

MAPPING RULING RELATIONS THROUGH HOMELESSNESS ORGANIZING

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## Abstract

Poor people's organizing can be effective even in periods of neoliberal retrenchment. This dissertation examines ruling relations and the social relations of struggle from the standpoint of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. With political activist ethnography as my central theoretical framework and methodological approach, I conducted field research, interviews and textual analysis of City and organizational documents. Focusing on OCAP's homelessness campaigns, I examine the social relations of struggle in three campaigns in Toronto: a campaign to stop the criminalization of homeless people in a public park by private security, a campaign to increase access to a social assistance benefit for people in emergency housing need, and a campaign to increase the number and improve the conditions of emergency shelter beds. My research demonstrates the active and ongoing research and theorization that anti-poverty activists engage in as well as the practices of delegitimization, excluding critique, testimonial injustice and epistemic violence that ruling relations engage in to counter activist research and theory. Some of this research and theory has regarded both Housing First policy and philosophy and Toronto's emergency shelter system which OCAP, homeless people and other advocates have been decrying as unjust and inept for years. This dissertation explicates some of the ways that the City works to delegitimize its challengers and demonstrates the validity of many of the longstanding critiques of the ruling regime. While the City of Toronto has worked to contain homelessness organizing in Toronto, and deployed numerous demobilization tactics to do so, each campaign was fully or partially successful. Full or partial victories were secured by anti-poverty activists through the use (or threat) of direct action tactics.

## **Dedication**

To the more than 1,000 people whose names are on the Toronto Homeless Memorial  
... and to those unknown.

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Firstly, I want to thank the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) and its members for allowing and supporting me to do this project. This dissertation wouldn't have been possible without you, not only for the obvious reason that it is conducted from OCAP's standpoint, but also because I've developed much of my political analysis through my experiences with OCAP.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>xv</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>xvi</b>
<b>List of Illustrations</b> .....	<b>xvii</b>
<b>List of Appendices</b> .....	<b>xviii</b>
<b>List of Acronyms</b> .....	<b>xix</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Introduction .....	1
Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach .....	2
Subject Position.....	4
Research Methods .....	5
Contextualizing the Dissertation: OCAP, Organizing and Homelessness.....	5
<i>OCAP Organizing Model</i> .....	6
<i>OCAP as/and Social Work(ing)</i> .....	9
<i>Homelessness and Homeless People</i> .....	9
Contribution of the Research .....	12
Overview and Structure .....	13
Conclusion .....	16
<b>Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Part I: Theoretical Framework .....	17
Introduction .....	17
Political Activist Ethnography: An Overview .....	18



<i>Ruling Relations</i> .....	19
<i>Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle</i> .....	20
<i>Translocal/Transtemporal Texts</i> .....	21
<i>Subjective/Objective</i> .....	22
<i>Inside/Outside</i> .....	23
<i>Starting Point/Standpoint</i> .....	24
<i>My Social Location as a Researcher</i> .....	28
<i>IE/PAE Conclusion</i> .....	32
Governmental “Practices of Assemblage” .....	32
Poverty and Homelessness in the Moral Economy.....	35
Neoliberalism .....	38
Social Movement Theory.....	39
<i>Normative Social Movement Literature</i> .....	39
<i>Movement Outcome Theory</i> .....	42
<i>Piven, Cloward and Disruption</i> .....	44
Theoretical Framework Conclusion.....	45
Part II: Methodological Approach .....	45
Introduction .....	45
Guiding Principles and Research Design.....	46
<i>Utility</i> .....	46
<i>Reciprocity</i> .....	47
<i>Reflexivity</i> .....	48
<i>Accountability</i> .....	50

<i>Accessibility</i> .....	55
Study Design .....	56
<i>Field Research</i> .....	56
<i>Freedom of Information Act Requests</i> .....	56
<i>Interviews</i> .....	56
<i>i. OCAP Interviews</i> .....	57
<i>ii. Toronto City Council and Staff Interviews</i> .....	58
<i>iii. Member of Parliament Interview</i> .....	58
<i>iv. Media Interviews</i> .....	58
<i>Data Analysis</i> .....	59
<i>Data Disposal</i> .....	61
Conclusion .....	61
<b>Chapter 3: Privately Policing Public Space: St. James Park</b> .....	<b>62</b>
Introduction .....	62
Getting the Call .....	65
What’s Going On? .....	67
Public Space, Private Police.....	69
<i>Criminalization/Displacement</i> .....	77
<i>Dispersal/Banishment/Displacement</i> .....	80
<i>Parks Ambassadors</i> .....	82
Media and St. James Park .....	87
Behind the Scenes .....	88
Aligned Interests and Coordinated Ruling.....	93
Fighting to Win: How Did OCAP Win? .....	98

The Aftermath: Winning to Fight .....	99
Conclusion .....	101
<b>Chapter 4: Fighting for Roofs and Beds: The Housing Stabilization Fund Campaign .....</b>	<b>104</b>
Introduction .....	104
Housing Stabilization Fund.....	105
Translocal Textual Ruling.....	107
The Laura Bardeau Case .....	108
Beyond Laura Bardeau.....	110
Incremental Victories and Ongoing Struggle.....	113
Winning (and Losing Momentum) .....	114
Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle .....	115
“Toronto Robs from the Poor” .....	117
<i>i. Surplus</i> .....	118
<i>ii. Reserve Funds</i> .....	118
<i>iii. Data Discrepancies</i> .....	119
<i>Launching the Report</i> .....	120
Legitimacy Problem.....	122
The (Non)Response.....	125
Tightening the Ranks .....	129
Direct Action Policy Work .....	136
Aftermath .....	142
Conclusion .....	143
<b>Chapter 5: Housing First, Homeless People Last .....</b>	<b>146</b>

Introduction .....	146
History of Housing First: The Standard Account .....	149
<i>Challenging the Standard Account and Simplistic Progress Narrative</i> .....	153
<i>Housing First Today</i> .....	156
Streets to Homes .....	159
<i>Housing First and Neoliberalism</i> .....	162
<i>Housing First in Toronto’s Housing Crisis</i> .....	165
Housing First: Rehabilitation and Harm Reduction.....	172
First Steps for the Pre-Housed .....	178
Part II: The Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness.....	181
TAEH for Toronto: Forged Alignment.....	188
Toronto for Who?.....	193
Conclusion .....	196
<b>Chapter 6: When is a Bed Not A Bed?: Epistemic Injustice and Shelter</b>	
<b>Occupancy</b> .....	<b>198</b>
Introduction .....	198
“What You’ve Seen is Incorrect”: Testimonial Injustice and Institutional Gaslighting.....	199
<i>Explicating the Numbers: The Ongoing Dispute over Shelter Capacity</i> .....	203
<i>Who Knows? The Social Organization of Credibility and Testimonial Injustice</i> .....	208
<i>Gaslighting</i> .....	213
<i>Smile and Say Thank You: Epistemic Violence of Requisite Gratitude for Continued</i> <i>Oppression</i> .....	217
Doing Our Best: Claims of Relative, Collective Innocence .....	220
<i>The Standard of Proof</i> .....	225
<i>Then Whose Fault is it? Scapegoating Refugees</i> .....	229

Conclusion .....	232
<b>Chapter 7: The Struggle for Shelter: The Campaign, Mobilization and Demobilization .....</b>	<b>234</b>
Introduction .....	234
Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle .....	244
Mobilization/Demobilization .....	246
<i>Not Invited to the Revolution<sup>TM</sup>: Divide &amp; Conquer, Censorship, Banning &amp; Epistemic Injustice</i> .....	248
<i>Sabotage: Delegitimization, Certifying the Competition, Concessions and Victory Hijacking</i> .....	254
<i>Inhumane Conditions: Dissimulation, Consultation and Standards Creation</i> .....	261
<i>Where's The Funds?: Repression, Smokescreens, Deferment and Attrition</i> .....	264
<i>Discussion</i> .....	269
Organizational Competition .....	273
Conclusion .....	280
<b>Chapter 8 - Conclusion: The Struggle Continues .....</b>	<b>282</b>
Introduction .....	282
Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle .....	282
The Power of Disruption, The Power of OCAP .....	289
Research Contributions .....	290
Policy Implications .....	292
Future Research .....	295
<i>i. Activist Research</i> .....	295
<i>iii. Housing First</i> .....	296
<i>iv. City of Toronto Policy</i> .....	297

Conclusion .....	298
<b>References .....</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>377</b>
<i>Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle</i> .....	422

## **List of Tables**

Table 4.1: Housing Stabilization Allowance Program Usage: 2013-2016 .....	<b>128</b>
Table 6.1: Daily Shelter Census: November 9, 2018.....	<b>204</b>
Table 6.2: November 9, 2018 Overnight Service Usage .....	<b>206</b>
Table 7.1 Demobilization Tactics Used Against OCAP in the Shelter Campaign.....	<b>270</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1: St. James Park Communications from OCAP’s Standpoint.....	89
Figure 3.2: St. James Park Communications .....	90
Figure 3.3: Coordinated Ruling of St. James Park.....	96
Figure 4.1: Homelessness Prevention Funding by Jurisdiction .....	106
Figure 4.2: HSF Campaign Social Relations of Struggle .....	116
Figure 5.1 Streets to Homes: Percentage of Private Market Use, 2005-2017 .....	167
Figure 5.2: S2H Clients Housed by Unit Type .....	168
Figure 5.3: Homelessness, Income and the Housing Market in Toronto.....	168
Figure 5.4: Toronto Rents and Vacancy Rates, 2006-2018 .....	169
Figure 5.5: Prescriptive Harm Reduction Trajectory .....	176
Figure 5.6: Mapping TAEH/City Relations: TAEH Becomes the CAB .....	190
Figure 5.7: Mapping TAEH/City Relations: Validating Knowledge .....	191
Figure 5.8: Mapping TAEH/City Relations: TPL as Community Partner.....	192
Figure 6.1 Shelter Campaign vs. TAEH Deputation Times .....	210
Figure 7.1: Shelter Campaign Protests and Events by Month .....	238
Figure 7.2: Map of Shelter Campaign Social Relations of Struggle.....	245
Figure 8.1: Mapping the Full Social Relations of Struggle .....	283



## **List of Illustrations**

Illustration 3.1: Map of St. James Park Neighbourhood.....	64
Illustration 5.1: Beds Not Cuts: Feb 9 <sup>th</sup> C.D. Howe Protest .....	148
Illustration 5.2: Stop the Homeless Sweep .....	161
Illustration 5.3: Toronto for All – Homelessness.....	194
Illustration 7.1 April 22nd Flyer .....	237

## List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Plain(er) Language Summary .....	378
Appendix 2: Glossary .....	428
Appendix 3: OCAP Influences Around the World .....	436
Appendix 4a: OCAP Timeline, Nov. 2016-April 2018 .....	438
Appendix 4b: St. James Park Timeline.....	440
Appendix 4c: Housing Stabilization Fund Timeline .....	441
Appendix 4d: Shelter Campaign Timeline .....	442
Appendix 5a: Informed Consent Letter for OCAP Members.....	443
Appendix 5b: Informed Consent Letter for City Staff/Councillors/Media.....	448
Appendix 6a: Interview Guide for OCAP Members and Paid Organizers.....	452
Appendix 6b: Interview Guide for Workers, Government Representatives & Media .....	454
Appendix 7: Toronto Map .....	455
Appendix 8: Issues with “The Misuse of the Housing Stabilization Fund” Report by TESS and OCAP’s Rebuttal.....	456
Appendix 9: TAEH Community Partners: Organizational Information.....	465
Appendix 10: TAEH and Toronto Libraries Community Partner Agreement .....	470
Appendix 11: Deputants, Time Speaking and Warning Times .....	472
Appendix 12: Written Deputation to Jan. 17, 2018 CDRC Meeting.....	475

## List of Acronyms

2SLGBTQI – Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex	HSF – Housing Stabilization Fund
AHNHC – Affordable Housing Not Hostels Coalition	LGBTQ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer
BLC – Better Living Centre	MOU – memorandum of understanding
CAB – Community Advisory Board	MTF – male to female (trans person)
CDRC – Community Development and Recreation Committee	NSM – new social movements
CHPI – Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative	NSMT – normative social movement theory
CMHC – Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation	NPS – Nathan Phillips Square
CP – Community Partner (TAEH)	OCAP – Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
CSUMB – Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit	ODSP – Ontario Disability Support Program
CUPW – Canadian Union of Postal Workers	OPS – Overdose Prevention Site
DSC – Daily Shelter Census	OPSEU – Ontario Public Sector Union
EDC – Economic Development and Culture	ORE – Office of Research Ethics
FRAPPU - Front d’action Populaire en réaménagement urbain (Popular Action Front in Urban Development)	OTF - Ontario Trillium Foundation
FTM – female to male (trans person)	OW – Ontario Works
H2H – Hostels to Homes	PAE – political activist ethnography
HF – Housing First	PAR – participatory action research
HR – Harm Reduction	PHR – Prescriptive Harm Reduction
	PIT – point in time
	PPT – political process theory
	RMT – resource mobilization theory
	RTR – Raise the Rates
	RWHP – Rapid Winter Housing Project

S2H – Streets to Homes

SDPP - Single Displaced Person's Project

SLMN-BIA – St. Lawrence Market  
Neighbourhood Business  
Improvement Area

SMT – social movement theory

SRS – social relations of struggle

SSHA – Shelter, Support and Housing  
Administration

TAEH – Toronto Alliance to End  
Homelessness

TCHC – Toronto Community Housing  
Corporation

TDRC – Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

THRA – Toronto Harm Reduction Alliance

TPL – Toronto Public Library

TPS – Toronto Police Services

## Chapter 1: Introduction

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*The gains around the HSF [Housing Stabilization Fund], getting [shelter and respite] space open that they weren't going to open... they're victories in terms of people don't die on the streets, people get the Housing Stabilization Fund so they don't have to sleep on the floor and those things are, for those people, they're incredible - and it would be worth it just for that. But I think they're also they're also things that people learn from... There are thousands and thousands of people in the city who have been influenced by OCAP and have some sense that collective action can win things. That might not have existed before.*

~ John Clarke (personal interview, Jan. 22, 2018).

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### Introduction

“Tracy” is 35 weeks pregnant. She and her partner, “Bill,” sleep on a mattress on the floor of the, ironically named, Better Living Centre (BLC) respite site.<sup>1</sup> The two of them stay in a large room that has the lights on 24-hours a day and up to 200 people in it at any given time. The City’s Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) workers tell Tracy they will find her a shelter bed at 24-weeks, but it keeps climbing and now is “37-weeks with a hospital stay.” Tracy tells me the Children’s Aid Society “is up our arse” because of their living situation. I meet her and Bill around 9 am in the café in City Hall before we begin a protest demanding at least 1,000 shelter beds be opened that year. Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) organizer Gaétan Héroux met the couple during one of his trips to the Better Living Centre; he brought them to the action so we can fight for a better place for them to stay.<sup>2</sup>

After disrupting the City Council meeting, the protestors who can stay occupy the space outside of the Mayor’s Office. Earlier that morning, the receptionist told me everyone was busy and the earliest anyone could get to the matter would be Friday; it is Monday. Now, no one comes to meet us; so, we decided to go with ‘plan B’ and attend the not far-away Metro Hall,

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<sup>1</sup> I put quotation marks the first time I use a pseudonym throughout this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> Gaétan told me that Tracy became reluctant when she learned there would be TV cameras. By talking further, that is how he learned that the BLC had not been distributing towels for several days and she had been unable to shower – another basic decency that OCAP would have to fight for.

where SSHA is headquartered.<sup>3</sup> About ten of us make our way to Metro Hall. After getting in the building, we inform security we will not be leaving until we have a meeting, and Tracy and Bill have somewhere safe and quiet to go. We wait. Tracy, Bill, Yogi and I go upstairs to meet with two Streets to Homes workers. Then, Tracy and Bill are on their way to Family Residence: a family shelter after we are assured, they will move to a motel as soon as one comes available.

This story demonstrates the efficacy a relatively small group of people can have when they work collectively and use disruptive tactics. With homelessness at levels unseen in decades, and in the midst of a housing crisis, OCAP organized to improve the living conditions of homeless people in the short-term and the social relations that produce homelessness in the long-term. Starting from, and grounded in, the experience of OCAP, this dissertation works to map “the social relations of struggle,” especially focusing on ruling relations and how they work (Kinsman, 2006, p. 133). By examining OCAP’s homelessness organizing from OCAP’s standpoint, I was able to map ruling relations’ homelessness policies and their relationship to neoliberal capitalism and gentrification; their practices of assemblage and of epistemic injustice; and demobilization tactics. This mapping and my related insights both contribute to scholarship and are valuable from the perspective of activists seeking to better understand and adapt strategies on the ground. In this introduction, I will briefly discuss my theoretical framework and methodological approach and the context in which I am working, specifically by introducing OCAP, its relationship to social work, and some initial background about homelessness and homeless people. I will then outline the contributions this project makes and provide the chapter overview and structure of this dissertation.

### **Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach**

The theoretical approach of this study is largely rooted in the Marxist-feminist approach

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<sup>3</sup> Three things happened that were unbeknownst to us. Firstly, SSHA had recently relocated due to renovations so there was no one to meet us there either; it took longer than usual to have staff meet us as a result. Secondly, SSHA dispatched staff to the Mayor’s office but this information was never relayed to us, so they had to reroute to Metro Hall. Thirdly, a City Hall security guard contacted the Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) and told them he “overheard” that we were going there “to get two individuals on OW” (in Fiorino, 2018, p. 49) – this wasn’t impressive intelligence gathering as we announced we were going there to get shelter beds. In all, at least four City divisions were activated: TESS, SSHA, the Mayor’s Office and security; and, at least eighteen City staff were looped in. SSHA General Manager received thirty-two pages of emails (“MFOIPPA # AG 2018-01844 [Paul Raftis],” 2018).

held by political activist ethnographers based on the work of George Smith (1990) and Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990, 1999).<sup>4</sup> They hold that knowledge is produced reflexively and collectively (also see: Frampton et al., 2006c). Dorothy Smith's (2002) conceptualization of ruling relations which "coordinate people's activities across and beyond local sites of everyday experience" (p. 45) is central to this dissertation. Ruling relations are the "web of relations" that coordinate ruling and include but are not limited to state, corporate and bureaucratic relations (Frampton et al., 2006a, p. 37 also see D. E. Smith, 1987). Political Activist Ethnography (PAE) allows for the piecing together of an analysis of the ruling relations that dominate and organize social relations (see Kinsman, 2006). Gary Kinsman (2006) builds on the theoretical contributions of Dorothy Smith and George Smith to discuss "mapping the social relations of struggle" (p. 133). This mapping works to understand the strengths, weaknesses and contradictions within ruling relations and those working to resist/change them. PAE was developed and is conducted to help social justice movements enact social change (G. W. Smith, 1990; Frampton et al., 2006c).

I also draw on several other theories that help me make sense of my experiences and my research. I discuss these in more detail in the next chapter.

This research is based on the values of social justice and the idea that social research can be mobilized for social change. Political activist ethnographers begin their research from the standpoint of activists: "it provides a way of exploring, from their standpoint, how the world works and how it is put together, with a view to helping them change it." (G. W. Smith, 1990, p. 629). This allows for a material standpoint from a subject rather than an objectified position (Benajmin & Rankin, 2014; Frampton et al., 2006b; D. E. Smith, 1987, 2005). My methodological approach is also informed by Bevington and Dixon's (2005) call to produce "movement-generated" and "movement-relevant" theory (p. 186). To achieve this, I developed five guiding ethical principles for my social justice activist research: utility, reciprocity, reflexivity, accountability and accessibility. It is in the interests of accessibility and accountability that I have included a plain language summary as an Appendix with this dissertation (Appendix 1) so OCAP members and other activists can more easily engage with the

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<sup>4</sup> George Smith was Dorothy Smith's student and friend; their shared last name is coincidental.

material. I have also written a glossary (Appendix 2) for these reasons. From this point on, the first time I use a word that appears in the glossary, it is underlined in the text.

Lastly, while political activist ethnography is very different than traditional ethnographies, I blend descriptive ethnography based on my field research into my political activist ethnographic approach and use storytelling to demonstrate how ruling relations work, how OCAP works, and what the iterative relationship between the two is. I recognize this is not a typical approach however, other scholars have used institutional ethnography, on which political activist ethnography is based, and additional methods to better speak to multiple audiences and fill gaps that cannot be addressed by institutional ethnography alone (Malachowski et al., 2017).

### **Subject Position**

While my standpoint is that of an OCAP activist, my subject position also informs my world view and my research. I have been involved with OCAP for 20 years. I spent all that time living in poverty until I entered my PhD, much of it in receipt of welfare and then disability social assistance. I also had relatively brief experiences with homelessness, both sleeping rough and hidden homelessness as a youth. My anti-poverty work is grounded in my experiences as a poor person. At the same time, I am a white settler living on the traditional territories of many nations, including the Anishinabek, the Haundenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation are the current treaty holders of the territory that I am grateful to call home. I benefit from settler colonial and white supremacist relations which also inform my experiences of poverty and class relations.

As knowledge is produced reflexively, the knowledge produced in this dissertation is collectively produced with and by OCAP members and, to a lesser extent, our allies. This is not to say, however, that there is agreement in OCAP about my analysis of events. This text is my own and I am not speaking *for* OCAP; rather, following Chris Dixon (n.d.) I am “*writing with*” OCAP (n.p.). Any and all errors are my own.

I want to be clear on my use of “we” throughout this text because I do not want to speak for OCAP but I am also writing about things I was directly involved in. I use “we” to refer to OCAP, including myself, only in reference to the period of time that I was engaged in my ethnographic field research and I was involved in something (e.g. “we went to the Mayor’s



office). I also use “we” to refer to OCAP’s longstanding campaign demands, political positions, etc. that arise during my field research but also predate this period (e.g. “OCAP demands housing for all”).

## **Research Methods**

My methods are rooted in a political activist ethnography methodology (G. W. Smith, 1990). I worked as an OCAP Organizer<sup>5</sup> (unpaid staff) for a year, taking extensive field notes. I conducted 37 interviews, primarily, with OCAP members, as well as members of the media, Toronto city councillors and their staff and one Member of Parliament. Additionally, I carried out a series of *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (1990) requests, totaling over 5,000 pages. I conducted a textual analysis of these documents as well as relevant publicly available municipal government documents and OCAP documents (including electronic and physical archival documents). These methods allowed me to conduct a thorough and in-depth analysis of the social relations of struggle (SRS) in relation to homeless organizing in Toronto from OCAP’s standpoint. I discuss my methods in depth in the next chapter.

## **Contextualizing the Dissertation: OCAP, Organizing and Homelessness**

Founded in 1990, OCAP is a direct action, anti-poverty organization that is based in Toronto. The group is anti-capitalist and anti-colonial/decolonial and understands itself to be “in solidarity with similar movements across the country and around the world” (OCAP, n.d.-a, n.p.). OCAP does not support a specific political doctrine (e.g. anarchism or socialism) nor does it support specific political parties. To make both my data and my dissertation manageable, I limited my focus to our work around homelessness, which was the primary issue the organization was working on during my research period.

The largest campaign during this period was a municipal fight for more shelter beds. Shelter beds are an emergency measure but an inadequate solution; people need housing and money. We were simultaneously fighting provincially to raise social assistance rates and nationally for housing. I view these campaigns as complementary to and interlocked with but separate from the shelter campaign. OCAP was a part of the Raise the Rates Campaign, a group working to raise social assistance and the minimum wage in Ontario. We organized

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<sup>5</sup> OCAP has a job title of Organizer, yet, all of us are organizers. I distinguish between them through capitalization.

together, including protests in October 2017, calling on the province for a raise and “an end to the punitive system of surveillance and degradation” (Raise the Rates Campaign, 2017, n.p.). We were also working with a loose network of groups, initiated by OCAP, to fight for housing nationally. A day of action was called by OCAP, the Front d’action Populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU - Popular Action Front in Urban Development) in Québec and Carnegie Community Action Project in Vancouver. Actions took place in multiple cities condemning the inadequacy of the Liberal government’s *National Housing Strategy* (FRAPRU, 2017).

Unfortunately, because I focused on the homelessness organizing, I was unable to capture the ongoing organizational labour that makes campaign labour possible. Some of these things include: bookkeeping, mentorship, booking meeting space, new member intakes, cleaning the office, emotional labour,<sup>6</sup> getting food for meetings, casework, website work, answering the phone, email, propaganda design and distribution, fundraising, social media, handling requests from researchers/media, printing and photocopying, etc.. There is a lot of, largely invisible, labour that goes into keeping an organization running that remains invisible in this dissertation.

#### *OCAP Organizing Model*

Since its early days, OCAP has maintained two distinct arms or strands: mass mobilizing, and casework (Clarke, n.d.). The problem of fighting for systemic change around poverty issues is that we are calling on people to take on a long-term fight when they are in very real and immediate crises. Poor people, especially homeless people, generally struggle to meet their most basic needs. Adopting campaigns that we know may take years to win does not address these immediate crises. However, exclusively working to help resolve the immediate needs of individual poor people would provide an individualistic band-aid solution (if that) and do nothing to change the deep injustices that poor people face daily. Together, however, casework and mass mobilizing work to ensure that we can collectively organize to win immediate needs and use those victories to build the larger struggles for fundamental changes in social relations (i.e. the elimination of capitalist, colonial, white supremacist, patriarchal, disablist, heterosexist and cissist relations) so that each of us has what we need not just to survive but to thrive.

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<sup>6</sup> Sometimes this involves checking in with new members or those who haven’t been around much while other times it involves dealing with conflict in the organization.

This form of casework is divergent from social work casework, as social work tends to view individual casework as distinct from community work (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Hugman, 2009; Netting, 2008). OCAP works with the community to win individual cases, conceptualizing individual casework as key for meeting immediate needs and for movement building (also see: Chapman & Withers, 2019). The success of direct action casework relies on the strategy of disruption. Poor people's organizing has limitations because poor people have so few resources and so little individual power. Stef Gude, a former OCAP caseworker, asserts: "Bureaucracy relies on the fact that things will always go in a particular way" (in Lowry & Nyers, 2003, p. 70). When poor people insist on functioning in ways that bureaucrats do not expect, it opens new possibilities. Direct action casework bypasses formal legal appeal mechanisms.<sup>7</sup> We refuse to work through the (often incredibly slow) official channels that are designed to keep poor people in line. Instead, we use collective disruption to force ruling relations to capitulate to us quickly. What seem like rigid and unmovable bureaucratic relations to individual poor people can become flexible and accommodating when groups of poor people collectively demand it.

Like strands of DNA, the two strands of OCAP's work are connected. As former OCAP caseworker, Stefan (1998), writes:

Casework gives OCAP a clear picture of the abuses people face daily. OCAP is effective as an anti-poverty Coalition because casework allows us to face the abuse that social agencies and organizations dish out, confront that abuse in particular cases, and launch campaigns against it in the broader political context of a capitalist society.

The weapons against (poor) people are demoralization, isolation, abandonment, hate, prejudice and further impoverishment. When OCAP does casework it tells something to people. It gives the people we work with strength and hope, and lets them continue with their lives. It also sends a clear message to our enemies: we are not going to lay down and take it. (p. 1)

Casework and broader campaign work reinforce one another and work in unison. Casework also works as a form of what Stefan calls "front line research" (p. 1). Through the calls that come into the office, OCAP caseworkers can spot trends and identify problematic policy changes or other

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<sup>7</sup> This is not to be confused with legal application mechanisms. For instance, with respect to social assistance, people have to make applications for benefits but, if denied, we do not follow the established legal pathways.

issues that need a collective response. If OCAP didn't have that regular contact and just analyzed policy the way that left-wing think tanks do, OCAP would be identifying theoretical issues rather than responding to those that are tangibly impacting people. This work also helps OCAP build evidence against the government, which often says it is working to benefit poor people while the reality on the ground is very different.

OCAP's casework program builds on a long history of using group protest tactics to help meet individual needs. In the 1930s, for instance, in both Canada and the United States, poor people came together to fight for welfare benefits for individuals and their families (Longmore & Goldberger, 2000; Palmer & Héroux, 2016; Piven & Cloward, 1979; D. A. Thompson, 2004). OCAP did not invent direct action casework. Nonetheless, what OCAP's model offers is a disciplined and experienced approach that has been successfully applied to the contemporary political and economic context. As such, the OCAP model of organizing, based on direct action casework coupled with mass mobilizing, has been globally influential, with groups directly replicating all or part of it in Canada, the US, UK Australia and New Zealand (see Appendix 3).

It is also important to note that, no matter how good an organizing model OCAP or any anti-poverty organization has, this model will not be a panacea. Many authors have documented the difficulties in organizing poor communities. John Clarke (1992) says, "oppression never fails to leave its mark on its victims" (p. 216); this has implications for organizing. Poor people, especially homeless people are also often in crisis. They may face hunger or eviction. There is a high level of transience amongst poor people – especially homeless people – that also makes organizing difficult because of a lack of consistency (Cress & Snow, 1996; Marcus, 2015; Palmer & Héroux, 2016). It can also be hard to reach people, in my experience, as many people don't have phones, or the money on their pay-as-you-go accounts runs out. The difficulties of organizing poor people are intensified with homeless groups because of the desperateness of their circumstances (Cress & Snow, 1996; Marcus, 2015; Rameau, 2008). One of the most tragic of these is the high numbers of homeless people who die (Palmer & Héroux, 2016; Wallace & Ormsby, 2018) which has an impact on the people who are close to the deceased and, often, the broader community. Also, many poor people lack class solidarity (beyond, perhaps, their immediate social circles) (Browne et al., 2005) and have internalized neoliberal values (Khasnabish, 2008; Law, 2015; Newberry, 2008). Organizing can be difficult with any group of

people, but with poor people, there are particular disadvantages and obstacles that intensify the difficulty.

### *OCAP as/and Social Work(ing)*

One of the risks of direct action casework is the casework becoming depoliticized and the organization becoming a service agency. OCAP member Lesley Wood (2017) says “casework as charity or social work” is one of the biggest pitfalls of poor people's movements (p. 112). Here Wood positions poor people's organizing as contradictory to social work. She and another long-time OCAP member, Macdonald Scott, also argue that OCAP's casework “may sound like social work,” but, it goes “beyond radical social work” (M. Scott & Wood, 2004, n.p.). While a number of OCAP members are trained social workers, none of these members thought what OCAP does is social work.<sup>8</sup> “Social work seems way more limited and constricting,” one member said; “I think it's better,” said another, referring to OCAP.<sup>9</sup>

However, Chris Chapman and I argue that social work should be understood much more broadly than professionalized social work. We demonstrate that the boundary work of professionalizing social work has been part of the colonial, white supremacist, cisheteropatriarchal, disablism, capitalist project (Chapman & Withers, 2019). Social work, from this perspective, includes interventions into the social world (what we sometimes call “social working” in order to differentiate from professionalized social work). From this understanding, poor people's organizing isn't definitionally oppositional to social work, it is social work.<sup>10</sup>

### *Homelessness and Homeless People*

Government policymakers and scholars have written exhaustive typologies of homelessness. The Canadian Government has adopted a definition that lays homelessness out in a spectrum from “at-risk” through to “chronically homeless” (Government of Canada, n.d.-a).<sup>11</sup> This taxonomy has been operationalized to determine who should receive services and what services they should receive. OCAP, on the other hand, rejects this taxonomy and organizes

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<sup>8</sup> Although one said “in a very basic sense, sure, we're doing work within society” before arguing we don't do social work.

<sup>9</sup> Because there are a limited number of social workers in OCAP, I am not citing who these quotes are from to preserve the anonymity of those requesting it. This was done with the consent of those being quoted here.

<sup>10</sup> Given this definition members agreed that OCAP does social work.

<sup>11</sup> I will discuss this taxonomy more in Chapter 5.

around homeless issues and homeless people – those without homes – including those considered to be the “hidden homeless” (people who are not in the shelter system nor sleeping rough). For OCAP, homelessness is a social rather than a statistical question.

‘Homelessness is a complex issue’ is something that is often said in the literature; I will discuss and problematize this at length in Chapter 5. However, the actual human complexity is often not captured. The official definitions flatten the diversity within homelessness categories and erase the uniqueness of what is going on for someone like Comrade George De Guzman.<sup>12</sup> Comrade George is a Pilipino immigrant who developed mental health issues after he came to Canada. George is a security guard and he trades his labour to a McDonalds in exchange for hamburgers and being allowed to sleep there. He also stays in respites or shelters. Comrade George needs the social interaction of shelters or McDonalds; if he is on his own, he has mental health struggles. He has an apartment with his mom where he occasionally returns to sleep for an hour or two if he is very exhausted. He pays rent there, but because he doesn’t use his room, he has moved two homeless people in. Comrade George’s name is on a lease, but he is homeless, and two people are housed because he is homeless.

It is also essential to understand that homelessness does not impact all groups of people the same way. Because of social relations that oppress certain groups of people, already oppressed people are much more likely to experience homelessness; and, different oppressed groups are likely to have somewhat different experiences of homelessness. For instance, disabled people<sup>13</sup> are much more likely to be homeless than non-disabled people (Canadian Population Health Initiative of the Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2009; City of Toronto, 2018b; Hwang et al., 2012). Experiences of homelessness and how one is treated as a homeless person can also be deeply informed by the type(s) of disability.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, some groups are more likely to experience/practice “hidden homelessness” – to ‘double up’ by staying with people they know, possibly trading sex for a place to stay, and/or squatting - rather than accessing emergency shelters or sleeping rough.

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<sup>12</sup> “Comrade” is not a term we particularly use in OCAP – except for George.

<sup>13</sup> I use the term ‘disabled people’ rather than ‘people with disabilities’ following the social and radical models of disability (see: Withers, 2012; also see Chapter Four).

<sup>14</sup> I will discuss disability and homelessness at length in my discussion about Housing First in Chapter Four.

Homeless women,<sup>15</sup> trans and non-binary people are at high risk of violence and other harm. Women's homelessness is often hidden (Baker et al., 2010; Homes for Women, 2013; Mayock et al., 2015; Alison Smith, 2015; Whitzman, 2006). According to the Homes for Women (Homes for Women, 2013) campaign, "the reduced visibility of their homelessness [is] due to the struggle for safety and to prevent their children from being taken into care by child protection authorities" (p. 1). Many women become homeless because they are fleeing violence, yet then face violence when homeless. Violence is also a significant factor for trans people (Dénommé-Welch et al., 2008; Sakamoto et al., 2007), also resulting in high levels of hidden homelessness. Further, trans people are sometimes refused access to both men's and women's shelters or are at risk of violence in shelters (Dénommé-Welch et al., 2008; Sakamoto et al., 2007). Women and trans people, who are also likely disproportionately Indigenous people, Black people and people of colour,<sup>16</sup> are less likely to be visibly homeless and, therefore, less likely to be identified as homeless in official statistics or offered homeless services.

Historic and ongoing practices of settler colonialism in Canada result in disproportionately high rates of homelessness among Indigenous people. Métis-Cree scholar Jesse Thistle (2017) says the "thorough, complex and intentional unravelling of traditional social and cultural systems, known as cultural genocide, has created and prolonged, and continues to perpetuate, Indigenous homelessness in Canada" (p. 7). In Toronto, Indigenous people make up 2.5 percent of the general population but comprise 16 percent of the homeless population.<sup>17</sup> Indigenous people are also much more likely to sleep rough (38 percent) and are homeless longer than non-Indigenous people. In Canadian urban centres, a staggering 1 in 15 Indigenous people in Canada are homeless while 1 in 128 non-Indigenous people are homeless (Belanger et al.,

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<sup>15</sup> Throughout this dissertation, any reference I make to "women" is inclusive of both cis and transwomen; the inverse is true for men for "men." As transwomen are women; transmen are men. If I am specifically discussing cis or trans people, I will indicate this. However, some of the literature is cisist and, therefore, excludes trans women from studies about women and transmen from studies about men.

<sup>16</sup> Racial and Gender data is often treated as wholly distinct with respect to homeless populations so how many Indigenous people, Black people, people of colour, women, trans, and non-binary people there are can only be guessed at based on these numbers. This is one of the many ways that the experiences of, and even the existence of, these groups are erased (see, for e.g.: City of Toronto, 2018b).

<sup>17</sup> This statistic, like many point-in-time counts, likely underestimates the number of Indigenous homeless people because many people travel between reserve and urban centres (Letkemann, 2004; Peters & Robillard, 2009).

2012). Additionally, Indigenous families are also far more likely to experience homeless than non-Indigenous families (Gulliver-Garcia, 2015).

Thistle (2017) argues it is necessary for settler regimes to recognize how “Indigenous Peoples imagine and experience homelessness on their own terms” (p. 17). Thistle, author of *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada*, says:

Indigenous Homelessness is... best understood as the outcome of historically constructed and ongoing settler colonization and racism that have displaced and dispossessed First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples from their traditional governance systems and laws, territories, histories, worldviews, ancestors and stories. (p. 6)

While this definition includes not having a place to live, it is far more expansive than the definition of homelessness I provided above.<sup>18</sup> From a policy perspective, this definition is useful as it could identify and allow for early Indigenous interventions into the harms associated with settler colonialism and prevent dispossession.

Racialized people and migrants are also disproportionately likely to be homeless. In Toronto, two out of three homeless people are people of colour: the largest racial group within this group is Black people (31 percent) (City of Toronto, 2018b). Migrants, the majority of whom are people of colour (Statistics Canada, 2017), are at increased risk of homelessness because they experience high rates of poverty and housing precarity; they may also live in situations of overcrowding as a result (Preston et al., 2009). Further, 10 percent of homeless youth were born outside of Canada (Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016). As I will discuss later in this dissertation, rather than intervene in the relations that create the conditions that make these groups (at risk of) homeless(ness), the Mayor, City Council and City staff scapegoated homeless migrants for the terrible circumstances that they were in.

### **Contribution of the Research**

Political activist ethnography is an engaged mode of inquiry developed to learn with and from, and to produce knowledge with and for, social movements so they can work more effectively: it is *Sociology for Changing the World*, as the key text about the theory/method is titled (Frampton et al., 2006d). This work has produced knowledge about ruling relations,

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<sup>18</sup> I recognize there is a contradiction between OCAP’s commitment to anti/decolonization and the framework of homelessness that OCAP uses.



Housing First and homelessness in Toronto that OCAP has been able to operationalize during this project. This includes information obtained through FOI requests, insights from interviews with city councillors and new understandings about how the ruling regime works. As I conducted my research, I would provide useful information to the organization as we went, sometimes doing lengthy updates and other times passing along small pieces of information. Anticipating wanting to make particular visuals for this project, I made some of them much earlier to use as OCAP tools. For example, Appendix 3, the OCAP influences chart was used as a fundraising tool. Similarly, I made Figure 4.1 in Chapter Four a visual depiction of federal, provincial and municipal funding schemes for the homelessness programs in time for the 2017 AGM so it could be used to inform our strategy discussions. OCAP has been able to integrate at least some of the contributions of this research into its organizing work.

Mapping the social relations of struggle, as I do in many of the chapters, demonstrates the importance of activist groups not simply asserting that City Hall is the enemy but understanding how ruling relations work and what OCAP's relationship is to them.

Throughout this dissertation, I explore and expand on Li's (2007b) conceptualization of governing practices of assemblage. I examine the ways that a non-governmental body engages in these practices as well as how City staff use the practices of assemblage to coordinate the activities of other City employees. I also offer several additional governing practices in Chapters Three and Four.

Additionally, I contribute to the normative body of work that makes up scholarly sociological social movement theory in this dissertation with a (partial) taxonomy of demobilization tactics that ruling relations use against social movements. This is based on the experiences of OCAP and our allies during the shelter campaign, the largest and longest of the campaigns discussed in this dissertation. I delineate sixteen different tactics that are used against OCAP and discuss how OCAP responded/failed to respond. This taxonomy is also useful to social movements themselves.

## **Overview and Structure**

In "Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach" I expand on political activist ethnography as a mode of inquiry and theoretical scaffolding. I discuss the rest

of my theoretical framework, my specific methodological approach and the research methods I used and issues that arose.

“Chapter 3: Privately Policing Public Space: St. James Park” examines a short-lived and successful campaign by OCAP to get the local Business Improvement Area (BIA) to remove the security guard it had hired to patrol St. James Park. The park is a popular gathering place for homeless people; but they reported being harassed and banned by the security guard. This chapter maps ruling relations and the practices of governing as OCAP worked to get the security guard removed from the Park. I discuss broader issues of gentrification and criminalization of homeless people in the neighbourhood and in Toronto. I argue that the BIA and the City have aligned interests in supporting gentrification and neoliberal capitalism. Consequently, City staff were slow to prevent a security guard acting illegally against homeless people; I map how OCAP’s work changed this.

In “Chapter 4: Fighting for Roofs and Beds: The Housing Stabilization Fund Campaign,” I explore the strengths, and ultimate limits, of direct action casework, how OCAP used it to build a broader campaign in relation to the HSF, and the policy changes that were won as a result. I conduct a detailed mapping of City staff’s response to an OCAP report alleging the mishandling of HSF funds and the social relations of struggle. In this chapter, I argue that ruling relations engage in the practice of tightening the ranks to maintain a unitary position.

Unlike the previous chapters, “Chapter 5: Housing First, Homeless People Last” does not focus on a specific campaign; rather, it examines the philosophy, policy and practice of Housing First (HF) in Toronto. The first half of this chapter explores and critically analyzes the history and principles of HF. Building off of OCAP’s analysis of HF and how it was and is implemented in Toronto, I argue that it is a neoliberal, rehabilitative project working to construct self-sufficient citizens, while erasing the social relations that cause homelessness, and cutting social services. In the second half of this chapter, I examine and map the relations between the City and the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH). I find that the City and TAEH have created a closed consultation circle that ensures that critics of HF are excluded. I also find that TAEH and the City engage in several governing practices to limit the number of new shelter beds in Toronto.

Building off of the previous chapter, “Chapter 6: When is a Bed Not A Bed?: Epistemic Injustice and Shelter Occupancy” examines the longstanding dispute between OCAP and the City about the shelter occupancy in Toronto shelters. OCAP has long argued that the shelters are far fuller than the City says they are. In this chapter, I map how OCAP and our allies experience the shelters to be full when the City says there are beds. I then examine the epistemological issues that make this division possible and allow it to continue; and argue that city councillors and Shelter, Support and Housing Administration staff perpetrate epistemic injustices and suppress the knowledge of OCAP and its allies in order to maintain its own account of shelter occupancy.

In “Chapter 7: The Struggle for Shelter: The Shelter Campaign, Mobilization and Demobilization,” discusses the shelter campaign. Unlike the other campaigns, which were quite small, the shelter campaign was a large-scale campaign over a long period of time, involving hundreds, if not thousands, of people. After providing a brief overview of the campaign, I discuss the tactics of demobilization that the City uses against the shelter campaign and OCAP’s responses. I then examine the interplay between the City and OCAP to produce knowledge about ruling relations in Toronto. I also briefly examine organizational competition between the Toronto Alliance to Eliminate Homelessness, which worked to undercut the shelter campaign on several occasions, and OCAP. I argue that TAEH was involved in a number of the demobilization tactics that the City engaged in.

In the Conclusion, Chapter 8, I amalgamate the mappings of social relations of struggle from the previous chapters to piece together a larger map and better understand the social relations of struggle that OCAP is a part of as a whole. I also examine the importance of direct action, which is evidenced in the explication of each campaign. I conclude this dissertation by discussing research contributions, policy recommendations and possibilities for future research.

Lastly, I have a number of appendices, several of which I want to note here. I have already mentioned Appendix 1 and 2, the Plain Language Summary and Glossary, respectively. I have written this dissertation relatively accessibly; nevertheless, it is lengthy and some of the discussion may make it challenging and/or intimidating for some. I hope that the summary will capture the major topics so that non-academics who do not wish to or cannot engage with the entire text can take up the central ideas of this work. Also, Appendix 4a is a timeline of OCAP

activities for the period of my research while, Appendices 4b, 4c and 4d are timelines for the specific campaigns discussed in this dissertation. These should assist readers to understand the chronology of the time period in question.

## **Conclusion**

The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty has impacted many individuals' lives and won significant social policy gains and material gains and built-up and defended communities over the years. It has also been a spark that has inspired other organizing around the world (see Appendix 3). This dissertation captures a small fraction of OCAP's work. It does, however, provide a perspective on the organization that has not yet been offered and offers new insights into organizing, ruling relations and the iterative relationship between the two.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

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*Good work, done with the best of intentions, but without accountability or a systemic analysis, ends up creating more problems than it solves. This is not to advocate chronic inaction, but rather thoughtful action.*

~Jordan Flaherty (2010, p. 266)

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### Part I: Theoretical Framework

#### Introduction

At the beginning of the self-guided tour of the Creationism Museum in Bulletsville, Kentucky, my friends and I enter a large room that has been made to look like the Grand Canyon. The museum, designed to try to debunk evolution, is run by Evangelical Christians. When you get into the Grand Canyon, a video plays featuring two scientists. They are both archeologists. The white, Christian fundamentalist archeologist smiles and explains to the viewer that he and his colleague, a man of colour who is bent over and doesn't make direct eye-contact, have different views of evolution. As a Christian, he knows that the earth is 6,000 years old: the archeological evidence he has found proves this. His colleague, however, has a "different starting point" which has led him to "different conclusions."

The epistemological position and theoretical framework of the researcher, or their "starting point," can lead to profoundly different conclusions. The age of soil, the meaning of flood damage, the placement of rocks – concrete material reality – can be understood very differently depending on one's epistemological assumptions, what questions asked or are worthy of trying to answer, and the theoretical lens through which the material is approached. The Christian archeologist's epistemological starting point shaped his analysis.

The theoretical approach of this dissertation is largely rooted in the epistemology (the study of how we come to know) and ontology (the study of being – of how the social comes into existence) delineated by institutional and political activist ethnographers who hold that knowledge is produced reflexively and collectively (D. E. Smith, 1987, 1990, 1999; G. W. Smith, 1990). Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson and Tilleczek (2006c) explain: "we learn from doing, from social practice and from inter-acting with others" (p. 4). Knowledge isn't produced

by individuals in ivory towers thinking hard; rather, it is produced through our actions, practices, and relations, which are never done in isolation.

### **Political Activist Ethnography: An Overview**

Political activist ethnography (PAE) emerged out of and in response to institutional ethnography (IE), a theory/method developed by feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith. Smith (1987) wanted to “address the problem of a sociology written from the standpoint of men located in the relations of ruling” and set out to “propose and formulate a sociology from the standpoint of women” (p. 1). IE focuses on how social relations are organized by people (often through text), examining what people actually do (D. Smith, 1987). IE is used to “uncover how the everyday experiences of people in local settings are organized by and linked to the work of others” (Benajmin & Rankin, 2014, p. 87). IE is materialist and produces knowledge about ruling relations from the perspective of those who are ruled.

Drawing on Dorothy Smith’s work, George Smith (1990), who was a gay liberation activist, developed PAE which uses basic institutional ethnography approaches to conduct research within activist movements and to assist movements. George Smith (1990) argues that institutional ethnography:

provid[es] a groundwork for grass-roots political action; not only because, as a matter of method, it begins from the standpoint of those outside of ruling *regimes*, but because its analysis is directed at empirically determining how such *regimes* work – that is, how they are socially organized. (p. 631)

Political activist ethnography draws heavily from institutional ethnography. Its key extensions are with respect to the role of the author and the purpose of the research. Here, the researcher is an activist doing work with a group they have an ongoing relationship with and the research is intended to contribute to the social movement of which the activist/researcher is a part.

Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson and Tilleczek (2006c) explain:

One of the central propositions of political activist ethnography is that, through confrontations with ruling regimes, activists are able to uncover aspects of their social organization. Through an analysis of the institutional relations movements are up against, more effective forms of activism can be developed. (p. 3)

This is a materialist framework and methodology that works to move away from understanding the social as being discursively produced and toward understanding it as something that “we

actively produce” (Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson, & Tilleczek, 2006a, p. 256) and therefore, as something we can change.

There are few research projects that employ PAE (e.g. Bradford, 2016; Frampton et al., 2006d; Hussey, 2012; G. W. Smith, 1990). Because examples are rare and because political activist ethnography is so closely related to institutional ethnography, where necessary, I draw on discussions of both here. Further, as I will discuss later, I draw on other theoretical frameworks to help make sense of what is going on and I use traditional ethnography to capture some of what takes place in the campaigns that OCAP is organizing.

### *Ruling Relations*

One of Dorothy Smith’s major contributions is her conceptualization of ruling relations. Drawing heavily on Marx, Smith (1987) says ruling relations (or relations of ruling) “connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives – the corporations, government bureaucracies, academic and professional discourses, mass media, and the complex of relations that interconnect them” (p. 11). Ruling relations includes activities through which people are ruled and coordinated as well as “the activities of those who are selecting, training, and indoctrinating those who will be its governors... are the institutions through which we are ruled and through which we, and I emphasize this we, participate in ruling” (D. E. Smith, 1990, p. 14).

This idea is particularly relevant to poor people's lives and organizing because poverty is a complex problem requiring change at, but also far beyond, the state level. Examining ruling relations allows for analysis that does not unduly focus on one component of the complex and interlocked relations of domination.

The ontology that Dorothy Smith offers brings human actions and social relations into focus. Smith (1990) observes, from her reading of Marx, that society is not a thing; it is “relations and processes that arise in and only in the actual activities of actual people. Society, therefore, happens” (p. 34). Drawing on this, Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson, and Tilleczek (2006b) say there is, “therefore [a] need to abandon the language of “systems” and “structures.” They get in the way of the work of recovering social practices, relations and organization, and impede our social struggles” (p. 256). Scholars and activists are inclined to reify (make to seem real by extracting the social relations from it) and objectify social relations and their consequences, what Dorothy Smith (2001) calls “blob-ontology” (p. 166). Ruling relations and

things like oppression, capitalism, and colonialism, for example, are not leviathans that we must fight but cannot necessarily locate – they are the result of human interactions and they are under human control. As a social justice organizer, I have found this ontological observation to be significant both for this dissertation and for organizing work. The target for change is not a far off yet ever-present set of interlocked systems; it is human actions of which we are a part and which we can resist and change.

There are ways that I try to use language throughout this dissertation to keep human relations as focal points. For example, I discuss “social relations” rather than “society” and “capitalist relations” rather than “the capitalist system.” It is following this same logic that the term “the state” should be avoided and, instead “state relations” or “state formations” should be used (Frampton et al., 2006a following Corrigan & Sayer, 1985). I agree with this logic. However, I don’t always echo this language; I can find it clumsy and it is not the language used nor is it a logical extension of or logically inferred by many of the activists I work with. Therefore, I often use “the state,” “the City” and “oppression” and ask the reader to recall that I am not writing about these as things in and of themselves but as sets of relations.

### *Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle*

Gary Kinsman (2006), expanding on the theory/method of PAE/IE, has developed the practice of “mapping the social relations of struggle” which is “a relational sketch of the conflicts between ruling relations and social movements” (p. 136). A map, Kinsman (2011) says, is “useful in terms of figuring out where you’re at and also where you might be going” (n.p.). Mapping the SRS creates a form of “social cartography” (Hussey, 2012, p. 13); it opens opportunities to explicate movement strengths and weaknesses, identify capacities and allies and “see where the weak links are and where we could potentially push through” (Kinsman, 2011).

Ian Hussey (2012), in his reading of Kinsman (2006), argues that Kinsman “does not recognize that community and political organizing themselves have ruling relations” (p. 13). Hussey argues that mapping the SRS includes mapping ruling relations within organizing work itself. In my reading of Kinsman, it is apparent that this is included in Kinsman’s envisioning of mapping SRS and a contribution that Kinsman, rather than Hussey makes. Indeed, Kinsman calls on activists to move beyond conceptualizing themselves as outside of



ruling relations and understand themselves as complicit within them. Hussey (2012) argues: “this mapping work has the potential to analyze how activist work is coordinated by ruling relations” (p. 13).<sup>1</sup> This is very much the case and, as this dissertation will demonstrate, by mapping the SRS and explicating the interplay between ruling relations’ attempts to coordinate movements and their response new understandings about both ruling relations and social movement organizing can be created.

### *Translocal/Transtemporal Texts*

Dorothy Smith focuses a great deal of attention on texts in her discussions of ruling relations. She argues that “texts are of foundational ontological significance to the existence of anything we can call 'large-scale organization,' or 'institution'” (D. E. Smith, 2001). This is because texts – which are not only published written materials, but include computer files, videos, and audio (D. E. Smith & Turner, 2014) – can be replicated over and over again and used by people across locations and time to “coordinate people’s activities across and beyond local sites of everyday experience” (D. E. Smith, 2002, p. 45). Smith (1999) writes:

The materiality of the text and its replicability create a peculiar ground in which it can seem that language, thought, culture, formal organization, have their own being, outside lived time and the actualities of people's living — other than, as the latter become, objects of action or investigation from within the textual. (p. 79)

Take, for example, a Toronto welfare office: workers in this office and every other Toronto welfare office are coordinated by the same texts. Provincial legislation and local policies are the governing texts that are used by people to organize people translocally (across locations) and transtemporally (across time). As George Smith (1990) observes, someone can move from a local site “to a set of general, textually-mediated social relations because they have the same social form” (p. 636). Therefore, using this example of the welfare office, one can understand general practices of welfare offices because the same governing texts are used to coordinate the activities of welfare workers and recipients. Texts are useful starting places for analysis because of the possibilities they hold in mapping ruling relations by moving from the local to the general.

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<sup>1</sup> Even before Kinsman conceptualized ‘mapping the social relations of struggle,’ he was explicating how ruling relations (attempted to) coordinate activist work (see: Kinsman, 1992).

### *Subjective/Objective*

Most social movement theory, as I will discuss shortly, is invested in the ideology of objective sociology and the subsequent belief that the researcher's social location does not affect the research. Sciences, social or otherwise, are not immune to or insulated from researcher's subject positions and biases – regardless of the measures taken to eliminate them, including the standpoint the researcher takes up. As Ruth Bleir (1984) writes:

Scientists, like everyone else, are born and raised in a particular culture of beliefs, biases, values, and opinions, and, to one degree or another, they will be affected in their work by what they hope, believe, want or need to be true. (p. 3)

Several feminist scholars, particularly Black feminist scholars (e.g. Collins, 1990; Sudbury, 1998) have rejected the construction of objectivity, what Haraway (1988) calls the “god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere” (p. 581). What questions are asked or considered worthy, what knowledge is pursued and why an individual is studying social movements are all informed by one's subject position.<sup>2</sup>

If knowledge about social movements is produced primarily by class privileged straight white non-disabled cis men, particular kinds of knowledge will be produced and reaffirmed and other kinds of knowledge will be devalued, blocked or erased. Social experiences form and inform what is and can be seen and understood as well as what is and will be missed and misunderstood. In addition to this being oppressive, the failure of authors to position themselves ensures that subordinated communities often lack the evidence to demonstrate that they are excluded from knowledge production. These critiques of objectivity are not new. It is both disappointing and, I would argue, telling that the bulk of normative social movement theory perpetuates these epistemic violences that have been identified by, among others, feminist and critical race theorists (e.g. Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Harding, 2004; Hawkesworth, 2006; Kvale, 1995).

PAE and IE have a very different relationship to objectivity and generalizability than does normative social movement theory. This is because they begin their inquiry from the

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<sup>2</sup> Sudbury has suggested that “[B]lack working class women” are able to be objective because they “alone may be free of ideological blinkers” (Sudbury, 1998, p. 27). However, disability, queerness and transness and other denigrated social locations are erased through this position.

standpoint of the oppressed (D. E. Smith, 1987; G. W. Smith, 1990). I will return to standpoint later. PAE and IE attempt to position themselves outside of traditional social science methodological frameworks and rejects mainstream methodological approaches. PAE and IE avoid the pitfalls of relativism because the methodology does not simply produce situated subjective knowledge that is only applicable to isolated situations. Rather, they allow for the piecing together of the ruling relations that dominate and organize social relations. As such, the problems of objectivity and generalizability within social movement theory can be addressed while still producing meaningful and useful knowledge. Further, rather than pretending to be objective, PAE is actively oriented toward supporting social justice and social change.

IE and PAE focus on “explicat[ing] ruling relations that organize and coordinate” therefore, generalizability “relies on discovery and demonstration of how ruling relations exist in and across many local settings” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 89). The researcher works to uncover “social processes that have generalized effects” and/or “institutional processes may produce similarities of experience” translocally and transtemporally (DeVault & McCoy, 2012, p. 382). Within these frameworks/methodologies, knowledge about ruling relations (or the social relations of struggle) is uncovered and that can contribute to broader understandings of ruling relations generally. In this approach, each movement or organization that research is produced about from within can help piece together a part of a broader map of ruling relations – some findings will reveal new knowledge while others will reinforce understandings of these relations.

### *Inside/Outside*

Unlike most social movement researchers, political activist ethnographers, would largely be categorized as ‘insider’ researchers because they are a part of the movements that they are researching. Being a member of the group that one is engaging in interviews and doing field research with can be an opportunity and a limitation. Because I am embedded in this community, I am invested in maintaining relationships and being non-exploitative. I may be more driven to act ethically than other researchers because of my connections with the people being researched (see L. T. Smith, 2008). Further, Oakley (1981) argues that qualitative interviews are the most fruitful when there is a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee.

However, Kinsman (2006) challenges activist divisions between inside and outside of ruling relations:

‘us versus them’ and ‘inside and outside’ distinctions and how these oftentimes change in relation to people’s implication and complicity in institutional relations. While we may be in rupture with ruling relations on one front, we may be fully inside ruling relations on another. (p. 143)

For example, Fanon (2004/1963) observes that First World workers are invested in the colonial oppression of those in the Third World. He argues that the First World working-class’ shared class interests with Third World workers does not override our shared colonial interests. This both allows for a positioning within social relations that is not at the bottom and access to the resources and riches that are a product of colonialism (of course, access to the fruits of colonialism are disproportionately slanted towards the upper classes). The same is the case for settler colonies like Canada, non-Indigenous people<sup>3</sup> are invested and complicit in colonialism, regardless of class (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Kinsman calls on us to reject simplistic understandings of insider and outsider and grapple with the complexities of the ways in which we are both subjected to and benefit from ruling relations. Consequently, a political activist ethnography approach calls on researchers to “explode[e] the inside/outside binary” (Frampton, Kinsman, et al., 2006a, p. 247). This offering from political activist ethnographers is an important one in thinking about how researchers relate to their research. It requires ongoing reflexivity and does not provide the space for insiders to absolve themselves of oppressive actions because they are ‘insiders.’

#### *Starting Point/Standpoint*

Institutional and political activist ethnographies begin from the standpoint of a specific group. Dorothy Smith’s (1987) use of standpoint is “a method that, at the outset of inquiry, creates the space for an absent subject” (p. 107). Dorothy Smith began her work from “the standpoint of women” (1987, p. 78); “the standpoint of people” (2005, p. 28). Standpoint “serves as the point of departure for investigation... beginning from the local and the immediate... in order to explore the larger social organization” (Bannerji, 1995, p. 87). Dorothy Smith’s conceptualization of standpoint – as a methodological starting place to find something out – is distinct from feminist standpoint epistemology which is a privileged epistemic position.

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that non-Indigenous people (or Indigenous people for that matter) have homogenous experiences of social relations.

For Dorothy Smith (2005), beginning inquiry from a standpoint is important because, as she argues, “‘standpoint’ as the design of a subject position in institutional ethnography creates a point of entry into discovering the social that does not subordinate the knowing subject to objectified forms of knowledge” (p. 10). For Smith, standpoint is “a site for the knower that is open to anyone” (p. 10). However, I will argue both statements: any standpoint is open to any person and IE keeps the people who are part of the group that the researcher is taking on the standpoint of from having their knowledge objectified, can be contradictory. It is my position, for which I will provide two examples, that some researchers taking up the standpoint of some groups is inherently objectifying, oppressive and/or epistemically violent.

The first example I will provide is the example of Viviane Namaste’s (2006), adoption of the standpoint of transsexual men<sup>4</sup> in “Changes of name and sex for transsexuals in Québec.” Namaste, a transsexual woman, conducts an IE/PAE<sup>5</sup> of the coordination of the lives of trans<sup>6</sup> people in Quebec through the legal identification (ID) change process. This chapter is a useful and thorough explication of the social relations behind not only the regulation of identity documents but also “the institutional management of sex” (p. 161). Namaste, it seems, took on the standpoint of FTMs because they have a more difficult time changing ID and, therefore make a better example. On the surface, this article appears unproblematic.

However, I will argue that Namaste’s adoption of an FTM standpoint is an epistemic violence; this epistemic violence is not theoretical, it is one that I feel, that I experience and that I know. Now, I am often externally understood as having a complex gender identity. For me, my identity is simple, I identify as non-binary and trans and I use “they” or “them” as my pronoun. But because I live in a binary world and have had gender affirming surgery and take hormones, I must also sometimes identify as FTM for legal and medical purposes.<sup>7</sup> This is because I was assigned female at birth and I do not identify as female.

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<sup>4</sup> Namaste says she is taking on the standpoint of both transsexual women (MTFs) and transsexual men (FTMs) but the text focuses almost exclusively on transsexual men and that is from which her actual standpoint is grounded, I would argue.

<sup>5</sup> In the text, it is identified as a PAE although it is much more like a traditional IE. For my discussion of standpoint, I would argue this distinction is irrelevant (particularly because Namaste (2005) is an activist)

<sup>6</sup> Namaste would likely take offence to my use of “trans” here as is opposed to the use of “transsexual” although her chapter does the work of explicating the relations for trans, transgender and transsexual people.

<sup>7</sup> I got ‘top surgery’ prior to recent changes in the DSM and had to expressly identify as FTM in order to get it.

Namaste has routinely denigrated and dismissed people with gender identities like mine. Namaste (2012) argues that non-binary identities are inherently (class) privileged and she largely erases or dismisses non-binary gender identities. Namaste (2015) “celebrate[s]” the gender binary and criticizes preferred pronouns in ways that are reminiscent of Jordan Peterson, a university professor who became famous for refusing to use gender-neutral pronouns (p. 138). She also published an interview she did with Mirha-Soleil Ross in her book without commentary or disagreement. Here, Ross argues that “current FTM politics are taking us, conceptually and politically, 40 years behind” (in Namaste, 2005, p. 94). At the time of Namaste making those statements, I was on social assistance, an anti-poverty activist and very much grounded in the material realities of trans people’s lives. But Namaste *knows* me.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it was also stereotypical, divisive and, frankly, hateful.

To be clear, what I argue about Namaste’s feelings about non-binary people and FTMs are not at all present in the IE chapter in question.<sup>9</sup> However, Namaste’s taking on the standpoint of FTMs, given her viewpoints about them, prevents her from allowing FTMs full subjectivity within her research practice. Therefore, FTMs are objectified. This is an epistemic violence in itself. Imagine the most insightful text that discovered how ruling relations work in ways no one else has, could that research be considered anything other than objectifying and epistemically violent if the Coyote took on the standpoint of the Road Runner? This would be the case, no doubt, even if a resultant policy change benefited both sides. As I said, the article appears unproblematic. However, as a non-binary trans person who has read the mean, even hateful, things she has written elsewhere, I find her article very upsetting. I experience Namaste’s claiming an FTM standpoint in order to produce knowledge to be harmful, to be an epistemic violence.

The second example is that of a white, settler scholar taking up the standpoint of Indigenous people (e.g.: Gruner, 2012; Vallee, 2018). Here, too, these wrote interesting texts and have useful and insightful findings. However, while it is Dorothy Smith’s (2005) position that

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<sup>8</sup> I have no doubt that some of what Namaste was responding to was transmisogyny, classism and anti-sex work politics in FTM organizing. Nicholas Matte (2017) documents some of the ways that some FTM organizing was anti-sex work and normative in his article about the activism of Rupert Raj and *Metamorphosis Magazine*.

<sup>9</sup> I am also not trying to fault the editors here as, at least from this chapter, they would have had no indication this was at all problematic.

“any standpoint is open to any person” (p. 10), I would argue that researchers who are working to explicate ruling relations must be attentive to those relations and work to, at a minimum, mitigate their harm. There is a long history of researchers, especially white researchers, enacting colonial relations on Indigenous people (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018; Padilha, 2010; Simpson, 2007; L. T. Smith, 2008; D.E. Smith, 1987). Audra Simpson (2007) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2008) both write about the assumed right of the Western scholar to *know* Indigenous people. Simpson also asserts that for her to understand the complex issues at the centre of her research in the Mohawk nation, she needed “an historical sensibility (and reckoning) that is deeply horizontal as well as vertical” (p. 76). The implication here is that an ‘outsider’ would not have the knowledge or skill to understand what was going on. Further, IE and PAE have epistemological and ontological positions attached to them (Frampton et al., 2006c; D. E. Smith, 1987, 1999, 2005; G. W. Smith, 1990). There are vast differences between Indigenous<sup>10</sup> and Eurocentric epistemologies and worldviews (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Hankard, 2012; Victor, 2007).<sup>11</sup> Learning Indigenous practices and worldviews is a lifelong venture – it is not something that cannot be completed during graduate studies. Settlers, especially white settlers, taking up the standpoint of Indigenous people, if not colonial, replicates colonial dynamics.<sup>12</sup>

To explore these dynamics, one needs to look no further than to ask what the researcher is saying through an IE project. Firstly, the settler scholar is saying that they, not an Indigenous scholar, are the appropriate person to do this research – either they know what is best for a community or they are the best researcher or both. Is the dynamic here then not a white saviour dynamic – an inherently colonial, centuries-old cycle in which a white person claims to know what is best for Indigenous people and works to impose it? This is also within a context of an

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<sup>10</sup> There is not a singular, pan-Indigenous epistemology; rather, there are some commonalities amongst Indigenous frameworks.

<sup>11</sup> I would also argue that the Guswenta (Two-Row Wampum) between settlers and the Haudenosaunee applies to all non-Indigenous researchers in Haudenosaunee territory. This Wampum implores people to ‘stay in their own canoe’ while travelling the river in peace and friendship (Koleszar-Green, 2019). The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) are among the original caretakers of parts of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, New York, Vermont, and Maine (Ramsden & Parrott, 2006; Wright, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> To be clear, non-Indigenous people can and have made important scholarly contributions to settler-colonial studies, anti/de-colonial research, etc. My critique is not of settler scholarship; it is of settlers taking the standpoint of Indigenous people.

increasing number of Indigenous researchers – both community-based and scholarly. What else does this dynamic say? A white settler ‘takes the standpoint’ of Indigenous people in general or a specific group of Indigenous people. Does a colonial dynamic not scream off the page?

Of course, there are other ways that IE can be taken up in and by Indigenous people and communities. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have conducted IE together (Wilson & Pence, 2006) and have blended IE with Indigenous methodologies (Peacock et al., 2002). Hankard (2012), an Abenaki/Métis man, made his IE research “accessible and indigenized for First Nations people,” which he was able to do as he had a deep cultural connection and longstanding history with Indigenous communities (p. iv). Standpoint, therefore, is not inherently problematic but it can become problematic depending on the research, the researcher, the researched and how those pieces fit together.

Within political activist ethnography, standpoint has, at times, been taken up following Dorothy Smith’s use of standpoint. For example, Ng (2006) takes up the standpoint of immigrant garment workers but is not an immigrant garment worker herself.<sup>13</sup> However, George Smith (1990) envisioned standpoint for PAE somewhat differently. George Smith took on the standpoint of a gay activist who is part of a group doing work to make social change – which he was. Hussey (2012) says, “the details” of each activist standpoint “are case specific” (p. 3). Here, standpoint is not based on oppressed experiences; rather, it is based in activity – being an activist who is already within the organizations or movements that one is researching (Hussey, 2012).

#### *My Social Location as a Researcher*

Standpoint, however, does not vacate the researcher’s social experiences which deeply inform how they engage with and understand the research from start to finish. Indeed, social experiences are central to one’s social standpoint. In Roxana Ng’s (2006) PAE, she does not situate herself in relation to her research. Ng was not an immigrant garment worker at the time, and likely never was one, but she doesn’t say this or anything about the power dynamics between her and the garment workers in the text. Ng could have written about her research while being open about her own subject position, even though her research comes from the standpoint of

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<sup>13</sup> Ng was an activist around garment worker’s rights for many years. I was aware of her work and she was very respected in the activist community for her work for immigrant rights. In noticing and critiquing that she took the standpoint of the worker, not the activist, I am not trying to devalue her legitimacy or legacy as an activist.



immigrant garment workers; this way, the power dynamics and potential conflicts would be clear to the reader.<sup>14</sup>

My own subject position bled into my research in ways that I was both acutely aware of, I was initially unaware but became aware of, and in ways I may never be aware of. It influences what I value and, therefore, what I noticed during my field research, what questions I asked and how I analyzed my data. It also influenced how people responded to me, what questions they answered and how they answered them.

My exaltation as a white person (see Thobani, 2007), and newfound life above the poverty line for example, likely influenced my interactions with homeless and poor people, particularly Indigenous, and racialized people who met me with suspicion. This isn't uncommon to OCAP organizing in general ("why is this stranger coming up to me and talking to me?"). I usually overcome this by using a few strategies, including dropping OCAP's name quickly and if people don't know OCAP, asking them if they know Gaétan. Gaétan Héroux is a well-loved longtime frontline worker who, it seems, has helped pretty much everyone on the streets at some point. I am also often smoking and give out cigarettes when asked and/or have my adorable 3-legged chihuahua with me. I will usually swear quite quickly in our interactions as well. All of these things are disarming and signal to most people that I am not – or at least not only – some random do-gooder. However, I never know in an interaction when someone is distant why that is the case and it very well could be because of my social privilege.

My disability is also a central part of my identity, my experience, and something that is always present in the work that I do. It is something that has helped me understand some of the issues that impact poor people and was one of the reasons that I was on social assistance for many years. It is because I am disabled that I have access to some important insights about poverty, poor people and the world. "Identity" is another one of those words that are often reified as creating fixed boundaries around a social group is problematic, especially a group like

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<sup>14</sup> This is not to say that Ng's work, including this piece, is not important or insightful, it is (e.g.: Ng, 1992, 2000, 2003; Ng & Shan, 2010). However, naming disjunctures between our aims and our practices can be important opportunities for learning. There are any number of reasons that Ng didn't position herself in this piece and, again, I am not trying to diminish her as a scholar. Rather, I am trying to articulate what I think needs to be a standard in PAE: that each and every time a standpoint is taken, the researcher clearly articulates their social position in relation to it.

disability which is always in constant flux (see: Bannerji, 1995). People have experiences of disability and disabilism is produced through social relations but there is no universal experience of a disability identity (Withers, 2012). While that is the case, I use “identity,” like I use “the state,” in a non-reified way because it is what activists that I work with use. Further, I use “identity” because as a disabled person, it is important for me to express that I claim disability, that I identify as disabled - not just that I experience being disabled. Lastly, I continue to use the term “identity” and will not consider doing otherwise until I find a simple and useful work around for “gender identity.” Many trans people’s gender identities and gender experiences are incongruent; thus, experience cannot be swapped out for identity.

I also live in chronic physical pain. At the time I began my field research, I was recovering from spinal surgery and things were particularly difficult. Accounts of field research are often grand accounts of physical performance, not of painful disabled bodies. For example, David Graeber’s *Direct action: An ethnography* describes his participant observation in anti-globalization protests and includes not only taking extensive field notes and attending almost daily meetings but also physical training, running from police, enduring tear gas, travelling long distances and a variety of other strenuous activities that required high levels of physical and mental endurance. Similarly, David Valentine’s (2007) ethnographic study of trans people in Manhattan describes his extensive cycling through Manhattan at length. He views this as an essential part of both his safer-sex activism and his fieldwork. I haven’t come across descriptions of field work that include taking calls in the office while lying down on a yoga mat or descriptions of a protest march from the accessibility van at the back.

Further, Methodological texts tend to presuppose a non-disabled researcher. Guides to writing field notes, for instance, provide instructions to write as much as possible as quickly as possible and to do so on location whenever possible (e.g. Emerson et al., 1995). That just doesn’t work for me. While Campbell (2005) discusses his difficulty writing field notes because his participant observation of hegemonic masculinity in pubs required him to be intoxicated much of the time (he needed to drink alcohol to perform manliness), I only founds one methodological conversation (Bennett, 2013) in my reading of the literature on disability, accommodation and ethnographic field research prior to going into the field. Because of this I found myself having to think through methodological tools without guidance from other disabled researchers.

My inability to write at length, at times, became rather insignificant to this project as taking notes simply felt inappropriate in many environments. Where taking notes would have made more sense – at demonstrations, where there were journalists around also taking notes, I was usually too busy doing other things. I would, instead jot down very sparse notes in the bathroom or at coffee when I could, type notes into my phone or use voice recognition to make longer memos to myself when I had time. Typically, I would use my transit time to flesh my field notes out, following Campbell (2005).

There is a disability studies methodology, emancipatory research, but I also did not find it helpful in thinking through how to apply my methods. Emancipatory research is deeply invested in forwarding the social model of disability (Barnes, 2003; Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Mertens et al., 2011; Oliver, 1992, 2002). Adherents to the social model of disability do not discuss ‘the hard parts’ of disability, for political reasons (Finkelstein, 2002; Morris, 1991; Oliver, 2009; Withers, 2012). This approach has also been criticized for being sexist (Morris, 1991), racist and even disablist (Withers, 2012). Two of the key proponents of the social model, Oliver and Barnes (1997), however, discuss the exclusion of disabled people from research, and argue that “because of society's failure to accommodate the needs of disabled people, employing disabled researchers can have serious resource implications which have yet to be addressed properly” (p. 812). They note some accessibility issues but do not address research strategies for disabled researchers.

Multiple disabled researchers have shown that they can bring important perspectives to disability research (e.g. Boland et al., 2008; Boswell et al., 2001; Doyle, 2014; Erickson, 2015). But, of course, disabled researchers can (and do) make important contributions to research in general. One discussion of a specific contribution that a disabled researcher can offer is by Andrew Bennett (2013) regarding researchers with ‘speech differences’ doing ethnographic research. He discusses how he created his research design, taking his disability into account. Bennett views researcher vulnerability as an advantage. He suggests these researchers may have better observation skills because their communication has been socially devalued, so they have learned to be more observant.

Karen Mogendorff (2013) suggests that disabled researchers should not disclose that they are disabled as it could hamper their careers. While I respect her caution about disablism in the

academy, this could create a number of problems with respect to reflexivity and positionality while also, I would argue, sending a problematic message to disabled researchers.

### ***IE/PAE Conclusion***

Political Activist Ethnography, based on the work of George Smith (1990) and drawing on that of Dorothy Smith (1987, 1999, 2005), allows a researcher to explicate ruling relations from the standpoint of an activist working in a political organization. Gary Kinsman (2006) also contributed “mapping the social relations of struggle” (p. 136) which allows organizations to locate themselves in the struggle and ascertain their capacity, limits, weak links and contradictions in order to help make the movement stronger. I map the SRS throughout this dissertation in overt and less obvious ways. As an OCAP member working for social justice, PAE allowed me to be explicit in my aims to conduct research with and for OCAP that will help contribute to social justice organizing. PAE also helps researchers avoid the potential messy pitfalls of standpoint that I discussed earlier and what I will argue is the inadequacy of normative social movement theory later. PAE is the methodological and theoretical scaffolding around which my research and this dissertation are constructed; however, I do bring in additional theories and methods to expand on my work, which is what I discuss next.

### **Governmental “Practices of Assemblage”**

Tania Murray Li (2007c) uses assemblage theory to provide a framework to understand the work governments do in “Practices of assemblage and community forest management.” Assemblages are multiplicities made up of heterogenous and interchangeable parts (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/1980). Neoliberalism (which I discuss below) is an example of an assemblage “of knowledge and practices” (Li, 2007a). Government interventions and policies are assemblages that take human labour to bring together and keep together (Li, 2007a, 2007b). “It is the *interactions* between human and nonhuman components that form the assemblage” (McFarlane, 2011, p. 208, emphasis in original). It is, therefore, more “than just parts that are related—and these interactions cannot be reduced to individual properties alone” (p. 208).

There can be a conflict between the ontology of IE and PAE and that which underlies assemblage theory. Assemblage theory can be used to reify what should be understood as social relations and struggles. For example, Dewsbury (2011) states assemblage theory is “an alternative

ontological unit for thinking the social on a par with that of the subject, community or the event” (p. 149). Indeed, institutional ethnographers Campbell and Teghtsoonian (2010) critique Li (2007b), partially on ontological grounds. This, however, does not mean that Li doesn’t have useful insights; Campbell and Teghtsoonian agree with and echo some of Li’s findings.

Elsewhere, Teghtsoonian (2016) has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the similarities and differences between the conceptual frameworks and methodological consequences of IE and governmentality. She finds that the two have a number of similarities which largely “flow from a shared connection to post-structural understandings of discourse and a related interest in texts as mechanisms through which it works to co-ordinate developments in local settings with ruling or governing programs and processes” (p. 331).<sup>15</sup> Teghtsoonian argues that the IE scholar typically “highlights the discursive practices through which extra-local interests and goals subordinate those of individuals in local sites;” consequently, this “arguably results in a depiction of ruling as secure, solidified and effective, rather than vulnerable” (p. 343; also see Frampton et al., 2006b). A scholar using a governmentality analytic framework is both less likely to support social justice efforts but also less likely to depict ruling in this way. Here, ruling is more commonly depicted as “contingently constituted, mutable and continuously productive of circumstances that call for new and different interventions” (p. 343). While this framework, too, can be flawed, the shift in perspective that can offer different interventions and, therefore, solutions, can be generative. There are multiple potential points of unity between these two paradigms and each can fill a potential shortfall of the other.

It is my position that Tania Murray Li (2007a, 2007b) offers important insights to IE/PAE and this ontological conflict between them can be overcome. For instance, in Chapter Four, I discuss the assemblage of the Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF) policy. I would argue, this is a site where IE and PAE ontology can tolerate assemblage theory. The HSF policy is an assemblage of the text, the workers who enact the policy, the City bureaucrats who created the policy and the computer software that calculates the amount applicants receive. Calling the HSF policy an assemblage in no way occludes that it is produced through and maintained by social

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<sup>15</sup> Others have made a similar observation about discourse. Bisailon (2012), for example, argues IE/PAE’s use of discourse is “consistent” with Foucault’s use (p. 611). This is not to say they have the same framework but that is one site of convergence.

relations. I am, however, far less concerned with the assemblage than with what Li (2007b, 2007c) offers as tools for thinking about the practices of governing.

Li (2007c) says governments first identify something as problematic in order to warrant an intervention and then engage in practices to form and re-form assemblages. She identifies six such practices: “Forging alignments,” “Rendering technical,” “Authorizing knowledge,” “Managing failures and contradictions,” “Anti-politics,” “Reassembling” (Li, 2007c, p. 265). The first of these, “forging alignments,” is the practice of “linking together the objectives of the various parties to an assemblage” (Li, 2007c, p. 265). This includes creating alignments between both those who are governing and those being governed. The second of these processes is “rendering technical,” which works to depoliticize an issue by constructing what has been rendered problematic “as a diagram in which problem (a) plus intervention (b) will produce (c), a beneficial result” (Li, 2007c, p. 265). Li observes: “experts tasked with improvement exclude the structure of political-economic relations from their diagnoses and prescriptions. They focus more on the capacities of the poor than on the practices through which one social group impoverishes another” (Li, 2007b). The practice of rendering technical, according to Li (2007b), may be routine but it is “not a secure accomplishment. Questions that experts exclude, misrecognize, or attempt to contain do not go away” (p. 10). This presents opportunities to challenge these practices in several ways, including through collective organizing. Thirdly, Li (2007b) argues that “authorizing knowledge” is a practice of assemblage. This includes setting the boundaries of what knowledge counts and is required as well as “containing critiques.” “Managing failures and contradictions” is another practice observed by Li (2007); this includes “presenting failure as the outcome of rectifiable deficiencies; smoothing out contradictions so that they seem superficial rather than fundamental; devising compromises” (p. 265). The fifth practice of assemblage is “anti-politics,” which recasts political issues as technical ones, “closing down debate” and/or encouraging debate “while limiting the agenda” (p. 265). This practice is closely linked to “rendering technical.” Here, experts’ “claim to expertise depends on their capacity to diagnose problems in ways that match the kinds of solution (sic) that fall within their repertoire” and, therefore, outside of the political realm (Li, 2007b, p. 7). “Anti-politics” can be used to create the perception of participation in the policy making realm while shutting it down or channeling discontent. The final process that Li (2007c) identifies is reassembly, in which new or

refurbished elements can be brought into the assemblage by “deploying existing discourses to new ends [and] transposing the meanings of key terms” (p. 265). The process of reassembly may involve the labour of changing the use of language because they emerge “in forms so different that they can no longer plausibly travel under the old name” (p. 287). I also identify several additional practices of assemblage that the City of Toronto engaged in and I discuss them in this dissertation. Together, these practices are used in doing the work of governing; they are tactics of ruling and management.

Practices of assemblage can be used to better understand the labour done by ruling relations to either maintain the status quo or make advances. For instance, Dorothy Smith (1990) discusses how depoliticization is used by ruling relations:

Issues of wages and working conditions are incorporated into elaborated structures in which class struggle is displaced onto struggles within legal and bureaucratic processes. The domestic situation of women is parceled out into issues of housing, mental illness, child neglect, poverty, welfare, and family violence. The actualities of class, gender, and race are dispersed over a range of sites within the institutions of ruling. (p. 65)

This is what I think Li (2007a) would call “anti-politics,” in which political issues are recast as technical ones. Li’s work is useful in this dissertation to help explicate those boundaries.

### **Poverty and Homelessness in the Moral Economy**

The “moral economy” describes the value that is imposed on people through social relations. Thobani (2007), in *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*, uses the moral economy to analyse the differentiation in attribution of human worth on Indigenous people and racialized immigrants. Here, I argue that homeless people (who are disproportionately Indigenous and racialized people) are denigrated within the moral economy, which is detrimental to homeless people.

Thobani argues:

The worthiness that exaltation endows onto national subjects does not function at an abstract level. In order to reproduce social relations with some measure of success, such exaltations are concretized and harnessed within a moral economy as very particular qualities and characteristics, recognizably human and self-evidently positively weighted. In this, the technique of power naturalizes itself and appears as guileless, unexceptionally and ordinarily reflecting an ethical polity. (p. 26)

According to Thobani, it is through the moral economy that human differentiation of value is attributed onto different groups, naturalizing and normalizing them. Chapman and I, in *A Violent History of Benevolence*, build upon Thobani's conceptualization of moral economy and apply it to a wide array of social relations (Chapman & Withers, 2019).<sup>16</sup>

How poor and homeless people are constructed within the moral economy, I would argue, depends on ruling relations. Poverty is already understood as relative to others in a society (Piven & Cloward, 1979), meaning there is no fixed construction of poor and homeless people within the moral economy, as this dissertation will demonstrate in forthcoming chapters.

The moral denigration of poor and homeless people opens up the space to bring their humanness into question. Stricker (2007) writes:

Thinking the poor were a different kind of human being with different values encouraged better-off members of the working class to resent the family on welfare more than the CEO taking a million-dollar bonus for closing a factory. (p. 97)

The differentiation in the moral economy is used to facilitate injustices to benefit and perpetuate ruling relations. Similarly, Bre, a former homeless person who has attended OCAP protests, challenges the construction of homeless people within the moral economy:

We are essentialized as thugs and criminals, and simultaneously as victims who suffer in silence. At the same time, essentialist discourses accuse me of being driven by bodily urges, of being incapable of refusing my desires. I am poor because, in addition to being lazy or immature, I cannot delay gratifying my immediate desires for sex, booze, or a leisurely life. Poor-bashing, as a form of dehumanization, doesn't necessarily ask about the basis of humanity or ask what is the essence of being human. It simply denies us a place in the category "human" itself. (Bre, 2007, p. 237)

This dehumanization, Bre argues, legitimizes the unjust treatment of homeless people.

While poor and homeless people are denigrated in the moral economy, this denigration isn't homogenous. Poor people experience denigration unevenly as it interlocks with gender, race, disability, etc. Poor and homeless people are also divided into the sub-groups of the so-called deserving and undeserving poor within the moral economy. These constructs divide those who are deemed incapable of competing in the capitalist labour market from those who are

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<sup>16</sup> Chapman and I also follow Thobani (2007) in our use of "exaltation" and "denigration" to describe those groups that are propped up and diminished in the moral economy (Chapman & Withers, 2019).



deemed able to do so (Ismael, 2006; also see Little, 1994; 2007; Palmer & Héroux, 2016). The deserving poor are constructed as “entitled to the economic, social, and political redistribution of resources that would bring them out of poverty and into [the] mainstream” while the undeserving must first become or demonstrate that they are deserving before obtaining these entitlements (Appelbaum, 1998, p. 4).

In Ontario, one of the clearest divides between these constructed categories are the differences in social assistance policy. The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) (disability) and Ontario Works (OW, or welfare) clearly delineate the difference between the so-called deserving and undeserving poor. Single people who receive Ontario Works only get 63% of what people on ODSP get (Income Security Advocacy Centre [ISAC], 2018). Certain disabled people, those deemed to qualify for ODSP, receive more funds and additional benefits than non-deserving disabled people and other poor people.<sup>17</sup> So-called non-deserving poor people are constructed as lazy and drains on the system (Swanson, 2001).

Similarly, the (neo) Liberal provincial government removed children from social assistance cheques, creating a false separation between undeserving poor parents and their deserving poor children (Withers, 2015). Children are cast as innocent victims while their parents on welfare continue to be constructed as undeserving.

While constructions of poor and homeless people shift within the moral economy, they are far from new. The English Poor Laws of 1598 and 1601 legislated the distinctions between those who were considered the deserving and undeserving poor (Hindle, 2004). This division is used to individualize social problems and, for example, depict homeless people as homeless “not because they were without work, wages, and the material foundations of human welfare (of which housing was foundational) but, rather, because they had other problems that afflicted them as individuals” (Palmer & Héroux, 2016, p. 425). These individual problems, often identified as pathologies, then require only individual solutions.

Poverty and homelessness are not discrete categories in the moral economy; rather, people can shift how they understand poor people based on their membership in denigrated groups. For example, McDonald (2009) delineates the difference between the “good citizen” and

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<sup>17</sup> People on ODSP, for example, get general dental coverage while people on OW only get emergency dental coverage; in my experience, this is typically extraction.

the “undeserving immigrant” (p. 67)—someone who would be considered to be a member of the deserving poor could become reinterpreted as undeserving depending on their immigration status. Similarly, a white disabled body may be categorized as the deserving poor but Stuart (1992) says that racialized disabled people are “assumed to ‘suffer’ from alien cultural practices” which are used to explain their disabilities (p. 301). A white person may be viewed as a part of the deserving poor while a Black person with the same disability might be further denigrated in the moral economy as undeserving poor in relation to and because of racism.

### **Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism is both a political/economic philosophy and set of capitalist political and economic policies. It espouses individual responsibility, privatization, and free-markets (Albo, 2002; McNally, 2011; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Steger & Roy, 2010). As neoliberalism became increasingly dominant, neoliberal logics were used more and more within the moral economy. Poverty has been increasingly individualized and blame downsized onto poor individuals (e.g. Law, 2015; Newberry, 2008; D. A. Thompson, 2004).

Peck and Tickell (2002b) describe the different phases of neoliberalism. “Roll back” neoliberalism is focused on “the active *destruction and discreditation* of Keynesian-welfarist and social-collectivist institutions” (p. 34, emphasis in original). Neoliberal practices have resulted in the systematic degradation of social services since the 1980s in Canada (Greene, 2006; Palmer & Héroux, 2016; Steger & Roy, 2010). Conversely, “roll out” neoliberalism is geared towards the purposeful *construction and consolidation* of neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations” (p. 384, emphasis in original).

While many scholars depict neoliberalism as advocating for, even leading to, “a hollowing out of the state... or a bypassing of the state by corporate power,” Albo (2002) reminds us that this is far from the case. He argues:

Neoliberalism has operated through the institutions of the nation-state. The state increasingly concentrates the exercise of political power relative to democratic actors, from parties to unions to NGOs, within civil society. It routinely invokes authoritarian measures in policing, administering social policy. (p. 51)

This is evidenced by trends of increased budgetary spending for policing and border security while social spending has been met with austerity (McNally, 2011).

The Canadian welfare state has been significantly eroded as a result of neoliberal practices and policies. For example, employment insurance (formerly unemployment insurance) (McBride & Whiteside, 2011), social assistance (Withers, 2015), and housing (Garrett, 2016; Hackworth, 2009) have all been eroded. As a consequence, wealth is far more concentrated in the hands of the rich in Canada today than ever before (McBride & Whiteside, 2011). Indeed, Canada's 87 richest families own more than 12 million Canadians (Macdonald, 2018).

