and are not politically aware or motivated) are still used to describe people experiencing poverty. Lewis' work, according to the preface that is included before the article as it appears in one Urban Anthropology volume, states that, "[*The Culture of Poverty*] is probably the most widely cited article ever written on poverty" (Lewis 2010). Salamon's critique wholly applies to Lewis' work, and the work of others who further render marginal the voices of the people about whom they write.

Though Salamon's argument focuses on literary and theoretical perspectives, I see no reason why this concept should not be transferrable to the realm of politics as well; in fact, the genesis for Canada's own Lived Experience Advisory Council[21] occurred during a protest outside of the Vancouver hotel hosting the 2014 Canadian Alliance to End

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[21] Hereinafter LEAC. The LEAC members describe the origin of the Council by stating, "During the 2014 Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference in Vancouver, a group of individuals came together with a common goal: to ensure that individuals with lived experience received equitable representation from service providers, researchers, policy makers, and others, so that they can better understand and tackle the problem of homelessness. We believe that without including individuals with lived experience in the decision making process, in research, and in all other endeavours, it creates an unbalanced approach to ending homelessness in Canada. To that end, our council was formed. Our first action was to articulate principles for the inclusion and leadership of people with lived experience in organizations and initiatives that aim to address homelessness. We presented these principles to the conference plenary under the banner, "Nothing About Us Without Us" (Lived Experience Advisory Council 2016)

Homelessness National Conference (Jarrett 2016). The protest, largely organized by and comprised of residents of Vancouver's Downtown East Side (both people experiencing homelessness and folks living in safe and secure housing), drew the attention and support of the conference's handful of attendees experiencing homelessness or precarious housing (conference organizers having made a concerted effort to bring Lived Experience Ambassadors to attend); it was a demonstration calling out the City of Vancouver's support of a conference premised on "market-based solutions" to homelessness rather than on "building homes". As stated on the Facebook page for the event:

> A powerful class of managers will spend three days talking about market "solutions" to a homelessness crisis that the market will never solve and is only making worse.

> Regimes of management, regulation, and control have been built up around low-income and Indigenous peoples' lives, bodies, and communities. To access basic incomes and housing we are forced to submit to medical or police monitoring and control, including under the new "Housing First" model. The National Conference on Ending Homelessness brings government and NGO elite together to tune this machinery.

> The City of Vancouver—after forcibly displacing homeless Oppenheimer Park tent city residents, and in the year with the highest ever homeless count—is generously contributing $30,000 to the conference. And to add insult to injury, tickets for this "Ending Homelessness" conference are $650… or $400 for students.

> The Social Housing Alliance calls for a major mobilization to confront, expose, and oppose the government policies and NGO industries that manage homeless, low-income, and Indigenous people without challenging or disrupting the systems

and social conditions that cause homelessness and poverty. (Social Housing Alliance B.C.; Alliance Against Displacement 2014)

Together, both conference protestors and attendees marched, united in solidarity through the recognition of shared experience. Upon debriefing about the protest, several of the conference attendees (who I would later come to know through attending the 2017 CAEH Conference) recognized the clear need for a coalition of individuals with lived experience of homelessness to advocate for other people who were also experiencing homelessness (Jarrett 2016). These activists are not beleaguered, battle-weary and fragile; they are strong, galvanized advocates, engaged in the process of shifting the discourse surrounding the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness.

I was fortunate to meet many of these resilient activists, who helped me to shift the way I thought about my experiences, and even how I talked about them. Shifting the discourse surrounding homelessness is difficult, as the experience is imbued with internalized layers of self-judgment, feelings of shame, and the notion that every moment of life as a person experiencing homelessness is terrible. You are not "allowed" to feel good things.

It's harder to write the good than the bad. I was trained to record the bad ones—code them as horrible, terrible, unspeakable. They get etched in deeper so that their scars are permanent.

Beach Boys. Rolling Stones. Even a little Creedence Clearwater Revival.

> *"...I see the bad moon rising..."*

...would float in from the kitchen—one of the later stops in our procession of dwellings. My mom has always been a "lite rock" connoisseur, and has (somewhat in futility, other than through an arm's length appreciation) tried to instill a love of the genre in me. I

remember doing homework on the upended Rubbermaid that served as our multi-purpose dining table, work station, and occasional step-stool.

"...I see trouble on the way..."

The months in this house were happy times.

Thinking of this house reminds me of the goo-filled and sticky coated 'splat toys' of the early-2000s—the idea being, you 'splat' the food object, spider, dinosaur, etc onto a wall, and watch it climb down and regain shape. After leaving a series of sticky, pinkish streaks down the living room wall, I inadvertently splatted the 'splat' tomato against the nubby, chalky stucco ceiling. I spent many hours, over many days considering our new, red ceiling decal, listening to my mom's unsubtle music lesson ("don't they teach you kids anything in school these days?").

I loved this time.

Now, these memories are corrupted. Within the next few years, I would be moving in around the corner, several hundred meters away, into foster care.

Mom, applying Liquid Band-Aid to a wounded finger—me, crying and then laughing about the absurdity of how much it stung. It healed quickly.

Foster mother, wrapping duct tape around a wounded foot. I still have the scar.

Close in time and space (real), but also eons and galaxies apart (imagined).

"...There's a bad moon on the rise..."

When I returned to Whitehorse from Winnipeg, I put my newfound knowledge and confidence into action. Through sitting in on Housing Action Plan Implementation Committee meetings, interviewing everyone who wanted to speak to me—from policy analysts to frontline service workers—attending community events, and spending time around local service centers, I noticed areas of disconnect between 'policy' and

'experience' that the people I worked with in Whitehorse are actively aiming to address. At the same time, I began to pick up on the way people spoke about the policy creation process; this happened to be a manner sometimes incongruous with the way I had heard policymakers speak about it in other contexts, and was further removed from the way it was described in policy manuals. The term itself ('policy') engenders a multiplicity of meanings, and, as some have argued, act in the fashion of a Raymond Williams-esque "keyword". Williams, in his seminal anthropological text, *Keywords,* describes the context, movement and utility of meaning of certain taken-for-granted words (1976). Included in his critical redefinition and reconsideration are words like "culture", "bourgeois" and "modern". As anthropologists-of-policy Cris Shore and Susan Wright posit:

> Keywords accumulate meanings historically and…whereas one meaning may dominate at any particular moment, previous meanings, although eclipsed, can always be resurrected. This is true of the term 'policy'. From the Greek *polis* ('city'), and its *polites* ('citizens'), to the Latin *politia* came two associated meanings: 'polity' (meaning civil organization, form of government and constitution of the state), and 'policy' (the art, method or tactics of government and regulating internal order). (Shore and Wright 1997)

The contemporary installation of this 'keyword' is reflective of the sociopolitical zeitgeist: there exists a demand for policy to be *more* than it has historically allowed, while simultaneously retaining its sedimentary and interwoven layers of meaning, historicity, utility, and structure.

What simultaneously surprised and delighted me was the fact that those in charge of policy creation and implementation in Whitehorse and the surrounding communities

spoke about policy in much the same way that anthropologists speak about crafting ethnography; for instance, I heard repeated laments that policy is not "living"—if it were dynamic, and community driven, it could better meet the changing needs of communities. The process of creating policy that responds in real time to dynamic community realities, however, is laborious, constant, and (as of yet) exists as a work-in-progress. In conversation with a friend who works for the Yukon Government, she expressed a concern that many of her colleagues also shared—that of voice and representation. She, in a relatively powerful political position, indicated that policies, plans, and documents that 'govern government' must reflect the lived, day-to-day realities of those who occupy civil service roles—"nobody wants to get behind something they can't see themselves in," she told me. The same dilemma rings true for community initiatives outside the territorial government as well; the long-awaited report, *Safe at Home: A Community-Based Action Plan to End Homelessness in Whitehorse*, assures that "citizens can expect a responsive system of care in their community and see themselves clearly defined in solutions and prevention" (Sim and Craig 2017). Good ethnography is produced as a result of collaboration—it represents co-constituted knowledge. Many of the elements participants described of desired policy futures reflect core elements of ethnographic writing and practice. This necessitates the direct, continuous, and meaningful engagement of voices of those whom policies are being written *about*.

Policy creation is, however, an inherently tricky beast. Hanging in the balance is the ordered hierarchical structure of bureaucracy on the one hand, with all its devilishly impassible checks and balances, and the almost irreconcilable needs, wishes, and human ambiguities of those who are stationed within it, or impacted by it. One participant, Julia,

a young woman working as a policy analyst and researcher, suggested that creating policy felt like she was constantly throwing her recommendations into the "beautiful, shiny, democratic abyss" of higher-level bureaucracy; she also "[didn't] know why decisions get made" that sometimes looked nothing like the recommendations that were originally funneled into the "abyss".

My conversation with Julia was one of my first indications that there existed a point of rupture, or mismatch between policy realities and desired policy futures. I could not help but juxtapose this with times when people would describe an ideal policy future as a collaborative process of listening, telling, negotiating, and renegotiating. To borrow from Deleuze and Guattari, human subjects, replete with the baggage of their biographies, form the rhizomatic tendrils weaving into and around the rigid linearity of the bureaucratic arbor (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). These rhizomatic threads begin to push into and make room for the human complexities that might otherwise be incommensurable.