### **Social Movement Theory**

The term social movement theory can refer to any theory about social movements. More specifically, however, it denotes sociological study *of*, rather than with or by, social movements that creates knowledge *about*, rather than with or for, social movements. I call this narrow form of social movement theory normative social movement theory (NSMT). With respect to NSMT, Aziz Choudry (2015) argues, “many movements, networks, organizations, and struggles are constructed as objects of study as if they are things that can best be known from the outside by disinterested observers” (p. 42). The producers of NSMT have tended to diminish the value and significance of non-normative social movement theory, especially what Walia (2013) calls “grassroots theory” (p. 18).<sup>18</sup> From the perspective of those trying to change ruling relations through social movements, it is grassroots theory that is relevant because it comes out of those movements and is intended for their benefit (Bevington & Dixon, 2005; Walia, 2013).

Placed side by side, it is clear that the focal points of NSMT and grassroots theory are strikingly different. Bevington and Dixon argue that activists “know about the need for ‘frame alignment’, the value of ‘informal networks’, and the importance of ‘opportunity structures’” (p. 190). My experience echoes these claims: tactics and strategy are of great concern to organizers because they are central to obtaining success. Yet, these are often unexamined in detail in NSMT (Banaszak, 2001; Greene, 2006; Piven & Cloward, 1979; Wood, 2012).

### *Normative Social Movement Literature*

Normative social movement theory is frequently framed as having an early or classical wave which focuses on the mind of the movement participant rather than on social problems and

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<sup>18</sup> This divide may not always be absolute or clear, as some activist scholars attempt to produce theory that is accepted by mainstream social movement theory scholars but also useful for social movements themselves.

injustices (Greene, 2006; M. F. Hall, 1995; McAdam, 1982; McAdam et al., 2001; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Le Bon's (2012/1895) *The Crowd* began the field of inquiry into social movements as part of the study of groups, crowds, and mobs by examining the individual psychology of participants as the explanation for collective action.<sup>19</sup>

Another psychologizing school of thought is breakdown theory, which attributes the rise of social movements to some form of social breakdown. Tilly (1977) tersely describes this theory:

Individuals anger when they sense a large gap between what they get and what they deserve. That can happen through a decline in what they get, or a rise in what they feel they deserve. Given the chance, angry people rebel. (p. 2-17)

There was a significant shift in the 1970s away from the psychologization of movements that was advanced by sociologists who supported social movements (Greene, 2006; M. F. Hall, 1995; McAdam, 1982; McAdam et al., 2001; McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) emerged in the 1970s and was intended to provide a non-psychologizing framework. These theorists argue that grievances are always present in societies and that social movement theorists should not focus on why movements emerge but how they do so through the use of resources (B. Edwards & Kane, 2014; B. Edwards & McCarthy, 2008; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). RMT presupposes that resources are determinative of social movement success or failure. In addition to other critiques, activists and social movement scholars are critical of RMT's emphasis on support from elites (Greene, 2006; McAdam, 1982; Piven & Cloward, 1979, 1991). McAdam (1982) argues RMT failed to account for political processes saying, "resources do not dictate their use, people do" (p. 21).

McAdam (1982) conceptualized political process theory (PPT), which decentres resources, focusing instead on the importance of political opportunities, organizations, and consciousness for movements to develop. Political opportunities are vulnerabilities in ruling relations, and movements require the co-ordination of organizations – formal or otherwise (McAdam, 1982; Shorter & Tilly, 1974). Organizational readiness is thus necessary for movements to mobilize to benefit from political opportunities. In addition to political opportunities and the importance of

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<sup>19</sup> Marx and Engel's (1994/1848), it has been argued, emerged long before what has become known as the "classical" social movement theory but have been erased from this history (Flacks, 2004; D. A. Thompson, 2014). Unlike normative social movement theory, grassroots movement theory frequently draws on Marx, as well as early Marxists (Bevington & Dixon, 2005; Tarrow, 1994).

organizations, cognitive liberation is central to PPT (McAdam, 1982). McAdam argues, “mediating between opportunity and action are people and the subjective meanings they attach to their situations” (p. 48). It is only after people collectively understand their situations as the product of injustice that action is possible. McAdam draws heavily on Piven and Cloward’s (1979) *Poor People’s Movements*, which is discussed in detail below. Piven and Cloward argue that when people perceive a loss in legitimacy in all or part of “the system,” it creates the space for people who are “ordinarily fatalistic... [to] begin to assert ‘rights.’” This is followed by “a new sense of efficacy; people who ordinarily consider themselves helpless come to believe that they have some capacity to alter their lot” (p. 4). This cognitive shift – or liberation – triggered by a political opportunity, is what enables collective action according to PPT.

The possibility of success, within a PPT framework, requires cognitive liberation followed by the ability to take advantage of political opportunities (McAdam, 1982). The concept of “political opportunities,” like “resources,” however, has been heavily scrutinized because it is broad and vague (Goodwin et al., 1999).

Significantly, McAdam, who first articulated the theory, shifted away from PPT, asserting “the static, individualistic, and often reified character of previous analyses – including our own – bars the door to dynamic, interactive analyses of mobilization and demobilization” (McAdam et al., 2001). McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) shifted towards better understanding what they call “contentious politics,” including war and nationalism, and the processes they have in common. Bevington and Dixon (2005) argue this makes NSMT even less relevant to activists.

In more recent years, *diffusion* (ways information travels between movements) (e.g.: Tarrow, 2005; Wood, 2012) and *cycles of contention* (periods of increased social movement activity that result in new possibilities) (e.g.: Liu, 2016; Tarrow, 1994) have also been significant sites of focus for a number of social movement scholars. Scholars have also focused on tactical repertoires (those tactics that are normatively available to movements within their historical, social, and political contexts) (Tilly, 2006). Lastly, *frames* (the articulation of what a problem is and what should be done about it) are also significant to social movement theorists. Framing is essential to success because organizations must be able to identify a target(s) and create outrage (e.g.: Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1992).

Instead of attaching themselves to RMT or PPT, many scholars have chosen to adopt a synthesis approach to social movement theory, drawing from both RMT and PPT as well as some of the concepts mentioned above (Anyon, 2014; Greene, 2006; Law, 2015; McAdam et al., 2001; Tarrow, 1994; Wood, 2012).

New social movement (NSM) theory is also a major field of study within normative social movement theory. NSMs were first theorized as such by Melucci (1980) and are often identity-based. Examples Melucci provides are the women's movement and LGBTQ movement,<sup>20</sup> although they also include other movements that largely make moral or cultural demands (e.g.: peace movement, anti-nuclear movement). Kerbo (1982) calls NSMs "movements of affluence" because they often concern themselves with "moral or conscience issues" (p. 653) rather than material needs like poor people's movements do. Steyn (2012) argues that their shift away from class and economic concerns and focus on autonomy could facilitate neoliberalism. Some NSM theory can contribute to better understanding poor people's movements. Solidarity, direct participation, and identity are all significant concerns for many contemporary poor people's movements (Clarke, 2010; Crass, 2015; Dixon, 2014; Fortier, 2005; Maulik, 2011; Rameau, 2008; Walia, 2013).

#### *Movement Outcome Theory*

There is a small subset of NSMT called movement impact theory that puts forward possible ways of understanding if and to what extent organizations and movements are successful in their aims. The most systematic attempt to measure social movement success is Gamson's (1975) *Strategy of Social Protest*; Gamson argues that those groups that are unruly and disruptive are the most likely to succeed.<sup>21</sup>

Gamson developed a specific measure of success for his study. He asks: "Did its antagonist accept [the organization] as a valid spokesman for the constituency that it was attempting to mobilize?" and "did the group gain the advantages it sought?" Gamson argues that there are four possibilities when these questions are combined: "full response, cooptation, preemption, and collapse" (p. 29). Achieving both acceptance and attainment means the

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<sup>20</sup> Referred to here as the "homosexual movemen[t]" p. 221.

<sup>21</sup> While Gamson's study ends at WWII, Frey, Dietz and Kalof (1992) found that his findings remained applicable and generalizable.

organization has been successful whereas achieving neither means there has been a failure according to this measure. Gamson argues that acceptance alone results in cooptation and advantage gains alone are the result of pre-emption. Gamson's study provides interesting insights about social movements and how to study their efficacy. However, he creates a measure of success in which organizations that don't seek acceptance will likely be viewed as unsuccessful even when those groups' actions have won tangible material gains.

Gamson, however, doesn't consider transformative organizations, like OCAP, that seek to eliminate rather than be absorbed into the systems they are challenging (see Dixon, 2014). Gamson states that transformative/revolutionary strategy "bring[s us] one a step closer to Armageddon" (p. 35). I would argue his Gamson's dismissal of and disregard for transformative groups demonstrates that his formula is problematic when used to evaluate them.

One of the most significant difficulties in trying to measure social movement success is demonstrating causality: did the organizing lead to the outcome? (Corcoran et al., 2015; Gamson, 1975; Juris et al., 2014) In assessing attainment and acceptance, Gamson was attempting to establish causal relationship between the demand and the victory. While this does not necessarily guarantee causality, it helps establish a relationship between the two. How can causality be established if acceptance as a prerequisite for movement success is rejected? It is incredibly rare that organizations' campaign work is credited with change making by officials (Greene, 2006; Palmer & Héroux, 2016; Piven & Cloward, 1979; D. A. Thompson, 2004). Examining only the winning of demands could be misleading as neither causation nor correlation can be established.

However, Gamson's (1975) second criterion for success, "goal attainment," remains helpful. He defines it as "the groups beneficiary gains new advantages during the challenge and its aftermath." (p. 29). In addition to goal attainment, I define success as the presence of a causal link. A causal link requires the demand to be made on or in relation to the body (or bodies) that concedes to the demand and is strengthened by evidence of, including but not limited to, acceptance by the body being challenged, public refutation of the body being challenged and/or policy or material changes that are reflective of the demand. These criteria are less definitive than Gamson's. However, they can appropriately acknowledge the successes of organizations that do not seek acceptance from movement antagonists and/or organizations that such

antagonists would hesitate to bestow acceptance upon because it could legitimize the organization's radical goals.

There are, nevertheless, a number of complexities that make determining success difficult using this, or any, criteria. For instance, success is particularly difficult with respect to changes to government policy, which often take a long time to be finalized and implemented. It is also difficult to measure if a movement has been successful in preventing "new disadvantages" even if a campaign is lost. The prevention of "new disadvantages" is what Kriesi (1995) calls reactive success (p. 43) while winning something new is delineated as "proactive" (p. 43). Also, an organization could put forward a demand for something that was already and independently occurring. Further, it is often held by organizations that obtaining victories is important to building movements (e.g.: Clarke, 2010; Greene, 2006; OCAP, 2013a; Piven & Cloward, 1979; D. A. Thompson, 2004, 2014). Consequently, organizations have an incentive to represent their work positively and to make victory claims.

Because of these difficulties, some scholars have problematized the idea of success itself, choosing instead to examine movement outcomes. Andrews (1997) explains:

Success implies the attainment of specific, widely shared goals, but the goals of most social movements are contested by participants and observers. Goals also change over the course of a movement. Studying outcomes avoids these problems and allows scholars to focus on unintended and negative consequences as well as successes. (p. 72)

Others also argue that focusing on success rather than outcomes overlooks possible unintended outcomes (Giugni, 1998, 2004; Haiven & Khasnabish, 2013).

One of the tensions, I would argue, between grassroots theorists and NSMT is the preoccupation within movement outcome theory about *if* movements were successful or *what* specific outcomes were. However, it is understanding *how* movements are or are not successful and *why* outcomes occurred that is most useful and interesting to people working within movements for social and economic justice so that they can learn from successful organizing in order to be more effective.

### *Piven, Cloward and Disruption*

The central and most influential poor people's movement text continues to be Piven and Cloward's (1979) *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail*. The authors



were a part of welfare rights organizing and the architects of some of its central strategies; they wrote the text to make a political intervention into poor people's organizing with the hopes of making the movement more successful.

For Piven and Cloward, occasional social upheavals create the conditions for poor people's movements to emerge spontaneously. These movements become increasingly organized with time. Piven and Cloward argue that collective disruption is the only way that poor people can win concessions from ruling relations precisely because of their social status. They define disruption as “the application of a negative sanction, the withdrawal of a crucial contribution on which others depend, and it is therefore a natural resource for exerting power over others” (p. 24). It is in collectively refusing to cooperate with institutional life that poor people’s power can be enacted – or, as an ally of OCAP said, “unionized workers can assert their strength by not being where their employer wants them to be, but the poor can only have power by being where they're not supposed to be” (Clarke, 2010 n.p.). Piven argues that “poor people’s cooperation tends to be kept in place by rules” rather than with economic power in an employer-employee relationship (in Miller & Piven, 2012, p. 370). Social assistance rules, tenancy rules, immigration rules, and criminal rules all work to regulate poor people and it is in breaking these rules that poor people can make material gains.

### **Theoretical Framework Conclusion**

This dissertation adds to grassroots social movement theory and maps ruling relations. It produces knowledge *with* social movements that is useful *to* social movements, drawing on governmental practices of assemblage and moral economy, and other relevant theories. PAE provides both a theoretical scaffolding and methodological approach; there is a strong theory/method relation in PAE (and IE). I will discuss my methods and methodological approach in the next section.

## **Part II: Methodological Approach**

### **Introduction**

I came into academia after a long history of social justice organizing and encountering multiple people conducting research on activism, in general, and OCAP, in particular. I have found that researchers tend to take a lot of time out of activists’ lives and give very little back.

Academics, especially grad students, often articulate wanting to make an important political intervention in order to benefit social movements. In the end, however, there is usually a long and inaccessible thesis or dissertation that the people who contributed and the organization might never see a copy of. This type of work commonly goes on to benefit the career of the author but not the rest of us. Indeed, Croteau (2005) has asserted:

Becoming an academic to support social movements is akin to launching a space program to develop a pen that writes upside down. At best, it is a circuitous route that is surely not the most efficient way of realizing this goal. (p. 20)

If one wants to make an intervention, one can make an intervention - activists do this all of the time. Of course, the root of some of these issues begins at the research methodology. In this section, I discuss political activist ethnography – the methodology I use for this project, as well as the ethical and political issues involved in conducting this research and the guiding principles underlying this project.

### **Guiding Principles and Research Design**

I am bound by the ethical requirements of my academic institution but these do not sufficiently align with social justice movement needs and values. Social movements, in general, and OCAP, in specific, are typically distrustful of researchers (Greene, 2006). OCAP has never given the kind of access I have been allowed to someone conducting research. I have this access because of my relationship with OCAP. I have established a significant amount of trust with people in the organization as a both volunteer and former paid organizer. It is politically important to me, in terms of my responsibility to OCAP, to not only be but also to be understood to be acting in ethically sound ways. This is also personally important to me as many people in OCAP are my dear friends and my political reputation would be deeply impacted by this project.

This research project was designed with five guiding ethical principles: utility, reciprocity, reflexivity, accountability and accessibility. I developed these principles in order to, at a minimum, mitigate some of the potential harms done by scholarly researchers and, ideally, strengthen organizing and help create social change.

#### *Utility*

Bevington and Dixon (2005) assert that those engaged in studying and writing about social movements should produce “theory that is useful and accountable to movements” which

“can inform and assist movements” (p. 186). Similarly, Flacks (2004) maintains that scholars researching movements should interrogate if and how “the validation, elaboration, and refinement of concepts provide useable knowledge for those seeking social change” (p. 138). These authors make the case that social justice movement research should provide utility for those movements (also see Singh, 2011). This activates a different ethical standard and motivation than typical academic research which is simply focused on producing knowledge. Bevington and Dixon (2005) stress this, particularly because most activists do not find social movement theory useful but are, nevertheless, very engaged with theory.

Sometimes, important questions arise about how to balance knowledge production and openness with protection for individuals and organizations (e.g. from the state/hate groups). Bevington and Dixon (2005) assert that research should be conducted for movements to be able to learn and adapt to become more effective. However, important questions about what the benefit is and who benefits from the publishing of one’s findings need to be addressed.

### *Reciprocity*

Strongly linked to utility, reciprocity is a principle that demands more than an extractive research practice. Reciprocal research is a “collaborative research process [that] becomes an ongoing and dynamic form of giving back in itself” (Driver & Higgins, 2014, p. 1). This means that researchers must think beyond the finished product as their contribution back to the movement and engage in thinking meaningfully about what reciprocity means for the people, organizations and movements about which they write.

I know many well-intentioned activists who made, or attempted to make, ‘interventions into the movement’ through academic texts that I have never read. That is why I began my research with the assumption that my actual dissertation would not be useful at all. I felt that I had to attempt to design a research project that would contribute to my community more than I was taking out of it by *doing* the research, not the final project.

Reciprocity could include thinking about ways of having the act of research contribute to organizing or asking what groups need to understand more about and conducting research to answer their questions. It may mean applying for funding to provide organizations and

individuals honoraria. It may mean volunteering for an organization in trade for one's time.<sup>22</sup> The process of determining reciprocity is dynamic and must be done collaboratively with the community (Driver & Higgins, 2014).

### *Reflexivity*

Researchers can impact those they are researching, including in harmful ways. Reflexivity<sup>23</sup> is often viewed as an important part of the qualitative research process in order to mitigate harm (N. Cooper & Burnett, 2006; Fortier, 2015; B. Gray, 2008; Pinnington, 2012; Probst & Berenson, 2014; Walby & Larsen, 2012). There are a number of different approaches to and definitions of reflexivity. Probst and Berenson (2014) say it “is generally understood as awareness of the influence the researcher has on what is being studied and, simultaneously, of how the research process affects the researcher” (p. 814). It also requires us to understand our own position and complicity in interlocking oppressions (Pinnington, 2012).

Reflexivity isn't unique to qualitative research. Social work also has a tradition of reflexivity in working with clients and communities (D'Cruz et al., 2005). Reflexivity has become “a dominant practice tool within social work” (Badwall, 2016). Writing about social work in particular, Longhofer and Floersch (2012) define reflexivity as “our human capacity to consider ourselves in relation to our contexts, and our contexts in relation to ourselves” (p. 513). Social justice activists also practice reflexivity. Indeed, Harsha Walia (2013) argues “movement building requires reflexivity” (p. 173). As my research will show, and as many others have shown, social justice activists frequently engage in ongoing reflexivity (Dixon, 2000; Fortier, 2015; Milstein, 2017; Oparah, 2010; Rameau, 2008). However, the term “reflexive” or “reflexivity” is often not used.

Reflexive processes in activist communities are frequently collective processes. Following Craig Fortier, who was also a Toronto based social justice activist doing dissertation research, my reflexive process “sought to foster a collective process of self-reflexivity rather than see this process as being inherently individualistic” (Fortier, 2015). I practiced ‘collective self-reflexivity’ the way that I would typically as an organizer with OCAP when I wasn't doing research – I would work to be thoughtful about my actions and talk through any questions or

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<sup>22</sup> Reciprocity would not include those kinds of volunteering that take a lot of effort from the organization.

<sup>23</sup> Here, I am using reflexivity in the social work/qualitative methodology sense (see glossary).

issues that arose with other OCAP members and with my support networks (who are also supportive of OCAP).

Reger (2001) argues that reflexivity is a very time-consuming process; however, I did not find this to be the case in my own research because it is simply a part of organizing (and knowledge production). I did, however, find writing field notes to be time consuming and I found this to be a useful additional site of reflection.

I should note that long before I began the research process, I had to practice self-reflexivity in relation to this project. Indeed, from the moment I first had the notion that I might want to do this as a project, I started ‘checking’ my behavior to ensure that I wasn’t doing anything that could impact my research and this continued through my initial informal conversations with key OCAP members about their thoughts about such a project until the last T was crossed in my dissertation. For example, because I, like most OCAP members, have an opportunity to edit most of the text that OCAP puts out, I could make subtle changes to seed the record to benefit my research before people in the organization even knew I was thinking about conducting it. A simple change from “government” to “government bureaucracy,” for example, could better fit a text into a section that I anticipated writing in the future. I had an ethical responsibility as both a researcher and an OCAP member not to do this not only because it would lead to invalid results but also because it would undermine the organization’s trust in me.

An obvious shortcoming of reflexivity is an epistemological one as it relies upon the researcher’s capacities and limitations for self-reflection and memory. How does the researcher know what they do not know? “So much of what affects the research we do (and the texts we produce) resists our awareness” (Proudfoot, 2015). Further, as Gillian Rose (1997) observes, researchers “see the world from specific locations, embodied and particular, and never innocent; siting is intimately involved in sighting” (p. 308). Collective self-reflexivity, however, helps diminish this problem because the members of the group can identify issues that the researcher may be unaware of. However, the self-reflexive knowledge produced is limited to the capacities of the group.

David Graeber, who has also done social justice movement organizing and ethnographic research (see: Graeber, 2009), emphasizes the practice of reflexivity – the actual *doing* of it (Graeber, 2014, drawing on Skeggs, 2001). Graeber writes:

whether one is actually doing reflexivity, by constantly reexamining the power dynamics implicit in our research process as part of that process itself, in active engagement with and with a sense of accountability to those with whom we work, or simply being reflexive, which is perfectly congruent with the kind of performance of self required by the hyperprofessionalization of the discipline. (p. 83)

For Graeber, ethnographers can ‘be’ reflexive without enacting reflexive practices. His observation that the performance of reflexivity maps onto “the hyperprofessionalization” of ethnography is, I would argue, an entirely appropriate observation for social work as well. I worked to *practice* reflexivity, in Graeber’s sense, in each step of my research process.

### *Accountability*

The fourth guiding principle of my research is accountability which requires that there was a mechanism in place to ensure that there was recourse available if I behaved unethically. My research had to obtain approval from York University’s Office of Research Ethics (ORE). However, an institutional ethics process is insufficient for this kind of research without additional ways of ensuring accountability for two reasons. Firstly, OCAP and/or its members may not have the capacity to navigate a university’s institutional ethics process. Secondly, there can be an incompatibility between institutional ethics and social justice movement ethics.

With academic ethics processes, the research subject can seek out the institutional ethics review board or, potentially, take civil action for damages if a consent agreement is violated (although in practice many research subjects likely don’t have the resources or capacity to navigate these processes). I would also argue that the consequences don’t necessarily translate to activist communities – not being able to use parts of the data collected or having to restart the research doesn’t make sense as redress for the violations that activists might experience even if it is experienced as a serious punishment and humiliation for a researcher.

Further, there are strong criticisms of institutional review boards like that at York University. Nichols (2015) argues “more focus is given to following set norms, so that the sponsoring institution can save face, minimize liability, and prevent offense, than to reducing the risk to subjects” (p. 9). Annas (1991) says that “their primary mission is to protect the institution” and, therefore, “the term ‘ethics’ is inappropriate, and the committee should be called a ‘risk management’ or a ‘liability control’ committee” (p. 19). Further, there are ethical

concerns that could be entirely appropriate within my ORE approval that are repugnant to members of OCAP.

While individual interview participants and OCAP as an organization always retained the right to withdraw consent from my research and could go to the ORE if I violated my ethics protocols, this was an inadequate accountability mechanism for this type of research. Therefore, I worked to establish a form of “dual accountability” (Cancain, 1993, p. 94): accountability to both the academy and the community.

Nevertheless, there will likely be tensions that arise between academic requirements and activist accountability (Cancain, 1993). Unlike academic institutional ethics which require researchers not to do harm to their participants (see, for instance, Tri-Council, 2018), I would argue that a social justice movement ethics would extend this duty to all people involved in the movement that OCAP is a part of, not just those interviewed or I directly interact with.

My ethics protocols required me to abide by the *Tri-Council statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans* (2018). The Tri-Council is part of the Canadian Government. It instructs researchers if there is a conflict between research ethics and the law, “researchers should strive to comply with the law” (p. 10). Prior to obtaining ethics approval to conduct my research, I had to add “Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law” to my interview consent form (Appendix 5a and 5b).

Conversely, I would argue that in OCAP, and other social justice movement communities, that it would be considered profoundly unethical for a researcher, or anyone, to provide the state incriminating information about anyone who was engaged in social justice work. Indeed, in these communities, Greene (2006) reports “issues of trust are of paramount importance” (p. 12) particularly because groups are concerned about being infiltrated by the police. Bevington and Dixon (2005) maintain that, for researchers studying political movements, “with the bonds of trust come increased responsibilities around issues of confidentiality” (p. 200). They discuss the case of one researcher who refused to comply with the legal requirement that he identify someone who would be criminally charged if he did. This researcher spent over five months in prison as a result. There is a direct conflict between these two sets of ethical values. An actual clash, however, did not arise related to my own research.

I took a number of steps in my research to help ensure the legal protection of social justice activists – beyond the standard of warning people of the risks. I was prepared to stop an interview recording when needed, rewind or erase the recording if I felt necessary or upon request. When I attended protests in which illegal actions might take place (including those organized by other groups), I took a new notebook so my existing notes could not be seized and reviewed by the police if I was arrested. I was also prepared to never write any identifying characteristics of individuals who might be involved in illegal activity (I say “might” here because there were no arrests during my field research and only small-scale actions). Having been a member of a social movement legal collective for many years and taken a paralegal program, I felt confident in my skill and knowledge to navigate these issues. However, I am also well aware that nothing is ever truly secure from the state and, therefore, the best protection for the people around me was to be smart about what I wrote down.

Also, in the interests of protecting the confidentiality of my interviewees, participants had the option of being named or not. For those who are not named, I chose to not provide the date of the interview, contrary to APA style guidelines. I did this in order to further protect the identities of my participants.

#### OCAP Research Steering Committee

In order to ensure accountability and a degree of control over the research, OCAP and I established a Research Steering Committee that was made up of people chosen by OCAP. It was their responsibility to supervise my work and research. I could go to them with concerns or questions that I had and OCAP members could also go to them with any concerns they had that they did not wish to bring to me directly. The committee was comprised of both paid organizers<sup>24</sup> and three other members (a fourth member was briefly a part of the committee but left due to workload issues). This committee reviewed my dissertation proposal and provided feedback about my informed consent forms and ethics protocols. The OCAP research committee also helped me transition into the role of OCAP Organizer.

The committee and I established a number of internal protocols for my research relationship with OCAP. If I violated these parameters, OCAP could withdraw its consent for the

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<sup>24</sup> After the retirement of John Clarke, the membership remained the same. Clarke stayed on as a volunteer.



study (although the research was done with full, free and informed consent and OCAP could withdraw its consent at any point). Of course, if the Research Steering Committee felt I violated our agreement it could put other restrictions on me (these would not necessarily be limited to my research but could include my membership in the organization). It was agreed that I would not report on the internal workings of General Membership or Executive Committee meetings to ensure that members felt they could speak freely. We also agreed that I could access the OCAP archive and my own personal archive (I have boxes of random OCAP stuff from over the years) but could not use people's names if I drew on their case files.

OCAP's existing policy regarding members speaking and publishing about OCAP was also adopted in my case. The existing rules apply to all members so that not just any member can publicly (and inaccurately or inadequately) represent OCAP. There are a number of texts, both scholarly and non, that claim to be written by OCAP members that are written by people who haven't been a part of OCAP for years or never really were an active part of the organization. Those texts carry an undeserved authority by using our name. Consequently, if one intends to speak on behalf of OCAP, it has to be approved (the act, not the content) and if one wants to publish about OCAP as a member of OCAP, they have to run the text by the elected OCAP Executive Committee. In my case, however, the Research Steering Committee was already quite familiar with my work so the research committee took on this role and it was agreed that text approval would be limited to the 'no harm' provision I will discuss shortly. I also agreed that I would work to make all talks that I did open to OCAP members and any published text available to them for free. The General Membership approved this policy exception in my case.

The issue of control is important for research of social movement organizations as academic research has a history of being exploitative and appropriative of activist and movement knowledge (Chesters, 2012; Dixon, 2014; Elliott, 2011; Frampton et al., 2006b). I would argue OCAP has experienced this kind of exploitation and appropriation before. Indeed, I personally have felt manipulated by researchers who then appropriated my knowledge about OCAP. I wanted to take extra caution not to subject the people that I work with for social justice to this form of epistemological injustice.

There were multiple ways that OCAP could benefit from this research, but it also took a risk in participating. I could do a 'hatchet job' on the organization and/or make it vulnerable to

political attack. Consequently, in ensuring that OCAP could maintain control over the research and that it could take the risk in participating, I agreed I would not present anything in my dissertation that caused harm to OCAP (as opposed to critique). Going into this project, this was a belief that I held firmly within myself. As a longstanding and committed member of the organization, I undertook this research to understand more about how power works and how to make our work more effective. I also wanted to show the minutia of our work so others could learn from it, not just the flash in the pan big actions. I certainly didn't want to do damage to OCAP. However, it is one thing to hold that principle and to make those decisions as a researcher and know that my research still has value and integrity. It is another, much scarier and more daunting thing to hold that principle collectively and allow others, in this case the OCAP Research Steering Committee, to make that determination with me. There were a few times in my field research when I would think "uh oh... this is going to be one of those things that gets considered as harmful, but I think is ok..." but I would work to bury that anxiety. I decided to record everything, write up everything and deal with it after the fact.

I also decided it was important, for the sake of the integrity of this research to say how many times and in what context I removed content because members of the OCAP Research Steering Committee thought it was harmful. There is a simple answer and a much more complex answer to this question. There were two concerns raised about potential harm to OCAP based on what I had written. I made no changes to the text.

A member of the Committee, however, asked one of my interview participants if they would change a single word of a quote. I was clear with the Committee that I would not be involved in changing what my participants said. The participant agreed to change the word – that was relayed to me and I confirmed with the participant that was their intention. As I run all of my quotes past OCAP members, and they can edit them for clarity, context, etc., this was within my methodological practice; although, I recognize it is unorthodox. Had the change been significant, or changed the essence of what was said, I would have removed the quote.

The more complex answer to this question is that, perhaps, framing the issue around "no harm to OCAP" was overly simplistic when we organize with allies who could also be impacted by this dissertation. However, delineating where or how a line could possibly be drawn along a "no harm to allies" would be nearly impossible. For instance, while I adore my postal worker, I

owe a lesser duty to their union, who organized to attend a rally than I do an agency that we worked with closely and whose funding could be impacted. Further, there is a difference between a hypothetical and a real harm. This did arise at one point in my dissertation. One of the members of the OCAP Research Steering Committee raised a concern that one of my arguments could negatively impact one or more of our allies. This could impact homeless people who use that/those services (at some point, someone could get mad at OCAP for what I wrote).

We discussed this at a meeting, and it was acknowledged that it did not constitute harm to OCAP as envisioned under the agreement. However, where possible, I wanted to protect the organization(s) that could be impacted. Therefore, I worked with one of the members of the Committee to revise a few paragraphs, rejecting any edits that I felt compromised my analysis.

### *Accessibility*

This final principle loops back into the first: utility. If one cannot access the text, it is not useful – regardless of the importance or urgency of the knowledge within it. While many activists engage with theory, even when it is academically written and less accessible (Bevington & Dixon, 2005) this can still be a significant barrier. Bevington and Dixon identify making scholarly texts more accessible to wider audiences as “commendable” (p. 193); however, they do not view it as “the core problem” (p. 193) or necessary to change. Nevertheless, they do acknowledge that texts should be “made available in a form, style, and location that is accessible to activists outside of the academy” (p. 199). While it is true that many activists engage theory, those who are the least likely to find academic texts accessible are also more likely members of oppressed groups, particularly: poor and working-class people who could not afford post-secondary education, people with intellectual disabilities and migrants who do not know English well. This works to continue the concentration of knowledge amongst people who are already exalted in movements, maintaining the oppressive relations it wishes to overthrow. I would like to suggest that issues of accessibility are indeed core issues and key to ensuring legitimate and meaningful social justice research ethics.

In addition to reporting on my preliminary findings from time-to-time. I also created a plain language summary and glossary that are included in this dissertation.

## Study Design

Driven by these five principles: utility, reciprocity, reflexivity, accountability, and accessibility, I set out to design a study that would provide me with extensive data so I could map ruling relations and the social relations of struggle.

### *Field Research*

My shift in thinking about non-extractive, reciprocal research absent a final project is what called upon me to do field research and helped me formulate the parameters in which I would conduct it. I worked as an unpaid OCAP Organizer for my field research for this dissertation. I had, about ten years previously, filled this role in a paid capacity. I intended to work for OCAP relatively full-time; however, I was not in a physical condition to do this as my recovery from my back injury and surgery was slower than I had expected. The OCAP Research Steering Committee and I decided that I would ease into the work, taking on what was reasonable for me without causing further injury to my back or exacerbating my other chronic pain. Nevertheless, returning to this position was a slow, frustrating process for me and I felt physically taxed all the time. After a month or two, I had fully found my footing and was comfortable in the role once again although I was in significant pain throughout the process.

### *Freedom of Information Act Requests*

I submitted multiple requests for information under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. While all these requests were to the City of Toronto, except one which was to the Province of Ontario, some of the social justice movement ethics that I outlined could still be applied. As freedom of information (FOI) requests came in, I would often review them with one of the other organizers or bring summaries to meetings. Sometimes we would obtain useful statistical data; other times we would obtain information about how OCAP was perceived. We would come up with working theories that we would use to apply to OCAP's work, demonstrating the utility of the project.

### *Interviews*

In total, I interviewed 37 people, including OCAPers, journalists, Toronto city councillors, Toronto City Council staff and one Member of Parliament. The conversational interviews took place in Toronto between December 2017 and April 2018. I had a series of

prepared questions for each interview (see Appendix 6a and 6b) and catered specific questions to each participant, building on what I had learned as I went through the research process.

Participants were provided informed consent forms (Appendix 5a and 5b) in advance and I went over the forms prior to beginning the interview.

There were two possible informed consent forms: one for “Current or Former OCAP Members, Casework Participants” (Appendix 5a) and one for “Media, Government Staff and Representatives” (Appendix 5b). There could be significantly different ethical considerations for OCAP members<sup>25</sup> than for public figures and City staff. For example, OCAP members could face reprisals at work if their boss discovers they are members of the organization, particularly if they work for the City of Toronto. They could also face problems finding employment or have family difficulties if they are a member of the organization. This is unlikely to be the case for a journalist to grant an interview to a PhD student.

Each participant was given the option of confidentiality or being named in the dissertation; the risks for which were explained in the informed consent form. This is in keeping with Article 5.1 and 10.4 of the *Tri-Council Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2018).

#### *i. OCAP Interviews*

OCAP interviews began towards the end of my field research; the first interview took place at the OCAP office in late December, 2017. I interviewed OCAP members with various degrees of involvement, from those who were relatively new but routinely attended meetings and demonstrations to those who had been members for longer but were less involved at the time of the interview. I also interviewed members of the Executive and both paid Organizers. OCAP members were given an honourarium of \$20 in recognition of their time. OCAP interview participants were provided those quotations that were used in the dissertation so they could respond to or clarify their quotes.

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<sup>25</sup> I only interviewed current members, electing not to interview former members or casework participants although some current members have also been casework participants – including myself.

## *ii. Toronto City Council and Staff Interviews*

Most of the eight city councillors that I interviewed consider themselves to be part of the “progressive caucus,” a group of councillors who attempt to collectively put forward what they consider to be a progressive agenda. However, I also interviewed councillors who are very much a part of the right-wing of Toronto Council.

I also interviewed Counselors’ aides. They chose to have any identifying information remain confidential.

I attempted to interview City staff who worked in the Departments of Toronto Employment and Social Services, Shelter Support and Housing, and Economic Development and Culture. I offered for these interviews to be confidential or for the employer to be aware of them. No one from any of these agencies was willing to be interviewed. Everyone I requested an interview from Toronto Employment and Social Services and Culture and Development declined out right. While I made an individual request to one staff person at Shelter Support and Housing Administration, I also made a formal request to the Director. The individual did not respond and the director said that he was willing to arrange something for his staff to participate in interviews but it was a bad time. I was unable to arrange time to interview any Shelter Support and Housing Administration interviews prior to writing this dissertation.

## *iii. Member of Parliament Interview*

I interviewed one Federal Member of Parliament because he was very outspoken about the City’s approach, involved in securing of the Moss Park Armory as an emergency shelter, and the Federal Government’s National Housing Strategy, and uniquely positioned because he is also a former Toronto City Councillor.

## *iv. Media Interviews*

Lastly, I interviewed five members of the media, one of whom was a woman and all of whom were white. While I tried to secure other interviews, only print journalists and one podcaster made themselves available. These interviews consisted of three freelancers and two staff writers for mainstream papers, the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*.

## *Data Analysis*

My data analysis was inductive and iterative, from when I got my first FOI documents<sup>26</sup> through my interviews and field research to writing and revising this dissertation. Eric Mykhalovskiy says that a conversational interview allows for “confirmation or correction” of the researcher’s emerging and developing understanding (as quoted in DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 23). This was the case not only for the interviews I conducted, but also throughout my field research. I worked as an OCAP Organizer and organizers are constantly strategizing about how to be more effective; PAE also aims to make social movements more effective. Consequently, my conversational engagement with members and allies about the work we were doing, about strategy and evaluation was often “confirmation or correction” of my analysis.

I drew not only from PAE, but also from more conventional ethnography. While I have discussed PAE at length, I have not particularly addressed conventional ethnography, which was driven by my desire to provide an accurate and relatively detailed account of OCAP’s work beyond its large actions and contribute to the historical record. The field notes and journals that I wrote during my field research enabled me to work my data into rich ethnographic description, largely following Graeber (2009) but also influenced by Fisher (2015), Li (2007a), Valentine (2007), and Wood (2012), among others. I analyzed that same text focusing on social organization (Marie Louise Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Consequently, my write up is somewhat different than many other IE or PAE texts I have read, especially for the three chapters (Chapter Three, Four and Seven) that focus on OCAP campaigns. These Chapters are story-centred and I use these OCAP stories to illustrate the theoretical conclusions that I arrive at using PAE.

I worked with a large amount of text, which I reviewed and analyzed, ongoingly. Again, I was dealing with interviews (audio recordings that, initially, I made rough transcriptions of), field notes and journals (typed up, also quite roughly), and documents (OCAP archival documents, OCAP public documents, OCAP internal documents – including email, City documents obtained through freedom of information act requests and City documents that are publicly available). I created rough transcriptions of the interviews and field notes and journals which I entered, along with a small number of deputations and FOI documents into a qualitative

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<sup>26</sup> As FOI documents are publicly available, I began making FOI requests prior to ethics approval as I was not seeking confidential or private material.

data analysis program (QDA Miner Lite). Some institutional ethnographers also use qualitative data analysis software (DeVault & McCoy, 2006). After I reviewed these documents, I coded them using simultaneous and subcoding (i.e. parent/child) (Saldana, 2012). Saldana says subcoding is well-suited for “ethnographies... studies with multiple participants... and studies with a wide variety of data forms” (2012, p. 76). While most sections of text have one, or even no codes, some have multiple codes. One paragraph in one interview, for example, is coded as “legitimacy problem,” “Dec 5/6,” “media,” “ruling relations,” “ssh general shelters, housing, homelessness.”<sup>27</sup> Saldana cautions that simultaneous coding “suggest that there is no clear or focused research purpose” (p. 81). I did not use the software and the codes to help me perform my analysis; rather, I used them to pull out everything that I coded about a particular topic (like the December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 protests or ruling relations) which I could then analyze.<sup>28</sup>

The majority of the electronic FOI documents I received were ‘flat’ which is to say they registered as images rather than text. Many governments have FOI management software that purposely transforms FOI documents into images so searching them is difficult (Walby & Larsen, 2011).<sup>29</sup> I ran some of the FOI documents through optical character recognition software to make them searchable; however, this software is imprecise and can result in inaccurate searches. I received some of these documents as hard copies and most on CD or USB drive.<sup>30</sup> I created a master spreadsheet to keep track of each FOI request, when it was made, the number of pages, the cost, where it was stored and any other pertinent information.

When I obtained FOI documents, I would typically do an initial pass of the documents and relay information that would be immediately useful to OCAP. I would often also contact the OCAP Organizer(s) and tell them about alarming or scandalous information I had uncovered – sometimes forwarding them the documents for them to read. I did this in case they felt like it should be relayed more fully and, in part, to discuss what I had found. While I initially coded a few FOI documents, I found this not to be an effective use of my time. Instead, I indicated repeat

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<sup>27</sup> I made some of my codes so I could type specific keys and they would come up quickly.

<sup>28</sup> Some of these topics, like ‘legitimacy problem,’ I was already well aware of based on my field research; thus, they were sufficiently grounded to create the category and work from there.

<sup>29</sup> This also means that the ruling regime purposefully makes them inaccessible for people who need screen readers.

<sup>30</sup> A document under 20 pages would usually be mailed to me as I had to pay a \$5 deposit for the costs. There is a fee of \$10 to have a request put on a CD or USB (plus any additional charges) while copying costs are done per page (\$0.25 each).



documents (e.g. I would receive an email sent to five people five times) so I would not review the same document multiple times and would meticulously go through the FOI. Depending on the contents of the request, I would sometimes do this several times when working on a chapter and several times again when working on another chapter. I would make notes about my findings in relation to these documents. I tracked publicly available City documents using computer files and Mendeley, as I did with OCAP documents (for which I also kept paper files and used my field notes to assist with).

### *Data Disposal*

Within 12 months of successful defense of this dissertation, a research archive will be provided to OCAP including the audio recordings and transcripts of consenting research participants, MFOIPPA requests, my dissertation and other research materials I have collected. This is being done in the spirit of reciprocity, so that OCAP has a rich archive from which it can draw in the future, and accountability. All other interview audio and transcripts will be returned to the participants or destroyed, as per their request.

### **Conclusion**

PAE is a theory/method that is very well suited to research based in social justice movements that are working for social change. I have, however, developed additional principles that I view necessary for ethical activist research to take place: utility, reciprocity, reflexivity, accountability, and accessibility. Institutional ethics are not intended to protect social movements and scholars have exploited activist groups and extracted movements' knowledge. These principles, I have argued, were necessary in grounding my own research and I believe they are an appropriate starting place for other activists doing similar research. I also draw on additional theories throughout this dissertation, particularly Li's (2007b) practices of assemblage and Thobani's (2007) moral economy. In the coming chapters, I will apply my theoretical framework to OCAP's organizing around homelessness issues, explicating the social relations of struggle.

## Chapter 3: Privately Policing Public Space: St. James Park

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*In thinking of our fight with the St. James Park BIA, I'm reminded of a line in a song by Boots Riley, in which he is giving his daughter advice about growing up in a messed-up world. One lyric in the song is, "if somebody hits you, hit them back, then negotiate a peace contract." That's what we did with the St. James Park BIA.*

~Yogi Acharya,  
(personal interview, December 19, 2017)

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### Introduction

On July 13, 2017, OCAP organizer Yogi Acharya answered a call in the OCAP office from someone named Neil, who said he was being harassed by private security in a public park. The security guard had been hired by the St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood Business Improvement Area (BIA) to remove people from the neighbourhood whom it deemed were breaking rules. At the centre of the BIA's social cleansing<sup>1</sup> efforts was St. James Park. Neil's phone call would spark a brief campaign by OCAP in St. James Park against private securitization and the displacement of homeless people. In this chapter I will argue that the BIA attempted to impose its own capitalist interests and cleanse the park of those it identified as undesirable. I will do so by examining how the BIA criminalized and displaced homeless people through multiple practices of assemblage in its attempt to retain control of the park. I will then go on to demonstrate that OCAP was successful in pushing back against the BIA and forcing the removal of the security guard.

St. James Park, like all of what is now called Toronto, is on the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, Tionontati, Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee (V. J. Freeman, 2010). The Guswentha, or Two-Row Wampum, is "the first treaty between Europeans and Indigenous Nations" in North America (Hallenbeck, 2015, p. 350). It is the foundational treaty for which all other treaties have been made and symbolizes the autonomy of, and mutual respect between, Indigenous and settler nations (Hallenbeck, 2015; Koleszar-Green, 2019). It marks the necessity

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<sup>1</sup> Palmer and Héroux (2016) argue that "social cleansing" is manifest in Toronto's downtown core through increased policing, the closing of homeless shelters, and the pushing of homeless people into housing in the inner suburbs.

of both non-interference and relationship building (Koleszar-Green, 2019).<sup>2</sup> These principles are repeatedly disregarded by Canada and Canadians, which has resulted in “ongoing settler-colonial dispossession” (Hallenbeck, 2015, p. 351).

St. James Park is in the southern portion of Toronto’s Downtown Eastend (see Illustration 3.1: Map of St. James Park Neighbourhood; see Appendix 7 for larger area map). It is a 10-15-minute walk from Toronto’s financial district and is surrounded by both fancy and fast-food restaurants, tourists, newly-built condos, and some rental housing. The area is also a hub of social services and agencies that poor and homeless people rely on. St. James Park is just south of the Salvation Army Gateway men’s homeless shelter and drop-in, which shelters up to 108 men (The Gateway, n.d.-b).<sup>3</sup> This is where Neil had been staying when he called us on his cell phone from the park.

Because of its location, St. James Park acts as a meeting place and impromptu shelter for many homeless people – it “amounts almost to the Gateway’s backyard” (Fisher, 2015). It is also just a few minutes’ walk away from the Fred Victor Centre’s main site at Queen and Jarvis and its 24-hr women’s drop-in on Lombard Street. The park also has a large gazebo, which is an attractive shelter from the elements: the raised park benches throughout the park can protect people from the wet, cold, and/or frozen ground. Even though the area is patrolled by Parks Ambassadors<sup>4</sup> and police, it offers a place to hang out away from the institutional rules of shelters, drop-ins, agencies, and libraries.

St. James Park is also a political gathering place. Over the years, OCAP has held a number of protests there. We protested the police clearing of homeless people from the park in 2001 (Lyons, 2001). It has also been the staging ground for protests demanding Housing for All and an end to austerity (OCAP, 2009, 2015b, 2015c). Occupy Toronto, which lasted 40 days in

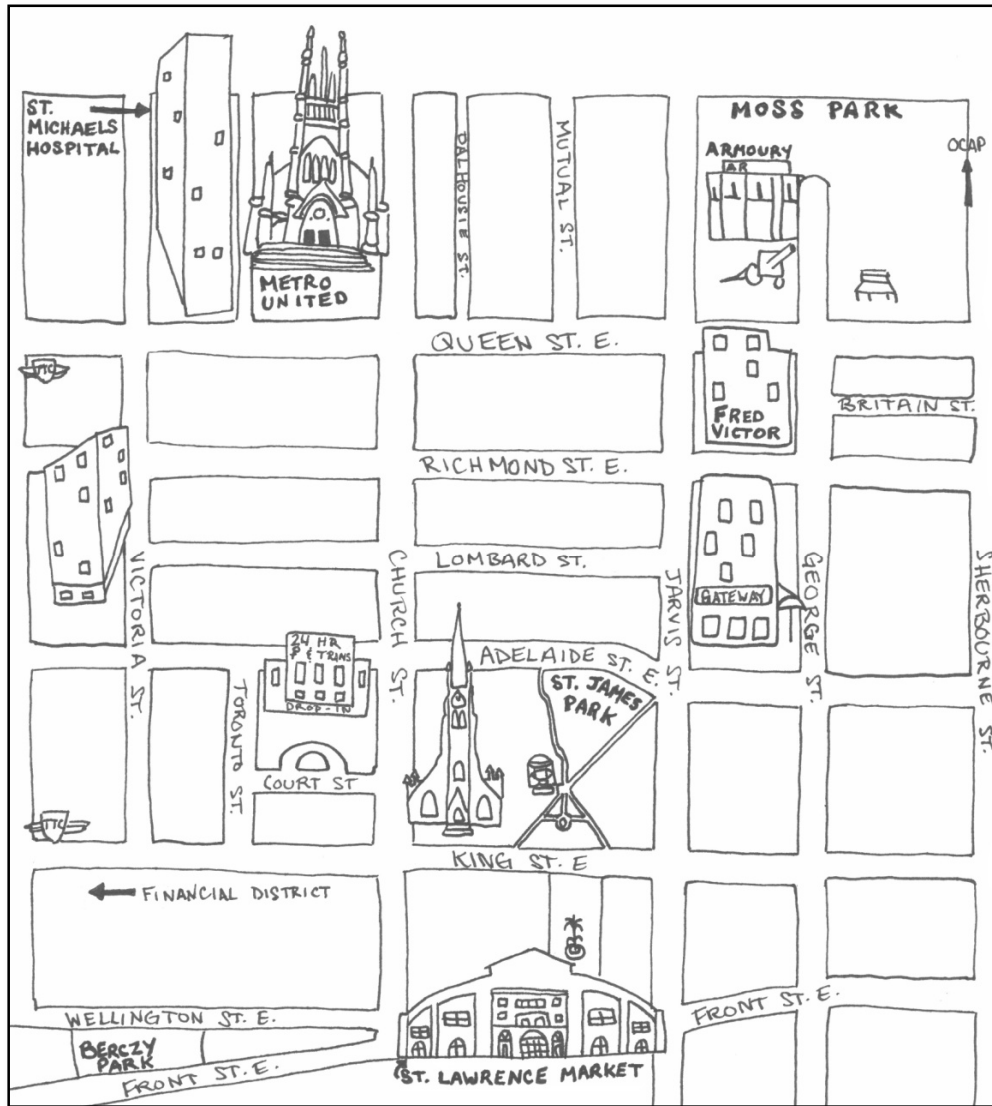
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<sup>2</sup> I want to acknowledge and thank Ruth Koleszar-Green for her ongoing dialogue with me and her public decolonial efforts at York University from which I have learned a great deal; this dissertation reflects that learning.

<sup>3</sup> The Gateway’s (n.d.-a) capacity has since increased to 120 men.

<sup>4</sup> Parks Ambassadors are City workers who enforce park rules. They will be discussed at length later.

**Illustration 3.1: Map of St. James Park Neighbourhood**



2011, took place there (Routhier, 2011), as did the launch of Toronto’s 2015 Peoples’ Social Forum (*Toronto Peoples’ Social Forum*, 2015).

St. James Park is a site of resistance, gathering, and respite. This makes the park not only significant on a neighbourhood scale, but symbolically important – both for those of us who are fighting to make it a safe space that poor and homeless people can use and for those trying to exclude them. The struggle in this park was hyper-local, but we were also defending public space

for poor and homeless people across the city. The symbolic importance of the park intensified the significance of whatever victory or loss would come of the campaign.

### **Getting the Call**

When Yogi answered the call in the office, Neil implored OCAP to immediately do something about the harassment in St. James Park. I could hear Neil's voice through the phone and could tell he was both angry and distressed. "I'm only sitting there doing a puzzle," Neil later said. "He just wants to try to very much intimidate you. He stands, he pumps his chest up, he starts puttin' on his leather gloves, he totally tries to intimidate everybody and most people when they're homeless, they fall into that. They do feel threatened" (OCAP, 2017a). Neil saw no reason why he should have to leave the gazebo or the park, so he first called his friend to tell him he might need bail money and then he called OCAP.

We knew that it wouldn't make sense for us to just drop everything and get there to intervene, as the interaction would likely be over by the time we arrived.

It says something, however, that Neil called OCAP in the moment. OCAP has worked for so long in the Downtown Eastend to build up trust with poor people in the neighbourhood and this is one of the results of that work. To our knowledge, none of us had ever met or interacted with Neil, but he knew about OCAP and he knew to call us if he needed us.

While Yogi was on the phone with Neil, I called the St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA (SLMN-BIA), because Neil had told us they were the ones who had hired security. A few minutes later, I got a call from someone at the BIA. He told me that some of the "vagrants are mean-spirited," that they "swear and yell." He said that "many of them are nice enough" and tried to explain that the BIA wasn't out to clear the park of all the "vagrants," just the ones that the BIA deemed undesirable. He said neither he nor the BIA is against drug users and drinkers as people; "I'm an ex-addict," he added. During my conversation with the BIA's representative, Neil left the gazebo and the brief standoff between him and the BIA's security guard ended.

BIAs are created through City legislation and are officially called Business Improvement Areas, though they are referred to by most people as BIAs or Business Improvement Associations. While the BIA model, or some variation of it has spread around the world, it began

in Toronto in the early 1970s (Hoyt, 2006; K. Ward, 2007). BIAs are funded by the City through a levy on businesses as part of municipal taxes (City of Toronto, 2017a). The St. Lawrence Market BIA has a Board of Directors, made up of local business owners (St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA [SLMN-BIA], n.d.-a); it also has multiple steering committees, also comprised of local business owners. The Parks Steering Committee, in addition to business owners, has City staff and a representative from the City Councillor's office (n.d.-b). The Streetscape and Development Steering Committee also has a representative from the City Councillor's office (SLMN-BIA n.d.-c). One of the visible outcomes of BIAs' labour in Toronto are aesthetics specific to each neighbourhood's major streets: matching streetlights or flowerpots – sometimes directly branded with the local BIA's name – help build neighbourhood cohesion. They can also be involved in security, urban planning, and social policy (K. N. Rankin & Delaney, 2011b; SSHA, 2008; K. Ward, 2007).

Neil wanted to fight back against the harassment of homeless people in the park by the BIA-hired security guard. He told us it was at its worst on Thursday afternoons, when the BIA holds a concert in the park, and that we should do something about it. The organizers in the office when Neil called, Yogi, John Clarke, and I, talked about what we should do. We knew we didn't have the capacity to take this on as a major issue but we also believed that it could be resolved relatively quickly and without a great deal of time or energy. Our assessment would prove to be correct: on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 24 days after Neil called and we began working on the issue, the BIA announced it would no longer employ private security guards in the park (see Appendix 4b: St. James Park Timeline).

This was an important victory for homeless people in the park. It didn't change their fundamental circumstances – no one got housing or more income, and capitalism wasn't overthrown. However, this quick campaign did let people keep their park. It let people stay safe from surveillance by onsite private security guards and permitted a return to what they were accustomed to: intermittent harassment and criminalization from roving police officers and Parks Ambassadors (PAs). I don't intend to sound flippant here. When you are homeless and a park is the only space you have, sporadic harassment and criminalization by police and PAs can be

preferable to the overcrowded, loud, sometimes violent, and often bedbug-infested emergency shelter system.<sup>5</sup>

### **What's Going On?**

The first step before taking on any campaign is doing the research. Activists are frequently engaged in research, actively producing knowledge to better understand the world (Kinsman, 2015). We believed what Neil was telling us, and the BIA representative echoed much of what he was saying. However, we still wanted to know what other people's experiences were and have a clear understanding of what was happening. Integrity and accountability are essential to us as a community organization. We don't want to make false accusations or misrepresent a situation. We know things are really bad for poor people. We know from our own conversations with people in our communities that, like with the police, it is not uncommon for poor people – especially Black people, Indigenous people, and people of colour – to be beaten or harassed by security guards. Neil was telling us about a problem in the park that impacted a lot of people, not just him. But if we jumped the gun and made allegations that contained even slight inaccuracies, OCAP would lose credibility, which could undermine other work against security guard abuse in the city. We wanted to get as much information as we could before taking action.

In this case, doing research meant talking to people in the park: hearing their stories and finding out in detail what was happening. This would also give us the opportunity to meet new people and feel out who could be potential allies and contacts in the park. Aziz Choudry (2015) observes: “activist research and organizing are often mutually constitutive” (p. 36). This was certainly the case during our time in the park as we gathered information and made connections with folks.

We wanted to keep Neil at the centre of what we were doing to the extent he wanted to be there. When he called the office to check-in, I answered the phone and explained we planned to catch the guard in the act of harassment on video. Neil thought this was a good idea but also suggested that we make a “know your rights” poster because people in the park needed to know as soon as possible what the security guard could and couldn't do legally – and what they could and couldn't do legally themselves.

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 6 for more on this issue.

We developed a three-step strategy for the campaign:

1. make a know your rights poster and put it up in and around the park;
2. make a short video about what was going on in the park and release it publicly;
3. picket the BIA Board Members' businesses.

Before proceeding with these steps, Yogi and I went to St. James Park the following Thursday – a day we knew the guard would be in the park to prepare for the weekly BIA-sponsored concert in the gazebo. We planned to talk to people to find out what was going on from their perspective. We approached people who appeared poor or homeless (which of course is a problematic category because anyone can be poor or homeless even if they don't look it), explaining that we were from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and here to talk to them about interactions with the security guard. Everyone we spoke to said that the private security guard's treatment of people in the park was terrible. We heard stories of people being harassed, chased out of the park, banned from the park, and threatened with police intervention.

The security guard came into the park while we were there. He walked into the centre of the park and started talking with Bob Kemp, the Streetscape Coordinator for the BIA. One of us posed in front of a shrub while the other took pictures, making sure to include Kemp and the security guard in the shot. We took several pictures and were lucky enough to have the security guard look over in our direction at one point. This would become the perfect photo for the “know your rights” poster.

Before doing outreach in the park, we had to make a decision about what our presence there should be: we could go in wearing OCAP shirts and be very visible or we could try and keep a low profile. With visibility we would have the advantage of potentially creating some safety at the outset for people who use the park. While aware of the real risks involved for people who use the park, we chose to keep a low profile. We did this in order to make a video catching the guard in the act of kicking someone out of the gazebo. We felt we could put it together quickly, and that its potential value in the fight against the BIA outweighed the potential short-term gains of establishing a visible presence sooner. We waited to put up the posters until after we completed the video shoot.

The poster was a hit with most of the homeless folks in the park. Across the top it read: “HASSLED BY SECURITY? KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.” Below was the photo of the security



guard. Beside that was: “THIS GUY” with an arrow pointing to the guard, “HAS AS MUCH AUTHORITY AS THIS GUY” with an arrow pointing to Homer Simpson eating a doughnut. Below these images was some text explaining that the BIA has hired a “private goon” who “has the same legal authority that any other regular person does.” It then outlined what the BIA security guard can do and what he can’t do. In the bottom right hand corner, it says, “Getting hassled? Get in touch” with OCAP’s logo and contact information (OCAP, 2017h).

When the poster was ready and we finished shooting the video at the gazebo,<sup>6</sup> we wheat-pasted up posters and distributed them during our outreach in the park.<sup>7</sup> We were still collecting information about what the guard was up to, but now people had something tangible they could take with them in case they encountered him – they could check what their rights actually were.

### **Public Space, Private Police**

“We shall not be priced, policed or pushed out,” is a slogan that can be found on any number of OCAP banners and posters. The BIA positioned itself to police and push out the homeless community from St. James Park using private security.<sup>8</sup> I will argue that hiring a security guard to patrol St. James Park equated to semi-privatizing the park for the BIA and led to the exclusion and criminalization of homeless people.

Public space is defined by Lofland (1973) as “those areas of the city to which, in the main, all persons have *legal access*” (p. 19, my emphasis). St. James Park is a prime example of a public space – it is outdoors and available to anyone who moves through it. The security guard dramatically changed that for people: “[He] 'bans' people from the area, enforces made-up rules (no sleeping in the park) and has become a symbol of fear, which is precisely the intent” (OCAP, 2017a).<sup>9</sup> The BIA is threatened by homeless people because it perceives them as undermining its business interests.

For St. James Park to be made into public space on public land, private land had to be created. This construction was, and remains, an integral part of the colonial project. Indeed, the

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<sup>6</sup> We planned on catching the guard harassing someone on video but this failed, we think because he became suspicious of us. So, the video mostly involved an interview with Neil.

<sup>7</sup> This is a homemade glue made from flour and hot water and sometimes sugar to keep posters up.

<sup>8</sup> Many of the local businesses, especially landlords, were already pricing poor people out of the neighbourhood.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, even in the absence of security guards, homeless people were still highly policed in St. James Park, like all the Downtown Eastend parks, by both Toronto Police and Parks Ambassadors.

concept of private land ownership was a colonial import (V. J. Freeman, 2010). Lands were wrested away from being collectively shared and cared for in order to create both private and public lands in what is now called Toronto. While Loftland (1973) asserts that public space is open to “all persons” (p. 19), in the Canadian settler state public space is already predicated, at least historically, on the understanding that some people are not persons. From my own observations in the park and from city statistics, these people are disproportionately Indigenous (City of Toronto, 2018b). This isn’t coincidence nor is it irony; it is the ongoing work of colonialism.

OCAP views itself as engaged “in a class war” (personal interview, anonymous) and we understood the BIA as a tool of the ruling class, pursuing its class interests by pushing out homeless people in St. James Park. In the campaign’s press release, I said: “The fact that poor and homeless people have become the target of the security’s illegal enforcement activities in this situation is both unsurprising and very troubling” (OCAP, 2017o). Amster (2004) writes:

Arguments have been advanced from various quarters that homelessness is caused primarily by economic and structural factors, whereas others have asserted that the homeless are in fact the “cause” of economic problems and a significant threat to business interests. (p. 203)

While the BIA used the language of safety in the media, the organization’s mandate is designed “with a view to increasing business revenues and tourism in the area” (SLMN-BIA, n.d.-d). I would argue that homeless people were threatening to the BIA because it viewed them as an aesthetic devaluation to the neighbourhood. The BIA “develop[s] and implement[s] streetscape beautification” and runs programs to draw people to the neighbourhood (SLMN-BIA, n.d.-d). From our observations in the park and the accounts from the people in the park, it appeared that the security guard answered to Bob Kemp, the Streetscape Coordinator. It says something significant that the Streetscape Coordinator was involved with, if not in charge of, the policing of homeless people in a public park. This dehumanizes people, making them a function of the “streetscape,” part of the physical environment. I submit that the BIA viewed homeless people as undermining its interests and worked to cleanse the neighbourhood of this group.

Not only are homeless people viewed as aesthetically displeasing and possibly unsafe, they aren’t buying what the BIA members are selling – literally. In a neoliberal city, individual

worth is measured by one's consumption and productivity. Neil Smith (1996, 2002) argues that the neoliberal city has shifted towards capitalist production, displacing social reproduction. He demonstrates how this process is interlocked with gentrification. As the neoliberal order in Toronto increases, capitalist production is intensified and there is less space for social reproduction – there is less space for people who aren't good neoliberal subjects.

The BIA works to operationalize neoliberal relations. Rankin and Delaney (2011) argue that BIAs “ensur[e] optimal conditions for capital accumulation” at the level of the neighbourhood and “can be read as an iconic institution of roll-out neoliberalism” (p. 1366; 1363).<sup>10</sup> In this way, BIAs can be driving forces behind gentrification, working to create spaces that are increasingly less accessible to and even hostile toward poor people (Fumia, 2013). Just one example of this is when the Old Cabbagetown BIA, also a Downtown Eastend BIA, worked to close down a neighbourhood restaurant: the Cabbagetown Restaurant. This restaurant was one of the last hangouts for poor people in the gentrifying neighbourhood. It had its liquor license targeted by the BIA, of which it was legally required to be a member. The BIA said the restaurant, which closed at 8pm, was a haven for illegal activity (OCAP, 2007; Town Crier Staff, 2007). The BIA's campaign, which included hiring pay-duty police officers to police patrons of the restaurant, was an attack on poor people and their access to space in the neighbourhood (OCAP, 2007; Town Crier Staff, 2007). OCAP (2007) worked to defend the restaurant and argued that “the crime they [the restaurant owner and his customers] are guilty of is to be poor in an area slated for upscale redevelopment” (n.p.). We were ultimately unsuccessful in this struggle; this location is now a Wing Machine franchise.

The St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA's neoliberal agenda maps neatly onto the ongoing gentrification of the neighbourhood. The entire Downtown Eastend of Toronto, including the St. James Park area, is feeling the crunch of gentrification and has been for many years. Shaw (2008) defines gentrification as “a generalised middle-class restructuring of place, encompassing the entire transformation from low-status neighbourhoods to upper-middle-class playgrounds” (p. 2). Shaw finds that “in the many different expressions” of gentrification, “one thing is common: people who cannot afford to pay are not welcome, and homeless people are

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<sup>10</sup> Roll-out neoliberalism is “focused on the purposeful *construction and consolidation*” of neoliberal relations (Peck & Tickell, 2002).

moved on” (p. 2). This has been the case throughout the Downtown Eastend, and St. James Park is no exception.

From OCAP’s perspective, as gentrification occurs the pressure increases on poor people to leave neighbourhoods they have lived in for years. Gentrification redefines the types of public behaviour deemed acceptable, or what Pattillo describes as a “progressive criminalization of quality of life issues” (as quoted in Zuberi & Taylor, 2017). Middle- and upper-class people often have different sensibilities and come into “conflicts over the use of shared spaces” (p. 151) with poor residents, some of who have been in the neighbourhood much longer. These conflicts do not result in higher crime levels but may create the appearance of increased crime due to increased police response (Zuberi & Taylor, 2017).

A City Councillor’s staffer described the way that middle- and upper-class people express their disdain for poor and homeless people in a gentrifying neighbourhood:

[They] discussed how we make this space welcoming to everyone. That's the language that they use frequently. So, it's this weird kind of sidestepping of being out and out awful about homeless people and poor people and focusing on how do we make a space for everyone. Coded. (Anonymous, personal interview)

This coded language doesn’t come out and say, “We don’t want poor and homeless people here,” but works at the level of implication. The staffer told me that, at the recommendation of City staff, following a community safety walk where such discourse was deployed, some benches were removed from St. James Park. “That's a tactic that they use. They remove benches or they space them out... I think maybe two benches were removed.” Through the removal of benches by the City – spots where homeless people are known to sleep and hangout (clearly making the park less welcoming to homeless people), middle- and upper-class community members were able to couch the removal of amenities homeless people use in the language of being “welcoming” and “inclusive.”

If homeless people are vanished from a “welcoming for everyone” rhetoric, the question that then arises is: who is “everyone”? Mendel (2011) argues that homeless people are only “*included as excluded*” (p. 164, emphasis in original). In the neoliberal city, full citizenship is dependent upon consumption and production within the capitalist economy (Sommers, 2013).

The “citizenship on the margins” that homeless people occupy (Mendel, 2011) means that a park can be made welcoming for “everyone” through the practice of unwelcoming homeless people.

Indeed, Kipfer and Keil (2002) argue that Toronto is becoming a “competitive city” which is “not reducible to the economic and social policies of neoliberalism” (p. 235). The competitive city has three central axes. The first is “the entrepreneurial city” (p. 235, following Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Harvey 1989); it uses “‘Hard’ competitiveness strategies, which promote cost competition through fiscal conservatism, tax incentives, cut-backs, deregulation of land-use planning, privatization, and the marketization of the local state. The BIA, which takes on a number of traditional City responsibilities like streetscaping to promote their own interests (read privatization), fits nicely onto this axis. The second axis is “the city of difference” which promotes a discourse of diversity and multiculturalism while Toronto’s “policy approach to oppression issues is entirely peripheral” (p. 237). The final axis is “the revanchist city” which I will discuss in more detail below (p. 237).

The rise of the neoliberal, competitive city has also led to the decline of public space. Zuberi and Taylor (2017) argue that “one important characteristic of the neoliberal city is the increasing privatization and regulation of urban public spaces” (p. 152). The St. Lawrence Market BIA worked to increase the regulation of and, I would argue, partially privatize St. James Park by hiring a private security guard to patrol the park several hours a day, six days a week (Al Smith, 2017a). The security guard, Santo, said that the BIA had “*hire[d] private security to patrol their properties and enforce the rules and regulations*” (A. Smith, 2017b, emphasis in original). Here it seems that the BIA views the park as *their property*. It is still public space, but the private guard could and did determine whether or not someone was barred from the park if they broke the rules. This initiative occurred without legal authorization.

However, only certain kinds of rules and regulations were deemed important to enforce and they were only enforced against certain kinds of people. Al Smith (2017), Executive Director of the BIA, claimed, “We do not target poor people. We are simply hoping to make the area safe” (n.p.). However, in all of the research we did speaking to people in the park, every situation they described was of someone who looked poor or who was homeless being singled out. How is someone sleeping a safety threat to others? Or drinking? Perhaps Smith believed that the security guard wasn’t targeting poor people specifically. However, the BIA was working to discursively

produce poor and homeless people as inherent threats. This enabled the BIA to produce a problem, create the need for a safety intervention, legitimize that safety intervention through the BIA's own discourse, and then work to solve the problem.

This is what Li (2007b) calls “rendering technical,” in which “a set of relations” are “extract[ed] from the messiness of the social world” to produce an  $(a) + (b) = (c)$  formula. Here, a “problem (a) plus intervention (b) will produce (c), a beneficial result” (p. 265, sequence modified). Social contexts and injustices are erased through this practice (Li, 2007a). The “problem” framed by the BIA became one of safety and security in the park for certain people; the intervention, therefore, was to control the behaviour of those who were constructed as the safety threat. This would result in a solution: making the park “welcoming for everyone” where “everyone” is a specific group.

The BIA, in equating homelessness with threat, was drawing on and reinforcing deep-seated cultural constructions of homeless people. These constructions are often colonial and white supremacist, with Black, Indigenous and people of colour – because they are even more denigrated within the moral economy – cast as particular threats.

The denigration of homeless people and exaltation of the BIA within the moral economy allowed the BIA to create a moral justification for its actions. Al Smith told the media: “We don't act as police, we want to act as moral persuasion to minimize those illegal and unsafe activities” (CBC News, 2017b, n.p.). This statement positions the BIA as protecting both those constructed as innocent victims of deviant behaviours that “[keep] people away,” and the poor and homeless people in the park it sees as needing moral guidance and safety (CBC News, 2017a, n.p.). For example, the security guard made six medical emergency calls: two for overdoses and four “to assist with extremely intoxicated individuals who have fallen and passed out on the ground” (A. Smith, 2017b). The security guard positioned himself as saving lives, erasing the potential risk to life he was participating in by displacing existing networks and safety mechanisms. By policing the park and controlling the behaviours of the people within it, the BIA can institute a corrective in line with ruling class mores. Chapman and I call this the “healing power of domination and imagined moral superiority”: oppressed groups are “fixed” through the imposition of ruling class practices and frameworks (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 18).

Relatedly and emerging out of the exaltation of the BIA and those gentrifying the area, I would also argue that the BIA is motivated by what Neil Smith (1996) calls “revanchism.” Revanchism is a form of revenge against urban poor and homeless people as “a reaction against the supposed ‘theft’ of the city... cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighborhood security” (p. 42). This is evident in a statement made by the security guard in an email to the BIA Executive Director, Al Smith (2017): “We cannot give into this group and stop this program, if we do this then they will take over the park again” (p. 28).<sup>11</sup> Drawing on their high ground of legitimacy within the moral economy, the BIA positioned itself as an authority in the park. While the BIA claimed it was “not acting as police,” its security guard policed the people and behaviours in the park that kept middle- and upper-class people away. Revanchism posits that the group that the BIA embodies and represents understands itself to be entitled – based on a colonial and white supremacist class mythology – to this space and that vengeful pushback is appropriate to “reclaim” it. Kipfer and Keil (2002) argue revanchism is one of the axes of the competitive city and, therefore, a central feature of Toronto’s policies. Here, those policies include the enforcement on public property of public rules – both real and made-up – by private actors.

Together these guiding ethics of the healing power of domination and imagined moral superiority and revanchism created a revenge-fueled “violent benevolence” (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 19) that targeted homeless people. This targeting was sometimes constructed as being for their ‘own good.’

The BIA, having taken moral and legal (in an enforcement sense) authority over the park, worked to make it a “better” space. It seems the BIA’s members were unable to imagine that the poor folks in the park could also feel a sense of pride, of responsibility, of community.

One day in the park, Yogi and I spoke with “Tom” and “Marty.” We had chatted with these two men a few times on our visits to the park. Both men were middle-aged. Tom was an Indigenous man. I understood Marty to be white but he may also have been Indigenous. They would usually be seated together on a bench, always in the same corner of the park, discreetly

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<sup>11</sup> The same email was provided to me in two different FOI requests. In one of them, MOIFPPA AG-2019-00013, this was redacted under s 14.1, which requires the protection of individual privacy. I believe these documents were redacted in violation of the Act.

drinking. They were friendly and liked to chat about the park. Tom told us that Marty called the City Councillor recently because the garbage had been piling up for four days and no one from the city had collected it. Marty showed me a bite on his hand from some kind of fly that had been swarming around the garbage. He had been scratching it; it looked nasty. Marty said he went “straight to the top”: after making multiple phone calls he called City Councillor Pam McConnell’s office. Once the Councillor’s office had been called, the garbage was picked up. This is a story I would hear at least three times from Marty and Tom. I could tell they liked to tell it. They were proud of having navigated City Hall and helped improve the park. They would interchange between insolence and pride as they recounted how they got the garbage picked up.

Tom and Marty know a lot about St. James Park and its history. They have been in the park for a long time and often listen to the stories the tour guide tells people walking through it. They tell me that the park is just north of St. Lawrence Market – which was also Toronto’s first City Hall – and that this neighbourhood has always had poor people in it, even though they are trying to get rid of them now. I suspect BIA staff members don’t know what these two know about the park and the area. The BIA staff and membership’s knowledge about St. James Park has a different epistemic ground, quality and value than Tom and Marty’s knowledge; indeed, Tom and Marty’s knowledge is devalued so significantly, it isn’t considered knowledge at all.<sup>12</sup>

The BIA imagines itself as caring for the park and keeping it clean and safe. Their imagination precludes people like Tom and Marty from working to keep the park clean and safe because these two men are imagined *as the problem*; they are imagined as aesthetic and potentially physical threats. They regularly (although discreetly) drink in the park, an action criminalized by the BIA and the state.

By pushing people out of the park – some of whom may have been using it longer than members of the BIA have been in business – and stopping undesirable behaviours – some legal, some regulatory offences, some criminal offences, some offences against the class sensibilities of its members – the BIA is intentionally changing the culture of the park to reflect its own interests and values, another example of the “healing power of domination and imagined moral superiority” at work (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 18).

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<sup>12</sup> The delegitimization of the knowledge of homeless people is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.



For the BIA and likely some residents of the area, keeping St. James Park clean and safe meant the removal or suppression of the homeless community and other poor people who use the park. There was an intention here, I would suggest, to fundamentally change both the aesthetic and culture of the park not only to reflect the interests of the BIA, and, thus, the white middle-class, but also to establish their hegemony. Bayley and Shearing (2001) write:

The consensus is that private policing is more concerned with preventing than punishing crime. Rather than deterring crime through the threat of detection, arrest, and punishment, private policing tries to regulate behavior and circumstances to diminish the possibility that crime will occur... private security tries to create an environment of discipline and order that limits opportunities for crime, reassures law-abiding people, and constrains the deviant few. (p. 17-18)

Bayley and Shearing argue that much of the focus of private security is on controlling people who are following the rules, or what Guthman and DuPuis (2006) call “governing the center” (p. 437). In St. James Park, however, that manifested through the harassment, control, and displacement of poor and homeless people – some of whom may have been breaking regulations and others who were not. In this way, the BIA used private security to govern both the centre and the margins.

#### *Criminalization/Displacement*

Homeless populations have been linked to disorder for over 600 years (Amster, 2004). Amster (2004) argues that groups or categories of people can be criminalized by “[locating] some behavior that is largely unique to that group and [making] it illegal” (p. 116). Additionally, “universal” legislation can be imposed “that plainly impact[s] only the target community” (p. 116). Drawing on anarchist philosopher Kropotkin, Amster observes: “without laws there could be no crime” (p. 116).

Homeless people tend to be criminalized in very particular ways. Greenberg and Elliot (2009) argue that legislation typically is passed “targeting their modes of survival (e.g., sleeping in public, panhandling, squeegeeing, etc.)” (p. 139). Walby argues that “seemingly innocuous policies” can be used for the “legal regulation of homeless people” like rules barring camping where it is not permitted (p. 1019). Toronto has a camping by-law, Section 608-13 of the *Municipal Code*: “Unless authorized by permit, no person shall dwell, camp or lodge in a park.” However, in OCAP’s experience, it is not possible to get a permit to camp in a park. In practice,

this means that people can sleep in a park, but they cannot erect a shelter. This is why the gazebo in St. James Park is such important and contested space – it is the only shelter in the area that homeless people can freely access at any time.

In St. James Park, criminalization applies to the BIA's actions, because visibly poor people without access to private space were targeted and their behaviour was policed by the security guard. O'Grady, Gaetz and Buccieri's (2011) define the "criminalization of homelessness" as:

The use of laws and practices to restrict the activities and movements of people who are homeless, often with the outcome being fines and/or incarceration. Though we use the term 'criminalization' we are including the use of security (including private security) to enforce city / provincial regulation of public space and activities that go beyond the realm of the criminal justice system. The key here is that people who occupy public spaces (because they lack private ones), and whose poverty is highly visible, are subject to extra attention by the criminal justice system not so much for what they do, but for who they are and where they are. (p. 7)

Technically speaking, Ontario's *Safe Streets Act*, passed in 1999 by Mike Harris' Progressive Conservative Government, creates provincial regulatory offences rather than criminal offences. Nevertheless, the severity of sentences and likelihood of escalating conflict with the police results in criminalizing specific behaviours associated with poverty – particularly homelessness. Palmer and Héroux (2016) say of the *Act*: "Nineteenth-century vagrancy laws [are] now back on the books, dressed up in the coercive garb of an automated, automobile age" (p. 352). While most of these behaviours take place outside the boundaries of St. James Park (though that certainly does not stop the criminalization of the homeless population using the park) some of the *Act* applies to the park itself. It is an offence under the *Safe Streets Act*, for example, to "solicit in an aggressive manner" (*Safe Streets Act*, 1999 s. 2. (2)) and to "[solicit] while intoxicated" (s. 2. (3) 5.). The former includes using "abusive language" – regardless of how abusive the individual being asked for money might be in their rebuke (s. 2. (3) 2.)

Upon the second and any subsequent convictions, the penalty for violating the *Safe Streets Act* is a fine of up to \$1,000 or six months in jail (s. 5 (b)). While crime rates were dropping in Ontario between 2004 and 2007, there was a 288 percent increase in *Safe Streets Act* tickets alone (O'Grady et al., 2011). Between 2013 and May 2018, 31,000 of these tickets were

laid against people in Toronto. This totaled an approximate \$1.55 million in set fine amounts; \$38,397 was secured (Mathieu et al., 2019).

The *Act* also criminalizes the disposal of used condoms, syringes (new or used), and broken glass in public places, including parks, without taking steps “to dispose of [them] in a manner that would not endanger the health or safety of any person” (s. 4). It may seem repulsive and dangerous to dispose of condoms, syringes, and bottles in parks. But from the perspective of homeless people, who don’t have bedrooms in which they can have sex, drink, or get high, where else can they engage in these activities?

While laws against drinking alcohol in public theoretically impact anyone who drinks, they disproportionately impact people who don’t have access to private space – people who have no option but to drink in public. “You can see that there’s legal – by-the-bylaw ways – to harass people,” one of the City Councillor’s staff tells me (personal interview). This extends to provincial offences violations like the *Safe Streets Act* as well.

From what I saw in the park and from what I know based on years of organizing with homeless people, most aren’t just having a drink or two to unwind at the end of the day. Most people are drinking or getting high to survive by managing the psychological impact of trauma – abuse, war, colonialism, oppression, child apprehension, and homelessness itself, which can be especially traumatic for women and trans people.

It may seem counterintuitive that people would get high to survive in the middle of an opioid crisis. In 2017, a total of 308 people died of opioid overdoses in Toronto – with 40 people dying in July alone (Public Health Ontario, n.d.). St. James Park and its community have seen their share of losses. “Susan” told me about a man who overdosed and died in the park, adding that she has “lost a lot of people” to overdoses recently. “Josh” told me that he found a body in St. James Park; the man had died from an overdose. From what people told me, these were two separate instances of deaths in the park.

Crime and punishment strategies have been ineffective in dealing with drug use in Canada. Imprisoning, or threatening to imprison, people through the *Safe Streets Act* for throwing away needles didn’t stop complaints from the Cathedral Church of St. James about the many needles in the park and on their neighbouring grounds. Eventually, the Church put a needle

safety-drop box on their property at the edge of the Park and many, though not all, of the needles stopped being left on the ground (Danielle Koyama, personal conversation, July 27, 2017).

Ticketing or arresting people for going to the bathroom in the park doesn't scare their bodies out of continuing to function, one of the issues the security guard had reported he had dealt with: "homeless [sic] urinating in plain site [sic] of persons and at times kids" (A. Smith, 2017b). Marty and Tom told me that it was a bathroom and not a security guard that the BIA should have spent its money on. Tom brought up Dufferin Grove Park, where City workers deal with public urination very differently. If they see someone urinating in the park, they come over and say, Tom and I repeat in unison (because it's the most obvious solution possible), "there's a bathroom over there."

Survival behaviours, and those behaviours that simply require privacy, are criminalized for homeless people, often because they *are* homeless people. There are solutions to these issues other than policing: the right to freely use public space for those who have been denied access to private space, public toilets, affordable housing, safe injection/overdose prevention sites, stopping gentrification and revanchism. Instead, the state and now private business respond with policing strategies, criminalization and, as the next section will show, displacement.

#### *Dispersion/Banishment/Displacement*

We do not know how many people were banned from St. James Park by the security guard. What OCAP did have were multiple complaints of people being banned. We were also told of an incident where someone was physically chased out of the park.

Banning a homeless person from St. James Park isn't the same as banning a housed person from a park. Banning a homeless person from this park removes them from the community and security that they have. When OCAP went public with the campaign, we started handing out the posters that we had made. Up until that point, we had only had casual conversations focusing on information-gathering, informing people about their rights, and telling them they could call us if needed. I approached a white woman who was probably in her 50s (but she could have been a lot younger – the streets tend to age people). I told her I was from OCAP and we were talking to people about the security guard. She gave me a suspicious and untrusting look – one I'm used to from people who aren't familiar with OCAP. I said he had no authority in

the park, including to ban people, and that we were giving people copies of posters that explain their rights. As soon as I mentioned that the guard couldn't ban people, her expression changed.

"He can't ban people?"

"No. It is a public park. It is illegal for him to ban people."

"I'm going to go get [Dave.]"

"Dave" was her friend who had been banned from the park by the security guard for a week. This was day five. She said that she slept in the park with Dave and two others for safety; now he couldn't stay in the park or he would be arrested, so she had to stay without him and felt less safe. "We all take care of each other," she told me. She asked if she could get some posters before leaving to give to her friend. I handed her three posters. She wanted more. Then more. She left with about 20 posters and said she was going "to hand them out to everyone."

Walby and Lippert (2012) call what the security guard did in St. James Park "dispersal policing," the goal of which is the "creation of sanitized spaces" (p. 1023). Dispersal policing is basically an immediate move-along strategy to force homeless people to go somewhere else: "dispersal temporarily removes homeless people judged to lack aesthetic value" (p. 1017).

Walby and Lippert argue that the concept of banishment doesn't fit this kind of policing work because:

Banishment implies a community from which one is being exiled. But homeless people are typically cut off from consideration as constituents of local or higher levels of government and as possessive of a right to the city (Mitchell 2003); they are already exiled from "the public." Banishment implies a permanent exclusion where dispersal does not. (p. 1018)

What Walby and Lippert fail to grasp is precisely what the above story about Dave's banning exemplifies: homeless people have communities. Those communities may be small, tenuous, and/or transitory but, in my experience, they very much exist. For many housed adults (who don't require regular care to meet their needs), a few days off from one's community might feel inconsequential. Because homelessness is an inherent crisis, however, I would argue there is a different temporal experience of banishment for many homeless people. Five days, for the woman I spoke to, didn't simply mean not having a roommate around for that time. It meant that her sense of safety was in jeopardy. A single day's banishment could mean life or death when your buddy isn't there to give you naloxone or defend you from sexual violence. Walby and

Lippert focus on political community, but disenfranchised people often form stronger communities because they have been cut off from, or never given access to, government and its resources (see, for e.g.: Chapman & Withers, 2019). Walby and Lippert fail to acknowledge the multiple forms, and meaningful significance of community in the lives of many homeless people.

### *Parks Ambassadors*

In addition to not having the authority to “ban” people, the BIA hiring a security guard to operate in a public park was a clear violation of City by-laws. Chapter 608-47 B. of the *Toronto Municipal Code* states: “Unless authorized by permit, no person shall, while in a park, practice, carry on or solicit for a trade, occupation, business or profession.” On July 24, I called the city’s General Supervisor for St. James Park and asked about the legalities of a private organization employing a security guard to patrol a public park. I was told that it was a violation of the by-laws and was assured that they were not aware of any guards patrolling any parks.

The City has its own mechanism to target and police homeless people through the Parks Ambassador program. The program was established about 15 years ago “due to many homeless challenges and issues in the downtown parks” (City of Toronto, n.d.-f, n.p.). PAs, who dress in uniforms that make them easy to mistake for police, enforce parks rules against homeless people *and* connect them with services like Streets to Homes (S2H), a City organization that houses people on the rare occasion that any affordable housing is available (City of Toronto, n.d.-f; Parks and Environment Committee, 2017). “Connecting people to S2H” can simply mean sending an email, sometimes with attached photos of someone sleeping in a park, requesting a worker go to that park (Camper, 2017; Herring, 2017; Malik, 2017b).

Parks Ambassadors use several tactics to prevent homeless people from sleeping in parks, including the disposal of homeless people’s bedding in St. James Park “to discourage overnight sleepers” (Malik, 2017a). In 2017, PAs assisted in the dismantling of over 300 “homeless encampments” in Toronto (Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, 2017). PAs have been called “security guard-meets-social worker” because of their service and enforcement role (Hune-Brown, 2019, n.p.). As with non-voluntary social work services, PAs – while sometimes providing useful services – are part of relations of control and domination of poor communities, which are disproportionately Indigenous and racialized (Chapman & Withers, 2019).

An email exchange between the leader of the Parks Ambassador program, Troy Ford, and a Toronto Police Staff Sergeant is illuminative of the PAs' role in escalating punitive and criminalizing measures against homeless people. Ford writes: "We request the services of the CRU [Community Response Unit] in assisting us in enforcing the *Trespass To Property Act* to all those choosing to illegally reside at the gazebo of St. James Park" (Ford, 2017a). Ford constructs sleeping in the park as a choice. His PAs escalate tactics once the "choice" is made to stay on the streets over the shelter system. He notes that the people staying in the gazebo are refusing S2H services, which makes sense in light of the fact that, while S2H's long-term services may involve housing people, its initial services often simply involve driving people to overcrowded shelters or respite centres with mats or cots.<sup>13</sup> It is important to also question how choice can be exercised in this scenario: someone who looks like a police officer is offering a service and, if you don't accept, the police will be called. If the group Ford is referring to is a mixed gender group, they may also fear being broken up.<sup>14</sup> Parks Ambassadors, then, are not carceral as a last resort; I would argue that carceral logic permeates all Parks Ambassador relations and criminalization is at the core of the interactions between PAs and homeless people.

After the BIA said it wouldn't use a security guard to patrol St. James Park anymore, Yogi and I went to the park around lunchtime on the day of the weekly concert. We also let freelance journalist Peter Biesterfeld know we would be there in case he wanted to come and observe what was going on.

When we got there, Josh, who was listening to the Red Hot Chili Peppers on a small radio, came over to say hi. We knew Josh from having met him several times in the park before. He had a cast on his arm and a pair of boots tied together at the laces and slung over his shoulder. Josh is tall and white, maybe in his early 30s, with long blonde hair; he looks a bit like a headbanger. He is, frankly, difficult to like: he is sexist, racist, and full of contradictions. For instance, Josh hates drug users but his best friend was, from what I have gathered, a person of colour, a drug user, and very recently died of an overdose in St. James Park. Josh told me that he and his friends aren't leaving the park: "We have peace here." Just because Josh has some

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter Five for more on Streets to Homes.

<sup>14</sup> This group may be Dave's group that I discussed earlier. Dave's group is a mixed gender group of four that was sleeping in the gazebo around the same time.

reprehensible beliefs and is, well, a jerk sometimes, doesn't mean that he should be expelled from the park or that OCAP shouldn't work with him. Working in poor communities means working with people who have ideas that we don't agree with and taking opportunities to do political education through meaningful conversations without being dogmatic or didactic.

There was no sign of the security guard on this particular day. Josh said he hadn't seen him for a few days. Josh was sitting and drinking a beer he kept concealed in his boot. Stuey, my small three-legged Chihuahua-mix, was with me and Josh adored him. After chatting for a minute or two, Yogi and I got up to leave. Just then, two yellow-jacketed men rode past on bikes. Josh waved.

“Those cops? Parks Ambassadors?” I asked.

“Yeah.”

“Parks?”

“Yeah.”

Riding by, they were indistinguishable from police on bikes to me.

The two Parks Ambassadors biked straight towards Bob Kemp from the BIA, who was standing near the gazebo. Yogi and I walked in that direction. The PAs spoke briefly to Kemp then turned back towards Josh so we followed them back around the other way. When we got to Josh, the PAs were talking to him about his open beer. Josh was advocating for himself, so we held back and started talking to one of them.<sup>15</sup>

The other PA told Josh he was “banned for one day.” Josh said his beer was closed, which it was – he had thrown the other one out. The PA said he saw Josh consume alcohol. Josh said the beer can was empty. Josh may have been correct in his assertion around the specific timing of the PA biking by; the beer in his hand may have been empty at that moment.

“You see what we have to deal with?” Josh said. “Not on concert day. The one fucking piece of entertainment.” The Parks Ambassador had told Josh that under Chapter 608 of the

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<sup>15</sup> One of the PAs went and got the permit from Bob Kemp and showed it to us. It said they had the gazebo from 1:00pm to 10:30pm. It looked official and was in a binder with the previous permits. City Councillor McConnell's office had told us the permit started at 5:00pm and a lot of the legitimacy of our campaign had been based on this fact. We don't know if or where a mistake was made but it turns out that we were wrong about the right of the security guard to expel people from the gazebo for parts of the time we argued. We gave the media this information; however, we did support our claims with written documentation from the Councillor's office.



*Municipal Code* drinking wasn't allowed. I said that under Chapter 608 of the *Municipal Code* patrolling as a paid private security guard wasn't allowed. I asked the PA if he would ban the security guard if he was patrolling in the park. "No. You'll have to call by-law for that," he told me. It looked to us like the PAs had been alerted to Josh's beer by checking in with Bob Kemp. Were the PAs instructed to go to St. James Park to fill the void of the private security guard? It seemed suspicious that they arrived right as the BIA set up for their concert.

Peter Biesterfeld, who was in the park that day, wrote a story about the BIA and its private security (see Biesterfeld, 2017a); he observed that it "seemed pretty obvious" the PAs and the BIA were working together (personal interview, April 4, 2018). Matthew Cutler, who worked in the Office of the General Manager of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, told Biesterfeld in writing: "We do not have any partnerships or agreements relating to security or patrols" with the BIA (personal email communication, Peter Biesterfeld, August 14, 2017). Three days before, however, Parks Ambassador Troy Ford (2017b), in response to an email about Biesterfeld's questions, told Cutler: "I advised [Bob Kemp from the BIA] how Parks Ambassadors will dedicate themselves to visit the park, every Thursdays [sic], at 1PM (until their permitted event is exhausted)" (p. 156). While Parks may not have had a written agreement with the BIA, they clearly had an agreement that they would attend the park on concert days, replacing the BIA's stated need for the security guard. By concealing the BIA's aligned interests and coordination with the City, Cutler,<sup>16</sup> it seems, knowingly lied to the media, in order to exclude critique. The practice of excluding critique is the practice of shutting out or shutting down critique.<sup>17</sup>

The coordinated replacement of the BIA security guard with PAs is also demonstrative of the practice of reassembly (Li, 2007a). The security guard was removed but policing and criminalization, on Thursday afternoons in particular, was re-formed and re-assembled by the City. Instead of a single person wearing a blue shirt and bullet-proof vest patrolling the park on foot, there would now be two people wearing bright yellow jackets patrolling the park on

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew Cutler is now the Assistant Deputy Minister, Communication Services in Brian Pallister's Progressive Conservative Manitoba Government (Cutler, n.d.).

<sup>17</sup> Here, I am drawing on Li's (2007b) governing practices, specifically the inward practice of containing critique that is performed by allies and flipping it as a practice of ruling relations turning it outward. I discuss this more in the next chapter.

bicycle. This form of securitization appears to be very much the same as what existed before the BIA brought in their security guard – but now, through the practice of reassembly, the PAs carry out the specific purpose of securing the interests of the BIA.

At least one upper-level City bureaucrat thought PAs were an appropriate substitute for the BIA’s security guard. A Parks, Forestry and Recreation Director wrote:

I wonder if it would make more sense for the BIA to hire parks ambassadors? Imagine if a few of the downtown BIAs got together and funded a new position? Not even sure we have the mechanism to do that, but an idea that I think is better than more police/security. (Price, 2017a)

This statement shows that, at least for this Director, the City’s interests are aligned with BIA’s in opposition to OCAP’s and many homeless people’s articulated desires for St. James Park.

The interaction between the PA and Josh went on for quite a while. Josh said, “You know what the cops fucking do? They say this, they come here they do this [motions taking the beer, dumping it out and crumpling] and say go throw it out. They don't fucking ban you.” He says he saw a murder last summer and he found a body the other week – someone who had died from overdose. People are dying all over and he is getting hassled for a beer.

From what folks in the park told me, PAs routinely ban people from the park for breaking rules.<sup>18</sup> As employees of the City’s Parks division, PAs have the authority to ask someone to “leave the park” (*Toronto Municipal Code* ch. 608 s 53 b. (3)).

PAs work is textually mediated by the “Suspension and Ban Policy” for Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation (2011). The policy says that alcohol and drug consumption are forms of “unacceptable behaviour” for which one can be suspended from the park for up to three days; less than half the time we were told the security guard banned people for. The policy requires the PA or other parks staff implementing the suspension to “take progressive steps to deal with unacceptable behaviour” (Parks, Forestry and Recreation, 2011, n.p.). The first step is a verbal warning, which the PA at St. James Park (who Josh calls “Juice”) did not give Josh. The second is a written warning, which is provided “if the behaviour continues.” This is followed by a verbal suspension if the behaviour does not stop. When the PA banned Josh, the offending behaviour

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<sup>18</sup> This is their language. In the language of the “Suspension and ban policy,” suspension is the correct term, as a formal ban is 1-3 years in duration. However, PAs use the term “ban” to refer to short-term suspensions as well.

was not taking place; further, Josh did not receive a verbal or a written warning. Nor did he receive the phone number of Juice’s supervisor, which is also required by the policy.<sup>19</sup> PAs, as an enforcement arm of the ruling regime, are largely unaccountable because they are engaging with a deeply marginalized population.

During the dispute with the PA, Peter Biesterfeld arrived and asked what was happening. Yogi and I explained the situation to him. Peter started asking questions of the PA, tape recorder on. Juice told us to wait while he consulted with his colleague, but Peter followed him and continued to ask questions; it wasn’t just OCAP paying attention to what these PAs were going to do. Josh, Yogi, and I stayed where we were and talked about what was going on. Josh was very angry. He got out his other beer. Yogi and I asked him not to open it – it would only make things worse. He opened it anyway. Yogi begged Josh to hide it before the PAs came back and he did. Juice came over and told Josh he had to leave the park to consume alcohol but that he could come back afterward. Josh said, “I accept that.” He didn’t leave. The PAs left the park.<sup>20</sup> What happened that afternoon is evidence that even small spontaneous collective action can impact ruling relations.

### **Media and St. James Park**

After things calmed down, Peter Biesterfeld asked Yogi and I for an interview. Yogi ended up doing almost all the interview because Josh came over and started talking to me about the horrors of abortion. It went on and on. Yogi got to talk about the criminalizing of homeless people in the interests of business owners and I had to talk about foetal heartbeats.<sup>21</sup> Yogi and Peter didn’t know this was happening, just that I had moved away to talk to Josh. Indeed, I kept walking Josh further away, trying to keep Peter from overhearing.

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<sup>19</sup> Yogi and I did not know the specifics of this policy at the time or we would have fought the banning on the grounds that it was in violation of City policy.

<sup>20</sup> Parks Ambassadors intended to police the park on that day at that time. There is some evidence that they left the park because of us. This would demonstrate a larger impact than simply keeping Josh from being banned. However, this evidence comes from a third-hand account of the Parks Ambassadors’ experience; it also erroneously says there were multiple reporters present (implying Yogi and I were reporters, even though we arrived before Peter Biesterfeld and identified ourselves to the PAs as OCAP) (see Price, 2017b).

<sup>21</sup> I think this is important to name as sexism. Josh viewed me as a woman. Cissism was also present because the fact that I am trans/non-binary was erased in this interaction. There are people in the queer community who say that folks like me (who are identified as transmasculine regardless of our own identifications) do not experience sexism but my own lived reality is much more complicated.

OCAP decided, based on previous experience, that mainstream media outlets were unlikely to cover the campaign and that we should release the video ourselves when it was ready. We put out a press release, just in case any media were interested, but decided to focus on the online video as our own form of alternative media (see Rucht, 2004).

The video ended up being ready the Saturday of a long weekend. As it happened, at least some of the mainstream media did want to cover it – perhaps because it was a slow news day. I found myself nodding off on the streetcar, exhausted from staying up late completing the video, to do interviews in the park. When we saw the story on the 6pm news, we had won! The BIA said it would no longer have security in the park.

### **Behind the Scenes**

It wasn't until very late in the campaign that anyone from the City or the BIA directly followed up with OCAP; the City Councillor's office acknowledged us, but the BIA and the Parks division never did.

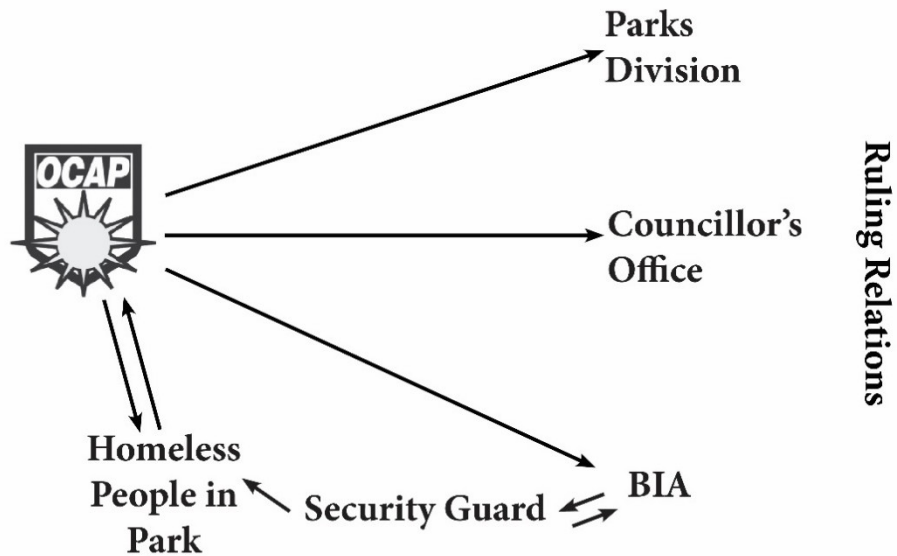
From OCAP's standpoint, we relayed that there was a problem in the park to the BIA, the Parks division, and the Councillor's office<sup>22</sup> – and absolutely nothing happened as a result. As Figure 3.1 illustrates,<sup>23</sup> there was an exchange of information between OCAP and homeless people in the park. OCAP learned from homeless people; research was part of our activism and relationship building and providing people with information about their rights was also part of our organizing. There was also one-way communication from the security guard to the homeless people there. But there was also only one-way communication from OCAP to each of the other parties – the BIA, the Councillor's office and the Parks division – as there was no communication coming back to us at all and no appearance of even the smallest amount of concern. We assumed that they were simply ignoring us and not communicating with each other.

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<sup>22</sup> The City Councillor, Pam McConnell, had died very recently so we were only working with (grieving) staff, which also informed how hard we pushed that office.

<sup>23</sup> I map the social relations of struggle for this and the other campaigns in the concluding chapter. This is a map of the communications during this campaign.

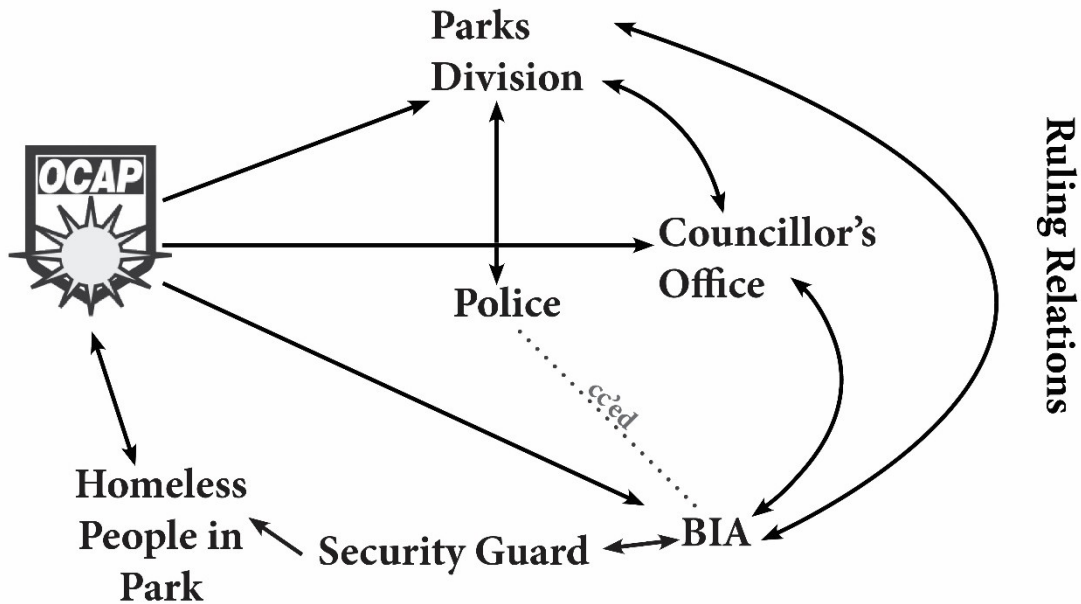
**Figure 3.1: St. James Park Communications from OCAP's Standpoint**



However, FOI requests revealed that communications looked much more like what Figure 3.2 depicts: all the other parties talking to each other and simply keeping OCAP in the dark. These documents also revealed how substantively OCAP was “accepted” by those in power, even while being kept out of the loop. The first email in the records of the Manager for Toronto & East York District Parks containing the phrase “St. James” is from the Councillor’s office. It says, “I’ve had a call from OCAP about actions by the security the BIA has hired” (Milbrand, 2017, p. 11). After that, there are 42 mentions of OCAP in the 70 pages of emails (MFOIPPA Request #2018-01845, 2017). Parks Ambassador Troy Ford even wrote an email with the subject line: “OCAP vs St. Lawrence BIA (St. James Park)” (Ford, 2017c).<sup>24</sup> We also learned, again through a FOI request, that Ford emailed with police and cc’d the BIA (Ford, 2017a). While OCAP received no word from ruling relations, there was a great deal of communication going on behind the scenes.

<sup>24</sup> Acceptance can clearly be demonstrated here (in Gamson’s [1975] sense), although, it shouldn’t be integral to understanding if an organization like OCAP is successful.

**Figure 3.2: St. James Park Communications**



It wasn't until August 2, three days before we learned we won, that we had an indication that there had been any movement on the part of the City Councillor's office whatsoever. Yogi and I happened to run into an OCAP ally who worked in the Councillor's office. This staffer told us the Councillor's office had been working to resolve the issue and provided us email updates.

I would argue that OCAP's experience of one-way communication was neither coincidental nor accidental. Rather, it was the result of the active labour of excluding critique – an attempt to render the conflict invisible, and to pre-emptively manage failure. If the BIA and the City did not acknowledge OCAP, it would be difficult for us to establish cause and effect: to claim that our actions resulted in the security guard being removed from the park and, ultimately, to claim victory. OCAP's claiming of victory would have been particularly important because OCAP is a well-known organization.

Gamson (1975) would call our acknowledgement by the City "acceptance." He argues that a movement is pre-empted unless it obtains acceptance as "a valid spokesman for the constituency" prior to winning its claims (p. 29). Almén and Burell (2018), however, discuss "answerability" which means that actors "*inform* about their decisions or *explain* their decisions" (Schedler, 1999 quoted in Almén & Burell, 2018, p. 719, emphasis in original). Answerability, then, is not about a politics of recognition; rather, it is an aspect of a politics of accountability

(Almén & Burell, 2018). In this case, neither the BIA nor the City understood themselves as needing to be accountable. Normally, OCAP has some form of intermittent engagement with the party we are in opposition to when we are doing this kind of work. Over the years, I have learned to gauge how close we are to winning from a phone conversation. While I am sometimes wrong, generally I, like other long-term organizers in OCAP, can plan a course of action based on the responses of the target. If they sound desperate, probably a small action like flyering their neighbours will push things in our favour. If they sound angry and obstinate, perhaps a larger action like a picket (being mindful of numbers for safety) will do the trick.

But the head of the BIA, Al Smith, wouldn't even return our phone calls. So, on July 24, OCAP sent him a letter. The letter said: "We demand that you immediately end the private policing of the park and cease the intimidation and harassment of homeless people" (personal communication, July 24, 2017). When we write letters to social assistance offices as part of direct action casework, we include a date by which the supervisor must reply before we escalate our action. I didn't do that in the letter that I sent to the Executive Director of the BIA because it simply didn't dawn on me – or John and Yogi, who checked over the letter – that they would not respond promptly given who we were, the seriousness of the letter, and the seriousness of the matter. Still, no reply. We were somewhat baffled by the BIA's behaviour. This was not the first time OCAP had squared off with at BIA, but it was the first time we had gone up against this BIA and engaged with an interconnected BIA-City relation. Like all activist work – especially when working with a new set of social relations – we were learning as we went.

The BIA and Parks took the practice of non-answerability to such an extreme that we did not even know that we had won when we won.<sup>25</sup> While it was only one day's difference, a lot of work was done on OCAP's end between end of day the business Friday and the evening news on Saturday. We worked well into the night to complete the *Back Off BIA* video (OCAP, 2017b) and then contacted the media to tell them about it. We also contacted the Chair of the BIA, George Milbrandt, informing him that his restaurant "will likely be our first target" if the security guard

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<sup>25</sup> The City Councillor's office was also not informed on August 4, the day the BIA told the Parks General Supervisor that they would not be using the security guard any longer. The General Supervisor likely would have informed them the next business day; however, August 4 was a Friday and we learned this fact through the media the next day. Had the Councillor's office been informed, our contact would have passed this information on to us.

wasn't removed (personal email, August 5, 2017). I also went to the park to do media interviews and Yogi and I had to communicate with the media multiple times throughout the day. None of these steps were needed. They did, however, make the victory more public and help OCAP claim this as *our* victory rather than a BIA policy change.

The BIA's refusal to acknowledge OCAP resulted in their public shaming. Had we been informed that we won on the Friday, August 4, I don't know that we would have finished the video – if we had, we would have done so as a victory piece. The media likely wouldn't have picked up a story of OCAP simply claiming victory, something that was literally yesterday's news. As it turned out, the media coverage allowed OCAP to reach a broad audience about what was going on in the park. The story served as a warning to other BIAs not to try something similar. It also sent a hopeful message to poor communities that collective resistance can work.

Our understanding of how we succeeded in getting the security guard removed from the park was based on how things appeared to us. It was only months later, through FOI requests submitted for this dissertation, that OCAP learned the BIA had quietly told the Parks department on August 4 – not on August 5 when it was publicly announced – that they would be pulling the security guard out of the park (White, 2017b, p. 68).

The practice of excluding critique went beyond the question of answerability. For instance, Yogi and I began distributing posters by putting up a few with packing tape as we went through St. James Park to check in with people (two OCAP members would do a full poster run with wheat paste later that week). As we walked out of the park, we saw Bob Kemp heading into it. We watched him come upon the first poster, stop, read it, and then try to tear it down. Here Kemp was physically working to exclude our critique. Yogi and I giggled in the corner of the park as he struggled for several long minutes to remove the poster that we had thoroughly taped on the lamppost. While it was funny to us in the moment, we knew then that the BIA would remove them all as quickly as possible. A few days later we got a call from a homeless woman who spends time in the park. She reported to us that the security guard had stolen several "Know Your Rights" posters OCAP had given her. The BIA was simultaneously actively suppressing the knowledge about people's legal rights and excluding critique. Nevertheless, its practice of suppression and exclusion around the poster was unsuccessful. The word was out in the park.



## **Aligned Interests and Coordinated Ruling**

Within a neoliberal capitalist state formation, the role of government actors is to facilitate capital. BIAs, according to Schaller and Modan (2005a), “reconfigure neighbourhood space into specialized, mass-marketable, consumer-friendly environments” (p. 396). In order to do this, municipalities empower BIAs, granting them unprecedented access to Toronto’s public space. Indeed, business owners can come together and create a “jurisdictional district in which property owners gain disproportionate decision-making power” (Schaller & Modan, 2005b), for which BIAs have been criticized (Lewis, 2010; K. N. Rankin & Delaney, 2011; Schaller & Modan, 2005b). The BIA is a part of ruling relations and it operates in the interests of its member businesses – in the interests of capital.

It was apparent that the Parks department was reluctant to do anything concrete about the security guard patrolling the park. The General Supervisor in charge of St. James Park told me that it was unquestionably illegal for the security guard to patrol the park (personal communication with Peter White, July 24, 2017). The *Toronto Municipal Code* prohibits the unauthorized practicing of business in a park (§ 608-46). Parks Ambassadors routinely engaged with people in the park who were perceived to be homeless and violating s. 608 of the *Municipal Code*. Further, a By-law Officer could have been dispatched to the park at any time to order the security guard to cease and desist; that didn’t occur.

Communications among Parks division staff, and between the Parks Department and the BIA, seemed to show evidence of concern on the part of both parties but never detailed any proposed action. On August 2, the City Councillor’s office escalated their communication strategy with Parks staff. At 12:11 pm, they contacted the Parks Director – the highest ranking in the Parks division of Parks, Forestry and Recreation – two Supervisors and two Parks Ambassadors in an email about the issue. This email excluded the Parks Manager, who had been dealing with the situation up until this point. A Parks Supervisor promptly contacted the Parks Manager, saying: “I am sure this has not been brought to your attention.” I suspect he made this assumption because nothing had yet been done about the problem even though it was clear to the Parks Manager that “They [the BIA] have absolutely no jurisdiction to do this” (Hawkins, 2017). This Supervisor classified his email as having a “high” level of importance (Hawkins, 2017). We

clearly weren't the only ones who assumed action would be taken on the part of those at the City in charge of St. James Park.

The Councillor's office sent an email two hours later. Once again going over the head of the Parks Manager, the Councillor's office was unequivocal. In bold font, the email asserted: "Direct communication to the BIA needs to come from City staff today" (Calabro & McConnell, 2017, p. 14). Then, 16 minutes later, the Manager got an email from the Director asking him to raise the issue with the BIA (Currah, 2017). A mere 48 minutes after the Councillor's office sent the email, the Parks Manager sent an email to the BIA. The email, having already been reviewed by the Policy and Project Advisor,<sup>26</sup> read:

I have been made aware that a private security officer, hired by the St. Lawrence Market BIA has been conducting enforcement activities in St. James Park. This individual does not have any jurisdiction to enforce the City of Toronto's Bylaw Chapter 608, nor initiate trespass to property requests with the Toronto Police Service (TPS). The individual may ask people to move from an area for which the BIA has obtained a permit, (the gazebo) during the permitted period. The officer should not be engaging park users at any other time, including banning people from the park. This is the sole responsibility of City of Toronto staff and officers of the TPS. Please instruct the private security officer to cease all of his unauthorized activities in St. James Park. (in White, 2017a, p. 63)

Why did it take so long to tell the BIA to back off? A City Councillor's staffer told me:

City staff is really stretched and they're not willing to stick their neck out for something that could get them in trouble. And even though you may not be fired necessarily there's like a million more ways for your bosses to make your life hell... my perception is that stuff doesn't move forward unless the Councillor is supportive in these issues of really hyper-local particular concerns and it's frustrating because the bylaw is there – it's not like [we] made it up to him.... in a Ward where the Councillor's bending over backwards to help out the BIA and perhaps takes the point of view that there shouldn't be homeless or poor people in a park, absolutely the staff would not have countered. (Anonymous interview)

While legislation exists, the relations of the ruling regime discourage staff from enforcing certain kinds of rules while they systematically enforce others. In this case, poor people continued to be routinely harassed by PAs and City staff permitted their extra-legal harassment by the BIA.

Some of the city staff and the City Councillor's office also had an ongoing working relationship with the BIA. A quarter of the 12 people on the BIA's Parks Steering Committee

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<sup>26</sup> From what I can tell, this is the second highest position in the Parks division.

were from the City: two were City staff and one was a representative from the Councillor's office (SLMN-BIA, n.d.-b). Two of them, one staff member and the City Councillor's representative,<sup>27</sup> were frequently cc'd on emails about the security guard in St. James Park (see MFOIPPA Request #2018-01845, 2017). The BIA assumed the power to govern the park; some of this power had been granted to it by the City (like the right to add lampposts and flowerpots to the park). Is it possible that the BIA assumed even more power because of its close working relationship with the city?

The internal social relations of City Hall also likely informed the inaction of Parks staff. While the City Councillor's office was actively pushing the Parks bureaucrats to enforce the by-law, there was a power vacuum in the Ward. The City Councillor had very recently passed away so there was no councillor to provide direction. The staff would likely be replaced when a new councillor came to power, but the BIA had a lot of influence and would still be there when the new councillor was sworn in.

In the view of the Parks Manager engaging with the BIA, the security guard was in violation of the by-law (personal conversation with Peter White, July 24, 2017). Yet the guard was not charged with a bylaw offence, nor was the BIA – its members were told they could not enforce the by-laws, not that they were violating them.<sup>28</sup> I've argued that the inaction of Parks staff was influenced by the aligned interests of the BIA and the Parks division, as both are part of ruling relations. This alignment is a relatively straightforward one because of the shared worldviews and goals of the people involved in these two ruling organizations.

As I established above, the BIA was part of a set of ruling relations and coordinated people's activities in St. James Park not only through the security guard but also through the events it held, the ways in which it promoted itself and the park, and even the physical space of the park itself. The City was part of a broader set of ruling relations, which include coordinating how public space can be used and by who through the administration of permits, landscape design, and by-laws. Figure 3.3: Coordinated Ruling of St. James Park demonstrates these ruling relations. Importantly, while they are distinct sets of relations, they interact with one another.

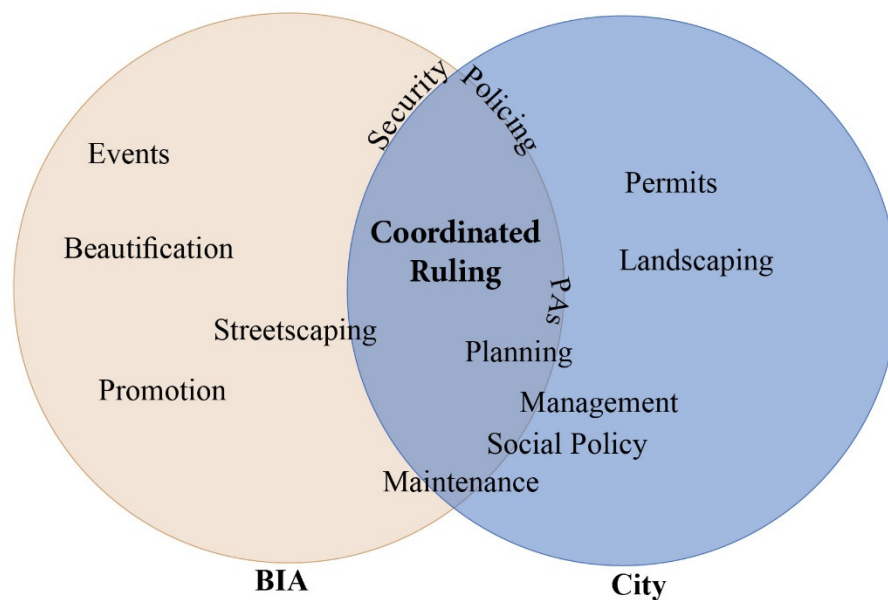
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<sup>27</sup> This was the Councillor's staffer who we were first dealing with when things were moving painfully slowly.

<sup>28</sup> Based on available email communications containing "St. James Park" of multiple Parks staff from July 13-August 20, 2017 (MFOIPPA request # AG-2019-00013; AG-2018-01845).

There is clear evidence that the City and the BIA had a relation of coordinated ruling for St. James Park. Figure 3.3 depicts this coordinated ruling in a Venn diagram. Like all diagrams that try to capture relations, however, this is an incomplete, simplistic, flattened and flawed rendering, as it doesn't capture the motion and interaction in these relations, which are created by actions between people and, therefore, not fixed. My research was only able to map a small piece of the relation of coordinated ruling in St. James Park because of the limited timeframe of the St. James Park portion of the project and because broader questions of large-scale urban planning and management are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

**Figure 3.3: Coordinated Ruling of St. James Park**



*This Venn diagram illustrates the separate and overlapping responsibilities (areas of ruling) of the BIA and the City.*

Nevertheless, it is clear that the BIA and the City coordinate ruling on a number of fronts. While the city is technically responsible for design, planning, and management of St. James Park, the BIA has its own Parks Steering Committee, which includes City representatives and has design and maintenance in its portfolio (SLMN-BIA, n.d.-b). This BIA also engages in the creation of social policy. It was, for example, involved in the consultations for the Enhanced Streets to Homes Program; homeless people and social services providers, however, were not (City of Toronto, 2007; SSHA, 2008). The BIA works with the City to coordinate and manage behaviours in the park by shaping public space and policy.

The most significant intersection of these coordinated relations of ruling for homeless people in St. James Park, I would argue, is the securitization of the park and the criminalization of homeless people. There is no evidence to suggest that the security guard was anything other than a BIA initiative. However, I would argue that this initiative was close to the line of coordinated ruling, as City management was aware of its illegality for at least nine days and did not require the BIA to stop or charge it with a by-law violation. Further, it is difficult to believe that Parks Ambassadors and City by-law officers, who should have been aware of the law, would not have seen the security guard as he was regularly in the park. Similarly, parks landscapers and maintenance workers would have also seen him; although, they may not have known to report this as they may not have been aware his activities were illegal.

When the BIA did remove the security guard from St. James Park, however, City staff ensured that PAs would be present in the park to police the behaviour of homeless people. Parks spokesperson, Matthew Cutler, was told of this in relation to a media inquiry and said the opposite (Ford, 2017b). This suggests that Cutler knew that this was, or at least would be perceived as, a problematic arrangement. While the PAs are a City program, there was some level of coordination with the BIA which happened both formally – via email agreements between Parks management and the BIA – and informally, from what I observed and on the ground with Bob Kemp (which may also occur with other BIA staff).

Similarly, the PAs arranged for the Toronto Police Services (TPS) to perform a policing operation in St. James Park at the request of the BIA. The day that Neil called OCAP, rather than communicate with OCAP, Bob Kemp communicated with the Parks Ambassadors. They agreed that they were “willing to meet” with TPS to discuss how to clear the gazebo (Ford, 2017a). The email between Troy Ford and the TPS, on which Bob Kemp was cc’ed, is also demonstrative of coordinated ruling between the BIA and the Parks division. Ford writes that homeless people “are now impacting” the concerts organized by the BIA and requests a three-day policing operation in the park. I would argue that the three groups in communication don’t only share a common worldview that denigrates homeless people and exalts neoliberal citizens – they also have a shared goal of clearing the gazebo of homeless people, and they had no problem coordinating ruling to do so. TPS provided Ford with the name of the Staff Sergeant he would liaise with and who would “have some officers available to assist” in clearing the gazebo (Ford,

2017a). These are the “by-the-bylaw ways” of pushing homeless people out that the City Councillor’s staff person was referring to above (personal interview, anonymous).

In service of their aligned interests, the City and the BIA worked independently and in conjunction with one another to police homeless people. This included allowing the illegal activities of the BIA to continue, coordinating a sweep of the St. James Park gazebo by TPS to remove homeless people, the ongoing targeting of homeless people by Parks Ambassadors, and ongoing efforts to conceal the coordination of these actions from OCAP and the public.

### **Fighting to Win: How Did OCAP Win?**

OCAP’s campaign was successful for several reasons – though we cannot fully know the why and how of this victory because of OCAP’s position outside of the ruling regime. We do know what OCAP’s actions were. We also know the campaign challenged the moral and legal claims of the BIA and then made its illegal actions public. This was enough to pressure the BIA into pulling its security guard from the park.

The poster that OCAP made was designed to be belittling to both the security guard and the BIA. The poster’s central statement – that the security guard had as much authority as Homer Simpson – was meant to undermine his authority. Several homeless people told me they said “Doh!” – a common Homer Simpson refrain – to him once they saw the poster. I also did it myself on one occasion. He became someone who could be laughed at and, therefore, somewhat less threatening. The poster also made people aware of their rights. It informed people what the guard could and could not do, which made it more possible for them to challenge his authority.

OCAP also challenged the legal authority of the BIA. The BIA justified its actions by stating it was upholding the law, but OCAP was able – both with the poster and through its website (OCAP, 2017a; 2017b) – to expose the illegality of the BIA’s actions. By demonstrating this illegality, and setting it against the rights of those being illegally policed, OCAP cost the BIA some of its moral authority. By publicizing the lawlessness of the BIA and the safety risks to homeless people, OCAP was able to (partially) reframe the problem the BIA constructed.

The public attention that OCAP brought to what the BIA was doing in the park also created the space for the City Councillor’s staff to be more aggressive than they normally would have been. It brought out different voices than those people who the Councillor’s office typically

heard from – largely middle-class gentrifiers and business owners. As a result, the office had political cover to challenge the BIA. In turn, pressure from the Councillor’s office gave City staff the ability to take action without fear of consequences for enforcing the City’s own laws.

Although the Councillor’s staff felt OCAP had opened new space for them to push harder than under typical circumstances, the BIA tried to close this space. The BIA, according to one interviewee, believed that the Councillor’s office “was being a lot more adversarial” than was necessary (anonymous interview). Here, the BIA was engaging in what Li (2007) calls the practice of anti-politics by trying to manage dialogue. This attempt to manage or control the conversation and its tone was, I would argue, an attempt to make the security guard issue a technical issue – defined and controlled by the BIA – rather than a political one.

While OCAP’s video and the ensuing media coverage did not help to get the security guard out of the park, I would argue that they were still worthwhile. OCAP challenged ruling relations and their practices of assemblage. We were able to use the video to publicize this challenge, politicizing what had been rendered technical and made invisible, including the poor bashing and other forms of violence that homeless people experience in the name of safety. Media coverage brought the story out of the neighbourhood and helped make it clear to other BIAs across the city that this kind of program is untenable, regardless of where it happens. Had the BIA been able to quietly withdraw the guard, it would have been more difficult for OCAP to claim victory, thus spreading the word, getting people inspired, and putting institutions involved in ruling relations on notice.

Because of OCAP’s positionality outside of ruling relations, there are things about how and why the BIA and the City, as distinct ruling regimes and coordinating their ruling together, took the actions that they did. However, the direct actions that OCAP took, and those that we threatened to take, were, themselves, a form of research (Kinsman, forthcoming, 2015); through this work, OCAP was able to produce new knowledge about ruling relations.

### **The Aftermath: Winning to Fight**

The week after the BIA announced that it was going to pull its security guard, two OCAP members went to St. James Park for the BIA’s weekly evening concert. One of them sent an email report-back to our internal listserv:

there were uniformed police present. At the very same moment cops were hassling ppl in the park for drinking beer, I got these pics of the band having beer on the gazebo before playing, they had a big red cooler full (email communication, Marque Brill, August 10, 2017).

The hypocrisy of the BIA, sponsoring an event at which their performers are brazenly breaking the same laws they hired private security to enforce is glaring here. Beyond hypocrisy, it is further evidence of the targeted nature of the BIA's policing of the park. The act of drinking was not actually the problem for the BIA; it was *who* was drinking that was the problem.

We had won. We had set out to do what we intended: to get rid of the security guard. But we were under no illusions that we had made any kind of systemic change in people's lives – the kind of change that people so desperately need.

The City, in the midst of a housing crisis and an over-capacity shelter system, chose to increase the number of PAs in Toronto from four to six; bringing the budget to \$0.5 million (City of Toronto, 2018c). While OCAP bought a reprieve for people in the park, by the following spring, there would be an additional PA team in the parks, targeting homeless people even more.

After that summer, St. James Park also got “reinvigorated” (Raw Design, n.d., n.p.). As part of the ongoing revanchist attack on homeless people in the park, the gazebo was leveled. It is being replaced with a large pavilion that has a roof with large open slats so it cannot be used as shelter from the elements. This, according to the designers, “supports growing social and cultural needs” of the neighbourhood while insuring homeless people could not use it as protection from the elements (Raw Design, n.d., n.p.).

This is, as I will continue to show, the painful reality of organizing under neoliberalism.

Organizer Yogi Acharya says:

I think [the campaign] was significant for two reasons. One is that it gave us a victory at a time when there weren't that many victories to gain. The other thing is that it re-established our connection with people who use St. James Park – the homeless people that you see in St. James Park – and gave them a sense of gains that could be achieved when you band together. (personal communication, Dec. 19, 2017)

Yogi's statement points to the importance of even small victories. That victories help build movements is a central component of OCAP's organizing philosophy; this was made clear in a number of the interviews I conducted with OCAP members and is also apparent in much of the literature about OCAP (Clarke, 2010; Greene, 2006; M. Scott & Wood, 2004) as well as other



social movement literature (Kinsman, 2006; Piven & Cloward, 1979; D. A. Thompson, 2014). I will return to the importance of this organizing philosophy in later chapters.

Yogi's statement also addresses the re-establishment of OCAP's connection to poor and, primarily, homeless people who use St. James Park. Being rooted in community is essential to OCAP's ability to organize and its credibility. If you'll recall, this campaign began with Neil calling OCAP because of our reputation as an organization that fights for homeless people. Several OCAP members I interviewed expressed that OCAP's roots in the community are based in real relationships that need to be built and maintained. Gaétan Héroux, a long-time OCAP member, highlighted the importance of maintaining a physical presence in spaces where homeless people are, like we did in St. James Park (personal interview, Feb. 21, 2018). In the absence of this outreach and relationship-building OCAP's credibility becomes questionable and we lose access to on-the-ground information, which compromises our ability to organize.

## **Conclusion**

OCAP quickly organized a campaign to get rid of a private security guard in a public park in the summer of 2017. The campaign grew out of a phone call to OCAP, which was made because we have longstanding roots in the community and a reputation as a group that can be counted on to defend homeless people. We did research preparing for our organizing work and as this work; we learned both by asking questions and by taking action. The almost month-long ordeal was successful in reclaiming public space as public by stopping the St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA's use of a private security guard in St. James Park.

The BIA criminalized homeless people who used St. James Park. Homeless people are denigrated in the moral economy, and the BIA used the language of safety and the moral economy to legitimize its role in policing, dispersing, and banishing of this community. The BIA employed a "violent benevolence" rooted in revanchism and the "healing power of domination and imagined moral superiority" (Chapman & Withers, 2019, pp. 19, 18) in an attempt to correct or expel homeless people from a public space.

This small but significant victory was one that OCAP initially misjudged its arrival at. Due to the non-answerability of the BIA and the City, OCAP had difficulty gauging the situation and, consequently, did more work than was necessary to win. Nevertheless, this labour helped

make the issue public and legitimize OCAP's claim to victory. At the same time, I demonstrated the BIA's and City's labour in trying to maintain the appearance of OCAP's insignificance through the practice of excluding critique.

I argued that the BIA and the City's shared worldview caused their interests in relation to the park to align, which is why – along with the internal relations at City Hall – the Parks division was so reluctant to enforce the City's bylaws against the BIA – even while Parks Ambassadors readily enforced these by-laws against homeless people. While the City and the BIA are each a distinct part of ruling relations, they coordinate ruling on park design, management, maintenance, and – most significantly – the securitization of the park and the criminalization of homeless people. This included Parks Ambassadors agreeing to attend St. James Park weekly to assist the BIA for event set-up once the security guard was removed, a practice of reassembly.

Indeed, this chapter explores how the BIA employed many of the governmental practices of assemblage delineated by Tanya Murray Li (2007a). While the BIA is funded through a levy collected by the municipal government, it is important to note that it is an independent body. Therefore, these practices of assemblage can be used by entities that coordinate our lives in the form of ruling relations alongside governments. The BIA rendered the social relations in St. James Park technical by labelling the rule-breaking and supposed lack of safety in the park a problem and identifying the security guard as an intervention which would result in the solution – safety for “everyone”. It also engaged in validating knowledge, including excluding critique and non-answerability by refusing to acknowledge OCAP and disregarding the many accounts of abuse that we reported to them. These are not practices that Li (2007b, 2007c) delineates; rather they are practices that I conceptualize drawing on Li's work and I explore them more in the next chapter. The BIA also worked to manage failure by maneuvering to keep OCAP from claiming victory. The BIA practiced anti-politics by attempting to manage the dialogue of the City Councillor's office. Lastly, the BIA worked to reassemble security in the park. Of course, it did not do this alone: it used its existing aligned interests and by coordinating ruling with the municipal government, it was able to ensure the Parks Ambassadors were present when it wanted them there most and enforcing the rules along the lines it wanted (including allowing the band to drink while enforcing the no drinking rules against homeless people).

Ultimately, the battle to stop the criminalization of homeless people and defend public space is a much larger fight than simply getting rid of a single security guard. It is interlocked with relations of gentrification, colonialism, white supremacy, and global capitalism. Better understanding ruling relations and the relationship between the municipal government and the BIA, however, can help organizations target that struggle more effectively.

## Chapter 4: Fighting for Roofs and Beds: The Housing Stabilization Fund Campaign

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*We need to stand-up for all people, not just for me and my boys, but for all families who have been denied and who don't know that there is support and help.*

~Laura Bardeau (in OCAP, 2016a)

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### Introduction

When I was on Ontario Works (OW), I would try to collect the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) once a year. Without enough money to cover my basic needs, this extra \$799 for furniture, appliances, and/or moving costs made a major difference in my life.<sup>1</sup> In 2004, however, the Ontario Liberal government changed the policy on the benefit so that it could only be collected once every two years other than in exceptional circumstances (Withers, 2015). This made my life, and likely the lives of tens of thousands of poor people in Ontario, even harder. In 2012, 16,000 households were accessing the CSUMB a month when the provincial government announced it was eliminating the benefit outright (Palmer & Héroux, 2016; Wellesley Institute, 2012). The provincial government would, instead, provide half of the \$110 million it had spent on the CSUMB to municipalities through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) (Wellesley Institute, 2012). The elimination of the CSUMB, devastating to poor people in Ontario, was part of the provincial Liberal government's program of "invisible austerity." Invisible austerity is the appearance that social spending is being maintained or even increased while, in actuality, complex changes to social welfare spending are being implemented and austerity is imposed (Withers, 2015).

OCAP, along with a coalition of groups across the province, organized under the "Raise the Rates" banner and fought the cut with direct action (e.g. OCAP, 2012b). After months of fighting, and over 35 protest actions, we succeeded in "twist[ing] the austerity arm" of the ruling regime and winning the restoration of \$42 million in funding, which was first announced as one-time funding and then made permanent (Government of Ontario, 2014; OCAP, 2017n; Palmer & Héroux, 2016, p. 418). This was a victory, but – like so many victories under neo-liberal retrenchment – it did not replace what was lost. A new benefit was promoted by the Liberal

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<sup>1</sup> Families could get up to \$1,500.

government as an improvement over the CSUMB because it could be granted to anyone who needed it, not only social assistance recipients, was far less than the CUSMB (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2012). However, while the CSUMB had been a mandatory province-wide benefit with a clear route to appeal, the new program became, in the words of one OCAP member, “a pathetic patchwork of local programs” (in Arce, 2016, n.p.). In fact, many municipalities elected not to revive programs after the elimination of the CSUMB (ISAC, 2013). In Toronto, as in many jurisdictions, only people on social assistance could access the new benefit (ISAC, 2013b). Despite the provincial Liberals’ spin, the elimination of the CSUMB was a major loss.

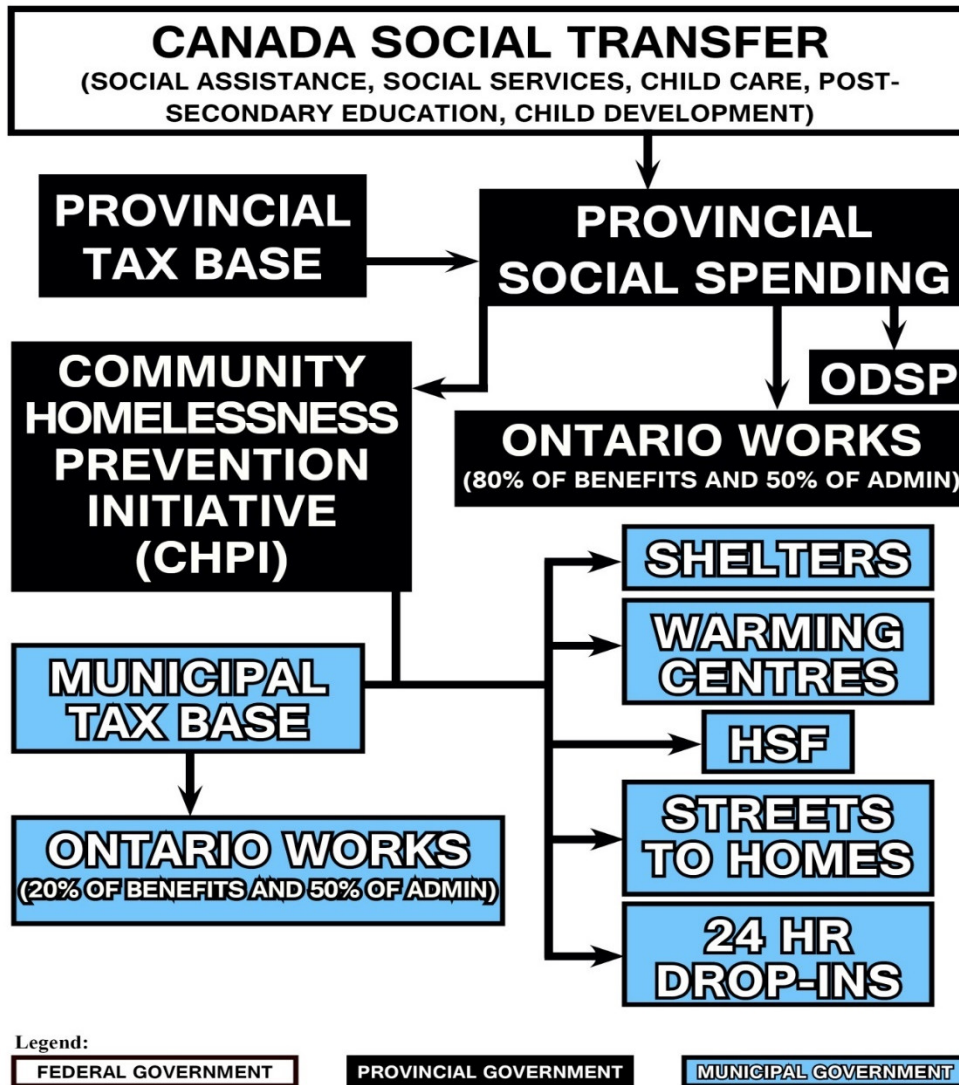
### **Housing Stabilization Fund**

The Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF) was instituted by the City of Toronto in 2013 to replace the CSUMB (ISAC, 2013b). With social assistance rates devastatingly low, the HSF and other benefits are some of the ways that people on OW, or welfare, and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), or disability, survive – if they are lucky enough to collect them. The HSF is a benefit for people on social assistance in Toronto to assist them with emergency housing needs like moving costs, last month’s rent, and essential furniture. Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) applied a restrictive and, for a time, discriminatory policy to the administration of the HSF. OCAP took on a campaign around the central disjuncture in the HSF: it is a fund intended to assist people in urgent housing need but was difficult for many people in such need to access. OCAP worked for increased access to the HSF and for people to get more money when they did access it. Using OCAP’s experiences with the HSF, I will demonstrate how direct action casework can be used to force bureaucrats who are enforcing policy rigidly to become flexible. By following this policy and its implementation from the individual to the general, this chapter exposes the manoeuvres that City staff made, and the complicity of city councillors, to attempt to undermine OCAP and keep the assemblage of the HSF policy intact.

The downloading of the CSUMB onto municipalities is part of a larger trend of neoliberal cuts and downloading. This trend began in the mid-1990s when the federal government eliminated the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) (McKeen, 2007). The new Canada Social Transfer replaced the CAP; it groups education, social assistance, and social spending together (McKeen, 2007). The Ontario Progressive Conservative government, under Mike Harris, downloaded OW

onto municipalities in 1998, requiring them to pay 20% of welfare payments – including the CSUMB (Association of Municipalities of Ontario & Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 1999). Under the new program, however, HSF funds come out of a fixed pot of CHPI funds, which are also used for other homelessness prevention programs that OCAP advocates for. This means that if OCAP successfully wins an increase in funding for the HSF at the

**Figure 4.1: Homelessness Prevention Funding by Jurisdiction**



*Canada Social Transfer from Federal Government provided to Provinces for social spending. Ontario uses these and its own funds generated through taxes (if it chooses) to fund social assistance and CHPI. Toronto uses municipal revenues (taxes) and CHPI funds to fund OW and homelessness (prevention) services, including HSF, shelters, etc. (services will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five).*

municipal level, without winning an increase in funding at the provincial level, OCAP could, effectively, reduce budgets for homeless shelters or drop-ins – even while OCAP fights to increase overall funding (see Illustration 4.1).

Now a discretionary program, the HSF policy has changed a number of times since it was implemented (OCAP, 2017n). One OCAP member, who is also a frontline worker with people on social assistance, tells me: “it can be really confusing and also just, like, inconsistent... it's changing all the time... you need to meet this criteria, now this is the criteria” (personal interview, anonymous). One of the major issues with the changing policy was that only vague rules were posted online, and the rest was kept secret. While there were contradictions in the policy that TESS wanted to smooth over (what Li [2007b] might characterize as “managing failure”), this policy was kept secret because TESS could keep it secret. People on social assistance are often unaware of supports, if they are available at all, to assist them in fighting government policies.

### **Translocal Textual Ruling**

The city's HSF policy was a coordinating text that was kept secret from social assistance users and advocates even as specialized HSF workers who applied the policy were supposed to be aware of its rules and procedures. This is an example of textual mediation in practice, as it was articulated by Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990, 1999, 2001). However, OCAP learned from an HSF worker that they did not have access to the HSF formula used to calculate eligibility; they simply typed the income of HSF applicants into the computer system and it informed them if the applicants were eligible or ineligible (OCAP, 2017n). Texts (in this case computer code), then, were used by workers to coordinate in a more intensified way than Smith described, as they enforced policies without being aware of their details.<sup>2</sup> This form of coordination further robbed workers of their autonomy and discretion.

While being textually-coordinated is nothing new for social assistance workers, they have always had a certain level of discretion. The removal of this discretion brings workers even more deeply under the control of ruling relations. These workers are what Lipsky (2010) calls “street-

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<sup>2</sup> Although, Smith (1999) perhaps anticipated this as she described people's activities being mediated by “text and its increasingly complex technological expansions” (p. 79).

level bureaucrats” (p. 18) because they engage in interactions with directly affected people and interpret and apply coordinating texts. This shift to having workers enforce policies of which they are not even aware, however, eliminates the possibility of discretion on the part of the worker. The removal of discretion is part of a larger neoliberal managerial strategy. Harris (2014) says, “far from being a neutral trend and a set of techniques for increasing efficiency, neoliberal managerialism represents a power struggle against institutions and people seen as thwarting [capitalist businesses’] purposes and intentions” (p. 16).<sup>3</sup> Through HSF policy implementation, therefore, relations are still textually mediated – but now they are mediated through a centralized computer system and the worker is unaware of the rationale – the full policy – behind decision making.<sup>4</sup> This shift potentially transforms street-level bureaucrats into street-level automatons who mechanistically apply policy within neoliberal managerial relations.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Laura Bardeau Case**

In 2016, OCAP took on an HSF case and, using direct action casework, we fought for Laura Bardeau, who is on ODSP, to get what we believe she was entitled to. What should have been a straight-forward case ended up becoming a long, public fight for access to the HSF. However, this case became a textbook example of what direct action casework can be: an individual gets hooked into a large community and they collectively fight to meet not only that individual’s immediate material needs but also mobilize a larger struggle to win broad change.

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<sup>3</sup> The provincial government had recently introduced the Social Assistance Management (SAM) computer system, which further routinized and bureaucratized social assistance workers’ labour. The \$250 million system led to widespread errors and delays for social assistance recipients across the province (Withers, 2015). I am not sure, however, that the HSF formula was applied using the SAM system.

<sup>4</sup> Other fields, like the healthcare professions, have undergone similar shifts towards computer-textual coordination. However, it is my understanding that they are still aware of the rationale behind the computer-coordinated activities. For example, if a computer tells a nurse to provide medication to a patient, the nurse is aware that the medication was prescribed by a physician, what the medication does and the medical condition(s) of the patient. There are even protocols in place if the nurse has been told by the computer to distribute an incorrect medication or dosage. This is a very different situation from the HSF worker who has no way to challenge the decision and no understanding of how or why that decision was made; nevertheless, they are responsible for implementing it.

<sup>5</sup> Much of this was made possible by the implementation of a new computer system, Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). OCAP, allied with the two unions that represent social assistance workers, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) worked (unsuccessfully) to stop the implementation of and, later, (successfully) to remedy many of the problems by its implementation.



Laura Bardeau came to OCAP because she had been denied the HSF. She is a single mother with two children. Laura was told she had “excess income” by TESS, so she was denied the maximum entitlement to replace furniture lost to bedbugs (OCAP & SALCO, 2016). Baffled as to how someone on ODSP could be considered to have “excess income,” OCAP worked with Laura to secure more than the \$484 she was first allocated to replace her three beds, table, and chairs (OCAP & SALCO, 2016).

OCAP was unsuccessful in winning the HSF for Laura at the local office level. This was likely because discretionary power had been removed from the local office through the computerized system: workers enforced but were not fully aware of policies guiding their work. We escalated the case to the City level. OCAP called, emailed, and tweeted at the Mayor, Chair of the Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC), and General Manager of TESS (OCAP, 2016d). A week later, OCAP showed up at City Hall and demanded the money (OCAP, 2016a). TESS issued Laura more funds, \$1,100 in total, for beds (OCAP, 2016a; letter from Yogi Acharya to Decision Review Committee, June 22, 2016). OCAP was appalled that Laura was classified as having “excess income.” We attempted to figure out how this was calculated but could not, as TESS kept its adjudication policies for this fund secret.

Following this, a larger delegation went to City Hall and demanded that she receive \$1,500, the maximum amount of the HSF benefit – and that the full policy be released publicly. We got a meeting with several City officials. Councillor James Pasternak, a representative for the Mayor, and TESS officials attended the meeting (OCAP, 2016a, 2017b). Laura and OCAP were promised the policy would be provided the next day and Laura’s case would be reviewed (OCAP, 2016a).

In the end, OCAP was able to secure the maximum amount of the HSF benefit for Laura Bardeau without the City changing its policy. Indeed, the first concession of bringing her benefit to \$1,100 and, ultimately, her receipt of the maximum amount were granted in violation of TESS’s policy. OCAP (2017n) posits, “TESS buckled as pressure mounted, and inconsistencies in its handling of Ms. Bardeau’s case became embarrassing” (p. 3). The desperation of social services to have the matter resolved is also apparent in documents attained by OCAP via Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. In an emailed discussion marked “high” importance about issuing the cheque that would bring Laura’s HSF sum to \$1,100, a TESS bureaucrat wrote:

“Let's hope all this goes according to plan” (Robis, 2016, p. 6). This “plan” also included couriering Laura’s cheque to her, which no one I spoke to had ever heard of happening.

It seems evident that while bureaucratic relations are normatively rigid, TESS became flexible in the face of disruptive protest. TESS bent to the demands of OCAP as a practice of what Li (2007b) calls managing failure. I will discuss this more below; here managing failure means granting an individual request in order to demobilize a growing campaign and to delay or dissuade the need for a policy change that could ultimately be seen as an admission of failure.

Once OCAP got the policy, however, we learned that the Child Tax Benefit, Special Diet Benefit, and Guide Dog Benefit were counted as income against people who were applying for the HSF. Yogi and I wrote:

Almost all of the money that people get to raise their kids (which is separate from social assistance), for medically necessary special diets, and for service animals is counted as being “in excess.” Indeed, while it would stand to reason that the more kids you have means you have greater furniture needs, the policy ensures that the amount you are eligible for goes down with every child. (Withers & Acharya, 2016, n.p.)

Using what we had learned from the Bardeau case, OCAP co-authored a report with the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO), based on the knowledge we gained through our activism, about the problems with the HSF (OCAP & SALCO, 2016). OCAP and SALCO (2016) argued that the HSF policy was discriminatory against disabled people and parents/caregivers, and called for widespread policy changes.

Returning to City Hall with a delegation, we were armed with the *Left in the Lurch: The Destabilizing Reality of Toronto’s Housing Stabilization Fund* report, which outlined the many problems with the HSF policy. We had put out the report a few days before, just in time for a hyperlink to go into a *Toronto Star* story about Laura Bardeau’s case. Laurie Monsebraaten (2016), the newspaper’s social justice reporter, wrote the article and brought a lot of publicity to the issue.

### **Beyond Laura Bardeau**

Following Laura’s case, OCAP took on the HSF case of “Sarah,” which had very similar circumstances – with the important exception that Sarah’s husband did not have immigration status. This made Sarah reluctant to participate in direct action; she did not want to draw

attention to her family.<sup>6</sup> Speaking of TESS, Yogi Acharya, Sarah’s OCAP caseworker, recalls: “they caught on to the fact that we weren’t going to do a direct action” (personal interview, December 19, 2017). In this instance, even with OCAP involved, TESS staff felt no need to take urgent action. In an early October 2017 email, obtained through an FOI, a TESS manager wrote: “unless you want it prioritized, which at this point, you agreed it is not a priority” (Abraham, 2016, p. 13), TESS would put it off until that December to go before the Decision Review Committee (DRC). In this case, OCAP did not pose a meaningful threat and, therefore, Sarah’s case was not a priority.

We took on another case, however, that also involved a disability accommodation. “David,” who had moved to Toronto from outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for medical reasons, was homeless. Most of David’s possessions were being stored by his former landlord, who was threatening to throw them away. David didn’t qualify for the HSF because the policy only allowed for people to move within the GTA. When I told David we could take on the case and we agreed on the initial plan of action, he thanked me for being the first person he had talked to about this who had a “flesh heart.”

In the letter that we sent to high-level TESS bureaucrats, we outlined the duty to accommodate David under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*:

As we have established this necessary disability accommodation, we will now turn to the question of undue hardship. As TESS should be aware (although past individual and systemic disability discrimination makes it clear that its knowledge of disability human rights law is lacking), TESS has a duty to accommodate on the grounds of disability unless there is an undue hardship. Given that this move will cost less than many moves within the GTA, there is no undue hardship for TESS to provide [David] with the HSF. Additionally, as the HSF has had a surplus of approximately \$3.5 million each year since the program began, it is difficult to fathom that there could be an undue hardship in allocating [David] this entitlement. (OCAP, 2017i, n.p.)

OCAP and David won the HSF. Here, unlike with Sarah’s case, TESS rightly suspected that there might be disruptive action taken to secure the funds for David and granted him HSF for “exceptional circumstances” (C. Thompson, 2017, p. 125). However, when TESS gave OCAP

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<sup>6</sup> With respect to the principles listed earlier, if OCAP takes on a case in which someone initially agrees to disruptive action and later changes their mind for good reason (e.g. health, immigration), we might continue on working on the case.

the full policy, it did not contain a route to grant funds on these grounds (TESS, n.d.-a).<sup>7</sup> As with Laura's case, TESS refused to change the policy to bring in a disability accommodation mechanism. TESS simply bent its own rules and became flexible – where normally it is rigid – in order to manage failure and avert more widespread change.

Taken together, the HSF cases of Laura, Sarah, and David are demonstrative of not only how casework can be used to mobilize for policy change, but also the necessity of moving beyond the individual level and the influence of direct action on the ruling regime. The casework process begins with the individual making contact with OCAP. That individual relays their own experience of ruling relations; this is the beginning of the research process for this specific case. OCAPers take what we learn here and it is mediated with past practice. From there, the OCAP caseworker does another kind of research by analyzing the “governing texts” – what Dorothy Smith calls “boss texts” – and related policy documents and reports (Bisaillon, 2012). Lastly, the caseworker will strategize in conjunction with the OCAP office workers and, depending on the timing, the General Membership, about the action(s), including who to target, when, where, and how. This step may also take additional research. The next step is doing an action (and all of the logistical lead-up to get people to attend an action – including outreach, transportation, etc.). If more than one action is needed, as in the Bardeau case, more than one action will be held until a successful resolution is achieved. Here, the person with the case gets a successful outcome.<sup>8</sup>

OCAP's casework process differs from that of social work agencies, constituency offices, or legal clinics in two key ways. First, OCAP's use of direct action brings together people from the community. Second, our work on these HSF cases openly revealed the need to move beyond the individual level and into the level of policy change. What was particularly successful in the Bardeau case was that OCAP built an effective campaign for policy change, which I will discuss in greater detail below. However, before we built that campaign, we used the casework process

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<sup>7</sup> There were two policy changes to the full policy OCAP was provided and neither of these changes added the ability to access the fund for exceptional circumstances. The first was the December 2016 change removing the discriminatory formula, reported to the CDRC (TESS, 2016b). The second was an April 2017 change regarding bedbugs; the changes were emailed to me and other stakeholders by a TESS manager Colleen Thompson (email correspondence March 30, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Sometimes this is fully successful and other times it is as successful as we knew we could be (there are times I have demanded more than someone is entitled to and won it). So, in some circumstances, we do not obtain our full demands, but we never thought this was a realistic outcome.

itself as a site of learning, research and organizing – another key difference between OCAP and state-based casework.

If OCAP's direct action casework can be used as a source of research and a way of initiating a campaign, this is an effective way of mobilizing around what often seem like intangible or abstract policies coordinated by governing texts. Grounding struggles for policy reform (and in general) in the experiences of real people can also ensure that policies (and victories in general) are organized in ways that address real people's needs rather than through abstractions.<sup>9</sup>

The Laura Bardeau case was, by far, the most visible and successful of the HSF cases. However, OCAP was able to learn from the cases of Sarah and David and, with respect to David, secure an important victory with only the threat of taking disruptive direct action.

### **Incremental Victories and Ongoing Struggle**

Building on momentum from the Bardeau case, OCAP continued to push for the discriminatory policy in the HSF to be removed, not simply for it to be waived with respect to Laura Bardeau. We were able to win the removal of the discrimination on the grounds of disability and family status in late 2016.

OCAP returned to City Hall on November 29, 2016, with a loose coalition of legal clinics and community groups to depute and demand essential changes. The agenda came out a week before the meeting and included a report by TESS that stated the discriminatory "excess income" calculation would be removed from HSF policy. We had won our primary demand. The report said that the program needed "greater transparency" (TESS 2016, p. 8) and that "since its inception, TESS has sought input from a range of stakeholders about the effectiveness of the HSF" (TESS 2016, p. 9). This is an example of what Li (2007a) calls "managing failure," in which government bureaucrats actively engage in the practice of "smoothing out contradictions so that they seem superficial rather than fundamental" (p. 265). Under this narrative, TESS was a responsive body simply working for ongoing program improvement. The report's claims obfuscated the fact that TESS had purposefully kept the policy secret and had the process for

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<sup>9</sup> There are strong parallels between this kind of casework to campaign work that I am discussing and political activist ethnography.

accessing the HSF opaque. TESS further exemplifies excluding critique by erasing Laura, OCAP, and our allies from the official narrative. Our thorough, analytical critique was reworked and replaced by bureaucratic accounts (also see Kinsman, forthcoming). Forced, I would argue, into policy change, TESS staff set out to then minimize any embarrassment to the department as an organization and then engage in the practice of “reassembling” the HSF policy (Li, 2007b). Even though we won our central demand, we continued to push for change because the HSF was still restrictive and had regressive rules. Nine people deputed at the CDRC meeting, calling for further changes to the HSF. One of the most problematic rules was what we had named “the retroactive rule.” This rule states that if someone procures the item(s), the arrears, or the rent deposit for which they are applying, they will not be granted the HSF funds (City of Toronto, n.d.-e). This is the case regardless of the circumstances – including administrative errors on the part of TESS that delay the process of receiving HSF funds. “We have people waiting on DRC [Decision Review Committee] appeals for months, for months!” Yogi angrily said to TESS staff at one point. Those months waiting for funds mean people sleep on the floor or the streets to prevent the risk of breaking the retroactive rule. I spoke to numerous people on the phone who were in very difficult circumstances because of this policy, including people who had nearly secured housing but lost it because TESS was too slow in approving their HSF application. OCAP and our allies had secured a significant victory, but HSF injustices continued.

### **Winning (and Losing Momentum)**

While the changes to the HSF were largely about managing failure, TESS was also engaged in the practice of excluding critique and used demobilization tactics. I will discuss demobilization tactics extensively in Chapter Seven. For now, drawing on Piven and Cloward (1979), victories are won by *forcing* ruling relations to concede something. Such concessions are granted, however, in the interests of ruling relations as much as they are in the interests of poor people; they are imbued with the intention of redirecting protest activity towards “more legitimate and less disruptive forms of political behavior” (1979, 30). The significant redesign, or reassembly (Li, 2007b), of the HSF following direct action and public pressure was, I would argue, an attempt to placate OCAP and our allies so we would stop organizing and/or not have

sufficient ammunition to level a critique. TESS made some important changes that made an important difference in people's lives; but, in doing so, TESS evaded making others.

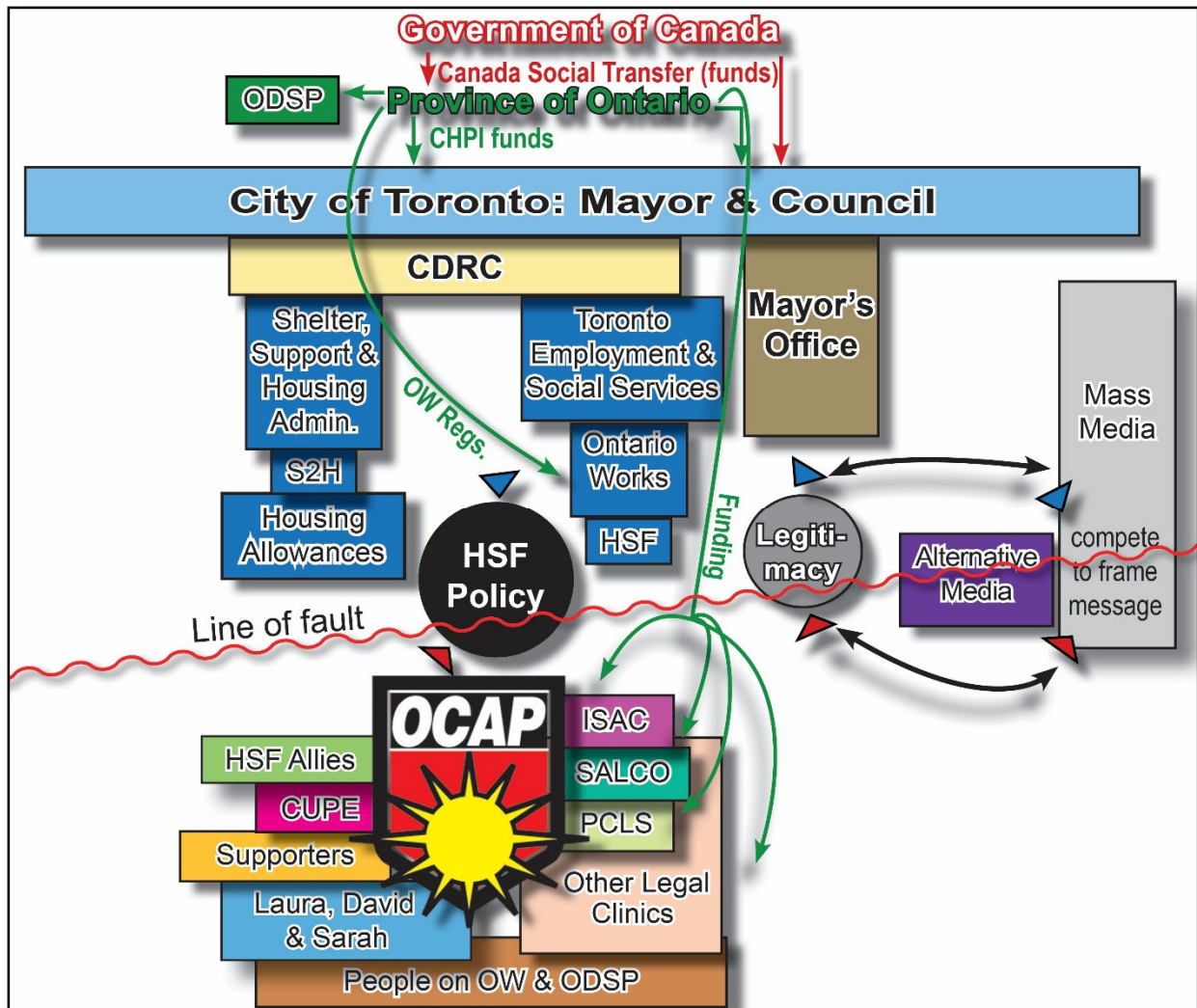
After the deputations, OCAP and our allies did not take public action on the HSF until late April 2017 – about five months later. This was a result of demobilization within the campaign, including the departure of some allied organizers, as well as the urgent need to shift focus to the shelter campaign (see Chapter 7). The biggest strengths of the campaign: our ability to understand the fine policy details and articulate their need for change and it being rooted in the direct experiences of HSF applicants became, perhaps, its biggest weakness. The campaign became very technical and it became quite difficult to mobilize people around it once we achieved the significant victories. This is demonstrative of how anti-politics is effective as a governmental practice of assemblage as the HSF was largely depoliticized and made a matter of technical expertise (Li, 2007b). OCAP won by fighting on a detailed policy terrain but this was also the campaign's ultimate undoing. We put the HSF campaign on the back burner.

### **Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle**

The purpose of the HSF benefit is to: “provid[e] resources to prevent evictions and assist OW and ODSP clients to obtain housing, retain their housing or relocate to more appropriate or affordable accommodation” (TESS & SSHA, 2013). There was, however, a line of fault between this stated purpose and how it was applied. From Laura's case we learned that her circumstance was not isolated; rather, the policy was designed to keep certain people from being able to (fully) access the fund. Through our organizing, OCAP began to discover other contradictions in the HSF policy and its application, including the HSF surplus even though there was a housing crisis and that the HSF data was contradictory.

On one side of the line of fault is OCAP and those we worked with. This includes Laura, and, to a lesser extent, David, Sarah, and others on OW and ODSP who came to OCAP with their individual difficulties that OCAP then connected to broader policy contradictions. OCAP also worked with a number of allies, including the Toronto Raise the Rates Campaign group. Community legal clinics were also involved in organizing, especially SALCO staff, who helped with the *Left in the Lurch* report, and the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) and Parkdale Community Legal Centre (PCLS) staff, who helped organize the open letter. The map also

Figure 4.2: HSF Campaign Social Relations of Struggle



illustrates a vulnerability in the campaign. All of the legal clinics, which were such key allies, are provincially funded. Their funding could be at risk to austerity or other forms or reorganization.

On the other side of the line of fault is the ruling regime. Here, TESS and SSHA work under the direct supervision of the CDRC and the broader direction of the Mayor and Toronto City Council. At times, however, TESS worked independently and outside of the direction of the CDRC in relation to some of the changes it made to the HSF, and the CDRC refused to hold it accountable. Indeed, unlike some other maps of the social relations of struggle in this dissertation, this map does not show supportive city councillors because they were absent from the HSF campaign; they chose not to hold TESS accountable for violating their own directives or



with respect to the many discrepancies in policy, delivery, and data collection. Municipal policies and practices are governed by provincial social assistance regulations. OW is administered by the City but regulated (textually co-ordinated) by provincial legislation and policy. ODSP is administered by the Province. While the HSF is a local policy with local criteria, who is eligible is broadly determined by provincial policy and it is funded through CHPI funds. Some of those funds likely come from the Canada Social Transfer from the Government of Canada (see Figure 4.1). While this is a local policy, this map reveals the role of all three levels of government.

As I will discuss in more detail later, however, the media is on both sides of the HSF disjuncture as both the City and OCAP compete to frame the issue and necessary remedies. Alternative media includes *NOW Magazine* (Acharya, 2017b) and other alternative publications (Acharya & Clarke, 2018) as well as videos (OCAP, 2016a), reports and statements OCAP puts out. Both sides compete to frame the media's message and for legitimacy.

### **“Toronto Robs from the Poor”**

Working on Laura's case and writing the *Left in the Lurch* report involved combing through all the publicly available City reports on the HSF. In doing this, Yogi noticed something significant: they didn't add up. Different reports claimed different numbers of people getting the HSF and, in the case of 2014, a difference in spending on the HSF of \$1,004,925 (OCAP, 2017n). Yogi and I dug as deep as we could into the data and emerged with *Toronto Robs From the Poor: The Misuse of the Housing Stabilization Fund* (OCAP, 2017n). This new report, like *Left in the Lurch* before it, was the grounds for new and evolving activism around the HSF. As the Laura Bardeau case resolved, OCAP used what it had learned in that process and through policy analysis to create the *Left in the Lurch* report and set the groundwork for a bigger campaign for policy changes. We then used what we learned throughout the HSF organizing process to create *Toronto Robs from the Poor*. Both reports are examples of how activists do ongoing research and use that research to inform and build their organizing (also see: Choudry, 2015 among others).

The reports are examples of part of a strategy of “documents and demonstrations,” which George Smith said is necessary to successfully challenge ruling relations (in Kinsman,

forthcoming). Thorough critical analysis needs to be done by movements – both informing and being developed in documents. This is based on activist research – the knowledge acquired through activism. However, articulating the logic and utility of this strategy, Kinsman (forthcoming) says, “people in positions of power would never consider our proposals without the power of demonstrations threatening to destabilize ruling relations” (also see Hurl & Klostermann, 2020). These reports, or even heavily researched demands (discussed in future chapters), exemplify OCAP’s research arm of this two-pronged strategy.

In *Toronto Robs from the Poor*, we revealed a number of problematic findings about the HSF. We did this in an attempt to delegitimize the ruling regime and force a policy change. Our findings, which I will discuss below in addition to the launching of the report, can be broken down into three general categories: disturbing HSF surpluses, a stagnant reserve fund for storing unspent HSF funds, and significant data discrepancies.

*i. Surplus*

At this time, Toronto was in the midst of a homelessness and housing crisis (which is the subject of the next three chapters). Nevertheless, the HSF had a significant surplus each year. In 2013, the first year of operations, the fund had a surplus of \$3.46 million, followed by \$3.47 million in 2014, \$3.09 million in 2015 and \$3.8 million in 2016 (OCAP, 2017n).<sup>10</sup> According to OCAP, “these surpluses were generated through unfair practices. These included violating the principles of natural justice and administrative fairness and discriminating against disabled people and parents which systematically lowered or extinguished entitlements” (OCAP, 2017n). Therefore, OCAP argued, the surpluses should be returned or put into the shelter system, which was “bursting at the seams” (Garrett, 2016).

*ii. Reserve Funds*

The 2014 and 2015 surpluses (\$6.89 million) seemed to vanish off of the books while the 2013 and 2016 surpluses (\$7.17 million) were put into the Housing Stabilization Reserve Fund. After several months of trying to trace the surpluses, OCAP learned that the 2014 and 2015 surpluses had been “distributed in accordance with the Surplus Management policy” (OCAP, 2017n). Consequently, 75% of the funds – which had, again, been budgeted for the poorest

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<sup>10</sup> At the time of the report, the 2016 figure was projected, however, it has since been verified as the actual amount.

people in the city to be able to obtain or retain housing – went to the Capital Financing Reserve Fund while the remaining 25%, according to the policy, would be allocated to “any underfunded liabilities, and/or reserves/reserve funds, as determined by the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer” (OCAP, 2017n).

There were significant problems with the Housing Stabilization Reserve Fund. It was created in March 2014 to provide housing allowances to people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and who met the City’s specific criteria. The province’s Ministry of Finance was tasked with administering the fund, with a plan for it to be exhausted in three years (OCAP, 2017n). However, the City’s 2016 HSF surplus and \$1.07 million from the 2015 SSHA budget were added to the reserve fund with no plan to spend those funds. In all, there was \$10 million sitting in the reserve fund with no plan to actually spend it on housing allowances. OCAP wanted this money back for the HSF or for homelessness programs.

*iii. Data Discrepancies*

OCAP found and reported a number of discrepancies in the HSF data that TESS had reported to City Council. Some of these discrepancies were relatively small while others were very significant. Perhaps the most significant discrepancy we found was a difference of \$1,004,925 in 2014 HSF spending between what TESS publicly reported and what was made available to us through FOI requests (OCAP, 2017n). TESS also released five publicly available reports containing data about the HSF for 2013. Two reports are essentially identical and the others all contain different basic information. There is a difference of 8,000 total eligible applications; this dramatically impacts the average amount of funding each individual is reported to have received. There were also numerous simple mathematical and other errors. In highlighting these, OCAP wasn’t simply pointing to reporting discrepancies to try to discredit TESS. If TESS was picking and choosing data to make or legitimize policy decisions, there were long-lasting policy implications that had real, material implications for poor people in Toronto:

This data isn’t benign: it is used to legitimize changes to the HSF. Recently, when OCAP said people weren’t getting enough money, TESS gave a journalist the data that contained the higher average issuance. But, when we argue that not enough people get the benefit, we are given the data that has the higher number of people receiving the benefit. (OCAP, 2017n, p. 10)

### *Launching the Report*

We pushed to get the report finished in time to coordinate its launch with an upcoming shelter action. The City kept saying it had no money for shelters, but OCAP had found \$18 million; we were demanding that money be put into the shelters or a combination of the HSF and shelters. The week before the report was publicly launched, Yogi published an article in *NOW Magazine* outlining what we were calling the “mismanagement” of the HSF (Acharya, 2017b). This article was accompanied by a small announcement for the upcoming protest. At the shelter action, a sleep-out in front of the Mayor’s condo, we had fact sheets about our research and I spoke about our findings.

Three days later, OCAP was outside of the Mayor’s office with a delegation demanding he take the report and give back the money. Edward Birnbaum, one of Mayor Tory’s advisors, came out and took the report in front of a surprising number of media. Councillor Joe Mihevc’s aid agreed to put a copy of the report in each city councillor’s mailbox and sent them each an email requesting a meeting to discuss the report.

Only four out of 44 city councillors were willing to meet with us about the report. We travelled up to Councillor James Pasternak’s constituency office on the second floor of a strip mall in North York for a brief and awkward but amicable meeting. Councillor Pasternak is the Chair of the CDRC and we are often in an adversarial position with him as he is part of Mayor John Tory’s circle. At the meeting, we felt like he didn’t understand what we were saying. When we left, he gave us magnets with his face and contact information on them.

We then got a meeting with Councillor Shelley Carroll because we knew the person in charge of her scheduling. The meeting with Councillor Carroll took place during a break at the monthly City Council meeting; it seemed very promising. We highlighted our primary concerns and when she was leaving, she told us she was going to take it to Council floor to talk to other councillors about it. As she was walking out, she tore the cover off the report. She saw our faces drop and said that she didn’t want other councillors seeing she was talking to people about the OCAP report just yet. We never heard from her or her staff again even though we tried to follow-up with them.

Unlike with Councillor Carroll, we knew right away that the meeting we had with Councillor Jim Karygiannis was useless. We were apprehensive about meeting with him in the

first place, as we consider him to be very conservative (although he considers himself to be somewhat progressive). After his initial disappointment that Yogi was Indian rather than Sri Lankan Tamil – because he wanted to claim he “led the charge” at a major Tamil protest several years ago – we started to discuss the HSF. He asked if the HSF should be eliminated altogether.

The councillor’s denigration of homeless people was evident in a number of his comments, including his claims that people become homeless because of drug or alcohol addiction or “his wife left him.” The individualized and gendered notion of homelessness in these comments clearly placed blame for homelessness on homeless people themselves. He also asked us how the HSF was going to help homeless people to become productive citizens who have jobs and become homeowners. The councillor clearly linked full citizenship with employment and home ownership. He also seemed disconnected from the basic realities of Toronto, both in his assumption that homelessness equates to unemployment, which it doesn’t for many people, and that \$1,600 or \$3,000 could somehow bring someone closer to home ownership. At the same time, however, he was contradictory, saying at one point, “any of our kids could be homeless.”

We repeatedly tried to turn to the *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report, but Councillor Karygiannis kept wandering off topic. He asked us numerous policy questions:

“Should we privatize TCHC [Toronto Community Housing Corporation]?” he asked, “And traffic? What are we going to do about traffic? Do you know what the solution for traffic is?”

We didn’t respond.

“It is closing King Street!” he said as he put his hand to his head as if it were a gun and motioned pulling the trigger.

Yogi had indicated fairly early in the meeting that he was finished but I ignored him because this councillor was fascinating in a comically horrifying way. He told us that OCAP should change its tactics. If we did that, I told him, “we might be more effective lobbyists, but we would be less effective.” He seemed incapable of comprehending what I was saying. “You need a champion,” he told us. If we got a city councillor to champion this cause, he would “be right behind them.” Yogi and I left and quickly agreed we were better off without this councillor on our side.

We also emailed with a staff person for Councillor Michael Ford, a young councillor who is the nephew of former Mayor Rob Ford and current Premier Doug Ford. Councillor Ford told me, “I take pretty much 99 percent of the meetings that are put forward to us” (personal interview, March 1, 2018). They did not follow through with a meeting.

We received no response from Councillor Joe Mihevc, even though it was his staff person who had distributed the reports for us and who we had asked personally to arrange a meeting. It wasn’t until a rather terrible CDRC meeting on June 7, 2017 when Yogi and I asked Councillor Mihevc in person if he would meet with us that he agreed. He gave us his personal email address and told us to contact him directly. We weren’t able to arrange a meeting with him until early July, after a number of other developments with the HSF had occurred. As such, I will discuss this meeting below.

Both Councillors Ford and Karygiannis say that the most effective way to make change is through meeting with councillors, not through disruption. But these meetings didn’t lead anywhere. While councillors were telling us to be more passive, OCAP had learned long ago that passivity did not win change for poor people.

### **Legitimacy Problem**

One of the issues that OCAP faced with the *Toronto Robs the Poor* report was that we are not considered capable of complex analysis by those who are a part of ruling relations. At least two journalists asked me who wrote the report for us and they were surprised when I answered, “We did.” It seemed out of the realm of possibility to them that OCAP would be capable of careful data and policy analysis. Indeed, OCAP had SALCO co-author our previous report, *Left in the Lurch*, as a strategic move to lend it legitimacy. The feeling in OCAP was that it “wouldn’t otherwise have been taken seriously” (personal interview, Yogi Acharya, December 19, 2017). While there is a depth of capacity within OCAP to analyze policy and law, OCAP is constructed by the ruling regime as incapable of doing so.

This legitimacy problem can also impact relationships with potential allies. OCAP worked in a coalition with other organizations, including a large number of legal clinics. At one point, OCAP authored a detailed critical analysis of the HSF policy. It was legal clinic staff that asked their organizations to sign onto this public letter, not OCAP. Here, too, OCAP and our

clinic allies believed that fewer clinics would sign on if it was clear that OCAP had written the letter – even though the analysis was sound. One legal clinic, in which the Executive Director was aware that OCAP had drafted the letter, refused to sign onto it against a number of staff’s objections (the letter apparently contained four “objectionable” words). However, once a critical mass of other clinics signed on, the Executive Director capitulated.

OCAP is delegitimized as a producer of knowledge because, I would argue, of the active practice of validating knowledge. This concept is akin to “authorizing knowledge,” described by Li (2007c) as an internal process in which scholars and advocates determine what the body of knowledge is and practice containing their own critiques so as not to “suppl[y] ammunition” to the opposition (p. 275). I find that ruling relations engage in similar practices turned outwards, which I call “validating knowledge.” This means that ruling relations confirm, authenticate, and recognize both a body of knowledge and its producers. The practice of validation is one of boundary-making: by validating some things, others are invalidated. Part of this is the exclusion of critique. Unlike “containing critique,” in which advocates and allies hold their critique inwards (Li, 2007b), ruling relations shut-out, omit, prohibit, or even preclude critique.

City officials, including the Mayor, engaged in practices of validating knowledge on multiple occasions. For example, the Mayor articulated who he determined to be an expert and what the boundaries of legitimate knowledge are when he dismissed the *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report almost as quickly as it was released: “the allegation they make that there has been an impropriety of any kind by anybody, and these things are run by public servants, not by politicians, I just think is why often times they don't have very much credibility” (as quoted in John Tory Watch, 2017). Given the short window of time between the report’s release and Tory’s public statement that OCAP was not credible while TESS staff were, it seems unlikely he actually read the 42-page report; rather, as FOI documents imply, his claims were based on OCAP Organizer Yogi Acharya’s (2017b) *NOW Magazine* article. Yogi recalls:

The person that didn't have credibility in that situation was Mayor Tory because even a perfunctory look at the City's own public record shows the level of inconsistency is just astounding... the people that don't actually have legitimacy or credibility, in that case, are the City administration that's putting out stuff like that... But it was merely a statement of dismissiveness, which isn't shocking coming from the Mayor given that he's trying to defend his administration's neglect of the poor. (personal interview, Yogi Acharya, December 19, 2017)

Nevertheless, the Mayor, who is in a position of authority, actively invalidated OCAP's knowledge. Because the practice of validating knowledge is an ongoing one and OCAP has consistently been delegitimized, the Mayor can carry this claim forward with inertia.

While Li's (2007b) focus is on governmental practices of assemblage, I would argue that the media, which are an important part of ruling relations, work to take up and legitimize this practice of knowledge validation. This was evident in the example I gave above in which a reporter was suspicious that OCAP could produce such a report on its own,<sup>11</sup> as well as in the media's response to *Toronto Robs from the Poor*. For example, Emily Mathieu (2017), the housing reporter for the *Toronto Star*, quoted Patricia Anderson of SSHA making the claim that "Allowances were given to 320 people over three years, with many receiving continued support, and 261 people currently receiving monthly funding of \$400 each" (n.p.). SSHA was given the opportunity to respond to OCAP's claims, but we were not given the opportunity to respond to their claims.

When I interviewed her, Mathieu said:

I don't think you would manipulate numbers.... I don't think it serves the City's interests to lie because it's on the record and I think lying on the record is a mistake. But I also think that they have their own interpretation of how they fund things and they also have a much greater understanding of all the different funding streams and where the money goes. (personal interview, April 18, 2018)

Mathieu says she doesn't think either side would lie but clearly views City staff as experts.

While Patricia Anderson's statement isn't a lie, it is an intentionally misleading response to the OCAP report.

Laurie Monsebraaten, the *Toronto Star's* social justice reporter, invalidates OCAP's knowledge production through her claims about Organizer and frequent spokesperson John Clarke; she said he "became more and more radical," which made him (and, presumably, all of OCAP) "less credible" because OCAP is "so far out of the mainstream" (quoted in Kozolanka, 2010, p. 71). For Monsebraaten, normative or normative-adjacent views are necessary for

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<sup>11</sup> There is a deeply held stereotype that poor people are less intelligent than middle- and upper-class people (Durante & Fiske, 2017; Grossmann & Varnum, 2011). I would argue that, consciously or unconsciously, this is mobilized in this practice of validating knowledge and the active devaluing or delegitimizing of OCAP's empirical research and intellectual contributions.



rendering knowledge valid. Mainstream media, then, not only perpetuates governmental practices of validating knowledge, but also perpetrates them. Freelance journalist Peter Biesterfeld argues that mainstream media understands and interprets the world through a “capitalist filter.”<sup>12</sup> This impacts when, how, and if OCAP is deemed legitimate and if its knowledge is validated (personal interviews, April 4, 2018).

At the same time, the mass media offers an opportunity for OCAP to reach people it would not otherwise be able to reach. For example, Monsebraaten was the journalist who wrote the article about the Laura Bardeau case that included a hyperlink to the *Left in the Lurch* report. Similarly, Mathieu has written several articles that discuss OCAP’s work and raise issues about homelessness as we frame them (e.g. Mathieu, 2016, 2018e, 2018f). The mainstream media, therefore, can be a site of struggle between a ruling regime and activist groups over how an issue is framed.

OCAP is conscious of the practice of (in)validating knowledge, and we attempted to guard against it through the use of allies in the HSF campaign. Indeed, both *Left in the Lurch* and *Toronto Robs from the Poor*, like many of OCAP’s public statements, media, and other work, demonstrate OCAP’s acute awareness of the importance of legitimacy; only here, OCAP is attempting to delegitimize ruling relations. The issues surrounding OCAP’s legitimacy, knowledge validation, and OCAP as knowers and knowledge producers will reoccur in forthcoming chapters.

### **The (Non)Response**

From OCAP’s perspective, both at the time and in the weeks following, it appeared as if there was little regard taken for our comprehensive report within City government relations. This appearance, however, was a part of a carefully crafted strategy that involved the Mayor’s office, the City Manager’s office, TESS, SSHA and, possibly, Strategic Communications (Carbone, 2017). While there was no comprehensive public response to the *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report made by either TESS or SSHA, internally the response to it and the preceding article in *NOW Magazine* (Acharya, 2017b) was rapid. FOI documents show that TESS and SSHA worked

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<sup>12</sup> While Biesterfeld is critical of this “capitalist filter,” like all of us, he remains part of capitalist ruling relations. The paper he writes for (as a freelancer) is a progressive paper but it operates through the sales of advertising revenues.

together, with TESS largely in the lead, to create two documents that were internal to municipal government relations. One document was a briefing note distributed to city councillors and the Mayor. The other was a table titled “Issues with ‘The Misuse of the Housing Stabilization Fund’ Report by OCAP” and remained internal to the two departments. In this section, I will demonstrate how the briefing note was used externally in the processes of authorizing knowledge, managing failure, and excluding criticism while the table was used in the governmental practice of tightening the ranks.