As it stands, policy often exists as a thin cross-section of human life, caught between slides. All of the intersections are crystalized at one point, suspended for eternity in this one, final, form. Stories, and the sharing of experiences, let you breathe life into this static form. As an anthropologist, my obligation in Whitehorse was to explore, document, and analyze the variety of different experiences and relationships people had to policy. Most importantly, however, I was listening to the *stories* of the people I worked with.

As I described at the beginning of Chapter 1, the narratives people choose to share about their lives and experiences reflect, in small ways the way they engage with and interpret

the world around them. They are part of their interactions with the surrounding world. To revisit the quote from anthropologist Robin Ridington, "Stories function as metonyms… parts that stand for wholes"—structures and systems are necessarily implicated in their creation and utterance (1999).

Stories (the currency in which anthropologists trade), and the way they are mobilized, are the bridge between what might at first appear to be diametrically opposed poles. In a narrative, one may bundle together things that, on the surface, have no apparent relation to one another; it is the responsibility of both teller and listener to negotiate and interpret meaning. Stories are not just a literary or descriptive tool for making-meaning from human experience, they are also an activist tool: a tool that can be used to break down the barriers that exist between categories, and between people. Stories, then, allow for the overcoming of apparently essential differences.

3.3   Positionality and Policy

It was my own fraught relationship to particular aspects of 'policy' that I was confronted with as I prepared to embark on research on that very topic: policies, in my experience, were things that kept my foster parent on the other phone line, listening in to my infrequent calls with my mom when my "visits" had to be "supervised"; they kept my mom and me from "loitering" in the mall food court with our possessions in tow when we had nowhere else to go; they prevented the motel manager from letting us stay another night on promises of future payment. Policy makers and enforcers were worse; as a child, I had conjured up images in my mind of intentional evildoers, cackling in the dark

recesses of government offices. As I grew older, and entered university, this cartoonish image was replaced by the trope of the quintessential austere and uncaring bureaucrat. It should surprise no one that policymakers are neither mustachioed villains, nor uncaring bureaucrats.

These ill-founded stereotypes also manifested in my initial uncertainty in how *comfortably* disparate fields like anthropology and policy research could function in dialogue. This ended up becoming one of the main questions I addressed through my work, including theorizing about how narrative and stories (elements fundamental to anthropological praxis) can be used in the creation of effective and inclusive policy. In an almost ironic twist, by humanizing "policymakers" (both for myself, and for potential future audiences of my work), I hope to render visible the "constructedness" of bureaucratic structures and of policy itself. Though "homeless experts" are invited to consult with policymakers with increasing frequency, the relationship is still fundamentally strained. I use the term "expert" in quotations not because I doubt the validity of the knowledge of those experiencing homelessness of structures and policies impacting them, but rather because I doubt the sincerity of some policymakers in engaging with people with lived experience of homelessness, then treating them in ways that belie their expert knowledge. One individual who participated in this research (someone who I chose not to disclose my experience of homelessness to) suggested that those who "sit in offices and draft policy are scared" of people experiencing homelessness—this is why meaningful collaboration does not take place.

The preliminary model this research was based on is that posed by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar's *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Latour and

Woolgar 1986). In this ethnographic study, Latour and Woolgar describe their experiences with scientists engaged in the process of making science as endeavors in "anthropological strangeness" or, even better, as encounters with a "strange tribe". This process of rendering what appears to be the mundane and familiar, *un*familiar lies in opposition to traditional ways of "doing" anthropology.

I *thought* I knew what I would find when I got to Whitehorse.

Then, not unlike an anthropologist studying the process of "making science" I came to realize that the lived experience, and quotidian lives of "policy makers", matters a great deal in how policy gets made, and if I had any chance at enacting systems-level change, I actually needed to know what was going on. The intersection and conversation between anthropology and policy research became rapidly and indisputably clear, though to be certain, the two fields often make for odd bedfellows.

At the CAEH conference in Winnipeg, one policymaker from B.C. asked "how do we engage people with lived experience meaningfully, rather than consulting with them, then turning around to have the 'adult conversation' somewhere else" (emphasis hers). This disheartening quote encapsulates the stumbling block that often prevents meaningful collaboration between policy makers and those who exist on the receiving end of said policy. In Whitehorse, one participant echoed this sentiment, suggesting "everyone is 'at the table', but their backs are turned". Both of these quotes demonstrate sentiments voiced by many of the participants in this study, as well as CAEH conference attendees I spoke to; even though invitations are extended more regularly to people who have experienced homelessness, this system they are being invited to participate in is one that

is still learning how to embrace and mobilize the stories and narratives of those *outside* the policymaking entity.

3.4   Policy and metaphor:

One cannot speak (in any language) without also using metaphors. In the words of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: pg 3). Metaphors are both built into and build the world as conceived of by North American English speakers; the question and role of metaphor (as Lakoff and Johnson describe) is as much linguistic as it is ontological in nature. Metaphors also allow us to explore and move between categories of known and unknown in everyday language and life; they reflect in subtle ways the way one orients themselves to the world and the people around them. The argument I pose in the pages ahead is not explicitly one of the role and function of metaphors, but does require a "suspension of belief" in which the reality discussed is a metaphor-bound one. I came to understand that individuals involved in the process of policy research and creation use metaphoric language to talk about two unique aspects of policy work; these metaphors, in turn, shape the way policy is made.

It should come as no surprise that policy is spoken of through the use of metaphoric referents; Lakoff and Johnson speak about the features and flexibility of metaphors, and explain the fact that metaphors are ubiquitous within spoken and written English (at least, seemingly in the forms of English apparently common to me, these authors, and

individuals in Whitehorse who participated in this research). It becomes clear, through Lakoff and Johnson's analysis of metaphors, that it is difficult or impossible to parse out which came first—the "chicken" (way things are done) or the "egg" (the way things are described).

The first grouping of metaphors and metaphoric language trends that I noted links policy (policy *making* as a verb, and policy as a noun) to navigation or cartography; policy is defined as a "course" or "guideline" of action, "moving" an organization, government or group in a certain "direction". This form of metaphor and association was predominantly used in the context of describing current or past policy trends. The following are some examples from interviews and participant observation:

- o "The policies have us *squeezed on all sides*"
- o "[Policy] is a *guideline*"
- o "[Some policymakers] work in a different way because of their *position*"
- o "We seem to forget policies can *change course*"
- o "If you're only *behind* a desk, or you don't do *on-the-ground* work, you can't make effective policy"
- o "We live with policies of *inaction*"
- o "[Policy] is about *making boundaries*"

Policy, during my time in Whitehorse, was also described through metaphors that as an anthropologist, sounded very much like the ways in which ethnography is described in the discipline; interestingly, this metonymy was used to describe a method of policymaking not necessarily representative of current trends. The desired state of policy

creation seemed to trend towards the following set of metaphors, referring to themes of voice, speaking, or story (examples of which are included below):

- o "Policy needs to include *voices* of Lived Experience"

- o "Policy won't meet people's needs until it *translates voices*"

- o "We need to make policy with the best *advice* and evidence… and what better evidence is there than the evidence *out of people's mouths*?"

- o "[Policymaking] needs to be *collaborative, not consultative*"

- o "It's inconvenient to *listen*, so it doesn't happen"

- o "Some people will *listen* in this new government"

As an anthropologist (especially as an anthropologist particularly interested in narrative as an activist tool) I found this curious. My thinking, in regards to policy, has also shifted to conform to or coincide with these categories, as someone who was previously familiar with policy only in abstract. I should note that the participants in this research used many other metaphors to describe policy work, but the two main frames stood out to me. Policy as a category is flexible and fluid; it allows for the selective application of multiple metaphors to be mapped onto its surface, as policy exists as something equally concrete and abstract. As someone who has run up against public and social policies, I have in past described policy as a soft enforcer: policies can easily turn into weapons, or a task force that some fall back on to deliver cruel messages or blows: "it's policy, you have to move/leave/accept being otherwise displaced or disenfranchised". Policy can and does act as a way of severing those who are tasked with enforcing and implementing policy from those who are on the receiving end. This was not the way those who were engaged

in policy creation in Whitehorse spoke about policy, though they too operationalized metaphoric language to speak about the policy process.

The reason metaphors are so readily applied to policy is because policy acts on multiple levels (thus can signify a myriad of things depending on context): policy exists at the 'macro', 'mezzo', and 'micro' level (Popple and Leighninger 2001). Macro-level policies, according to authors Popple and Leighninger, are the broad level policies that exist at the national or federal level: these provide the frame within which all other forms of policy are based. Mezzo-level policy represents institutional or organizational policy, and is derived from macro-policies. Micro, or ground level policy is what exists in person-to-person interactions, based on Macro and mezzo-level policies (Popple and Leighninger 2001). Micro policy is the most easily-observable place for human agency and interpretive capacity to present itself, as individuals decide on a case-by-case basis how to apply policy.

3.5   Stories as Activist Tools

One participant, Frank, a lovely older gentleman, who retired from his career as an economics professor several years ago, was exceptionally helpful in encouraging my understanding of the connection between ethnography and policy.

Somewhat of a theoretician and philosopher himself (on our flight to Winnipeg, for the CAEH Conference, he shared some of his book ideas with me), Frank is convinced that qualitative research, data, and analysis should be considered in the process of creating sound housing policy, and public policy more broadly. Frank, like many of the folks I

worked with, is a long-time advocate for housing as a human right, and for community engagement in ending poverty. He is open about his beliefs that the "story told" or conclusions drawn from data is strengthened by bringing quantitative and qualitative data together—often referred to as a "mixed methods" approach. Communities, Frank insisted, must engage in the sharing of stories to dispel myths about stigmatized groups, emphasizing how both ethnography and community driven policy can act as points of articulation and dialogue between individuals, fellow community members, and overarching or abstract systems and frameworks.