The *NOW Magazine* article was released online on April 19, 2017 and in print the following day. There was a meeting in the Mayor’s office at 10:30 am on April 20 to discuss the matter; representatives from both TESS and SSHA attended (Morgan, 2017b).<sup>13</sup>

On April 21, 2017, TESS drafted a briefing note that named the *NOW Magazine* piece, Yogi, OCAP, and the *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report. The note outlined and responded to the key issues raised in the article. After people in the Mayor’s office saw the note, it was sent to the Deputy City Manager. The official briefing note, “Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF) and Housing Allowance Reserve,” was issued on May 5, 2017 (FOI #2018-01844, 2018). All references to OCAP, the *Now Magazine* article, and Yogi had been removed. The Deputy City Manager said: “I re-worked it a bit... I took out the intro that referenced the NOW article. Let’s just focus on providing the facts as opposed to responding to a media article” (Carbone, 2017). While the briefing note is a response to the OCAP report, City staff at the highest level of municipal government ensure that there is no acknowledgement of OCAP within it.

The “Housing Stabilization Fund – Usage and Expenditure Data” section of the briefing note says it contains the “**actual** HSF usage and expenditures since its implementation” (TESS & SSHA, 2017, bolded in original). By using the word “actual” in bold, the briefing note implies that OCAP used incorrect numbers rather than acknowledging TESS’s use of multiple sets of inconsistent, incorrect, and contradictory numbers. TESS and SSHA are engaged in the practice of validating knowledge here by their use of “actual;” they undermine OCAP as a producer of

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<sup>13</sup> MFOIPPA 2018-1844 is divided into files by the name of the individual’s records, as such page numbers are expressed by whose communications they can be found in. This does not mean that the person named is the originator of the record.

knowledge with this single word. They are also doing the labour of managing failure through the occlusion of their inconsistent and inaccurate reports to City Council.

The briefing note responds at length to concerns raised in the OCAP report about CHPI funding. In *Toronto Robs From the Poor*, we claimed that the transfer of funds was distributed “contrary to provincial policy” (OCAP, 2017n, p. 7). However, the City’s position was that, because it spent more on CHPI eligible expenses than it received in CHPI funding, it could reclaim the HSF surplus. The only thing that was required of the City in this case was that it report a change in funding allocation to the province in its Investment Plan Update (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2012).

The briefing note from TESS, however, does not address many of the issues raised in the OCAP report, in addition to the data discrepancies already mentioned. There is no reference to why the people who were supposed to be responsible for the Housing Stability Allowance rent subsidy program could not answer basic questions about the program or why the City could not produce a single report from the Ministry of Finance, which was supposed to be administering the program. Nor is there a discussion about why there is no mechanism for people with disabilities to be accommodated through the policy. It simply erases these issues while appearing to address the concerns raised in the report. A city councillor or their staff would have to sit down with both documents and make sure that the briefing note addresses each point in *Toronto Robs the Poor*, which would likely be deemed unnecessary as TESS staff are already viewed as legitimate, while OCAP has a legitimacy problem and is not constructed as an authorized producer of knowledge through governmental practices.

The briefing note also depicted a fundamentally different reality with respect to the Housing Stability Allowance than OCAP did. It made the claim that the Housing Stability Allowance had helped “[m]ore than 320 clients” (p. 7). This is the claim made to the media that I raised earlier (Mathieu, 2017). According to the City’s agreement with the Ontario government, on March 1, 2017<sup>14</sup> there were supposed to be 660 clients currently receiving the allowance, with a peak of 780 in 2015 (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and City of Toronto, 2017). The cumulative total for the program (320) was less than half of what was supposed to be the current

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<sup>14</sup> This was the closest available date to the date we issued the report. This FOI request was mailed to Yogi several days after the *Now Magazine* article came out.

point-in-time total for the program. Further, the claim of helping more than 320 clients – an attempt to manage failure – exposed a significant contradiction.

Based on the data, the only way that 320 new clients could be arrived at is by including data from 2013. While Table 4.1 looks sound, if the data for 2013 is removed, there are only 328 new clients who have ever accessed the allowance and 171 people assisted in 2016. The \$3.7 million HSF surplus was authorized by City Council to create the housing allowance in October 2013 (City of Toronto, 2013b). The agreement between the Ontario government and the City demonstrates that the housing allowance wasn't signed off on until March 7, 2014 (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and City of Toronto, 2017).

**Table 4.1: Housing Stabilization Allowance Program Usage: 2013-2016**

Year	New Clients	Renewals	Total
2013	90	0	90
2014	153	86	239
2015	71	209	280
2016	14	247	261
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>		

I would like to suggest that SSHA engaged in the practice of managing failure by including 2013 housing allowance numbers from a pre-existing program to seem more successful. Knowing that the City's assertion of facts would be deemed more credible than OCAP's, it could exclude OCAP's critique and make the Housing Stabilization Allowance program appear more functional than it was.

The briefing note likely had an impact on city councillors' attitude towards OCAP. It quite possibly was the reason that Councillor Shelley Carroll did not respond to OCAP after she said she would look into the concerns raised in our report. Additionally, Councillor James Pasternak was confidentially provided with a draft copy of the briefing note on or about May 2, 2017, in order to prepare for his meeting with us (Raftis, 2017).<sup>15</sup> It is very possible that what Yogi and I took as him not understanding in our meeting was him simply not listening. Having gotten him the briefing note ahead of time, TESS had successfully excluded our critique.

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<sup>15</sup> The decision was made to send the Councillor the draft report; the actual email was not captured in the request.

The OCAP report had reverberations in other areas of SSHA as well. A reporter inquired about how much had been spent on an advertising campaign to encourage Torontonians to welcome homeless shelters in all neighbourhoods. SSHA staff sent emails discussing how to give partial information to the journalist; they wanted to downplay the actual figure. One City staff person raised the concern that “I don't think the \$87K addresses the question. She's going to figure out that we spent more on additional advertising” (Wing, 2017, p. 13). SSHA Director Mary-Anne Bédard (2017a) stated:

So, it is unfortunate that this week OCAP released its report on HDF (sic). We had no way to predict the attention it would get. But I think we are best to lead with the full truth rather than try to back-peddle later on the numbers. (p. 13)

SSHA bureaucrats may have intentionally misled the media if not for the pressure and additional scrutiny that OCAP was putting on them. This incident exposes a significant, although possibly temporary, shift in the lack of scrutiny and unaccountability to which TESS and SSHA were accustomed.

Responding to OCAP's allegations in the *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report involved multiple drafts and multiple people, phone conversations, a meeting in the Mayor's office, and over 130 pages of emails.<sup>16</sup> A lot of people and effort were involved in crafting the briefing note and the table. City staff did a lot of work to delegitimize OCAP and exclude our critique. The creation of the briefing note involved an internal process of preparing it for distribution outside of SSHA and TESS in order to assist in the external processes of validating knowledge, excluding critique, and managing failure. However, TESS and SSHA also created the table – an internal document, which, I will argue, served the primary purpose of aiding in the governmental practice of tightening the ranks.

### **Tightening the Ranks**

It is not only poor people who are ruled by ruling relations; we all are, including TESS and SSHA staff. What I will call the practice of tightening the ranks was used, I will argue, to

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<sup>16</sup> This is a likely an underestimation as, for example, while I requested the emails of Patricia Walcott containing the term “OCAP” and/or “Ontario Coalition Against Poverty,” I was supplied no email communications about this matter even though she is listed as having “prepared” the May 5, 2017 briefing note. She was included in a number of emails regarding this briefing note but I was not supplied with her communications regarding the report or the briefing note even though she clearly had them (Carbone, 2017; Morgan, 2017b).

hold the HSF policy together and uphold TESS and SSHA as experts and by constructing them as innocent. The point-by-point response to OCAP's report was a table produced by TESS and SSHA staff called, "Issues with 'The Misuse of the Housing Stabilization Fund' Report by OCAP" (TESS & SSHA, 2018; Vermeersch, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). Its stated purpose was to expand upon the briefing note. However, there is substantial evidence, from the documents obtained through FOI requests (MFOIPPA # AG 2018-01844 [Nathaniel Kennedy], 2017), that the table was not used for the briefing note. Indeed, of the 22 specific critiques addressed in OCAP's report, only three could arguably be found in the official briefing note. The first is the addition of the total number of clients (320) who have received the Housing Stability Allowance (the 2017 total, 261, is present in the original briefing note). The second and third are with respect to CHPI funds being spent following provincial guidelines. The first draft of the briefing note does not have a section about CHPI funds but subsequent drafts do (Carbone, 2017; TESS & SSHA, 2018). TESS and SSHA were clearly invested in refuting the OCAP report but they did not use this refutation for the briefing note, with the above-mentioned exceptions.

The creation of the table involved a protracted process, with multiple people and drafts involved, which allowed for those responding to OCAP's *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report to become increasingly detached from the original report. Only the subtitle of our report was used to title the table: "Issues with 'The Misuse of the Housing Stabilization Fund' Report by OCAP," erasing and sanitizing the political nature of the original title. The creation of the table strips the critique away from its context, including images and text boxes that are clearly designed to evoke emotional responses. Surrounding text, also designed to cause anger, was removed as City staff cut and pasted specific critiques from the report into the table. Page numbers from OCAP's report were indicated in the table, but it was no longer necessary to view these critiques in their original context – now all that was necessary for review was this table. While there were 22 of OCAP's critiques in the table, at least 11 were absent (see Appendix 8: "Issues with 'The Misuse of the Housing Stabilization Fund' Report by OCAP" and Rebuttal for the full table and my response as well as OCAP's missing critiques). This is a significant erasure, which includes everything from issues of data discrepancies and low funds for beds to the violation of the *Ontario Human Rights Code* for discrimination. TESS staff had now created a new document, a degree removed from the OCAP report that they and SSHA staff could engage with. Now

distanced from the original document, the table erases criticisms and contains misinformation. As more than one person prepared this table, different actors may not be aware that some of the responses contained in the table are problematic because OCAP's report had been so significantly worked over and decontextualized.

This new and sanitized table, already having erased about one-third of the critiques in OCAP's report,<sup>17</sup> became a working document for City staff. The table was functional and, no doubt, far easier for staff to re-work critiques with. While OCAP was able to take ownership over the initial framing through the *NOW Magazine* article (Acharya, 2017b), TESS and SSHA were now reworking the media coverage and report. Reading the table as a whole, the TESS/SSHA narrative is one of "relative innocence" (Chapman et al., 2013, p. 30). This is evident in the way a number of the responses to OCAP's critique are crafted. The full table and my responses are available in Appendix 8, so I will only highlight a few examples here.

TESS constructs itself as proactive and accountable without actually taking responsibility. In response to OCAP's critique that "Tracking Tool and TESS' data [are] demonstrably awed," they assert: "The staff report dated November 14, 2016... demonstrates and commits to developing and implementing an improved HSF reporting tool" (Vermeersch, 2017b). This positive spin does not acknowledge that there was a problem but says that they were already working on a better system (so OCAP had better not take credit).

Likewise, the response to OCAP's critique that people who go without their necessary HSF funds and are penalized through the retroactive rule, even when there is a delay on TESS's end, puts on a positive and proactive spin. TESS says: "In December 2016 TESS clarified a service standard for rendering eligibility decisions for HSF applications of 'within 4 business days of receiving required documentation'" (Vermeersch, 2017b). TESS says that "HSF cannot be issued until verification of circumstances" (Vermeersch, 2017c). That is to say, it is not TESS's fault if an application takes a long time, but the fault of the applicant. Here, the problem is the person on social assistance, not TESS. There is no acknowledgement that TESS ever falls outside of this window or makes mistakes that take time, sometimes months, to get resolved.

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<sup>17</sup> This isn't counting questions that may well be critiques framed differently.

TESS constructs itself as innocent in this critique because it has a policy in place – implying that this policy constructs reality.

TESS also asserts that there was simply a definitional change in “application” between reports. “Applications” now meant the sum of an applicant’s requests (i.e. moving and last month’s rent would now equal one application instead of two), which resulted in a discrepancy of 8,000 applications. In 2014, TESS stated there were 37,778 people who got the HSF in 2013; in 2015, they said 29,456 got it in 2013. TESS maintains: “The 2014 staff report failed to note the change in definition” (TESS & SSHA, 2018). This is a logical and sensible explanation; unfortunately, it is also flawed. In another FOI request, TESS provided a table of the number of HSF payments in 2013 – that is to say, the full number of eligible applications using the latter definition of “application” that TESS was referring to. This document titled “Response to FOI Request 2017-00044” states the April 17, 2014, Staff Report has a total of 41,326 applications (TESS, n.d.-b).<sup>18</sup> There is a discrepancy of 3,548 eligible applications between the report where TESS claims it uses this new definition and the one in which TESS actually uses it, – that’s 3,548 rent deposits for homeless people, beds for people sleeping on the floor, etc. While TESS appears to be straightforwardly responding to OCAP’s critique, it uses misinformation in its practice of excluding critique- including displacing and minimizing the specific issues raised.

TESS also provides a seemingly reasonable explanation for the discrepancy with the third set of data, which is only for the first few months of 2013.<sup>19</sup> TESS’s internal document maintains: “the data on HSF expenditures was for OW recipients only” (FOI #2018-01844, 2018). However, this information has never been made available to OCAP or myself as TESS claims that “[i]nitially, data collection from the HSF Tracking Tool did not allow for a distinction in the data between the OW and ODSP programs” (TESS, n.d.-b). How did this data, which was first issued in April 2013 (four months into the program), only contain OW recipients (OCAP, 2017n)?

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<sup>18</sup> This answer is particularly confusing as there was no April 17, 2014 Staff Report. There is, however, an April 2, 2014 report that was presented to the CDRC on April 17. TESS also reports there are “\$41,326” applications – the careless insertion of the \$ initially made it difficult to understand this response.

<sup>19</sup> Excluding the above-mentioned report provided through an FOI which was not publicly available.



I would argue that the explanations regarding the 2013 data discrepancies are highly questionable and demonstrate TESS' continued inconsistencies, which have never been fully or appropriately explained. However, on the surface, these explanations seem both reasonable and satisfying. It takes a great deal of time and effort, including analyzing multiple City reports and making several FOI requests, to problematize these responses. Meanwhile, TESS can work to produce itself as innocent, relative to OCAP: for instance, TESS did not include the "fact" that it was using only OW numbers or that they used different definitions between reports.

In one instance, when OCAP reports its experience with SSHA, SSHA fully negates that experience. OCAP writes: "city officials cannot say what [the] housing allowance program is called or confirm its operation" and "SSHA has no reports from the Ministry of Finance about who has received the allowance, [and] how many allowances have been issued" (OCAP, 2017n; Vermeersch, 2017b). This claim is based on an email Yogi sent to Glenn Morgan, a Director at SSHA, on March 24, 2017, which stated: "[you] didn't have immediate answers [about] what the program was called, how agencies refer people to it, and where reports of its usage could be obtained" and which is partially confirmed in an email Morgan sent to SSHA General Manager (2017a).<sup>20</sup> The internal response table says: "As provided to OCAP, the following information from the Ministry of Finance details the flow of the Housing Stability Allowance since inception..." (TESS & SSHA, 2018). The data that they are referring to was not provided until after the release of OCAP's report; nevertheless, the statement – albeit disingenuous – was true at the time the table was written. Here, the fact that the City bureaucrats responsible for administering the housing allowance could not provide basic information requested of them was flipped. City staff were reconstructed as innocent and OCAP was constructed as guilty of having information and keeping it out of the report.

With respect to the approximately \$1 million discrepancy in 2014, TESS again flips the narrative, stating that OCAP:

received a working document containing preliminary data on HSF expenditures... November and December of 2014 were greyed in because the data for those two months were estimates, they nevertheless... conclude[d] that there are systematic data collection and financial management issues within TESS. (Vermeersch, 2017b)

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<sup>20</sup> None of Morgan's communications regarding this issue can be found in his emails, contrary to the *Act*.

OCAP had requested the HSF expenditures for the years 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. We received this information through an FOI request, with no clear indication that the November and December 2014 numbers were estimates. TESS made up some very specific numbers, provided them to OCAP without clearly indicating that they were estimates, and called OCAP irresponsible for making this discrepancy public. In drafting our report, we considered the possibility that these numbers may have been estimates but thought it was much more likely that the columns were greyed because there were some minor issues with the new SAM computer system. From our perspective the numbers were too specific (e.g. 1,515 people receive \$1,193,204 for household goods) and off-based to be estimates. (OCAP, 2017n). TESS also asserts that this was “preliminary data” for 2014, even though these FOI documents were obtained in late 2016/early 2017.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, it could have been irresponsible to come to a conclusion of “systematic data collection and financial management issues within TESS” if OCAP only based that conclusion on this piece of evidence. Here, too, TESS is working to construct itself as innocent by denying its irresponsibility as the source of the data and by constructing OCAP as “irresponsible” and jumping to conclusions.

These bureaucrats do, however, acknowledge that they made mistakes. In the final version of the table, “OCAP is correct” appears twice, both in reference to relatively insignificant issues: “a typo” and a “minor variance in the numbers” (Vermeersch, 2017b). Thus, responsibility is taken when no “alternative facts” can be constructed (Conway in Meet the Press, 2017, n.p.). The act of taking responsibility is useful here because it helps answer the question: why did OCAP write this report if it was so wrong? This acknowledgement can help TESS and SSHA engage in the practice of constructing innocence. TESS made a typo and a “minor variance” and became the innocent victims of overzealous activists who don’t understand the realities of working within a climate of fiscal restraint.

The process of constructing innocence is productive in addition to closing off possibilities of guilt or implication. Here, TESS and SSHA staff engaged in intellectual and emotional labour

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<sup>21</sup> The original request for this information was made June 29, 2016. An appeal to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario was filed in order to obtain these records. The OCAP archives indicate that there was mediation between TESS and Yogi on December 6, 2016 and the documents came after that date. The exact date could not be located in the OCAP archive. The 2016 data was not provided at all with this request.

to re-establish themselves as good/innocent workers in Toronto's social services sector. Unlike the briefing note, which was created for people within the municipal government but outside of TESS and SSHA, the table was made specifically for TESS and SSHA staff. I would like to suggest that its creation would have allowed for management to reassure themselves and their staff that a thorough investigation had been done and that there was no merit to OCAP's claims.

Another aspect of the practice of tightening the ranks, I would argue, is the internal process of creating unified messaging. The table, for instance, could be used to ensure that TESS and SSHA directors were all in agreement about a unified message in response to OCAP's specific critiques. This is exemplified when TESS and SSHA staff consult with others in their department regarding *the* appropriate response to media or OCAP questions (see MFOIPPA Request # AG-2017-00350, 2017; AG-2018-01844, 2018). Composing a singular message can help narrate a collective account of "truth," to be used not only to ensure that media spokespeople do not step out of line but also to organize how staff discuss the issue with others inside and outside of their respective departments.

The creation of the briefing note is also a practice of tightening the ranks as it gave TESS and SSHA staff a process for unifying their message. In drafting the May 5, 2017 briefing note, SSHA Director Glenn Morgan objected to some of the language being used. He emailed eight TESS and SSHA high-level bureaucrats saying:

I'm not comfortable with the section that suggests the City paid for all the CHPI eligible expenses. There is overlap between the Federal HPS [Homeless Partnering Strategy] program and the CHPI program and there were some years in which HPS underspending paid for CHPI eligible expenses. It would be okay to show the increasing CHPI eligible expenses over the years but we cannot conclude that the City paid for these expenses...The briefing note implies that the City is investing in Hostels Services when in fact the opposite is true. I suggest we remove the last row of table one and be silent on this point (Morgan, 2017c, p. 88).

Morgan included the gross and net spending on CHPI eligible programs since 2014 to demonstrate his point, and then changed the draft of the briefing note using the track changes feature on his word processing program. However, Morgan's concern was ignored and the original language remained. Even while Morgan is listed as the person who prepared the briefing note for SSHA, through the practice of tightening the ranks he was forced to adopt the unified

message of TESS and SSHA staff. He signed his name to a document that has at least one section which, at best, he believed was misleading and, at worst, he believed was an outright lie.

Bureaucratic relations used the practice of tightening the ranks to hold HSF policy together. In this case, claiming innocence and producing a unified message were two aspects of this practice that TESS and SSHA implemented. Tightening the ranks is a practice primarily oriented inwards in order to focus, motivate and coordinate staff as they simultaneously implement other governing practices.

### **Direct Action Policy Work**

OCAP and our allies in the legal clinics and a few community groups continued to keep the pressure on the City throughout the spring, primarily through various forms of casework. While we had won important changes to the HSF policy – most notably the elimination of sections that discriminated against disabled people and people with kids – it was still deeply flawed.

Then, in June 2017, a TESS Director called the OCAP office and asked for Yogi. Yogi wasn't in, so I took a message: the caller was requesting a call back to see if Yogi would be available to come to an "information session" about upcoming changes to the implementation of the HSF. She followed up with an email to Yogi. We checked with our allies who had been working on the HSF, some of whom met with TESS several times a year, and none of them had heard anything about it. Yogi, along with John Clarke, me, and another member confirmed we would attend on June 28, 2017, and sent the invitation out to the ally group.

We learned through an FOI request that TESS's original plan was for a consultation, not an information session, to take place on June 15. They also intended to invite all of the organizations that attended the 2016 consultation (TESS, 2017b). It is unclear why they did not hold the planned consultation in mid-June, but what is clear is that the policy was fully designed and ready to be implemented by the time we were contacted.

There were about twenty-five people at the "Housing Stabilization Fund Information Session" and almost everyone there other than TESS staff members found out about it through

OCAP.<sup>22</sup> It was an information dump about the changes that were coming into effect on July 4, just two business days away. TESS had undertaken to City Council to “conduct a series of consultations with stakeholders” (TESS, 2016b, p. 3). At the June 28 meeting TESS admitted that not everyone who had been consulted last time was invited but said they had been doing “continuous stakeholder engagement.” I confronted TESS staff during the session:

You wouldn't give us materials in advance, the policy is going forward on July 4, that's next week and there's a long weekend in between now and then and that is outrageous. You cannot sit here and tell us that consultation is important when you have refused to do [it] – City Council approved your plan on the basis of your promise to consult and you didn't do that. And, frankly, I think your consultations are always somewhat disingenuous. We told you many of these things and many other things in November. You didn't do most of the things that we said were necessary at the time... that's despicable. So, don't sit here and tell us that you think that it's important and you value consultation. (TESS Information Session, June 28, 2017)

I was clearly angry as I spoke, my voice slightly raised.

We later obtained a new briefing note was requested by a city councillor in response to concerns we raised at the information session about the policy changes.<sup>23</sup> Through the briefing note, we learned that “continuous stakeholder engagement,” the justification for not consulting, means “existing mechanisms / options to bring concerns forward,” like appealing or going to the City Ombudsman or a TESS manager (TESS, 2017c). Therefore, according to TESS, they did not need to uphold their commitment to consult.

When OCAP attended an HSF consultation earlier, in October 2016, it also felt like a frustrating and meaningless process for me. For that consultation, TESS staff also expressed that they wanted OCAP to attend. Our email bounced and TESS staff sent several emails discussing how they would make sure we knew about the event (C. Thompson et al., 2016).

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<sup>22</sup> The TESS staff person responsible for inviting people to the meeting blamed this on having “lots of email bounce backs” so she began calling people and had “only got to a few people when people started calling me because OCAP had sent it out.” Why she would get a large number of email bounce backs from groups that TESS had worked with in the past is curious (this would mean that the email to OCAP was the one of the only that got through – strange, given that at the time we use an anarchist email service which tended to have more technical difficulties than most). At the end of the meeting a woman from a mental health organization whom we didn't know said she didn't know about the previous consultation. A TESS staff person asked if she provided her contact information and Yogi said loudly: “maybe you should give us your contact info, maybe we're supposed to send them.”

<sup>23</sup> This will be known as the July briefing note.

OACAP is deeply critical of public consultations. We view them as a way of trying to earn political legitimacy by discussing poverty issues without acting on them. Long-time OACAP member Mac Scott has called the provincial Liberal government poverty reduction consultations that OACAP picketed “a distraction” (in Kraus, 2008, n.p.). About those same consultations, John Clarke says: “this is not a government that actually cares about poor people, it is a government trying to get political capital by talking a lot about us, but doing nothing for us” (OACAP, 2008, n.p.). Concerns that consultation is used to legitimize decisions, some of which have been made already, are among the most commonly raised by those critical of government consultation processes (Rowe & Frewer, 2000).

Some of the scholarly literature supports OACAP’s critique of the consultation process. First, it has been shown that there are often restrictions on the degree of participation by community members, which confine the possibilities for a consultation process (Drake, 2002; Joiner, 2006; Kinsman, 1992; Wood, 2017). This is the practice of what Li (2007b) calls “anti-politics,” which involves the “re-posing of political questions” into technical ones (p. 279). Here, the “debate about how and what to govern,” the legitimacy of specific policies, and “the distributive effects of particular arrangements” are shutdown “by reference to expertise; encouraging citizens to engage in debate while limiting the agenda” (p. 256). Gary Kinsman describes Sudbury Coalition Against Poverty’s (SCAP) experience of the consultation process during the design of Sudbury’s equivalent of the HSF. Among other problems with the process, the practice of anti-politics is apparent. City staff tried to create the appearance of a “consensus” through the exclusion of SCAP’s critiques and, in a follow-up survey, “questions directed replies towards de-prioritizing important areas of funding” (Kinsman, forthcoming). Likewise, at the HSF consultations in Toronto TESS sets the agenda and directs the conversation; issues are limited to specific questions about narrow policy issues while broader political questions are considered entirely irrelevant. The practice of anti-politics makes HSF a technical issue to be administered by experts (in this case TESS staff), occluding the fundamental political nature of the HSF, and of all social policy.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Another critique of consultations is that they can tokenize marginalized communities (Monno & Khakee, 2012).

Arnstein (1969), in “A ladder of citizenship participation,” argues that “participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit” (p. 216). She positions information sessions and consultations on the bottom half of the “ladder,” and argues that when consultations “are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to ensure that their views will be *heeded* by the powerful” (p. 217). For Arnstein, consultations are a performance of public engagement unless the power of ruling relations is fundamentally altered. Cheeseman and Smith (2010), describing national public consultations in Australia, called them “political choreography” (p. 55).

The 2016 HSF consultation and 2017 information session, however, were a part of a larger process that OCAP was already involved in. Strategically, it made sense in this case to participate in order to say we participated. Had we known how desperate TESS was to make sure we knew about the first consultation, we would have factored that into our decision and actions. With respect to the information session, we wanted to both challenge what TESS was doing and find out what was coming into effect the next week as we had become the *de facto* community HSF experts.

Returning to the July 4, 2017 policy changes that we learned about at the Information Session, some were very positive and represented what we had been fighting for. However, there were a number of significant problems with the reassembled HSF. Some of these were flagged by OCAP and the other groups at the Information Session, while others we couldn’t identify until later. TESS did not speak to all the changes at the Information Session, possibly because they knew we would have a negative reaction. They got one anyway. While OCAP was clearly the angriest (I yelled at a Director at one point) most of the other groups expressed their upset at the new policy and the process as well. One of the sites of contention was the requirement that people move to less expensive housing. Although one OW Director said there was room for “extenuating circumstances,” another TESS representative made it clear that the HSF exists to “help people move from shelter to housing” – not to better housing. Skyrocketing rents,

advocates argued, made it nearly impossible to relocate to less expensive housing. Further, TESS refused to clearly define what “extenuating circumstances” meant.<sup>25</sup>

As many allies as possible met after the information session to discuss a strategy for moving forward. Following this, OCAP drafted a letter and policy analysis to which 21 community advocacy groups, mostly legal clinics, signed on. We sent the letter to the Mayor and city councillors on the Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC), which oversees the HSF (OCAP, 2017f).<sup>26</sup> We called for a review at the next CDRC City Council Committee meeting. Our analysis contained other serious issues with the new policy, including an unauthorized 30 percent cut to the benefit for children in temporary care, a reduction in how often the fund could be accessed for issues related to bed bugs, low and arbitrary amounts of money for furniture and moving costs (e.g. \$300 for a twin bed), and the lack of an accommodations process for disabled people, among others (OCAP, 2017f). After issuing the letter, on July 7, Yogi and I met with city councillor and CDRC member Joe Mihevc to – finally – discuss the *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report as well as the latest changes to the HSF. He provided us with the May 5, 2017 briefing note at that meeting. We raised our concerns about the management of the HSF and the housing allowance as well as the most recent policy changes. Yogi and I felt somewhat hopeful that the councillor might try to put the HSF on the next CDRC meeting agenda.

On August 2, Yogi and I, along with Vic – a Community Legal Worker from PCLS who (along with Liz from ISAC) had been holding down the legal clinic side of the HSF campaign – met with Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam’s Policy Advisor, Melissa Wong. Councillor Wong-Tam sat on the CDRC. Melissa was particularly concerned about the unauthorized cut to the HSF for children in care. Based on the briefing note, which she had with her and went through with us, TESS’s rationale is that children in care should only have a bed and bed bug encasements for it – nothing else (TESS, 2017b).

Melissa challenged TESS’ assertion that they had a capped HSF, something we had taken for granted. She informed us that if TESS went over the HSF budget, they could access the

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<sup>25</sup> “Extenuating circumstances” is still not mentioned in the publicly available HSF policy (City of Toronto, n.d.-e).

<sup>26</sup> 18 groups signed on before the letter was sent to Council and 3 added their names afterwards.



reserve funds – that is what they are there for. Realizing this made TESS’ multimillion-dollar HSF surplus significantly more egregious to us.

Another issue with the data was around moving amounts. TESS responded to our claim that moving amounts are “unjustifiably low” in the July briefing note but did not address our concern that this is “likely based on flawed data” (OCAP, 2017n). In the briefing note, TESS outlined their methodology for calculating the flat rate: they obtained quotes from vehicle rental companies and movers and conducted “a review of average costs issued to clients for moving expenses. At that time, clients were issued for actual moving costs, up to a maximum, based on quotes provided.” In examining FOI documents, however, it became clear TESS workers simply averaged the disbursement per benefit size (single/couple, family with one child, etc.) and made sure it was possible to move within that amount, based on the lowest estimate (TESS, 2017a, pp. 1–5, 15, 19, 26–28).

TESS provided rationales, although inadequate and unjust in OCAP’s view, for each of the concerns raised in our letter. They did not, however, respond to the fact that they continue to refuse to implement a disability accommodation process for people. Here, like their previous briefing note, TESS bureaucrats simply did not respond to a key criticism and engaged in the practice of excluding critique through erasure.

We left the meeting very optimistic that Councillor Wong-Tam’s Advisor, with whom we had a good working relationship, would encourage her to try to get the HSF on the agenda of the September 2017 CDRC meeting.

However, the HSF wasn’t on the agenda for that meeting. A staff person for one city councillor told me that “for some Councillors, it’s not that they don’t believe that there are discrepancies but it’s a challenge to keep up with every single thing that comes forward and to keep track of it and to push and push and push... we weren’t getting anywhere with asking those questions of [TESS] staff” (anonymous). Yogi said “the impression that one can get from that is that the councillors were unwilling to push staff any further... in spite of the fact that... the bureaucrats had blatantly disobeyed City Council’s order” (personal interview, Yogi Acharya, December 19, 2017).

Considering that City Council is responsible for overseeing TESS and the HSF and that it didn’t notice these issues for years, it makes sense that councillors on the CDRC might also want

to avoid the potential for drawing unwanted attention to themselves. Consequently, the members of the CDRC were engaged in the practice of managing their own failure in order to avoid political embarrassment. The CDRC acquiesced to TESS' practice of excluding critique, including those councillors who believed that there were problems with the program and/or how it was being reported. By not requiring TESS to report back on the HSF, the CDRC ensured that there was no public accountability mechanism to engage with the issues raised by OCAP; therefore, there was no public scrutiny of the CDRC councillors either.<sup>27</sup>

### **Aftermath**

As the HSF struggle went on, the policies that we were fighting became more detailed and difficult to put into soundbites. This was because we had won several key changes and, consequently, TESS had reassembled the HSF on more than one occasion. When OCAP was fighting the Laura Bardeau case, the message was simple: a single mom on ODSP was denied money for furniture because she had “excess income” related to her disability and got money from the government for her kids – and all of this is in a policy that is kept secret. But, as we got further into the campaign, the HSF got harder to explain. As the campaign progressed, the social relations of struggle shifted. TESS had been effective in utilizing the practice of anti-politics with the HSF so that it became an increasingly technical issue. Longtime OCAP member Wendy Forrest describes the HSF as “kind of Byzantine... it's a maze and it gets worse” (personal interview, January 8, 2018). A city councillor's staff person agrees: “since it became HSF they changed the program so many times that it becomes harder to track” (anonymous). It became increasingly obvious that we were getting into policy minutia – a place from which we were unable to sustain a campaign because technical details are difficult to organize around. The victories we had won were also demobilizing or were able to be used to facilitate demobilization.

After it became clear that City Council was unwilling to hold the bureaucrats at TESS accountable, we put the campaign on pause. If cases came up that we could use to reinvigorate the campaign we would; otherwise, it was too difficult to fight in the weeds.

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<sup>27</sup> We could have taken our report to the City's Auditor General, and we seriously contemplated doing so. However, we were also concerned that it could negatively impact the HSF as a whole. The Auditor General for the province had delivered a number of troubling reports regarding the special diet benefit for social assistance, which were used to attack both the benefit and people receiving it.

The large HSF surpluses continued – although they were not as large. While TESS made claims to OCAP and City Council that it was on track to spend its full HSF budget in 2017 (Eisler, 2017; TESS & SSHA, 2017), it had a \$2 million surplus (TESS, 2018). For the 2019 fiscal year, TESS formally recommended a budget reduction for the HSF of \$1.5 million to “\$26.500 million for HSF to more closely reflect actual expenditures” (City of Toronto, 2019a). This way, budget surpluses will be smaller so the optics will be better. TESS consistently attempts to justify its unjust application of the HSF policy on the imperative to balance need with its capped budget (TESS, 2017b; TESS & SSHA, 2017) – so it is especially distressing that TESS reduced this budget. At the same time, a comparison of the 2016 surplus, the year OCAP began its campaign, to the 2017 surplus shows that \$1.8 million more was spent on the HSF in 2017. Most of the policy changes were won in December 2016 and July 2017 (City of Toronto, 2016; TESS, 2017b). While the scale of OCAP’s impact can’t be discerned from the data, it is evident that OCAP’s work had a positive material impact for people on social assistance in Toronto.

## **Conclusion**

The Housing Stabilization Fund campaign made important gains for people on social assistance in Toronto. The elimination of the “excess income” formula that counted funds allocated for disability-related needs and children was a major victory. Getting the definition of homelessness expanded, having people establishing a residence automatically receive the maximum HSF amount, and obtaining access to the policy for people on social assistance were all significant gains. Comparing 2016, when we began the campaign, to 2017, a significant change in the surpluses is evident, with \$1.8 million more going to people on social assistance in 2017. Access to the HSF could mean the difference between becoming housed and staying homeless, between keeping one’s housing and losing it; these wins have very real and material implications for poor people in Toronto.

However, the campaign was not a clean sweep. With significant victories, there were also regressions, like the cut to the HSF for children in temporary care. Further, while OCAP was able to get the discriminatory income formula removed, it was never able to get the City to

implement a basic disability accommodation policy for the HSF. We were also unsuccessful in overturning the “non-retroactive” policy, which negatively impacts many HSF applicants.

In doing HSF casework, OCAP learned of a new way that workers were being textually coordinated. We learned that HSF workers were enforcing the HSF policy without knowing key aspects of it, due to the implementation of a computerized system to calculate eligibility. This has significant implications for workers, whose discretionary powers have been removed as part of the further intensification of neoliberal managerialism. This shift in translocal textual ruling also impacts institutional ethnographers as they contemplate the possibilities for research with computer code as the primary coordinating text; although they are increasingly implemented not only in social services but also in social agencies, health care, and the public service.

OCAP was able to move from a single case into a broader campaign by linking its two organizing arms, direct action casework and mass mobilizing, together. OCAP doesn't buy into the individual/group dichotomy that is so persistent within hegemonic western social work (Hugman, 2009). The two very different but successful casework examples discussed in this chapter, those of Laura and David, are demonstrative of how individual casework can be conceptualized as community organizing rather than separate from it. This perspective is one that could be highly beneficial for the normative social work field.<sup>28</sup>

By contrasting the cases of Laura and David with that of Sarah, I showed how the most significant defining characteristic of these cases was the meaningful threat of direct action. It was by using direct action in Laura's case that HSF funding was won – even when the demand specifically violated TESS' policy. TESS' rigid HSF policy and application of that policy became flexible once OCAP applied sufficient pressure in Laura's case. In David's case, far less pressure was needed, perhaps because of the cumulative effect of the campaign.

Drawing again on Li (2007b), TESS, and to a lesser extent SSHA, manoeuvred to validate knowledge, manage failure, and exclude critique in order to hold the HSF together. While OCAP was aware of some of this, most of these practices took place behind the scenes. I

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<sup>28</sup> Chapman and I also make this argument in *A Violent History of Benevolence* (Chapman & Withers, 2019). It is important to note that the notion of the individual as rugged and separate is a European one that has often been imposed through colonialism and is not at issue in Indigenous communities or the Global South (see, for e.g. Baskin, 2011; Hugman, 2009). I am not trying to suggest that this conceptualization is unique to OCAP.

discussed additional governmental practices of assemblage: tightening the ranks, validating knowledge, and excluding critique, in addition to those that Li (2007b) delineates. Tightening the ranks is an internal practice intended to bring those doing the governing into line. I demonstrated its implementation within TESS through the practices of constructing innocence and creating a unified message. However, there are a number of other possible ways that tightening the ranks could be manifested, including incentivizing loyalty and penalizing dissention. This governmental practice is used to ensure that government actors are as effective in their ruling as possible – as they are also being ruled. I further demonstrated how these governmental practices overlap in time and in purpose.

Unlike the shelter campaign that will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the HSF campaign was relatively small and short-lived. While we ran a small campaign, OCAP was still able to garner far more attention than we had anticipated, particularly when we released the *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report. We were also able to extract meaningful resources from the City. The HSF, however, is only a small component of Toronto's homelessness and homelessness prevention programs, all of which fall under the umbrella of "Housing First," an international homelessness approach. The bulk of the City's budget for homelessness initiatives go to other Housing First programs (e.g. SSHA 2017c); this is the subject of my next chapter. What we won in the HSF campaign may have been trivial in terms of the City's budget, but it was significant for people on social assistance in Toronto.

## Chapter 5: Housing First, Homeless People Last

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*“The noise, we hear it everywhere. Housing first! Housing first!”*  
~Beric German (2017)

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### Introduction

In 2017/2018, OCAP witnessed the greatest crisis in homelessness in the organization’s three-decade history. People couldn’t get shelter beds; the respites were full and the conditions there were terrible. One night in late September of 2017, Gaétan, Yogi and I went to the Peter Street Referral Centre to talk to people outside.<sup>1</sup> We spoke to one young Black man who was at his paid job from 8 am until 8 pm. He had been in Toronto for a month and had to sleep at Peter Street the night before because staff had nowhere to refer him to. This gentleman was on his way to Fort York overflow,<sup>2</sup> a shelter for men who have paid employment. The shelter was full, so he could go there for one night, sleep on a cot, and then come all they back to Peter Street the next day. Another Black man in his 20s was on Employment Insurance because he had sustained a back injury. Having gone to Peter Street in the morning, he was told there were no beds available. He asked to use the shower and was told it was broken. Now, at 9 pm, he was also on his way to the Fort York overflow to sleep on a cot with his injured back. We also talked to a 75-year-old white man from Newfoundland who had been staying on the upper floor of Peter Street, which was an emergency shelter, for three months. He had recently been taken to see a boarding home by a Streets to Homes worker, but he couldn’t walk up the stairs. He wanted to find something soon but seemed somewhat resigned to being stuck in the shelter indefinitely due to the lack of accessible, affordable housing.

We couldn’t see inside the Referral Centre, the windows have been frosted over ever since *NOW Magazine* ran an article about the shelters being full, which included pictures of people trying to sleep on chairs at Peter Street (Spurr, 2013a, 2013b).<sup>3</sup> We knew that the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) was making people wait a very long time – if it

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<sup>1</sup> In writing this dissertation, I learned its official name is the Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre (SHARC) but nobody calls it that – at least not homeless folks – people just call it “Peter Street.”

<sup>2</sup> This is a shelter at Fort York, not Fort York Armoury which we have called for to be opened.

<sup>3</sup> Shelter, Support and Housing Administration staff, however, claimed that the frosting of the glass following this damning article was merely coincidental (Spurr, 2013a).

was able to find a space for them at all. If there was no space for someone to go, they would have to stay at Peter Street, where there was no proper food because, as a referral centre, they never built a kitchen (personal interview, Adam Vaughan, Feb. 20, 2018).

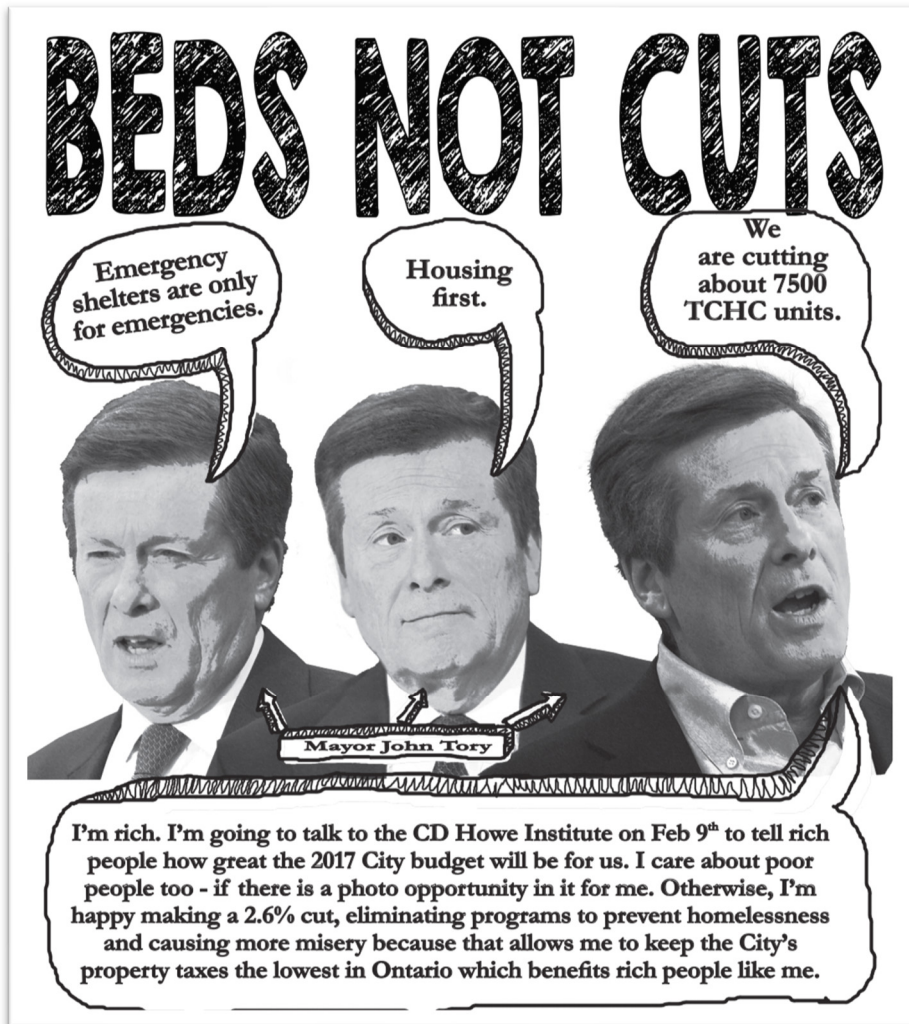
While Toronto was in the grips of a homelessness crisis, Mayor John Tory pushed through a 2.6 percent cut of the shelter system in the City budget. The same night the budget passed, Pierre Gregoire, an Innu man, sought shelter at the St. Felix Respite Centre. Staff there let him sit and gave him food but told him there was no space to sleep (Toronto City Council, 2018b). Gregoire left and was found dead from a suspected overdose in a KFC bathroom not long afterwards (Mathieu & Pagliaro, 2017; OCAP, 2017j). OCAP organized a memorial at John Tory's \$2.4 million condo three days later (OCAP, 2017j). There, Cathy Crowe, a long-time street nurse and activist, said:

Shelters turn people away. The Out of the Cold program is turning people away. And then this other level of emergency service that we got is the warming centres: two 24-hour warming centres that are really drop-ins that in the winter open up, so people can sleep in chairs and on a few mats. They have been full at capacity for two years and that led to the death of this man last week.

We had a major shortage of low-income housing and shelter beds. This coupled with the protracted opioid crisis and decreasing real values of social assistance, resulting in a rise in homelessness and homeless people being worse off.

Just a few weeks before the budget passed, OCAP held a rally outside of the C.D. Howe Institute, a pro-business think-tank (Corporate Mapping Project, n.d.). Mayor John Tory was speaking inside; OCAP called the rally "Stop Tory's Hypocrisy," in protest of the proposed shelter cuts. The rally's poster (Illustration 5.1) has three images of John Tory, each with a speech bubble. The first says: "Emergency shelters are only for emergencies." The middle bubble says: "Housing first." The final speech bubble says: "We are cutting 7,500 TCHC [Toronto Community Housing Corporation] units." One of the hypocrisies OCAP draws attention to here is the cutting of both social housing and emergency shelters, particularly in the midst of a housing crisis.

Illustration 5.1: Beds Not Cuts: Feb 9<sup>th</sup> C.D. Howe Protest



Top Two-thirds of February 9, 2017 poster. From OCAP (2017d) website. Artist unknown.

The Mayor's assertion of "Housing First" in the speech bubble on the poster wasn't OCAP sarcasm nor was it a Mayoral slogan – it was, and remains, official policy. The Mayor would say *and do* "Housing First" and yet social housing was being shuttered and there were not even enough mats on the floor in the City's shelters and respites for homeless people. As I will discuss in this chapter, along with the passage of Housing First (HF) came both the termination of City funding for survival supplies for homeless people and the criminalization of sleeping in front of City Hall. Nevertheless, this program appears progressive in contrast to what is often



called “treatment first” – the requirement that one be “housing ready” before being housed – which was in place in many jurisdictions and which I will discuss in more detail below.

Many homeless people have been housed in Toronto, primarily through a program called Streets to Homes (S2H), the City’s flagship HF program. Many people experienced this program as helpful, according to a study conducted by SSHA (Raine & Marcellin, 2007); however, as I will demonstrate, others were left abandoned in the inner suburbs without supports and/or little or no money to survive, resulting in great difficulty or even a return to homelessness.

There were two largely oppositional advocacy responses to the growing shelter and homelessness crisis in Toronto. On one hand, OCAP and a number of our allies called for more housing and, in the short term, increased shelter beds. On the other hand, the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH) embraced HF and called for more supportive housing for “chronically homeless” people under the HF model.

Before discussing the response to Toronto’s crisis and HF as it is currently implemented, I will engage with HF as a model – its history and philosophy – in order to lay the foundation for understanding it in its local and present context. Then I will argue that, even though HF has become the international best practice<sup>4</sup> and has resulted in positive individual impacts for many people, it is a neoliberal, rehabilitative model that keeps the relations that cause homelessness intact. I will demonstrate this by examining how Housing First has been implemented in Toronto, including how TAEH and SSHA have engaged in the practices of forging alignment, validating knowledge, excluding critique, and anti-politics to further the HF agenda.

### **History of Housing First: The Standard Account**

There is a standard account<sup>5</sup> of the emergence of HF, which locates its origin in New York City with the Pathways to Housing program in 1992. Its founder, Sam Tsemberis from

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<sup>4</sup> “Evidence-based practice” and its corollaries “best practices” and “evidence-based policy” are, according to Pollack and Rossiter (2010) neoliberal and “celebrat[e] the diminished role of autonomous thought and judgment with [their] prescription for uncritical obedience to the dictates of positivist pseudo-science” (p. 160). It has also been suggested they are authoritarian (Holmes et al., 2006; Pollack & Rossiter, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Chrisjohn and Young (2006) argue that there is a “standard account” of the telling of the history of Indian Residential Schools. While there may be some variations, there is an accepted general telling. Chapman and I, without negating the importance of the specificities of the work that the particular standard account of Indian Residential Schools does, argue that there is also a standard account of the history of social work (Chapman &

Pathways to housing, rejected the “treatment first” model (also sometimes known as the “continuum of care model”). Treatment first mandated homeless people to become “housing ready,” which required them to undergo case management and, commonly, treatment for substance use or mental health diagnoses before getting housing.<sup>6</sup> Tsemberis, according to the standard account, turned this model on its head by housing people without first requiring treatment. Instead, HF offers supportive housing and helps people access treatment only if and when they want it. The term “Housing First,” however, was first used in Los Angeles by Beyond Shelter (Waegemakers Schi & Rook, 2012). This term became widely adopted as it succinctly captured the practice and philosophy of the model.

In 2004, HF was implemented by the Bush administration as its official program to address “chronically homeless” which helped the model proliferate across the United States (Salmon, 2004). There are various definitions of “chronic homelessness,” which I will examine later. For now, it suffices to say that it always refers to people who have been homeless for a long time and often specifically to disabled people. HF proponents say it is effective in getting “chronically homeless” people housed, improving their health and wellbeing, and is reportedly cost-effective. Therefore, it is alluring to conservative and progressive politicians alike. While HF began as “a radical idea,” today it is “the gold standard of service delivery for... adults with psychiatric and/or substance abuse diagnoses” (Greenwood et al., 2013).<sup>7</sup>

In addition to not requiring “housing readiness,” there are other basic tenets to the HF philosophy: independent housing with individualized supports, choice in housing, recovery/harm reduction,<sup>8</sup> and “community integration” (Gaetz et al., 2013; Tsemberis, 2010; Tsemberis & Asmussen, 1999b; Tsemberis & Henwood, 2011). While these foundations are somewhat

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Withers, 2019). Here, I apply it to Housing First, as Chapman and I, and Chrisjohn and Young, argue that standard accounts do particular kinds of work in creating generalized glosses of understandings of agreed upon history.

<sup>6</sup> See Bogard (2010) and Gerstel, Bogard, McConnell, & Schwartz (1996) for discussions about some of the arbitrary, punitive and paternalistic ways the term “housing ready” is applied to people.

<sup>7</sup> For examples of the standard account, see: Anderson, 2013; Evans, Collins, & Anderson, 2016; Falvo, 2010; Gaetz, Scott, & Gulliver, 2013; Hwang, Stergiopoulos, O’Campo, & Gozdzik, 2012a; Klodawsky, 2009, 2013; Phillips, 2016; Pleace, 2016; Schwan, 2016; Tsemberis, 2010; Tsemberis & Henwood, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> “Recovery” generally refers to mental health; “harm reduction” generally refers to substance use. “Recovery” was originated by people, often psychiatric consumers/survivors, promoting alternatives to institutionalization in the psychiatric system, but has been adopted (even co-opted) by, mainstream psychiatry (Howell & Voronka, 2012).

malleable around the edges, HF proponents argue that they are essential to any program that is said to bide by its philosophy.

HF emerged in Canada, according to the standard account, in the mid-2000s.<sup>9</sup> The first large HF program was Toronto's S2H program in 2005.<sup>10</sup> This was followed by two major developments in 2008: the announcement of the federal research study *At Home/Chez Soi* and *Calgary's 10-year Plan to End Homelessness*. The federally funded *At Home/Chez Soi* research project took place in Toronto, Montreal, Moncton, Winnipeg, and Vancouver from 2009-2013 (Goering et al., 2014). Even before the final report was released, HF scholar-advocates Stephen Gaetz, Fiona Scott, and Tanya Gulliver (Gaetz et al., 2013) said it "is one of the most important developments to solidify Housing First as a paradigm-shifting approach to homelessness in Canada" (p. 4). *Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness*, created by a group of business leaders, the Calgary Alliance to End Homelessness, and others, was released with the endorsement of the Mayor of Calgary (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008). These three projects are largely held in the standard account of the emergence of Canadian HF as the primary drivers of the model's spread.

Several key HF advocates promoted and proliferated the model across Canada. Toronto City staff trained people from a number of municipalities in the S2H model (Falvo, 2010). Sam Tsemberis promoted HF broadly through his academic journal articles (Tsemberis et al., 2004; Tsemberis & Asmussen, 1999a, 1999b; Tsemberis & Eisenberg, 2000) and the news media (e.g. Evans, 2002; McCarroll, 2002; Welles, 2002).<sup>11</sup> US President George W. Bush's head of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, Philip Mangano, also toured Canada, encouraging people

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<sup>9</sup> For examples of the Canadian standard account of the emergence of housing first see: J. Evans, Collins & Anderson, 2016; Falvo, 2010; Gaetz et al., 2013; Klodawsky, 2009; Schwan, 2016. A minority of these accounts also name the eviction and rehousing of Toronto's Tent City residents and corresponding housing allowance and support pilot program in 2002 as part of the Canadian standard account (see: Falvo, 2010; Gaetz et al., 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, while S2H continues to be recognized as the first large HF program in Canada, it was not necessarily targeting "chronically homeless" people. This may be because of the significant overlap between people who are sleeping rough and "chronically homeless" people; it is, however, unclear that the City had this data in 2005 when S2H began (the first Street Needs Assessment was in 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, this flagship housing first model organization stopped paying rent in 2010 for a number of the Pathways clients (G. B. Smith, 2018). Over 1,300 eviction notices were sent to Pathways tenants (G. B. Smith, 2014). Tsemberis, in the meantime, was being paid handsomely; he made around \$300,000 in 2011, for example (G. B. Smith, 2018). This was in addition to his salary as Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, Columbia University Medical Center.

to adopt HF and a 10-year plan as a part of the package. Mangano, who longtime activist Beric German (2017) called “evangelical” in how he promoted HF, said it was “foolish and naive not to have a 10-year plan” (as quoted in Goar, 2006, p. A18). Together, these proponents helped ensure the speedy uptake of HF in multiple municipalities.

Schwan (2016) argues that Canadian homelessness advocacy can be divided into two waves. She says groups like OCAP make up the first wave. The second wave, she argues is “crucially linked” to HF and came onto the Canadian advocacy scene in the mid-2000s (p. 303). Schwan says HF:

was promoted by new advocacy groups, targeted to new audiences, and attempted to shift understandings of the nature of the problem and how to address it. This new framework positioned homelessness as an economic problem, a bureaucratic problem, a scientific problem, and an identity-based problem. (p. 303)

HF wasn’t simply a new model; its promoters were a different kind of advocate than first wave groups like OCAP that understood homelessness on very different terms. OCAP understood capitalist social relations as the cause of homelessness and poverty, while the “second generation” understood those same relations as an important part of the solution.

HF proponent and, according to Schwan’s taxonomy, second wave advocate, Nick Falvo (2016) uses the “glass half full” metaphor to describe HF advocates, who believe that “public resources for the homeless had been mismanaged in the past and that, if they were better managed going forward, we would see major reductions in homelessness (possibly without a great deal more public spending)” (n.p.). These advocates “often presen[t] as non-threatening to public officials” and are “‘insiders’ – they’re very often meeting inside the offices of elected officials and government staff” (n.p.). The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) – which he names – and by extension OCAP – are the “glass half empty” organizations.<sup>12</sup> These groups present “brutal honesty” and, are “‘outsiders’ – they’re typically outside the offices of elected officials and senior government staff” calling for big increases in government spending (n.p.).

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<sup>12</sup> The now disbanded TDRC was a homeless advocacy organization in Toronto. OCAP often worked with the group, which had more moderate tactics and was not openly anti-capitalist.

### *Challenging the Standard Account and Simplistic Progress Narrative*

Standard accounts are not necessarily untrue but they are partial and they are used to do political work (Chapman & Withers, 2019; Chrisjohn & Young, 2006). Chrisjohn and Young say part of the work of critiquing the standard account is “revealing the word-games that have continually been used to pass off ideology as fact” (p. 25). Ideology, as conceptualized by Marx and Engels (1846/1965) in *The German Ideology*, is not simply ideas and beliefs – as it is often used. For Marx and Engels, ideology describes ideas that are abstracted or uprooted from the social relations (i.e. the interactions and practices) that produce them (also see Frampton et al., 2006a).<sup>13</sup> Ideology, then, is “a useful for[m] of knowledge for ruling and managing people’s lives” (Frampton et al., 2006a, p. 32). The standard account of HF is ideological: its practices are detached from actual social relations.

Discussing the standard account of the history of social work, Chapman and I argue that those who are creating and disseminating this account are doing the work of constructing a “normative progress narrative” (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 324). Housing First emerges as a heroic policy response by “glass half-full” advocates to a rigid and deeply flawed “treatment first” model that makes “adequate stability” a precondition for housing of “treatment first” (Hwang et al., 2012). In HF, stability comes from housing, thus it is characterized as a more progressive solution. This linear progress narrative, however, is more complex and messy than is presented in the standard account.

The straightforward progress narrative of HF is also made possible by, I would argue, a very select starting point told for the standard account. HF histories begin with the treatment first model and then progress into HF. However, this history did not emerge cleanly and normatively across all locations in North America, as the Toronto history demonstrates. The standard account situates itself after the deinstitutionalization of psychiatricized people began (Ben-Moshe, 2017; Sealy & Whitehead, 2004) and proponents of neoliberalization started to roll back social welfare

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the government is not a thing but a doing – a practice of people. Nevertheless, it is through ideology that the government becomes an agent – it has agency. Dorothy Smith (1990) is deeply critical of sociology for studying the abstraction – the ideology of government, rather than the social relations of governing.

programs (Harvey, 2005; Palmer & Héroux, 2016).<sup>14</sup> HF, in response to treatment first, does look like a more compassionate program – it does look like progress. However, beginning the standard account further back, perhaps in the pre-colonial Huron-Wendat settlement that was on part of the land where Toronto now lies, HF doesn't look particularly like straightforward progress. The Huron-Wendat, it seems, didn't have economic disparity between people – let alone homelessness (Birch & Williamson, 2013). It was settler-colonialism that brought displacement and dispossession. Starting the history of HF in pre-colonial times exposes at least some of the root causes of homelessness that the HF standard account conceals, and it challenges the panacea narrative of HF proponents.

It would also appear that HF, at least its early incarnations, began in Toronto – not the United States. Toronto's Houselink, a grassroots-initiated housing program founded in 1977 for people being deinstitutionalized from psychiatric institutions (Houselink, n.d.), is the first HF program in North America (Phillips, 2016a; Waegemakers Schi & Rook, 2012). Others link it to Homes First, which opened a housing program in Toronto's Downtown Eastend in 1984 (Homes First, n.d.). Falvo (2016), for example, asserts the similarity in the names isn't coincidental: the “founders believed that people needed *homes first* before they could work on other challenges” (n.p.).

However, I would argue that Falvo's claim about the similarity in the nomenclature of Homes First and Housing First is based on his belief in HF more than historical accuracy. There was an overlap in the people working on creating Homes First and those in Toronto's Single Displaced Person's Project (SDPP), a network of agency workers, managers, and clergy people (Greene, 2014). The SDPP focused on the social relations that lead to homelessness and rejected “conventional notions of individual frailty and charitable provision that dominated homeless discourse” (Greene, 2014). In 1983, this political group began to call for housing rather than shelter beds (Greene, 2014).<sup>15</sup> The SDPP adopted the slogan “homes not hostels” (Greene,

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<sup>14</sup> Ben-Moshe (2017) convincingly challenges the commonly held belief that deinstitutionalization led to homelessness and then mass incarceration. Instead, she deconstructs “the ‘deinstitutionalization → homelessness’ nexus” and demonstrates that it is housing insecurity that is criminalized (p. 274).

<sup>15</sup> Homes First emerged out of the Fred Victor; it shifted its policy from shelter to housing in 1981 (Greene, 2014).

2014). Homes First, I would argue, was not about rehabilitation after housing as Falvo claims; rather, it was about housing as a priority over shelters.

In December 1985, Drina Joubert, a homeless woman crashing in the back of a truck behind 230 Sherbourne Street, froze to death (B. German, 2017; Greene, 2014; Palmer & Héroux, 2016). Beric German publicized the death and shortly thereafter the Affordable Housing Not Hostels Coalition (AHNHC) was formed. Non-disabled single people who were under 60 years-old were excluded from social housing at this time (Greene, 2014; Palmer & Héroux, 2016). The AHNHC fought for this group to access social housing and won 3,000 units of housing for low income non-disabled single people (B. German, 2017; Palmer & Héroux, 2016).

I would argue there is a different moral ethic between what those in 1980s Toronto were fighting for and what Falvo (2016) imagines they were fighting for. As Beric German (2017) says of the AHNHC: “We wanted housing, housing not hostels. So, we weren’t fighting for hostels, we were fighting for housing.” That is the “Housing First” that they were working for at the time. German, however, doesn’t say: “we wanted housing (not hostels) and then for people to work on their ‘challenges,’” as Falvo asserts. German does not make a rehabilitative argument for housing; he makes a housing argument for housing.<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, the standard account is that HF began in the early 1990s New York and had near miraculous results housing “chronically homeless” people because it did not require “housing readiness,” also known as “treatment first.” The model spread across the US, in part because it was adopted by the Bush administration; the model is said to make sense to both progressives and conservatives because it is compassionate, ends homelessness, and saves money. Bush’s head of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, Philip Mangano, toured Canada and the US promoting HF and 10-year plans to end homelessness. In Canada, according to the standard account, HF began in Toronto with Streets to Homes in 2005, followed by a major national study and Calgary’s 10-year plan in 2008. HF grew from there. I have troubled this standard account in several ways, first by questioning the narrative of straightforward progress that positions HF in direct opposition to treatment first rather than in relation to other

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<sup>16</sup> Today, Homes First follows a housing first model but, according to Beric German, that isn’t what was being fought for in the 1980s and early 1990s (German, 2017; personal interview, Feb. 22, 2017).

programs and ways of living that HF does not see as successful. I then discussed Toronto's history of organizing for housing and providing non-treatment first housing well before the New York HF model was created. Early Toronto housing programs' histories have been appropriated by some HF advocates. In the next section, I will discuss contemporary HF as a philosophy and a set of programs. As I said, standard accounts are not benign; the ideological work they do is used to legitimize ongoing HF programming and, as I will argue, the ongoing harm that HF causes.

### *Housing First Today*

HF has led to positive changes in some individuals' lives. Hennigan (2017), who is deeply critical of HF, argues it "is also an innovative, strangely compassionate re-focusing; it does help some of the most vulnerable individuals" (p. 1424). Proponents of the HF model point to the successes of various programs. The national At Home/Chez Soi study concluded:

**Housing First rapidly ends homelessness...** In the last six months of the study, 62 per cent of HF participants were housed all of the time, 22 per cent some of the time, and 16 per cent none of the time; whereas 31 per cent of [treatment as usual] TAU participants were housed all of the time, 23 per cent some of the time, and 46 per cent none of the time (Goering et al., 2014)

Indeed, Mayor Clugston of Medicine Hat, Alberta, says it is "the city that ended homelessness" in Canada because it implemented HF (as quoted in Lawrynuik, 2017, n.p.).

There are a number of studies that found HF successful in housing people who have been homeless for a long time and have significant psychiatric diagnoses and/or drug/alcohol addictions (Aubry et al., 2016; Blood et al., 2017; Falvo, 2010; Gaetz et al., 2013; Goering et al., 2014; Greenwood et al., 2005, 2013; Kozloff et al., 2016; Pleace, 2016; Raine & Marcellin, 2007; Tsemberis et al., 2004; Tsemberis & Asmussen, 1999b). Studies have also shown positive health outcomes for those housed through HF programs (e.g.: Buchanan et al., 2009; Raine & Marcellin, 2007). HF proponents also advocate HF because they argue it will reduce the overall costs for homelessness supports (City of Toronto, 2009a; Culhane et al., 2002; Gladwell, 2006; Goering et al., 2014; Larimer et al., 2009; Toronto City Council, 2018b).<sup>17</sup> Improvements in the

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<sup>17</sup> According to HF proponents, hospitals, shelters, and jails/prisons are "supports." While many medical and social work interventions are not experienced as supportive by the people who are being intervened upon, it is especially egregious that jails/prisons are included.



health of homeless people, coupled with their ability to access housing, are important for those people and, I would argue, for social policy as a whole.<sup>18</sup>

These findings have helped HF proponents make it the dominant – arguably, the hegemonic – approach to homelessness policy today. Federal, provincial, and municipal governments have all adopted HF as their primary guiding principle. The Government of Canada (Government of Canada, n.d.-b) and Ontario Ministry of Housing (Ministry of Housing, 2017) both require a HF approach for funding allocation to municipalities.<sup>19</sup> The dominance of HF in Toronto has, according to some advocates, created a chill on the ability to critique the model or present alternatives within Toronto’s homeless agency sector (Schwan, 2016). It also means that other kinds of programs are less likely to get funding. Consequently, Beric German describes HF this way: “It grows like a flower. It looks like a flower. But its roots are killing us and taking all the water from us” (as quoted in Schwan, 2016, p. 162).

Despite its reported successes, there are a number of criticisms of HF, including its implementation and its underlying philosophy. I will examine these critiques via Toronto’s HF programs. While HF advocates pushed for the implementation of Streets to Homes and Hostels to Homes (H2H), Toronto’s HF programs, OCAP and other homeless advocates pushed back against it and are continuing to organize against HF’s further entrenchment.

In Toronto, HF was first implemented on a large scale through the S2H program in 2005; this was also the first large HF program in Canada. One of the primary criticisms of S2H has always been that it is a mechanism, alongside gentrification, to clear the streets of unsightly homeless people and improve the free flow of capital, as I discussed in Chapter 3. Like with the private security guard at St. James Park in St. Lawrence Neighbourhood, HF programs work to cleanse the streets of homeless people. Beric German (2017) says “people, more and more, are being driven from the core – that’s what Housing First meant! It did not mean Housing, First!”

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<sup>18</sup> I want to express my deep concerns about the ethics of HF research experiments on homeless people. Specifically, what happens to people when these studies are complete? The *At Home/Chez Soi* study involved turning Vancouver’s Bosman Hotel into a supportive housing building for 100 people. When the study ended, people were left with uncertain futures. The province stepped in to keep the building open but supports were cut: from three meals a day to one, from round-the-clock medical support to once a week visits, from extra income for working at the hotel to none. As provincial then municipal funding ran out, tenants would, understandably, become very anxious about whether or not they would still have a home (Lupick, 2015; Yeung & Geselbracht, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that *all* programs must be HF programs.

HF programs are designed, according to Willse (2010), to remove homeless people who are “in the way of business ventures, wealthy residents and tourists” (p. 150-151).

Toronto’s HF programs are demonstrative of this claim; their trajectory is lock-in-step with the visibility of homelessness in Toronto. First, the City initiated S2H, which focused on people sleeping outside – a group stereotypically understood to be highly visible day and night. In 2008, SSHA (2008) “enhanced” S2H after the City Council Executive Committee requested that the City develop a “holistic approach to address panhandling that meets the concerns of business while maintaining the rights and dignities of the urban poor” (p. 4). While businesses’ and residents’ associations were consulted for this program, homeless people, frontline workers, and activists were not (SSHA, 2008). S2H was “enhanced” to include panhandlers who were homeless but staying in shelters at night. In 2016, 11 years into City-run HF programs, Toronto brought in its Hostels to Homes program, which houses “chronically homeless” people in the shelter system (Raine, 2017; SSHA, 2017b). Toronto’s HF programs clearly track with sweeping stereotypes about what kinds of homeless people are most visible, and City documents support this correlation.

The City’s focus on visibility in its HF programs works to exclude certain oppressed groups that do not experience homelessness in normative ways. This is informed by the violences that these groups are subjected to on a regular basis. Homes for Women (2013), a national campaign spearheaded by the YWCA, to end homelessness for women and girls, issued a briefing note titled: “Housing First, Women Second?” They called for an expansion of HF criteria in order to include women and girls. HF, they argue, excludes women who often face particular kinds of episodic homelessness as a result of their experiences of abuse, which does not fit the HF criteria. The HF criteria are also more likely to exclude migrants, 2SLGBTQI people, and Indigenous people, who, because of some the survival responses to racism, cisheteropatriarchy, and colonialism, result in greater invisibility.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> As discussed in the Introduction.

## Streets to Homes

When S2H was proposed, OCAP (2005) and the TDRC (2005) argued that it was an attack on downtown homeless people, in large part because the new legislation that accompanied it banned homeless people from Nathan Phillips Square,<sup>21</sup> where City Hall is located and eliminated funding for the distribution of survival supplies like sleeping bags (Toronto City Council, 2005a). The ban on sleeping in Nathan Phillips Square would displace about 100 people (Falvo, 2010; Palmer & Héroux, 2016). Bryan Palmer and Gaétan Héroux (2016) argue S2H:

in effect, funnelled the dispossessed from the highly visible streets and parks... to distant and dilapidated accommodations. Social assistance funding was drained away in exorbitant rents, leaving the poor “housed” but essentially abandoned. (p. 395-396)

Thus, people were housed but with a social cost. Brian, an OCAP member who was homeless at the time, described the plight of S2H clients this way: “They're fucked. Two months later they're back down here [in the Downtown East] cuz they got no fucking services, they got no food, they got no friends out there, they got nothing out there” (Yam et al., 2011).

Member of Parliament Adam Vaughan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (including housing) – and an HF proponent – shared some of the same critiques: there was a “failure of the Housing First strategy.” He said:

they give you a set of keys and they point you someplace in north – God knows where – and say: “you're fine.” Well, you're not if there's no transit, you're not if there's no services, you're not if your friends are all downtown, you're not if you're managing the addiction and the only place you can serve and self-medicate is downtown because that's where the drug trade is on the street. You're in a very artificial setting. (Personal interview, Feb. 20, 2018)

Vaughan says cases like these “may look like a statistical victory but it's not a sudden transformation.” However, he blames these problems on the previous federal government rather than on governments of which he has been a part: the current federal government and the Toronto municipal government, where he was formerly a city councillor.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Like with St. James Park, the language of being “accessible to all” was used as justification for banning homeless people from Nathan Phillips Square (City of Toronto, 2005, p. 21).

<sup>22</sup> Vaughan was a Toronto City Councillor for many of the early years of the City's S2H program.

There are an unknown number of people who end up homeless again or who are “housed,” essentially, with a storage unit and shower somewhere on the edge of the city. Scholars question the kinds of lives HF clients live as a result of the isolation and poverty that they are left in (Klodawsky, 2009; Mcnaughton, 2008). Hennigan (2017) says that people housed through HF are now to be “governed by the invisible hand and struggle against poverty in an apartment” (p. 1435).

S2H presents a different picture of its program. A study S2H conducted of itself found that roughly two-thirds of program participants (61 percent) experienced large improvements in their lives; only 2 percent said their lives got worse and 7 percent said they were about the same (Raine & Marcellin, 2007). Nearly two-thirds of S2H clients in the study also reported improvements in the quality (63 percent) and quantity (65 percent) of food they eat. However, 68 percent do not have enough money after rent with 66 percent report sometimes running out of money for food. A full 81 percent of people housed by S2H used food banks, an increase of 55 percent from before they were housed (Raine & Marcellin, 2007). This survey doesn’t include the 11 percent of people that S2H lost track of in roughly the same period; presumably, many of these people became homeless again (Kennelly et al., 2007).

There are concerning methodological issues with some of the above data. Problematic City data is far from rare, as other chapters in this dissertation demonstrate. With respect to the S2H study, it was problematic for workers to evaluate their own program because clients may not have felt they could be candid.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, S2H was initially a pilot program and was seeking ongoing funding at the time of the study. Consequently, the employment of the follow-up workers who asked the clients to participate in the study and possibly the researchers and recruiting staff could have been impacted if the study yielded negative results; this is a clear conflict of interest. There is also a sampling bias towards S2H clients who are housed in social and supportive housing; this could be a consequence of the convenience sampling method. The study, conducted in 2007, found 40 percent of respondents were in private market housing, 35 percent in social housing, and 25 percent in alternative/supportive housing; however, documents

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<sup>23</sup> Falvo (2010) also briefly mentions this.

### Illustration 5.2: Stop the Homeless Sweep



*OCAP Squat poster image: Mayor David Miller sweeping the streets from 590 Jarvis, an empty City owned building (Alana Svlvians, n.d., OCAP Archives).*

persuasion” seems to be Chow’s term. It wasn’t called this in City documents; it was called a ban. However, Chow points to something very important that S2H workers were doing at the time. Well before the ban came into place, outreach workers would try to get people staying in the Square to move into housing (Toronto City Council, 2005b). Chow’s use of the words “gentle persuasion” here is telling as, ultimately, the people who stay in Nathan Phillips Square have no choice but to be persuaded – if not by the “gentle” hand of social work, then by the forceful hand of police. Chapman and I examine ways that “because it’s imagined to be benevolent, instrumental violence can be narrated as gentle or nonviolent, even when it’s violent

acquired through a FOI request show that from 2005-2008 an average of 67 percent of S2H clients were in private market housing, 24 percent were in non-profit housing (e.g. social housing and co-ops), and 9 percent in supportive housing (SSHA, 2018b). While demographic information was representative, housing type may have skewed how people experienced the program. In spite of these issues, this study has been S2H’s official account of its own successes for over a decade.

Prior to the implementation of S2H, well known progressive City Councillor Olivia Chow<sup>24</sup> said of the ban on sleeping in Nathan Phillips Square: “Is it called banning? No. Is it called gentle persuasion? Yes. And that is what we need” (as quoted in Porter & Ogilvie, 2005, p. A1). “Gentle

<sup>24</sup> Chow’s husband, Jack Layton, was a well-known homeless advocate and had, by this time, written a book on homelessness (Layton, 2000), although he had moved on from municipal to federal politics.

and is experienced as oppressive” (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 196). Because Chow – along with the Mayor, S2H workers, and others – imagine that a home is better than sleeping outside, they assume to know what is right for all homeless people. They fail to acknowledge that there is a violence in believing that they know best and imposing that on someone else, especially because that “knowing best” is typically based on white middle/upper-class social mores (Chapman & Withers, 2019). Of course, some people, perhaps most people, wanted to accept the housing that S2H was offering. But for those who didn’t want to leave their neighbourhood or take the housing for some other reason, “gentle persuasion” is a deeply problematic approach for homelessness policy or any other social policy.

It would appear, too, that good intention is used as a mechanism to cast innocence on those creating and enacting HF policy. Chow’s use of “gentle persuasion” helps cast her and other progressive members of Council as innocent because their intention is to help homeless people. Colin Phillips (2016), who has a social work background and dedicates his dissertation to Olivia Chow’s husband, Jack Layton,<sup>25</sup> argues that S2H is rooted in “progressive ideas of homelessness being unacceptable” (p. 152). Phillips argues that it is only “poor planning [that] has made these policies appear regressive, and ironically forces marginalised people to transverse the City to a greater degree” (p. 152). Phillips argues that S2H remains fundamentally progressive because that is its root intention. It is a dangerous inclination within social policy and social work to be deeply invested in one’s innocence while causing harm (Chapman et al., 2013; Chapman & Withers, 2019; Rossiter, 2001). There is likely little solace for the displaced person – or for the stolen child, or the involuntarily institutionalized person – to know that the social worker meant well.<sup>26</sup>

### *Housing First and Neoliberalism*

Like other HF programs, Toronto’s HF programs’ displacement of homeless people from the street to facilitate the flow of capital is neatly aligned with a broader neoliberal project. Again, proponents of neoliberalism advocate individual responsibility, privatization, and free

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<sup>25</sup> Jack Layton was a long-time Toronto City Councillor who went on to become the leader of the federal New Democratic Party and leader of the Official Opposition. He is also the author of *Homelessness: The making and unmaking of a crisis* (Layton, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> In making this statement I am drawing attention to harms that social workers cause; not equating them.

markets (Albo, 2002; McNally, 2011; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Steger & Roy, 2010). HF creates individual solutions for social problems while minimizing public investment and public infrastructure and promoting an uninhibited free market, which can be understood as the practice of “rendering technical” (Li, 2007b, p. 265). Therefore, HF has become a part of the broader neoliberal project.

HF allows for the decoupling of homelessness from broader social relations by individualizing it. There is some attention to homelessness prevention within HF, such as the previously discussed Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF). The HSF may prevent individual emergency housing crises from resulting in homelessness in the short term, but it doesn’t address the social relations that created homelessness in the first place, including: insufficient low-income housing, low social assistance rates, inadequate tenant protections, and domestic violence. Further, by locating the site of the problem in the “chronically homeless” individual, the intervention becomes individualized. MP Adam Vaughan demonstrates the HF understanding that homelessness is not necessarily an issue of poverty when he tells me

for 80 percent of the people that experience homelessness in a given year, it's a straight-up issue of poverty...And that's why they're in-and-out one time... They see rock bottom and it's scary enough for them to climb up again – and it's tough. (Personal interview, Feb. 20, 2018)

According to Vaughan, this group doesn’t need intervention because they are made responsible, under this neoliberal approach, to fix their individual problems on their own.

What Vaughan describes for this “80 percent” is an example of the construction of a moral hazard, which is a foundational operational principle of homeless shelters (O’Flaherty, 2009). Moral hazard theory was developed in the medical insurance field; Arrow (1963) posited that if insurance was available, risk aversion needed to be incentivized. Translated onto homelessness, shelters are miserable places on purpose, so that people will “choose” not to become homeless.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Toronto exemplifies moral hazard theory through its terrible shelter conditions, as I discuss in the next chapter. Marta Russell (1998) also has an excellent discussion of the application of moral hazard theory to disabled people in relation to disability social assistance.

The 80/20 divide that Vaughn asserts likely originates from an article published in the US that created the typology of “transitional homelessness” (80 percent), “episodic homelessness” (10 percent) and “chronical homelessness” (10 percent) (Kuhn & Culhane, 1998). Chronic and episodic homelessness are often collapsed into “chronic homelessness” for simplicity’s sake, as Vaughan appears to do here. It is claimed that in Canada, the percentage of “chronically homeless” people is far lower: about 2 to 4 percent (Aubry et al., 2013a). However, in Toronto, 48 percent of the homeless population is estimated to be “chronically homeless” (City of Toronto, 2018b).

For the 20 percent (which is actually 48 percent in Toronto) of “chronically homeless” people, who according to Vaughan, largely define the majority of the permanent shelter users, it’s a “different set of equations” (personal interview, Feb. 20, 2018). One of those equations is simple math: what costs less?

The City of Toronto has whole-heartedly embraced cost-effectiveness as a line of reasoning to justify HF programs. A 2009 report authored by the Acting Deputy City Manager and the Chief Financial Officer – two of the highest-ranking City officials –dramatically illustrate the City’s buy-in to this argument. The officials focused in on a small percentage of the homeless population, “such as chronically homeless and those with severe mental illnesses, the ‘Million Dollar Murrays’ which can be found in any city” (City of Toronto, 2009a).<sup>28</sup> They said there were six individuals who “over the next ten years... may have cost the system more than \$2 million dollars [sic] in health and emergency services” (City of Toronto, 2009a).<sup>29</sup> These individuals are constructed as an excessive cost to public resources and S2H is understood as an effective way to mitigate these costs.

HF exemplifies the practice of “rendering technical,” which Li (2007b) delineates as: problem + intervention = positive result. This practice is one of “extract[ion] from the messiness of the social world” (p. 265). HF simplifies (“chronic”) homelessness and its causes via this

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<sup>28</sup> “Million Dollar Murray” refers to a Malcom Gladwell (2006) article in the New Yorker about a Nevada homeless man who was estimated to use \$100,000 a year (or \$1 million over 10 years) in supports.

<sup>29</sup> This report took a small sample (N=44) to follow up from the 2007 Streets to Homes post-occupancy study (Raine & Marcellin, 2007) which compared the self-reported last year of homelessness to the first year of housing (City of Toronto, 2009a).



practice; now a technical problem, the HF equation is: “chronic homeless” + supportive housing = cost savings, improved health outcomes (including less drug/alcohol use), and an “end” to homelessness in 10 years.<sup>30</sup> As the quote by Schwan (2016) above demonstrates, HF repositioned homelessness as a set of technical problems – economic, bureaucratic, and scientific – instead of a social problem. An economic problem can be resolved through better resource management. A “bureaucratic problem” can be resolved through better information management. A “scientific problem” can be resolved through more research. An “identity-based problem” can be resolved through individualized supports (p. 303). Now rendered technical, homelessness becomes a matter for experts to manage; thus, City leaders and HF advocates engaged in the practice of validating knowledge – of determining what knowledge and whose knowledge is legitimate, which I will examine in the next chapter.

SSHA (2017a) states that one of HF’s core principles is “individualized, client-centred supports [which] are strengths-based, trauma-informed, grounded in a harm reduction philosophy, and promote self-sufficiency” (p. 6). Through this principle, SSHA lays bare its HF programs: individual interventions intended to develop self-sufficient individuals.<sup>31</sup> The components of this principle between the two individualistic bookends, “strengths-based, trauma-informed, grounded in a harm reduction philosophy,” can each be important to people’s wellbeing if applied properly; or, they can be hollow buzzwords.

### *Housing First in Toronto’s Housing Crisis*

One of the driving forces behind the scarcity of rental units that poor people can afford in Toronto is the increasing financialization of the housing market. Financialization “refers to the way capital investment in housing increasingly disconnects housing from its social function of providing a place to live in security and dignity” (Farah, 2017, p. 3; also see Marcuse, 2016). Financialized housing markets have been encouraged by all levels of government “through legislation to create new vehicles for financial investment in real estate, and through policies to decontrol rents, deregulate tenant protections, and withdraw from social housing provision”

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<sup>30</sup> The fine print here is “chronic” and “episodic” homelessness.

<sup>31</sup> The City instils self-sufficiency in people in transitional housing by making people “pay rent to learn the skills to pay rent” (Paul Raftis, General Manager, SSHA, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

(August & Walks, 2018, pp. 124–125). When the federal government, and shortly thereafter the provincial government, withdrew from building social housing in the early and mid-1990s, the construction of low-rent apartment units virtually collapsed in Toronto (August & Walks, 2018). The expansion of the online short-term rental company Airbnb contributed to both the financialization of housing and the exclusion of long-term, local tenants from the market (Grisdale, 2019). Tenants have been significantly and negatively impacted by these trends.

Canada’s social housing stock has also suffered under decades of neoliberal policies. Canada’s stock is small in relation to other countries, falling between the US and Hungary in national rankings (OECD, 2017). Both private and public housing in Canada is increasingly commodified; this ongoing process “shrinks the spaces that hold up low-cost housing” (S. E. Cooper, 2018, p. ix).<sup>32</sup> The wait list to get into a rent-geared-to-income unit in Toronto has continued to grow; it now has over 100,000 households, an increase of about 40 percent since 2007 (City of Toronto, n.d.-g; Housing Connections, 2012). The City has also failed to keep Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) units in good repair, resulting in the plan to shutter “a unit a day in 2018” and, ultimately, “more than 10 per cent of the entire portfolio” (Pagliaro, 2017a, n.p.).<sup>33</sup> It is within this grim housing context that homeless people try to get housing and others must struggle to keep it.

It is also in this context that, HF workers are trying to house people. Rather than invest in social housing, a large portion of HF funds go towards the private market through housing allowances.<sup>34</sup> In 2017, 79 percent of S2H clients were housed in the private market, an increase of more than 10 percent over the first few years of the program (see Figure 5.1).<sup>35</sup> S2H’s use of private market units is, according to Phillips (2016), “directly and unequivocally correlated to the lack of social housing” (p. 136). While this may be the “most viable option” in the short-term, Phillips argues “underfunding and a lack of long-term planning” has turned HF, which Phillips

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<sup>32</sup> Redevelopments involving public-private partnerships, like that in Regent Park, are a prime example.

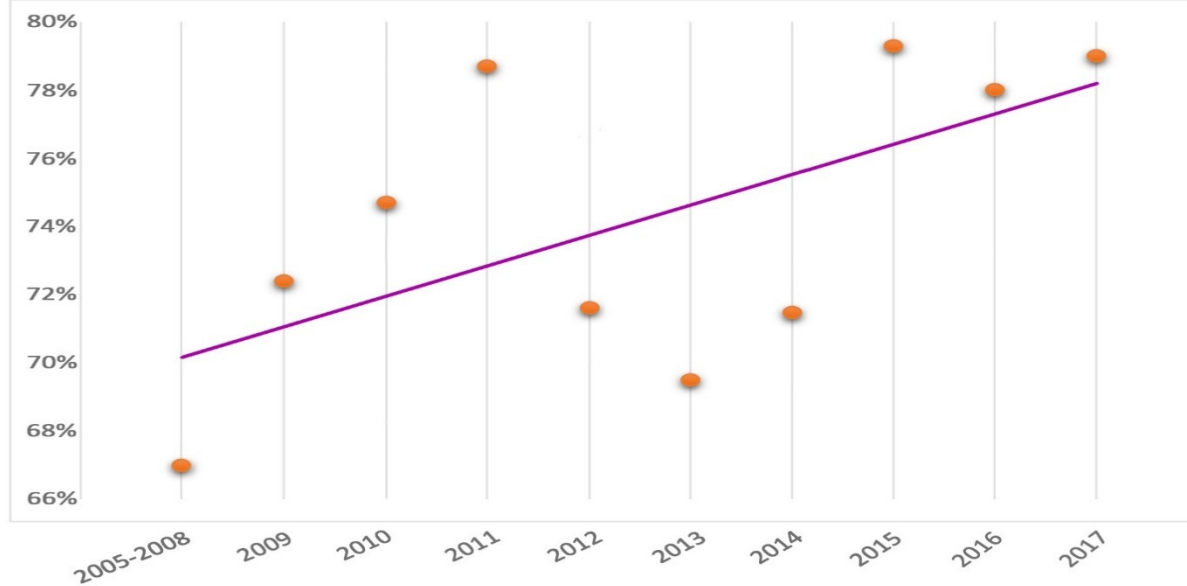
<sup>33</sup> The Federal government came forward with \$1.3 billion in 2019 to help stop the loss of housing units because of the repair backlog. TCHC President and CEO responded by saying that large-scale closures, including of entire complexes, would not reoccur as a result (McLaughlin, 2019). This, however, does not address the City’s deprioritization of social housing in its budgetary decisions.

<sup>34</sup> Some of which are likely funded through the Housing Stability Reserve Fund discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>35</sup> 2005-2008 numbers were only available as a total for the period and the average over that period (SSHA, 2018).

supports, into “an ad hoc fix” (p. 125). While private market housing placements went up, however, overall S2H housing placements have gone down (Figure 5.2) even though homelessness has been on the rise (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.1 Streets to Homes: Percentage of Private Market Use, 2005-2017**

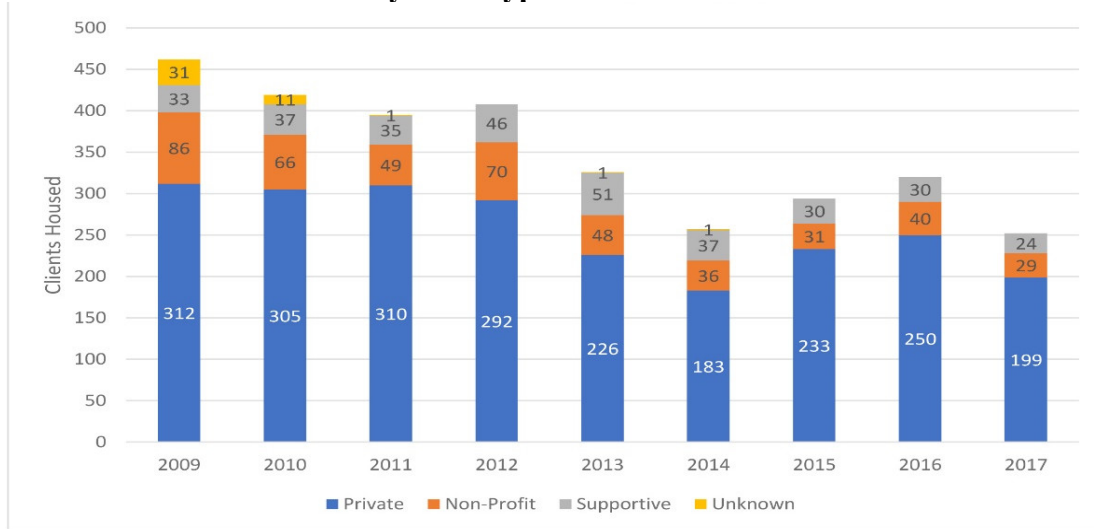


*Approximately a 10 percent increase in private market unit usage in S2H programs (linear trendline).*

People housed in private units through HF programs are often given a housing allowance because market rent is higher than their income. These allowances are positive because they are portable and there are significant gaps between social assistance rates and Toronto rents, as Figure 5.3 shows. As rents increase, the increases in social assistance do not keep up; therefore, people are left with less and less each month to survive. By 2018, someone on welfare would be \$360 over their entire monthly cheque (not simply their shelter portion, which is a mere \$384/month) if they tried to pay the average market rent (ISAC, 2018a). Someone on ODSP had \$88 a month to live off after rent, or about \$2.90 a day to cover food, transit,<sup>36</sup> and all other personal needs. For this reason, housing allowances act as an increase in welfare for a small percent of the population so they can afford housing. However, the housing allowances are still not sufficient for people to live decent lives. With a maximum \$600 monthly housing allowance

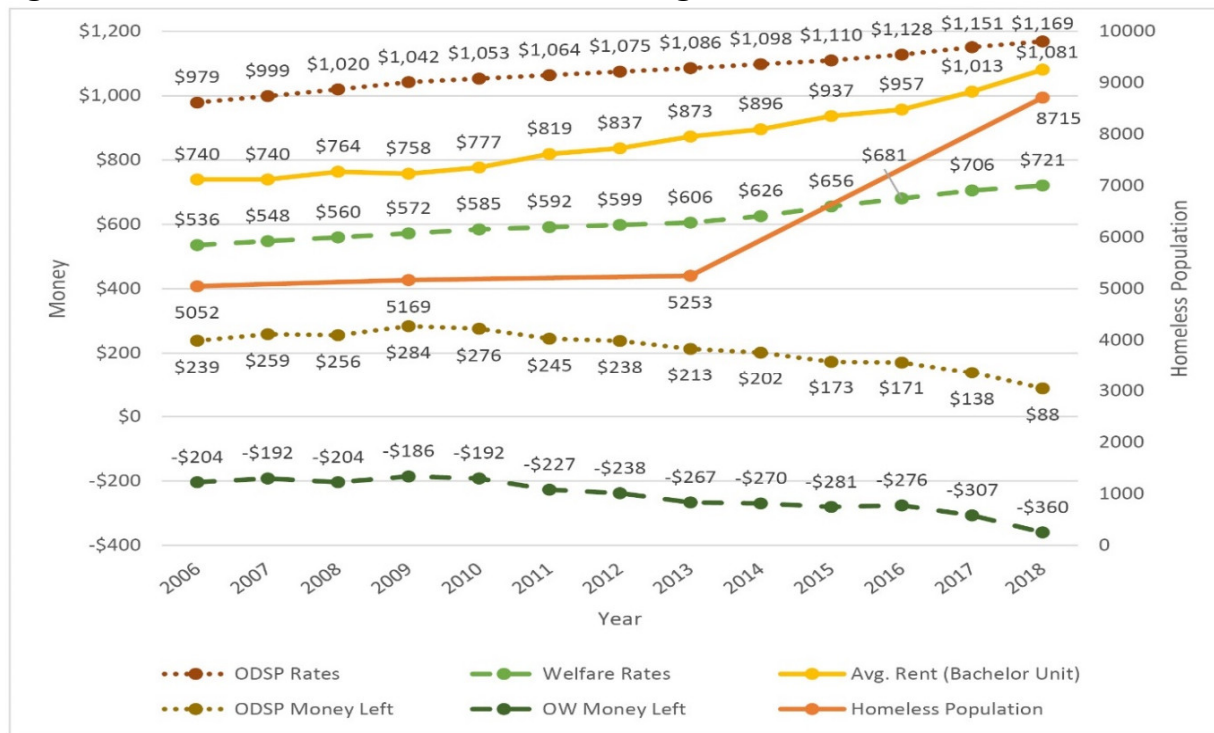
<sup>36</sup> This daily total would not cover a one-way trip a day.

**Figure 5.2: S2H Clients Housed by Unit Type**



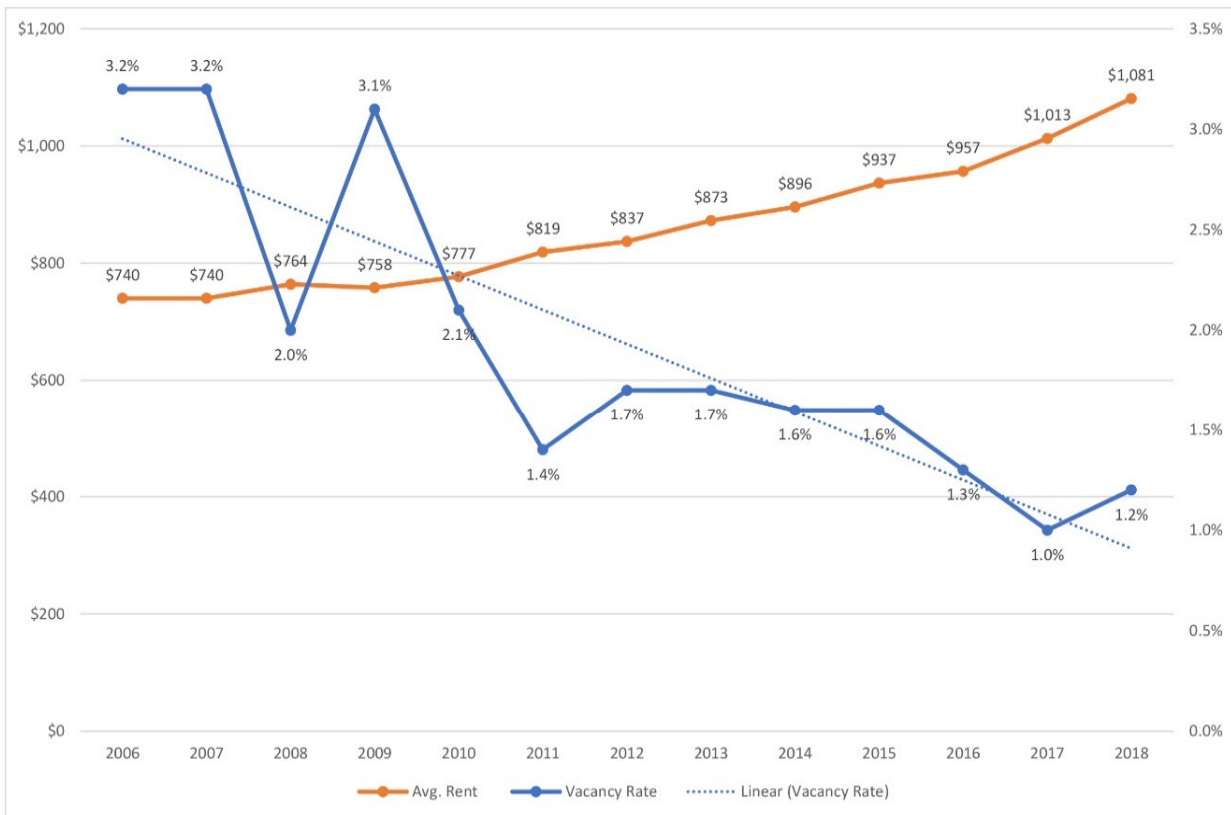
The overall number of clients S2H has housed has decreased substantially from 2009-2017; the proportion of private units, however, has increased.

**Figure 5.3: Homelessness, Income and the Housing Market in Toronto<sup>37</sup>**



<sup>37</sup> Sources: Average Rent (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, n.d.); Homeless population (City of Toronto, 2006, 2009c, 2013a, 2018b); OW & ODSP rates (Income Security Advocacy Centre, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018b).

**Figure 5.4: Toronto Rents and Vacancy Rates, 2006-2018<sup>38</sup>**



*Social assistance rates do not keep up with Toronto rents; homelessness rates dramatically increase.* through a City HF program, people on welfare or ODSP would be left with about \$8 or \$23 a day after paying rent. Considering that a single round-trip transit fare is \$6.50 (Toronto Transit Commission, n.d.), this setup creates a short trajectory back to homelessness. Sadly, “Housing First” really is that: housing before food, before transit, before anything.

OCAP is deeply critical of housing allowances as a social policy solution because they are individual interventions that do nothing to alleviate the causes of homelessness. Amid a housing crisis where there is clearly not enough low-income housing, the government is providing funds for hundreds more people to enter the market, thereby adding more competition at its bottom end. Figure 5.4 illustrates this deepening housing crisis in Toronto: rents were climbing while vacancy rates were low and getting lower. Through the lifespan of Streets to

<sup>38</sup> Sources: Vacancy rates – 2006 & 2007 (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], 2007), 2008-2018 (CMHC, 2018b); Rent: (CMHC, n.d.).

Homes, even while homelessness continued to climb, S2H workers housed fewer people. The number of S2H clients housed in one year peaked in 2009 at 462 (SSHA, 2018b).<sup>39</sup> In 2017, only 252 people were housed through S2H; this is the case even though the outdoor homeless population – the primary target of S2H – was likely higher in 2017 than in 2009 (City of Toronto, 2009b, 2018b).<sup>40</sup> Further, the evidence shows that housing allowances can, and do, have the effect of inflating the rental market, leading to higher rents (Carlson et al., 2011; Eriksen & Ross, 2015; McMillen & Singh, 2018; Susin, 2002).<sup>41</sup> Higher rents often lead to greater precarity for poor tenants, some of who will be unable to maintain their housing. OCAP wanted funds to be invested in creating more social housing, not to go towards subsidizing private landlords – including slumlords.

There may appear to be a disjuncture between neoliberalism and HF, as neoliberalism is commonly understood as the retreat from public spending and social programs. However, HF is exemplary of “roll-out neoliberalism” which is “focused on the purposeful construction and consolidation of neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations” (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 384). Roll-out neoliberalism HF proponents promote supportive housing, but this is typically couched in the neoliberal discourse of creating more self-sufficient, independent individuals. Self-sufficiency, however, excludes certain kinds of labour – like opening doors for people with a cup in hand (SSHA, 2008). The *Canadian Housing First Toolkit: The At Home/Chez Soi Experience*, which had prominent HF scholars and advocates as authors advisors and is published by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the HF think tank the Homeless Hub, says that “creating job opportunities for participants... has been fundamental to Housing First implementation” (Polvere et al., 2014, p. 115). The *Toolkit*, which is written specifically about people with mental health issues, also says people:

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<sup>39</sup> This includes the 31 people listed as “unknown original housing type” even though they are listed below the total.

<sup>40</sup> There were over 100 more people sleeping rough in 2018 than 2009 (City of Toronto, 2009b, 2018b).

<sup>41</sup> At one point during my field research, John, Yogi and I met with two of the experts who were part of creating *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change*. Their goal was to get OCAP to accept their report, which called for a 15 percent increase in ODSP and a 22 percent increase in OW over several years (as compared to the 60 percent OCAP was calling for). The report called for the creation of the Ontario Housing Benefit – a housing allowance for all low-income Ontarians who had a gap between their actual and affordable rents. They told us that this wouldn’t have an impact on the market. While we believed that they were sincere in what they were saying, this struck us as preposterous. Later, all the data I could find contradicted their position.

will be in different stages of recovery, and experience different challenges throughout the implementation of Housing First programs. Project teams may be working with some participants who are facing substantive challenges with regards to maintaining stable housing and are therefore more focused on meeting their basic needs, while other participants may be moving toward employment and beginning to disengage from the process of requiring continued assistance. (p. 114)

Here, a clear trajectory is created for people from wherever their starting point is towards employment and disengagement – in other words, neoliberal self-sufficiency.<sup>42</sup>

HF proponents have attempted to reduce homelessness to individual issues to be addressed through expertise. A number of mathematical equations have been used to promote HF within neoliberal frameworks, including cost savings and statistical analyses. However, there is some simple math that does not add up. If the neoliberal HF belief system is correct and the problem with “chronic homelessness” is rooted in the individual, which is where the intervention should be directed, why does there appear to be a correlation between the lack of affordable housing and the increase of “chronically homeless” people? Further, why is there such a profound discrepancy between Toronto’s percentage of “chronically homeless” people (48 percent) and the estimated national average (2-4 percent) (Aubry et al., 2013b; City of Toronto, 2018b)? I submit that these numbers point to the line of fault between the ideology of HF and the reality of homelessness. Social relations cause homelessness and those same social relations will not end homelessness, as the proponents of HF claim. HF programs in Toronto are neoliberal programs that limit interventions to a specific group of homeless people: the “chronically homeless,” who are understood to be both the most visible and costly. Consequently, HF policies have been enacted by City staff to displace homeless people from the downtown core and reconstruct them as self-sufficient neoliberal actors. By rendering homelessness a technical problem, HF proponents create a mirage in which homelessness is not caused by unjust social relations but rather by individual problems requiring individual solutions that can be resolved within the neoliberal policy frameworks of ruling relations. This is one of the fundamental falsehoods of HF.

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<sup>42</sup> While the trajectory is *towards* neoliberal self-sufficiency, many people do not achieve this given the material and social realities of their lives.

## **Housing First: Rehabilitation and Harm Reduction**

Because HF attempts to turn the homeless subject into an economically productive actor, it is a rehabilitative program. There is literature that demonstrates that homelessness has been pathologized (Curry, 2016); this is not, however, the site from which HF rehabilitation begins. The additional layer of pathologization that HF advocates have created and then intervene upon is “*chronic* homelessness.”<sup>43</sup> At the federal and provincial levels, “chronic homelessness” requires homelessness for at least six months and involves “individuals, often with disabling conditions” (Government of Canada, n.d.-a; Ministry of Housing, 2017).<sup>44</sup> MP Adam Vaughan told Toronto City Council that “chronic homelessness” is a health (read: disability) issue. He said homelessness is:

a function of poverty but also a reality of the medical failure – the failure of the healthcare system. Brain injury, drug addiction, mental health issues, developmental disabilities that go undiagnosed are the four leading causes, medically, of this public health emergency and the way to respond to it is to respond to it as a health care crisis as much as a housing crisis. (in Toronto City Council, 2019)

While Vaughan says, “you also need to understand which forms of poverty are driving who into the streets,” he emphasizes the need to understand “chronic homelessness” “from a medical perspective” (personal interview, Feb. 20, 2018). At the federal level, then, disability and chronic homelessness are not always co-occurring, but they are so often that the solution to chronic homelessness as a medical intervention or a medical intervention coupled with a social intervention.<sup>45</sup>

Pathologization is not a benign process. The medical model of disability is the dominant paradigm in which disability is understood (Withers, 2012). By pathologizing homeless people through the construction and perpetuation of the term, HF brings “chronic homelessness” into the

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<sup>43</sup> While some dictionaries have a definition of “chronic” that relates to length of time in addition to illness related definitions, Chapman (2010) says that “whatever dictionaries say,” some words always have a disability connotation similar to how “it would be impossible for me to say ‘gay’ and have it only signify ‘happy’” (n.p.).

<sup>44</sup> The Canadian government removed this overt reference to disability in 2019 but it was in place for the period that I am writing about. This is also the definition that the TAEH (n.d.-d) continues to use.

<sup>45</sup> The City of Toronto defines people as “chronically homeless” when they have been in the shelter system or sleeping rough for more than one year (Raine, 2017) while the Ontario and federal government use six months for their definition (Government of Canada, n.d.-a; Ministry of Housing, 2017).



medical model.<sup>46</sup> In the medical model, the experts about disabled people’s lives are not disabled (and “chronically homeless” people) people themselves; rather they are healthcare practitioners – including social workers and social service workers. This is evident in the healing power of domination and imagined moral superiority (Chapman & Withers, 2019).

The construction of homelessness – and particularly chronic homelessness – as a disability isn’t benign. Amster (2008) argues that the ubiquity of “the disease image” associated to homeless people serves a dual purpose. It is used at once “to empower officials and merchants to assume the mantle of speaking for the ‘health and safety of the community’ in devising and implementing schemes to remove the perceived threat” and “to disempower the homeless themselves from having effective domains of self-presentation and resistance” (p. 84).

An example of this is the use of “choice” in the discourse deployed by HF proponents. While “choice in housing” is a key principle in HF, some homeless people do not choose to become S2H clients. If a homeless person encounters an S2H worker three times, they automatically become a client (City of Toronto, 2009a) – administratively categorized and textually classified in order to be coordinated by ruling relations. In the spirit of social work’s violent benevolence, this is imagined as being for their own good (Chapman & Withers, 2019).

One of HF’s foundational tenets is “harm reduction.” There are various definitions for harm reduction; in short, it is both the theory and practice of mitigating the harm associated with drug use (Harm Reduction Coalition, n.d.; Mancini & Linhorst, 2010).<sup>47</sup> The term emerged out of the illegal direct action tactics by activists who distributed clean syringes to drug users in San Francisco in the 1980s (C. B. R. Smith, 2012). The Drug Policy Alliance asserts that “the success of a harm reduction strategy is measured by the change in rates of death, disease, crime and suffering” (quoted in Toronto Harm Reduction Taskforce, 2003, p. 8).

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<sup>46</sup> Of course, treatment first models are also pathologizing.

<sup>47</sup> Tsembris, Gulcur and Nakae (2004) apply harm reduction not only to drug “abuse” (including alcohol) but also to “psychiatric symptoms or crises” (p. 652). In a superficial scan of the literature and based on my knowledge of harm reduction through my work in OCAP, harm reduction for “psychiatric symptoms or crises” is not how “harm reduction” is used elsewhere. Some psychiatric survivors/consumers discuss harm reduction in relation to psychiatric medication, but not in relation to symptoms (W. Hall, 2012). Harm reduction is also sometimes discussed in relation to sex work (i.e. provision of safer sex implements and education, etc.) (Rekart, 2005; Sistering, n.d.). The framing of harm reduction for HF in these terms is particularly significant because Tsembris is generally considered the founder of HF.

As long as I have been in OCAP, it has been a non-judgmental space for people who use drugs and has supported harm reduction. OCAP has also defended the rights of substance users against the police and the City for years, including organizing against policing initiatives that specifically targeted drug users (Da Silva, 2014; *The Globe and Mail & Canadian Press*, 1999). OCAP supported the Moss Park Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) – a makeshift safer injection and smoking space in a tent in the Downtown Eastend park that began in August 2017 – from its inception. Street nurse and OCAP member Jessica Hales, who worked at the OPS regularly, thought of it as “a broad extension of OCAP work” (personal interview, Feb. 3, 2018).

It has been argued, however, that harm reduction has been depoliticized and institutionalized as it has been legitimized by and adopted as public health policy (C. B. R. Smith, 2012). Most harm reduction work doesn’t look like Toronto’s direct action OPS. In my experience, even the few health organizations that continue to do harm reduction advocacy can be cautious about it. Further, these healthcare organizations’ focus is on individual medical care. Smith (2016) argues that harm reduction is now a “politically sanitized, ‘disease model’ – driven public health policy” (p. 211). The radical roots of harm reduction have often been extricated from its contemporary practice except in places like the Toronto OPS and amongst communities of drug users who are committed to the care and protection of one another.<sup>48</sup>

However, harm reduction, as it has been applied by HF practitioners and espoused by its proponents, hasn’t simply moved away from its radical origins. New approaches to harm reduction have emerged which, in many ways, would be unrecognizable to its originators. The HF harm reduction model works, rather, to rehabilitate homeless drug users. Taking the *Canadian Housing First Toolkit* as an example, on one hand it says: “The aim of harm reduction is to reduce both the risk and effects associated with substance abuse and addiction, without requiring abstinence as a condition for maintaining housing” (Polvere et al., 2014). On the other hand, it says that when someone “chooses not to engage in treatment, staff is encouraged to hone their skills in harm reduction motivational interviewing, and work with the participant in learning

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<sup>48</sup> Toronto’s Crack Users’ Project (2007), and Vancouver’s Insite – Canada’s first OPS (PHS Community Services Society, n.d.) are examples of these. Also, I would argue, are the OPSs that have opened in response to the overdose crisis and initiated by or in conjunction with those directly and immediately affected by it.

alternative strategies for illness management” (p. 117). Here, the disease model of drug use is adopted, and treatment is framed as the ideal choice. While “harm reduction motivational interviewing” is undefined in the manual, the basic principle of motivational interviewing is that the desire for behaviour change is found intrinsically (McKenzie et al., 2018; Rollnick & Miller, 1995). Embedded in these instructions, therefore, is the assumption that a behaviour change is needed. It may be up to the drug user to determine what the behaviour change is, but rooted in HF harm reduction is the idea that there is something problematic about individual drug user’s behaviours and that those behaviours need to change.

Consequently, Hennigan (2017), writing about how harm reduction has been taken up by HF programs in the US, says that harm reduction is “the policy of dissuading rather than prohibiting drug and alcohol use” (p. 1425). Rightly, Hennigan says this “is, in itself, not completely ‘anti-moralistic’” because it discourages people from doing drugs (p. 1425). I will call harm reduction as it is taken up by HF “prescriptive harm reduction” (PHR).<sup>49</sup>

Prescriptive harm reduction is evident in the *Canadian Housing First Toolkit*, which establishes a clear goal: employment. The *Toolkit* says that people will be “in different stages of recovery, and experience different challenges” (p. 114). While there is space in the model to “meet people where they are at” (p. 114), there is still a linear trajectory towards employment (see Figure 5.5):

Project teams may be working with some participants who are facing substantive challenges with regards to maintaining stable housing and are therefore more focused on meeting their basic needs, while other participants may be moving toward employment and beginning to disengage from the process of requiring continued assistance. (p. 114)

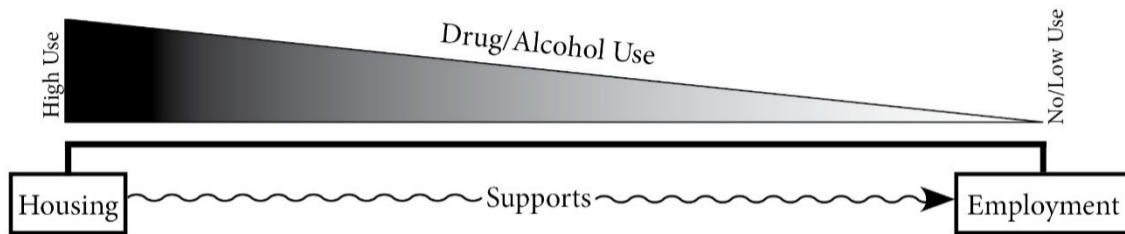
HF philosophy, policy, and programs are, at least in part, about rehabilitating the unproductive homeless body to become productive within neoliberal relations. To be clear, the fact that some people may want paid work is not problematic. What is problematic is that the program strives, at least in part, to rehabilitate people so they can participate in the capitalist economy as workers.

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<sup>49</sup> I am using this term to engage with the harm reduction model(s) put forward by housing first proponents and don’t want my use of the term prescriptive harm reduction to conceal my unease with using the term harm reduction at all in this context.

Further, this social intervention is economically justifiable not only because it is cost-effective, as HF advocates argue, but also because it aims to construct a productive and self-sufficient body by weaning it off social supports.

**Figure 5.5: Prescriptive Harm Reduction Trajectory**



*The ideology of the PHR HF trajectory: when someone is housed, their high drug and/or alcohol use declines with the help of supports to no or low use and the individual can then be employed.*

Further, HF’s housing models can mean that drug users are permitted while drug use is not; this is, I would argue, another departure from an actual harm reduction model.<sup>50</sup> In Toronto, the City acknowledges that both City-run and City-funded housing programs don’t necessarily meet drug users’ needs (SSHA, 2017b). The Toronto Community Housing Corporation (2018) has adopted a policy not to evict people for drug use or simple possession. However, TCHC has also violated its own policy. In 2016, the TCHC pursued an eviction against a tenant who was arrested for about \$70 of crystal meth.<sup>51</sup> They did not succeed in evicting him but sought and won a non-possession of drugs on the premises order (*TSL-63145-15 (Re)*, 2016). Forced abstinence is not harm reduction. TCHC has also sought eviction against someone for having frequent guests who use drugs in the unit (*TSL-68556-15 (Re)*, 2016); this could also discourage safer drug use. Toronto Community Housing, then, has restrictions and limitations on who gets and what counts as harm reduction for HF clients and other residents.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> In the United States, many projects receive some funding from Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which prohibits drug use on any HUD funded premises (Willse, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> He was also charged with drug trafficking, which may have motivated the TCHC eviction procedures, but those charges were dropped by police.

<sup>52</sup> Landlord Tenant Board cases are rarely reported. While these two cases are from 2016, they are significant because the tenants would not fall under the Harm Reduction Policy even though their evictions are for simple possession or drug use – and the associated behaviours, like using with other people which can save lives.

The City's acknowledged inadequacy coupled with its occasional breach of its own policies means while there may be some supports and protections in Toronto's public housing for HF clients who use drugs, they are clearly inadequate. With respect to private market housing, where over three-quarters of City HF clients are housed (SSHA, 2018), tenants can be rapidly evicted for drug use/possession. The *Residential Tenancies Act* permits eviction within 20 days for someone who possesses an illegal substance (2006, s. 61(1)). Further, many HF support workers ensure that tenants are aware of their legal responsibilities under the *Act* (see TAEH, 2018b); this would, presumably, include the illegality of using drugs in the unit. The two primary sites of placement for Toronto's HF clients: TCHC and the private market, then, result in many drug users remaining precariously housed as tenants because they use drugs.

I would argue, therefore, that HF's claims to begin a harm reduction program are flimsy, as there are no meaningful harm reduction relations with and for HF clients. I couldn't find evidence in SSHA, TCHC, nor City literature that HF programs are working to embed any kind of harm reduction protections in the landlord-tenant relationship for HF clients.<sup>53</sup> Even if a lease guaranteed a tenant would not be evicted for drug use, however, Ontario's *Residential Tenancies Act* is applicable "despite any agreement or waiver to the contrary" (s. 3(1)). I was able to locate one Streets to Homes worker saying that sometimes they worked on "matching the client's lifestyle and the kind of behaviour you can expect from a client to a building and a neighbour situation and a landlord situation that's going to be able to tolerate that" (as quoted in Phillips, 2016). This same worker said sometimes they try to match clients with "a 'slumlord' because some clients, you know they're going to be a mess... so you don't want to move them into a place that's too nice" (p. 94). Working to get a client into a building with a slumlord who is less likely to evict someone for drug use because that landlord is also less likely to do basic repairs may be a work-around of existing tenancy laws that target specific populations – but it is not, I would argue, an appropriate solution for a City housing program.

While SSHA has adopted a harm reduction framework, it continues to place the blame for homelessness, inadequate housing, and shelter bans on drug users themselves. SSHA (2017a)

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<sup>53</sup> While SSHA (2017a) has developed a harm reduction framework for the shelter system, its framework for the rest of its programs remains incomplete.

says: “substance use continues to result in barriers to people accessing and maintaining safe, affordable housing in Toronto” (p. 1) and acknowledges “stigma [and] discrimination,” but only in conjunction with “the isolation of people who use substances” and in relation to how this has “impeded important connections and relationships with service providers who play a crucial role in facilitating access to housing” (p. ii). Individualized access to social services workers is emphasized by SSHA’s HF approach. While the lack of affordable housing and inadequate income distribution are acknowledged, SSHA downplays the inadequacy of the housing supply and social relations, focusing responsibility on individual substance users instead.<sup>54</sup>

Housing First, through its prescriptive harm reduction interventions, works to rehabilitate homeless people so they can become responsible neoliberal subjects. The construction of “chronic homelessness” allows first for the pathologization of and then for the targeting of a subset of homeless people who are compelled to participate in rehabilitative interventions through HF. Rooted in the healing power of domination and imagined superiority, rehabilitation may have positive benefits for some people; regardless of these benefits, however, it is important to attend to the inherent violences in prescriptive harm reduction.

HF proponents and practitioners have repositioned the once radical harm reduction project to become a prescriptive harm reduction project. Along with the HF project as a whole, PHR has been mobilized by the City and social welfare agencies to rehabilitate HF clients, placing them on a trajectory towards employability and self-sufficiency. As a rehabilitative project, HF endeavours to create better neoliberal subjects.

### **First Steps for the Pre-Housed**

In early 2017, the City began discussing the “First Step Housing and Services” initiative which emerged out of a report by City-commissioned consultant Bruce Davis’ (2017). Davis proposed renaming shelters to help reduce their stigma. The City is still in this process, but the name Davis proposed as a placeholder, and adopted by SSHA in the interim, is “First Step

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<sup>54</sup> SSHA harm reduction model exclusively views the role of current and former drug users as consultative for “development and evaluation” (2017). Conversely, in grassroots harm reduction programs in Toronto (some of which were started by drug users) current and former drug users are part of the entire process, including service delivery (Balian & White, 2010; Crack Users Project, 2007; Norman et al., 2008; Toronto Community Hep C Program, n.d.; Toronto Harm Reduction Taskforce, 2003).

Housing and Services.” Davis argues that this positions shelters as “part of a system of supports, or a continuum of housing” (p. 9). Shelters would no longer be understood as “a dead-end;” rather, they would be understood as a place for “residents to recover and map out their next steps” (p. 9). Part of the logic behind the renaming is rooted in the argument that “the word ‘shelter’ has itself become pejorative” so “changing the conversation” would make it easier to find sites for shelters (p. 9). This name would also “convey a more positive, hopeful journey” for individual homeless people (p. 10). Davis (2017) also called for a revamp of the shelter model, saying the Toronto public supported smaller shelters of 60-90 people.<sup>55</sup>

When the report first came out, people in OCAP were angry. John Clarke said he thought the City was going to create “homeless hubs”<sup>56</sup> in the middle of the suburbs where people had nowhere to go but all of the services they needed so “they never have to leave” (personal conversation, Jan. 22, 2018). While the report didn’t say that it would drop people in the middle of nowhere, we did have strong grounds to believe this based on our experience with S2H and the moratorium on new shelters opening in City wards with more than 500 shelter beds (TCC, 2003). Yogi Acharya described the current shelter climate:

When new shelters are added to replace ones that are closed down [in the downtown core], they are being opened away from the downtown core. Abandoned in the suburbs, without access to the critical support services (e.g. food banks, health centres, soup kitchens, etc.), and with prohibitively expensive transit costs, the homeless are simply expected to vanish. (2017a, n.p.)

The new shelter design would have supports built in, but people would still be displaced from their neighbourhoods and from the people – like their friends, family, healthcare providers, and social workers – who they have long established relationships with.

Davis (2017) says that he isn’t “trying to cynically rebrand homeless shelters” through the proposals in his report (p. 9). Nevertheless, Cathy Crowe calls the plan an “incredibly stupid

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<sup>55</sup> This report often used phrases like “we heard” followed by general conclusions about how something should be based on what was heard in a consultation. However, only rarely did the report contain the number of people who actually provided a specific response at a consultation. In response to the size of shelters, Davis says no one chose 30 beds and one person chose 120 beds, and the “consensus was 60 beds” but does not provide the number of people who chose this. Did everyone choose this over the other option of 90? If not, how many did? (p. 18).

<sup>56</sup> Perhaps John did this intentionally – I only catch the pun in the name as I write this dissertation: Homeless Hub was, at the time, the name of the prominent research group on homelessness, now called the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, which promotes HF.

but manipulative diversion at this time” because it draws attention away from the very real crises inside of the shelter system, including overcrowding and poor conditions (personal interview, Feb. 27, 2018).

Further, the new plan individualizes homelessness and blames homeless people for their homelessness – inline with the neoliberalism of HF. Davis (2017) says: “This is not about a capital ‘H’ homeless problem” (p. 7). Rather, it is about dealing with people “who are unable to manage in traditional accommodation (apartment, rooming house, house)” (p. 9-10). For Davis, homelessness isn’t about high rents or inadequate incomes – including desperately low social assistance rates – or the social relations of oppression and exploitation that lead to dispossession; it is about the individual failings of specific people to “manage” their housing.

Yogi, John, and I talked in the office about the new plan to rename the shelters and the push that City Councillor Paula Fletcher was doing in the media for it. We discussed how outrageous it is and joked about the proposed new name “first step housing;” someone said that homeless people will be renamed soon too: they will be called “pre-housed people.”

People who support HF, however, already use different language than people in OCAP to describe homeless people. HF advocates use “people experiencing homelessness” (Toronto City Council, 2018b; Gaetz, Dej, et al., 2016; Polvere et al., 2014b) while OCAP members tend to use “homeless people,” as I have throughout this dissertation. Alicia Albl (n.d.), a Housing Advisor for an HF agency, explains the logic behind the language shift: “This puts the person first and focuses on a situation that a person is experiencing, removing homelessness as a stigmatized identity” (n.p.). In fact, Albl lists this as the number one thing “YOU” can do to “help END homelessness” (n.p.).<sup>57</sup> This language shift is a relatively new one, taking place around 2014/2015.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The others are “saying ‘hi,’” “prepare care packages,” “volunteer your time at soup kitchens, food banks or local shelters,” “consider donating funds to charities... [like] Hockey Helps the Homelessness [etc.],” and “become an advocate” – which is only defined as “[e]ducate[ing] yourself, your family and your community about the issue of homelessness and the factors that can lead to homelessness” (Albl, n.d., n.p.). That is to say, becoming an advocate doesn’t include advocating. All of these together make three things clear: ending homelessness is not about giving money to homeless people, it is not about housing, and it is not about addressing root causes.

<sup>58</sup> For example, *The State of Homelessness in Canada: 2014*, written by some of Canada’s most prominent HF advocates, uses the term “homeless people” (Gaetz et al., 2014); but, the next time the publication was released,



“Person-first language” emerged out of the disability community (Withers, 2012) and has been applied by HF advocates to the homeless community (Rich, 2017). There are strong critiques of person-first language amongst disabled activists, me included. In *Disability Politics and Theory*, I argue that person-first language is individualizing and does not address the social relations that construct disability (Withers, 2012). The same line of argument can be applied to homeless people. I would also argue that the application of person-first language for homeless people, like with disabled people (Oliver, 1990; Withers, 2012), largely comes from people acting *on behalf of* homeless people. The professional class of homeless advocates consider this shift as a necessary one<sup>59</sup> – but in my years with OCAP I have never heard a homeless person challenge the use of this term.

The differences in language usage between TAEH and OCAP both originates from and is reflective of the opposing worldviews of the two groups. As a liberal organization, TAEH focuses the site of the problem and of change on the individual: homeless is an individual experience that requires individual intervention. As a radical anti-capitalist organization, OCAP’s language focuses on the social relations that create and material realities of poverty, colonialism, racism, and homelessness. This language usage opens the window into these opposing worldviews: the mostly shiny understanding of Canadian social relations perceived by the liberal worldview and the mostly shitty one for poor people understood by OCAP.

## **Part II: The Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness**

As I have already discussed, TAEH is the civil society group driving HF in Toronto. In this section I will argue that, in order to advance its HF principles, TAEH has engaged in the practice of forging alignment with the City and that the two have participated in the practices of

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2016, the language had shifted to “people experiencing homelessness” throughout (Gaetz, Dej, et al., 2016).

Further, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the federal organization that promoted HF internationally, also seems to have adopted it in late 2014/2015 (see: Doherty, 2015; Duchovany, 2014).

<sup>59</sup> As further evidence of the professionalization of this class of homeless advocates, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness – a group associated with TAEH – has established a Training & Technical Assistance branch. “Are you looking for training and technical assistance that will help you end homelessness?” They ask. “We can provide high quality affordable training and technical assistance on a wide range of topics” (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, n.d., n.p.).

validating knowledge and anti-politics. Together, the City and TAEH have worked to delegitimize and undermine critiques of HF, OCAP, and campaigns for increased shelter beds.

TAEH is one of many “Alliances to End Homelessness,” all united by the HF philosophy. Founded in 2014 (TAEH, 2017a), TAEH is a partner of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH, n.d.-i), which was founded in 2012 (Gaetz, 2012).<sup>60</sup> The group is made up of individuals and organizations from across Toronto.<sup>61</sup>

TAEH presents as a very formal organization and uses NGO/corporatist language with a clearly stated “Mission” and “Vision” (TAEH, n.d.-i). TAEH’s Mission is: “To mobilize the collective impact necessary to effect change in Toronto to achieve and maintain zero homelessness. We believe homelessness is not acceptable and that we can end it” (TAEH, n.d.-i). Their Vision, which appears to be contradictory, is: “Zero chronic and episodic homelessness in Toronto” (TAEH, n.d.-i).<sup>62</sup> When these statements are taken together, it becomes clear that TAEH is not working to “end homelessness,” as its name indicates; rather, it is attempting to end homelessness in specific populations of (often) pathologized people who, as I discussed above, are identified as being particularly costly to the ruling regime. TAEH (n.d.-i) says that it is:

a community-based collective impact initiative that recognizes the critical importance of working in a new way towards a common goal. This includes working with all levels of government, particularly the City of Toronto to achieve our vision

It is unclear from TAEH’s website what this “new way” of working is; however, this dissertation demonstrates of the ways that TAEH works with the City that seem to be new. The organization also has a relatively clear hierarchy: on one hand there is a Steering Committee with a Chair, Mark Aston, and on the other, there is Kira Heineck, the Executive Lead and one other staff person, a Solutions Manager (TAEH, n.d.-a).

Conversely, OCAP works against NGO/corporate structure and discourse. As a poor people’s organization, OCAP works to be relatable and accessible to its most marginalized

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<sup>60</sup> The organizations’ names parallel the American organization the National Alliance to End Homelessness (n.d.), founded in the late 1980s and the International Alliance to End Homelessness, founded in 2011 (Roman, 2011).

<sup>61</sup> It doesn’t make its full membership public.

<sup>62</sup> They adopt a former federal definition of “episodic homelessness” which, like “chronic homelessness” is typically pathologizing. It means people, “often with disabling conditions” who are homeless and have been homeless at least three times in the last twelve months with longer than 30-day breaks between (TAEH, n.d.-d, n.p.).

members. The organization meets every other week and “strive[s] to ensure that everyone gets to have a say in what we are doing” (OCAP, n.d.-d, n.p.). The two paid staff in OCAP are simply called Organizers – and that is what they do: they organize people and things. OCAP attempts to interrupt hierarchy and to ensure member participation on a regular basis. OCAP does not have a “Mission” or “Vision” but it says it is “mobilizing people in resistance to government and corporate policies responsible for widespread immiseration and destitution” (OCAP, n.d.-d, n.p.)

TAEH receives funding through grants and Community Partners (CPs). These include, at a minimum, \$225,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) (n.d.-c), an Ontario government agency that distributes provincial funds (OTF, n.d.-b). On its website TAEH also thanks the Zuckerman Family Foundation (TAEH, n.d.-i). While not a charity itself, TAEH receives charitable funds under the trusteeship of Cota (2018a), an organization whose mission is “to support individuals with mental health and cognitive challenges to live well within their communities” (Cota, 2018b, n.p.). TAEH negotiates the funds that each CP will provide with the organizations individually (TAEH, 2017c).

TAEH’s discourse and organizational approach directly mirrors the Ontario Trillium Foundation’s Collective Impact Grants. These grants, which are up to \$500,000 a year, carry the five generally accepted collective impact principles as conditions for the grantees (Ontario Trillium Foundation [OTF], n.d.-a). The conditions are: “Common Agenda,” “Shared Measurement,” “Mutually Reinforcing Activities,” “Continuous Communication” and “Backbone Support” (a coordination team) (OTF, 2016, p. 2). OTF also requires groups develop a “theory of change,” which TAEH has and is guided by. Key terms in the Trillium granting information are echoed by TAEH, like “organize for impact” and “deliver impact” (OTF, 2016; TAEH, n.d.-d). TAEH (2017a) says collective impact “c[a]me to guide TAEH’s development” (p. 1). The adoption of this language and model may be a result of the funding requirements of the OTF. The OTF, also part of a ruling regime (the Province of Ontario), has created bureaucratic categories that organizations must fit their experiences into. In other words, the ruling regime has textually coordinated TAEH’s structure and organizing theory.

OCAP, on the other hand, doesn’t receive government funds on principle. It also doesn’t receive charitable foundation funds; rather, it is reliant on donations from individuals and allied

organizations. In a good year, however, OCAP will receive grants from two small left-wing granting groups, Fredonia and Groundswell, totaling less than \$8,000 combined. OCAP tries to recruit people to make scheduled monthly donations, called “sustainers,” rather than one-time donations as this “allow[s] us to plan better, and spend less time fundraising and more time organizing” (OCAP, n.d.-b). The organization also sells t-shirts, publications, posters, buttons, and other items at public events. John Clarke says, “OCAP isn't exactly a slick fundraising operation” (personal interview, Jan. 22, 2018). OCAP admits it “operates on a very modest budget [and] only just manage[s] to scrape by” (OCAP, n.d.-b). From time-to-time, OCAP has run out of basic operating expenses and had to make a public appeal for emergency funds (e.g. OCAP, 2003, 2004a, 2006, 2008b, 2012a). A section of OCAP’s website titled: “Support us” is dedicated to fundraising. This contrasts with TAEH’s website, which does not ask for donations. This difference in the financial stability of each organization is, I would argue, demonstrative of the fundamental differences them: TAEH largely has a financially secure professional membership and works within government funding relations, whereas OCAP has a largely working class and poor membership and works outside of and against government relations rather than with and within them.

OCAP, unlike TAEH, also works prefiguratively. Prefigurative organizing means to “work to build new social relations and forms of social organization through struggle” (Dixon, 2014, p. 8). Thompson (2004) argues that antipoverty organizing, including OCAP specifically, is commonly prefigurative:

Neither is direct action born in a vacuum; it is the result of those committed to radical forms of mutual aid. In a liberal world all about “me,” antipoverty activists respond with a resounding “us” ... Antipoverty organizers and the community they serve have traditionally strived to combat greed and selfishness with declarations and acts of equality and unity. (p. 134; also see Day, 2005)

Therefore, OCAP organizes *within, against, and beyond* (Holloway, 2005). Gary Kinsman (2018) describes how direct action casework (which he calls “support work”) fits into Holloway’s formulation of – and why it is so important to work – within, against and beyond. Discussing migrant justice organizing, he argues:

[R]egulations must be used and stretched to provide entry and support for as many people with need as possible, through direct action support work and campaigns, to organise against restrictive regulations that deny status to many people, and push beyond them for an alternative that permits all who need to enter and stay in Canada. (p. 100)

Here, Kinsman argues that direct action casework and campaigns can be useful “within” work, while working “against” the relations that deny and deport people is essential. However, without a beyond, what goes in its stead? Like TAEH, OCAP works within ruling relations (although the ways we do that are quite different). However, OCAP also works against ruling relations and toward the beyond to prefigure social relations – literally *pre*-figuring the world we want to live in through the ways we organize. Part of our beyond is also to call for decent, affordable, and accessible social housing for all.<sup>63</sup>

TAEH (2017a) says it began as a “grassroots network” of organizations in the homeless sector. “Grassroots” is a term that is often used and rarely defined (e.g.: Betancur & Garcia, 2011; Dixon, 2014; Hamlin, 2013; Walia, 2013), including to describe OCAP (e.g.: Black, 2005; Clarke, 2010). This is likely because the metaphor of grassroots is such a clear one: grassroots organizations are rooted and grounded in community (also see: Gouthro, 2012; Luft E., 2009; Walker & Stepick, 2014).

TAEH’s Community Partners are predominantly agencies who routinely coordinate the lives of homeless people (TAEH, n.d.-f). All but five of TAEH’s 38 CPs<sup>64</sup> provide services to homeless people can be withdrawn or restricted (see Appendix 9: TAEH Community Partners: Organizational Information).<sup>65</sup> CPs run drop-ins that coordinate when homeless people can attend, as well as when and what they will eat. They also run emergency shelters and supportive housing programs that dictate the acceptable ways people can conduct themselves (which can include curfews, behaviours, and substance use) and coordinate the relations between and among residents and staff. While standards and programs may be governed by funding rules and by City

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<sup>63</sup> Here, it is not my intention to imply that OCAP is at all near perfect in our organizing culture or how we treat one another.

<sup>64</sup> When I refer to the TAEH’s CPs, I mean the list provided on the TAEH (n.d.-f) website. However, CPs are not all necessarily listed on the website (TAEH, 2018c); consequently, this analysis is a generalization and may not be 100 percent accurate. I am, for example, aware of one organization that runs a drop-in and supportive housing program that is not listed on the website (and which I have not included in my analysis).

<sup>65</sup> An additional group represents organizations that can withdraw services.

regulations, TAEH members/partners also actively rule over the lives of homeless people.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, I would argue, TAEH has never been a grassroots organization.<sup>67</sup>

Another term sometimes used to distinguish between kinds of organizations is “astroturf.”<sup>68</sup> Cable (2019) describes astroturf organizations as “contrived grassroots movements designed by corporations or public-relations firms to promote political conformity to corporate values of individualism and free markets” (p. 129). Cable calls them “synthetic organizations [which] seek to influence public opinion and policy-makers in ways that increase corporate profits” (p. 129). It is through these astroturf organizations that corporations engage in public consultations and debates while gaining legitimacy from community (Lyon & Maxwell, 2004; Morrill & Arsiniega, 2019; Young, 2009).

TAEH has several qualities of an astroturf organization. As I have demonstrated previously, the political philosophy of HF promotes the value of individualism, which Cable (2019) identifies as a hallmark of an astroturf organization. Further, while HF may not overtly promote free markets, it is clearly positioned to provide: a) “solutions” to homelessness that do not require a critique of free markets as a contributing, if not causal, factor; b) work to produce subjects that can provide labour for free markets; c) promote government interventions that continue (and even subsidize) the housing market; and d) remove visibly homeless people from the downtown core to facilitate the flows of capital. TAEH (n.d.-b) also invites “landlords, developers, foundations, businesses and corporate sponsors” to become partners. However, a claim that TAEH was a front group for corporations is, indeed, a spurious one.

There, is however, another significant similarity between astroturf organizations and TAEH: over two-thirds of TAEH’s CPs have a direct financial interest in the further

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<sup>66</sup> While I am critiquing TAEH here, as its CPs can employ specific forms of power over homeless people through ruling relations, I do not intend to exceptionalize OCAP. OCAP, too, is a part of and complicit in ruling relations, although differently so than the TAEH. An example of OCAP’s implication in ruling relations is that, even though it is opposed to them, OCAP participates in capitalist relations all of the time: OCAP pays its rent, we buy food for actions and meetings, we purchase supplies, etc. OCAP also operates within OW/ODSP regulations, at least in some ways at some times, in addition to working against and beyond them (see Holloway, 2005).

<sup>67</sup> “Grasstops” is a term used to refer to the leadership of a community (M. H. Cooper, 1993; Costea, 2013; Grefe, 1997; Potter, 2010); although, it is not particularly commonplace. Even still, I would argue that TAEH’s partners, largely social service agency leadership, are not leaders of the homeless community.

<sup>68</sup> The term originates from US Senator Lloyd Bentsen who, referring to such a campaign, said: “A fellow from Texas can tell the difference between grass roots and Astroturf” (as quoted in Zellner, 2010, p. 362).

development of supportive housing and/or Housing First. Over half of the partners are supportive housing providers themselves; directing funds towards supportive housing would see funding increase for supportive housing in Toronto – for which these organizations may be eligible (also see Appendix 9). Unlike astroturf organizations, however, TAEH (2017a) requires that its Steering Committee work in the interests of TAEH rather than themselves or their own organizations and “[it] is ultimately accountable to the community” (TAEH, 2018c, p. 1).

Working in the interests of TAEH, however, does not preclude TAEH from representing the financial interests of its CPs. As an example, TAEH supported the transfer of 693 houses from TCHC’s portfolio to co-ops and not-for-profits. TAEH deputed that it “is deeply rooted in the non-profit housing sector in Toronto” (TAEH, 2017c, p. 1). The written deputation then went on to outline downtown youth shelter Covenant House’s project and how it and other TAEH CPs would benefit from more housing under their control.

Consequently, TAEH can be understood to be at least astroturf-esque because it is putting forward a supportive housing agenda and appearing like a community organization while the majority of its CPs will benefit from its gains. But what about the other one-third of partners and its individual members?<sup>69</sup> When they are taken into consideration, “astroturf” seems like an inappropriate and somewhat unfair descriptor of TAEH.

Perhaps, “sod” is a more appropriate term. Sod is not fully artificial, but it shares some of the same qualities as astroturf. Like a roll of sod, TAEH and other Alliances to End Homelessness can roll out 10-year plans to end homelessness,<sup>70</sup> along with the over 400 communities who have their own 10-year plans in Canada and the US (Tsemberis & Henwood, 2011). A few service providers and others, guided by the dual ethics of the healing power of domination and imagined superiority on one hand and neoliberal pragmatism on the other, can make a lawn – and make it appear as if it came up from the grassroots.

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<sup>69</sup> It is unclear how many Community Partners or Individual Supporters the TAEH has in total. The TAEH (n.d.-e) documents say that a benefit for being an Individual Supporter is to be on the group’s website, but I could not locate the list on the website. However, in examining the only set of meeting notes I have available to me, from April 21, 2017, there were 29 people present. I was able to identify all but four of them. Not counting the two TAEH staff, exactly half work for supportive housing organizations and half do not. I identified the meeting attendees using a web search with the person’s name, “Toronto,” and “homelessness.” One of those four people, however, also comes to OCAP events and is a community member.

<sup>70</sup> TAEH’s (n.d.-d) *Theory of Change* maps out a 10-year plan to end homelessness, although it doesn’t call it that.

## **TAEH for Toronto: Forged Alignment**

Also among TAEH's Partners is the City of Toronto (TAEH, n.d.-f).<sup>71</sup> SSHA, reporting about its work to city councillors, said that "Strategic alliances were forged with the community" (City of Toronto, 2015a, p. 10). SSHA was speaking almost exclusively about its relationship with the newly formed TAEH. This is what Li (2007) calls the practice of forging alignments. Li describes this practice as "the work of linking together the objectives of the various parties" (p. 265) by connecting the goals of "both those who aspire to govern conduct and those whose conduct is to be conducted" (p. 265). Both groups benefit substantially through this alignment.

SSHA benefits from its alignment with TAEH because it legitimizes SSHA's appearance of community engagement. Toronto City Council directed SSHA to create a "multi-stakeholder community advisory committee to engage with on a range of issues" (SSHA, 2015). SSHA framed TAEH this way: "the Alliance's value and strength is that it is an independent grass-roots organization that has naturally formed to effect change and contribute to the dialogue on ending homelessness" (p. 4). SSHA and TAEH "meet regularly to share information and discuss... service delivery and planning issues" (p. 2). SSHA says that this relationship "has not diminished our commitment to the continued engagement of well-established sector-specific bodies" (p. 2) and commits to ongoing community engagement.

SSHA made TAEH its official advisory group, known as the Community Advisory Board (CAB), shortly after TAEH was founded. The role of the CAB is to provide "feedback and advice on the transformation of Toronto's housing and homelessness services" (SSHA 2015b).<sup>72</sup> SSHA reports that it did this "rather than establishing an additional multi-sectoral table with largely the same participants" (p. 4).<sup>73</sup> In this way, TAEH, which is "mobiliz[ing] the collective

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<sup>71</sup> The City of Toronto is listed on the TAEH website as a "Community Partner" and has been since the Community Partner page was created (or as close as can be established with archive.org's Wayback Machine) (TAEH, 2018a). However, the City says they do not have a Community Partnership MOU, which is required to become a Community Partner (City of Toronto, 2019d)

<sup>72</sup> In various SSHA documents, TAEH is referred to in a number of different ways, including a "community reference group." SSHA (2016a) also calls Toronto Aboriginal Social Services Coalition (TASSC) a community reference group (SSHA, 2016a). However, this is likely for the Indigenous shelter and housing only, and possibly as the Community Advisory Board (SSHA, 2019).

<sup>73</sup> In this particular document, SSHA calls what is clearly the CAB the "multi-stakeholder community advisory group" (p. 4). SSHA may be using this language to reflect that it met City Council's requirements. The City



impact necessary to effect change in Toronto” (TAEH, n.d.-g) by lobbying the City, became the advising body to the City. Cathy Crowe raised concerns about TAEH:

[It] seems to be very purposely situated to start situating itself as a partner with the City: a key consultant. And they just seem to be planning mechanisms for integrating Housing First practices and policies and programs, etc. into Toronto infrastructure. (personal interview, Feb. 27, 2018)

She says she is particularly concerned that TAEH is positioning itself as the organization that will control the allocation of funding for the City: “I find them extremely dangerous” (personal interview, Feb. 27, 2018). This isn’t paranoia on Crowe’s part. Indeed, TAEH was already influencing where some funds were going. Kwame McKenzie, CEO of the Wellesley Institute, a research organization and TAEH CP, said: “City staff are working with TAEH in planning the most effective ways to use the new Home for Good [provincial] funding” (Toronto City Council, 2018c). TAEH, then, would have participated in decision making in relation to the over \$90 million in funds for the City through this program (City of Toronto, 2017b).

Further, TAEH advises on the distribution of federal funds through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (SSHA, 2019). The role of TAEH in this process isn’t simply a superficially consultative one (like I discussed in the previous chapter). The federal program requires that the CAB “develops terms of reference for the solicitation and assessment of applications for funding. Following the review of applications, the CAB is responsible for making recommendations for funding” (Government of Canada, 2016, p. 2). Because it develops terms of reference in partnership with the City, TAEH can ensure specific agencies cannot access funding by setting exclusionary parameters. Funding policy is one of the primary ways – if not the primary way – that ruling regimes regulate the activities of social agencies. Consequently, these recommendations could have serious implications for agencies. For instance, TAEH could also ensure that funding was directed to supportive housing and limit funds to attend to the overcrowding in the shelter system.

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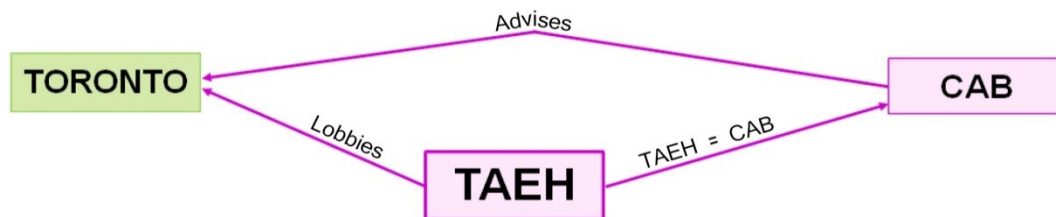
formerly had an Advisory Committee on Homelessness and Socially Isolated Persons that allowed anyone to attend. The Advisory Committee had an open vote (for members of the community and City Council) and advised Council directly (J. Gray, 2006). In 1998, the Advisory Committee got City Council to declare Toronto a “disaster area” because of the homeless crisis (Crowe, 2019, n.p.).

In addition to the practice of forging alignments, I also argue that TAEH and SSHA are engaged in the practices of validating knowledge and anti-politics to further their shared HF agenda. When TAEH started as a group, its practices were straightforward: it worked to get the City to adopt the policies it was promoting through, among other things, several meetings with SSHA bureaucrats – forging alignments with institutional and ruling relations (SSHA, 2015).

However, in 2015, when TAEH became the CAB, SSHA and TAEH created a closed circle (see Figure 5.6). This closed circle ensures that the consultation and advice SSHA gets from this CAB would only be from a HF perspective.<sup>74</sup> TAEH continued to publicly make deputations (i.e. lobby) to further its policy agenda and privately advise SSHA about the policy agenda it should take. SSHA created the CAB based on the rationale that another advisory group would have “*largely* the same participants” (SSHA, 2015, my emphasis). Here, SSHA implicitly acknowledges that a non-TAEH CAB would have had participants that are now excluded.

Further, TAEH requires its members, or CPs (organizations) and Individual Supporters, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to “participate in TAEH’s collective impact initiative” and support its “Theory of Change” (i.e. support and do work that aligns with

**Figure 5.6: Mapping TAEH/City Relations: TAEH Becomes the CAB**

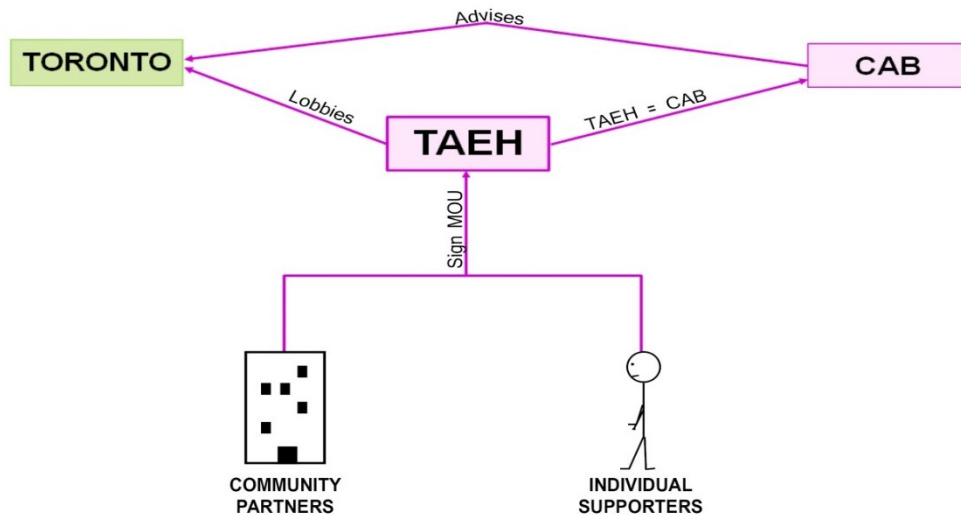


*This figure maps the relationship between TAEH, which is also the CAB, and its lobby/advisory relationship with the City; it shows the closed circle of influence.*

<sup>74</sup> This closed consultation circle likely created what Dorothy Smith (1983) calls “ideological circles” (p. 330) which result in self-referential and validating evidentiary loops that are uprooted from actual events. I was unable to analyze the products of the CAB meetings. These closed consultation circles, however, here resemble ideological circles themselves but the particulars and textual schemata are organizations and individuals.

TAEH and HF) (TAEH, n.d.-b, n.d.-c, 2018c).<sup>75</sup> The MOU is employed by SSHA, although at an arm’s length, to ensure voices that are critical of HF are not allowed at the CAB table by requiring people and groups to agree with and actively support the basic principles of TAEH before having even the possibility of joining the CAB (TAEH, 2018c) (shown in Figure 5.7). This is an example of the excluding critique, part of the practice of validating knowledge. Together, TAEH and SSHA determine who is on the CAB – whose knowledge is validated.

**Figure 5.7: Mapping TAEH/City Relations: Validating Knowledge**

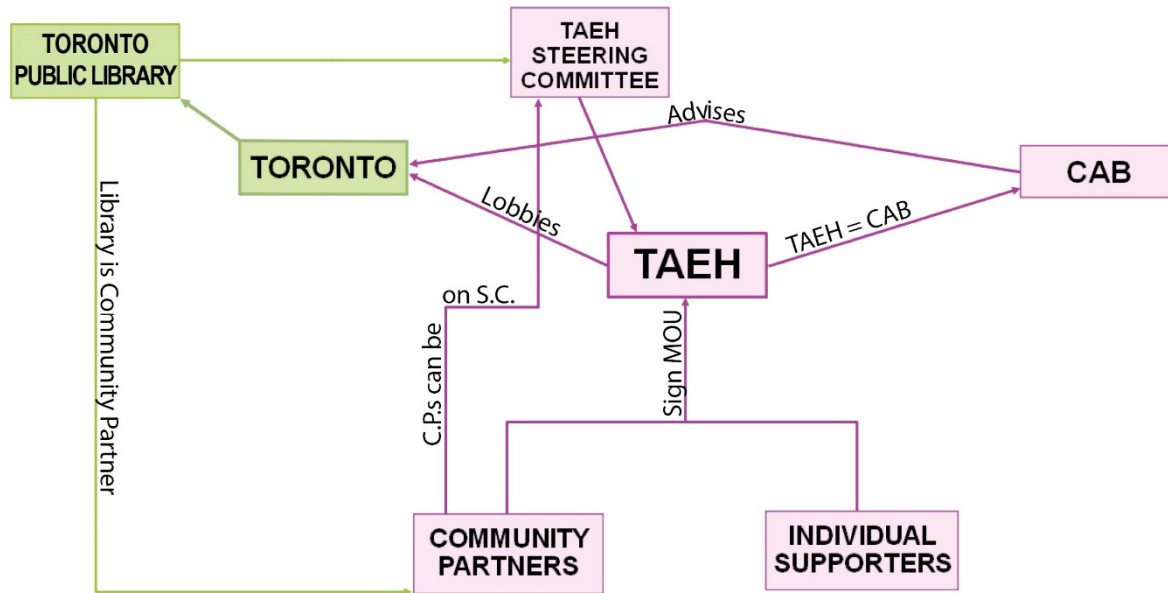


*Added to the map are Community Partners and Individual Supporters; they join TAEH by signing a MOU.*

When the Toronto Public Library (TPL) became a (2018c) CP (as shown in Figure 5.8), one branch of the City joined part of a body that publicly presents itself as independent but also works to change City policy. The Steering Committee for TAEH is made up of individuals from the group’s CPs – so a TPL representative could theoretically become part of the leadership of this organization.

<sup>75</sup> MOU is not explained, and the full acronym is not even provided on the website. It stands for “memorandum of understanding” and it is a formal agreement that may not be legally binding but is weighty and serious (“memorandum, int. and n.,” 2019).

**Figure 5.8: Mapping TAEH/City Relations: TPL as Community Partner**



*This map is of the entire TAEH network. In addition to the previous maps, it shows one of the Community Partners: The Toronto Public library and its potential relation to the Steering Committee which makes decisions for the Alliance. Other Community Partners would be similarly positioned but would not be part of the City of Toronto.*

In addition to gaining legitimacy by working with the (so-called) community and meeting the City Council requirement of community consultation while excluding critique, it is also evident that TAEH gets more access to policy makers, including input into the distribution of resources, and an increased appearance of respectability because of this relationship with SSHA. There are additional advantages for both groups as well. The relation of a forged alignment between the two groups has led to a fruitful partnership as SSHA and TAEH have worked on a number of projects together, including the: Street Needs Assessment (City of Toronto, 2018b), Home for Good program (Toronto City Council, 2018b), and Toronto for All campaign discussed below.

The City and TAEH also engage in the practice of anti-politics. Like with the HSF in the previous chapter, the Community Development and Recreation Committee of City Council sets the agenda and determines what will come forward for discussion. In this way, city councillors “close down debate,” which is one of the ways Li (2007a) identifies anti-politics is practiced (p.

279). Within SSHA’s jurisdiction, however, I would argue that it and TAEH practiced anti-politics collaboratively. Specifically, the mechanisms through which the CAB were constructed did not simply work to close down debate about HF but precluded it. Further, I have already demonstrated how HF is used as a practice of anti-politics in itself because it erases political questions and makes them “matters of technique” (Li, 2007b).

While Li (2007a; 2007b) focuses on state ruling, the collaboration between an NGO like TAEH and the City demonstrates how ruling relations can both use the formal administrative rules and move beyond them. In this case, here, they used the CP MOU in the practices of anti-politics and validating knowledge to exclude oppositional voices. It is not remarkable, I would suggest, that TAEH is a part of ruling relations; indeed, each of us is a part of ruling relations. What is notable, however, is that TAEH is outside of the formal City administration but uses its own mechanisms to assist the City to co-ordinate the lives of people – to rule within the City administration.<sup>76</sup>

### **Toronto for Who?**

TAEH, like other HF groups, is opposed to opening new shelter beds. Tsemberis and Henwood (2011) explain that HF programs require funds but they “can be offset to some degree through reduction and eventually elimination of outreach, drop-in, shelter, and transitional housing programs” (p. 188). Opening new shelters is, therefore, considered to be contradictory to the HF project.

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<sup>76</sup> Late in 2018, SSHA and TAEH partnered around a new consultative group, the Toronto Housing and Homelessness Services Planning Forum, for service providers (note the continued exclusion of OCAP). The CAB remains intact but this new group discusses homelessness and housing related issues. However, in an MFOIPPA request for the minutes of these meetings was denied because SSHA said they are online. Only minutes for what seems to be the first meeting, Nov. 29, 2018, are online. Upon further prodding, I was provided with minutes for a meeting on July 12, 2019. Either this group, which at the time of writing only generated two Google search hits, has only had two meetings or SSHA doesn’t even bother to keep copies of the minutes. Further, this doesn’t only appear to be a TAEH co-chaired group; it appears to be a TAEH front group. The July 12, 2019 minutes discuss how TAEH would be lobbying city councillors, ZeroTO, the TAEH’s presentation to HousingTO, the TAEH’s interest in laneway housing, etc. Further, if this is a co-chaired meeting between TAEH and SSHA as partners, it is questionable that SSHA is, at a minimum, creating the space to discuss lobbying city councillors on City policy (City of Toronto MFOIPPA request receipt #22480832, 2019 – not a proper request # because it was never fully processed).

Nevertheless, TAEH partnered with the City for the “Toronto For All” campaign and supported the campaign’s “Homelessness” designed to support “First Step Housing” – that is to say, shelters (Davis, 2017). Launched in April 2017, advertisements were put up in public transit, social media, and on the campaign’s website, a total cost of \$138,000. TAEH received \$87,000 to produce and manage the campaign (City of Toronto & TAEH, n.d.; Levy, 2017).

There were two ads, one showing the head and face of a white man (see Illustration 5.3) and the other a similar shot of a white woman, saying that homeless shelters are needed but shouldn’t be placed close to where the person in the advertisement lives. Much of the campaign text explicitly focuses on homeless shelters for men (City of Toronto, n.d.-h; Levy, 2017b). It would appear that this was the case because, according to Davis’s (2017) report, “siting the men’s facilities [is] very difficult because of local opposition generated by fears commonly associated with single men” (p. 17). The website also tells the reader that “85% of those in Toronto experiencing outdoor homelessness are male” (City of Toronto, n.d.-g). At the same time, the City was proceeding with its plan to close Seaton House, Canada’s largest homeless shelter, which was built with a capacity of 675 men’s beds but has held as many as 900 men (Coutts, 1993; Friesen, 2017; McIntosh, 2017). The new policy stating that shelters can have no more than 60-90 beds meant that Seaton House would have to be replaced by 7 to 10 shelters. Seaton House was supposed to close in 2017, but the City has still not found places to house or shelter its residents as of the time of writing this dissertation and the closure has been delayed until 2021 (City of Toronto, n.d.-d).

Like HF in general, which is critiqued for excluding women (Homes for Women, 2013), this “Toronto For All” campaign also excluded women. While most people sleeping rough in Toronto are men (City of Toronto, 2018b), there are fewer women’s shelters and they are consistently fuller (City of Toronto, n.d.-b, n.d.-c).<sup>77</sup> This campaign perpetuated the myth that homelessness is primarily about men and further rendered homeless women invisible.

### **Illustration 5.3: Toronto for All – Homelessness**

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<sup>77</sup> This is also based on data available on the Daily Shelter Census



(City of Toronto, n.d.-h)

In addition to receiving funds for the campaign, TAEH also received free advertising (City of Toronto, n.d.-e; City of Toronto & TAEH, 2017a, 2017c, 2017b, 2017d). The campaign website tells readers to visit TAEH’s website “for more information and resources” (City of Toronto, n.d.-h). This likely promoted the organization beyond its usual reach. The practice of forging alignment led to real opportunities with material benefits for TAEH, both in terms of payment for services and advertising.

However, this campaign may also have come with a political cost for TAEH as the call for more men’s shelters directly contradicts TAEH’s central message. Indeed, calling for additional beds to be opened and trying to soften the public to the idea of more homeless shelters was directly contradictory to TAEH’s HF *raison d’être*. This is an example of what Li (2007) calls the practice of containing critique through which groups “self-censor their criticism” (p. 275). Li argues that “parties... make compromises and, in so doing, they become implicated, their positions compromised and their critiques contained” (p. 279). TAEH, a group opposed to the opening of new shelters was now campaigning for new shelters because it had become compromised—the group was now a collaborator with the City’s agenda.

Toronto For All was a short-lived campaign designed to encourage Torontonians to adopt a “yes in my backyard” (YIMBY) position towards men’s homeless shelters. This was a joint effort between TAEH and the City that excluded homeless women. While there is an apparent

disjuncture between TAEH's values/goals/mission and the message put forward by the ad campaign, it helped to provide funds and bring a new and wider audience to the organization while further engaging in the practice of forging alignment with the City, to their mutual benefit.

Significantly, not long after the ads were released Kira Heineck, the Executive Lead of TAEH, told the CDRC that even though the shelter system was "beyond what experts consider safe," no new beds should be opened beyond the number that the City planned (Toronto City Council, 2017b). In addition to OCAP, agencies, the Out of the Colds, and drop-in operators, health care providers, and frontline workers all reported that this number would not be sufficient (Toronto City Council, 2017b). While there is a clear contradiction between this position and the advertising campaign, there is also a consistent pattern: TAEH supported SSHA's position in both instances, as it did publicly throughout the campaign. The two groups, TAEH and SSHA, were engaged in the practice of forging an alignment; consequently, TAEH contained its critique and became contradictory at times in order to support SSHA.

## **Conclusion**

I began this chapter by providing an overview of the standard account of the emergence of HF in the United States and Canada and challenging that account. This account has been used by policy makers, proponents, and practitioners of HF to create a rhetoric of triumphalism. In Canada, HF has been adopted by all three levels of government and proponents have successfully expanded programs and policies through supposedly progressive governments like that of former Toronto mayor David Miller and the provincial and federal Liberal party, as well as Conservative governments like that of Stephen Harper. I argued that HF tracks neatly onto neoliberal agendas, which all of these governments embraced. HF is, fundamentally, a neoliberal project that is used to erase social relations and individualize social problems by both ignoring root causes of homelessness and, often, pathologizing homeless people. HF policies and programs are used by workers to attempt to rehabilitate once homeless people into increasingly responsible neoliberal actors. What I call prescriptive harm reduction is a cornerstone of the HF rehabilitative project.

As the centralized organizational voice for HF in Toronto, the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness has partnered with the City in multiple ways to further its aims. I have



demonstrated how this includes the practices of forging alignment, validating knowledge, excluding critique, and anti-politics. By mapping the relations between the City and TAEH, I discovered that they created a self-referential cycle and ensured voices critical of HF would be excluded. TAEH has positioned itself to influence policy and funding distribution by engaging in the practices of forging alignment, anti-politics, and validating knowledge with the City. Nevertheless, HF has not gone unchallenged. OCAP has worked to counter the implementation and expansion of HF, with uneven but significant results. In the next chapter, I will explore the longstanding dispute between Shelter, Support and Housing Administration staff and OCAP with respect to shelter occupancy numbers and the epistemological implications and impacts of this dispute. In the final chapter, I will examine the ways in which OCAP successfully combated HF doctrine in its campaign for more emergency shelter beds to alleviate the shelter crisis.

## Chapter 6: When is a Bed Not A Bed?: Epistemic Injustice and Shelter Occupancy

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*When our TV room is unavailable, I send [families] to the 24hr Tim Hortons. That for me is an inhumane situation. I would like your phone numbers so I can call you when I have that situation and I want you to look that family in the face and tell them 'I'm sorry, we didn't have a budget for this, we have no rooms for you, you need to go to a Tim Hortons.*

~Emily Green, shelter worker - to City councillors  
(Toronto City Council, 2017a)

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### Introduction

A longstanding dispute exists between OCAP activists and our allies, on one side, and Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), on the other, involving the state of the shelter system. OCAP has argued for years that the system is in crisis. Our knowledge is based on the experiences of homeless people and frontline workers. People cannot access beds when the City says there are beds available; if someone does get a bed, they also experience overcrowded, unsanitary, and other terrible conditions. However, the City tells us that and that all shelter standards are being met and that the system is operating well.

Dorothy Smith (1987) calls the disjuncture between lived experience and official accounts of reality a “line of fault” (p. 49); it is from here that critical inquiry begins. The experiences of homeless people and frontline workers trying to find space in the shelter system parallels the people living with AIDS that George Smith (1990) wrote about whose “knowledge of everyday events situated them on one side of a line of fault separating them from the objective bureaucratic domain of a politico-administrative regime” (p. 631). George Smith argues that it is “the social organization of this kind of knowledge, moreover, [that] produces the epistemological line of fault between the objective knowledge of a regime and, in this instance, the reflexive, everyday knowledge” of community members (p. 633). It is at this disjuncture that this chapter begins: the disjuncture between the textual reality expressed through City statistics that there are

500 beds in the shelter system and the actual experience of not being able to access a single bed to sleep in.

Several years ago, under pressure from OCAP, Street Health, and other community groups, City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam called the City's shelters. Afterwards, she said: "they all gave me the same response: 'we're full, we are always full.'" She then went on a tour of several of the shelters and saw things for herself. Councillor Wong-Tam acquired experiential knowledge of the shelter system and was in a position on the Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) to challenge SSHA and substantiate our knowledge which could, potentially, help mitigate the testimonial injustice we experienced. When she "brought this back to the attention of staff" and told them there was something wrong with the accounting, they told her "what you've seen is incorrect. There is space" (personal interview, Kristyn Wong-Tam, Feb. 23, 2018). SSHA staff told this sitting city councillor, in an open meeting, "what you've seen is incorrect," repudiating her own direct observation (personal interview, Kristyn Wong-Tam, Feb. 23, 2018). Councillor Wong-Tam's experience is exemplary of the disjuncture between the official textual account of the shelter system and the experiential one.

In this Chapter, I will demonstrate that SSHA and Toronto City Council perpetrated epistemic injustice, including through testimonial injustice, institutional gaslighting, and requisite gratitude by denying OCAP and our allies as knowers and refusing our knowledge. I will also explore the social construction of innocence, which I argue enables the evasion of accountability and facilitates the City's scapegoating of migrants in its rhetoric on the shelter crisis.

### **"What You've Seen is Incorrect": Testimonial Injustice and Institutional Gaslighting**

There is a line of fault between Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's textual knowledge of the shelter occupancy numbers and the experiential knowledge of homeless people, frontline workers and advocates, including OCAP. While the numbers may vary, this discrepancy is – if one believes OCAP – a daily/nightly problem that forces people to sleep outside, meaning it is a problem that can have deadly implications. Underlying the dispute about shelter numbers are fundamental epistemological divisions about what we know about shelter capacity and where that knowledge comes from. In this section, I will argue that SSHA and City

Council perpetrate epistemic injustices in order to disregard counter-knowledges, which I will demonstrate by examining their practices of testimonial injustice and institutional gaslighting.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, there is no “objective knowledge.” The competition between OCAP’s and SSHA’s truths is not benign. Each side uses its truth to further its goals. The interests of the two sides in this epistemological dispute are relatively straightforward: OCAP seeks to prove that there is no shelter space, in order to get more space opened, while SSHA seeks to prove that things are working well in order to maintain the status quo. Each side experiences the other as dishonest, but the difficulty goes beyond the question of sincerity. In terms of each side’s knowledge, the other is wrong – wrong in its data and wrong in its conclusions with respect to the need for action and change. City staff seek to prove that the City’s response to the situation is adequate. One OCAP member tells me that OCAP is seen by City employees as “just trying to make [the City] look bad” (personal interview, anonymous) and as exaggerating in order to win its demands. In contrast, OCAP has accused the City of “lying” about shelter bed availability for years (e.g. Cole, 2013). OCAP member Jess Hales posits that SSHA is “just lying and covering up, like, the shit [that] is going on, which has been going on for years” (personal interview, Feb. 3, 2018). For Jess, and several OCAP members I interviewed, only the act of lying can allow the City to claim that there is action being taken: saying that there is space in the shelter system occludes the experiences of people like her who see clients every day unable to access a shelter bed.

One of the central issues is the conflict between types of data. SSHA uses its own statistics, which are generated using its own tracking software, to determine how many shelter beds there are;<sup>1</sup> whereas OCAP and our allies use experiential and anecdotal evidence that is grounded in the social standpoints of frontline workers and homeless people. Maurice Adongo, a

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<sup>1</sup> This is made more difficult by SSHA’s website which overwrites the DSC each day. Therefore, it is hard to point anyone in the direction of official data to validate our claims. SSHA provides “Monthly Shelter Occupancy” which compares total shelter usage per month over the past months since 2017; however, this isn’t broken down by sector, which is where much of the necessary information is gleaned. Also, the City now makes this data available through its Open Data system, but this has problems as well: the data is nearly impossible to use for the current year because of the file format. At year’s end, it is put into a spreadsheet, making it somewhat manageable.

Street Health Outreach Worker who had formerly lived in a refugee camp (Stevenson, 2018b), spoke to the conflict between types of data:

we talk a lot about studies, we want proof... The best study is what we see in the streets. You just opened [the] armoury, it is full. You opened the Better Living Centre, Mark Aston told us they had 174 people last night. You go to some of these warm places with mats on the floor, it feels like you walked into an earthquake zone, it is terrifying, and with an earthquake zone, you got a traumatized society dealing with the tragedy we have a permanent earthquake zone it is frightening and so if you want evidence, it is in the streets and we are seeing it every day. (in Toronto City Council, 2018b)

Maurice is articulating the value of grounded, experiential knowledge about the shelter system while speaking to the immediate crisis it is in.

City Councillor Gord Perks also problematizes SSHA's approach to information and the way that city councillors privilege certain kinds of knowledge:

You have to step way back and ask fundamental questions about how public policy works. I think there is a bias in how we think about public policy, that data and numbers and things that you can measure are the place where you find truth... We've become so used to the idea that counting and measuring is how you solve the problem that we don't even think about whether that's true and we just assume... So, you set points in time when you take a snapshot, get some data and then you compare it to another time and see how the data changes over time and assume that's going to tell you the truth of the circumstance. (Personal interview, Jan. 19, 2018)

Councillor Perks is clearly alluding to the Daily Shelter Census data: point-in-time statistical data that OCAP argues is inadequate.<sup>2</sup> “Counting and measuring” are constructed as objective and scientific while the data that OCAP and our allies hold – like Maurice relayed above – are constructed as subjective, biased, and illegitimate. Councillor Perks' critique, however, also calls for a reassessment of what kinds of knowledge are understood as valuable in the policy-making arena.

One councillor speculated that City councillors have an:

overreliance on the use of statistics to tell a human story. That is – it's problematic because everyone says: “you gotta show me the data, show me the data” and then, that

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<sup>2</sup> The *Street Needs Assessment* is also point-in-time data and has its own methodological flaws (City of Toronto, 2006, 2009c, 2013a, 2018b).

data can be misinterpreted data, can be fudged. Data, data loses all emotion. (Personal interview, anonymous)

SSHA data, therefore, can be manipulated and allows emotional detachment from the very life and death that the shelter system involves. Further, the loss of emotion from the data allows for the claim of “objectivity” even though SSHA has a vested interest in what the data depicts (and, of course, the notion of objective is problematic in itself).

Multiple people gave accounts of the conditions in the shelters, respites, drop-ins and Out of the Colds (OOTC) in public forums like protests, press conferences, and through deputations at City Hall. Sistering, a 24-hour drop-in for women and non-binary people, was carrying a lot of the burden of the shelter system being full; and, many of its clients and staff were active in the campaign. For example, Peer Worker Dana Dack described there being so little room to walk that people tripped over people lying down on mats on the floor, leading to fights breaking out (Toronto City Council, 2018c). Executive Director Patricia O’Connell described a 79-year-old woman who slept for a week or more at a time on three kitchen chairs, along with women who slept on the floor and who, if they rolled over at night would “ru[n] into someone else” (Toronto City Council, 2018c). Along with Sistering, allies and OCAP members deputed about other problems with the system and repeatedly stressed that people could not get shelter beds (Toronto City Council, 2017a, 2018f).

However, SSHA’s statistical data continued to be accepted despite numerous instances of people using the system and workers repeatedly telling City Council that the shelters were full and there was a crisis. City Councillor Michael Ford,<sup>3</sup> for example, told me that City staff “had statistics they’ve shown me... they give rationale to why they put their recommendations forward.” Ford makes it clear that both he and other members of Council ask questions of SSHA staff, but adds, “they know best” (personal interview, March 1, 2018). Another councillor told me they “instinctively support staff” (anonymous).

The diminishment or disregard for someone “in [their] capacity as a knower” is what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls “testimonial injustice” (p. 20). Testimonial injustice occurs, according to Fricker (2019), when “a speaker is misjudged and perceived as epistemically lesser”

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<sup>3</sup> Councillor Ford is a member of *the* Ford family and nephew of current Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford.

because of a prejudice that is held by those being spoken to – in this case the city councillors, as well as SSHA management who were also present at City Council meetings (p. 53). Fricker (2019) notes that this epistemological testimonial injustice “will tend to have negative effects on how they are perceived and treated non-epistemically too” (p. 53). She gives the example of someone who is psychiatrized, arguing that this person may be subjected to testimonial injustice because of their diagnosis (epistemic injustice) and then experience coercion from medical practitioners (non-epistemic injustice). With respect to the testimonial injustice against homeless people, OCAP and its allies, there are material and potentially deadly consequences as a result of the testimonial injustices enacted by City Council and SSHA.

*Explicating the Numbers: The Ongoing Dispute over Shelter Capacity*

City Council, SSHA and OCAP all agreed that the shelter occupancy *should* be 90 percent, an occupancy cap won after activism from OCAP and allies, (Toronto City Council, 1999, 2013). The General Manager of SSHA said the shelter system loses the “flexibility and responsiveness needed in the system” if it exceeds 90 percent occupancy (SSHA, 1999, n.p.). Even with the importance of meeting the 90 percent cap recognized by both Council and SSHA staff, one City councillor acknowledged to me that “we definitely have to strengthen our shelter system because we've never reached that 90 percent capacity” – the system has persistently been over 90 percent (OCAP, 2018d; Toronto City Council, 2017b).

While both the City and OCAP agree that there should be 10 percent occupancy in the shelter system to act as breathing room, we don't on agree how many beds are *actually* in the system on any given night. OCAP has argued for years that SSHA creates the appearance that there is room in the shelters when there is none. On nights when OCAP members have heard from several people who cannot access shelter beds anywhere in the city, SSHA reports there are multiple open beds.

The City has made the shelter numbers available online for a number of years (City of Toronto, n.d.-a).<sup>4</sup> The Daily Shelter Census (DSC) provides a breakdown of shelter bed occupancy, by sector, at 4 a.m. the previous night. Table 6.1 is one day, November 9, 2018, from

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<sup>4</sup> I was able to trace this to 2014 which matches my recollection, but it is possible this practice began earlier.

the DSC and included here to show how the Census works.<sup>5</sup> This day is representative of the overall shelter situation in Toronto on most days (Jadidzadeh & Kneebone, 2018; OCAP, 2016c; B. German, 2017).

**Table 6.1: Daily Shelter Census: November 9, 2018**

Shelter Sector	Occupancy	Capacity	Occupancy Rate
Co-ed	556	566	98%
Men	1,803	1,826	99%
Women	738	749	99%
Youth	525	528	99%
Family (shelters)	721	721	100%
Family (motels)	2,252	2,724	83%
Total	6,595	7,114	93%

There is a significant disjuncture between our experienced reality and SSHA’s statistical reality. On November 9, 2018, SSHA reported having over 500 available beds. For OCAP, it simply can’t be true that there were over 500 beds available – but it does sound good. It sounds like there isn’t a crisis when SSHA tells the public that there are so many open beds in the system. While the entire shelter system is 98-100 percent full except for the family motels which are 83 percent full, it is the total number that tends to get reported rather than the sector-specific numbers.<sup>6</sup>

There are several ways that OCAP and our allies have argued that the numbers are misleading. OCAP has long complained that the family motels “skew the overall average,” (OCAP, 2016c, p. 1). Single adults, youth, and couples<sup>7</sup> are not permitted into the family shelters, so 472 empty family beds are irrelevant to these groups. With the family beds removed from the total occupancy rate, the shelters would be 99 percent full and there would be 47 beds

<sup>5</sup> Using the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine, I copied one day’s worth of the DSC. There were very few 2018 dates available (these dates also post the drop-in and respite numbers, unlike in 2017) and I wanted one in which the respites were open but had not just opened, making November 9, 2018 the next available date.

<sup>6</sup> For example, the CBC reported “Toronto’s shelter system is currently at a 93 per cent occupancy rate” on November 9, 2018 (McLaughlin, 2018b, n.p.).

<sup>7</sup> At times during the peak of our advocacy/the crisis, SSHA made an exception, allowing some couples into motels.



available in the entire system. Additionally, some of the beds listed in the DSC are transitional shelter beds, which require a resident to be referred and accepted into the associated program. This means a bed can be counted as “empty” in the DSC at the same time it cannot be filled by a real person. Also, shelters hold beds for people to return to, which makes them unavailable to be filled throughout the day – but they can be available at 4 a.m. for the census count if the person does not return (SSHA, 2018). One OCAP member and frontline worker describes how SSHA manipulates the shelter occupancy numbers:

They’re tricky... There’ll be a bed at a men’s shelter, for example, but a female identified person is looking for a bed. So, sure, yeah there’s beds but not for this person. And, so, I just think that they’re really good at skewing the lens to make it look more in their favour. (personal interview, anonymous).

These are some of the ways that there can appear to be more than 500 beds available but very real people are denied shelter.

Families also experience the phenomena of being told there are beds when they cannot access them. Steve Meagher, the manager of a refugee shelter, speculates how family shelter beds can be reported as available when they are actually not:

The numbers are misleading... because when it comes to families, space should be counted by rooms, not beds... for example, if you have a room with a maximum occupancy of 5, but a family of 3 is admitted there, it will show that there are 2 available beds, which is inaccurate, because a family is occupying the room and the other ‘available spaces’ are not actually available. (Hatlem, 2018)

Meagher says he doesn’t know for sure why there is such a discrepancy between the relatively low occupancy rate of the family motel rooms and the fact that “families continue to wait for up to a week for a referral to emergency shelter” (Hatlem, 2018). He entertains the possibility that “there is space and families are being denied access to it” (Hatlem, 2018). While this could be the case, it would be cruel to the point of near implausibility – especially if it were done in order to maintain a statistical fiction that there is space in the shelter system. However, there is documented evidence that there was available space in a respite site and people were denied access to it. Mayor Tory had recently opened a new site and had said on numerous occasions that it had space to take people. Yet, Central Intake said it was full. After homeless advocate Doug

Johnson Hatlem went to that site to see if it had beds (cots actually) and was told they did and could take people, he said:

I think it's intentional... if it happens once or twice you can understand it as a mistake, if it happens night in and night out... and you start seeing the way the City manipulates stats, then you realize its an intentional strategy... the intention is to be able to say we're not full... they're actually over 100% every night. (in CBC Radio, 2018, n.p.)

Hatlem also notes that people who stay at Peter Street are not factored into the City's occupancy statistics. This is the case even though people stay in these sites, sometimes at length; women have stayed at Sistering for "well over a year" (Toronto City Council, 2018g). Of course, someone calling Central Intake on their own or with a worker who was denied access to the new respite site is statistically invisible. The City's official position on this matter was that it was a "miscommunication" between Central Intake and the site (McLaughlin, 2018a, n.p.).

Respite sites are parallel to formal shelters but have lower standards and regulations. This group of sites includes low-barrier respites, 24-hour drop-ins like Sistering, and volunteer, faith group run Out of the Cold (OOTC) programs. The respites and 24-hour drop-ins are fixed sites while the OOTCs operate one night a week out of a church or synagogue. All have become *de facto* shelters because the shelters are so full, and the numbers of people using the respites continues to climb.

**Table 6.2: November 9, 2018 Overnight Service Usage**

Site	Occupancy	Capacity	% Full
24-hour Respite Sites			
545 Lakeshore Blvd W	133	150	89%
Cowan Ave	20	21	95%
Margaret's	50	50	100%
Park Rd	30	30	100%
Progress Rd	45	49	92%
St Felix	50	50	100%
George St	100	105	95%
<b>Sub Total:</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>94%</b>
24-hour Women's Drop-ins			
Sistering	70	50	140%
Fred Victor	69	67	103%
<b>Sub Total:</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>119%</b>

Out of the Cold			
Eastminster United	37	45	82%
Knox United	27	20	135%
<b>Sub Total:</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>99%</b>

(City of Toronto, 2018f)

On November 9, 2018 this part of the shelter system was 99 percent full, with 637 people staying at a respite, drop-in or OOTC (Table 6.2). The 24-hour drop-ins were at 119 percent capacity (City of Toronto, 2018f). At one point, on February 12, 2018, it hit 812 people (City of Toronto, 2018e). Again, this data is for 4 a.m. and doesn't capture the people circulating through various sites throughout the day. Further, the sites that are at their capacity are, in OCAP's experience, likely turning people away. For example, it is unlikely that exactly 30 people tried to access Park Rd. respite November 9<sup>th</sup>; rather, more people likely tried to access it and were unable to get inside. St. Felix had a policy that they would not turn people away if they were at capacity – but staff would only let someone in for 20 minutes to warm up and then they would have to wait outside until someone left. Therefore, 50 reported people at St. Felix might mean there are 50 people there with more waiting outside.<sup>8</sup>

Directly flowing out of the discursive debate with SSHA and the Mayor about how full the shelters are is the issue of shelter and respite conditions. While poor shelter and respite conditions can be independent of occupancy and overcrowding, OCAP was hearing from homeless people and workers that the crowding in the system was pushing things over the edge. Respite, drop-ins and OOTCs were being utilized, at least in part, Beric German argues, because “they don't spend as much money on [them]. That's, that's the bottom line. They're saving money by not creating types of standards” (personal interview, Feb. 22, 2018). OCAP (2018d) frequently complained that “shelters [and respites] are overcrowded, unsafe and prone to disease outbreak and bedbugs” (n.p.). However, these accounts were also discounted by SSHA and City Council.