During our conversation, Frank and I began discussing the way that he sees policy. Frank drew me a chart in order to demonstrate his points:

Interior	Exterior
I	It
We	Its

I noticed the direct relationship between the features of Frank's diagram, and my conceptualization of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, as conceived of by philosopher C.S. Peirce. As explained by Cornelis de Waal, one can visualize this concept by imagining a black dot on a blank sheet of paper (de Waal 2013). There is nothing that exists aside from the dot, save for the piece of paper it is drawn on; thus, with every object, even if it exists merely as a thought, there is always inherently a context (a Secondness). By drawing a second dot, one is able to envision the existence of a Thirdness: the first dot and the second dot represent two immanent and linked

categories (de Waal 2013). These would reflect the "I" and the "we" posed by Frank in the "internal" category. The "it" and "its" represents the transcendent "external" category, or the Thirdness. Frank and I spoke at length about the implications of these categories of understanding and experience on both policy creation and ethnography. Joan Scott's "Evidence of Experience", C.S. Peirce's "firstness", "secondness", and "thirdness", and Frank's diagram all indicate a movement or navigation between internal and external factors, situated solidly within a crucial (yet often-overlooked) framework (Scott 1991).

An aspect present in *Laboratory Life*, Latour and Woolgar posit that all science arises out of circumstance; if the scientist is a "Firstness", the science made is the "Secondness", it follows that the context, circumstance, and negotiation (the paradigm, field, or canon in an academic setting) that suspends and surrounds the two is the "Thirdness". This Batesonian, cybernetic process is applicable far beyond disciplinary borders.

3.6   Promising Practices

The route to integrating and injecting living, breathing narratives into the domain of policy may lie in having policies more closely align with programs or organizations that can bring people together in a collaborative manner:

In Whitehorse, a program (loosely) working in tandem with policy has seen initial success. Landlords Working to End Homelessness[22], is a newly implemented program providing information and support to private market landlords housing clients whose income source for rent payment is Social Assistance, INAC Assistance[23], or income support from their Yukon First Nation. LWEH brings together housing navigators and support from a wide array of community organizations serving populations at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. Similar programs exist in other cities[24]. LWEH works as an assurance for both renters and landlords, acting as a third party mediator subletting rooms, apartments, or houses to Social Assistance clients. Homelessness, as it is universally understood, exists as a result of multiple systems breaking down in chorus: LWEH is a stopgap measure that arose in response to some of these failures; the onus of providing affordable housing to "vulnerable" and "at-risk" individuals has fallen on private market property owners, with the amount of social and

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[22] Hereinafter LWEH

[23] INAC was disbanded under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2017, being replaced with two organizational branches. CIRNAC, or Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, operates as the political branch, whereas DISC, or Department of Indigenous Services provides a variety of services (including income support) to Indigenous peoples (Government of Canada 2017). The change was made, according to Trudeau, to: "[demonstrate] that we are serious about taking the right steps to move beyond the Indian Act, but doing it in partnership and collaboration with Indigenous peoples…We are moving forward on a true nation-to-nation relationship" (Wattie 2017).

[24] Covenant House Toronto and Covenant House Vancouver are two examples involved in housing youth, though these programs do not take over a lease and sublet to an individual as in the LWEH program. They do, however, provide support and education to landlords and renters, mitigating the perceived "risk" some landlords may feel in renting to a young person whose income source comes from Social Assistance (Homeless Hub 2017).

RentSmart Ontario (a "consortium of five agencies providing housing services in Niagara") also offers landlord and tenant education and support programs (RentSmart Ontario 2017).

government-controlled housing barely increasing since the 1980s (during a sustained period of neoliberal fiscal retrenchment at the federal level) (Suttor 2016).

Many participants in this research also referenced a short-term, alternative emergency shelter run during the winter of 2017. As outlined in the Whitehorse *Safe at Home* action plan, the shelter was created through collaborative efforts between "Yukon Government, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and the business community…within 8 weeks of identifying the need" (Sim and Craig 2017).

3.7   A Note on Ethnographic Methods

Anecdotally, from accounts and testimonies of those in positions of policy creation, "ethnographic" methodology is heralded as a route to making "good" policy. What is specifically meant by this is that building relationships between community members goes a long way in shaping a body of policy that effectively meets the needs of those for whom it has the biggest impact.

Stories undoubtedly go into the way policy is shaped and referred to, but let me be clear about one thing: I am not suggesting that public policy should be the latest field to dangerously and uncritically adopt the language of "ethnography"; nor do I suggest that anthropologists should sign up to conduct ethnographic and ethically dubious work on behalf of governing bodies[25]; what I mean, instead, is that policy, as a genre of writing,

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[25] I say "ethically dubious" in reference to the time depth, mutual obligation, and relationship-building necessary to produce good ethnographic work—all things that are difficult to establish during a short-term

has a lot to learn from the genre of ethnography, alongside its methodology and approaches. In ethnographic writing, an author is very clear about articulating their position in relation to knowledge, and the basis of their authority to speak about the topic at hand. The author is also clear to describe their standing and relationship to the community within which their work is based. More than this, there is recognition in ethnography that knowledge is co-constituted within a dynamic and living system (a community, and the relationships that form it). However, the most crucial facet of ethnography's utility lies in its ability to transition from *story* to *analysis*—ethnographic methodology and analysis renders narratives into tools with which to effect meaningful change.

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contract or period of research. These goals frequently lie in opposition to the needs and structure of bureaucratic processes. Ethnographic methodologies and approaches designed to advance the goals of dominant institutions that control, govern, or hold power in a given society may conflict with the primary obligation of the ethnographer: to reflect the needs and wishes of those one conducts research with.

This being said, there are many feminist ethnographers conducting good work on policy and bureaucratic structures—I believe that an intersectional feminist ethnographic framework and approach holds the ability to unsettle some of the patterns that might otherwise make ethnographic policywork untenable. Some of the scholars cited in this thesis are doing this type of critical and engaging work—for example, see Ready (2016), and Bacchi & Eveline (2010).

Chapter 4

4   Cyborgs, Policies, and Feminist Futures

During my fieldwork, I lived with a family 30 minutes outside of downtown Whitehorse. I would get dropped off in town at 8:30, and would be picked up at 6:30 or 7. This meant it was in my best interest to find ways to fill my time. I spent a significant amount of time 'hanging out' around institutions and organizations—including the public library.

Fridays, the public library (an arm of the territorial government) closes early (6pm, instead of the usual 9). I spent a great deal of time at the library; I, like many of the other patrons, sought a space that was warm, free, and had access to washrooms and computers; the library is a hub in most cities, where people congregate who have nowhere else to go. I remember stealthily catching naps at a library in my hometown when I had pneumonia. At the time, we were sleeping in different church basements across the city every night; during the day I was "home sick" from school, with nowhere to go: the library has always been a refuge for me, a safe place.

Catching the last few minutes of warmth before close, the Friday night library patrons and I were lingering. My ride home wasn't for another hour, and I knew it was at least a 30-minute walk to McDonalds. I thought that perhaps ducking into a store's doorway for an hour would be the best way to avoid the wind that had dropped the -20 degree weather to a chilly -31. I went downstairs to use the washroom. Suddenly, a loud, crashing noise startled me. I became very still, small, and quiet in my stall. It was one of the librarians, hitting the stall door with a stick—rousing and rattling the last stragglers out into the cold.

Bang.

*"**We're closing, you need to leave**" from the librarian.*

Bang.

*"**You can't park here overnight- no loitering***" from the security guard knocking on our window, as we slept in our car outside one of the many libraries in our city.*

Bang.

*"***It happened again- we lost the house. Unless you can think of a better idea, we're going back to the shelter***" from my mother to a frightened, twelve year old Alex.*

Being kicked out—being told your body is a burden, an inconvenience, or an otherwise grotesque protuberance in a physical space—is an all-too-familiar pattern for those experiencing homelessness.

Many times throughout my fieldwork, I was confronted with situations that brought me back to times and spaces where my between-worlds body has not belonged. I didn't want to do fieldwork anymore. I wanted to go home, where I could hide from my experiences, and where I am able to put theory and logic between my selves.

How do you turn your body that has hurtled with you through space and time, into a producer of rational, objective political, social, or natural science? The question of "science" has two meanings in the context of my research: it refers on one hand to the "science" produced by the participants in this study in the form of policy, and on the other, to the "science" I produce as an anthropologist in the form of this ethnographic thesis. The science I aim to produce is one (as Donna Haraway suggests) of feminist objective science—one that recognizes that we all live in Cyborg bodies, producing knowledge that is firmly rooted in our experience in (and of) the world. The Cyborg is a synthesis of technology and biology; it is neither machine nor animal, but human. The knowledge of the Cyborgs is necessarily reflexive and historical, contextual and local; as Haraway describes, "Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in

which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia" (Haraway 1991:181).

4.1   Gendering Homelessness

Every person experiencing homelessness has "fallen through the cracks", but the way that this occurs differs based on one's gender; failing to recognize this means that women, transgender, and gender non-binary persons often find their needs unmet by institutions and services. Homelessness affects different groups of people in quite different ways, thus analysis of it must be intersectional—race, class, and gender all impact and shape the way one experiences it. The policies that are created that impact people experiencing homelessness aren't always intersectional, however—a reality towards which several people that participated in this research expressed frustration:

> In an ideal world, all policy would be feminist: equal pay for equal work, feminist housing policy, Social Assistance policy… I'm advocating for continuous change… because the whole homelessness paradigm is based on men. (Judy 2017)

Judy, a well-connected powerhouse in the Whitehorse feminist activism scene conveyed this frustration to me during one of our conversations towards the end of my time in Whitehorse. Having worked to advocate for women experiencing homelessness in northern Canada for decades, Judy is a force to be reckoned with. She helped me in the process of locating the gendered spaces and gaps in policy in Whitehorse, and answered many of my bewildered questions regarding responses to women's homelessness during my time in the territory.

Judy also pointed me in the direction of three prominent reports on women's homelessness across the territories: *A Little Kindness Would go a Long Way: A Study of Women's Homelessness in the Yukon*; *You Just Blink and it Can Happen: A Study of Women's Homelessness North of 60;* and *Trajectories of Women's Homelessness in Canada's 3 Northern Territories.* Between these three reports, one can begin to fill in a mental schema of the complex web of experiences, governing bodies, policies, and other factors that shape and inform homelessness for northern women.

The *You Just Blink and it Can Happen* Report offers a critical examination of the inadequacy of many government or policy reports in addressing gender-based differences in experiences of homelessness. I feel alienated when I read definitions of "homelessness", and this report makes it clear that I am not alone in this:

> Traditional definitions of homelessness are inadequate to represent the complex and interrelated factors that contribute to women's homelessness…. Although the number of women living on the street is increasing in many parts of Canada, street homelessness is not representative of most women's experiences. Definitions that focus on "absolute" or "visible" homelessness therefore leave most homeless women, especially those with children, out of homelessness counts and media portrayals of the issue. For these women,

>> *…living on the street is an impossible option that is almost certain to mean losing their children. For single women, increased vulnerability to violence and sexual assault make street life something to be avoided at all costs. Existing shelter surveys indicate dramatic increases in the use of shelters by both single women and women with children, particularly Aboriginal women and Black women. But living in a shelter is also considered a last resort…*

At the same time, CERA (Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation) notes, definitions that focus on "affordability" and "adequacy" criteria (critical elements in definitions of "relative" or "hidden" homelessness or for identifying women "at risk of homelessness") tend to simplify the ways in which government and private sector policy and practices are discriminatory toward women. (Bopp, et al. 2007: 37-38)

This excerpt not only highlights the intersectional nature of homelessness, but also the ways in which "gender-inattentive" governing structures that do not critically engage in feminist praxis and analysis impact women. Janine Brodie and Isabella Bakker discuss a similar violence-through-erasure that exists throughout the Canadian policy-scape in their book, *Where are the Women?: Gender Equity, Budgets, and Canadian Public Policy*: homelessness is just one aspect in which not discussing the gendered dimensions guarantee that women and gender minorities will not have their unique needs met (2008). During the 1980s and 1990s, the authors argue that, coinciding with the rapid push towards neoliberalization across the world (resulting in the dismantling of social infrastructure, the social security net, public, and overall fiscal retrenchment), efforts to mitigate the gendered impacts of policy that had begun in earlier decades were also quietly scaled back. For example, Casey Ready has demonstrated the impacts of such policy on YWCAs in "neoliberal Ontario", finding that the clawing back of funding for women's organizations has held serious consequences for women—and especially for women in marginalized groups (Ready 2016). Ready, echoing the sentiments of Brodie and Bakker, states:

The intent of such shifts to gender-neutral language…is not to broaden understandings of gender issues but to erase the visibility of systemic inequalities for

women. When used with this intent, gender-neutral language renders women and the systemic issues that lead to violence against women invisible. (2016: 23)

4.2 "Can Policy be Feminist?"

This question, during interviews, I initially asked with curiosity and sincerity. After a few awkward impasses, I realized that I was asking a redundant question; obviously policy should be feminist, that is to say, policy should be inclusive and collaborative from its genesis to its revision; it should be formed with the impetus that differently gendered bodies move through the world and sociopolitical landscape in vastly divergent ways; it should 'gender mainstream'[26]; it should be formed not behind doors, "from nowhere", but should instead be formed via transparent and collaborative mechanisms; people who, through their embodied, personal experiences, are experts on the *topic* the policy *covers*, should be included in the process of policy formation. I saw, in Whitehorse, the emergence of some of these approaches to political life—town halls where community members could gather and have their voices heard on policy matters, shifting landscapes of gender-based protections in human rights legislation, diversity and inclusivity training

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[26] Gender mainstreaming, according to Bacchi and Eveline, can be described as the following: "Gender analysis procedures, as mentioned, are commonly associated with a relatively recent policy development, called gender mainstreaming. The idea behind 'mainstreaming' is that every policy should address the needs of so-called disadvantaged or marginalised groups (such as women, the 'disabled' and 'Indigenous' peoples). Gender mainstreaming, perhaps the best publicised of these initiatives, appears in many industrialised states (for example, Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands), in some 'developing' states (for example, South Africa, India, Indonesia), and in the protocols of international organisations such as the ILO (International Labour Organization) and the World Bank. The expressed objective of gender mainstreaming programs is to promote 'gender equality'. "Reflecting on government policy as an example, the declared goal is to ensure that each policy produced by a government is examined to see that it treats both women and men fairly" (2010: 1)

mandates for government workers—these are all excellent steps in creating an inclusive and feminist governance and community.

What puzzled me, however, was the response garnered from my queries regarding gendered experiences of homelessness. My initial line of questioning began "how do women's experiences of homelessness look different in Whitehorse?", but very few people wished to talk about women's homelessness apart from those whose work or organizational mandate saw them specifically working with women experiencing homelessness. I modified the question to refer to "gendered experiences of homelessness", to see if people would feel more comfortable speaking about gender and homelessness more broadly, but most participants felt most comfortable referring to the experiences of cisgender men, if they mentioned gender at all. Though the overwhelming majority of people who participated in this study were women—and many agreed that the policy process should be feminist in nature—gender was not part of the conversations people wanted to have with me; when it was, it was not in the manner that I expected. In the majority of interviews I held, this question was addressed by the interviewee saying something akin to:

- o "I'm not sure exactly, I know more about men" (referring to women's homelessness)

- o "Gender… do you mean transgender people?"

- o "I don't know, we mostly [serve] men here" (from someone involved directly in service provision)

- o "Most of my clients are men"

I was also met on more than one occasion with the assertion that it was men, and not women who were 'falling through the cracks' of service provision in the city. Naturally, I

found this claim curious, and sought to explore it further; experiences of those who do not identify as men[27] are erased from conversations and discourses unless their inclusion is explicitly sought, and, as indicated above, Canada has undergone a long and systematic process of de-gendering policy and approaches to governing. I argue that this is partly reflected in Whitehorse (as in all jurisdictions), and is representative of the framework undergirding the claim that "men 'fall through the cracks' more than women". It was suggested by at least one person I interviewed, and several more that I was not formally interviewing that there are not only shelter spaces for women fleeing violence, but that women also have access to The Women's Center—an outreach center with no shelter capacity. I was told that because women have access to these particular services, their needs required little-to-no further attention as far as they differ from those of men. Though this particular argument was by no means common, it was something I found surprising, given the Yukon's recent efforts and considerable success in advancing gender-specific legislation. In 2017, Yukon enshrined gender identity and expression as protected grounds in the Yukon Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act[28]. Moreover, the Yukon Women's Directorate, over the last few years, has requested that all Yukon Government policy staff take specific gender-inclusivity training (GIDA).[29]

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[27] Women, and certainly transgender and non-binary persons experience this erasure. This thesis explores "gender" as something that influences an experience of homelessness, though refers mostly to women's experiences. There is a small (but growing) body of literature on the topic of gender non-binary and transgender individuals who experience homelessness—though the literature predominantly revolves more broadly around LGBTQ2S individuals. Also noteworthy, existing literature focuses mainly on LGBTQ2S *youth* experiencing homelessness. For an excellent introductory literature review, I would recommend a 2012 article by Ilona Abramovich, entitled "No Safe Place to Go- LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in Canada: Reviewing the Literature".

[28] Based on amendments passed in June, 2017

[29] Gender Inclusive Diversity Analysis

4.3   Situated Knowledges

Policy creation and bureaucracy often face difficulties engaging with traumatic memory. Bureaucracy is inherently linear, and demands the use of an authoritative, singular voice that is monological by nature; this lies in opposition to traumatic memory, which exists as something both rhizomatic and multivocal.