When cracking open how the shelter numbers are constructed, the problems with this data become obvious. OCAP and/or our allies have attempted to testify to all or parts of these flaws,

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<sup>8</sup> This is based on conversations with several service users and front-line workers.

but we have been repeatedly rejected. The City's shelter data is regarded as inherently more legitimate than OCAP and our allies' data because it is statistical and, therefore, scientific and valid; the advocates' information, on the other hand, is constructed as anecdotal, emotional, subjective, and biased. Numerical/statistical knowledge is constructed as more 'objective' than qualitative/experiential knowledge.

As many people in OCAP and other advocates are aware (and as Steve Meagher and Doug Johnson Hatlem demonstrate), the DSC is socially organized to produce a deflated occupancy rate. Campbell (2006) notes:

official views are usually presented as being neutral and official actions as being in the public interest, or for the common good. It may therefore be ineffective to challenge them on the level of claims about which view is 'right.' For activist researchers, that means learning a set of research strategies beyond critiquing differing perspectives and their appearance in public policies. Activists must also learn how to understand and engage with the actions of public administration whereby policies are planned, implemented and evaluated. (p. 91)

Herein was the catch for OCAP: we were aware of the practices of planning, implementing, and evaluating policy; we simply couldn't get the life-threatening shelter crisis remediated when the data showed that there were 500 empty beds. Challenging the existence of those beds was essential, but it could seem impossible in the face of epistemic injustice.

#### *Who Knows? The Social Organization of Credibility and Testimonial Injustice*

Testimonial injustice was imposed on shelter campaign advocates in different ways throughout the campaign to get more beds and better conditions. While OCAP and our allies were disadvantaged by, testimonial injustice and other epistemic violences, SSHA staff and TAEH were advantaged by it. Testimonial injustice is experienced differently by those who are more exalted than by those who are more denigrated within the moral economy. As I will discuss in this section, testimonial injustice does not only impact organizing; it disproportionately impacts directly affected people.

Testimonial injustice unevenly impacted people advocating for more shelter beds. It was far more common for workers and allies to speak publicly than homeless people. Several of the people who deputed about the crisis in the shelter system identified themselves as formerly homeless people (City of Toronto, 2017c; Toronto City Council, 2017a, 2018h). It also was more

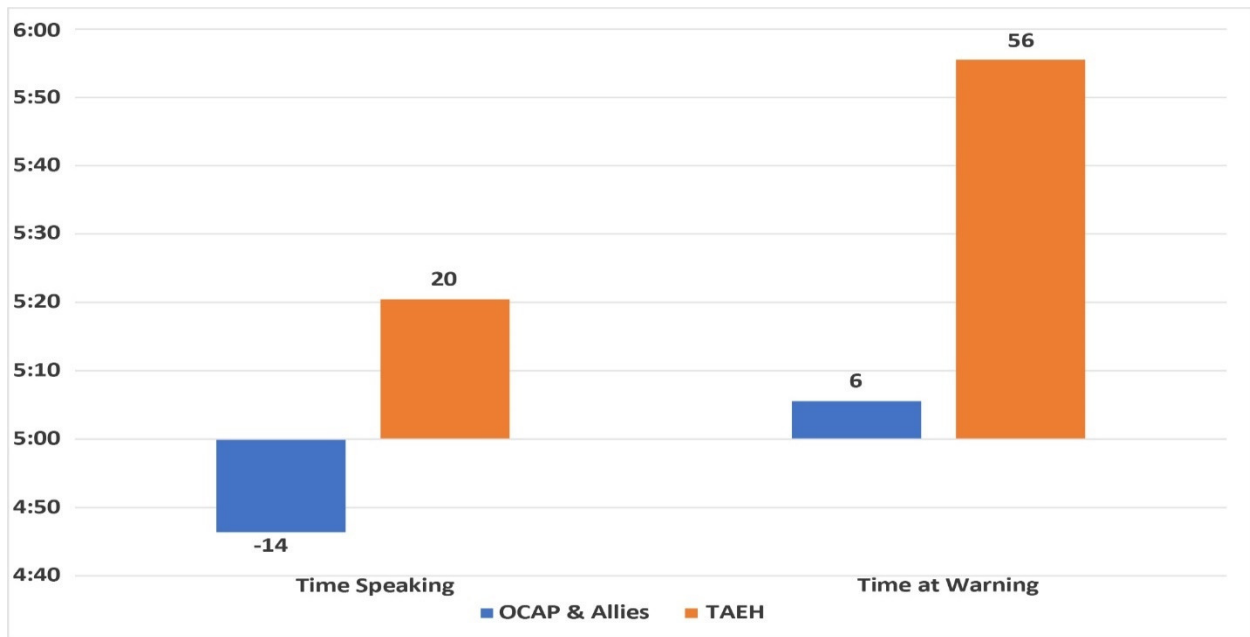
common to have homeless people speak at press conferences and rallies than to depute. This was not for lack of trying. The reasons for this, no doubt like homelessness itself, are complex. There were several occasions when someone would confirm that they were going to speak at a press conference, rally, or even depute, and would not show up. The difficulties of organizing homeless people that I discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation apply to coordinating speakers at public events and, I would argue, are heightened because of the anxiety inducing nature of this role. I would like to suggest that homeless people are more hesitant to depute than to speak at a press conference or rally because they are aware of the likelihood of experiencing epistemic injustice should they testify before city councillors. At rallies and press conferences, which typically have supporters present, there is an audience that will hear what the speaker has to say (even if there may be problematic questions from media). After all, testimonial justice is not rooted in the act of being able to speak but in having an audience that will listen to you (Fricker, 2007).

When OCAP and our allies deputed at City Hall before the CDRC, there was certainly a feeling amongst many of those working on the shelter campaign that we were unheard and that those representing TAEH were privileged in the space they had both to speak and be heard.

Councillors would chat or get up and leave the room while shelter campaign deputants spoke – this also happened to TAEH speakers, but it to happen a lot less to them than it did to us. Many of us in the audience whispered that it seemed like the CDRC Chair, Councillor James Pasternak, would give those of us speaking in favour of the shelter campaign less time than TAEH speakers – and, councillors would ask TAEH spokespeople and supporters more questions than they would us. After analyzing every set of deputations that OCAP organized for, I found that there is a clear discrepancy in the Chair’s warnings to deputants that they were over their allotted five-minutes to speak (see Appendix 11). On average, TAEH speakers were warned after fifty-six seconds while shelter campaign speakers were warned after only six seconds (see Figure 6.1). Even when I adjusted for when the Chair warned an OCAP ally she was out of time after two and a half minutes and when he let an ally speak for eighty seconds over – likely accidentally,

because he was on Twitter<sup>9</sup> – shelter campaign supporters were warned after ten seconds. Notably, TAEH speakers were always upper management – a professional class of advocates – while the OCAP and allied speakers were often frontline workers (including peer workers) and volunteers. Occasionally a Manager or Executive Director of a more progressive agency would depute on OCAP’s side. As it was experiential knowledge that challenged ruling relations and was given less time, this is clear evidence of testimonial injustice. The Chair, consciously or unconsciously, applied the rules unevenly based on the views of the speaker – restricting oppositional submissions by denying them both time and credibility.

**Figure 6.1 Shelter Campaign vs. TAEH Deputation Times**



Further, TAEH speakers were asked, on average, questions by three city councillors while shelter campaign supporters were asked only one. Asking questions, I would argue, is a way that councillors demonstrate recognition of the speaker as legitimate knowers. Answering questions also allows the deputant to clarify their position and take more time. There was only ever one TAEH speaker who was not asked any questions, while this was common for people speaking for the shelter campaign and was the norm for OCAP members (see Appendix 11). The

<sup>9</sup> See the deputations of Teya Greenberg and Melissa Goldstein, respectively.

distribution of who is asked questions and how many questions they are asked is demonstrative of the rejection not only of the knowledge of the people calling for more shelter beds but also the rejection of them as knowers.

Testimonial injustice is also evident in the mainstream media coverage of the shelter crisis. Throughout the campaign, multiple open letters were written to City Council calling for the issue to be addressed. Media coverage of these letters varied, I would argue, in relation to the social standing of the authoring groups, in more direct relation to their (lack of) knowledge of on-the-ground issues of homelessness and the Toronto shelter system.<sup>10</sup> There were three letters penned by community groups, none of which received coverage in the mainstream print media.<sup>11</sup> OCAP (2017), Out of the Cold members and faith leaders who work with them (Beth Sholom Beth Tzedec Out of the Cold et al., 2017), and Social Planning Toronto, with 30 direct service agencies, (Social Planning Toronto et. al., 2017) all called on the Mayor and/or City Council to meet the 90 percent occupancy policy and to do so by opening more beds. Individually and combined, these groups have day-to-day, on-the ground knowledge about the shelter crisis and its impact, yet their letters did not receive media coverage.

Indeed, the more knowledge groups had about the shelter system, the less coverage they received. The open letter to City Council that received the most media coverage was sent from the Mayor and seven city councillors. It called for a review into “implementing 1000+ new permanent shelter beds in the system” (Wong-Tam et al., p. 2). The letter was notable because the Mayor and the Budget Chief signed it; however, it was such a watered-down version of our demands that it amounted to not much more than a distraction. This letter was the central topic of four newspaper articles (J. Gray, 2018; Mathieu, 2018b, 2018c; Pagliaro, 2018a) and it was mentioned in three other articles (Levy, 2018; Pagliaro, 2018a; Stevenson, 2018a). The second open letter that received media coverage was a letter signed by 50 “prominent artists” (*Letter to Mayor Tory from prominent artists*, 2019). Cathy Crowe worked with Actor/Director Sarah

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<sup>10</sup> I discuss media framing further in the next chapter. I conducted a search of the *National Post*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and *Toronto Sun*, using the Factiva database between December 1, 2016 and April 14, 2018 using the key words: “shelter” and “open letter” and all relevant results were logged.

<sup>11</sup> There was minor and indirect mention of the Social Planning Toronto and Out of the Cold letters by Mathieu (Mathieu, 2018c) who noted that Cathy Crowe included historical documents with her deputation, including open letters. These letters were a part of this package.

Polley to put the letter together. It was signed by many prominent Canadians, including Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Lesley Feist, Rachel McAdams Catherine O’Hara, and Eugene Levy. There was a long article about this letter in the *Toronto Star* (Mathieu, 2018d) and it was mentioned in three other newspaper articles (Mathieu, 2018a; Pagliaro, 2018a, 2018c). With the exception of Sarah Polley, who wrote the letter and organized the signatures, and Leslie Feist, who appeared at a Health Providers Against Poverty press conference, the entire role of the “prominent artists” was to add their name to a letter – they did not even physically sign it. This letter received more coverage than any other non-governmental letter. This is an example of what Fricker (2007) calls “credibility excess” (p. 17). OCAP member Jess Hales said:

Because of just the hierarchy of society... people don't believe people with lived experience... It's probably based on the values of capitalism in that sense. That doesn't make sense to me – like shit, like the famous people coming out... It's so unfortunate. (personal interview, Feb. 3, 2018).

Here, Jess highlights the reality that people are valued as knowers within ruling relations according to their value in the moral economy. OCAP members, and especially homeless people, are denigrated in the moral economy and, thus, their testimony is valued less.

Another way OCAP is denigrated is through critiques of our emotionality. When people are repeatedly not listened to and their actual experiences dismissed, they may get angry. This is a legitimate response to testimonial and material injustice. Councillor James Pasternak said OCAP members are “mad because they feel they're not being heard and then they're shutting us down so we can't be heard” (personal interview, Feb. 20, 2018). Here Pasternak creates a false equivalency between the actions and impact of the ruling regime, of which he is a part, and OCAP, which is fighting to be heard. He also uses these demonstrations of anger, which are reasonable and ordinary responses to injustice to further epistemically delegitimize OCAP; this is what McKinnon (2019) calls “the ‘epistemic injustice circle (of hell)’” (p. 169).

The City’s use of the Community Advisory Board represents what Fricker (2007) calls a “pre-emptive testimonial injustice,” in which ignoring/refusing invested knowers produces particular kinds of knowledge (p. 130). As I discussed in the previous chapter, only certain people were recognized as knowers by SSHA: members of TAEH. Only people who supported Housing First were a part of TAEH so only specific knowledges and knowers were allowed to



advise SSHA as “the community.” Returning to Li’s (2007b) conceptualization of governmental practices of assemblage, which I described in the last chapter, testimonial justice is one form of the practice of validating knowledge. Validating knowledge includes excluding critique which includes but is not limited to what Fricker (2007) calls pre-emptive testimonial justice.

There were multiple forms of testimonial injustices that permeated the shelter campaign, from the pre-emptive testimonial injustice to the social organization of credibility – both of which ensured that OCAP was excluded because OCAP was illegitimate. OCAP and our allies were given less time and space to make deputations, and homeless people in particular did not take up this space (perhaps because they have internalized their experiences of testimonial injustice). Other epistemic violences were also perpetrated on shelter campaign activists; in the next section, I will discuss use of gaslighting to undermine both activists and the campaign.

### *Gaslighting*

The term gaslighting<sup>12</sup> is used to denote a form of psychological and epistemic abuse. It has been theorized in the scholarly literature, but it has also been adopted in activist parlance, including by some OCAP members. I have explained gaslighting to other activists like this: “gaslighting is not a thing; you imagined it, you never heard the word gaslighting – that is what gaslighting is.” According to Porzucki (2016), gaslighting is a form of manipulation intended to “mak[e] someone doubt their memories or perception of reality” (n.p.). To gaslight someone is to try to evoke “a change in belief about herself, not merely a change in behavior” (Spear, 2019, p. 7).<sup>13</sup> Gaslighting is often conceptualized as an individual issue (e.g. Abramson, 2014; Porzucki, 2016). Some scholars, however, examine gaslighting as a collective issue and a practice of ruling relations. For example, police and mainstream media gaslight Black people about racial profiling (Tobias & Joseph, 2018); medical professionals collectively gaslight people with fibromyalgia, especially queer Black, Indigenous and people of colour, as narrators of their own experiences (Moussa, 2019); and state officials gaslight communities to delegitimize Black teachers’ qualifications (Roberts & Andrews, 2013). “Institutional gaslighting,” according to Ghaida

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<sup>12</sup> The term references the 1944 film *Gaslight*, in which a woman is manipulated by a man to make her feel like she can no longer trust herself or her reality (Porzucki, 2016a; Sweet, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> The use of the feminine pronoun here is likely to elucidate the gendered nature of gaslighting.

Moussa (2019), “refer[s] to the ways in which institutions use their institutional and epistemological power to make marginalized subjects doubt their experiences, thoughts, and lives” (p. 124). This is done in service of maintaining and perpetuating ruling relations.

Bringing Ghaida Moussa (2019) into conversation with Dorothy Smith (1999), institutional gaslighting can be practiced translocally and transtemporally using policies (text). Consequently, a decision can be made by one individual within a regime that will be made visible to other actors in other locations and at other times; it can thus have very real epistemic and material consequences for one or more people. For example, if an intake worker registered a trans woman as a man in the Toronto shelter intake system, she would only be offered space in men’s or co-ed shelters. Presuming she told the intake worker she was a woman, this is a testimonial injustice because her knowledge was devalued in favour of the intake worker’s competing and superior knowledge (this is also accomplished through text – as the worker enters and thus controls the narrative). We can understand this as institutional gaslighting, because that data entry decision now links a network of City staff who all now *know* that she is a man and each time she or an agency worker calls to get a shelter bed she will be placed as a man. This woman’s activities will be coordinated through text – via the computer tracking system – as she is institutionally gaslit throughout the shelter system.<sup>14</sup>

In the contest knowledges between SSHA and OCAP and our allies, there is not only the refusal by the ruling regime to hear our knowledge; the very existence of our knowledge is actively denied. When we say: “there are no beds,” we are told: “there are beds.” OCAP experienced institutional gaslighting through the negation of our experienced material reality of the shelter system which was achieved through the conceptual practices of quantitative knowledge – especially through statistics – as rational and objective.<sup>15</sup> This is the practice of institutional gaslighting, and this practice is used not only to negate us as knowers but also to deny our experiences, our understandings of reality, and even the standpoint from which we know.

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<sup>14</sup> Of course, this situation is easily correctable and, hopefully, would be easily corrected – but it could take time, and epistemic violences pile one on top of the other in the meantime.

<sup>15</sup> While OCAP experienced institutional gaslighting as a group, each person had individual experiences and reactions to it. Further, institutional gaslighting has individual consequences as well as collective ones.

Testimonial injustice occurs when a person or a group is diminished or denied as a knower; however, gaslighting moves beyond this rejection and is a practice aimed to get the knower to question or undo themselves as a knower. Gaslighting is an attempt by the gaslighter, in this case the ruling regime, to accept knowledge that is not one's own and that one does not (or at least did not initially) believe. OCAP's knowledge wasn't simply suppressed; we were told over and over that we were wrong – that there was room in the shelters – when we knew otherwise. The aim of institutional gaslighting in this instance, I would argue, was not simply to establish SSHA's truth as the dominant truth, but to eradicate all other truths. Abramson (2014) argues the gaslighter “aims to destroy the possibility of disagreement by so radically undermining another person that she has nowhere left to stand from which to disagree, no standpoint from which her words might constitute genuine disagreement” (p. 10).<sup>16</sup> Gaslighting is a practice and a process of undoing or rewriting of the gaslit's knowledge and reality to bring these into alignment with the gaslighter.

Councillor Wong-Tam's experience, which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in which she was told “what you've seen is incorrect,” is exemplary of gaslighting. It was both gaslighting in its classic sense and institutional gaslighting.<sup>17</sup> While she is part of the ruling regime, in this instance the councillor worked against the aligned interests of SSHA, TAEH, the Mayor, and many other councillors; consequently, she was an appropriate target for institutional gaslighting.

Councillor Wong-Tam, frontline workers, homeless people, OCAP members, and other proponents of the shelter campaign all had their experiential knowledge made incomprehensible and illegible within ruling relations. The negation of experiential knowledge and the practice of institutional gaslighting are socially organized. A clear and replicable pattern is evident with respect to both testimonial injustice and institutional gaslighting. This involves: a) the limiting or

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<sup>16</sup> Gaslighting is typically described and experienced as gendered - as men's control over women (Abramson, 2014; McKinnon, 2019; Sweet, 2019) but it has been adopted and applied by other marginalized people to describe these practices (e.g. McKinnon, 2019; Munson, 2011; Roberts & Andrews, 2013; Tobias & Joseph, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> The Councillor is a person of colour who was the only out member of the 2SLGBTQ community elected to City Council at the time (and the second in history) (J. Freeman, 2014). I cannot help but wonder if a white, straight, cis, male Councillor would have been told “what you've seen is incorrect” – particularly given the gendered and racialized nature of gaslighting.

closing off of testimonial space (deputation length/questions, membership in the Community Advisory Board); b) statistical glossing (including transitional beds and unfillable family beds in the DSC while excluding Peter Street Referral Centre); c) statistical negation (DSC and other statistical data are used to delegitimize our accounts); d) public repudiation (if we get media attention, our account is countered with The City’s “more legitimate” account, typically including their statistical data – also see Chapters, 4, 5, and 7); and, e) wear down (repeat, repeat, repeat – steps c and d, in addition to private repudiation, and specifically gaslighting). The whole pattern, as it can be cycled through again and again can (or, alternatively, is intended to) get critics to question their own experiential knowledge and accept the knowledge of ruling relations. This is how the social organization of epistemic injustice and gaslighting worked with respect to this campaign.

These epistemic violences: testimonial injustice and institutional gaslighting, felt unrelenting to me. The Daily Shelter Census came out every weekday and I would frequently check the numbers to see how bad things were – while being gaslit at the same time. OCAP and our allies continued to resist these practices. We went regularly to the CDRC to name the problem, speak about our experiences, and demand what we knew we needed. Both holding onto our own knowledge and continuing to speak it are acts of resistance in the context of testimonial injustice and institutional gaslighting. Further, disruption isn’t only a strategy and a tactic to challenge the day-to-day activities of ruling relations and to obtain our demands, as I have discussed in previous chapters – although it certainly does this. OCAP’s disruptive actions also opened testimonial space for the knowledge that was suppressed by ruling relations. For instance, when we shut down City Council on February 12, 2018, we held up a banner saying: “Where’s The Funds for 1,500 Beds Now?” as well as the names of homeless people who had died. OCAP Organizer Yogi Acharya yelled across the gallery:

Mr. Tory, the budget that you are championing is going to make sure that those hundreds of homeless [people] who don’t have a bed today still won’t have a bed a year from now. The conditions in the respite centres are nightmarish Mr. Tory!

Before the one minute that Yogi had announced he would take was over, security was moving in on him – an act of epistemic violence through physical repression. Epistemic resistance does not

negate the testimonial injustice; however, in this case it created new space for OCAP and our allies to demonstrate our knowledge and it showed our refusal to be gaslit – opening up space for our knowledge claims.

Testimonial injustice and institutional gaslighting are epistemic violences and can be used by the ruling regime as practices to suppress both knowledge and knowers. The conflict between the City and OCAP and our allies about the shelter occupancy numbers and conditions is demonstrative of a disjuncture between experiential knowledge and official knowledge.

Through the social organization of epistemic violence, the City attempted to suppress experiential knowledge about the shelter system and bring knowers in alignment with official truth. Nevertheless, OCAP resisted these violences and continued to put forward its testimony through institutional avenues and used disruption to create new space for our testimonies.

*Smile and Say Thank You: Epistemic Violence of Requisite Gratitude for Continued Oppression*

Epistemic violences are forms of harm perpetrated onto people “against or through knowledge” (Galván-Álvarez, 2010, p. 12). In addition to testimonial injustice and gaslighting, scholars have identified a number of other forms of epistemic violence, including testimonial quieting and testimonial smothering (Dotson, 2011), emotional misperception (Glazer, 2019), and colonial epistemic violence (Pinilla, 2016; Spivak, 2015/1998; Zhaoguo, 2011). Interviews with two city councillors helped me identify an additional form of epistemic violence: requisite gratitude for continued oppression, which I will expand on in this section. Requisite gratitude for continued oppression is a form of epistemic violence, as those enacting it require those it is enacted upon to repudiate existing and ongoing harms.

Councillor Paula Fletcher, a white woman with many years on City Council and a reputation as a progressive, helped me understand that she expects OCAP – and, perhaps, homeless people – to thank staff and Council for what little is provided. She told me “every single person that spoke” at the CDRC meeting in favour of more shelter beds should go out “and find a few sites” for the City because “it's not enough just to say we need them, we need them, we need them.” Rather than discuss the fact that it seemed like not only an unusual expectation but an unprecedented request of the ruling regime to ask its residents do the work of staff, I brought up the work that OCAP had done identifying sites in the past. OCAP squatted

buildings and identified them as needing to be turned into housing and/or shelter, but the City sold or failed to expropriate those properties. I said it was frustrating because these buildings are now lost. The City-owned building at 590 Jarvis St. is an excellent example of this. OCAP squatted this former Toronto Police Services headquarters, demanding it be turned into housing/shelter; it was in relatively good condition and could have been converted into housing quickly. Instead, the City sold it to condo developers who leveled it (Landau, 2016; OCAP, 2004b). “But that's definitely something that... people can look at again,” Councillor Fletcher responded, either not hearing or registering that those buildings are long-gone (personal interview, Feb. 9, 2018).

Councillor Fletcher largely shifted my interview from dissertation interview of a councillor to a meeting in which a councillor gives an OCAP member advice. Perhaps because I was interviewing her, or perhaps because she was committing a testimonial injustice, she would not listen to, or sometimes even acknowledge, how I responded. She told me: “instead of thinking about [City staff] as being horrible people that don't care, actually thinking about them as caring people changes the frame.” I responded: “I am; but, it doesn't change the material reality that we're in right now.” There have been years of institutional gaslighting, underreporting shelter occupancy, and ignoring many of our demands for specific buildings to be turned into shelters or housing<sup>18</sup> by those same staff who brought us to this crisis.<sup>19</sup> Part of that material reality is the fact that over 500 homeless people died between 2005, the year Streets to Homes was implemented, and the end of 2018 (Toronto Homeless Memorial, 2019); OCAP members knew many of them. Understanding SSHA staff as humans who are trying hard and have good intentions does not negate the realities of Toronto's brutal shelter crisis that Toronto, which is, in part, the result of the actions taken by many of these same staff.<sup>20</sup>

Councillor Fletcher and another councillor both indicated that OCAP should express gratitude for what it gets. Councillor Fletcher raised the difficulty of siting shelters and the

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<sup>18</sup> We did win others (see: Palmer & Héroux, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Of course, these staff are not responsible for Toronto's housing crisis but alternate action could have ensured the responses in the shelter system were adequate.

<sup>20</sup> The head of the City's Affordable Housing Office, for example, was present the day that the Pope Squat was brutally evicted and the 30 or so people who lived there were made homeless again without any support from the City (personal conversation, Gaétan Héroux, September 5, 2017).

“pushback” that comes from certain segments of the community. She told me that, when a shelter goes in, OCAP needs to thank SSHA staff for their work; we need to say, “that was good; that worked well; thank you.” Otherwise, according to Councillor Fletcher, “if it looks like they're damned if they do and damned if they don't then that's when you're going to get pushback” (personal interview, Feb. 9, 2018). While she did not say it, I think the need to thank city councillors was implicit in this statement as well as they can face significant “pushback.” Further, at least in some circumstances, it is the job of SSHA staff to site shelters, but city councillors can decide whether to support their placement. Another councillor told me OCAP “need[s] to celebrate the victories” which I also understood as expressing gratitude to City Council and, perhaps, staff. This councillor said they thought “OCAP is unreasonable in its demands” because we want too much too fast – like “‘I want my house to be built in a week,’ ... you’re not even getting your building permits in a week” (personal interview, anonymous). So, OCAP should be happy with the small things that we do get and celebrate those, which, presumably, would involve publicly thanking – or at least positively naming, City Council. Distinct from the actual victories, both councillors seem to be saying that OCAP needs to express our thanks to staff and/or councillors when we get very little – including under circumstances we would consider a loss.<sup>21</sup>

This expectation of gratitude is a kind of epistemic violence that requires a profound cognitive dissonance from OCAP members in several ways. It requires us to not only negate the legacy of and ongoing harm and to accept what we know is profoundly insufficient and will ensure continued suffering but also to smile and say ‘thank you’ for this.<sup>22</sup> Expressing gratitude under these circumstances also requires an acquiescence to a deeply unjust social hierarchy in which homeless people continue to be denigrated – some of whom “ha[ve] been marginalized (literally to death)” (Kennelly, 2009, p. 132).

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<sup>21</sup> Discussing Canadian colonialism, Cindy Blackstock made a similar observation of elected officials: “in their news announcements about like so-called ‘investments in child and family services’ – which are actually in response to court orders – but they leave that out. They want us to be thankful for that – to appreciate them.... There’s this whole thing where we’re supposed to be grateful for being discriminated against” (in Brown, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Some of this expectation may be an attempt to get us to behave like social service agencies or it could be that those people involved in the ruling regime don’t know how to act around or work with anyone who operates under a different model.

Further, councillors and, to a lesser extent, City staff are formally recognized for their work. They are paid (while all but two OCAPers are not), which is a significant form of recognition in a capitalist society. City councillors also get public recognition in many other ways, from their photos on signs to relatively regular media interviews. At the same time, City staff and city councillors will almost certainly not thank OCAP for its work to get whatever OCAP is expected to thank them for. Thus, OCAP is called upon to both erase and devalue its own labour and legitimize ruling relations through our expressions of gratitude.

The epistemic violence of requisite gratitude for continued oppression calls on OCAP to perform more respectably and become more legible to political actors in ruling by being happy with what we get and thanking them when we get it. This is an epistemic violence because it negates our experiences and ourselves. It also works to prop up those same ruling relations OCAP seeks to challenge.

### **Doing Our Best: Claims of Relative, Collective Innocence**

Requisite gratitude is one component of a larger project of innocence making on the part of actors within the ruling regime. By constructing themselves as innocent, city councillors and staff can continue to feel good about their work and recuse themselves from grappling with the real harms caused by the decisions that they make. These claims to innocence also have significant ramifications for shelter campaign proponents with respect to what kinds of evidence we then have to produce to counter SSHA's official narrative. Further, with the system in crisis and those in leadership constructed as innocent, the City needs to create a group to hold responsible; in this case, they scapegoated refugees – which I discuss below.

There is clear evidence in the documentary record that I obtained through freedom of information (FOI) requests that SSAH staff work to inoculate themselves from external critique through claims of relative innocence. With respect to SSHA workers, these claims are made through a “we’re doing the best we can in the roles we have” narrative. One example of this is an email that Director Mary-Anne Bédard sent to 30 people in SSHA, referencing two critical media pieces. One of the articles was a report by OCAP (2016c) called *Out in the Cold* which described the poor conditions in the Out of the Cold system. Bédard (2016) wrote:



I want to encourage you not to take the criticism articulated in these types of stories personally. Our job as public servants is to speak truth to power and put forward the best possible recommendations for Councils (sic) consideration. After that, we (sic) our job is to manage the system we have, as best we can, I know that many of you have worked incredibly hard, in partnership with our community agencies, to ensure that the ECWA [Emergency Cold Weather Alert] Drop-in's are providing safe shelter from the harsh winter weather, and I want you to be proud of your accomplishments this year. (p. 128)

Here, Bedard is telling other SSHA staff to be “proud” for doing the “best we can” within “the system we have.” The claim to relative innocence is in relation to what homeless people would have without SSHA: nothing at all, or, perhaps, jails and other carceral institutions. Doing work they can be proud of, Chapman and I argue, allows helping professionals to occlude the reality that they are agents who perpetuate relations of domination and injustice (Chapman & Withers, 2019).

In another maneuver towards innocence, Bedard's email also renders her and her staff's power invisible through the claim it is their job to “speak truth to power.” Here, Bedard negates how much power she and her staff can wield, from deciding who gets housing to how many shelters will be opened and where. In casting her staff in the heroic role of speakers of truth to power she exceptionalizes herself and SSHA: they do not have power and, therefore, they do not hold responsibility for the failures of the shelter system.

In another instance, an OCAP member wrote a post for OCAP's Facebook page about their experiences at Margaret's respite centre. They described the conditions they saw early one morning: “a sea of green neon blankets across the floor and you could not tell where one space started and another began,” including people having to sleep under tables because it was so crowded, and the staff pulling blankets off of people who were slow to rise (OCAP, 2016b). In response, Alice Broughton (2016),<sup>23</sup> Manager of Community Housing Initiatives, visited Margaret's and crafted an email that was, ultimately, forwarded to a lot of mid- and high-level bureaucrats within SSHA and the Mayor's office. Broughton said she only saw “staff being kind and considerate” (p. 4). And described a far more pleasant, calm, and humane environment than

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<sup>23</sup> I have, to my recollection, never met Broughton. The following is not intended to be a critique of Broughton as a person; rather, it is my intention to draw attention to and critique the discourses circulated within SSHA that are used to create a sense of innocence among SSHA bureaucrats.

OCAP did. It doesn't seem to occur to Broughton that Margaret's staff might behave differently if a SSHA Manager is in the drop-in. It is a reasonable assumption that when SSHA upper management present, Margaret's staff will be on their best behaviour.

The issues that Broughton does flag in her email can be categorized as “we are doing our best” – type claims of relative innocence. Indeed, all the issues she raises she blames on clients. The main issue seems to be that there is one toilet not working but she seems resigned that there can't be much done about it (“it's difficult to deal with people flushing things down the toilet, including their supplies for injecting” [p. 3]).<sup>24</sup> She said two of the three people she spoke to said that they were unable to sleep well there because some people were disrespectful – in a single room with 61 people sleeping there that night. The only issue Broughton follows up on is that the breakfast “didn't seem like much” (p. 3).

Broughton ends her account with: “I am thinking big thoughts – how, if only we could more evenly share the world's resources, what a better place it would be” (p. 5). The use of “if only” indicates an emphatic wish. That there is a great deal of wealth in Toronto that could be redistributed, including through tax increases; that SSHA provides Margaret's with funding that could be increased; that adequate shelter could be opened; that Broughton herself made 35 times – and her boss made 53 times – what a single homeless person on welfare makes that that they could redistribute some of,<sup>25</sup> were all irrelevant. Broughton's “big thoughts” are an articulation of desire, and do not suggest that any action is possible. This expression is a public demonstration of her good intentions, allowing her to claim innocence for her seeming inability to change the material circumstances, which, she makes clear, are not as bad as OCAP says. This claiming of innocence allows her, and by extension SSHA, to distance themselves from any responsibility. She names the uneven distribution of resources as the problem but considers herself in her role at SSHA and the City itself unrelated to both the problem and the solution.

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<sup>24</sup> Another staff person did suggest ensuring there was a sharps disposal in the bathrooms so people weren't flushing injection supplies (Wainberg, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Calculated using basic needs amount for Ontario Works, 2016 (ISAC, 2016) and Broughton's Public Salary Disclosure (Province of Ontario). Rob Cressman became the Acting General Manager. He was replaced by Paul Raftis in early 2017. Raftis would make sixty-one times a homeless single person on OW.

It is important to note not only Broughton is invested in this narrative. Her email was forwarded several times (Abrams, 2016; Broughton, 2016; Wainberg, 2016). Then SSHA General Manager forwarded this email to the Mayor's Office, the Acting Deputy City Manager, and the General Manager of Toronto Employment and Social Services in addition to key SSHA bureaucrats, saying: "I thought you'd find these contrasting perspectives interesting" (Abrams, 2016). The implication, of course, is that the OCAP account is not credible or, at best, is an outlier.

I would like to suggest that SSHA staff are making what Chapman, Hoque, and Utting (2013) call "claims of relative innocence" in these internal documents; they allow City bureaucrats to maintain an "exclusively outward-directed anger and critique leaves little personal agency or responsibility for things in which they had actively participated" (p. 27). Once they situate themselves as innocent, these staff can uncritically continue in their labour which leads to miserable conditions for homeless people.

"Binary good/bad or innocent/guilty ways of understanding people enable [ people] to situate [themselves] squarely on the side of good, as innocent" (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 358). Upper-level bureaucrats at SSHA positioning themselves entirely on the side of "good" enables them to reject evidence that the shelter system is in a greater crisis than they want to believe. For instance, an OCAP press release said, the 24-hour drop-in "location on Adelaide often has had to turn women away" (OCAP, 2017g). Upon reading this, SSHA Director Mary-Ann Bedard (2017c) said that SSHA needed to get the Adelaide numbers because "I see those nightly numbers and note that they are regularly under capacity... 35/50... check the occupancy... as that will be important information to correct" (p. 189, *first two ellipses in original*). The 4 a.m. capacity could regularly be 35, but that does not mean the drop-in was not full many nights from 8 p.m. to midnight, for example. Bedard does not express worry about the human cost of people being turned away; she is simply concerned that there is information that contradicts her own understanding of the situation and, therefore, requires correction.

OCAP's reporting of the situation at Adelaide was based on my conversation with a woman who told me she had been turned away numerous times. While I believed her, I also ran what she said by OCAP members Danielle and Jess, who work in the neighbourhood, to get a sense of the

scope of the problem; they both told me that it had been an issue lately. Unlike Sistering, which goes over capacity in order not to turn people away in the cold, Adelaide shuts its doors to people when it hits its cap. There was no question about if or how often this occurs from Bedard; there was simply an assertion that it isn't happening most of the time (without, it seems, checking whether or not this assertion was true). Bedard based her entire understanding on the textual account from her department. Here, a SSHA Director ignored important and possibly life-threatening information because it contradicted her own investment in her innocence.<sup>26</sup>

Constructing themselves as relatively innocent is also how, at least in part, SSHA staff could be so determined that the DSC numbers were correct. Because they are on the side of good, have good intentions, and therefore are innocent of causing harm, SSHA staff's work, too, is made innocent. While there may be recognition within SSHA that, like all data collection methods, there are limitations to their DSC, because they are 'doing the best they can,' any flaws can be mitigated by their good intentions.

City councillors also constructed SSHA staff as innocent. In addition to taking SSHA staff's knowledge as true, nearly every city councillor I interviewed from across the political spectrum, made note of the good intentions of staff. "City staff do care," Councillor Fletcher told me (personal interview, Feb. 9, 2018). Councillor Cressy said, "These are folks who are saying 'how can I do better?'" He noted that SSHA staff are not in their jobs to advance their careers, like those in many other departments; they are "seeking the same end goal" as OCAP (personal interview, Jan. 18, 2018).<sup>27</sup> For these councillors, SSHA staff's intentions and, for Cressy, their intentions relative to other City staff, are what make them innocent.

To be clear, however, there is a difference between intention and action. I do not doubt the sincerity of the majority of SSHA staff's *wish* that every homeless person was housed *if only* that was possible in their world view. Individual workers' intentions, however, do not make them innocent of the harms they participate in as workers who labour within and on behalf of a ruling regime (see: Chapman & Withers, 2019). For example, in her examination of personal care work,

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<sup>26</sup> How and why experiential knowledge is rejected from OCAP is the subject of the next chapter.

<sup>27</sup> I failed to follow up on the anti-capitalist, decolonial, and anti-oppression politics of people at SSHA, how SSHA staff navigated being revolutionaries working for the City, and what kind of post-revolutionary Toronto he thought most SSHA staff were seeking.

Marie Campbell (2006) uncovered how disabled people's needs would "routinely get subordinated" by institutional priorities (p. 91). While consistency of care for disabled clients was repeatedly top priority, staffing seniority and cost concerns routinely overrode this priority. Campbell found: "we can see how good intentions to serve the public are not enough" (p. 92).

Having positioned SSHA staff as innocent, councillors and the Mayor tended to position themselves as innocent as well. For example, Councillor Ford told me: "we did the best job we could, given the circumstances" (personal interview, March 1, 2018). Implicit here is that they could have done better under different circumstances: yet, the central circumstance limiting City Council was the budget in which it refused to raise property taxes beyond inflation (Pagliaro, 2017a). The Mayor (2017) also maintained his own 'best we can' innocence narrative: while refusing to open more emergency shelter spaces or add sufficient resources to the shelter system, he claimed, "we are doing everything we can to keep people safe" (n.p.).<sup>28</sup> This claim of relative innocence is enabled through the epistemic violence perpetrated against homeless people by the ruling regime. It enables SSHA staff, the Mayor and a number of city councillors to manage the contradiction between their personal belief they are doing good and their refusal to implement anywhere near the changes that OCAP and other activists said were necessary.

I have argued that those individuals making decisions about the shelter system within the ruling regime are invested in relative claims of innocence. This has allowed them to disregard evidence about the state of the shelter system and their own culpability in the harms caused within it. In the next two sections, I will discuss additional ramifications of these claims, specifically, the higher evidentiary burden that is required of shelter campaign supporters and the shifting of blame for the crisis onto the refugee population.

### *The Standard of Proof*

The investment in innocence on the part of SSHA and city councillors is an additional reason, beyond testimonial injustice and institutional gaslighting, that OCAP and our allies have such a high evidentiary burden to overcome these injustices and enter the realm of believability. In law, "standard of proof" means "the level of certainty and the degree of evidence necessary"

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<sup>28</sup> This is from a reply that Tory made to a letter over 30 agencies signed calling for an increase in shelter beds.

to convince the trier of fact (“Standard of proof,” n.d.). Because of our devaluation in the moral economy, position outside of the ruling regime, and the implications for city councillors in relation to their own relative claims of innocence, I argue that there is a fundamentally higher standard of proof for OCAP and our allies than there is for SSHA.

In early 2018, shelter advocates began putting out evidence that did not hinge on the credibility of those bringing it forward. Both OCAP and long-time homeless advocate Doug Johnson Hatlem released two recordings that directly refuted the City’s account of the shelter situation. Hatlem made an audio recording of a City employee telling him that there were no shelter beds available and the only space he could go was Peter Street. At that time, however, there was space in the newly opened Better Living Centre. The Mayor also continued to claim the Better Living Centre had room. Once the Moss Park Armoury opened (a significant but short-lived victory in the shelter campaign), one of its residents, Debi OKane, provided Hatlem with secretly recorded footage. The footage shows a man in medical crisis left unattended to and who had had his medication thrown away by City staff, according to OKane. This footage highlighted the dire conditions of the respite sites.

These conditions were further illustrated in February 2018, when Gaétan Héroux, Beric German and a freelance journalist named Paul Salvatori went into several respite sites. Paul, wearing eyeglasses with a video camera embedded in them, filmed the conditions. OCAP gave the footage to a CTV reporter as an exclusive; other media outlets then picked the story up through that story or OCAP’s press release. Press releases are a one-page explanation of the issues, including quotes that the media can draw from. They are a way that OCAP and other social movement organizations work to frame their issues for the media. Part of the social relations of struggle is the contested field of framing mainstream media messaging.

OCAP (2018b) also made a three-and-a-half-minute video that we posted on YouTube so the people could see for themselves. This video included facts about the shelter system, including how full the system *actually* was and what the conditions were *actually* like. The short, shaky video captured the conditions of the Better Living Centre (BLC): staff behind a chain-link cage, lights on all night, one giant room with 115 people sleeping crowded together in it. The first sound on the video is when Paul walks into the BLC and a whisper an exasperated “*fuck*” as he

takes in the conditions of the site. Then we hear two people in a dispute, one says the other has threatened him – they are speaking quite loudly as those around them try to sleep. Gaétan, Beric, and Paul also went into Margaret’s – both the All Saints Church side and the main site. There, too, people are lying on the floor with little space between them; so close, in fact, that it appears some people’s blankets are touching the mats of the people beside them. The video says: “This doesn’t meet City shelter standards or UN standards for refugee camps.” At All Saints, it is loud and cold – the video says: “temperatures drop to 14°C” (OCAP, 2018b). OCAP had been describing the terrible conditions of these spaces for months, but now we could show people.

Here OCAP had concrete evidence that could not easily be dismissed. This video was the product of activist research and knowledge production; with it, we were able to challenge the ruling regime’s narrative. SSHA tried to spin the video’s content in their response to CBC reporter Muriel Draaisma, which I learned about through a FOI request. For example, very bright lights in the video at Margaret’s and parts of the BLC, are described by SSHA spokesperson, Pat Anderson, saying: “lights [are] dimmed and people [are] settling in for the night” (Anderson, 2018b, p. 120) The CBC reporter did not report this line of argument. She did, however, report SSHA’s counter to the claims in the video about the low temperatures at All Saints, saying: “temperatures at a number of the winter respite sites are reported to SSHA daily”; she then provides temperatures from that day and the previous day without actually addressing OCAP’s knowledge that the temperatures do indeed drop as low as 14°C (Anderson, 2018a).<sup>29</sup> Staff behind a chain-link cage became “fenced walls... to delineate an office space” (Anderson, 2018a). Nonetheless, SSHA could not deny the actual reality of the images themselves.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Other issues with this statement from SSHA are: 1) they do not say Margaret’s reports temperatures to SSHA, just that a number of sites do; 2) if Margaret’s does report its temperatures to SSHA, it has a financial incentive to misrepresent those numbers; 3) temperatures on February 11 and 12, 2018 were not especially cold, with lows of -4.4°C, -2.8°C and -6.4, respectively for the dates and times provided by SSHA to the CBC (Environment and Climate Change Canada, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

<sup>30</sup> In the official response from SSHA to the CBC, Pat Anderson (2019a) said: “It is generally considered inappropriate to take secret pictures of vulnerable people in what should be considered private space.” OCAP edited the raw footage together and blurred out people’s faces to ensure people were not identifiable. We were, then, in a position of being gaslit and disbelieved when we gave our experiential evidence and condemned when we provided video evidence.

CDRC members did not weigh the two sets of evidence against each other in making a determination about shelter occupancy and conditions based on the evidence, known as ordinary proof or a finding on the balance of probabilities (i.e. one is more likely than the other) (Wexler & Cameron, 2009). City councillors and members of the mainstream media (as I will discuss momentarily) demonstrate “strong deference” to SSHA staff (T. Ward, 2017, p. 264). This is a form of “epistemic deference” (T. Ward, 2017) that is, I would argue, rooted in “credibility excess” (Fricker, 2002, p. 17). Strong deference to epistemic authority is an uncritical acceptance of expert opinion (Ward, 2017). For SSHA, I would argue, the standard of proof is below the standard in ordinary proof: they introduce a report with data, and it is accepted.

Continuing the use of standard of proof, I would like to suggest that City Council approaches OCAP and our allies’ knowledge as if it is an accusation of guilt against SSHA. Here, like in a Canadian courtroom,<sup>31</sup> the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty. “Proof of guilt weighs one case against a fixed standard which is outside the case before the court... [which] does not vary with the circumstances” (Wexler & Cameron, 2009). Here, the standard of proof is much higher, requiring either proof “beyond a reasonable doubt” or “clear and convincing evidence” (Wexler & Cameron, 2009).<sup>32</sup> What is concerning is that shelter campaign proponents have to overcome both epistemic injustice and provide irrefutable evidence to have *individual* instances of problems with the shelter system recognized.

The application of grossly different standards of proof is an epistemic injustice layered on other epistemic injustices. The testimonial evidence of shelter campaign proponents – especially OCAP – is invalidated because of who we are, and we are institutionally gaslit by being told that our experiences are not real. On top of this, we must prove our case to a very high standard, a much higher standard than SSHA staff, another epistemic injustice. This is, at least in part, because SSHA staff claim relative innocence and are accepted as such by city councillors. In turn, City Council and the Mayor root at least part of their own relative innocence in SSHA

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<sup>31</sup> Of course, some people are assumed more innocent than others, if they are truly assumed innocent at all, based on their position in the moral economy. There is clear evidence of widespread discrimination in the legal system against Indigenous people, Black people, and people of colour.

<sup>32</sup> The difference between these two standards are not of concern here, nor is the legitimacy of ‘clear and convincing’ as a standard proof of concern (see Wexler & Cameron, 2009).



staff's claim of relative innocence and on the reliability of SSHA's data, and that SSHA staff, whom they are responsible for, are "doing their best under the circumstances." Nevertheless, as the shelter campaign progressed, OCAP and other allies escalated our epistemic tactics as well as our protest tactics, and were able to make the disjuncture between lived experience and City sanctioned reality more visible through audio and video recordings.

*Then Whose Fault is it? Scapegoating Refugees*

The City's investment in its own innocence had far reaching implications. While the ruling regime was often able to maintain its assertions about shelter occupancy and conditions, it was not consistently able to contain the reality that the system was not in crisis. Returning to the binary innocent/guilty ways of thinking, by constructing themselves as innocent, SSHA bureaucrats and the rest of the ruling regime needed to provide an explanation for why there was crisis at all. Refugees and asylum seekers<sup>33</sup> – and, to a lesser extent, the federal government – were constructed as guilty by the ruling regime.

SSHA staff began ringing alarm bells about the number of refugees in the shelter system in 2017. A SSHA (2017a) report, *Managing Refugee Flows*, said that Toronto had experienced a surge in refugees, beginning in 2015. It claimed, "these surges and their unpredictability create significant pressures on the shelter system, often stretching the system's capacity beyond its limits" (p. 1). It stated that there had been "spikes in both 2001 and 2007 [that] resulted in increased demand for emergency shelter services" and that contemporary situation was a similar phenomenon (p. 6). The City's 2018 *Street Needs Assessment* (SNA) perpetuated this rhetoric. The SNA made several strong claims about refugees in the shelter system; however, on closer examination, these findings cannot be fully substantiated. The SNA found that "40% of respondents staying in City-administered shelters are refugee/asylum claimants" (p. 3, emphasis added). However, the question put to respondents pertains specifically to the immigration category they came to Canada under (i.e. immigrant, refugee, etc.) – not their current status.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the report can only conclude that '40 percent of respondents staying in City-

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<sup>33</sup> While there is a legal distinction between a *Convention* refugee and a refugee claimant/asylum seeker, the discussion almost never made this distinction; consequently, I will simply use the term "refugees" here unless it was otherwise stipulated.

<sup>34</sup> The actual question was: "Did you come to Canada as an immigrant, refugee, or refugee claimant?" (p.54).

administered shelters *were* refugee/asylum claimants *at one point in their lives*. Indeed, the average length of time migrants had been in Canada at the time of the report was 9 years.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, the first “key finding” listed in this SSHA report is: “the number of people homeless in Toronto is due, in large part, to a significant increase in refugee/asylum claimants (City of Toronto, 2018b, p. 3). This finding is not methodologically sound and the 2018 SNA falsely inflated the number of homeless refugees.<sup>36</sup>

This rhetoric was also adopted both by the Mayor and at City Council. The Mayor spoke on the Council floor of “the pressures in the system because of the space occupied by refugees and asylum seekers” (in Toronto City Council, 2018c).<sup>37</sup> Additionally, two city councillors, James Pasternak, the CDRC Chair, and a councillor who wanted to remain anonymous, also raised concerns about the situation “south of the border” (a supposed influx of asylum seekers via the United States) as a cause for concern (personal interview, James Pasternak, Feb. 20, 2018; anonymous).

Mayor John Tory spoke on the Council floor about the burden of the refugees on the shelter system a year less a day after he reaffirmed the City’s “Sanctuary City” policy (Fox, 2017; Toronto City Council, 2018c). “Sanctuary City,” means that people without immigration status are supposed to be able to access services without being asked their status and without their status being passed on to Canada Border Security Agency (No One is Illegal Toronto, n.d.). When the policy was reaffirmed, Tory said Toronto is “a place of inclusion and acceptance, where people are welcomed and valued” (in Fox, 2017, n.p.). This wasn’t apparent over the

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<sup>35</sup> Information for refugees was not tabulated separately than other migrants.

<sup>36</sup> It did not compare 2013 and 2018 SNA data, but instead used 2013 data from the City’s Shelter Management Information System (SMIS). People were asked either their reason for homelessness or their immigration status for the 2013 numbers (SSHA, 2009) and their reason for coming to Canada for 2018. This means that many people who would have become citizens or landed residents or who were not homeless because they were refugees would not have been counted as refugees in 2013 but those same people would have been considered refugees in 2018.

<sup>37</sup> In this context, he was speaking about complaints he hears from shelter users when he visits shelters. This is a common xenophobic, racist refrain we hear at OCAP from shelter users as well – it is almost always accompanied with misinformation about how much money refugees receive from the federal government (typically based on white supremacist, anti-immigrant sources). When we encounter it in OCAP, we typically talk about what the causes of the shelter crisis actually are, from our view. Instead, Mayor Tory legitimized this line of argument.

coming months as poor refugees were increasingly victim blamed for being homeless and scapegoated for the shelter crisis.

Here, we can begin to understand how racism and anti-migrant sentiment are socially organized. City staff conducted a report and that report is used to mobilize already existing xenophobia and white supremacy. The report was conducted because, according to SSHA spokesperson Pat Anderson, “people wanted to know” how many refugees there were using the shelters *and where they were coming from*. Anderson told me that asking if someone was a refugee was in alignment with the Sanctuary City policy because “we don’t ask status, we ask reason for service” – this just happens to be the same thing sometimes (personal conversation, Oct. 20, 2017). So already drawing from the anti-migrant racism – either SSHA decided to do the report or it was requested by one or more councillors and the report, using faulty statistics, could then further legitimize this racism.

In addition to their vulnerability as, often, a poor, and traumatized population with little support and low English literacy levels, refugees make an ideal scapegoat because they create the opportunity for politicians to play a favourite game: “jurisdictional ping pong” (Graham & Peters, 2002, p. 12).<sup>38</sup> Here the City can place blame onto the federal government with the claim that refugees are its jurisdiction, which City Council did when it requested that the federal government “pay for all necessary resources, including affordable housing and shelter costs, for any refugees that have moved to Toronto over the last three years” (Toronto City Council, 2017d).

One of the many problems in this game of “jurisdictional ping pong” is that the ball is a group of people being bounced back and forth between governments – in this case homeless migrants.

OCAP publicly accused the City of scapegoating refugees:

The Mayor and a number of councillors blamed refugees’ use of shelters for the pressures on the system... The current shelter crisis is a product of the worsening housing crisis, low social assistance rates, declining incomes, and the ongoing failure of council to address the shortage of shelter spaces. Shelter use has increased dramatically across all sectors since 2015. The percentage of refugees in the shelter

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<sup>38</sup> It is not my intention to diminish the specificity Graham and Peters intend in its original context with this metaphor in relation to urban Indigenous people and colonialism by adopting it with respect to refugees here.

system is comparable to years past. Their numbers were simply artificially low under the Harper regime because of its regressive immigration policies. Blaming refugees for a crisis that all three levels of government are responsible for creating is reprehensible, can only increase xenophobic violence, and must be viscerally opposed. (OCAP, 2017q)

OCAP and our allies demanded that the crisis be dealt with rather than blamed on a group of particularly vulnerable homeless people. Deputing at the CDRC for the shelter campaign, frontline shelter worker Emily Green challenged this scapegoating, saying, “you’re responsible,” while waiving her open hand across the room, to the councillors: “our policy makers and those who are deciding on our budget for shelters are responsible” (Toronto City Council, 2017a). Her testimony included multiple, documented accounts of people refused shelter.

The City’s narrative that refugees were responsible for the shelter crisis was largely accepted by the mainstream media (e.g.: Levy, 2017a; Ngabo, 2017; Shum, 2018; Warnica et al., 2018). It was also used to fuel a discourse of “deserving” and “undeserving” amongst a number of poor and homeless people that I spoke with. This discourse re-inscribed longstanding denigrations of certain kinds of poor people, in this case— primarily racialized migrants, as the “undeserving” poor within the moral economy (as discussed in Chapter 2). I have argued that this occurred because SSHA bureaucrats, city councillors, and the Mayor constructed themselves as relatively innocent and, consequently, needed to construct someone as guilty. Homeless refugees, already denigrated in the moral economy – and increasingly so with a rise of anti-immigrant, xenophobic and white supremacist rhetoric – were an easy target.

## **Conclusion**

There is a clear line of fault between the experiential knowledge of those of us who have worked on the shelter campaign and that of the City, which has maintained its claims that there is space in the system while begrudgingly admitting that there are serious problems. Of course, there has always been a simple solution to the numbers conflict. Rather than counting beds at 4am (or in addition to it), SSHA could track the number of real people who cannot access beds. This would give SSHA a true picture of how many people are seeking beds that they cannot access. It is possible that this would require expensive improved or new software; it is also possible that SSHA does not want to know this information, as the Daily Shelter Census benefits

SSHA and its narrative. Instead, SSHA and City Council have engaged in multiple practices to denigrate and suppress the knowledge of homeless people, OCAP, and our allies, including through testimonial injustice, institutional gaslighting and requisite gratitude. SSHA staff and city councillors have constructed themselves as relatively innocent – negating responsibility for the harms they are implicated in and, in turn, scapegoating homeless refugees for the shelter crisis.

However, OCAP and our allies resisted the epistemic injustice that SSHA staff and city councillors perpetrated against us. We organized against the scapegoating of refugees. OCAP's protests also used disruption to open space for us to speak about our knowledges in official spaces in unofficial ways. OCAP and other shelter campaign proponents refused to be silenced by the ruling regimes practices. In the next chapter, I will discuss the shelter campaign in detail, the mechanisms of the ruling regime used to try to demobilize it, and how OCAP responded.

## Chapter 7: The Struggle for Shelter: The Campaign, Mobilization and Demobilization

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*Why are we angry? 30 years of watching these people die on the streets!... 30 years you leave us there watching them!*

~ Gaétan Héroux, Dec. 6, 2017  
OCAP disruption of City Council Meeting

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### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the ongoing line of fault between the ruling regime and OCAP regarding shelter occupancy and conditions and the related epistemological issues and injustices. That chapter discusses the epistemic issues that underwrite the campaign and what we are fighting about during the period in question. This chapter examines the campaign itself. I argue that the ruling regime deployed an arsenal of tactics geared at demobilizing the shelter campaign and examine how the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness' forged alignment with the City was used in this attempt to demobilize the campaign.

The shelter campaign worked to create better conditions and more beds in the shelter system. It could be argued that this is a relatively continuous campaign. OCAP held a tent city, named Mulroneville, after Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, in August 1991 – just a year after the organization was founded (Palmer & Héroux, 2016). In 1999, OCAP organized a 'Safe Park' in Allan Gardens – this tent city was a safe place homeless people could stay because shelters were full (Gordon, 1999; Palmer & Héroux, 2016). These are just two examples of the organization's continued fight for housing and shelter through its 30-year history. The social and political context,<sup>1</sup> however, has meant that there can be concentrated focuses or specific campaigns within this broader struggle. In this chapter, I will focus on a wave of struggle from September 2016 to April 2018 (a timeline of the campaign can be found at Appendix 4d).

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<sup>1</sup> Some NMST scholars (e.g. McAdam, 1982; Sawyers & Meyer, 1999; Tarrow, 2011) would frame these as political opportunities and some, like a vulnerable Mayor or city councillor, clearly are. However, OCAP, I would argue would find it very problematic to frame some things, such as the deaths of homeless people or overcrowding of shelters, as 'opportunities' even if they may be framed that way within normative social movement theory.

In October, 2016, there was a “dangerous level of overcrowding in Toronto’s homeless shelters” (OCAP, 2016c, n.p.). Nevertheless, the City was planning to close Seaton House, the largest homeless shelter in the country (Héroux & Palmer, 2017b). In response, and beginning this period, OCAP held a Speakers Series in October 2016 called “No One Out in the Cold” where Street Nurse and activist Cathy Crowe spoke about the Shelter Crisis. Building on the public education from the event and increasing concern about the shelter crisis converging with the cold weather, OCAP organized a larger event. This was a gala screening of *Bursting at the Seams* (Garrett, 2016) in front of Mayor Tory’s multi-million-dollar condo. The film, co-produced by Rebecca Garrett, OCAP and Sanctuary,<sup>2</sup> is a short documentary about Toronto’s shelter and housing crisis. OCAP went to the Mayor’s condo because, according to OCAP Organizer John Clarke, he is responsible for people’s homelessness “so we thought it appropriate to come here and counterpose that to the luxury Tory lives in” (quoted in Gray-Donald, 2016, n.p.). We returned to Tory’s condo twice more: in February 2017, a few days after the death of Pierre Gregoire, a homeless man who died after leaving a drop-in without room for him to sleep, and once in April 2017, for a sleep-out demanding more shelter beds.

The campaign demands evolved as the shelter situation evolved. For the April 22 sleep-out, for example, we demanded:

The city must open 1000 new shelter beds to bring shelter occupancy rates down to a manageable level. Given winter spaces have closed, the city must also immediately add 300 beds in armouries, gyms or other public spaces that can offer showers, enough bathrooms and meet basic shelter standards. (OCAP, 2017k, para. 2, see Illustration 7.1)

The number 1,000 was arrived at after carefully considering the number of people sleeping rough (as estimated by the City), how many beds were needed to bring the system down to 90% and how many spaces were respite, drop-in or Out of the Cold – which are inadequate and temporary. OCAP also demanded that a number of these beds become low barrier beds to serve groups who struggle to access the standard shelter system. By January 2018, we increased this to 1,500 beds (see Appendix 12: Written Deputation to Jan. 17, 2018 CDRC Meeting for rationale). At the time, a small group of us did the math based on the previous methodology that OCAP members

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<sup>2</sup> Garrett (2001) also co-produced *Safe Park* with OCAP, Park which can be viewed on YouTube; Sanctuary is a direct service organization that provides means, drop-ins, etc.

Danielle Koyama and Jess Hales had developed. We knew that the 1,500 demand was an underestimate; however, it was the easiest to justify because we used concrete City numbers. Further, as Jess Hales put it, OCAP was “trying to make sure that our numbers d[id]n't appear grossly high – just for even credibility” (personal interview, Feb. 3, 2018). One OCAP member described our approach to our demands:

our politics are, fundamentally... very radical but the demands that OCAP puts forward are not radical at all... When we ask for 1,500 or 3,000 shelter beds, that is need that's identified in the City - it's not a pie in the sky number. (personal interview, anonymous)

Nevertheless, one city councillor told me OCAP’s “been hard at us to you know now it is 1,500 beds I think the number has increased to 1,500 beds now” (personal interview, anonymous).

While we were thorough, even conservative, in establishing the demand for the beds, it was still dismissed as asking for too much by this councillor and, as the Council voting record shows, a number of other councillors as well (Toronto City Council, 2017b, 2018i).

OCAP’s demands are known as a form of “prognostic framing.” The concept of frames can be useful as “they function like picture frames, *focusing attention*,” (Snow et al., 2018, p. 393). A prognostic frame includes the demands that the campaign puts forward – what needs to be done and who is to do it to remedy the problem (Snow & Benford, 1988; Snow et al., 2018). Prognostic framing also involves “a plan of attack and the frame-consistent tactics for carrying it out, and often a refutation of the opponent’s current or proposed solutions” (Snow et al., 2018, p. 396). The April 22<sup>nd</sup> Sleep-out flyer (Illustrations 7.1) contains these elements. It condemns the current circumstances under which homeless people are forced to live and the budget Mayor John Tory passed which included tax-breaks for “rich multi-million dollar property owners such as himself” and cuts for social housing and shelters (OCAP, 2017k, p. 2). The tactic, sleeping in front of the Mayor’s condominium, is consistent with the frame.

Part of what OCAP members tend to call “messaging” in my interviews and conversations with them was also what Snow and Benford (1988) call “diagnostic framing” and is evident in the above flyer as well. Diagnostic framing involves identifying the problem and who is responsible (Snow et al., 2018; Snow & Benford, 1988). For the shelter campaign, the problem is articulated as overcrowding in the shelters and the municipal government is



responsible. This does not mean that OCAP’s analysis of capitalism and the housing crisis were lost, simply that these were not the primary diagnostic frames for the campaign.

OCAP organized numerous events and actions during this period to try to win our demands. Figure 7.1 depicts the number of protests and events that were organized by OCAP.<sup>3</sup> In **Illustration 7.1 April 22nd Flyer**

**No More Homeless Deaths!**

**Shelter Now**  
One homeless person is dying every 10 days. This must stop.

See over for details ---->

**Toronto’s homeless crisis by the numbers:**

- 90** people died as a result of homelessness in the last two years; one every 10 days
- 300** people on average slept on mats, chairs or floors every night at warming centres, drop ins, or 'Out of the Cold' facilities this past winter. Many of these facilities, now closed for the year, do not provide showers and lack sufficient bathrooms.
- 4,150** shelter beds will be made available by the city in 2017
- 5,000+** were estimated to be homeless in 2013; the number has since gone up.
- 16,000** people used the shelter system in 2016
- 99,000+** households languish on Toronto's social housing waiting list. The wait times now exceed a decade.
- 10 million** dollars have been siphoned away from homelessness and homelessness prevention programs since 2013. See our website for details.

Decreasing incomes and skyrocketing rents are pushing ever more people into homelessness. Chronic overcrowding, bug-infested dormitories and recurrent spread of contagious diseases plague the city’s emergency shelter system. Many people are forced to risk death by sleeping on the streets.

Under these circumstances, Mayor John Tory implemented a budget that gave rich multi-million dollar property owners such as himself a break while cutting budgets for public housing and emergency shelters (and long-term care homes, transit, and more).

The city must open 1000 new shelter beds to bring shelter occupancy rates down to a manageable level. Given winter spaces have closed, the city must also immediately add 300 beds in armouries, gyms or other public spaces that can offer showers, enough bathrooms and meet basic shelter standards. It has the resources to do so.

**OCAP**  
Come with us to the follow-up delegation:  
Tuesday, April 25, 10:30am, Toronto City Hall  
Meet us by Toronto sign in the square

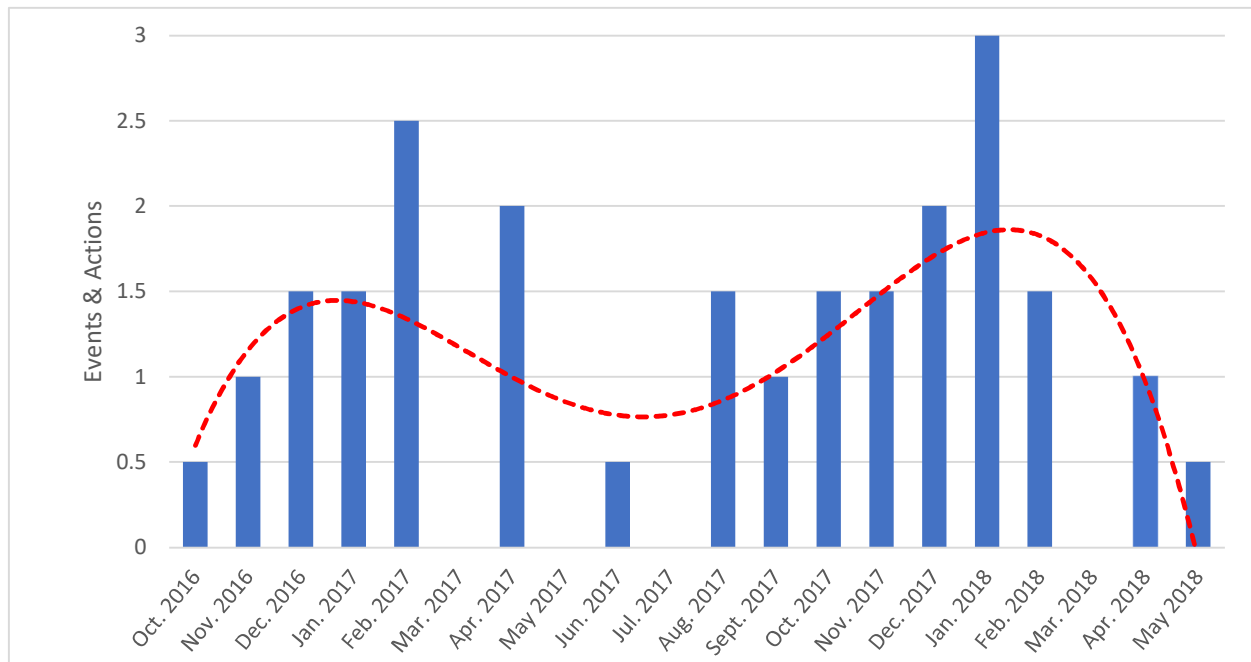
**Ontario Coalition Against Poverty**  
416-925-6939 | ocap.ca

*Illustration 7.1: Flyer is a rendition of Mayor John Tory’s condo building with people camped in front of it. The Mayor says: “so unfair” from the penthouse. The flyer is mocking him for saying it was unfair of OCAP to attend his home previously. Art by A.J. Withers.*

<sup>3</sup> Protests include rallies, speak-outs, demonstrations and vigils; events include press conferences, Speakers’ Series, and non-disruptive deputations, etc.

2017, the campaign held the largest number of events and protests in February, with a protest against Mayor Tory’s proposed budget cuts to the shelter system and a vigil for the death of Pierre Gregoire. The number of protests and events, however, does not capture the strategy involved in building them, how much outreach the organization did for each, etc. So, while February 2017 looks like the most significant month that year, and was certainly impactful, OCAP continued to mobilize people, building towards the sleep-out at Tory’s condo in April.

**Figure 7.1: Shelter Campaign Protests and Events by Month**



*Protests generally have more organizational labour and importance, so I gave them a value of 1 and I gave events a value of 0.5.*

Indeed, the shelter campaign is made up of two smaller waves, both peaking in the cold winter months. Figure 7.1 clearly demonstrates this. As the numbers of homeless people continued to climb in Toronto and the availability of shelter beds and respite spaces seemed less and less, OCAP began to build its campaign. In the trough of the 2016/2017 wave, we tried to maintain and broaden the relationships we had built with allies. We also worked to raise alarm bells early about what we knew would be the worst winter the City had ever seen. In June 2017, we organized 16 deputations at City Hall, including many frontline workers; we told the

Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) the “Winter readiness” plan was insufficient (Toronto City Council, 2017a). There, not only were we subjected to the usual and expected epistemic injustices, discussed in the previous chapter, but also two progressive councillors, Mihevc and Cressy, scolded us for the position we took. At the beginning of the day, Councillor Mihevc told me that we needed to support the plan. He said, “we are getting \$6 million.” Not only was the money not enough, “we” weren’t “getting” anything, the report was requesting funds.

How could a city councillor consider City staff requesting more funds a victory when City Council was supposed to oversee staff and could give more funds if it saw fit? This disjuncture, however, exposes something about how ruling relations work. While City staff are technically beholden to City Council, Councillor Mihevc indicated that he is beholden to City staff. This is in addition to the strong deference, discussed in the previous chapter, on which city councillors uncritically accept City staff’s opinion as a result. While it is the CDRC and City Council that direct SSHA, this disjuncture reveals that, at least in some instances, it is SSHA staff that coordinate the activities of the elected government.

The strategy behind making deputations isn’t simply to be heard through the formal democratic process. I would argue that OCAP takes institutional avenues, at various points in its campaigns, so it can say that it did – as a means of legitimizing the nearly always necessary disruption that will follow. While OCAP is a direct action organization, it cannot simply rush into direct action without attempting to resolve an issue through another route first. or, OCAP would be accused of being unnecessarily antagonistic and militant. Further, the City has official channels through which it much do things; it must pass motions, for example. So, if we want something done, there has to be a corresponding motion.<sup>4</sup>

The shelter crisis intensified that summer and the number of homeless opiate overdose deaths climbed. In August, we held a “BBQ and Rally for Shelter & Housing” at Allan Gardens park at Carlton and Sherbourne – directly across from the OCAP office. Recognizing the profound grief in the community and need to build struggle, we brought people together under

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<sup>4</sup> It used to be that the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee would play this role much more but OCAP had to take this on when the TDRC disbanded.

the metaphorical and physical banner “Mourn the Dead, Fight Like Hell for the Living.” Two people stood at the 19-foot-long banner with markers; their job was to help people write the names of the homeless people they have lost on the yellow fabric. This job was harder than it looked, a member later told me. They “heard a lot of very meaningful [and] the very heartbreaking stories... it was lovely and difficult at the same time” (anonymous).

Gaétan Héroux, who has worked with OCAP for decades and as a frontline worker with poor people for even longer, was one of the speakers. When Gaétan speaks, it is grounded in the day-to-day experiences of the neighbourhood. I don’t know that I have ever seen him speak about homelessness without watching his grief and anger well up in him. He often tries to hold back his tears as he movingly tells a crowd the reality of poverty in Toronto’s Downtown Eastend. He often fails. So do I. He said:

Everyone in this park right now can name a person who’s died on these streets. I can name hundreds of people that have died on these streets. Hundreds of people! Hundreds of people! And people here – if you were to go up to people and you would ask ‘do you have a friend who has died on these streets?’ They would say: ‘Yes.’ Richard Roy in 1996 – just over here. Jeff Holly Homes. Roxanne just over here. I can go on and on and on and... recently we’ve had these ODs. We had Carl White who died in the back alley when he OD’d – a 27-year-old when he died. So, the hell - we’re going to watch our people die on our streets. We need to have the most basic stuff to live. We need housing. We need enough income. And, we’re gonna fight for that. (Héroux, 2017)

And fight we did. The next six months would be the hardest many of us had fought, the hardest many of us had organized in years. We organized large and small events, some of which are discussed later in this chapter and all of which can be found in the timeline (Appendix 4d).

Finally, in November, we had a victory at City Hall. Like for the June meeting before it, we had organized a significant number of knowledgeable people to depute at the CDRC meeting. Unlike the June deputations, where the councillors we would expect to be on-side with OCAP and, especially, our allies were openly hostile, however, several councillors introduced motions paralleling our demands. After nine allies and Gaétan from OCAP deputed, critical motions were passed. Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam put forward a motion that City Council request that the Mayor declare an emergency (this would invoke in new powers and funds) and make a request to the federal government for the use of the armouries. Councillor Wong-Tam also moved that new

respites be opened and the City change its shelter siting criteria. All of Councillor Wong-Tam's motions passed with all but one Councillor (Michael Ford) voting in favour. Councillor Joe Mihevc moved that 1,000 new shelter beds be opened in 2018; it passed unanimously (Toronto City Council, 2017b). While TAEH had been present that day supporting SSHA plan that we argued was almost entirely inadequate, the CDRC was finally addressing the crisis.

I asked the councillors I interviewed what had changed for them between June and November that they were now supporting many of our demands. Councillor Joe Cressy told me "most Torontonians have never been in a drop-in and so suddenly they were seeing photos" (personal interview, Jan. 18, 2018). He was likely referring to an op-ed article that OCAP member Jess Hales wrote in the *Toronto Star* the month before. The article condemned the City for "ignoring Toronto's shelter crisis" and was accompanied by a large photo of a crowded drop-in with people sleeping on the floor so close to each other that they appear to be touching (Hales, 2017, n.p.). One of the things Jess wrote about was the Peter Street referral centre, the place where people go when there is nowhere else, unexpectedly closing one night in September due to a "mistake" (Katawazi, 2017, n.p.). OCAP (2017g) held a speak-out at Peter Street a week after it closed, publicizing it had happened and that "politicians and bureaucrats can no longer look away and underplay the problem. A system that has been horribly crowded and grossly inadequate is at the point of collapse" (n.p.).

In addition to the Peter Street closure and subsequent press and protest, Councillor Cressy also stressed that councillors were hearing from people other than OCAP, which was significant:

we always heard OCAP calling for more, more investments, but then [councillors] started to hear voices they haven't always heard - some of the Out of the Cold providers being much more vocal, the Bishop from the Anglican Diocese... - so it was like holy cow this is at a new level. (personal interview, Jan. 18, 2018)<sup>5</sup>

Both the number and outspokenness of the allies in the shelter campaign was growing and, according to councillors I interviewed, was having an impact. This is both demonstrative that OCAP's strategy of working with allies was effective and, again, of the epistemic injustice

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<sup>5</sup> I could not find a record of a Bishop speaking out about the Toronto shelter crisis. It is possible they had a private conversation or correspondence. However, he is likely referring to Maggie Helwig, Anglican Priest, Poverty Reduction Committee, Anglican Diocese who is a longstanding and outspoken ally of OCAP.

perpetrated by city councillors – even those who claim to be progressive. What Councillor Cressy is saying of the CDRC is that how correct OCAP was was irrelevant as long as the message came from OCAP alone.

Councillor Mihevc also told me that he heard something new that persuaded him to support the influx of new resources into the shelter system. He said, he recalled a deputant from Sistering, referring to Patricia O’Connell the Executive Director and the only person speaking from Sistering that day, “she was very convincing” (personal interview, March 2, 2018).<sup>6</sup> In June, Teya Greenberg spoke from Sistering and delivered a very similar message to O’Connell’s (Toronto City Council, 2017a). Mihevc, however, did not find Greenberg “very convincing.” Perhaps Councillor Mihevc required the legitimacy of an Executive Director title to believe a deputant – an epistemic injustice towards Greenberg. Even still, the councillor told me he asked SSHA General Manager about what was said: “Is this real? Do you have any reason to dispute these numbers? And Paul Raftis said: ‘No, it’s true’” (personal interview, March 2, 2018) Thus it was only with validation of shelter campaign proponents’ knowledge by actors within the ruling regime that the councillor found this knowledge credible. The construction of legitimacy and credibility was a critical terrain of struggle.

Having won at the CDRC, there was only one more step until the beds we needed had been secured, on paper at least. OCAP called a demonstration for the morning of December 5<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the City Council meeting, to make sure our motions passed. However, the Mayor held a press conference on December 3<sup>rd</sup> saying he was putting forward a motion for 400 spaces (mats, cots or beds). Our protest went ahead – much angrier than we anticipated it being. The Mayor’s motion passed and the other, positive, CDRC motions were defeated.

We continued to build the campaign. The Mayor was forced to back down and ask the Federal Government to open the Moss Park Armoury in January (City of Toronto, 2018d); he

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<sup>6</sup> Returning to epistemic injustice, I want to note Mihevc’s use of the word “convincing,” rather than, perhaps, ‘compelling,’ signifies an inherent distrust of the shelter campaign deputants – a testimonial injustice. Secondly, at the June depositions, a speaker from Sistering spoke who I found very convincing and, more importantly, compelling. Teya Greenberg did this even though she was interrupted at two-and-a-half-minutes and told she was out of time (she continued another two minutes). However, Teya is not the Executive Director (Toronto City Council, 2017a), she does not have the same status in the moral economy and, consequently, before the CDRC.

also opened the Better Living Centre (BLC) respite as well (City of Toronto, 2017d). This was a major victory for us; but it was short-lived. The armoury closed after only three weeks and the BLC closed in April (City of Toronto, 2018d). In January, we rallied outside of the City Council Executive Committee meeting. We disrupted the meeting with loud chants, banging on the windows and, at one point, a few folks went in and yelled. We held another protest in February, coinciding with the City Council meeting. There, a 1,000-bed motion was won! OCAP summarized the campaign, saying the organization and our allies had:

forced the City and the Mayor to dramatically shift positions. In a span of a few months, they went from downplaying the seriousness of the crisis, to acknowledging there was one; from refusing to open necessary respite sites, to opening 8 this winter; from planning to shut down the respite sites in April to budgeting money to keep them open until the end of the year; and finally, from refusing to budget money for 1,000 beds this year to doing so last night. It's a testament to the power of fighting back. (OCAP, 2018a, n.p.)

However, the motion only required the city make “all reasonable efforts to expedite the expansion of permanent shelter beds by 1,000 in 2018” but it could take as long as three years for the 1,000 beds to be brought online (Toronto City Council, 2018a, para. 163). This meant the struggle for beds continued but was now an implementation struggle (I will discuss the implications of this shortly).

After the 1,000-bed motion was won, the shelter campaign deescalated rapidly. That April, OCAP held a press conference at Dundas and Sherbourne followed by CDRC deputations about the planned closure of several respite sites. After the event was called, SSHA announced that they were opening alternative sites; but, they were far from the downtown core and there was a gross loss of 248 spaces for the warmer months (OCAP, 2018e).

During this period, OCAP and our allies fought as hard as we possibly could to win life-saving services. We won specific and essential material gains, many of which, given the context, was clearly going to be very difficult. In the next section, I map the social relations of struggle to better understand where OCAP is at in relation to the ruling regime, and our allies, and our potential and weaknesses. In the remainder of the chapter, I will discuss what theoretical insights can be gleaned from the shelter campaign about organizing and mobilization while focusing on the tactics that the ruling regime employed to demobilize social movement organizing. Based on

my explication of demobilization tactics, I argue that understanding these tactics and OCAP's response to them can help movement organizers combat the use of these tactics in the future. I also argue that some demobilization tactics can only be implemented with the complicity of an outside organization, in this case TAEH, and examine the OCAP-TAEH relationship and the competition between the two organizations.

### **Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle**

To provide a richer perspective and analysis on the social relations of struggle in the shelter campaign and where OCAP is situated within them, I map the social relations of struggle below. The line of fault is the claim that the shelter system needs more shelter beds (along with the related call to improve conditions in the respite sites). On one side of the line of fault is ruling relations, under the guiding philosophy of Housing First. Indeed, HF is a coordinating approach within ruling relations. HF texts like the Federal Government's Housing Partnership (Government of Canada, n.d.-a) and the Province's Home for Good (Toronto City Council, 2018b) that determined municipal funding for homelessness programs are governing texts that are used to coordinate City actors.

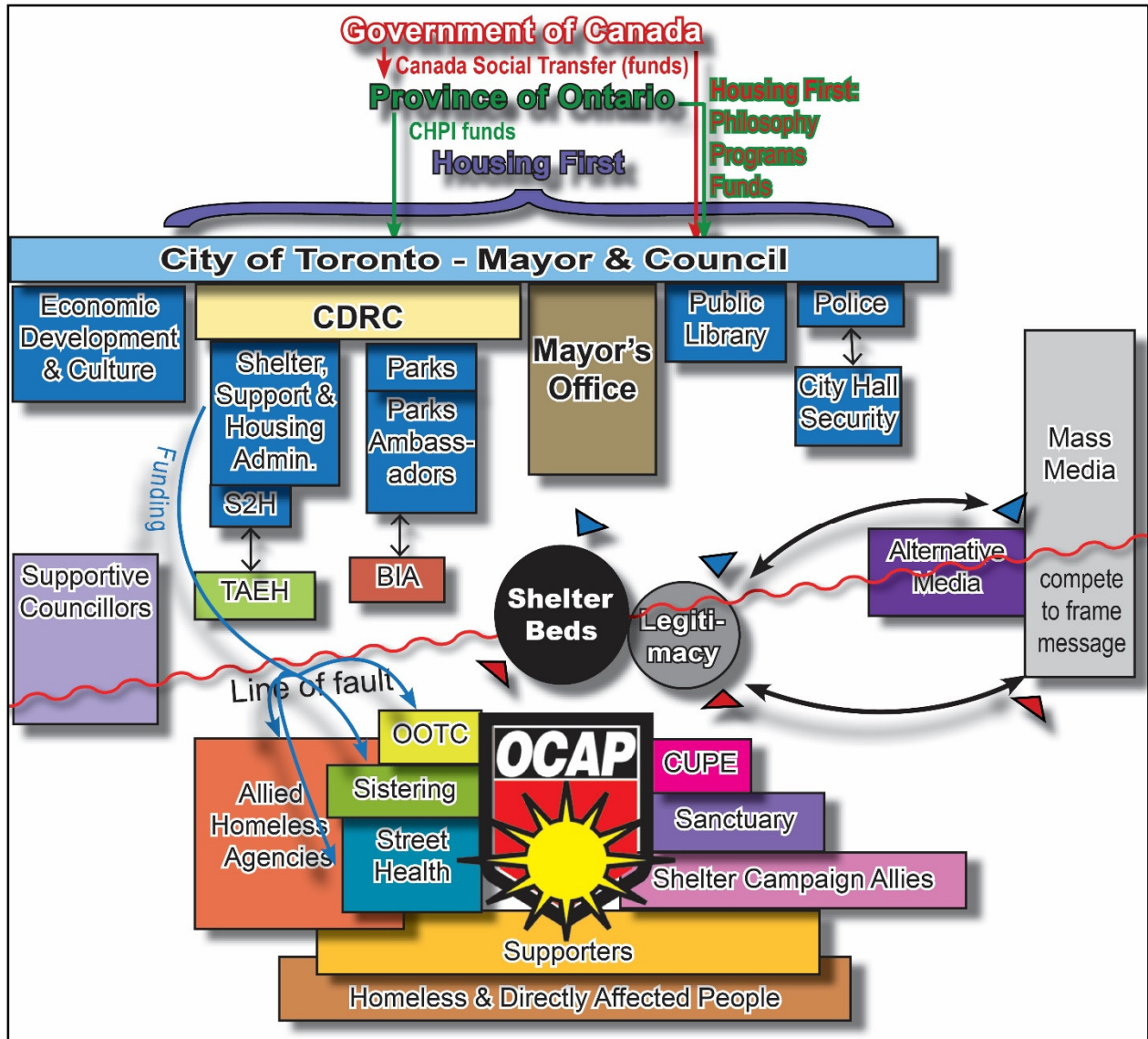
The primary actors for the City are SSHA staff who have a close relationship with TAEH. Again, TAEH, or Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness is the Housing First advocacy organization. There are a few City departments that may seem out of place on this map but played roles during the shelter campaign. Economic Development and Culture (EDC), Toronto Police Services and City Hall Security did not take public positions about the number of beds in the Toronto shelter system; however, they all played a role in the suppression and/or repression of OCAP during the campaign, as I will demonstrate. Additionally, the Toronto Public Library is a TAEH Community Partner. On this side of the line of fault lies a great deal of financial resources as well as the institutional relations to pass laws and create more beds.

Straddling the disjuncture are the media and supportive city councillors. In my experience, the mainstream/mass media is more likely to write stories that show strong deference to City staff and provide us little space to present our case – so would the City and TAEH. However, the alternative media, particularly *NOW Magazine*, tends to be more responsive to our position. OCAP members have also published in *NOW Magazine* on occasion (Acharya, 2017b,



2017c; Clarke, 2002; Crowe & Hales, 2016; Hales, 2019; Héroux & Palmer, 2017a; Withers, 2019b). Several city councillors also navigate this disjuncture, changing positions when the political landscape required it (or, perhaps, when it was in their own interests).

**Figure 7.2: Map of Shelter Campaign Social Relations of Struggle**



On the side of the fault line favouring more shelter beds, is a less resourced group of people who have come together for the shelter campaign. In addition to OCAP and the group of supporters we can regularly count on, there was also a group of shelter campaign allies. This group of allies was largely individuals who we worked with closely. The three key agencies:

Sistering, Street Health and Sanctuary were central in the campaign and often acted as a bridge between OCAP and other allied homeless agencies, many of which OCAP had no direct contact with. The Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness is the interfaith group that runs the Out-of-the-Cold program on a volunteer basis which became very outspoken during this campaign as well (listed as OOTC). Several of our allies were doing work in ways that are not mapped here nor discussed in this dissertation because I was only peripherally aware of their activities. For example, Rafi Aaron, the spokesperson for the Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness, and Cathy Crowe both had independent conversations with city councillors and the media, but I only became aware of those on occasion and was not aware of the extent of their activities. While it is my position that OCAP led the campaign and I am examining the campaign from OCAP's standpoint, it is not my intention to downplay the significance of these allies. Absent from this map is the larger organized left and organized labour, with the exception of a few specific CUPE locals.<sup>7</sup> CUPE 79, the local that represents many shelter workers made one deputation throughout the entire campaign.<sup>8</sup> University education workers, CUPE 3902 and 3903 also provided support. At the base of the groups working to secure more shelter beds and better conditions is homeless people themselves. Homeless people, positioned here to signify OCAP's community rootedness and bottom-up justice, were involved throughout the shelter campaign.

By examining this mapping of the social relations of struggle, the weaknesses of the shelter campaign become apparent: outside of OCAP, most of the organizing and support is concentrated within the agency and service sector. This means that the campaign is vulnerable to pressure from the City because many of these groups receive funding from the City (see Kinsman, forthcoming). Of course, this concentration is also a strength as those groups that are on-the-ground are also actively engaged in trying to change the social relations that result in too few beds and poor conditions.

### **Mobilization/Demobilization**

Social movement mobilizations take strategy and labour and happen in relation with who they are mobilizing against. Drawing on Tilly, Tarrow (2011) writes: "challengers must be seen

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<sup>7</sup> See Palmer and Héroux for more on OCAP's history with organized labour.

<sup>8</sup> This was at the November CDRC meeting that OCAP organized deputants for, including CUPE 79.

in relation to those they challenge and to influential allies, third parties, and the forces of order, in the context of the specific type of regime in which they operate” (p. 33-34). Campaign mobilization cannot be understood simply as one-sided, linear progression. As OCAP employed various tactics to mobilize, the ruling regime responded with its own tactics of demobilization. Demobilization is relational and it is an integral part of the social relations of struggle. This is an iterative process as actions and reactions are informed by the relations of the actors and others (the community, allies, media, etc.) (Davenport, 2015; McAdam et al., 2001). McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) call this “an iterative dance of mobilization and demobilization” (p. 66).<sup>9</sup> Of course, the dance metaphor is limited as one of the ‘dance partners’ has a multi-billion dollar budget, a staff of ‘legitimate knowledge’ holders and an armed police force while the other has a members list, a phone line, an office with 4 desks, and a lot of righteous anger. As disparate as the power and resources are between the City and OCAP, there is still a simple formula to the strategic mobilization and demobilization dance: OCAP acts, the City (staff, elected officials or both) assess and react and then OCAP assesses and reacts. The City works to try to demobilize OCAP and we fight to win.

Normative social movement theory has thoroughly studied the dynamics of mobilization but often neglected demobilization (Davenport, 2015; Fillieule, 2015; Lapegna, 2016; McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 2011). Demobilization is the decline in movement activity that, ultimately, results in its end (as opposed to deescalation, which is a recoverable dip in activity) (Tarrow, 2011; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). As there is an iterative, relational process between mobilization and demobilization; to understand mobilization, demobilization must also be understood.

Taking seriously the call to create movement-relevant theory (Bevington & Dixon, 2005, p. 189), however, means not only further examining mobilization/demobilization as an interplay but scrutinizing those tactics that ruling relations use to try and demobilize movements. It is in understanding these tactics more fully that organizers can better anticipate their use and plan to mitigate them at the earliest opportunity.

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<sup>9</sup> They also note the importance of “identity formation and innovative collective action” (p. 66). Here ‘identity formation’ refers to how someone identifies as a member of a movement.