While I was conducting fieldwork in Whitehorse, I began to revisit elements and memories from my past that had remained cloaked in the veil of time and forgetfulness. The process of conducting fieldwork was, in a sense, an archaeological dig into my own experiences—a "re-collection" of assorted pieces and patches that had been forgotten or lost. Since returning from Whitehorse, I have experienced a shift in my perception of these memories. In an essay on memories that are selective, good, bad, or traumatic, anthropologist Johannes Fabian reflects on the construction of narratives in the context of colonial trauma in Central Africa. He explores the ways in which certain memories arise, highlighting the process of selective remembering and forgetting; in the essay, he suggests (correctly), "no story can tell it all. If it could, it wouldn't be a story" (Fabian 2007: 98). Fabian, further in the same essay, posits the following:

> Certain bad memories may be diagnosed... as being "traumatic". Is calling a memory traumatic just a way to emphasize its salience or its tenacity? The assumption is that traumatic pertains to bad memories. But, could salience and tenacity not also be attributes of good memories? Is calling a memory traumatic a clinical statement of some kind of pathology in need of therapy, a wound in need of healing? (2007: 98)

What happens when it is the anthropologist, and not their "subject" who is being asked to recall "traumatic" memories? Readers of ethnography are rarely granted access to the anthropologist's process of constructing or formulating a narrative; this point is particularly salient when considering Fabian's formula of creating memories selective, good, bad, or traumatic. The way I conceptualize my experiences has fundamentally altered the way they impact me; while addressing a group of participants (who I interviewed for this research, and also attended the CAEH conference) during a debrief after CAEH, I explained that the biggest benefit I realized from attending was a shift in how I view my experiences: in situations where I would at one time be ashamed, I now feel empowered. In many ways, my process of re-covering and re-collecting memories and experiences provides a tidy analogue for the process of constructing a narrative of my fieldwork experiences. All humans and bodies are mired in their own experiences, becoming embroiled in, as Michael Taussig posits, "epistemic murk"; Taussig's term encompasses all the things that are complex and contradictory about people, as well as the impossibility of finding "The Truth" while researching human beings and cultures (Taussig 1986). As both Taussig and Fabian suggest, no single story, or all-encompassing narrative exists, due to the emergent, contingent, contextual, and inherently murky nature of memories and knowledges. Knowledges and narratives are always necessarily sites of negotiation and contestation, and none more so than those that exist between perspectives rooted in bodies (Haraway 1991: 173-174).

When we got off the airplane in Winnipeg, heading to the CAEH conference, Gary (whose experiences I reference briefly in chapter 1) asked me, "Who are you here representing", and I didn't know what to say. I stumbled a bit, "uh, YAPC? Western? I

don't know". He responded by telling me that he was at this conference representing himself, and other people who had experienced homelessness. As a researcher who knows what homelessness feels like, I was not sure which of my voices, perspectives, or subjectivities was asking questions to policy makers. I interviewed my participants as a researcher, but my lived experiences cannot be cast aside in favour of a clean, objective study of homelessness.

"Lived experience", as a concept, has exploded across discourses on marginality, activism, and advocacy. I am reluctant to use it, as it frequently implies something sanitized, totalizing, and abstract. Moreover, there is a danger in failing to recognize that everyone engaged in the discourse on homelessness has a complicated articulation to (and thus, occupies space in relation to) the topic. "Lived experience" suggest an inside, or a depth that cannot be probed or understood from the outside. However, homelessness has no inside; one does not necessarily have to have experienced homelessness to comprehend its forbidden depths. Homelessness has intensities and boundaries that can be felt and crossed for those that want to do so. The role of the person with "lived experience" is not to be a living example of a body marked by the stigma of having had no home—rather, it is to be an experienced speaker, or teacher to those that are involved in governing and making policies. The person with "lived experience" and the policy maker, be they different people, or one and the same, are "Postmodern bodies" swimming in the same currents of neoliberal, patriarchal, colonial regimes (Haraway 1991: 209).

When only one group is put in a position of spectacle, and "epistemic authority", other groups are no longer responsible for making their relationship to the conversation, or position clear, where others with "Lived Experience" must constantly negotiate this

complexity. No experience can truly be left in the past: traces of experiences—memories—are diachronic in the way they flow in and out of salience. Experience is not synchronic, or certified by its completeness; experiences are *living*, and shape the way one relates to their environment, to those around them, and even to themselves. My own homelessness is not just a lived experience, but a lived awareness, a trauma, a personal storytelling tradition, a way of seeing, and a way of negotiating my relation to the world.

This chapter is an exploration of my own memory & experience of being "hidden" and invisible, and how this shapes both my objectivity and positionality as a field researcher; to explore this reality, I also consider why many participants were reluctant to talk about gender and homelessness, situating this collection of narratives in a broader discourse of "hidden" homelessness, "hidden" women, neoliberalism, and Canadian politics.

4.4   Hidden or Invisible?

Sweeping the spray of newspapers and assorted quotidian kitchen-table accouterments into the final moving box, my mother and I found ourselves heading onto the "next adventure": from the little flat we had lived in for a few months, to a motel. Usually, my mom would plan our impromptu "departures" from rental units around sending me to a friend's house for the weekend, leaving me unaware of her plans to relocate; when I would return home from the sleepover, we would be living in a new house. I never really understood why we left house after house, but came to accept that this was the way it was for some families. This move was different, however; my mom had been on a sunrise walk with the dog we had at the time, and had seen the landlord's car parked down the block. She thought it was slightly unusual, as the landlord lived quite a distance away from our house, but the 'sighting' quickly fell from her memory. Over the next few weeks, she would come to notice the car parked down the street on several more occasions—the

landlord sitting inside, watching her as she went on her morning walk. My mother was terrified, not knowing why this man sat there, watching her, morning after morning. What choice did we have but to move?

Piecing together fragments of what happened to my family in the months to follow, I can only guess that the costs associated with an emergency move, so soon after the original move were too much for my mother's already strained budget. After a brief stay in a motel, then an even briefer stay with a family friend, we ended up in an emergency shelter. The first night, I could barely sleep: I was lying in a large church hall, on an army cot with a thin blanket, less than two feet from a middle-aged man that I did not know. My mother and I held hands and cried through the night. This was no "option"— this was a last resort.

Public policy becomes what Haraway refers to as a "god-trick"—something that carries the illusion of being omniscient, all-knowing, and sweepingly representative. It appears, without being called upon to articulate by whom, and for whom, it was made; in Haraway's estimation, these god-tricks do a poor job of slicing deep into assumptions, and peeling back subcutaneous, accumulated layers of colonialism, patriarchy, neoliberal capitalism, or western rational science. The skin of this diseased Cyborganism obscures the guts, blood and muscles underneath what is at first presented. In Whitehorse, I worked with many individuals involved in this process—a process in which some of these invisible barriers are beginning to come down. Policy is always necessarily fashioned as a product of relationships, but usually vertical, bureaucratic relationships rather than horizontal relationships that build rhizomatic and complicated networks within communities. I am endlessly thankful for one of the policymakers I worked with in Whitehorse, Stephanie, who helped me understand the basic steps of policy creation; though I asked many participants to help facilitate my understanding of this process, her

insight was tremendously helpful. She explained that the basic formula[30] for policy creation is virtually the same across all governments, institutions, and organizations:

1. Identify a problem

2. Analyze the problem/research

3. Generate Solutions

4. Consult with public/communities

5. Measure and assess performance

Stephanie explained that this process is inherently iterative, resulting in the continuous flow between stages and steps of policy creation, sending policies into the bureaucratic "abyss" multiple times throughout the process. Whitehorse, Stephanie suggested, is working diligently to increase opportunities for collaboration and consultation between various governing bodies, NGOs, and members of the local community; ideally, the collaborative aspects would be woven into the policy framework earlier and earlier in the process, including those impacted by policies in all stages of policy creation.

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[30] The formula for policy creation referred to here comes from the Manitoba Government, and can be accessed at https://www.oag.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/PolicyDevelopmentGuide.pdf

4.5   *In Medias Res:* A Historical Overview

The history of housing and homelessness in Canada is often framed either as the story of a tumultuous socio-economic and political post-war reality, or as a Thatcher/Regan early-neoliberal drama. Both of these forms begin *in medias res* by identifying key people, governments, and policy approaches, leaving out quite a lot of historical and colonial context that is inherently relevant to the contemporary Canadian housing situation; they rarely dedicate more than a few sentences to discussing northern or territorial realities. The territories are often left out most of discourse about Canada. The silence surrounding, or omission of, the three northernmost territories is notable—but not something I had spent a great deal of time considering growing up in southern Canada. As Kenneth Coates makes clear, "the North" has long been a space of non-consideration for "the South" (save for the times when northern resources have been convenient for southern Canadian interests), even though their histories interweave in particularly salient ways (Coates 1985).

To understand specifically why shifts in policy conceptualization are so necessary, one must understand the basic roles and contexts of policy. In his 2016 book entitled, *Still Renovating: A History of Canadian Social Housing Policy*, Greg Suttor explores the relationship between the Canadian social and political context, and the corresponding "waxing or waning" of housing as a policy priority (Suttor 2016). In this key text, Suttor describes the predominant shifts and epochs in the Canadian social housing policy landscape from the postwar period to the beginning of the new millennium. It should be noted, however, that Suttor's otherwise breathtakingly comprehensive analysis falls short when considering a few key areas—in Suttor's own words, "also given less attention in

this book is social housing as it relates to First Nations and Urban Aboriginal people, as well as Canada's North" (Suttor 2016: 23). Both of these are clearly necessary dimensions for examining social housing in Yukon and the territories "North of 60". Also notable is the lack of gendered analysis or reference within the book: though race/racism/racialization is included in limited ways, gender (or women and social housing) is never discussed.

In examining Suttor's "key turning points" and policy epochs in relation to territory-specific policy, and Yukon's housing output, I thought of points of overlap and conversation between notable shifts he indicates, and corresponding shifts in the broader Canadian sociopolitical landscape—especially those corresponding with the rise of neoliberalism. What I found interesting in his examination of social housing was how clearly he lays out the impact the social, economic, political, and historic environment has on policy creation and housing initiatives; Suttor's model provides a solid framework for conducting further research and analysis, especially in Canada's North.

The key "epochs" and "turning points" Suttor outlines are as follows:

1) The Early "Postwar" turning Point

2) Early Public Housing (1949-1964)

3) Mid-1960's Turning Point

4) Public Housing Heyday (1965-1973)

5) Early 1970s Turning Point

6) First Non-Profit Decade (1974-1985)

7) Mid-1980s Turning Point

8) Second Non-Profit Decade (1985-1993)

9) Mid-1990s Turning Point

10) Devolution Era (1994-2001)

11) Early 2000s Turning Point

12) Modest Re-Engagement (Since 2002)

(2016:9)

Policy—broadly, how governments operate—reflects in its entirety the sociopolitical zeitgeist. This may seem like an obvious conclusion, but using this assumption as a starting point for analyzing current and future trends in policy creation is a mechanism or lens through which policy creation in Whitehorse can be used as a barometer of social and political change. Importantly, Suttor's key epochs correspond to shifts in policy and thinking in regards to other, interrelated issues—especially when applying an intersectional lens.

4.5.1 Yukon Housing, Grey Mountain Housing and CMHC

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation opened its doors in 1944—or, at least, the "History" portion of their website suggests that the impetus behind its creation began with the National Housing Act of the same year. Starting with the phrase "it all began in 1944" is an interesting position to take, because conversations surrounding housing (social housing in particular) in Canada arguably did *not* begin in the 1940s. Housing has been a notable issue in this country since confederation. A subsidiary of the Canadian government, CMHC oversees the administration of social housing in 8 out of 10 provinces, and all three territories (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2018). The Yukon Housing Corporation—the entity that invited me to the Yukon—is the

affiliate of CMHC operating in Yukon, and was established under the Housing Corporation Act in 1972 (towards the end of Suttor's *Public Housing Heyday*) (Lennox, et al.: 2010).

Grey Mountain Housing Society, established a decade later (in 1983), "is a registered charity organization and is not a governmental initiative or social housing agency. Our mandate includes providing geared-to-income housing facilitated by the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Urban Native Housing Program" (Grey Mountain Housing Society 2018). The fight for self-government agreements was also underway at this time, resulting in the first 4 of the 11 self-governing Yukon First Nations signing self-government agreements. Housing creation in Yukon roughly corresponds with the shifts outlined by Suttor—most of the available housing stock, for example, was built several decades ago—during the *Heyday*. This has serious implications for supplements and tax breaks for renovations and maintenance—of which many homes in Yukon are in need.

4.5.2   Gender and Neoliberalism

Brodie and Bakker masterfully outline the legacy of gender-neutral policy in Canada, but author Casey Ready, in *Shelter in a Storm: Revitalizing Feminism in Neoliberal Ontario*, applies a similarly critical eye to Ontario policies as they impact YWCAs in Ontario. She states: "The neoliberal social welfare state, which replaced the Keynesian state in the 1970s, introduced significant cuts to previously funded social services" (2016: 38). This happened in multiple waves, including, for example, the Harris conservative government, which entered power in 1995. Ready documents the drastic cuts that took place in this period, such as a 21.6% cut to welfare rates, occurring during the infamous "Common

Sense Revolution" (2016: 39). Ready discusses the uneasy relationship between feminism and "the state", and the ways that feminist initiatives are being revitalized in the contemporary Ontario political context. These authors all discuss the need for intersectional feminist frameworks and analyses.

4.5.3   History of homelessness:

The late NDP leader Jack Layton summed up the history of homelessness in Canada in a 2000 book, *Homelessness: The Making and Unmaking of a Crisis.* This book critically examines the political climate that contributed to the contemporary "homelessness crisis" Canada finds itself in. In his examination, Layton finds that the concept of "homelessness" was not a term present in the Canadian zeitgeist or even something commonly used until the 1980s and 1990s. Though homelessness has long been an issue facing Canadians, the period of time since the 1980s has seen a dramatic increase in the prevalence of homelessness (Layton 2000). It is unclear, however, whether this increase is due to an actual increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness, shifts in the visibility and recognition of homelessness, or both factors influencing each other simultaneously.

Changing models of policy, or even individual policies themselves is difficult. Just as fervent as those who are calling for policy change, are those who wish for policy to stay the same. The role of shaping policy, in the Whitehorse context, looks very different than in many other jurisdictions. The conservative Yukon Party, holding office for 14 years (3 consecutive terms) until November 2016, lost re-election to their Liberal opposition (Tobin 2016). Research participants informed me that the Yukon Party often spoke about the need for collaboration and community-driven recommendations; however, policy

practitioners and community members across the board experienced occasional frustration and disappointment when collaborative efforts would fall through. This frustration (of individuals both inside and outside the territorial government) had with the Yukon Party has not dissipated: though personnel may have changed, some of the "bad feelings rolled over", as one participant told me.

The relationship between policymakers, advocacy groups, and NGOs is interlinked and constitutes a concerted, if not always-coordinated action for activism related to homelessness. I rarely found myself in rooms or at tables where no government representatives[31] were present or no NGO workers were present. The flows between these groups are readily apparent and ever-present, and many people who I spoke to discussed the importance of these relationships. The associations between NGOs and corresponding government departments are supposed to be "arm's length"—meaning, the NGO receives government funding (and thus, is answerable to government pressures), but is also beholden to mandates that often privilege advocacy on behalf of marginalized groups. Therein lies a prickly question: how can you advocate for political change, when your organization is funded by those you criticize? Some tersely referred to this as "biting the hand that feeds you". Moreover, changing the structure of government has the potential to put NGOs in precarious positions: for example, blocks of funding for rent supplements (as two participants, representing two different organizations, told me) have no guarantee that funding will continue after current allotments run dry.

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[31] Usually the government workers present were employed by the territory, though sometimes municipal government representatives were present. It was less common during the meetings I was invited to for representatives from First Nations governments to be in attendance.

For some governments, as with the former Stephen Harper Conservative Government, the work of activists represents a threat to its own hegemony. One individual who I interviewed, Ella, spoke to me of the stringent budgetary restrictions that the Harper Government placed on charities doing advocacy work. The restrictions—which had always formed a part of the Income Tax Act, only began to be stringently enforced under Harper. They specifically focused on the actions and operations of organizations with "radical" or politically progressive mandates. Under these newly enforced rules, a maximum of 10% of their budgets (time and resources) could be spent on what was deemed to be "political activity". Canada Without Poverty—an organization with which some people I interviewed were affiliated—launched a "Charter challenge" with the Ontario Superior Court, seeking a declaration that provisions in the Income Tax Act which restrict political activities of charities seeking to relieve poverty in Canada violate the Canadian Charter, particularly the right to freedom of expression (s. 2(b)) and the right to freedom of association (section 2(d))" (Canada Without Poverty 2016)[32]. Awareness of issues like homelessness represents an unwanted challenge to governments that do not wish to address its ramifications. As Michel Foucault writes: "There is an administration of knowledge, a politics of knowledge, relations of power which pass via knowledge and which, if one tries to transcribe them, lead one to consider forms of domination" (Foucault 1972: 69).

Doreen Massey, in reference to the work of Edward Soja, author of *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), describes a similar phenomenon to that which occurs in the realm of

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[32] As of July, 2018: Canada Without Poverty has since won its Charter challenge against the CRA at the Ontario Superior Court (Beeby 2018)

policy creation, in which some voices and stories are given ubiquitous preference over others to define reality:

> But another effect of the linear way in which Soja constructs his history is that it omits, not just other themes, but other voices. It has a hermetic coherence which excludes deviant contributions. Non-Marxist geographers, for instance, are not heard from very much… there is little simultaneity here, just a procession of those *who are seen to have been* dominant or important. It is a disappointment because it belies the evident democratic intent. (1994: 218)

4.6   Knowledge and Power

As Gregory Bateson suggests, all researchers forfeit pure "objectivity" from the outset of their project, because "the total universe, past and present is not subject to observation from any given observer's position" (Bateson 1972: XVIII). The data procured by a researcher's research is inherently skewed to present the set of results highlighted via the guiding questions posed, or the objectives outlined. I emphasize this reality because I, too, was faced with a dilemma while conducting this research; on the one hand, anthropologists are encouraged to follow the narrative and thematic threads that are presented by the people they work with. These threads are examined and considered within the framework of a cosmopolitics; I struggle with imposing what I know to be true through my own experiences onto discourses that do not include the same perspectives, concerns, and worldviews. What people told me is clearly embedded in larger discourses in which women are already absent. The danger present in excluding the voices and experiences of women from this conversation means that women are less likely to be able

to access services that meet their needs as bodies informed and produced via the gendering process.

When a service, resource, space, or policy does not specify the population it aims to serve, it becomes a service, resource space, or policy for or benefitting men (or "the masculine experience" more broadly). This is clearly indicated in the quotes included above, and subtly enforced through "gender neutral" or "gender-inattentive" policy. Language that is "gender neutral" in attempt to be "inclusive" simply serves to mask nuance; gendered realities are simply ignored, because addressing them is a complicated endeavor.