In the next section, I will discuss what demobilization tactics the City used to try to outmaneuver OCAP's shelter campaign and how OCAP responded or failed to respond.<sup>10</sup> This is not an exhaustive list of demobilization tactics and, because mobilization/demobilization are relational, they cannot be implemented in the same way in another context; nevertheless, this initial taxonomy of demobilization tactics can provide insights to other social justice organizers in other contexts and into how ruling relations work.

*Not Invited to the Revolution<sup>TM</sup>: Divide & Conquer, Censorship, Banning & Epistemic Injustice*

In early 2017, OCAP partnered with two prominent photo artists, Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, for Nuit Blanche, a city-wide all-night art festival at the end of September that year. The project, "Monument to the Century of Revolutions," was celebrating revolution, including the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and held in shipping containers at Nathan Phillips Square (in front of City Hall).

In August City staff came to appreciate that partnering included OCAP members being present at this public event and they moved to ban OCAP. Carole and Karl told us they had a phone conversation with Pat Tobin and Kristine German from Economic Development and Culture (EDC), the City department responsible for Nuit Blanche, and that OCAP was not going to be allowed to participate. OCAP, having held protests, occupations and rallies at City Hall for decades, did not feel like this was ground we could give up; so, we fought back. On August 15, 2017, I attended an over air-conditioned meeting with Carole, Karl and several EDC staff to try and resolve the issue. Patrick Tobin, the Director in charge of Nuit Blanche, was philosophical about direct action in his justification for banning OCAP: "OCAP's purpose is in the spectacle... It is less about the target – the individual building than the spectacle," he told us. The City is "presenting the spectacle," he said. His logic, from what I could follow was that as the City was providing "the spectacle" OCAP would do something to take over said "spectacle." Tobin went on to require proof that OCAP won't try to seize the building after quoting John Clarke from, what I would later learn was, a four-year-old *Toronto Star* article about a specific protest: "if we'd have been in a position to seize that place [City Hall] and fortify it, we certainly would

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<sup>10</sup> Table 7.1 provides a full list of these demobilization tactics and their definitions.

have” (see Daubs, 2013). “If given access to a City venue,” Tobin tells me, “you need to take it and hold it.” I told him I could neither prove a negative nor something that hadn’t happened yet and assured him that our plan is to do the art installation – *that* was the action. I also made him aware that there was caselaw asserting OCAP members’ right to protest at Nathan Phillips Square (see *R. v. Semple and Héroux*, 2004).<sup>11</sup> In this meeting, the City compromised, allowing for three OCAP members to attend, providing we agreed to *all* their conditions – we didn’t agree.

What was supposed to be a small side project ended up taking enormous amounts of energy. The irony of fighting with municipal government workers about if or how many of us could participate in an exhibition celebrating revolution was not lost on any of the OCAPers I spoke to.<sup>12</sup> Making a flyer, choosing hashtags, making or picking banners and helping with set-up were supposed to be our only tasks. Art collectives made up of poor and homeless people in the Watkinson Park area, took on installing art on one side of the external part of the container so we only had to find banners for the other half. Instead, we were bombarded with labour because of the City’s attempt to ban us. The three Organizers, John, Yogi and I, had to come up with an impromptu strategy for how to handle the City and divvy up a growing list of tasks.<sup>13</sup>

Eventually, the EDC staff decided that OCAP would be permitted to attend and participate in the public event and we all agreed that Nato Thompson, the Curator would deal with artistic decisions while the City staff would handle logistical decisions. The agreement worked until City staff decided it didn’t. On August 31, we learned from the curator that the City bureaucrats had deemed one of the banner’s slogans “Tory’s lies cost lives,” a commentary on the Mayor’s shelter and homelessness policies, unacceptable (Inayet, 2017).<sup>14</sup> Patrick Tobin

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<sup>11</sup> In this case, two OCAP members, Gaétan Héroux and James Semple had been banned by City Hall security. They attended a memorial/protest for Brian Boyd, a homeless man Gaétan knew well, and were arrested for trespassing. The Court found that their *Charter* rights to were violated by being barred from City Hall/Nathan Phillips Square.

<sup>12</sup> Hearing of the controversy, Dmitry Vilensky (2017) from the *Chto Delat?* collective organizing the event was “glad that finally we [are] doing something which trigger[s] (sic) some real tension,” presumably because the political nature of the art itself (p. 247).

<sup>13</sup> At least one City staff member was involved in spreading disinformation about OCAP to at least one of the other artists as well. We heard we were planning on burning an effigy and we were going to do a direct action that would result in the entire event being shut down. Spreading disinformation, is a form of subversion which is also a demobilization tactic (used to sew division amongst supporters, etc.) and took a fair amount of energy to manage. However, I am engaging with it briefly and as a note, because it involves internal movement politics.

<sup>14</sup> There are gaps in the written record; it is evident in person and/or telephone conversations took place.

(2017e) revised the EDC strategy on September 25<sup>th</sup>, with set-up to begin on the September 28<sup>th</sup> and the event to take place two days later. Now they would “deal with Nato to implement change to banner” and, likely to ease this process, “we're dealing with K&C [Karl and Carole] on their installation as well as with Nato as NPS [Nathan Phillips Square] curator” (p. 13). They refused to communicate with OCAP any longer – we would email them directly and they would respond to Carole and Karl; it felt like working with five-year-olds.<sup>15</sup>

We tried to use the banner as a bargaining chip to procure “written confirmation that you will not undermine the curator's approval of all of our materials... and will refrain from creating any further impediments to the participation of our members or... Carole and Karl” (Withers & Acharya, 2017, p. 34). We didn't appreciate at the time that we weren't going to get anything in writing from them. EDC staff were consciously constructing “an email trail showing we are working constructively towards a resolution” (Tobin, 2017d, p. 198). If they replied to our emails, it could be used as tacit acknowledgement they were interfering with us and counter their strategy. We took it as far as we could and got as much as we could before we abandoned the banner – it wasn't worth the energy.

At Nuit Blanche, we were next to an approximately twelve-foot tall wooden silhouette of a woman throwing a brick. The woman was a decontextualized image of resistance without a political message. Conversely, OCAP had a political message that was directed at the people whose offices were inside the building and it was OCAP's message that was prohibited.

There were four demobilization tactics employed by the ruling regime during the Nuit Blanche saga: divide and conquer, banning, censorship, and epistemic injustice. The first was divide and conquer (see Cunningham, 2011);<sup>16</sup> the ‘divide’ was directed towards our allies, Carole and Karl. Emails obtained through FOI requests confirm Carole and Karl's story that they were only presented one option: “proceed with the project... without OCAP member presence as part of the presentation of the installation” (K. German, 2017, p. 188). Internally, EDC had concluded that the only other option was to “Close out contract with Artists” - to cancel the

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<sup>15</sup> This is, perhaps, unfair to five-year-olds who are, in my experience far less conniving and deceptive. The “I'm not talking to you” and pettiness, however, is reminiscent of five-year-olds at their worst.

<sup>16</sup> Cunningham (2011) examines ‘divide and conquer’ as a demobilization tactic (as well as “divide and concede” (p. 275)) in her article about what she describes as “separatist organizations” within nation states.

project (p. 188). There is also some evidence that Pat Tobin was seeking alternate partners for Carole and Karl. A “Steelworkers buddy” of Tobin’s recommended ACORN, and “the Parkdale rent Strikers” (Tobin, 2017c, p. 116). Mike Bulhuis (2017), a Director at the Homeless Hub (n.d.),<sup>17</sup> suggested TAEH as a partner. Carole and Karl, however, are not just any artists; they are movement elders who have been active doing social justice work since the 1970s. The politics of the project are key for them; so, the OCAP Organizers and Carole and Karl all agreed not to buckle. Here, the ruling regime seems to have underestimated the artists’ political commitment and capacity to withstand intimidation; this was an unsuccessful tactic.

The next two tactics employed by the ruling regime on and around Nuit Blanche were banning and censorship. I define banning as the prohibition from physical space; it can be used as a demobilization tactic because it can prevent access to an mobilization ground (i.e. to where communities are, an event or a battle).<sup>18</sup> We were successful in thwarting EDC’s attempt to ban us; however, that does not mean it was not at least partially successful as a demobilization tactic. I will return to this after I briefly describe censorship which complemented the use of banning. I define censorship as a demobilization tactic, as the suppression of the messaging of a movement, campaign or organization (verbal, written, visual). The City was successful in censoring us as we relented and did not bring our “Tory Lies...” banner. Both censorship and banning became effective as demobilization tactics because of the amount of energy they consumed. This fight often involved multiple emails and phone calls a day. Consequently, this demobilization tactic exhausted organizational resources that could have been better used on the campaign elsewhere. When used by ruling regimes, censorship/banning will generally be effective as demobilization tactics in either accomplishing their initial goal of silencing/exclusion, ideally leading to full demobilization, or, at a minimum, redirecting campaign resources away from the campaign.

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<sup>17</sup> The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) (n.d.), formerly the Homeless Hub, works “to conduct and mobilize research that contributes to better, more effective solutions to homelessness” (n.p.). One of the biggest homelessness research institutes on the planet, the heavily funded COH promotes housing first.

<sup>18</sup> There are, perhaps, other ways to classify banning. For instance, Smithey and Kurtz (2019) would likely classify banning as “intimidation;” however, given the significance of physical space (as NPS was to OCAP) and the weight that banning can carry (see Chapter Three), I would argue it holds implications and significance for both activists and ruling relations than many other forms of intimidation.

However, using these and other controlling, heavy-handed tactics come with a risk to ruling regimes. If ruling relations use tactics that are perceived to be unjust, this could trigger “backfire” which Hess and Martin (2006) define as an “ongoing, adverse reaction[n] and mobilization” (p. 252). Consequently, the very tactics employed to demobilize can trigger mobilization – something ruling relations want to avoid (also see: Martin, 2019; Smithey & Kurtz, 2019; Wood, 2012).

OCAP worked with Carole and Karl behind the scenes to create the conditions to try and produce backfire.<sup>19</sup> Curator Nato Thompson (2017) warned EDC staff that backfire could occur: “provoking OCAP is probably the worst idea out there.... You really don't want to further poke this hornets (sic) nest. It could easily become THE STORY” (p. 217). Indeed, a letter to the artists had been prepared by Carole and Karl and OCAP had a public statement ready if needed. However, a campaign around this banning would suck even more energy out of the organization (and it could put Carole and Karl’s future work prospects at risk).

The Mayor’s Office also likely anticipated outrage or backfire over the banning of OCAP. EDC Director Pat Tobin told one of the Mayor’s staffers, Siri Agrell, about the situation and, according to Tobin (2017e), she advised him “not to interfere with the project” (p. 287). However, she made him aware OCAP’s presence “may have an impact on Mayor's participation (sic)” (Agrell in Tobin, 2017e, p. 287). The threat that the Mayor’s participation in Nuit Blanche might be limited would have been quite serious for EDC.

A Briefing Note “Controversial Artistic Content within Nuit Blanche Toronto 2017”, which says it was prepared by Tobin, was provided to the Mayor’s Office the following day. It had a section titled: “If pressed on OCAP involvement in NBTO2017.” It is written as a question and answer section. Question one asks:

Q. Did you try to prevent OCAP from participating in NBTO2017?

A. No. City staff worked closely with the curator and artists for this project to ensure that it met the artistic and logistical requirements that all Nuit Blanche Toronto

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<sup>19</sup> The term “backfire” can be used against social movements or as justification for continued oppression. For example, the backlash against feminism is sometimes used to argue that feminists shouldn’t organize or should ask for a lot less. Here, I am referring to “backfire” in a specific sense within normative social movement theory (Hess & Martin, 2006), as I discuss below.



projects must meet. This included trying to better understand the role of OCAP in the Conde/Beveridge project. (Tobin, 2017b, p. 611)

The briefing note made this assertion despite the emails quoted earlier and the fact that the day before the briefing note was sent to the Mayor's office, Tobin emailed his boss about the situation. In this email, Tobin (2017f) said: "we asked artists to proceed without OCAP members on site, noting logistical and security concerns, given OCAP's history at City Hall" (p. 287). It is possible that Tobin was trying to frame 'not trying to prevent OCAP from participating' as allowing OCAP to be a part of the project but not attend. This would, at best, be disingenuous.

Tobin did provide a disingenuous but technically true answer to journalist Peter Biesterfeld when he inquired about the threat of OCAP being banned from Nuit Blanche. He gave a true but partial answer, telling Biesterfeld we were asked for names to be provided "so they could be added to the City's insurance policy," no one was "denied access," and every artist group was "limited to eight per shift in order to maximize space for audience members" (Tobin, 2017a, p. 94). While true, Tobin omitted some key details.

Hess and Martin (2006) argue that there are common tactics used to try and prevent backfire. The evidence suggests that EDC staff used two to them: "cover up" and "reinterpret what happened by lying, minimising, blaming and framing" (Martin, 2012, p. 14). I would like to suggest the Briefing Note was an attempt to cover up what the EDC staff tried to do to OCAP.<sup>20</sup> However, OCAP gave journalist Peter Biesterfeld the tip about the City censoring artists in advance of Nuit Blanche and I forwarded him our emails with the City. From here, Tobin reinterpreted events in order to downplay the egregiousness of the ruling regime's actions and minimize the likelihood of backfire. In the end, and in part because of the positive email record EDC staff were largely successful in constructing and because of Tobin's semantic answers, Peter Biesterfeld (2017c) wrote an article for *NOW Magazine* about relatively mild censorship.

This takes me to the third demobilization tactic that the ruling regime utilized during Nuit Blanche organizing: epistemic injustice, in this case the practice of institutional gaslighting.<sup>21</sup> I

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<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, they were trying to provide the Mayor with plausible deniability.

<sup>21</sup> Of course, not all epistemic injustices are used as demobilization tactics, however, I would argue that those in the previous chapter were.

discussed this at length in the previous chapter so I will be brief here. Institutional gaslighting made it difficult for us to prove what had happened. Trying to prove what happened took organizational energy and was emotionally and mentally taxing, at least for some of us. Here, too, this demobilization tactic did not demobilize the shelter campaign but it was an effective distraction and it diverted resources. There may have been mild outrage as a result of the article about the censorship at Nuit Blanche, but there was no backfire (see Hess & Martin, 2006).

*Sabotage: Delegitimization, Certifying the Competition, Concessions and Victory Hijacking*

It is 8:46 am. Kira Heineck, the Executive Lead for the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, sends an email to TAEH Co-ordinating Committee. Perhaps she has some nervous excitement for the events of the day. “There is a Christmas Fair in NPS [Nathan Philips Square],” she tells the Committee “so prepare for some congestion on your way in.” She instructs them to inform her if they are attending and to show up a little early and says “**we are confirmed for 1pm today**” (Heineck, 2017b). It is a big day for TAEH, it isn’t every day you have a press conference with the Mayor.

At home on this cold December day, I turn on the T.V., having heard the Mayor would be making an important announcement about homelessness on the radio. It was odd that the Mayor would hold a last-minute Sunday afternoon press conference. “Maybe he’s finally opening the armouries,” I thought. Just two weeks ago, we had won the 1,000 bed motion at the CDRC. Now with Councillor Joe Mihevc, the councillor who introduced that motion, and Kira Heineck at his side, Mayor Tory announced he had a plan to put in 400 spaces (mats, cots or beds) and introduce a Rapid Winter Housing Project which would house up to 400 shelter users between now and the end of February. The 1,000 bed motion was, effectively, killed for the time being. By design, none of the shelter campaign activists knew enough in advance to organize something to disrupt this press conference. Kira Heineck (2017b) advised the Coordinating Committee not to tell the rest of TAEH: “we have too good an opportunity here... to risk voices of dissent coming to the press conference” (p. 219). She said she would phone Kapri, from Street Health, and Pat, from Sistering, both of whom had been active in the shelter campaign, the next day to talk to them “as a courtesy and in appreciation of their commitment to TAEH thus far.” Kira also said “if some organizations cannot support our view... it is right that they not continue as TAEH

partners” Kira also told the Coordinating Committee “I would not advise sharing our work on this or our advice to the Mayor with folks like Cathy Crowe or OCAP as they will always be oppositional and are on record as not wanting to work for solutions” (p. 219).<sup>22</sup> TAEH leadership took precautionary steps to ensure that their own members,<sup>23</sup> as well as OCAP, were not present at the Mayor’s press conference so there would be no opposition to the plan.

There are four demobilization tactics being used during and around this press conference and the secret meetings that preceded it; TAEH plays a central role in most of them. The first two are delegitimization and certifying the competition. Like with the Housing Stabilization Fund, the Mayor positioned those of us working on the shelter campaign as lacking credibility and expertise. In the two days leading up to the City Council meeting, he would stress that he was following *expert* advice. The Mayor went on CBC Radio and said he listens to:

objective professional public service experts and people from outside in the homelessness community and I just wonder why it is that the view of OCAP and Cathy Crowe and some of these people are to be taken somehow as gospel. (in Galloway, 2017)

The host, Matt Galloway pointed out he was getting angry as he spoke about us. It appeared the Mayor resented being asked about us when his ‘experts,’ City staff and TAEH, all agreed with him that not as much money needed to be spent as we said. This also signaled that for the Mayor that OCAP and Crowe were recognized as legitimate in some corners of the City.

At the City Council meeting, progressive Councillor Gord Perks challenged the Mayor’s rebuke of our expertise:

The Mayor was developing a story saying that we didn't need to make larger investments, or much larger investments... because the people who really understood the issue of shelters city staff were telling him: “No... We have an adequate system.” I thought it was important to contest that; because, if you look at the history of issues around housing homelessness over the last few decades, you can see that the government and the public service have often got it wrong and its people who work directly as street nurses or social service providers frontline workers or activists who've had to lead us by the nose to the right answer. So, I went through questions of shelter staff to try to establish the people who have historically known best are – they are the activist community... I thought it was important to put on record that actually those - those activists are the people who, over time told us what the problem is and told us what the solutions are. And, we have

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<sup>22</sup> I have checked my files, OCAP’s archives and online and not been able to locate any such records.

<sup>23</sup> Technically, these are partners, as Kira says, “remember, we don’t have ‘members’” (Heineck, 2017b)

done our best work as a city when we listen to activists. (personal interview, Jan. 19, 2018).

Questioning the General Manager of Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, Paul Raftis, Councillor Perks made Raftis directly contradict the Mayor's repudiation of our expertise. Raftis admitted that community activists were responsible for originating important measures in the shelter system and that they "good policy decisions" have emerged out of SSHA's relationship with the community (Raftis at Toronto City Council, 2017b, n.p.). While Perks' challenge was important, a portion of the staff questions of one of forty-four city councillors carries neither the weight nor the distance of a Mayoral media blitz.

At the same time the Mayor was knocking us down (delegitimization), he was propping TAEH up (certification). In this dissertation, I have discussed several forms of delegitimization used by different groups within the ruling regime. As a demobilization tactic, delegitimization is used to undermine the validity of the campaign and/or people organizing against the ruling regime; it can be used in subtle or overt ways. OCAP worked to counter delegitimization as a demobilization tactic by working with as broad of an ally base as possible.

The Mayor and SSHA also legitimated, or certified, TAEH as the organization speaking for and working on behalf of homeless people – from the Community Advisory Board to the Toronto For All advertising campaign, as I discussed in Chapter 5. However, this press conference with the Mayor signaled something different: the direct response of the Mayor not only to the homelessness crisis, but also to a social justice campaign. Certification, according to McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) is performed by "external parties" but it is "especially authorities" that can certify (or decertify) movement actors (Furuyama & Meyer, 2011). By making a backroom deal with TAEH and ensuring they were available to the media and, thus, able to claim credit, the Mayor legitimized TAEH (and, through our absence delegitimized OCAP and our allies). This was a demobilization tactic because it attempted to undermine our political position, tactical repertoire and organizational effectiveness. The Mayor's press conference was a direct response to the pressure on his Office as a result of our organizing. Publicly certifying TAEH, I would argue was a strategic decision to try to demobilize the campaign.

Importantly, it is not only TAEH as an organization that is certified, but also their tactics are implicitly endorsed as well. By certifying TAEH, the Mayor indicated that TAEH was the effective group and lobbying the effective tactic. Here, certification of the competition can be used as a demobilization tactic because it can funnel people away from protest tactics. The use of “institutionalized tactics,” as TAEH does exclusively, is “viewed as nonthreatening by elite groups,” according to McAdam (1982). These tactics do not challenge ruling relations and because “it is within these ‘proper’ channels that the power disparity between members and challengers is greatest” (p. 57). It is in the interest of ruling relations, it is in John Tory’s interest, to promote the myth that protesting is ineffective because this myth will help weaken, and potentially demobilize, social movements.

While it felt like a devastating loss at the time, securing 400 new spaces would not have happened without the shelter campaign that OCAP led. Concessions can also be demobilization tactics. Concessions are things given up by ruling relations. City Council awarded concessions to shelter campaign advocates which actually make it more difficult to organize because supporters can lose a sense of urgency or believe that the issue has been resolved (see Greene, 2006). The creation of 400 shelter spaces in December 2017 was a clear concession. Based on my interviews with city councillors, this would not have occurred without the work of OCAP and its allies. The shelter campaign was able to create a situation within ruling relations where not doing something was more costly than doing something. While this was an indication of our political might, people in OCAP were torn about what this concession meant. A few members weren’t totally sure if it was a win or a loss. One member said, “I don't think it was a victory. I'm not sure if it was a failure. I think I don't know” (anonymous). At the same time, Danielle Koyama said it was “not what we wanted and it's not what we need but it was more than what was going to be coming” without OCAP’s work (personal interview, Jan. 10, 2018). Following Danielle, I submit that the concessions secured in December 2017 were substantial yet insufficient.

Piven and Cloward (1979) write that concessions are granted only when movements threaten elites and are “shaped as much by elite ideas and interests as by movement demands” (p. 17 n17). Here, I would argue that a, if not *the*, primary concern of the ruling regime on this file was quietening OCAP and our allies. Consequently, ruling relations took action that seemed like

it could be successful in accomplishing this. Indeed, Councillor Joe Mihevc told me “I thought I was gonna be the hero” having changed his original 1,000 bed motion to 400 spaces (personal interview, Mar. 2, 2018).

The final demobilization tactic used by the ruling regime in and around early December in relation to the 400-bed motion is intentional, coordinated victory hijacking. The “hijacking” of victories by organizations who don’t do (much of) the organizing work that lead to the victory sometimes happens on the left (in Wilmot, 2011, p. 122). This only becomes a demobilization tactic employed by the ruling regime, however, when the hijacking organization does so intentionally and in a coordinated fashion with the ruling regime.<sup>24</sup> As victories are believed to be especially important for mobilizing by OCAP (e.g. Clarke, 2010; Stefan, 1998; D. A. Thompson, 2004), not being properly able to claim victories could be deflating.

TAEH took credit for OCAP and our allies’ work. TAEH’s support for an expansion of shelter beds/spaces was particularly surprising because the group spoke-out against the opening of any new shelter spaces just two weeks earlier. Kira Heineck (2017a) acknowledged “our system is full beyond what experts consider safe and what City Council itself set as a baseline for acceptable capacity levels” (p. 2). Now, TAEH (2017) implied the motion was a victory, saying the Rapid Winter Housing Project (RWHP), which TAEH would be coordinating, “builds Toronto’s capacity to **eventually end homelessness**” (p. 1, emphasis in original). While OCAP and TAEH are very different organizations, TAEH laying claim to the December 5<sup>th</sup> motion as a victory could have erased some of this distinction for the general public – especially those who may not have understood the difference in the first place. Thus, TAEH would receive public attention and support based on the work of OCAP and our allies.

After the December Council meeting, OCAP was caught between demobilization tactics. OCAP chose to let TAEH claim the win. We issued a public statement on condemning City Council’s vote to accept the Mayor’s motion, its “willing[ness] to tolerate high levels of human

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<sup>24</sup> The other forms of hijacking are intentional, uncoordinated (such as parasitic organizations that show up to other groups events to sell papers, display their banners), unintentional, uncoordinated (such as when OCAP is given credit in the media for things we have little or nothing to do with simply because we are a well-known organization). There is also a theoretical possibility of unintentional, coordinated (in which a group works with the state but does not mean to – and would involve, perhaps, a counterintelligence operation).

suffering” and “grossly inadequate” response (OCAP, 2017n, n.p.). We laid the blame squarely on the Mayor, Councillor Mihevc and SSHA, as well as those councillors who voted for the motion. While it was clear that TAEH was sabotaging the shelter campaign, we did not name or indirectly mention them in the statement (TAEH has never been criticized in any public OCAP statement).<sup>25</sup> Allowing TAEH to claim this motion as an uncontested victory let them take credit for OCAP and our allies’ work but it also meant that we did not have to reinforce the narrative of the 400-spaces as a (partial) victory which also has a demobilizing effect. Instead, OCAP reframed the December concession as a “inevitable triumph” narrative (Voss, 1998, p. 144). We said: “this fight will escalate and... we intend to win the measures that are necessary” (OCAP, 2017n, n.p.). This type of narrative is a way movements sometimes frame failures as it puts forward “the idea that the defeat was part of a larger struggle” in which victory was inevitable (Voss, 1998, p. 144). OCAP used this narrative to reframe the December motion.

The decision about how to respond was made quickly and many of us were incredibly angry at the time. While there was a large protest on December 5<sup>th</sup>, a smaller group of us returned on the 6<sup>th</sup>. We stayed at City Hall until about 4:30. We disrupted Council when they voted not to open the armouries. Gaétan Héroux yelled:

Shame on you! Shame on all of you! People are dying on the streets and you can’t even ask for the armoury. Shame on you! Shame! The next time someone dies – when they die, we’ll be here! Shame on you and shame on you again! Where’s your phone Tory? Give me your phone! I’ll phone! If you don’t have the guts to act, I’ll phone. Give me your phone now! You can’t do it can you? Coward!

The Mayor never looked at us.

Removed from City Hall again, a small group of us finalized the plan on how to proceed. A draft of the statement was sent over our internal listserv by 9 am the next morning, it was edited about an hour later. The nearly 1,000-word text was distributed over our large listserv and put on our website shortly thereafter. While OCAP’s work is strategically driven, in this instance, like in many others, this strategy had to be determined very quickly.

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<sup>25</sup> OCAP (2018f) addressed a petition to Mark Aston, calling for the Fred Victor to re-open its drop-in program, and informed people that he “is also the frequent spokesperson for the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness” (n.p.).

We had been caught in what social movement theorists call a “dilemma action” in which activists have to make a choice between two disagreeable options (Sørensen & Martin, 2014, p. 76). When I am organizing, I just call this ‘a trap;’ if successful, the opponent looks bad no matter what. Indeed, this is a common organizing strategy; but it can also be used by ruling regimes (Smithey & Kurtz, 2019; Sørensen & Martin, 2014). In retrospect, I think we made a strategic misstep in our response to the December press conference and 400 bed motion.

The Mayor and City Council are better at publicizing their message than OCAP. Further, the nuance between beds and spaces and how many beds were needed were not necessarily appreciated by people who weren’t attuned to the daily realities of the shelter system.<sup>26</sup> Refusing to acknowledge a concession narrative did not mean that there was no concession narrative about the motion. The Mayor and TAEH were able to frame the issue first and we were responding saying 400 was not enough. A concession narrative was the dominant narrative.

Rather than reject the 400 spaces, looking back with post-campaign hindsight, I think OCAP should have claimed victory for those spaces and condemned TAEH for its actions and its hypocrisy. We would have loved for 400 people to be rapidly housed by the end of February. The central problem with TAEH’s plan was that it was a housing crisis. We needed more space and we needed it immediately. However, because we didn’t publicly challenge TAEH or claim the 400 spaces as a victory we allowed TAEH to hijack our victory, failed to successfully challenge our delegitimization and their certification and were, I would argue, partially demobilized by a concession.

This motion, coupled with the holiday break which is always a difficult time to organize around, did result in a lull in shelter campaign organizing for the remainder of December 2017. Thompson (2014) says: “compromise... can both pacify and embolden” (p. 513) poor people; neither organizers nor ruling relations can necessarily predict if compromise, in this case concessions, will be an effective demobilizing tactic. By the beginning of the new year, it was apparent that, the Tory/Mihevc/TAEH 400-space initiative was wholly insufficient. Outrage once again began to grow beyond the limits of OCAP and energy returned to the campaign. I would

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<sup>26</sup> For example, the *Toronto Star* headline read “Council votes for new shelter beds...” (Rider, 2017).



also argue that Mayor Tory's forced capitulation through opening the Moss Park Armoury was a victory helped re-escalate the campaign.

*Inhumane Conditions: Dissimulation, Consultation and Standards Creation*

The overcrowding and terrible conditions that it often caused in the respites were an ongoing concern. While homelessness is a year-round problem, the City planned to close several respites in April; as it approached, OCAP grew increasingly concerned. Also, as part of the shelter campaign, OCAP and our allies repeatedly demanded that conditions in the respite sites be improved. On January 31, 2018, Toronto City Council (2018g, 2018k) ordered the creation of formal respite standards. Bare-bones interim standards took effect April 30, 2018 (City of Toronto, 2018a). Even with new standards, however, respites were slated for closure in April.

OCAP had a meeting with with SSHA Directors, Mary-Ann Bédard and Gord Tanner, and General Manager, Paul Raftis, in February 2018 and warned SSHA that All Saints was facing imminent closure. The roof needed repairs. All Saints (the back half of Margaret's) often had 60-70 people staying at the respite located at Dundas and Sherbourne. In late March, OCAP Organizer Yogi Acharya (2018) emailed Bédard to ask what the plan was regarding the closure. Bédard (2018a) responded saying that they were having "ongoing discussions with the Church regarding the planned repairs" (p. 21). Bedard ended her email saying: "I am looking forward to working with you in the coming months as we develop program standards and our plan for next winter" (p. 21). Yogi wrote again on April 5<sup>th</sup>; the closure deadline was April 15<sup>th</sup> and SSHA had yet to admit All Saints was closing (Acharya, 2018). Later that day, after running a draft past at least four colleagues and the General Manager,<sup>27</sup> Bedard (2018b) told Yogi, "unfortunately... we were notified yesterday" that All Saints was closing (p. 20). We were fuming in the office – there was no space, no time and no real plan. However, we didn't wait for SSHA to tell us what we already knew. Even before we sent the April 5<sup>th</sup> email, we had written a draft call-out for an "Emergency Action at Dundas and Sherbourne."

I talked to SSHA General Manager Paul Raftis on the phone on April 10<sup>th</sup>. He openly mused about the difficulty of finding sites for shelters and respite sites and asked me if I knew

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<sup>27</sup> Bédard did not disclose this email with the FOI request; I found it in the disclosure of her co-workers.

anywhere they could try. He told me that they wanted to work with OCAP – to “be partners.” The next day, – the day before the OCAP press conference about the loss of All Saints and other respite spaces, SSHA announced their new plan for the respites. Raftis had told me that things were still being worked out with third parties when we spoke but gave me no indication that they were making an announcement the next day (they were already drafting the press release when we spoke). FOI records show that SSHA planned to send the announcement to OCAP first, around 7-7:30 am, then to the CDRC city councillors, which oversees the respites, around 8-8:30 am, followed by the announcement being sent to the media at 10 am (Raftis, 2018).

Dissimulation means to hide or conceal your feelings under a contrived appearance.<sup>28</sup> One of the examples of verb usage that the Merriam-Webster dictionary provides is “a politician's ability to *dissimulate*” (“Dissimulate [verb],” n.d.). City bureaucrats have this skill as well. Dissimulation can be an effective demobilization tactic when those employing it are able to delay or dissuade organizers from organizing based on the (possibly false) promises of ruling relations. Shelter, Support and Housing Administration upper management used the demobilization tactic of dissimulation by telling us on multiple occasions that they wanted to work with OCAP while managing OCAP and withholding information. In Mary-Anne Bedard’s email to Yogi on April 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:42 am, she writes: “in our ongoing effort to communicate information as soon as possible, I wanted to let you know that later today we will be sharing publicly our plans” (personal communication forwarded by Yogi Acharya, April 11, 2018). SSHA staff could have told OCAP several days, possibly even weeks sooner. This statement is a clear example of dissimulation, they did tell OCAP first – including before the elected members of City Council that oversee their department. SSHA went to great lengths, involving at least 10 SSHA staff (see Raftis, 2018), to tell OCAP first and, therefore, retain a certain level of credibility that we were ‘working together’ or ‘respected’ or ‘partners.’ This is indicative of the importance OCAP has in the social relations of struggle; at the same time, however, they withheld information about their plans – we don’t know how long for. This wasn’t simply

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<sup>28</sup> While dissimulation is discussed here as a demobilization tactic, it is also a tool of resistance employed by poor people as is expressed in the oft quoted James C. Scott (1985) passage from *Weapons of the Weak* “the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth” (p. 29).

annoying for OCAP – Waiting until just days before people were to be kicked out of the respites they were staying in was incredibly stressful for many homeless people.

Dissimulation was used by SSH, as this example of All Saints Respite site closure demonstrates, to try and keep OCAP ‘on side’ and dissuade or slow our inclination to protest. As campaigns are largely built through escalation, dissimulation can be an effective demobilization tactic as it can stall escalation. What I would have previously described as the ‘smarmy,’ ‘fake’ and/or ‘disingenuous’ way that SSHA bureaucrats talk to us, I would now describe as ‘tactical dissimulation.’ This tactic is slow and, perhaps, seemingly insignificant, even “mundane” as Lewin (2019) calls it in his discussion about the causes of demobilization (p. 574). I would posit that the extent that this tactic is successful is dependent on several factors, including the degree to which the social movement actors put their trust in ruling relations.

OCAP (2017e) has “learned from bitter experience that ‘going through the proper channels’ is to disappear into a maze of political evasion and bureaucratic delay” (n.p.). I would argue that this lesson, OCAP’s radical political inclinations, and many of our members’ lived experiences predispose the group’s members to be distrustful of ruling regimes. Consequently, while OCAP was not immune to dissimulation and would, at times, put off public statements or action calls based on the word of an elected official or bureaucrat (sometimes a worthwhile delay and other times not), this tactic was not particularly effective as a demobilization tactic.

It is this lesson about how bureaucrats delay that informed OCAP’s participation in relation to the other two demobilization tactics that the ruling regime used against us as well. While respite standards<sup>29</sup> were won in order to create better conditions, the creation and implementation of the standards from the moment of the win took nine to ten months. The creation of standards is a demobilization tactic in and of itself. The new standards, I would argue, work to make the issues of conditions isolated matters of enforcement and compliance rather than issues with ruling relations as a whole. SSHA (2018a) is responsible for enforcing the standards - the organization that, as I discussed in the previous chapter, denied there was a problem with conditions, now has to identify problems and ensure they are corrected. Now, if for

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<sup>29</sup> The respite standards demand was championed primarily by OCAP’s allies – especially those in the healthcare profession, like HPAP and Cathy Crowe.

example, a respite site does not ensure that there are two-and-a-half feet (the width of a standard bathtub) between mats on the floor (without permission from SSHA), SSHA is required to ensure this is corrected.

The creation of standards is often paired with consultation, another demobilization tactic. Consultation can be an effective means for a ruling regime to draw energy out of organizing and to delay addressing a problem. Similarly, the creation of standards can also be used to do these things and, in many jurisdictions, incorporates consultation into this process.<sup>30</sup> The processes of both consultations and the creation of standards, including the agenda and timeline, are controlled by the ruling regime. Participation in institutional avenues means poor people, abandon what power they do have – that is, the use of collective disruption (or threat thereof). This, too, is another mechanism to demobilize a campaign.

While securing a mechanism to monitor and enforce respite standards is a victory, the ruling regime was able to utilize different demobilization tactics in the implementation. Indeed, the creation of standards, and the consultations that often coincide with it, is a demobilization tactic in itself. Further, throughout the shelter campaign, but as is exemplified in this example, SSHA staff (and I would argue a number of city councillors) used dissimulation – creating the appearance of “partnership” while controlling information and managing OCAP. Both partnerships and consultations are techniques of neoliberal governance (Kinsman, 1992). What many of us in OCAP experienced to be manipulation, coupled with the lengthy struggle for beds and better conditions, can have a toll on people in the organization. I will discuss this and the last few demobilization tactics used against OCAP during the shelter campaign in relation to our February budget action in the next section.

#### *Where’s The Funds?: Repression, Smokescreens, Deferment and Attrition*

On February 12, 2018, we arrived at City Hall for a rally before filling the Council Chamber. The City has a rule that you cannot bring signs or banners into the Council Chamber.

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<sup>30</sup> Boghossian and Marques (2019) discuss how standard creation was used to by the Canadian government as a demobilization tactic against anti-seal hunt protesters. Here, the practice of standard creation was not the central tactic, however, it was the delegitimization boycotts through international trade law because of the new standards. Once the standards were in effect, if the protestors were effective in pressuring governments to boycott Canadian seal fur, the Canadian government would have a legal mechanism against the boycotting government.

Sometimes we make and distribute T-shirts; but this can become complicated on cold winter days. So, this time we hand printed about 70 bright yellow and green reusable shopping bags that said: “This is a crisis, OPEN SHELTER NOW.”

Security told us that the bags were not permitted inside City Hall. I spoke to the head of security: “you let bags in with ‘The Gap’ or ‘Loblaws’ on them all the time, don’t you?”

“They aren’t coming in,” he told me.

I tried to raise the Constitutional issues with him – they were allowing corporate speech in the same format but not political speech. He turned around and walked away.

As usual, protesters are searched entering City Hall but this time they would not be allowed entry with any of these reusable shopping bags. About 20 bags made it in anyways, as did the big banner.<sup>31</sup> We filed in and sat in the gallery and, when the time came,<sup>32</sup> rather than disrupt Council from the chairs like usual, we decided to go behind the gallery to the press section. Only a few metres wide, we packed into that section and became much harder to be removed. We unfurled our prohibited banner across the back of the Council Chambers gallery: “Where’s The Funds for 1,500 Beds Now?” Because we were packed in at the back, the security guards and the police could not easily get to the banner to take it down. City Council could not continue business as usual with us there. The police nabbed Yogi and an OCAP supporter. They were taking people out the back elevator and a cop said “Wait! Take this one too, [they’re] a leader” and pointed at me. So, I got taken downstairs as well. This took place during a 10-minute recess that Conservative Speaker Frances Nunziata called. Nineteen-minutes later, the gallery had been cleared of protesters and the recess was ended (Toronto City Council, 2018e).

Clearly, the police were instructed to be gentle with us. We were asked if we were ok and if we were being held too tightly. The last time I was at a City Hall elevator with a bunch of cops, one of them punched an OCAP member in the face right beside me. We were taken to the security desk and released on the condition that we not return to City Hall that day.

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<sup>31</sup> OCAP has a number of creative tricks that I can’t divulge as we would not continue to be able to use them.

<sup>32</sup> In a rare case of positive media coverage, we worked it out with one of the local television stations that they would broadcast the whole thing live. So, we waited for the station to switch to us before we started the action.

The first and most obvious demobilization tactic used here is repression. It was physical coercion; protesters were physically apprehended and detained; this was a demobilization tactic as it was used to keep us from getting our message across. Those who were not detained were removed from the City Hall gallery through physical force or threat thereof. Further bags with protest sayings were removed from people (also censorship); if protesters refused to have their bags confiscated (or gave them up before getting to security) they were physically prevented from entering the building.<sup>33</sup>

The second demobilization tactic at play at the February 12, 2018 City Council meeting is deferment. The funds were moved forward so 1,000 beds could be put into the system in 2018; this seemed like a victory. However, SSHA did not have to bring them online in 2018 (in Toronto City Council, 2018e). It became an issue of how long its implementation would be deferred for – not the quick life and health saving measure OCAP intended. Deferment can be used as a demobilization tactic because it, like concessions, can create the appearance of victory without much of a victory at all. It can also change the target within the ruling regime (e.g. from publicly elected City Council to SSHA staff). The ruling regime can use any number of bureaucratic maneuvers to slow a project. Consequently, while a longstanding slogan of OCAP is “fight to win,” one of the most effective demobilization tactics means that we “win to fight” (also see: Withers, 2019a).

Smokescreen victories, or “faux concessions” (Nelson, 2013, p. 167) are an additional demobilization tactic. They are used similarly to concessions but without the concessions, just the appearance of them. For me, the February 12<sup>th</sup> motion *felt like a real victory at the time*. Creating the appearance of winning, like with concessions, can have similar demobilizing effects to winning itself. Green (2006) argues that:

simply altering the nature of the problem, by taking action to reduce the visibility and urgency of the grievance, may be as effective in dampening the prospects for the

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<sup>33</sup> While the example I gave is clearly repression, based on OCAP’s experience with the Toronto police, I would call this ‘repression-lite.’ OCAP has experienced heavy repression, particularly for the June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000 Queen’s Park (Police) Riot for which forty-five people were arrested, a number of whom faced jail time (Palmer & Héroux, 2016; Queen’s Park Riot Defendants, 2001). Then Police Chief Julian Fantino (who went on to become a Minister of Parliament and the Minister of National Defence) labeled OCAP “domestic terrorists” (Clarke, 2001, n.p.).

emergence of more sustained forms of mobilization than if the authorities took substantive remedial action. (p. 53)

Herein lies the danger of both concessions and smokescreen victories, they allow the soothing of critique within the broader community and quelling of protest by ruling relations without enacting substantive change. If the relevant authorities provide the appearance of addressing the problem in a serious and satisfactory manner, real change may be sidestepped. Therefore, at least in part, OCAP member Wendy Forrest says, “you never trust a partial victory” (personal interview, Jan. 8, 2018).

It can take a long time to win anything meaningful. Several of the OCAP members I interviewed indicated that they believe that the only reason there were any new shelters in 2017/2018 or that the Moss Park Armoury, Better Living Centre or George Street respite was opened were because of the work of the shelter campaign. Further, it took a long time and a great deal of effort to win the watered-down 1,000 beds motion. In order to get what we did, the organization had to work incredibly hard. The campaign was “four or five months non-stop... every few weeks” there was another action or event (personal interview, Gaétan Héroux, Feb. 21, 2018). After the February 12<sup>th</sup> action, key organizers said they were very “tired” – “exhausted” even (both in interviews and in conversation). The rate at which we organized the shelter campaign was not sustainable in the long term.

At the same time organizing can be an important counter to burn-out. In their interviews, many of the frontline workers spoke about how doing OCAP work is important to prevent burnout for them. “Being a part of OCAP is a part of self-care,” one member said, because as a frontline worker they need to feel like they are fighting for broader change (anonymous). This issue is complex, however, as it was some of the frontline workers who were also exhausted.

This exhaustion (and I will include burnout here as well<sup>34</sup>) is a consequence of attrition as a demobilization tactic. The demobilization tactics that I discussed above were used in concert and over an extended period of time. While any of the above tactics may be used a single time with the intention to demobilize a campaign or movement, it is far more realistic that a

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<sup>34</sup> It is not my intention, however, to imply that burnout, or even exhaustion, is always and wholly caused by ruling relations; rather, we cannot straightforwardly divide internal and external causes.

combination must be used to force demobilization. By using attrition as a demobilization tactic, the ruling regime doesn't have to fight to win; it simply has to fight to exhaust the opposition.

Exhaustion is identified by some social movement scholars as a mechanism of demobilization (e.g. Davenport, 2015; Tarrow, 2011). However, they theorize exhaustion as an internal cause of demobilization rather than one that is, or at least can be, an external cause. Indeed, of Davenport's (2015) five kinds of internal sources of demobilization, four of them are directly linked to exhaustion: lost commitment, burnout, membership loss, exhaustion; and, the fifth, polarization/factionalization is easily impacted by it as well. Organizing and organizations take work; this can be tiring which can lead to demobilization. However, City staff and elected leadership engaged in work to wear us down – which is why exhaustion isn't simply an internal process. If we didn't have to spend hours upon hours combatting ECD staff for space in Nathan Phillips Square or try to undo the damage that TAEH's collusion with SSHA was doing, we would have had more time and energy. Attrition, therefore, especially if timed to coincide with ebbs in the campaign can be an effective demobilization tactic.

While all movements have periods of escalation and deescalation, ruling relations have a particular attrition advantage in the climate of Toronto as homelessness organizing is naturally cyclical. That is, the climate – the weather – greatly informs OCAP's organizing around homeless issues.<sup>35</sup> While the number of homeless people likely does not decrease in the summer months, general concern for homeless people certainly seems to. In my experience, the media has been far more receptive to stories about homelessness, when there is imminent risk of freezing death.<sup>36</sup> In his study of OCAP in the early 2000s Jonathan Greene (2006) found that it is easier to organize around homelessness issues when there is a sense of urgency.

Attrition is a demobilization tactic involving the wearing down of organizers over time, including by using other demobilization tactics. There are other factors that contribute to attrition as well. With respect to the shelter campaign, one of the biggest factors for people is the amount of pain and suffering, the number of deaths. "Intrapsychic wounds derive from specific physical

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<sup>35</sup> In my experience, unless there is a crisis (e.g. war), other organizing in Toronto tends to show a very different trend, with organizing, especially protests, focusing on the spring and fall with a dip in the summer (presumably because many people are away) and a significant drop in the winter because it is too cold to hold outdoor events.

<sup>36</sup> However, hot summer weather is a "silent killer" (Rankin in McCabe, 2019, n.p.).



or emotional trauma” says Nelson (2013, p. 171), drawing on Armstrong’s study of gay organizing in San Francisco. The trauma and grief of organizing around an issue in which an increasing number of people die, some of whom you may know (this impacts some OCAP members much more than others) can lead to intrapsychic wounding which can be an experience of the group. I would argue this trauma and grief, or intrapsychic wounding, also contributes to, and perhaps, exasperates attrition.<sup>37</sup>

### *Discussion*

I have discussed demobilization tactics that were used by the ruling regime against OCAP and our allies during the shelter campaign. This explication of these tactics that City politicians and staff engaged in is far from a complete list of all possible demobilization tactics. As each of the campaign examples I use demonstrates, there was overlap in how these demobilization tactics were employed. Nelson (2013) writes, “in the laboratory of real life multiple methods of subversion are generally deployed sequentially and concurrently” (p. 171). Indeed, multiple tactics deployed at the same time could increase their efficacy.

Other demobilization tactics, which are sometimes given other names in the literature, are not necessarily less impactful. An additional tactic that was used against OCAP during the shelter campaign (and particularly during the St. James Park campaign) but did not fit any of the campaign stories I used, was ignoring. Ignoring is the refusal to acknowledge or consider actions and demands of social organizations/movements and it doesn’t have to be limited to the actual activities of the ruling regime but can include its perceived actions (see Bishara, 2015).<sup>38</sup> Subversion (e.g. the spreading of disinformation) is a demobilization tactic used to sew division amongst supporters (see: Peña & Davies, 2017). Individualization can be used as a demobilization tactic can be destabilizing because OCAP works “to maintain collective solidarity” amongst and between poor people (Withers, 2019a, p. 249). Lewin (2019) outlines various tactics companies use to keep the public from knowing what is going on, including isolating activists. There are numerous other demobilization tactics that were not experienced by

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<sup>37</sup> Nelson argues that intrapsychic wounds can be operationalized as a method for suppressing movements. (also see: Smithey & Kurtz, 2019).

<sup>38</sup> What occurred during the St. James Park campaign, as discussed in Chapter 3 is a good example of this; however, in that instance it resulted in OCAP garnering more publicity than it otherwise would have.

OCAP during the shelter campaign such as: divisiveness, co-optation, sabotage, exclusion (see: Peña & Davies, 2017), negotiation (see: Coy & Hedeem, 2005), and stigmatization (Nelson, 2013; Smithey & Kurtz, 2019).

**Table 7.1 Demobilization Tactics Used Against OCAP in the Shelter Campaign**

	<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Definition</b>
1.	Attrition	The wearing down of organizers over time, including by using other demobilization tactics.
2.	Banning	The prohibition from physical space and can be used as a demobilization tactic because it can prevent access to a mobilization ground (i.e. to where communities are, an event or a battle)
3.	Censorship	The suppression of the messaging of a movement, campaign or organization (verbal, written, visual) which prevents the ability to frame and promote an issue.
4.	Certifying the Competition	Ruling relations validating a rival organization.
5.	Concessions	Things that are given up by ruling relations; they can be used to create the appearance of victory, ending the need to organize.
6.	Consultations	Ruling regime's engagement with individuals or groups; ruling relations control the timeline and, generally, the agenda and it can be used to delay (or possibly delegitimize) organizing.
7.	Creation of Standards	The process of creation and the practice of the standards can both be used as demobilization tactics. Process: can be used to delay (or possibly delegitimize) organizing often involves consultations. Practice: can be used to individualize and institutionalize grievances.
8.	Deferment	The delay in implementing concessions. Can be used to move the movement/campaign from working towards new victories to trying to implement old ones and to force a shift in targets within the ruling regime (from elected politicians to bureaucrats).
9.	Delegitimization	Attempts to undermine the validity of the campaign and/or people organizing against the ruling regime by challenging their expertise or representativeness.
10.	Dissimulation	To hide or conceal your feelings under a contrived appearance which can be used to delay or dissuade organizers from organizing based on the (possibly false) promises of ruling relations.
11.	Divide and Conquer	Attempts to separate coalitions or organizations and defeat one or all of the weaker individual parts.
12.	Epistemic Injustice	Injustices related to organizers as knowers and/or the knowledge they have that are used to undermine organizers and/or a campaign (there is significant cross-over with delegitimization but delegitimization is not limited to the epistemic realm).
13.	Ignoring	Refusal to acknowledge or consider the actions and demands of social movements.
14.	Repression	Physical coercion (including arrest) or threat thereof; it is used to cause direct harm, remove people from the struggle (however temporarily) and/or deter people.
15.	Smokescreen Victories	Used the same way concessions are except there are no real concessions, just their appearance.
16.	Victory Hijacking	A competing organization works intentionally and in coordination with ruling relations to take credit for the work of the group that won the concessions.

I have described sixteen demobilization tactics that I argue were used against OCAP by the ruling regime during the shelter campaign (see Table 7.1). As I am mapping ruling relations from the standpoint of an OCAP organizer, my approach to demobilization is quite different from other scholars. Various scholars have created classification schemes and approaches with respect to categorizing the tactics and/or strategies that ruling relations use to try to weaken or

kill movements. There is a circle of scholars, with Tilly (1978) being the most influential who theorize all of these actions (anything intended to make organizing harder or more costly) by ruling relations as repression (also see, for e.g.: Earl, 2003; Smithey & Kurtz, 2019). Conversely, Tarrow (2011) argues there are five mechanisms of demobilization: repression (including suppression), facilitation (concessions), exhaustion, radicalization, and institutionalization.<sup>39</sup> The last two, radicalization and institutionalization, according to Tarrow, tend to go together and often represent a split in a movement as one portion becomes more radical and the other is institutionalized (also see Jung, 2010). Others have suggested additional demobilization mechanisms including, for example, critical events (e.g. a police shooting) (Demirel-Pegg, 2017), electoral outcomes (Heaney & Rojas, 2011; McAdam & Tarrow, 2013) frame removal (Lavine et al., 2017), frame disputes (Badran, 2019), and revolution (Koopmans, 2004).<sup>40</sup> These broader mechanisms are not particularly what concern me here as they are so broad – particularly the ‘everything is repression’ approach.

Several scholars attempt to create complete taxonomies of, what I call, demobilization tactics. In his book *How Social Movements Die*, Davenport (2015) endeavours to create a theoretical model to understand the demobilization of social movement organizations. There are, he argues, two distinct forms of demobilization: positive demobilization in which the movement wins and negative demobilization. Davenport then subcategorizes as negative demobilization into “killed from the outside” and “killed from the inside” (p. 23). Davenport’s approach, like most of the others suffers from over-broadness in my view. For Davenport (2015), the mechanisms of demobilization for “killed from the outside” are “resource deprivation,” “problem depletion” and “state repression” (p. 23). Here, knowing that repression caused or was a contributing factor in the decline of a movement is not particularly insightful or useful. Those for “killed from the inside” are “factionalization,” “exhaustion,” “lost commitment,” “departing member[s],” and “rigidity” (p. 39). Davenport argues that scholars tend to focus on either

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<sup>39</sup> Many scholars focus on the repression/concession, mechanisms of demobilization (e.g. Carey, 2006; Goldstone, 2003; Kern & Laux, 2017; Tilly & Goldstone, n.d.). However, this is such a broad categorization it limits the amount of insight that can be garnered as everything is either A or B.

<sup>40</sup> Demirel-Pegg also says scholars say violence is a mechanism of demobilization but, by examining the texts the author cites, it is repression (in response to violence) rather than violence that is demobilizing.

external or internal causes of demobilization and not how they can occur simultaneously. Davenport's model, therefore, has a total of 15 combination mechanisms of demobilization (one internal plus one external – i.e. factionalism-resource deprivation or rigidity-repression) in addition to the original eight individual mechanisms.

Davenport's innovation is also one of its limitations as he only examines two mechanisms at a time. Of course, it could become untenable to try to calculate all of the varied combinations; nevertheless, multiple mechanisms can operate at the same time. For instance, on February 12, 2018, OCAP faced repression, problem depletion and exhaustion. This is incalculable in Davenport's model. Further, Davenport's model presents a clean outside/inside division; ruling relations can push demobilizing tactics inside, as I have shown. While Davenport discusses exhaustion as an internal factor, I show how it can be linked to the demobilization tactic of attrition.<sup>41</sup>

Another classification of demobilization tactics is that by Smithey and Kurtz (2019). Part of the 'it's all repression' camp, Smithey and Kurtz swiftly dismiss critiques of this approach, saying they "defin[e] repression too narrowly" (p. 208). They have conceived of a "Continuum of Demobilization" that include what they varyingly call "demobilization tactic[s]," and "demobilization techniques" (p. 191, 197, 200). At the most violent end of the continuum is "Overt Violence" followed by "'Less-lethal' Methods," "Intimidation," "Manipulation," and "Soft Repression," with "Hegemony" at the least violent end. This continuum, in broad strokes, may be useful for anticipating backfire (although I contest some of the placement of tactics, e.g. arrests and beatings are 'overt violence' but tasers and rubber bullets are not or that election fraud is among the least likely to trigger backfire, along with self-censorship). However, their focus on backfire results in those individual demobilization tactics they name going unexamined.

Thinking through demobilization tactics as sometimes simultaneous but distinct tactical approaches can help organizers better strategically navigate the iterative aspects of campaign

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<sup>41</sup> Further, factionalism, lost commitment and departing members can be initiated and/or aggravated by infiltrators working for the ruling regime. Also, likely in his pursuit for clean theoretical divisions, Davenport made three coherent 'outside' categories. However, problem depletion is incredibly broad; this category contains a successful coup, the government creating a 'front' organization and/or convincing the public that the movement is responsible for the problem, along with several other issues.

work. Indeed, by separating out concessions from intentional, coordinated victory hijacking, I was able to reanalyze OCAP's strategy with respect to the December, 400 bed motion and come to the conclusion that we should have applied a different strategy. I did not attempt to create a hierarchy of efficacy between the demobilization tactics as these would be highly context dependent, although some (e.g. repression) would generally be more effective than others (e.g. ignoring). In the next section, I will directly discuss the relationship between the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness and OCAP as TAEH was clearly involved in the implementation of several of the demobilization tactics.<sup>42</sup>

### **Organizational Competition**

It is evident from my explication of demobilization tactics that the Toronto Alliance to Eliminate Homelessness played a pivotal role in the implementation of several of the demobilization tactics. As is likely evident by this point, TAEH and OCAP have a relatively acrimonious relationship as a result of their very different political positions, tactical approaches and TAEH's overt sabotage of the shelter campaign. In my conversations with OCAP members during my field work, it was apparent that many OCAPers view TAEH as collaborators with the ruling regime who legitimize both the capitalist system that creates homelessness and the neoliberal and inadequate responses to homelessness by the City.

TAEH legitimized the 400-bed motion in large part on the grounds that they could coordinate the Rapid Winter Housing Project (RWHP), up to 400 Housing First spaces by the end of February 2018. I was unable to ascertain how many people were housed under the RWHP because, as of September 2019, over a year-and-a-half later, SSHA had yet to receive the final report from TAEH. However, during the period that the RWHP was supposed to be housing up to 400 people, only 269 households were housed using housing allowances in all of Toronto, as the RWHP was to do (City of Toronto, 2019c). It appears, then, that TAEH failed miserably in its efforts to house people through this program. Presumably TAEH, like Streets to Homes –

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<sup>42</sup> There is an unwritten rule in organizing that you don't publicly criticize another organization which may have informed OCAP's position at the time. I do not know if this informed the decision at the time and OCAP purposefully chose not to target the TAEH or if OCAP's priorities were elsewhere. Now, however, I think that TAEH is not a legitimate social justice organization, even if it fits the definition of a SMO within NSMT and does not warrant such consideration.

whose housing numbers have declined over the years (see Figure 5.2), tried earnestly to house people; nevertheless, the housing crisis in Toronto means there is very little housing that poor people can afford – even with a subsidy.

In addition to the December motion maneuvering, TAEH also secretly worked to undermine the shelter campaign on at least one other occasion. In this instance, Cathy Crowe forwarded an email laying out the campaign positions for the June 2017 deputations to TAEH. The original sender, an OCAP organizer, was removed. Cathy, having previously pushed TAEH to change its position on shelters, asked “Will TAEH be able to join in our concerns?” (Crowe, 2017, p. 114). TAEH forwarded the email to SSHA staff (Bédard, 2017b). SSHA staff had already created a document to prepare General Manager Paul Raftis for the upcoming CDRC meeting but edited it in response to our arguments. They also added six additional questions and answers under the subtitle: “Responses to Issues raised by Cathy Crowe” (Bédard, 2017b).<sup>43</sup> TAEH and SSHA coordinated to undermine our position at the CDRC.

The above account of how TAEH worked to undermine the shelter campaign is indicative that TAEH understands itself to be competing with OCAP. A number of scholars argue that organizations compete with one another (Gamson, 1990; Ganz, 2000; Greenberg et al., 2009; M. F. Hall, 1995; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015; Wood, 2012; Zald & McCarthy, 2017/1980). While none of the OCAP members articulated OCAP’s relationship with TAEH as “competitive,” I will demonstrate here that it is organizational competition that, at least in part, informs this relationship.

Hall (1995) argues that there are two kinds of competition between SMOs: territorial and organizational. As both groups work in Toronto and put forward campaigns related to the distribution of resources municipally, the case for territorial competition is self-evident. Organizational competition, on the other hand, according to Hall’s definition, involves things that would not be an issue of contention between OCAP and TAEH like “recruitment of staff,” as I can confidently say that OCAP would wholesale reject any potential staff coming out of

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<sup>43</sup> Here OCAP is erased and our critique becomes Cathy Crowe’s – through no intention of Cathy Crowe. This is another example of the erasure of the intellectual contribution of OCAP. This isn’t an example of SSHA’s intentional erasure, but it is an example of one of the ways that our contribution is erased. Crowe is a credentialed “expert.”

TAEH (and the inverse would likely be true). We also have profoundly different “leadership styles,” which Hall delineates as a site of organizational competition. OCAP has tended to value ‘barn-burner’ oratory, passion, and the ability to mobilize communities while, from what I have observed of TAEH, they value lobbying skills, bureaucratic and organizational skills, reasoned speech and a politics of respectability. The “definition of issues” is, I would argue, the primary site of competition between the organizations; and, particularly, the definition of solutions as OCAP routinely contests Housing First’s proposed solutions. To a more limited extent, there are very minimum “trading strategies” as both organizations depute at City Hall and work to have city councillors and bureaucrats listen to their articulation of the problems and solutions. However, OCAP primarily uses direct action and protest tactics which is frequently delegitimized by Housing First supporters (Schwan, 2016). There is also the possibility of competition amongst the two organizations for “recruitment of members” as both groups work to get agencies (which makes up the majority of TAEH’s membership) to adopt their demands (M. F. Hall, 1995, p. 53). Agencies cannot fit the definition of OCAP members, but agency support remains important and frontline workers make up a segment of OCAP’s membership. In summary, by Hall’s delineation, I would argue the primary site of competition between TAEH and OCAP lies in the definition of issues, but membership recruitment (where membership is understood broadly as support) and strategy are additional sites of potential competition between the groups.

There is some specific social movement theory relating to the competition between newer social movement organizations and older, more established, ones. Again, TAEH was founded in 2014 and OCAP was founded in 1990. Stinchcombe (1965) argues organizations experience a “liability of newness” (p. 148). He asserts that new organizations involve a great deal of learning and creating new relations and relationships, etc. Ganz (2000), however, argues against Stinchcombe’s premise and instead asserts that there “may be a ‘liability of senescence,’” or deterioration with age (p. 1043). Ganz argues this can “make it harder to innovate by making it easier for [older social movement organizations] to keep doing the same thing wrong” in part because of “the abundance of internal resources to which well-established groups have access”

(p. 1043). For Ganz, a group like OCAP would likely be slow and repetitive, in part because of its relatively easy access to resources.

Ganz (2000) argues that new organizations “often lack conventional resources”; however, they have high levels of “strategic capacity” through “aspects of their leadership and organization” which can mitigate their lack of resources and “liability of newness” (Ganz, 2000, p. 1043). It makes sense that a new organization would bring new ideas and new energies into the organizing environment and find ways of carrying them out with few resources.

With respect to TAEH versus OCAP dynamic, however, I have found that neither Stinchcombe’s (1965) “liability of newness” nor Ganz’s “liability of senescence” straightforwardly apply. During the 2017/2018 shelter campaign period, OCAP repeated a number of tactics as Ganz would predict: deputing at and disrupting City Hall, issuing public statements, and holding press conferences, protests and vigils. However, OCAP also innovated new tactics: sleeping out at the Mayor’s house, holding a vigil at the Mayor’s house and making a video of respite sites with a spy camera. While it is possible that OCAP repeated the ‘same things wrong,’ the organization also innovated. Comparatively, TAEH lobbied government both publicly and privately and worked with SSHA on research and programming – a far narrower repertoire. Further, unlike the predictions of both Stinchcombe and Ganz, TAEH has far greater formal (especially financial) resources than OCAP. I would argue that neither Stinchcombe’s nor Ganz’s theories apply to the OCAP/TAEH dynamic because TAEH is a ‘sod’ organization and OCAP is a grassroots organization; both a cause and consequence of the two groups differing worldviews, resources and tactical repertoires.

While not examining OCAP and TAEH specifically, Schwan (2016) explores the divide between what she calls “first-wave”, and “second-wave” advocacy. Again, this can be broken down into against and in favour of HF, respectively. Schwan argues these divides could usually be reduced to “differing tactics” (p. 211). ‘First-wave’ activists view ‘second-wave’ advocates as having “sold out or [being] co-opted” (p. 211). On the other hand, ‘second-wave’ advocates believed that “direct action tactics were no longer effective and could actually damage the movement” (p. 211). Applying this analysis to OCAP and TAEH, a central dividing factor, if not



*the* central dividing factor between the organizations is tactical; it centres on *how* the groups work to achieve their goals.

However, I would argue that Schwan fails to appreciate that groups' tactical repertoires, those tactics that are available to a group at a given time because of the organizational culture and broader context (Tilly, 1977), are deeply informed by political principles and philosophies. OCAP uses disruption because we believe it is necessary for poor people who are excluded from normative politics (Winchester & Clarke, 2016; Withers, 2019a; also see Piven & Cloward, 1979). Piven and Cloward (1993) demonstrate that poor people's movements don't have access to elite decision makers and, therefore, must engage in non-normative politics in order to effect change (also see: Piven & Cloward, 1979). According to Hall, (1995) because poor peoples' "groups are initially locked out of the decision-making process, contentious actions will result" (p. 29). I would argue OCAP isn't a tactically purist organization that roots itself in its tactics; rather, it is tactically pragmatist and roots its tactics in its understandings of the world and its varied tactics over the years are evidence of this. Long-time OCAP member Don Weitz<sup>44</sup> says he observed that "other groups... weren't getting the results through their diplomatic and political approaches but the direct action always brought some results and some reaction" (personal interview, April 11, 2018). OCAP's members' generally agreed-upon view of the world sets the boundaries for the organization's tactical repertoire.

Similarly, TAEH's tactical repertoire is influenced, if not determined, by its worldview and social relations. TAEH has close relationships with government officials (Toronto City Council, 2018b). For example, at the April 21, 2018 TAEH meeting, several municipal and provincial government representatives were in attendance (TAEH General Meeting draft notes).<sup>45</sup> Further, TAEH (n.d.-b) is an organization made up of "local champions, landlords, developers, foundations, businesses and corporate sponsors" (n.p.) They also received funds

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<sup>44</sup> Don is also a prominent antipsychiatry activist and author (see: Burstow & Weitz, 1988; Weitz, n.d.).

<sup>45</sup> These officials were: Scott Harcourt, the Manager for Policy and Program Development for the Ontario Ministry of Housing and Graham Gerrell, the Policy Advisor for the Homelessness Secretariat, Housing Policy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Housing, Paul Raftis, the Interim General Manager and Mary-Ann Bedard, Director, Service System Planning & Integrity from SSH. TAEH's notes were forwarded to me, as an OCAP Organizer, through our organizing networks. I did not have regular access to TAEH minutes and do not know how frequent it was for government officials to attend meetings.

directly from the City of Toronto; it was paid \$25,000 in 2016 and, again, in 2107 (City of Toronto, 2019e). TAEH has direct access to decision makers in the ruling regime and the organization has forged an alliance with the regime; consequently, disruptive tactics are unnecessary.

According to Schwan (2016), HF advocates critical of direct action “often framed governments as unwitting participants in creating and/or maintaining inequality and injustice in Canadian society... if governments are shown how to change and given the tools to do better, they will” (p. 149). Here, governments are allies who are willing to listen and want to do better; whereas, for OCAP, governments are part of the problem and working in the interests of the rich (e.g. Acharya & Clarke, 2018; Biesterfeld, 2017b). OCAP Organizer John Clarke (n.d.) articulates the philosophical divide between OCAP and groups like TAEH:

anti-capitalism has been a political compass for us. If, as some would have us believe, governments are fundamentally honest brokers who hear from the competing 'stakeholders' and then decide how to act in the best interests of the greatest numbers, then you want to consult with and educate them. If, on the other hand, you say that governments operate state structures that serve the interests of an exploiting class, then you fight for concessions by disrupting and posing a threat to those institutions and you look for ways to undermine the systems of control that hold back social upsurge and decisive struggle. (n.p.)

OCAP’s radical, anti-capitalist worldview calls for a fundamental reordering of social relations and the moral economy with it. OCAP challenges the moral economy and works to assert the intrinsic value and fundamental humanity of homeless people. In Chapter 2, I discussed the ways in which homeless people are dehumanized in the moral economy. OCAP challenges this dehumanization by fighting for more beds and dignified conditions in the shelter and respite system. OCAP’s calls for decent, affordable, accessible housing for all and liveable incomes also challenge the moral economy while its long-term anti-capitalist, decolonial and anti-oppressive vision promises to fundamentally restructure – if not eradicate the moral economy.

TAEH’s (neo)liberal worldview works to keep the moral economy and the status quo intact. This framework and TAEH’s work accomplishes more than this, however. While TAEH and other HF groups use “people first” rhetoric, their pathologization of “chronically homeless” people and abandonment of other homeless people equate to, I would argue, the dehumanization

of homeless people in general. Further, HF is promoted by primarily professional advocates and HF is a paternalistic, prescriptive model which also reinforces the moral economy and ruling relations.

Both OCAP's anger and problematization of rich people (and, implicitly, ruling relations and the moral economy in general) is exemplified in a common chant: "We're hungry, we're angry, we won't go away! Stop the war on the poor, make the rich pay!"<sup>46</sup> Schwan (2016), however, reports that Housing First advocates condemn the display of anger, the use of "'angry' tactics" (p. 218) and "aggressively demand[ing]" things from ruling relations (p. 216). For OCAP, anger is a driving force of organizing. Multiple people I interviewed stressed the importance of recognizing or channeling people's anger as a way to motivate them. One OCAP member said: "don't be sad; be mad" (anonymous). From OCAP's perspective, people face injustices; anger at those injustices is legitimate. Audre Lorde (1981) writes: "anger is loaded with information and energy" (p. 7). OCAP's protests attempt to direct that information and energy at an appropriate target to win the group's demands.<sup>47</sup>

In Housing First, however, anger is to be managed rather than expressed. One of the supports available through some Housing First programs is anger management (Gaetz, 2014; Guo et al., 2016; Henwood et al., 2015; Parhar et al., 2014). Along with the erasure of the social causes of homelessness (and poverty) within the HF model, the individualization of the solution of homelessness also means the individualization of emotional responses that people have to social relations. Here, social injustices become about individual management. Anger is depoliticized and problematized – even when it is a rational reaction to people's experiences of social injustices.

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<sup>46</sup> Once, this was misquoted in the *National Post* as "Stop the war, arm the poor" (Selley, 2011). It is also demonstrative of the difference between OCAP and Toronto ACORN which, while doing outreach their protest, I heard their changed version of our longstanding chant to "we're tired, we're hungry..." Anger was removed.

<sup>47</sup> Developing what Deborah Gould (2009) calls an "emotional habitus" and a movement culture that encourages the transformation of affective reactions to injustice into anger (as opposed to fear or guilt, for instance) is, I would argue, a necessary component of movement building. However, Gould also found that anger can be a double-edged sword as she argues the emotional habitus in ACT UP allowed for the fostering of significant amounts of anger, but this left little space to engage the despair that people felt later in the organization's history. Jasper (2014) also argues that anger poses a risk of being turned inward and directed at others in movements. This can damage or even kill movements.

In HF advocacy in Toronto, anger also does not appear to have a role. For example, each time I witnessed a speaker from TAEH, they presented in a calm, professional manner. Where OCAP speakers would angrily condemn City officials for homeless deaths TAEH speakers would thank them for their efforts; where OCAP speakers would denounce City staff in rage for the lack of beds TAEH speakers would commend them and City staff for their work.

OCAP and TAEH have oppositional worldviews and political analyses. I argue that it is out of these that the two organization's tactical differences emerge and they both draw particular kinds of members and resources. However, both organizations also compete for the ability to define the issues and gain support.

TAEH and OCAP actively compete to define the issues and for public consideration. The competitive relationship between the two organizations is an outlier to existing social movement theory with respect to the age of the groups. I posit this is because TAEH is what, in Chapter Five, I identified as a 'sod' organization, which has some of the qualities of astroturf organizations and some of the qualities of a grassroots community organization.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined the shelter campaign which was the largest and most sustained campaign during my research period. OCAP and TAEH, driven by their worldviews, took opposing sides. OCAP's campaign work is exemplary of how to challenge HF discourse and the moral economy itself and provides insights into opposing those demobilization tactics used by ruling relations to quell this resistance. I delineated and discussed the demobilization tactics that the ruling regime used against OCAP and our allies during the campaign and how we responded. The (incomplete) taxonomy that I developed of demobilization tactics based on those tactics the City employed makes a contribution to normative social movement theory by developing deeper understanding of, what Davenport (2015) calls, external factors in demobilization (p. 22). At the same time, for social movement organizers, this taxonomy could be operationalized as identifying demobilization tactics that are being used against them by ruling relations and develop targeted strategies to diffuse those tactics. My discussion about OCAP's responses can also inform this strategizing. Perhaps organizers can be better suited to anticipate these demobilization tactics and/or recognize them as they are being deployed in order to resist them,

try and create the conditions for backfire, or simply strategize endurance plans such that social justice organizing can be more effective and sustainable.

## Chapter 8 - Conclusion: The Struggle Continues

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*My message is: to all comrades in OCAP and all the anti-poverty activists, let us keep continuing our activities, action programs and education and organizing. And we shall never surrender.*

~ Comrade George de Guzman  
(personal interview, Feb. 19, 2018)

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### Introduction

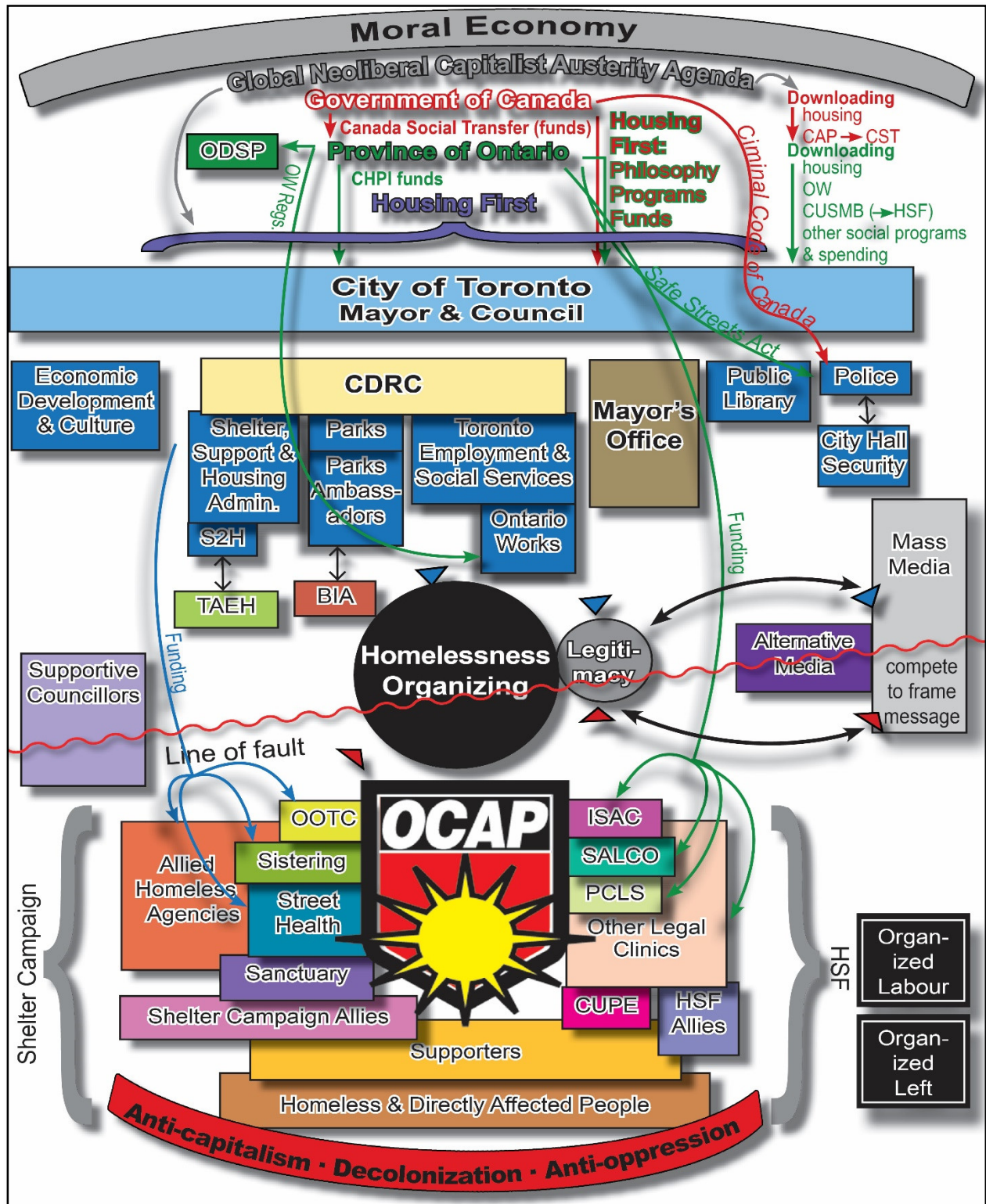
The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty is 30 years old this year. I have chronicled what we have done in just a tiny fraction of OCAP's lifetime and only one part of its organizing program. By mapping three campaigns – the struggle against private security guard harassment of homeless people in a public park in the interests of capital, the fight for a benefit for people on social assistance to prevent or end homelessness, and the battle for more shelter beds and better conditions – I have been able to trace how policy is made and implemented and, most significantly, when and how we change it and what tactics the ruling regime uses to resist change. While I have mapped ruling relations in each chapter and done a partial mapping of the social relations of struggle, in this chapter I will bring all of those pieces into conversation with one another in a large mapping of the social relations of struggle OCAP was engaged in during this period. I will also discuss the importance of disruption, and what the primary research contributions of this dissertation are. Lastly, I will offer several policy recommendations and suggestions for future research.

### Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle

OCAP, like its campaigns, does not exist in a bubble; it is a part of social relations and implicated in ruling relations. In various chapters and to varying degrees, I have mapped the social relations of struggle for different campaigns. However, these social relations are dynamic and co-occurring (see Figure 8.1: Mapping the Full Social Relations of Struggle).

In this map, the moral economy looms over and influences the struggle. Who is valued and who is devalued – constructed as deserving and undeserving or “homeless” and “chronically homeless” or citizen and refugee – within and by ruling relations permeates the entire field of struggle. Countering the dominant moral economy, however, is OCAP's fundamental political

Figure 8.1: Mapping the Full Social Relations of Struggle



philosophy which asserts and centers social justice and the humanity of all – especially those who are denigrated in the moral economy. This philosophy can largely be summarized as anti-capitalism, decolonization and anti-oppression. Connected to this philosophy is homeless and directly affected people (e.g. HSF applicants, people at risk of homelessness, etc.), who ground the struggle and who OCAP takes leadership from. It is from here, at the bottom of this map and the top – with the global neoliberal capitalist austerity agenda, that the class hierarchy in the social relations of struggle are evident. The top represents and reflects the interests of the rich. There is a direct link from here to the neoliberal downloading of social spending, especially housing, from the federal government to the provincial government. The provincial government, in turn, downloaded housing, social assistance, the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and other programs to the municipalities. There is another direct link to Housing First; both the federal and provincial governments impose HF on the City. However, recall that Toronto was the first major jurisdiction in Canada to adopt HF. This map makes it evident that HF must be fought at the provincial and federal levels in addition to the municipal level.

The regulation and criminalization of the poor is also socially organized not only at the municipal level but also provincially and federally. The provincial government regulates Ontario Works but the City administers it, while the province continues to administer ODSP. Social assistance is one of the main ways that ruling relations coordinates and controls poor people (Piven & Cloward, 1993). Poor people are also regulated through criminal and quasi-criminal legislation like the *Criminal Code* of Canada and the *Safe Streets Act*. It is the Toronto Police Services that enforce these laws but they are federal and provincial legislation, respectively. Of course, Toronto Police also enforce municipal by-laws.

The OCAP campaigns focused at the local level to win access to public space, benefits and beds. OCAP organizing, like protests, reports, and media work, pushed our campaigns forward while the City attempted to use demobilization tactics to these campaigns. Mapping the full social relations of struggle makes it clear that the problems that precipitate the need for these struggles are not only socially organized municipally, but also provincially, federally and even transnationally. As mentioned earlier, OCAP was involved in provincial and federal campaigns for an increase in social assistance rates and housing, respectively. At the same time, organizing



beyond the local level can be difficult because of the lack of resources available to poor people's organizations. Consequently, poor people's movements tend to be localist – they tend to focus at the local level (Greene, 2006).<sup>1</sup> However the OCAP members I have had conversations with and interviewed have very global perspectives. Many, if not most, OCAP members view their organizing as a part of a global struggle for social justice. This is also how other radical activists in North America tend to see their work (Chaudry, 2015; Dixon, 2014; Wood, 2012).

What is evident, likely from my discussion in the previous chapter, and from this mapping, is that much larger mobilization is needed to resist the regulation and criminalization of the poor and gain real ground in the struggle for decent, affordable, accessible housing for all and livable incomes.

Below the line of fault on this map are organized labour and the organized Left are shown in negative space on the map, as they are largely absent from homelessness organizing in Toronto during this period. Some unions do fund OCAP's work, which is essential for the functioning of the organization. However, in terms of supporting the actual struggle of the campaigns, it was almost exclusively specific CUPE locals and CUPE Ontario that were involved. The President of CUPE Local 79, the local that represents City shelter workers, gave a deputation calling for more shelter beds and better conditions in November 2017 when OCAP organized deputations for the CDRC meeting (see Appendix 11). CUPE Ontario is one of the members of the Raise the Rates Campaign (n.d.) which made the HSF an issue in the Toronto Day of Action in the provincial campaign. CUPE 3903 also mobilized its members on several occasions to support OCAP events and actions. There were only two notable instances of non-CUPE organized labour involvement in any of these campaigns. The first was the use of OPSEU's offices for the HSF meeting that I mentioned above. The second was when a delegation of Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) attended a January 2018 protest at City Hall. The CUPW workers distributed CUPW whistles to the crowd, which came in very handy as we disrupted the Mayor's Executive Committee meeting demanding more shelter beds. Overall, however, OCAP members – unionized and nonunionized – were critical of organized

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<sup>1</sup> Greene found OCAP was an exception to this based on two protests OCAP organized in Ottawa in the late 1990s. As time has shown, these were anomalies.

labour for its lack of support of the large segment of the working class that is unwaged. Comrade George de Guzman said his own union fails to be “actively engaged” in anything beyond collective bargaining (personal interview, Feb. 19, 2018). Another member raised the point that the conditions in the shelters make working conditions much worse. The different unions that represent those workers “should therefore have a greater motive to be concerned and they're not – if only for their workers” (anonymous). Labour unions have the potential to organize millions of workers across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015) and have tremendous communications networks material and financial resources. The absence of union support, with a few exceptions (e.g.: Maguire in City of Toronto, 2017c; Grinspun & Mulrooney, 2018), means there is a great deal of lost potential.

The broader organized Left in Toronto is also largely missing from this map. OCAP recognizes the interconnectedness of poor people’s struggles with a multitude of social justice issues. For example, “OCAP often does anti-colonial, migrant justice, anti-police brutality, anti-violence against women, anti-war and disability justice organising” (Withers, 2019a, p. 241). However, this connection is often unidirectional; we recognize the connection of poverty to these struggles and both organize around these issues and support other groups’ work around them, but this support is often not reciprocated. Further, I have noticed that “bottom-up organizing” has become somewhat of a catch-phrase in activist circles; yet, it seems to exclude homeless people. While lots of activists and other “OCAP supporters” would come to OCAP events, there was a general absence of organizational support and mobilization from social justice groups in Toronto.

Part of the absence of support from both unions and the organized Left is that there appears to be a decline in movement organizing in Toronto in general. John Clarke says we are “in conditions of pretty grim isolation and overall retreat by movements and unions.” At the same time, he notes, “we've done pretty well under the circumstances and I always have to hope that we're going to see a turn in the broader situation in which the groundwork that we've done is really going to come into its own” (personal interview, Jan. 22, 2018).

This map also depicts the profound lopsidedness between the two sides of the struggle. The City has an armed police force, multiple divisions, city councillors, and much easier access

to the mainstream media. Not counting the Toronto Police Service, the Toronto Public Library Services and other boards and agencies, the City has nearly 35,000 employees (City of Toronto, 2019f), OCAP, on the other hand, has two paid staff. This map also demonstrates the rigid hierarchy of the ruling regime versus the relatively decentralized organizing structure of the homelessness campaigns. While OCAP took the lead in all of these campaigns, the HSF and shelter campaigns were coalitional and involved multiple groups with different constituents and organizational structures. TAEH and the BIA had a mutually beneficial relationship with the ruling regime but the remaining groups on the ruling side of the map have specific positions within the hierarchy of the ruling regime.

The media bridges both sides of the line of fault. The mainstream media both coordinates the activities of people through text – it is a textbook definition of a part of ruling relations (D. E. Smith 1987) – and can be useful to movements to resist ruling relations. Consequently, OCAP and our allies work to frame our messages so the media will adopt our framing and, so too, does the ruling regime. We compete for media framing; there is a relationship between this competition and the struggle over legitimacy: the more one side is recognized as legitimate, the more (favourable) media coverage they will likely receive. Further, the more (favourable) media a side receives, the more legitimate it will appear.

There is far less competition over framing for alternative media. It also straddles both sides of the line of fault but is much more on the side of resisting ruling relations. *NOW* Magazine was important in each of the campaigns as both Paul Salvatori (2018) and, especially, Peter Biesterfeld (e.g. 2017a; 2017b; 2017c) wrote articles about our work. OCAP was also able to publish our own articles in the *NOW* (Acharya, 2017b; Acharya, 2017c; Crowe & Hales, 2016) through which we could get our own message to a much wider audience (although Yogi, who authored these, still had to be mediated by the *NOW* editor). We also wrote a number of articles for *The Bullet*, an online publication that has a large distribution on the Canadian Left (e.g. Acharya, 2017a), and *Briarpatch*, a progressive magazine (Acharya and Clarke, 2018). Alternative media also includes OCAP's own media – from our videos about St. James Park and the respite sites to fliers, posters and our website and social media. There is a relatively direct

relationship between the amount of control that we have over our message and the audience: as the audience increases in size, our control diminishes.

Homeless people and directly affected people are depicted as the base of the social relations of struggle. Neil, Laura Bardeau, “David,” and the many other homeless and poor people involved in and providing leadership to the campaigns give homelessness organizing direction and keep it rooted in the daily material realities of poor and homeless people in the community.

There are many groups of allies on this map which is a strength. Some of these ally groups, such as “HSF Allies,” includes a broad coalition, from the Federation of Metro Tenants’ Associations, Nellie’s and The Dream Team – all of which signed on to the letter to the CDRC – to CUPE Ontario, the ODSP Action Coalition, and Put Food in the Budget who helped organize the protest on October 17, 2017 – to the Toronto District Ontario Public Sector Employees Union (OPSEU), who opened up their offices for an emergency HSF meeting. OCAP also relied on our relationships with legal clinics like the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, Parkdale Community Legal Clinic and the Income Security Advocacy Clinic to connect with others (either because they were more conservative or because they had strong pre-existing relationships). Similarly, we relied on some key progressive agencies to act as a bridge between OCAP and homelessness agencies (many of which we had no contact with). The role of these agencies in the campaign was integral: several city councillors and/or their staff indicated the importance of having frontline agencies support the shelter campaign and speak openly about the difficulties they were facing. At the same time, however, that many of these allies rely on funding from the municipal or provincial government is a clear weakness. Funding extends down directly from the ruling regime and, as an appropriate coincidence, the arrows indicating this relationship look like hands – perhaps even those of a puppet master.<sup>2</sup> The group of “Shelter Campaign Allies” primarily includes key individuals who were centrally involved throughout the campaign and

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<sup>2</sup> For example, After Doug Ford was elected Premier of Ontario, he made substantial cuts to legal aid clinics. A spokesperson for the Advocacy Clinic for Tenants Ontario, which was involved in the HSF campaign, said “housing advocates across the clinic system have become victims of the government’s ‘red-tape’ stance on dissent” (Shadpour as quoted in S. Edwards, 2019, n.p.). It should also be noted that some homeless agencies also get provincial funds through healthcare funding.

Health Providers Against Poverty, which was, perhaps, less constrained by relationships to the ruling regime.

Mapping the social relations of struggle for OCAP's homelessness organizing over the entire research period helps put this organizing and the specific campaigns into perspective. OCAP worked with an array of different people and groups, most of which did not share our political beliefs nor tactical repertoires (see, for e.g. Tilly, 2006). This involved mobilizing to open up space for our experiential knowledge, including creating testimonial spaces, and combatting epistemic violence and multiple demobilization tactics. We were able, sometimes in loose coalition and sometimes on our own, to procure concessions even though we are a relatively small number of people up against a large and well-resourced ruling regime.

### **The Power of Disruption, The Power of OCAP**

Many of the chapters in this dissertation demonstrated the power of OCAP – a degree of power that, until we worked on these campaigns and/or learned through FOI requests after the fact, we were unaware of. Frustrated by the use of ignoring as a demobilization tactic by the Business Improvement Area and the City Parks Department, the St. James Park campaign felt slow and arduous to us at the time. It was only much later that I understood the web of communication and engagement that we had triggered within ruling relations. Similarly, Economic Development and Culture staff worked incredibly hard to try to keep OCAP out of Nuit Blanche, activating numerous informants inside and outside of the City bureaucracy and strategizing on an ongoing basis about how to handle the situation. Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) staff appear to have created an information session to communicate information to OCAP and it was us who ensured other stakeholders were aware of the event. Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) notified OCAP of an important announcement about new respite sites even before telling those city councillors responsible for overseeing the department and the media. These are just a few examples of indications that the ruling regime was concerned about OCAP and what the organization was capable of.

Before conducting this research, I knew that OCAP's name had power in it. This was based on my nearly 20 years of experience with the group – only a tiny fraction of which I have captured here (see Clarke, n.d.; Palmer & Héroux, 2016; OCAP, 2015; Queen's Park Riot

Defendants, 2001). I would often tell people to mention that they had spoken with us to their OW or ODSP worker because that may help resolve the issue. However, I did not appreciate the level and extent of concern OCAP's name would trigger amongst City staff nor the amount of labour they would engage in to conceal this concern.