4.7   Salvation Army Centre of Hope: A Case Study

In October 2017, a highly controversial, $10 million dollar homeless shelter opened in Whitehorse, run by the Salvation Army with the support of the Yukon Government's department of Health and Social Services. The Salvation Army Center of Hope opened its doors across the street from the old Salvation Army Shelter building, which, according to reports, was consistently operating at 200% capacity to provide shelter and meals (CBC News 2015). According to some interviewees, a tender for a proposed shelter was put out for organizations to bid on in the late 2000s, which the Salvation Army won. The newly constructed building has a capacity of 25 emergency shelter beds (alongside 20 transitional units on the upper floor, which had not yet opened when I completed my fieldwork), and provides meals, programming, and shelter 7 days per week. Because the Centre opened during my fieldwork, it was all that many of participants wanted to talk

about. Participants in my research told me that initial plans for the Centre were created in consultation with advocates for women experiencing homelessness. Between the proposed 25 shelter beds, and the 20 transitional beds, 50% of the new shelter space was to be allocated to women, and 50% to men. The transitional units on the upper floor would also be split evenly. At the grand opening, however, it was revealed that a much smaller portion of beds in the shelter space would go to women; as for the transitional units, though they would still be split "50/50" by a movable divider, the partition could be shifted to extend the men's "half" into the women's. Women's advocates in Whitehorse were understandably confused, and were left asking why this change had been made at what seemed like the last minute. They were met with the argument that women had historically accessed shelter space and services at the Salvation Army less than men, so, required less shelter space allocated to them. Advocates for women experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse were notably excluded from making this decision.

At the beginning of this thesis, I indicated that my research spanned the topics of homelessness, housing policy, and gender. Notably, gender has been absent from the previous chapters as a core element. I hope to explore, in this chapter, why this might be the case. While I was conducting research, it was curiously difficult to ask questions and have conversations about gender in relation to homelessness and policy in Whitehorse. Gender and sexuality are protected grounds in the new, and hard won (I refer to this above), Yukon human rights legislation, and I repeatedly heard that policy "should be" feminist in orientation and genesis. Moreover, the majority of the participants in this research were women, and there is certainly no lack of female representation in the

recently elected Yukon government. Why, then, were people so puzzled when I entreated to speak to them about gender, or so convinced that men were more likely to suffer at the hands of structural violence due to their gender than women? This is a complicated question. Service providers may be correct in stating that the majority of the clients they serve are men. When I began asking questions about gender and homelessness in northern centers, I was directed to read two 2007 reports co-researched and produced through interviewing 66 women experiencing homelessness across the Yukon, though a corresponding report also included voices from across the three territories. Women's advocates from both Yukon and North West Territories encouraged me to use these reports as a points of entry to see what issues they had been facing, not just in the form of bureaucratic roadblocks but also as Northern women working to amplify the voices of other Northern women. These two reports were written over a decade ago, but many of the issues that face Northern women experiencing homelessness persist; their narratives include poignant intergenerational trauma stemming from colonialism, and bureaucratic pressure that is at once representative of systemic inattention and discrimination. One of the key takeaways from the report, and perhaps the most alarming realization, is that "all northern women are at-risk of homelessness" (Bopp and Hrenchuk 2007). I read this assertion and initially found it to be alarmist; however, I was forced to reconsider this position after conducting an interview with a Yukon government worker who ended up couch surfing for a few months when she was unexpectedly forced to move from her rental house during a particularly tight period in Whitehorse rental unit availability. As the report suggests, "it (*homelessness*) can happen to anyone" (2007).

So, when I heard that the Salvation Army would not be holding 50% of the shelter beds for women, I was shocked. The 2016 point-in-time count (partial, as all point in time counts are) suggested that half of those experiencing homelessness in the city were women. Women, as I found out, who largely do not go to the Salvation Army shelter, who do not access resources and services at many organizations, because they do not feel safe doing so; many women are afraid of what might happen if they enter certain spaces. This experience of fear, like other lived realities, is as Joan Scott says:

> [At] once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political. (Scott 1991: 797)

Embedded in women's experiences of homelessness are the always-intersectional realities faced by bodies living in the time of colonial capitalopatriarchy: of being a woman in a space and society that privileges masculinity; or of being Indigenous in a space and society that privileges whiteness or settler Canadians; or of being a single mother in a space and society that privileges the heterosexual, two-parent nuclear family. The bodies of women who experience homelessness, with complex identities, threaten dominant, hegemonic society—and the "normative" bodies of white, male, middle class citizens.

So, instead of providing separate spaces for women to encourage them to use the Salvation Army services, women (not only the women involved in advocacy, but also the women experiencing homelessness themselves) find their needs and voices once again pushed to the margins. In order to receive an equitable share of resources, women experiencing homelessness are implicitly tasked with the burden of showing up and

demanding them; even showing up to a shelter requires the overcoming of barriers that make the space less accessible to women in the first place.

Even when services are in place to target and serve specific groups, they often fail to understand the overall circumstances that may make them untenable or unsuitable for those very people. In one interview, a participant had just gotten off the phone with a client—a woman on a waitlist for social housing. Their client had been removed from the waitlist for refusing the two houses she had been offered. The first refusal occurred when a case worker called the woman during the day, while she was at work: the woman had answered her phone, but said "no" to the house in confusion and misunderstanding. She refused a second house because the place was too large for her and her young son; not only would she have felt guilty taking up a place that she felt could hold a much larger family, but she would constantly be reminded that she did not have enough furniture to fill the space. The services that are offered to people experiencing homelessness are often offered in a way that does not prioritize a dialogue and mutual understanding; these services attempt to fill a gap and to genuinely provide something that is needed, and individuals working on issues and services targeting those experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness told me that the Yukon is advancing quickly in the context of implementing "client centered" approaches, with an "any door is the right door" capacity. These desires are reflected in the highly collaborative *Safe at Home* plan, and serve as a barometer for progressive social and political change.

On several occasions, I was met with stories of past projects that had been supported through collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and community members, only to be tabled indefinitely as they reached the final stages of implementation. In other

instances (as with the case of the Women's beds at the Salvation Army shelter), a dramatic change would be made at (seemingly) the last minute, which would render the narratives shared or prior collaboration moot. Overwhelmingly, however, many of the people who participated in this research were optimistic about current initiatives and projects to promote collaboration in Whitehorse—I was impressed by the efforts underway to collaborate and foster dialogue surrounding these issues. I use these examples from my fieldwork in Whitehorse not to suggest that Whitehorse is somehow unique or negligent in addressing these issues, but rather to demonstrate how these experiences and conversations very much align with the treatment of intersectional issues in broader, macro-level discourse. Whitehorse is moving in positive directions, but it is important to locate where it lies compared to other locales across Canada at the policy level. As Janine Brodie and Isabella Bakker note in *Where are the Women?*, this erasure and "hiding" of women and their experiences is a national issue (2008).

4.8   Cyborg Policies, Feminist Futures

It is important to mention that several policymakers and service providers who participated in this research had also experienced homelessness. This reality was also present in the "voices of service providers" included in the *A Little Kindness* report from 2007 (Bopp and Hrenchuk). When people who have experienced homelessness find themselves in this system as social workers, policymakers, frontline workers (in many instances motivated to do so given their experiences), they express frustration with how things are, and peer inside the machine to understand why things can't change quickly. One government worker who had also experienced homelessness as a teenager, Mike,

expressed that he has to repeatedly remind himself why he got involved in the bureaucratic work he is currently doing: "I'm doing this because I want to change the system". He soon realized, however, that the painfully slow pace at which bureaucracy moves is, in large part, why quick changes can't be made to fix glaring gaps in the social security net. Another participant (an NGO worker) confided that she often has to shake herself out of being numb to her background as a frontline worker in the policy-based work she currently does.

Sometimes, as several participants inferred, you have to act in ways that run counter to your experience (even with experience of homelessness or frontline service work). When I would tell another person with "lived experience" about my own history, there was recognition of shared struggle, and most importantly, of shared community. Being allowed to start the process of creating community bonds through reclaiming painful and traumatic experience is, in itself, an empowering process. The ability to share your story is an exercise in self-advocacy and empowerment, and a process of speaking to often marginalized or contradictory parts of a Cyborg self.

What is to be done with a Cyborg? The Cyborg, to a Haraway-inspired imagination, lives in a grotesque, roughly hewn body; it is comprised of an abominable amalgamation of assorted parts, made up of fragments of worlds marked as a Being being Other. The concept, brought to life by Haraway in the mid-90s holds a great deal of utility in discussing the role and question of women in the policy-scape; the Cyborg also represents hope that women can avoid the same naturalistic, dualistic, and hegemonic structures that have underwritten patriarchal thinking (Haraway 1991:151-155).

Policy is an odd creature in the ecology of functional governing bodies, being a jargon-filled explanation for, and outline of, the actions and intentions of the hegemon. It is, like many other things, a Cyborg—on the one hand, it is simultaneously cagey and illusive-one might not know precisely what "the policy" is (or, they do, but apply it selectively based on context) while on the other hand, policy occupies the role of apex predator—its boundaries are selectively permeable, the reach, scope, and connotation of the word far reaching. Policy is something that tries in futility to beat its fists against human agency, and loses, more often than not. This is not because policy means harm, but because it operates within structures that are desperately trying to avoid their own unraveling against the chaotic forces that are unleashed by disruptive techno-scientific, and economic changes. Policy is only effective if it includes, as agents, the very people and communities that will be affected by it.

"The Knowing self," Haraway posits, "is partial in all its guises. It is never finished, never whole, it is simply there and original" (1991: 193). The edges of this knowing self-this body, this view from somewhere are rough, raw, poorly defined—in this manner, they can be stitched together and negotiated to fit with others to form new connections, relations, and communities.

Stories are a product of communities, and, as rhizomatic and living things, they can bend to fit new contexts. Narrative expression is dynamic in ways products of arborescent structures can never be. They are contextual—they change depending on the teller, the audience, and the relationship between them both. Bureaucracy has rules that blunt the effect of stories, and protect the arbor and hegemon from the rhizome, the Cyborg. We need to create new ways of doing things that mean people don't become numb to, or

dismissive of their own experiences as "not objective", or unimportant; we need to create a way to see lived experience and Cyborg selves as being assets, rather than liabilities. If people who have experienced homelessness are funneled into the bureaucratic arbor, without altering its rigidly bounded and defined structure, they will get caught in its linearity—flies in a spider's web.

This is not the time for fully formed, or bounded categories. We are living in a time when the currents underlying our thoughts, theories, actions- all reflect this incommensurable, insurmountable incompleteness. It is because our knowledge is partial that we must build communities with those who have experiences both different and similar to our own. What we most need to understand and explore is the emblem of our times: the being between worlds, the Cyborg.

Chapter 5

5   Conclusion

In the preface to this thesis, I included an excerpt from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*: in this quote, Kublai Khan and Marco Polo are discussing a stone bridge, and Khan expresses frustration with Polo for describing the stones that form the bridge—he only wants to hear about the arch, not the seemingly mundane components that form it. Polo interjects, explaining that each individual stone is vital to make the bridge—the bridge and the stones are both implicated in the very existence of the other. If Khan wishes to see the bridge, he must also embrace the existence of the stones. I have attempted, through this thesis, to hang together a wide array of paradigms and disciplines—each element I present in this thesis is as important as the overall structure they take. Throughout this thesis, I refer to Mosquera's *Marco Polo Syndrome*, and the importance of examining the context in which "art" (including, necessarily, concepts and stories) is produced. As Donna Haraway suggests, knowledge comes *from somewhere*—it is contextual, situated, and rooted in a world outside of itself that is messy and complex (1991).

5.1   Synopsis

This thesis, at its core, is an attempt to uproot and unsettle binary thinking about taken-for-granted, invisible, or ignored realities: homelessness is not the inevitable opposite of housedness; narrative and "subjectivity" can form a part of "objective" scientific methodology; "men's homelessness" and "women's homelessness" are not simple and

obvious categories with clear causes and approaches; Whitehorse—the "Wilderness City"—can exist in a space of north/south or urban/rural contradiction.

I began by laying out the methodological dimensions of "social science" as it pertains to anthropology—namely the necessity of reporting the polyvocal knowledges that not only emerge from narratives, but also constitute an ethnographic narrative itself. My voice, and the voices of those who participated in this research, work together to convey a dialogic method—demonstrating that my own research interests aimed at understanding policy (specifically that which is aimed at reducing homelessness) cannot exist without the work of people engaging with those issues.

Furthermore, these issues do not exist in a vacuum; instead, they are situated in Whitehorse, a distant city in "the North" that exists as both an untamed wilderness in the Southern, settler imaginary, and as a very real city populated by its own urban infrastructure and residents. Whitehorse has histories; it has its genealogy of policy ideas, power relations, and multiple layers of bureaucracy that all weave together to shape its current form. The policy decisions that tug and pull at the possible ways of experiencing homelessness in the city are ongoing. As articulated by multiple theorists throughout this thesis (notably Donna Haraway, Joan Scott, Julia Christensen, Doreen Massey, and Michel Foucault), the dynamics of unequal power relations (in the context of this research, specifically between those who write policy and the people who experience its effects) pose major difficulties. Moreover, the awareness that people with "lived experience" must be involved in the policymaking matrix has opened new opportunities to learn from embodied experience—from knowledges situated in Cyborg bodies. The knowledge sought from those with "lived experience" has the potential to transform the

way that policy is understood and made. However, that transformation is not to be expected from consultation alone, but rather from the meaningful inclusion of voices and bodies within the organs of power: to open doors to marginal communities and give them the support and agency to make change happen on *their terms*.

My process of conducting the fieldwork presented within this thesis involved coming to terms with this complexity, and applying this reflexivity to the stories and realities shared with me by the individuals who participated in this research. Lives and experiences are never easily explainable—there is no inevitability in being human. Those who work to create policy can also be folks who have experienced homelessness; mapped spaces can hold multiple, contradictory meanings across groups of people (and even for one person).

The process of conducting this research in Whitehorse was tightly wound around the reawakening of memories from my past. In trauma theory it is known that a long period of time can pass between traumatic events and their resurfacing to affect an individual's psychological state. While conducting my work I was finding that some interviews, and even some entire days, left me physically drained. What I did not know was that the constant process of writing, researching, and thinking about themes that closely reflect my own experiences would feel like putting all your weight on an injured leg, and then proceeding to walk on it. There were times where I was unable to hold my coffee, because my body would be shaking so uncontrollably from being overwhelmed with a sense of emotional vulnerability.

5.2   Future Directions

Much like a traumatic memory realized, this work has holes, gaps, messiness and partialities. It is honest, and exploratory, and just begins to scratch the surface of themes I will explore further. Throughout this thesis, I have included notes about areas I will consider during future research. My research in Yukon is ongoing; over the next several years (for my dissertation) I will continue to work with policymakers—including women with lived experience of homelessness—in the territory on the topics presented within this thesis. I seek to understand not just *how* policy is made (something I only began to explore during the process of writing this thesis), but how policymaking entities and stakeholders function as part of a living and symbiotic ecology. Importantly, I hope to broaden my understanding of Indigenous homelessness in the North—specifically as experienced by Indigenous women. My interest in exploring the experiences of single mothers has not abated, and I hope to weave this aspect into my future work. As part of my dissertation, I will also explore the history of Yukon as it relates to key shifts in policy or social realities in southern Canadian provinces.

It is worthwhile to explore further the concept of "translation"—of making something intelligible to another person who has lived a different life, with different experiences than the translator. How does one go about making something that is widely unknown, or often miscommunicated due to contextual paucity, understandable to a broad audience? How do you explain feelings or experiences? The translator must engage in a process of standing in two worlds, and of peering into the imagined minds of those who engage with their translated work. Through this thesis, I begin laying the groundwork for such a translation—of weaving this narrative into a tool for understanding complex positions

and knowledges. In future work, I will develop (both conceptually and methodologically) this idea of translation in the context of narrative and policy creation.

The core themes within this research are those of homelessness, housing policy, gender, narrative, and the concept of "Northern Canada". Homelessness, for example, is anything but a straightforward, predictable, or linear experience. As mentioned in chapter 1, many scholars who write on the topic suggest that homelessness exists on a continuum (one that people experiencing homelessness are said to "slide along" or "fall along"), or they talk about the many "pathways to homelessness". I find the linearity inherent in this conceptual imagery frustrating, as it hints at assumptions of a clear destination; homelessness, however, is symptomatic of a complex system—it occurs as a result of multiple dynamic factors interacting to produce a monstrously thorny social, political, economic, and profoundly human crisis. Homelessness feels like being swallowed by a monster wave, over and over, every time you stand up. It is at once sudden and inescapably drawn out—it is anxiety-producing, and all-encompassing. Homelessness is a phenomenon that hangs together, however briefly, fluttering and rhizomatic human agency winding around the constraints of its structural cage, and a "becoming" sent spiraling in new and unpredictable directions.

My goal is to develop a stronger understanding of homelessness as a *gendered* phenomenon, and of policy as a *gendering* process. I intend to work with people experiencing homelessness as part of this process, and explore what it means to form communities based on shared trauma.

Through my work as a member of the Women's Homelessness Advisory Committee for the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, I will continue to focus energy into policy advocacy—specifically on efforts to include people with lived experience of homelessness in the policy creation process. As articulated throughout this thesis, such efforts are already underway across Canada. I believe strongly that experience and narrative—*if taken seriously*—can make the policies produced by the institutions that govern Canadian society more effective.

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Ethics Clearance

Western Research

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Bipasha Baruah
Department & Institution: Arts and Humanities\Women's Studies and Feminist Research, Western University

NMREB File Number: 109660
Study Title: Understanding how homelessness reduction policy is framed: a case study of Whitehorse and the Yukon Housing Corporation (YHC)

NMREB Initial Approval Date: October 03, 2017
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Western University Protocol		2017/10/02
Letter of Information & Consent		2017/10/02
Instruments	List of Interview Questions - Received August 7, 2017	
Other	Letter of invitation from Yukon Housing Corporation - Received for Information	2017/08/07

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

EO: Erika Basile __ Grace Kelly__ Katelyn Harris__ Nicola Morphet __ Karen Gopaul __ Patricia Sargeant __ Kelly Patterson __

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Alex Nelson

Post-secondary   The University of Western Ontario
Education and   London, Ontario, Canada
Degrees: 2012-2016 B.A. (Hons)

Honours and   Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Awards: Canada Graduate Scholarship- Master's
                                      2016-2017

                                      Regna Darnell Graduate Award for Fieldwork in Sociocultural
                                      Anthropology
                                      2017

                                      Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship
                                      Doctoral Award
                                      2018-2019

Related Work   Research Assistant
Experience   The University of Western Ontario
                                      2016-2017

                                      Teaching Assistant
                                      The University of Western Ontario
                                      2017-2018