The evidence indicates that this concern, possibly even fear, is rooted in OCAP's direct action and disruptive tactics. Perhaps the clearest example of this was in Chapter Four, where I discussed how TESS staff did not take action regarding an HSF case that we had no intention of doing direct action over. TESS took multiple steps, including violating its own policies when we took public, direct action in the Laura Bardeau HSF case. This was also indicated to us by Economic Development and Culture staff, who were so concerned about the possibility of disruption at Nuit Blanche they tried to ban us and then tried to cover it up. Many of the campaigns' events did not involve disruption. However, because OCAP is known to use direct action, there is, I would argue, a relatively constant threat that this will occur. As Alinsky (1971) argues, "the threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself" (p. 129). Therefore, it seems that OCAP poses a threat because of the potential for disruption and that threat is useful to make City staff responsive to OCAP's demands, at least as long as that threat – implicit or explicit – can be followed through on. Consequently, if OCAP asked nicely and politely, as several city councillors told me OCAP should do, it is apparent that OCAP would be less effective.

### **Research Contributions**

This dissertation has several implications for social work theory and practice. OCAP's tactics and strategies can be drawn on by social workers to help advance social justice more broadly. Yu and Mandell (2015) have initiated a public debate about practicing extralegal social work with their anthology *Subversive Action: Extralegal Practices for Social Justice*. Elsewhere, Mandell argues it is necessary for social workers to work around the law when confronted with policies that are unjust and to participate in street protests in order to fight for social justice (in Barth, 2016). OCAP's work is, I would argue, exemplary for social workers who want to work *with* communities for social justice. Further, the OCAP model of direct action casework coupled with mass mobilizing is of particular salience for social work as it supplements or disregards formal appeals and reviews and uses protest tactics to secure material gains.

Additionally, I credit much of OCAP's success to being rooted in poor and homeless communities in the Downtown Eastend. This was something that multiple OCAP members spoke to in both our conversations and interviews. This approach to organizing is oppositional to the lone-wolf or saviour organizer model. The lone-wolf/saviour model is when organizers come into communities, claiming to know what is best and working towards it (see, for e.g., Alinsky, 1971).<sup>3</sup> This is similar to critiques that have been raised of social workers (see: Chapman & Withers, 2019). These organizers often engage in what O'Brien calls "manipulative instrumentalization," where community members are made into a means to achieve an organizer's goal (in Dixon, 2014, p. 168). Without being rooted in the community, organizations are poised to be incapable of winning victories or to have any victories they do win be ultimately irrelevant or even harmful to poor communities.

Further, I would argue that this dissertation demonstrates political activist ethnography (PAE) can be suited for social work researchers who are working with community groups for social change. PAE provides both a theoretical framework and methodological approach that complements critical social work. Participatory action research (PAR) has been adopted within social work as, what appears to be, the primary research method to promote social change (Asakura et al., 2019; Hollinrake et al., 2019; Janes, 2016; Jarldorn, 2019). While PAR may be appropriate in certain circumstances, it cannot be used to explicate and map the social relations of struggle the way that PAE can, which is one of the things that makes this dissertation both innovative and useful to community organizers.

I also interrogate the ethic of "the healing power of domination and imagined moral superiority" that I argue overrides the position of Housing First (HF) logic and its adoption by Toronto's SSHA. Chapman and I argue that this is a central ethic in much of social work and has led to a great deal of harm (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 18). In particular, I argue the rehabilitation goals – or the harm reduction principles – of HF are rooted in this ethic. I offer the

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<sup>3</sup> Many films that depict organizing, especially where the organizing is done by people of colour, often have a lone-wolf white man who saves the day. Melvin Van Peebles has a good discussion about this in relation to the film *Panther* (Taylor et al., 1995).

term “prescriptive harm reduction” to describe the HF harm reduction approach. I also demonstrate the ways that HF has not actually worked in Toronto.

Relatedly, I demonstrate the ways that OCAP challenges the moral economy. From the struggle for shelter for homeless people to how homeless people are valued in St. James Park, OCAP works to shift the social relations that produce human value in the moral economy. When OCAP holds memorials for people whose names are unknown and displays public grief for their lost lives as human beings or fights for more beds and better conditions, it challenges the dehumanization of homeless people in the moral economy. OCAP’s condemnation of the City’s scapegoating of homeless migrants also challenged the moral economy through which migrants (and racialized people) are afforded less value as people than Canadian citizens. OCAP’s organizing of poor people as a disruptive, empowered collective rather than the construction of the meek, passive recipients of social assistance also challenges the valuation of people in the moral economy. This is one of the ways that OCAP’s organizing is prefigurative. OCAP recognizes the humanity and agency in the people it works with. From here, it roots its implicit call for a fundamental revaluation of the moral economy and the ways in which people are thought about, related to and how humanity is constructed are restructured.

Lastly, I map out a number of tactics that the ruling regime used to try to demobilize the shelter campaign. This initial taxonomy of 16 tactics both contributes to social movement theory and social movements. Demobilization has not had much scholarly attention paid to it, despite the recognition that mobilization and demobilization are iterative processes. My delineation of demobilization tactics contributes to filling this gap in the literature. It also provides activists the possibility of identifying, analyzing and strategizing around these tactics if they are deployed against their own groups.

This research makes contributions to multiple audiences: OCAP, social justice activists and scholars; and it can help social movements build social change – as is the central principle of PAE.

### **Policy Implications**

There are several policy implications and recommendations that emerge out of this dissertation. I would like to suggest that, if the following policy recommendations are



implemented, the homelessness landscape in Toronto would profoundly change. The two most obvious policy conclusions from this dissertation are that Housing First is failing in Toronto and that the Daily Shelter Census (DSC) system of tracking available shelter beds is deeply flawed. These two policy issues are related: if HF was successful, there would be enough available beds for people in the shelter system that the problems with how beds are tracked by the DSC would become irrelevant.

Laying aside my theoretical critiques of HF throughout this dissertation, the City's own data demonstrates four key things: 1) homelessness continues to increase; 2) length of stay in shelters continues to increase (City of Toronto, 2018b); 3) the number of people who get housed by the City's Streets to Homes workers has decreased (SSHA, 2018b); and 4) it appears the City's biggest proponent of HF, the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness was unable to come close to its goal of housing 400 people when it was given the opportunity (City of Toronto, 2019c). HF proponents' focus on specific kinds of evidence, like potential cost savings on "chronically homeless" people, leading them to disregard the ample evidence that HF has not worked in Toronto.

All three levels of government are ideologically attached to HF; consequently, policy change is required on multiple scales, beginning with the federal government, which is where the funding flows from. Member of Parliament Adam Vaughan used London, Ontario as an example of HF success and to explain why "the shelter debate, to me, is so frustrating" (personal interview, February 20, 2018). His argument was that Toronto shouldn't be putting in shelters because it should be doing HF properly. However, when I interviewed Vaughan, a bachelor apartment in Toronto cost at least \$400 more a month than units in London; Toronto also had nearly half the vacancy rate (CMHC, 2018b, 2018a). When it comes to homelessness in Toronto, all three levels of government – are trying to fit a square peg in a round hole.

Mayor John Tory continues to claim that the answer to homelessness is housing not shelters and celebrates the transfer of public lands to private developers who will build some affordable housing there (D'Andrea, 2019; Febbraro, 2019). However, the City's official definition of "affordable" now means "at or below average market rent... by unit type" (City of Toronto, 2019b, p. 1). Even Sean Gadon, Director of Toronto's Affordable Housing Office,

admitted when he met with OCAP that “affordable” by this definition is unaffordable for people on social assistance: “it’s for people who have jobs,” he said (personal conversation, Sept. 6, 2017). Of course, it isn’t for many poor people who have jobs as it remains unaffordable. Toronto’s current homelessness and housing policies are not working. Only substantial and ongoing investment in low-income housing can ease pressure on the housing market and mitigate the housing crisis.

In the short term, however, more shelter beds and a sufficient mechanism to track access to beds are both needed. As I write this, the shelter system is 99 percent full, minus the family motels, and the respites are 95 percent full (recalling Chapter Six, this means that they are, for all intents and purposes, full). There are a total of 7,494 people in the shelter system (City of Toronto, 2020).<sup>4</sup> The City needs to create enough shelter beds to bring the system down to 90 percent occupancy. Many of these beds should be low-barrier so that the people who need them have options beyond the respites and drop-ins. The City has already committed to 90 percent shelter occupancy; it needs only commit the resources to make this a reality.

Relatedly, the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration should implement a person-based tracking system in addition to its bed-based tracking system. Currently, the bed-based tracking system counts beds, while individuals who need beds wait at Peter Street Referral Centre or on hold with Central Intake (and they or their workers often have to call back several times). This tracking system of counting beds does not acknowledge or monitor those people looking for beds – people at Peter Street are not counted, nor are the many people told to call back later to see if something comes available. Further, the number of theoretically available beds is irrelevant to someone *who* is prohibited from accessing that bed-type (i.e. 1 or 100 available men’s beds have no meaning for women looking for beds). SSHA needs to track who is looking for a bed. This person-based system would create data about who is unable to access the system at the point of refusal from a shelter, respite, Central Intake, or Peter Street (including

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<sup>4</sup> It was a warm night, with the temperature above zero so more people than usual were probably outside.

when and some of the circumstances that are involved).<sup>5</sup> These are the bare minimum policy changes that would help shift the City shelter system out of such an acute state of crisis.

Provincially, housing funding is needed, as are changes to homelessness funding schemes for Toronto that would allow it to implement policy that is reflective of, and responsive to, the current housing climate. Further, it is evident, as demonstrated in Chapter Five, that social assistance rates are too low to manage in Toronto's housing market. Substantial increases (as much as double or more) in Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program are necessary to mitigate the risk of homelessness and help people leave homelessness should they find themselves in such circumstances.

I am not the first person to make these or similar recommendations. At this point, some of these policy recommendations, like raising social assistance rates, are obvious. This is one of the reasons why OCAP has said "STOP Studying Poverty. START ending it." OCAP continues, "Poor people don't need more studies, we need better income, and we need that now" (2017e, p. 1).<sup>6</sup> However, while there has been extensive anecdotal evidence, this is the first scholarly demonstration of the level and extent of the failure of HF in Toronto.

### **Future Research**

I have identified four areas for future research: activist research, resisting ruling relations/regimes, Housing First, and City of Toronto policy.

#### *i. Activist Research*

In my discussion about methodology in Chapter 2, I set out five guiding principles for my research: utility, reciprocity, reflexivity, accountability, and accessibility. I hoped that these would at least mitigate harm and, ideally, help strengthen social movement organizing and foster social change. Outside of the reflexive work of scholars (DeMeulenaere & Cann, 2013; Fernandez, 2009) and critical feedback from their research participants/co-investigators (e.g. Clough & Fine, 2007), however, how do I *actually* know that my work was experienced as ethical by OCAP members? The ethical labour of activist scholars continues to be thoughtfully

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<sup>5</sup> This is not a by-name-list as supported by the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH), which is designed to track everyone in the shelter system (TAEH, n.d.-h).

<sup>6</sup> This was a flyer opposed to the Liberal's provincial basic income pilot program. Full disclosure, I wrote this.

developed (Erickson, 2015; Fortier, 2015) but has not yet been sufficiently tested. There is a need for activist researchers to work with activist research participants to better understand and develop reflexive and ethical research practices for activist scholars.

*ii. Resisting Ruling Relations/Regimes*

While research on how to more effectively resist ruling relations is paramount and, seemingly, endless, there are several specific questions that arise out of this study that warrant much closer examination. These include, but are not limited to, how to more effectively counter neoliberal managerialism, epistemic injustice and violence and demobilization tactics? Further, what other demobilization tactics have been employed by other ruling regimes and how have different groups of activists worked to counter those tactics?

*iii. Housing First*

Further critical research is needed into Toronto's Streets to Homes program. S2H was hailed as Canada's premier HF program. The often-cited study of S2H (Raine & Marcellin, 2007) is now quite dated and was conducted internally. Questions have arisen during this dissertation that warrant further examination:

1. To what extent, if at all, are people who are housed through S2H returning to homelessness downtown (either keeping or abandoning their apartment)? Under what circumstances? What conditions are they living in?
2. What impact, if any, does participating in clearing homeless people from parks and ravines have on the relationships between S2H workers and clients?
3. What are the longitudinal realities of Toronto's Housing First clients? The City tracks limited information at 12 months. How are people doing several years after they have been housed?

Updated studies would help produce knowledge about S2H, allowing for more breadth and depth in understanding of HF.

Additionally, while there is literature that is critical of the pathologization of "chronically homeless" people (Hennigan, 2017; Sparks, 2012; Willse, 2010) and of homeless people in general (Curry, 2016), none of the literature examines the pathologization of this population from a critical disability studies perspective. As disability is socially constructed, definitions of

disability and how they are implemented impact disability ontologically (Withers, 2012). The existing research briefly explores the implications of the pathologization of this group for broader homeless populations and for social policy. However, it fails to interrogate the theoretical implications for disability as a category: what does it mean to interlock service usage and disability; what are the implications for disability theory and disabled people that women are largely excluded from this category; what are the on-the-ground practices of imposing disability onto homeless people; and how do changing policy definitions of disability impact disability as a category? A broad, multi-jurisdictional study that explores the pathologization of “chronically homeless” people in policy and practice would assist in better understanding this issue.

iv. *City of Toronto Policy*

There are also two areas with respect to homelessness and homeless people that require further research: the Toronto Parks Ambassador program and a human-centred shelter-bed tracking system. Parks Ambassadors’ treatment of homeless people warrants further research. Freedom of Information requests revealed that Parks Ambassadors dispose of homeless people’s belongings. Further, my field observations found that they do not always observe their own *Suspension and Ban Policy*. Independent research examining how Parks Ambassadors engage with homeless people and their property would be beneficial in understanding how this program works and how homeless people experience it. Given the disproportionality of criminalization and homelessness of both Indigenous and Black people in Toronto (City of Toronto, 2018b; Crichlow, 2014; J. Rankin et al., 2013; J. Rankin & Contenta, 2017), this research should particularly attend to racist targeting, bias and treatment.

Further, I argued there is a clear policy solution to the disjuncture between the City and OCAP with respect to the ongoing dispute over shelter occupancy: to count people looking for shelter beds in addition to beds. However, empirical research could be useful to compare the number of people looking for beds to the Daily Shelter Census. This could support the case for a human-centred rather than a bed-centred tracking system.

Lastly, I could easily make the argument for further research into the conditions of the respite centres or the need for more shelter beds, social housing and higher rates of social assistance, but such an argument would be irresponsible. As this need has been so clearly

established, it would be inhumane to suggest further research rather than to call for better conditions and more beds as well as the income and units to create the material conditions for people to leave the shelter system.

## **Conclusion**

In the first few weeks of January 2019, four homeless people, Crystal Papineau, Hang Vo, Tabitha Lewis, and an Indigenous man whose name was not released, all died in horrifying ways. Crystal Papineau died, trapped in a clothing donation bin (OCAP, 2019a). OCAP organized a vigil for her at the site of her death the next week. Chrystal was dear to many of the staff at Sistering. Five days later, there was another vigil. Hang Vo, whose immigration status was revoked after over 30 years in Canada,<sup>7</sup> was crushed by a garbage truck while sleeping on a grate to stay warm (Ngabo, 2019; OCAP, 2019b). We also gathered where Hang died – the blood still visible on the ground. This vigil was a “Speak Out to End [the] Deadly Housing Crisis” (OCAP, 2019b) and we also honoured the unnamed, young, Indigenous homeless man who was found dead in an alley the same night Hang was killed. That same month, Tabitha Lewis died of an overdose inside a bathroom of the George Street Respite; her partner nearly died as well (Withers in Toronto City Council, 2018c); OCAP and the Toronto Overdose Prevention Society organized a rally outside of the George Street Respite where Tabitha was also remembered.<sup>8</sup> In November 2019, we organized another vigil; this time, for Kevin Dickman, someone who several members of OCAP knew (Héroux, 2019). This vigil was held at the Peter Street Referral Centre – the place where people go when there is nowhere else to go. While things had been terrible during the period I write about, and some people had to sleep there for days, Peter Street has since started turning people away (OCAP, 2019d). And, of course, these names, along with many more, are added to the Homeless Memorial at its every-second-Tuesday noon-hour

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<sup>7</sup> She was given a deportation order and would have been unable to get into social housing or get social assistance. This occurred because of criminal convictions for fraud (Ngabo, 2019). This is an example of ‘double punishment’ in which Canadian citizens are punished through the courts but non-citizens are punished twice: first through the courts and then through immigration – sometimes with dire, even deadly, consequences.

<sup>8</sup> In response to this, OCAP demanded the City “ensure adequate staffing and training in overdose prevention and response, and access to naloxone at all shelters, respites, drop-ins and out of the colds” (OCAP, 2019c, n.p.).

memorial gathering (Toronto Homeless Memorial Network, n.d.). The Homeless Memorial added its 1,000<sup>th</sup> name in January 2020 (Mathieu, 2020).

Toronto, they say, has the most cranes in the sky; most of these are being used to build residential units (likely condos) (Gismondi, 2019) that homeless people will never be able to afford. In a city with such tremendous economic prosperity, there is a profound disparity in how resources are distributed. What OCAP won during the time period of which I write seems insignificant compared to what we need to win. However, for the person who needed a bed on a particular night and got one because of the shelter campaign or who secured housing because of the HSF campaign, it made all the difference. In these times, as ruling relations further invade the daily lives of poor people with neoliberal policies and practices, I sometimes feel that resistance is hopeless. At the same time, the work of OCAP, in conjunction with our allies, has helped hold back the onslaught, hold on to what we have, and win essential gains. OCAP has shown not only that the organized, disruptive resistance of poor people and their allies is possible, but also that it is practical. As this chapter ends, another begins. The struggle continues. Fight to win.

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## Appendix 1: Plain(er) Language Summary

*Note: while this is a plain(er) language summary, there are still terms that I use that may not be familiar to everyone. Some of these are defined in the glossary in the next Appendix. To show which terms are in the glossary, they are underlined.*

### Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2017 and 2018, Toronto was experiencing a housing crisis and homelessness was higher than it had been in decades. The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) organized to improve the living conditions of homeless people in the short term. In the long term, OCAP, worked to change the social relations that produce homelessness. This dissertation examines OCAP's work, how the City government responded to it and what we can learn from those interactions. My goal in this research is to produce knowledge that can help make social movements more effective.

My standpoint is important to my work and from the perspective of an OCAP Organizer. I have been involved with OCAP for 20 years. I spent all that time living in poverty until I entered my PhD, much of it in receipt of welfare and then disability social assistance. I also had relatively brief experiences with homelessness, both sleeping rough and hidden homelessness as a youth. My anti-poverty work is grounded in my experiences as a poor person as well as a queer, trans and disabled person. I am also a white settler living on the traditional territories of many nations, including the Anishinabek, the Haundenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation are the current treaty holders of the territory that I am grateful to call home. I benefit from settler colonial and white supremacist relations and this affects the way I experience poverty and class.

#### *About OCAP*

Founded in 1990, OCAP is a direct action, anti-poverty organization that is based in Toronto. This dissertation focuses on OCAP's work around homelessness, the primary issue we were working on during my research period. Our largest campaign during this period was a fight with the City of Toronto for more shelter beds. Shelter beds are an emergency measure but not a real solution; people need housing and money. Unfortunately, because I focused on the

homelessness organizing, I was not able to capture the ongoing OCAP work that makes this organizing possible (things like fundraising and website maintenance).

The OCAP organizing model involves direct action casework and mass mobilizing. Together, casework and mass mobilizing work to ensure that we can collectively organize to win immediate needs and build on those victories to build larger struggles for fundamental changes in social relations. The success of direct action casework relies on the strategy of disruption. Poor people's organizing has limitations because poor people have so few resources and so little individual power. Direct action casework bypasses formal legal appeal mechanisms. We refuse to work through the (often incredibly slow) official channels that are designed to keep poor people in line. Instead, we use collective disruption (like holding a loud rally in a City office to get the government to meet with us) to force ruling relations to give in to us quickly.

#### *Homelessness and Homeless People*

The Canadian Government defines homelessness in a spectrum, from “at-risk” through to “chronically homeless.” OCAP rejects this definition and organizes around homeless issues and homeless people – those without homes – including those considered to be the “hidden homeless” (people who are not in the shelter system nor sleeping rough). Also, different oppressed groups experience homelessness differently. For instance, women, trans people and migrants are more likely to be part of the “hidden homeless.” Disabled people as well as Indigenous people, Black people, and people of colour are also more likely to experience homelessness.

#### *Conclusion*

The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty has impacted many individuals' lives and won significant social policy gains, material wins for individuals and built-up and defended communities over the years. It has also been a spark that has inspired other organizing around the world. This dissertation captures a small fraction of OCAP's work. It does, however, provide a perspective on the organization that has not yet been offered and offer new insights into organizing, ruling relations and the iterative relationship between the two.

## Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

### *Theoretical Framework*

This dissertation uses theory to explore the actual activities and interactions of OCAP organizers and activists, and the municipal regime. Most important to this project are the ideas of sociologists Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990, 1999) and George Smith (1990) and their theory/method. For simplicity's sake, I will sometimes call them "the Smiths."<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography (IE) is used to produce knowledge about ruling relations from the perspective of those who are ruled. I draw on Dorothy Smith's (2002) idea of ruling relations which "coordinate people's activities across and beyond local sites of everyday experience" (p. 45). Texts, including computer files, videos and audio, as well as printed texts (D. E. Smith & Turner, 2014), are central for Smith because they can be used in coordinating people across time and space (like through policy manuals). It is the theory of the Smiths that lays the foundation for this dissertation. Drawing on Dorothy Smith's work, activist George Smith (1990), developed political activist ethnography (PAE) which uses basic institutional ethnography approaches to conduct research within activist movements and to help movements create social change.

Dorothy Smith (1990) brings human actions and social relations into focus. When we talk about "systems" or "structures," what we are actually talking about is the interactions between people. Ruling relations and things like oppression, capitalism, and colonialism, for example, are not giant monsters that we must fight but cannot necessarily locate – they are the result of human interactions and they are under human control. When I use words like "the state," "the City" and "oppression" please keep in mind I am not writing about these as *things* but as sets of relations.

Gary Kinsman (2006) builds on the theoretical contributions of the Smiths to discuss "mapping the social relations of struggle" (p. 133). This mapping works to understand the strengths, weaknesses and contradictions within ruling relations and those working to resist/change them.

Also, there is some neutral observer position outside of social relations. However, most scholarly social movement theory (which I call normative social movement theory, or, NMST) claims this perspective (e.g. Bleir, 1984; Collins, 1990; Haraway, 1988; Sudbury, 1998). Rather

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<sup>1</sup> George and Dorothy are not biologically related but Dorothy was Georges teacher. Also, this is not to be confused with The Smiths, the band fronted by racist singer Morrissey (Beaumont-Thomas, 2018).



than pretending to be objective, PAE is conducted from the standpoint of activists (Hussey, 2012; G. W. Smith, 1990).

In addition to the Smiths, I draw on Tania Murray Li (2007a, 2007b) and her ideas about the practices of assemblage to provide a framework to understand the work of ruling. Government interventions and policies are assemblages that take human labour to bring together and keep together (Li, 2007a, 2007b). Assemblages are collections of different parts, like regulation, information and desks) that are not stable; people have to engage in practices of making them, holding them together and remaking them. Li (2007b) outlines a number of different “practices of assemblage.” I discuss these practices in detail later. I also identify several other practices of assemblage that the City of Toronto engaged in and I discuss them in this dissertation. Together, these practices are used in doing the work of governing; they are tactics of ruling and management.

I also discuss the idea of the “moral economy” which describes the value that is imposed on people through social relations (Thobani, 2007). Because poor and homeless people have very low regard in the moral economy, they can be treated as less than human and blamed for economic and social problems. It is important to remember that different poor and homeless people are regarded differently within the moral economy because they are members of other oppressed groups. Within the moral economy, poor and homeless people are also divided into the sub-groups of the so-called deserving and undeserving poor. The deserving poor are constructed as “entitled to the economic, social, and political redistribution of resources that would bring them out of poverty and into [the] mainstream” while the undeserving must first become or demonstrate that they are deserving before obtaining these entitlements (Appelbaum, 1998, p. 4). The categories of deserving and undeserving are not fixed. They can shift depending on factors including membership in an oppressed group. For example, two people with the same circumstances might be thought of as deserving and undeserving because they are different races or because one has citizenship and the other does not.

Neoliberal capitalism is a political and economic philosophy range of policies. It supports individual responsibility, privatization, and free-markets. With the rise of neoliberalism (beginning in the 1970s), poor people are increasingly blamed for their own poverty within the moral economy. The Canadian social safety-net has been significantly eroded as a result of

neoliberal practices and policies, including cutting social assistance, employment insurance and social assistance and housing. As a consequence, wealth is far more concentrated in the hands of the rich in Canada today than ever (McBride & Whiteside, 2011). Indeed, Canada's 87 richest families own more than 12 million Canadians (Macdonald, 2018).

The term social movement theory can refer to any theory about social movements. More specifically it is about the sociological study *of* – rather than with or by – social movements that creates knowledge *about* – rather than with or for – social movements. I call this narrow form of social movement theory normative social movement theory (NSMT). Early NSMT focused on the psychology of protestors. However, in the 1970s, some scholars wanted to move away from focusing on the psychology of protestors; they created resource mobilization theory (RMT). They argue that grievances (complaints) are always present in societies so the focus should not be on why movements emerge but how they do so through the use of resources (e.g. McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Later other models emerged to explain how and why social movements emerge, decline, what outcomes there are from movements, etc.

The most influential theorists of poor people's movements are Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward (1979) who wrote *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail*. Piven and Cloward argue that collective disruption is the only way that poor people can win concessions from ruling relations – because they are poor people. They say that disruption is poor people's most effective tactic. It is in collectively refusing to cooperate with institutional life that poor people have power.

This dissertation adds to grassroots social movement theory and maps ruling relations. It produces knowledge *with* social movements that is useful *to* social movements, drawing on governmental practices of assemblage and moral economy, and other relevant theories. PAE provides both a theoretical scaffolding and methodological approach; there is a strong theory/method relation in PAE (and IE). I will discuss my methods and methodological approach in the next section.

### *Methodological Approach*

There are a lot of people who want to study (with) social movements. As an activist, I have come across many people who want to make interventions into activism with their

dissertations. But those dissertations are long, boring and inaccessible.<sup>2</sup> In order for this research to be as ethical as possible and with the intention of making its findings relevant, I created five guiding principles:

1. **Utility:** the research should be useful to social movements. I worked for OCAP as an unpaid Organizer so even if the research product was not useful, the research process was. I also uncovered useful documents through the *Municipal Protection of Privacy and Freedom of Information Act*.
2. **Reciprocity:** the research(/er) gives back to the movement. In addition to working for OCAP, my data collected for this project will go to OCAP's archives; both of these are examples of reciprocity.
3. **Reflexivity:** an understanding and practices of engagement with one's complicity in oppression, potential to cause and actual causing of harm, how a researcher is impacting and being impacted by what they are researching. I practiced collective reflexivity within OCAP and within my broader support network (see Fortier, 2015).
4. **Accountability:** recognition of the incompatibility between institutional ethics processes and social movement ethics requirements and mechanisms to hold the researcher accountable if agreed upon ethical standards are violated. This included the OCAP Research Steering Committee, a group chosen by OCAP, that I engaged when any ethical issues or other concerns came up. This group, which was made up of experienced, long-time OCAPers, including both paid Organizers, had a lot of helpful feedback and important questions for me. They were only allowed to interfere in my work if they determined that something I did or wrote was harmful to OCAP. This did not happen.
5. **Accessibility:** Without the research being accessible, it cannot be useful. I provided OCAP with updates of significant findings as I went through this process. One of the reasons accessibility is important is because people who are already part of oppressed groups are more likely to find scholarly texts inaccessible – these include, for example: poor and working-class people who could not afford post-secondary education, people with

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<sup>2</sup> That is to say I haven't seen one that isn't these things and I make no claim mine is an exception. Hopefully, this summary can by-pass some of those issues.

intellectual disabilities and migrants who do not know English well. This summary and the glossary are also components of my accessibility strategy.

In order to ensure my research met these principles, my methods are rooted in political activist ethnography methodology (G. W. Smith, 1990). I took field notes when I worked for OCAP as an Organizer (unpaid staff).<sup>3</sup> I conducted 37 interviews, primarily, with OCAP members, as well as members of the media, a Minister of Parliament and Toronto city councillors and their staff. Additionally, I carried out a series of *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (1990) requests, totaling over 5,000 pages. I conducted a textual analysis of these documents as well as relevant publicly available municipal government documents and OCAP documents (including electronic and physical archival documents). Together, these things helped me map the social relations of struggle and make findings that will help make homelessness organizing more effective.

### **Chapter 3: Privately Policing Public Space: St. James Park**

In July 2017, OCAP received a call from Neil. He was a homeless man who was being harassed by a security guard that was hired by the Business Improvement Area (BIA) to patrol the park.<sup>4</sup> Neil wanted to fight back against this harassment both for himself and for other homeless people. OCAP took on the issue because we believed it was important and that we could win it relatively quickly and easily. We did. We got the security guard out of the park twenty-four days after we first found out about it (see Appendix 4b: St. James Park Timeline). This was an important victory for poor and homeless people in the park.

St. James Park is an important place for homeless people to gather and, sometimes, sleep because it is between critical services in the southern part of Toronto's Downtown Eastend (see Illustration 3.1 for a map of the neighbourhood). The park also has a gazebo that has acted as a shelter for many.

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<sup>3</sup> OCAP has a job title of Organizer, yet, all of us are organizers. I distinguish between them through capitalization.

<sup>4</sup> BIAs, officially called Business Improvement Areas, though they are referred to by most people as BIAs or Business Improvement Associations, are created through City legislation and funded by the City through a charge to businesses as part of municipal taxes (City of Toronto, 2017a). They do things like streetscaping of the commercial streets and promote local businesses in a particular neighbourhood.

OCAP needed to figure out what was going on in the park. We believed Neil but we needed to confirm what he was saying. If we jumped the gun and made claims that were just a little inaccurate, OCAP would lose credibility. This could undermine us and/or other work against security guard abuse in the city. We wanted to get as much information as we could before taking action, including a bigger picture of systemic abuse. Over multiple times going into the park and talking to people, we heard that the security guard was bad news. We heard stories of him harassing people and banning people from the park. Talking to people like this to learn about what is happening is a form of activist research. Activists do research all the time and research and organizing often co-construct one another (Choudry, 2015; Kinsman, 2006).

We made a “Know Your Rights” poster and put it up in the park. The poster compared the security guard to Homer Simpson and called him a “private goon” who “has the same legal authority that any other regular person does.” It then outlined what the BIA security guard can do and what he can’t do. The poor and homeless people in the park really liked the poster – the people we met didn’t know their rights. The BIA didn’t like it and ripped them down.

#### *Public Space, Private Police*

St. James Park is public space but the security guard changed that for people: “he 'bans' people from the area, enforces made-up rules (no sleeping in the park) and has become a symbol of fear, which is precisely the intent” (OCAP, 2017a).<sup>5</sup> The BIA is threatened by homeless people because it perceives them as undermining its business interests. Therefore, the BIA positioned itself to police and push out the homeless community from St. James Park using private security. Hiring a security guard to patrol St. James Park amounted to semi-privatizing the park for the BIA. It also led to the exclusion and criminalization of homeless people. OCAP views itself as engaged “in a class war” (personal interview, anonymous) and we understood the BIA as a tool of the ruling class pushing out homeless people in St. James Park.

Displacing poor people from a neighbourhood is called gentrification. As gentrification advances, neighbourhoods are changed to fit the values and needs of their new wealthier residents. A staff person for a city councillor I interviewed told me that gentrifying residents use the language of “welcoming to everyone” which is “coded” as a way of targeting poor and

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<sup>5</sup> Making it ‘public space,’ and creating private and public space is part of the colonial project. Indigenous people cared for the land – no one owned it prior to colonialism.

homeless people (anonymous). The BIA's efforts fit neatly with gentrification. The BIA's goal is to "increase[e] business revenues and tourism in the" St. Lawrence Market neighbourhood (SLMN-BIA, n.d.-d). The group talked about "safety" in the media but the issue was really about neoliberal capitalism and making money for the BIA's members. BIAs can be driving forces behind gentrification.

The rise of the neoliberal city, which Toronto is, has led to the decline of public space. The SLMN-BIA essentially privatized the park by hiring a private security guard to patrol the park. The Executive Director of the BIA even called St. James Park one of "*their properties*" where they hired a security guard to "*enforce the rules and regulations*" in an email to the City (A. Smith, 2017b, p. 26 emphasis in original). But only certain kinds of rules and regulations were believed important to enforce and they were only enforced against certain kinds of people.

The BIA set poor people up as a threat and came up with the 'solution' of hiring the security guard, with the promise of a positive result. This is what Li (2007b) calls "rendering technical," in which "a set of relations" are "extract[ed] from the messiness of the social world" to produce an (a) + (b) = (c) formula. Here, a "problem (a) plus intervention (b) will produce (c), a beneficial result" (p. 265, sequence modified). Social contexts and injustices are erased through this practice (Li, 2007a). The "problem" framed by the BIA became one of safety and security in the park for certain people; the intervention, therefore, was to control the behaviour of those who were constructed as the safety threat. This would result in a solution: making the park "welcoming for everyone" where "everyone" is middle- and upper-class mostly white people.

The BIA also said it wanted to act as "moral persuasion" against the 'bad' behaviour of poor and homeless people (CBC News, 2017b, n.p.). So, the BIA is protecting both the middle- and upper-class residents *and* the poor and homeless ones. But the poor and homeless people are being protected from themselves through ruling class values. Chapman and I call this the "healing power of domination and imagined moral superiority": oppressed groups are "fixed" by imposing ruling class practices and values (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 18). This protection includes the criminalization of "survival behaviours" like going to the bathroom and sleeping that homeless people have no choice but to do in public. It also includes criminalizing other actions that housed people can do at home – like having sex and drinking.

In addition to criminalization, displacement is an approach that the BIA used in St. James Park to target homeless people. The security guard banned/banished people from the park. This would have put some people's safety at risk because they rely on one another for protection from assault, safer drug use, etc. In addition to not having the authority to "ban" people, the BIA hiring a security guard to operate in a public park was a clear violation of City by-laws. The General Supervisor for St. James Park told me so. He also told me that staff didn't know there was a security guard working or banning people in the park.

The City has its own way to harass homeless people in parks: Parks Ambassadors (PAs). They look a lot like police and enforce by-laws against homeless people (and only homeless people). Parks Ambassadors help connect homeless people with Streets to Homes, throw people's stuff in the garbage "to discourage overnight sleepers" (Malik, 2017), and help dismantle "homeless encampments" (over 300 in 2017) (Parks Forestry and Recreation Division, 2017). PAs have been called "security guard-meets-social worker" because of their service and enforcement role (Hune-Brown, 2019, n.p.). I argue there is an implied threat of police action if one does not do what PAs say.

After a few weeks of fighting the BIA and the City to get rid of the security guard, we were successful. However, the Parks Ambassadors attended the park at the beginning of the BIA concert set-up to replace the security guard. A FOI document shows that City staff made an agreement to replace the security guard with PAs and the General Manager was aware of it (Ford, 2017b); this was the case even though the General Manager told the media it was not (personal email communication, Peter Biesterfeld, August 14, 2017). After OCAP's victory, the City reassembled its governing practices and now the PAs carry out the specific purpose of securing the interests of the BIA.

It wasn't until very late in the campaign that anyone from the City or the BIA directly followed up with OCAP; the City Councillor's office acknowledged us, but the BIA and the Parks division never did. From OCAP's standpoint, we exchanged information with homeless people in the park as part of our research and organizing. We also relayed information to the Parks division, City Councillor's Office and BIA and the BIA and security guard exchanged information (see Figure 3.1). However, we learned through FOI documents that the Councillor's

Office, Parks division and BIA were all talking to each other and keeping OCAP in the dark (Figure 3.2).

I argue that OCAP didn't know that everyone was talking about us but not to us was on purpose. Rather, they were engaged in the practices of "managing failure" (Li, 2007b, p. 265) and excluding critique. This is because it would have been hard for OCAP to claim victory if we were not acknowledged in advance (Gamson, 1975). The BIA and Parks division took this to such an extreme that we did not even know that we had won when we won – we found out on the evening news. We took several steps in the campaign after we had won. These included making the video, threatening the Chair of the Board's business with a picket and doing several media interviews. What the video and the press did do, however, was make the win more public and more clearly OCAP's.

It was not until early August when the City Councillor's Office began pushing back against the Parks division about the security guard. I learned that it took so long for Staff to tell the BIA to back off because "City staff is really stretched and they're not willing to stick their neck out for something that could get them in trouble" (anonymous interview, city councillor's staff person). The staff person also told me that if the councillor wanted the homeless people in the park to be privately policed, the City staff would not have challenged the BIA – even though the group's actions were illegal. Further, the inaction of Parks staff was influenced by the aligned interests of the BIA and the Parks division, as both are part of ruling relations.

Indeed, the City and the BIA coordinate the ruling of St. James Park in a number of different ways. The City is responsible for the park's maintenance and design but the BIA has its own Parks Steering Committee, which includes City representatives and has design and maintenance in its portfolio (SLM - BIA, n.d.-a). The BIA works with the City to coordinate and manage behaviours in the park by shaping public space and policy. The City-BIA's coordinated ruling is particularly concerning around the criminalization of homeless people and securitization of the park. It is unlikely that PAs didn't know about the security guard's operation in the park. Also, parks management definitely knew about it and let it go on for at least nine days. Once the guard was removed, City staff arranged for the PAs to take on the role of the security guard. The head PA also arranged, in conjunction with the BIA, for the police to crack down on people sleeping in the park. These three groups (BIA, PAs, Toronto Police) in communication don't



only share a common worldview that denigrates homeless people and exalts neoliberal citizens – they also have a shared goal of clearing the gazebo of homeless people, and they had no problem coordinating ruling to do it. In service of their aligned interests, the City and the BIA worked independently and together to police homeless people.

*Fighting to Win; Winning to Fight*

OCAP's campaign was successful for several reasons – though we cannot fully know the whole story because OCAP is outside of the ruling regime. We know the campaign challenged the moral and legal claims of the BIA and then made its illegal actions public. This was enough to pressure the BIA into pulling its security guard from the park. OCAP challenged the authority of the security guard. The “Know Your Rights” poster informed people what he was doing was illegal and empowered them to challenge him themselves. Also, in challenging the legal authority of the BIA, OCAP undermined the BIA's moral authority because the BIA claimed it took its actions to uphold the law.

While OCAP's video and the ensuing media coverage did not help to get the security guard out of the park, I think they were still worthwhile. If the BIA was able to quietly withdraw the guard, it would have been more difficult for OCAP to claim victory. This helped spread the word, get people inspired, and put institutions involved in ruling relations on notice.

The week after the BIA announced that it was going to pull its security guard, two OCAP members went to St. James Park for the BIA's weekly evening concert. They saw uniformed police “hassling [people] in the park for drinking beer” while the band had a cooler full of beer on the stage (email communication, Marque Brill, August 10, 2017). This is hypocritical. The BIA sponsored an event where the band was breaking the same laws they hired private security to enforce. It is also more evidence of the targeted nature of the BIA's policing of the park. The act of drinking was not the problem for the BIA; it was *who* was drinking that was the problem.

We had won. We had set out to do what we intended: to get rid of the security guard. But we were under no illusions that we had made any kind of systemic change in people's lives – the kind of change that people so desperately need. Indeed, in the years to come, the City would increase the number of PAs and demolish the gazebo. At the same time, OCAP believes that even small victories are important for building movements.

## *Conclusion*

OCAP quickly organized a campaign to get rid of a private security guard in a public park. The BIA criminalized homeless people who used St. James Park. Homeless people are denigrated in the moral economy, and the BIA used the language of safety and the moral economy to legitimize its role in policing, dispersing, and banishing of this community. This small but significant victory was one that OCAP initially misjudged its arrival at because of the practice of containing critique employed by the BIA and the City. I argued that the BIA and the City's shared worldview caused their interests in relation to the park to align, which is why – along with the internal relations at City Hall – the Parks division was so reluctant to enforce the City's bylaws against the BIA – even while Parks Ambassadors readily enforced these by-laws against homeless people. Ultimately, the battle to stop the criminalization of homeless people and defend public space is a much larger fight than simply getting rid of a single security guard. It is interlocked with relations of gentrification, colonialism, white supremacy, and global capitalism. Better understanding ruling relations and the relationship between the municipal government and the BIA, however, can help organizations target that struggle more effectively.

## **Chapter 4: Fighting for Roofs and Beds: The Housing Stabilization Fund Campaign**

The Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF) is a Toronto benefit for people on social assistance to deal with emergency housing needs (last month's rent, beds, moving costs, etc.). It replaced a similar benefit that the provincial Liberal government eliminated in 2013 and is funded the using provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funds. CHPI funds are fixed, meaning that if more money is allocated to the HSF, less money will be available for other emergency housing initiatives, like homeless shelters or drop-ins.

In 2016, OCAP took on the case of Laura Bardeau. Here, an individual gets connected with a larger community and they collectively fight to meet not only that individual's immediate material needs but also to mobilize a larger struggle to win broader change. Denied the HSF, this single mother with two children was told she had “excess income” by Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS), so she was denied the maximum entitlement to replace furniture lost to bedbugs (OCAP & South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, 2016). Baffled as to how someone on ODSP could be considered to have “excess income,” OCAP worked with Laura to secure more than the \$484 she was first allocated.

Unable to win at the office level, OCAP escalated to City Hall. After a phone/e-mail blast at the Mayor and a mass delegation to City Hall, TESS issued Laura \$1,100 for beds. OCAP was angry TESS said Laura had “excess income.” We tried to figure out how this was calculated but could not, as TESS kept its policies for this fund secret. We went back to City Hall demanding more money for Laura, demanding her full entitlement. In the end, OCAP got a hold of the full HSF policy and the full benefit for Laura but we didn’t get the policy changed. As a result, TESS gave the Bardeaus the money by breaking its own rules. OCAP and SALCO (2016) said, “TESS buckled as pressure mounted, and inconsistencies in its handling of Ms. Bardeau’s case became embarrassing” (p. 3). TESS became flexible in the face of disruptive protest.

Once OCAP got ahold of the policy, however, we learned that family and/or disability-related benefits were counted against HSF applicants. For example, if someone got money for a special diet for health needs, that money would be counted as income in their HSF application. OCAP said this was discrimination against families and disabled people and fought this policy. Returning to City Hall with a delegation, we were armed with the *Left in the Lurch: The Destabilizing Reality of Toronto’s Housing Stabilization Fund* report, which outlined the many problems with the HSF policy.

Following Laura’s case, OCAP took on the HSF case of “Sarah,” which had very similar circumstances – with the important exception that Sarah’s husband did not have immigration status. FOI records imply that TESS knew that Sarah was reluctant to take action around her own case – which she was because of her husband’s status. Because it was not likely OCAP would use direct action, TESS determined the matter was “not a priority” and delayed it for two months (Abraham, 2016, p. 13).

In another case, however, we threatened to take disruptive action and we meant it. “David” was denied the HSF because his situation didn’t quite meet the policy. We said there should be a disability accommodation, but TESS said “no.” We threatened public action and, again, TESS broke its own rules to grant our demands. Taken together, the HSF cases of Laura, Sarah, and David are demonstrative of not only how casework can be used to mobilize for policy change, but also the necessity of moving beyond the individual level and the influence of direct action on the ruling regime.

Grounding the HSF campaign in casework meant that we were learning about issues impacting people on OW and ODSP (activist research). We could then mobilize these cases into broader campaigns. Grounding struggles for policy reform in the experiences of real people can also ensure that policies are organized in ways that address real people's needs, rather than through abstractions.

In November, TESS submitted a report to City Council's Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) announcing the elimination of the discrimination against disabled people and families. However, they did so without ever acknowledging the discrimination, rather framing the changes as a policy tweak resulting from ongoing stakeholder consultation. Laura Bardeau and OCAP were erased from the official account entirely. The policy remained flawed but some of the problems had been resolved. The reform, or reassembly (Li, 2007b), of the HSF following direct action and public pressure was, I would argue, an attempt to placate OCAP and our allies, so we would stop our organizing and/or lack the ammunition to level a critique. TESS made some important changes and, in doing so, was able to evade making others. Because of this, we ultimately put the campaign on the back burner.

The line of fault in the HSF campaign was between its stated purpose of helping address emergency housing needs and how it was actually applied (see Figure 4.2). On one side of the line of fault is OCAP, and its allies. . However, both the alternative (including *Now Magazine* and OCAP's own self-produced videos, reports and statements and mainstream media fall on both sides of the line of fault because OCAP and the City compete to frame the issue. The City, City Council and their various committees and divisions fall on the other side of the line of fault. The HSF is also coordinated by provincial social assistance policies and provincial and federal funding.

#### *Toronto Robs from the Poor and OCAP's (Il)Legitimacy*

Emerging from OCAP's work on the Laura Bardeau case, OCAP issued a report on the HSF called *Toronto Robs from the Poor*. This is an example of activist research and what George Smith calls "documents and demonstrations." This means activists create documents but the information and demands in them are only considered because of activist pressure (Hurl & Klostermann, 2020; Kinsman, n.d.). OCAP made troubling findings that it included in the report.

The most significant were that the City ran, on average, a \$3.5 million surplus of unspent HSF money annually and that these funds officially were allocated to a Housing Stabilization Reserve Fund that grew to over \$10m, with no apparent plan to spend it, all while Toronto's homeless population ballooned. OCAP also reported that TESS's own records of spending and other HSF data were wildly inconsistent.

OCAP launched the report in conjunction with a shelter protest in April 2017. The protest was a sleep-out in front of the Mayor's house. OCAP demanded the \$18 million in unspent emergency housing money we had uncovered go to the overcrowded shelters or other homeless programs. The City always claimed there was no money – but through our own research – we found it. The report got a lot of media but only four city councillors were willing to meet with us and, ultimately, those meetings came to nothing.

One of the issues that OCAP faced with the *Toronto Robs the Poor* report was that we are not considered capable of complex analysis by those who are a part of ruling relations. At least two journalists were surprised to learn that OCAP wrote the report – it didn't seem possible to them that OCAP could do careful data and policy analysis. OCAP is very aware of this dynamic which is why it sometimes has other groups co-author or author texts that it writes. Indeed, with an almost impossibly short amount of time to read the report, Mayor John Tory said OCAP “d[id]n't have very much credibility” (as quoted in John Tory Watch, 2017). What the Mayor did is an example of what I call validating knowledge. Validating knowledge is when ruling relations confirm, authenticate, and recognize both a body of knowledge and its producers. Here, the Mayor invalidated OCAP's knowledge. The media also clearly participates in this practice.

OCAP is conscious of the practice of (in)validating knowledge, and we attempted to guard against it through the use of allies in the HSF campaign. Indeed, both *Left in the Lurch* and *Toronto Robs from the Poor*, like many of OCAP's public statements, media, and other work, demonstrate OCAP's awareness of the importance of legitimacy; only here, OCAP is attempting to delegitimize ruling relations.

From OCAP's perspective, both at the time and in the weeks following, it appeared as if there was little regard taken for our wide-ranging report within City government relations. However, like with St. James Park, there was a lot going on to manage the situation. As soon as the *NOW Magazine* article by OCAP Organizer Yogi Acharya (2017) about the HSF was

published, TESS and SSHA began responding to OCAP's accusations. They created a briefing note for city councillors and a table for TESS and SSHA staff, both refuting OCAP's claims.

The briefing note was an obvious response to OCAP's research but did not acknowledge the group by name. It was used to manage bureaucratic failures by erasing TESS's inconsistent and inaccurate reports to City Council (see Li, 2007b). It is also an example of validating knowledge as they undermined OCAP as a producer of knowledge. The briefing note appears to comprehensively address the concerns raised in the *Toronto Robs from the Poor* report, but it glosses over many key issues. Because TESS staff are viewed as legitimate, it was likely deemed unnecessary to check to ensure TESS responded fully and was accountable to OCAP's claims – in fact, TESS was not. The briefing note also included misleading data that made the City's housing allowance program appear more successful than it was. The briefing note was used by TESS in the practices of validating knowledge, excluding critique and managing failure.

In addition to the briefing note, TESS and SSHA made a table containing OCAP's critiques and their responses. This table seems to have only been used internally among staff, for what I call the practice of tightening the ranks. The table removed our critiques from their original context, including the images and context – sanitizing and isolating them. The table contained 22 critiques of the HSF and related housing allowances but omitted 11 of them. TESS staff had now created a new document, a degree removed from the OCAP report, that they and SSHA staff could engage with. Now distanced from the original document, the table erases criticisms and contains misinformation.

In this new document (see Appendix 8), TESS and SSHA make a claim of “relative innocence” (Chapman et al., 2013, p. 30). TESS also makes itself look proactive and responsible. It also provides multiple explanations to OCAP's critiques that seem both reasonable and satisfying. It takes a lot of time and effort, including analyzing multiple City reports and making several FOI requests, to have the knowledge to problematize these responses. Meanwhile, TESS can work to produce itself as innocent, relative to OCAP. There are, however, two instances where it is acknowledged that OCAP is correct in the table. These are minor issues: “a typo” and a “minor variance in the numbers” (Vermeersch, 2017a). Thus, responsibility is taken when no “alternative facts” can be constructed (Conway in Meet the Press, 2017, n.p.). The act of taking responsibility is useful here because it helps answer the question: why did OCAP write this

report if it was so wrong? This acknowledgement can help TESS and SSHA engage in the practice of constructing innocence. TESS made a typo and a “minor variance,” and became the innocent victims of overzealous activists who don’t understand the realities of working within tight budgets.

The table served a number of purposes in the practice of tightening the ranks. It would have allowed for management to reassure themselves and their staff that a thorough investigation had been done and that there was no merit to OCAP’s claims. It could also be used in an internal process of creating unified messaging. Tightening the ranks is a practice primarily oriented inwards in order to focus, motivate and coordinate staff as they simultaneously implement other governing practices.

#### *Direct Action Policy Work*

We kept pushing for HSF changes, especially through direct action casework. Then, we were invited to an information session about changes that were coming into effect very soon. The information session was held June 28, 2018, and the changes were put in place six days later – three of those days were a long weekend. We were very angry about how little advance notice we were given and that TESS said consultation was important. TESS was required to consult, and this was anything but consultation. We really let TESS have it at the information session that was made up of different social agencies – almost all of which found out about the meeting through OCAP. OCAP attended the consultations while remaining deeply critical of the process, viewing them as a way to earn political legitimacy by discussing poverty issues without acting on them. Cheeseman and Smith (2010) have even called consultations “political choreography” (p. 55).

Some of the July 4, 2018 changes were positive, reflecting our demands and the success of our campaign. Some were unacceptable, including a cut to HSF eligibility for kids in temporary care, and no accommodation process for disabled people. We met with as many allies as possible and drafted a letter and policy analysis to the Mayor and CDRC. Twenty-one community advocacy groups, mostly legal clinics, signed on.

Yogi and I were hopeful that a city councillor would address the HSF issues at the September CDRC meeting, but despite two promising meetings with City officials, no Councilor was willing to step up and add the item of the agenda. Considering that City Council is

responsible for TESS and the HSF, it makes sense that councillors on the CDRC would engage in the practice of managing their own failure in order to avoid political embarrassment. The CDRC acquiesced to TESS's practice of excluding critique, including those councillors who saw problems with the program and how it was being reported. By not requiring TESS to report back on the HSF, the CDRC ensured there was no public accountability mechanism to engage with the issues, and no public scrutiny of the CDRC councillors either.

As the HSF struggle went on, the policies we were fighting became more detailed and difficult to put into soundbites. This was because we had won several key changes and, consequently, TESS had reassembled the HSF on more than one occasion. When OCAP was fighting the Laura Bardeau case, the message was simple: a single mom on ODSP was denied money. She couldn't get furniture because she had "excess income" related to her disability and got money from the government for her kids. And, all of this is in a policy that is kept secret. But, as we got further into the campaign, the HSF got harder to explain. It became increasingly obvious that we were getting into policy minutia – a place from which we were unable to sustain a campaign because technical details are difficult to organize around. The victories we had won were also demobilizing or were able to be used to facilitate demobilization. So, we put the campaign on pause.

### *Conclusion*

The Housing Stabilization Fund campaign made important gains for people on social assistance in Toronto. The elimination of the "excess income" formula that counted funds allocated for disability-related needs and children was a major victory. Getting the definition of homelessness expanded, having people establishing a residence automatically receive the maximum HSF amount, and obtaining access to the policy for people on social assistance were all big gains. \$1.8 million more went to people on social assistance in 2017 than in 2016, when we started the campaign. Access to the HSF could mean the difference between becoming housed and staying homeless, between keeping one's housing and losing it. However, there were also losses. We were also never able to achieve some goals– like getting an accommodation policy for disabled people.

OCAP was able to move from a single case into a broader campaign by linking its two organizing arms, direct action casework and mass mobilization, together. By contrasting the



cases of Laura and David with that of Sarah, I showed how the most important characteristic of these cases was the meaningful threat of direct action. Drawing again on Li (2007b), TESS, and to a lesser extent SSHA, worked to validate knowledge, manage failure, and exclude critique to hold the HSF together. Most of these practices took place behind the scenes. On top of the governmental practices of assemblage Li (2007b) describes, I described: tightening the ranks, validating knowledge, and excluding critique.

We were also able to get meaningful resources from the City. The HSF is only a small piece of Toronto's homelessness and homelessness prevention programs. The bulk of the City's budget for homelessness initiatives goes to other Housing First (HF) programs (e.g. SSHA 2017), the subject of my next chapter. Our limited victories in the HSF campaign may have been trivial in terms of the City's budget, but it was important for people on social assistance in Toronto.

## **Chapter 5: Housing First, Homeless People Last**

In 2017/2018 Toronto had a major shortage of low-income housing and shelter beds. This coupled with the protracted opioid crisis and decreasing real values of social assistance, resulting in a rise in homelessness and homeless people being worse off. At the same time, Toronto's social housing, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), units were being closed and the Mayor planned a 2.6% cut to the shelter budget.

Before discussing the response to Toronto's crisis and HF as it is currently implemented, I will engage with HF as a model – its history and philosophy – in order to lay the foundation for understanding it in its local and present context. Then I will argue that, even though HF has become the international best practice and has resulted in positive individual impacts for many people, it is a neoliberal, rehabilitative model that keeps the relations that cause homelessness intact. I will demonstrate this by examining how housing first has been implemented in Toronto, including how the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH) and the SSHA have engaged in the practices of forging alignment, validating knowledge, excluding critique, and anti-politics to further the HF agenda.

### *History of Housing First: Telling and Challenging the Standard Account*

There is a standard account, or generally accepted telling, of the emergence of HF, which has its origin in New York City with the Pathways to Housing program in 1992. It was founded

by Sam Tsemberis who rejected the “treatment first” (TF) model. Treatment first required homeless people to become “housing ready,” which required them to undergo case management and, commonly, treatment for substance use or mental health diagnoses before getting housing. HF offers supportive housing and helps people can access treatment only if and when they want it.

HF was implemented nationally in the US in 2004 by George W. Bush to address the “chronically homeless,” with the model quickly spreading across the country and around the world. The HF is said to appeal to both progressives and conservatives because it is compassionate, ends homelessness, and saves money. “Chronic homelessness” always refers to people who have been homeless for a long time, and often specifically to disabled people. HF proponents say it is effective in getting “chronically homeless” people housed, improving their health and wellbeing, and is reportedly cost effective

The four basic principles of HF philosophy are:

1. independent housing with individualized supports
2. choice in housing
3. recovery/harm reduction
4. community integration

HF proponents argue that they are essential to any HF program.

In Canada, the standard account of HF puts its origin with Toronto’s Streets to Homes (S2H) program in 2005. This was followed by two major developments in 2008: the announcement of the federal research study *At Home/Chez Soi* and *Calgary’s 10-year Plan to End Homelessness*. Philip Mangano, who worked in the Bush administration also toured Canada, promoting HF.

Standard accounts are not necessarily untrue, but they are partial and are used to do political work (Chapman & Withers, 2019; Chrisjohn & Young, 2006). When compared with TF, HF often looks really good. Beginning the standard account further back, perhaps in the pre-colonial Huron-Wendat settlement where Toronto now lies, HF appears less like straightforward progress. The Huron-Wendat didn’t have economic inequality between people, let alone homelessness (Birch & Williamson, 2013). It was settler-colonialism that brought displacement and dispossession. Starting the history of HF in pre-colonial times exposes some of the root

causes of homelessness that the HF standard account conceals, and challenges the HF fix-all narrative.

Furthermore, some HF programs started in the 1970s and 1980s in Toronto, not in the 1990s in New York. They emerged out of initiatives to improve the lives of psychiatricized people (1970s) and secure housing for homeless people (1980s). These early Toronto housing programs' histories have been appropriated by some HF advocates. The ideological work standard accounts do is used to legitimize ongoing HF programming and, as I will argue, the ongoing harm that HF causes.

### Streets to Homes

When S2H was proposed, OCAP (2005) and the TDRC (2005) argued that it was an attack on downtown homeless people, in large part because new legislation that accompanied it banned homeless people from sleeping in City Hall's Nathan Phillips Square (NPS), and eliminated funding for the distribution of survival supplies like sleeping bags. Through S2H, some people moved into housing, and their lives improved. But for some people, their housing was a form of displacement from their communities and the services upon which they relied.

The ban on sleeping in NPS displaced about 100 people who relied on it for shelter. The people who stayed in NPS had no choice but to be persuaded – if not by the “gentle” hand of social work, then by the forceful hand of police – to leave the square. Chapman and I examine ways that “because it's imagined to be benevolent, instrumental violence can be narrated as gentle or nonviolent, even when it's violent and is experienced as oppressive” (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 196). Because City Council, S2H workers, and others imagine that a home is better than sleeping outside, they assume to know what is right for all homeless people. They fail to acknowledge that there is a violence in believing that they know best and imposing that on someone else, especially because that “knowing best” is typically based on white middle/upper-class social patterns. Of course, some people, perhaps most people, wanted to accept the housing that S2H was offering. But for those who didn't want to leave their neighbourhood or take the housing for some other reason, “gentle persuasion” is a deeply problematic approach for homelessness policy or any other social policy.

## Housing First and Neoliberalism and the Housing Crisis

HF creates individual solutions for social problems while minimizing public investment and public infrastructure and promoting an uninhibited free market, which can be understood as the practice of “rendering technical” (Li, 2007b, p. 265). Therefore, HF has become a part of the broader neoliberal project. HF allows for the decoupling of homelessness from broader social relations by individualizing it. Further, by locating the site of the problem in the “chronically homeless” individual, the intervention becomes individualized. the individual becomes the site of intervention to fix the problem.

HF is a good example of the practice of “rendering technical,” which Li (2007b) describes as: problem + intervention = positive result (p. 265). HF simplifies (“chronic”) homelessness and its causes via this practice; now a technical problem, the HF equation is: “chronic homeless” + supportive housing = cost savings, improved health outcomes (including less drug/alcohol use), and an “end” to homelessness in 10 years.

HF is a neoliberal program and philosophy. It erases broader social problems and individualizes both the cause of, and solution to, homelessness. This is one of the reasons that, while Toronto is in the midst of a housing crisis, HF not only continues to be promoted by neoliberal actors but has also failed to reduce homelessness.

Toronto is in the middle of a housing crisis and the housing market is an important contributor to this. Housing is increasingly viewed as a commodity that is bought and sold on the open market for the purposes of making money rather than as a social good and human right. Airbnb has contributed to this and closed many long-term rental units off from the local rental market. The federal and, later, provincial government stopped building social housing in the mid-1990s which ended almost all low-rent apartment construction. Now, there are over 100,000 households on the waitlist to get into Toronto Community Housing.

Toronto’s HF programs are operated in this context. Most people who are housed through HF are housed with housing allowances in private market units. But, even with these allowances, average monthly rent for a bachelor’s unit exceeds a person on welfare’s (OW) monthly cheque by \$360. Someone on disability (ODSP) has only \$88 left each month after paying their rent, for all of their other monthly expenses. Sadly, “housing first” really is that: housing before food, before transit, before anything.

There may appear to be a contradiction between neoliberalism and HF as neoliberalism is commonly understood as the retreat from public spending and social programs while HF is public spending on social programs. However, I argue that HF is itself a neoliberal program. HF reduces social spending, individualizes social problems and, while proponents promote supportive housing, this is typically couched in the neoliberal discourse of creating more self-sufficient, independent individuals. This, then, is a short-term investment for the long-term gain of rehabilitating homeless people to become self-sufficient neoliberal citizens.

### Housing First: Rehabilitation and Harm Reduction

HF constructs “chronic homelessness” as largely linked to disability. There isn’t always a relationship between the two for HF proponents, but there often is. At the federal and provincial levels, “chronic homelessness” requires homelessness for at least six months and involves “individuals, often with disabling conditions” (Government of Canada, n.d.; Ministry of Housing, 2017).<sup>6</sup> Because there is such a tight link made between disability and “chronic homelessness,” and it tries to turn people into economically productive actors, a rehabilitation framework is used.

A core principle of HF is “harm reduction.” This is both the theory and practice of reducing the harm associated with drug use. As long as I have been in OCAP, it has been a non-judgmental space for people who use drugs, and has supported harm reduction. OCAP has also defended the rights of substance users against the police and the City for years. OCAP supported the Moss Park Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) – a makeshift safer injection and smoking space in a tent in the Downtown Eastend park that began in August 2017. However, harm reduction has become a mainstream health policy and its radical roots have been stripped from it except in places like the Moss Park OPS and communities of drug users.

For HF, though, harm reduction has gone even farther away from its original aims and HF workers act as if they know what is best for clients. HF adopts a disease model of drug use and the assumption that a behaviour change is needed. This is why I call HF’s harm reduction approach prescriptive harm reduction (PHR). PHR directs people towards paid work so they can participate in the capitalist economy as workers and use fewer (and, perhaps, eventually no)

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<sup>6</sup> The Canadian government removed this overt reference to disability in 2019 but it was in place for the period that I am writing about. This is also the definition that the TAEH (n.d.-d) continues to use.

social supports. As tenants, HF clients are at risk of eviction for drug use. Ontario tenancy law allows for eviction within 20 days for illegal activity. This is another way that HF can be used as a PHR tool.

HF proponents and practitioners have repositioned the once radical harm reduction project to become a prescriptive harm reduction project. Along with the HF project as a whole, PHR has been mobilized by the City and social welfare agencies to rehabilitate HF clients, placing them on a trajectory towards employability and self-sufficiency. As a rehabilitative project, HF endeavours to create better neoliberal subjects.

### First Steps for the Pre-Housed

In early 2017, the City began discussing the “First Step Housing and Services” initiative which emerged from City-commissioned consultant Bruce Davis’ (2017) report. Davis proposed renaming shelters to help reduce their stigma. The City is still in this process, but the placeholder name Davis proposed, which has been adopted as the placeholder by SSHA, is “First Step Housing and Services.” In the OCAP office, we joked that they would soon rename homeless people “pre-housed people.” There would be a new shelter model, with smaller shelters (60-90 people) and more services.

OCAP was against this new plan. Based on our experience with S2H and the moratorium on new shelters opening in city wards with more than 500 shelter beds, we had strong grounds to believe this was yet another plan to ship homeless people out of the downtown. Again, people would be displaced from their established neighbourhoods and from the people, like their friends, health providers and social workers that they have long-established relationships with.

Like HF, the “First Step Housing” plan erased the social relations that create homelessness and blames individual homeless people for their situations. For example, Davis (2017) says: “This is not about a capital ‘H’ homeless problem” (p. 7). Rather, it is about dealing with people “who are unable to manage in traditional accommodation (apartment, rooming house, house)” (p. 9-10). For Davis, homelessness isn’t about high rents or inadequate incomes, including the desperately low social assistance rates, or the social relations of oppression and exploitation that lead to dispossession. It is about the individual failings of specific people to “manage” their housing. This plan also side-stepped the immediate crisis in the overcrowded shelter system and respite system.

## *Part II: Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness*

As I have already discussed, TAEH is the civil society group driving HF in Toronto. TAEH and OCAP have opposing worldviews. As a liberal organization, TAEH focuses the site of the problem and of change on the individual: homelessness is an individual experience that requires individual intervention. As a radical anti-capitalist organization, OCAP's language focuses on the social relations that create and maintain material realities of poverty, colonialism, racism and homelessness. This language opens the window into these opposing worldviews: the mostly shiny understanding of Canadian social relations perceived by the liberal world view and the mostly shitty one for poor people understood by OCAP. In this section I will argue that, in order to advance its HF principles, it has engaged in the practice of forging alignment with the City and that the two have also participated in the practices of validating knowledge and anti-politics. Together, the City and the TAEH have worked to delegitimize and undermine critiques of HF, OCAP, and campaigns for more shelter beds to alleviate the shelter crisis.

### **Chapter 6: When is a Bed Not A Bed?: Epistemic Injustice and Shelter Occupancy**

There has been a longstanding dispute between OCAP activists and other allies and Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA). In OCAP, we have argued for years that the system is in crisis only to be told by the City that it is operating well. Our knowledge is based on the experiences of homeless people and frontline workers. They cannot access beds when the City says there are beds available. They also experience overcrowded, unsanitary and other terrible conditions if there are beds available, yet the City says all shelter standards are being met. Dorothy Smith (1987) calls the disjuncture between lived experience and official accounts of reality a "line of fault" (p. 49; also see G. W. Smith, 1990). It is at this disjuncture that this chapter begins: the disjuncture between the textual, statistical reality that there are many available beds in the shelter system and the actual experience of not being able to access a single bed to sleep in. In this Chapter, I demonstrate that SSHA and Toronto City Council perpetrated epistemic injustice, including through testimonial injustice, institutional gaslighting and requisite gratitude by denigrating OCAP and our allies as knowers and refusing our knowledge. I will also explore the social construction of innocence, which I argue allows SSHA to evade accountability and helps them to scapegoat migrants for the shelter crisis.

*'What You've Seen is Incorrect': Testimonial Injustice and Institutional Gaslighting*

There is a line of fault between Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's textual, statistical knowledge of the shelter system and the shelter occupancy numbers, and the experiential knowledge of homeless people, frontline workers and advocates, including OCAP. While the numbers may vary, this discrepancy is, if one believes OCAP, a daily/nightly problem that forces people to sleep outside, a problem that can have deadly consequences. Underlying the dispute about shelter numbers are fundamental epistemological divisions about how/what we know about shelter capacity and where that knowledge comes from. In this section, I will argue that SSHA and City Council perpetrate epistemic injustices in order to disregard counter knowledges, which I will demonstrate by examining their practices of testimonial injustice and institutional gaslighting.

There is a competition between OCAP and SSHA about what is true. This competition has consequences and each side has an agenda. OCAP wants more shelter beds. SSHA wants to show things are fine. OCAP has accused the City of "lying" about shelter bed availability for years (e.g. Cole, 2013). One of the reasons this fight can continue is because of the kinds of data that are used. SSHA uses the Daily Shelter Census (DSC) which is its own system that counts empty beds at 4 am. OCAP uses the experiences of homeless people and frontline workers. One of the problems is that, based on my interviews, city councillors tend to default to believing City staff, even when they hear horror stories about what is happening in the shelter system from those trying to access it.

The diminishment or disregard of someone "in [their] capacity as a knower" is what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls "testimonial injustice" (p. 20). Fricker (2019) says there can be non-epistemological consequences to testimonial injustices. This is the case for homeless people, OCAP and its allies, because it can mean that there are not enough shelter beds or that conditions for shelter residents are terrible.

Explicating the Numbers: The Ongoing Dispute over Shelter Capacity

City Council, SSHA and OCAP all agreed that the shelter occupancy *should* be 90 percent. This occupancy cap was won through activism (Toronto City Council, 1999, 2013). But the 90 percent occupancy cap has *never* been met. While both the City and OCAP agree that there should be 10 percent occupancy in the shelter system to act as breathing room, we don't



agree how many beds are *actually* in the system on any given night. On nights people in OCAP know several people who cannot access shelter beds anywhere in the city, SSHA reports there are multiple open beds.

There are several ways that the shelters can appear to have open beds, but homeless people can experience there to be no beds. I use the example of November 9, 2018, to illustrate this point. On this night, the City says there are 472 free beds, that the system is 93 percent full. But only families can access family beds – taking them out of the equation, the system is 99 percent full and there are only 47 beds left in the entire system. Some beds are part of programs people must be referred to. So, they are recorded as empty, but no one can access them. Also, shelters hold beds for people to return to which makes them unavailable to be filled throughout the day; but they can be available at 4 a.m. for the census count. Or, there can be men’s beds but women cannot access them. Families are also told they can’t get beds even when the DSC says there *are* beds. These are some of the ways that there can appear to be more than 500 beds available but very real people are denied shelter. It seems like this is because motel rooms have a maximum occupancy (say of 5 people) but if the family is fewer people (say 3 people), the other beds would be counted as “empty” (2 beds). This is the case even though no one could access these beds (Meagher in Hatlem, 2018). This is how it seems there are many available beds while at the same time no one can access them.

It is also possible that people can’t get into the family motels because they are deliberately left empty in order to make the numbers look better. I don’t really think this is happening. But this has happened with the respite sites. Mayor Tory had recently opened a new site and had said on numerous occasions that it had space to take people. Yet, Central Intake said it was full. Homeless advocate Doug Johnson Hatlem went to that site to see if it had beds (cots actually) and they said they did and could take people; he said “I think it's intentional” in order to manipulate the shelter statistics (in CBC Radio, 2018, n.p.). The respite sites aren’t counted in the shelter numbers – they have their own separate count every night at 4 am. They are supposed to be low-barrier 24-hour drop-ins but they have become *de facto* shelters because the shelters are so full. The numbers of people using the respites kept climbing. On November 9, 2018, they were 99 percent full, but that also doesn’t capture the full story. This number doesn’t count the people going in and out through the day, or the people turned away.

While cracking open how the shelter numbers are calculated, problems with this data become obvious. Yet many times OCAP and our allies have attempted to testify to these flaws, our accounts have been rejected. The Daily Shelter Census is socially organized to produce a deflated occupancy rate. As long as the “objective reality” was that on any given night there were 500 empty shelter beds, we could not possibly succeed in advocating for more.

### *Who Knows? The Social Organization of Credibility and Testimonial Injustice*

Testimonial injustice was imposed on shelter campaign advocates in different ways throughout the campaign. While OCAP and our allies were disadvantaged by testimonial injustice and other epistemic violences, SSHA staff and TAEH were empowered by it. But testimonial injustice does not only impact organizing, it also disproportionately impacts people who are denigrated in the moral economy.

When OCAP and our allies deputed at City Hall before the CDRC, many of us felt that we were not heard. We also felt that those representing the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness were privileged in the space they had to both speak and be heard. After analyzing every set of deputations that OCAP participated in, I found the Chair discriminated against people who supported the shelter campaign. On average, TAEH speakers, who were always upper management, were warned after fifty-six seconds while shelter campaign speakers were warned after only six seconds (see Figure 6.1). TAEH speakers were asked, on average, questions by three city councillors while shelter campaign supporters were asked only one. This is clear evidence of testimonial injustice, as it was experiential knowledge that challenged ruling relations, and was afforded less time and attention by those same relations.

### *Gaslighting*

Gaslighting<sup>7</sup> is a form of psychological, epistemic abuse used by scholars and activists that involves sowing doubt and uncertainty through persistent negation. I have explained gaslighting to other activists by saying something like: “gaslighting is not a thing; you imagined it, you never heard the word gaslighting – that is what gaslighting is.” Ghaida Moussa (2019) says “institutional gaslighting” is when institutions make oppressed people “doubt their

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<sup>7</sup> The term references the 1944 film *Gaslight*, in which a woman is manipulated by a man to make her feel like she can no longer trust herself or her reality (Porzucki, 2016a; Sweet, 2019b).

experiences, thoughts, and lives” with their epistemic power (p. 124). This is done to maintain and perpetuate ruling relations.

Bringing Moussa (2019) into conversation with Dorothy Smith (1999), institutional gaslighting can be practiced translocally and transtemporally using policies (text). This means one staff person in one place can impact someone’s experiences of an institution in many different times and places. For OCAP, when we say, “There are no beds,” we are told, “There are beds.” OCAP experienced institutional gaslighting by our experiences of the shelter system being denied. Additionally, we were denied as knowers and our experiences, understandings of reality, and even the standpoint from which we know were denied. Gaslighting is an attempt by the gaslighter, in this case the City, to accept a knowledge that is not one’s own and that one does not believe. OCAP’s knowledge wasn’t simply suppressed, we were told repeatedly that we were wrong, that there was room in the shelters, when we knew this was not the case. The aim of institutional gaslighting, in this instance, was not simply to establish SSHA’s truth as the dominant truth but to eradicate all other truths.

The denial of experiential knowledge and institutional gaslighting are socially organized. A clear and replicable pattern is evident with respect to both testimonial injustice and institutional gaslighting. This involves: a) the limiting or closing off of testimonial space (deputation length/questions, membership in the CAB, etc); b) statistical glossing (including transitional beds, unfillable family beds); c) statistical denial (DSC data are used to delegitimize our accounts); d) public rejection (if we get media attention, our account is countered with their ‘more legitimate’ account); and, e) wear down (repeat, repeat, repeat – steps c and d, in addition to private denial, are specifically gaslighting). The whole pattern, as it can be cycled through again and again can (or is intended to) get advocates to question their own experiential knowledge and accept the knowledge of ruling relations.

OCAP’s disruptive protest actions opened up space for our knowledge claims. OCAP resisted these violences and continued to put forward its testimony through institutional avenues and used disruption to create new space for our testimonies – like chanting and making disruptive speeches.

*Smile and Say Thank You: Epistemic Violence of Requisite Gratitude for Continued Oppression*

Requisite gratitude for continued oppression is an epistemic violence. It means that oppressors require expressions of gratitude in order to make even a small change to their continued oppression. Two councillors both indicated to me that OCAP should express gratitude for what it achieves in concessions from the City, even in situations where they receive very little, or even lose ground in bureaucratic reshuffles and policy rewrites. This expectation of gratitude is a kind of epistemic violence that requires a profound cognitive dissonance. It requires us to suborn our understanding of past and ongoing systemic harm and to accept concessions we know are insufficient and will ensure continued suffering. At the same time, we are expected to smile and say ‘thank you’ for this. Expressing gratitude under these circumstances also requires our submission to an unjust social hierarchy in which homeless people continue to be denigrated – some of whom “ha[ve] been marginalized (literally to death)” (Kennelly, 2009, p. 132). Further, councillors and City staff are recognized and lauded for their good work. This is an epistemic violence because it negates our experiences and ourselves. It also works to prop up those same ruling relations OCAP seeks to challenge.

*Doing Our Best: Claims of Relative, Collective Innocence*

Requisite gratitude is one component of a larger project of innocence-making on the part of actors within the ruling regime. By constructing themselves as innocent, City councillors and staff can continue to feel good about their work and recuse themselves of grappling with the real harms caused by the decisions that they make. These claims to innocence also have ramifications for shelter campaign proponents with respect to what kinds of evidence we must produce to counter SSHA’s official narrative. Further, with the system in crisis and those in leadership constructed as innocent, the City needs to create a group to hold responsible; in this case, they scapegoated refugees – which I will discuss below.

With respect to SSHA workers, these claims are made through a ‘we’re doing the best we can in the roles we have’ narrative. One example of this is an email that Director Mary-Anne Bédard sent to thirty people in SSHA. She tells staff they are doing work they can be “proud” for doing the “best we can” within “the system we have.” This claim of “relative innocence” relates to what people would have in their absence: nothing at all, or, perhaps, jails and other carceral institutions. Doing work they can be proud of, Chapman and I argue, allows helping

professionals occlude the reality that they are continuing relations of domination and injustice (Chapman et al., 2013, p. 30). Bedard's email also renders her own and SSHA's power invisible through the claim it is their job to "speak truth to power." Here, Bedard negates how much power she and her staff can wield, from who gets housing to how many shelters will be opened and where. In casting themselves in the heroic role of 'speaking truth to power', she exceptionalizes herself and SSHA staff. Powerless, they do not hold responsibility for the failures of the shelter system.

Chapman, Hoque and Utting (2013) say "claims of relative innocence" allow City bureaucrats to maintain an "exclusively outward-directed anger and critique leaves little personal agency or responsibility for things in which they had actively participated" (p. 27). Once they situate themselves as innocent, SSHA staff can uncritically continue their labour, leading to miserable conditions for homeless people. "Binary good/bad or innocent/guilty ways of understanding people enable[ people] to situate [themselves] squarely on the side of good, as innocent" (Chapman & Withers, 2019, p. 358). SSHA upper-level bureaucrats positioning themselves entirely on the side of 'good' enables them to reject evidence that the shelter system is in crisis.

City councillors also constructed SSHA staff and themselves as innocent. In addition to accepting SSHA staff's knowledge as truth, nearly every city councillor I interviewed, from both sides of the political spectrum, made note of the good intentions of staff. For these councillors, SSHA staff's intentions are what make them innocent. City councillors and the Mayor also had a "best we can" narrative about the shelter crisis. Councillor Ford told me "we did the best job we could, given the circumstances," implicit here is that they could have done better under different circumstances (personal interview, March 1, 2018). Yet, the central circumstance limiting Council was the budget that they themselves set. The Mayor (2017), also maintained his own 'best we can' innocence narrative. While refusing to open more emergency shelter spaces or add sufficient resources to the shelter system, "We are doing everything we can to keep people safe," he said (n.p.).<sup>8</sup> This claim of relative innocence is enabled through the epistemic violence perpetrated against homeless people by the ruling regime. It enables staff, the Mayor and

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<sup>8</sup> This is from a reply that Tory made to a letter over 30 agencies signed calling for an increase in shelter beds.

councillors to manage the contradiction in their personal belief they are doing good while not implementing the changes that activists said were necessary.

Because city councillors are invested in their own innocence and that of SSHA staff, OCAP and our allies need more and better evidence to prove our case. In early 2018, advocates started releasing recordings that could not be as easily dismissed as our testimonies. First, there was audio from the SSHA Central Intake hotline saying there was no shelter space. Then a video circulated showing a man in a medical crisis that was left unattended to. Both of these were released by Doug Johnson Hatlem. Then OCAP went into several respites with a journalist wearing a concealed camera and made a video of the conditions. It appeared on the nightly news and was posted on YouTube. OCAP had been describing the terrible conditions of these spaces for months but now we could show people. SSHA tried to dispute the claims in the video but could not deny the reality of the images themselves.

But CDRC members did not weigh the two sets of evidence against each other in making decisions based on the evidence. Instead, I suggest that the evidence that OCAP and our allies put forward are treated like accusations of guilt against SSHA. This means shelter campaign proponents have to overcome both epistemic injustice and provide irrefutable evidence to have *individual* instances of problems with the shelter system recognized.

The application of grossly different standards of proof is an epistemic injustice layered on other epistemic injustices. Shelter campaign proponents', especially OCAP's, testimonial evidence is invalidated because of who we are, and we are institutionally gaslit by being told that our experiences are not real. On top of this, we must prove our case to a very high standard, a much higher standard than SSHA staff- another epistemic injustice. This is partly because SSHA staff make a claim to relative innocence. In turn, city councillors and the Mayor root their own relative innocence in the unchallenged veracity of SSHA's own claims, data and testimony, and in their staff's inherently good intentions. Nevertheless, as the shelter campaign progressed, OCAP and other allies escalated our own epistemic tactics were able to make the disjuncture between lived experience and City-sanctioned reality more visible through audio and video recordings.

The City's investment in its own innocence, both in the case of SSHA staff and city councillors, had far reaching implications. While the ruling regime was often able to maintain its

assertions about shelter occupancy and conditions, it was not consistently able to contain the reality that the system was not in crisis. Returning to the binary innocent/guilty ways of thinking, by constructing themselves as innocent, SSHA bureaucrats and the rest of the ruling regime needed to provide an explanation for why there was a crisis at all. Refugees, asylum seekers and, to a lesser extent, the federal government, were constructed as guilty by the ruling regime.

SSHA staff began ringing alarm bells about the number of refugees in the shelter system in 2017. The 2018 *Street Needs Assessment* (SNA) continued this rhetoric. The SNA made several strong claims about refugees in the shelter system. However, on closer examination, these findings cannot be substantiated. The SNA found that “40% of respondents staying in City-administered shelters *are* refugee/asylum claimants” (p. 3, emphasis added). However, the question put to respondents pertains to the immigration category they came to Canada under (i.e. immigrant, refugee, etc.) – not their current status. Therefore, the report can only conclude: ‘40% of respondents staying in City-administered shelters *are or were* refugee/asylum claimants *at one point in their lives.*’ Indeed, the average length of time migrants in the shelter system had been in Canada was 9 years.

In addition to their vulnerability as, often, a poor, traumatized population with little support and low English literacy levels, refugees make an ideal scapegoat because they create the opportunity for politicians to play a favourite game: “jurisdictional ping pong” (Graham & Peters, 2002, p. 12). Here the City of Toronto can lay blame onto the federal government with the claim that refugees are its jurisdiction, which it did when it requested additional funds. Toronto City Council (2017d) passed a motion asking the federal government “to pay for all necessary resources, including affordable housing and shelter costs, for any refugees that have moved to Toronto over the last three years.” OCAP and our allies demanded that the crisis be dealt with rather than blamed on a group of particularly vulnerable homeless people.

### *Conclusion*

There is a clear line of fault between experiential knowledge of the reality of the shelter system, and the official account of the situation presented by the City. Of course, there has always been a simple solution to the numbers conflict. Rather than counting beds at 4 am (or in addition to it), SSHA could track the number of real people who cannot access beds. This would give SSHA a true picture of how many people are seeking beds they cannot access. It is possible

that this would require expensive new software. It is also possible SSHA does not want to know this information as the Daily Shelter Census benefits SSHA and its narrative. Instead, SSHA and City Council have worked to denigrate and suppress the knowledge of critical voices, including through testimonial injustice, institutional gaslighting and requisite gratitude. SSHA staff and city councillors have constructed themselves as relatively innocent – negating responsibility for harm and, in turn, scapegoating homeless refugees for the shelter crisis.

However, OCAP and our allies resisted the epistemic injustice that SSHA staff and city councillors perpetrated against us. We organized our communities against the scapegoating of refugees. OCAP’s protests also used disruption to open space for us to speak about our knowledge in official spaces in unofficial ways. OCAP and other shelter campaign proponents refused to be silenced by the ruling regime’s practices. In the next chapter, I will discuss the shelter campaign in detail, the mechanisms of the ruling regime used to try to demobilize it and how OCAP responded.

## **Chapter 7: The Struggle for Shelter: The Campaign, Mobilization and Demobilization**

This chapter discusses the shelter campaign. The shelter occupancy numbers and the epistemic injustices OCAP experienced, which I discussed in the last chapter, were central to this campaign. I argue that the City used several demobilization tactics against OCAP and our allies. I also look at how TAEH’s forged alignment with the City was used to try to demobilize us.

The shelter campaign worked to create better conditions and more beds in the shelter system, including the respite centres. In October 2016, there was a “dangerous level of overcrowding in Toronto’s homeless shelters” (OCAP, 2016d, n.p.). To document what was going on, OCAP co-produced a short documentary called *Bursting at the Seams* with Rebecca Garrett and Sanctuary, a drop-in for homeless people (Garrett, 2016). We held the film premiere in front of Mayor John Tory’s luxury condominium. OCAP said if he wasn’t going to address the problem, we would bring the crisis to him. We returned to Tory’s condo twice more: in February 2017, a few days after the death of Pierre Gregoire, a homeless man who died after leaving a drop-in without room for him to sleep; and once in April 2017, for a sleep-out demanding more shelter beds.

The campaign demands evolved as the shelter situation evolved. For the April 22 sleep-out, for example, we demanded the city open 1000 new shelter beds, and 300 beds in armouries,



gyms or other public spaces that could offer showers, enough bathrooms and meet basic shelter standards. (OCAP, 2017k, para. 2, see Illustration 7.1)

The number 1,000 was chosen after carefully considering several factors. These included: the number of people sleeping rough (as estimated by the City); how many beds were needed to bring the system down to 90% occupancy; and how many spaces were respite, drop-in or Out of the Cold – spaces which are inadequate and temporary. OCAP also demanded that a number of these beds become low-barrier beds to serve groups who struggle to access the standard shelter system. By January 2018, we increased this to 1,500 beds (see Appendix 12: Written Deputation to Jan. 17, 2018 CDRC Meeting for rationale).

At the time, a small group of us did the math based on the previous methodology that OCAP members Danielle Koyama and Jess Hales had developed. We knew that the 1,500 demand was an underestimate; however, it was the easiest to justify because we used concrete City numbers.

One OCAP member described our approach to our demands:

our politics are, fundamentally... very radical but the demands that OCAP puts forward are not radical at all... When we ask for 1,500 or 3,000 shelter beds, that is need that's identified in the City - it's not a pie in the sky number. (personal interview, anonymous)

Nevertheless, one city councillor told me that OCAP wanted too much.

OCAP organized many different kinds of actions and events throughout the campaign. Several different times, we organized for people to depute at city council. The strategy behind making deputations isn't simply to be heard through the formal democratic process: OCAP takes institutional avenues, at various points in its campaigns, simply *so it can say that it did so* – as a means of legitimizing the nearly always necessary disruption that will follow. While OCAP is a direct action organization, it cannot simply rush into direct action without attempting to resolve an issue through another route first; if we did, OCAP would be accused of being unnecessarily antagonistic and militant. Further, the City has official channels through which it must do things; to enact services or policies it must pass motions, for example. So, if we want something done, there has to be a corresponding motion.

In the summer of 2017, the overdose crisis hit the homeless community in Toronto especially hard. “BBQ and Rally for Shelter & Housing” was held at Allan Gardens. We had a 19-foot-long banner that said: “Mourn the Dead, Fight Like Hell for the Living.” There, Gaétan

Héroux (2017), who has worked with OCAP for decades and as a frontline worker with poor people for even longer said:

Everyone in this park right now can name a person who's died on these streets. I can name hundreds of people that have died on these streets... recently we've had these ODs... We need to have the most basic stuff to live. We need housing. We need enough income. And, we're gonna fight for that.

And fight we did (see Appendix 4d for the campaign timeline).

Finally, in November, we had a victory at City Hall. Like for the June meeting before it, we had organized a significant number of knowledgeable people to deputate at the CDRC meeting. Unlike the June deputations - where the councillors we might otherwise have expected to be on-side with OCAP and, especially, our allies, were openly hostile, several councillors introduced motions paralleling our demands. After nine allies and Gaétan from OCAP deputated, critical motions were passed - including the jackpot: to open 1,000 new shelter beds in 2018. That motion passed unanimously (Toronto City Council, 2017b). While TAEH had been present that day supporting SSHA plan (a plan which, we argued, was almost entirely inadequate) the CDRC was finally addressing the crisis.

Having won at the CDRC, there was only one more step until the beds we needed had been secured, at least on paper. OCAP called a demonstration for the morning of December 5<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the City Council meeting, to make sure our 1,000 bed and other motions passed at Council. However, the Mayor held a press conference on December 3<sup>rd</sup> saying he was putting forward a motion for only 400 new spaces (mats, cots or beds). Our protest went ahead, with a much angrier tone than we had anticipated. The Mayor's motion passed and the other, more ambitious and comprehensive CDRC motions were defeated.

We continued to build the campaign. We made wins along the way that year. The Mayor was forced to back down and ask the Federal Government to open the Moss Park Armoury in January (City of Toronto, 2018d); he also opened the Better Living Centre (BLC) respite as well (City of Toronto, 2017d). We kept organizing.

We held another protest in February, coinciding with a City Council meeting. There, a 1,000-bed motion was won! But, there was a catch: the motion only required the city make "all reasonable efforts to expedite the expansion of permanent shelter beds by 1,000 in 2018" but it

could take as long as three years for the 1,000 beds to be brought online (Toronto City Council, 2018a, para. 163).

After the 1,000-bed motion was won, the shelter campaign deescalated rapidly. By April 2018, respite sites were scheduled to close. SSHA announced that they were opening alternative sites, but, they were far from the downtown core. There was a gross loss of 248 spaces in the city for the warmer months (OCAP, 2018e).

During this period, OCAP and our allies fought as hard as we possibly could to win life-saving services. We won specific and essential material gains, which given the circumstances we knew would be very difficult. In the next section, I map the social relations of struggle to better understand where OCAP is at in relation to the ruling regime, and to our allies, and our potential and weaknesses. In the remainder of the chapter, I will discuss what insights can be gained from the shelter campaign about organizing and mobilization by examining the demobilization tactics used by the City. I argue that understanding these tactics and OCAP's response to them can help movement organizers combat the use of these tactics in the future.

### *Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle*

In this chapter, I map the social relations of struggle for the shelter campaign (see figure 7.2: Map of the Shelter Campaign Social Relations of Struggle). The line of fault is the claim that the shelter system needs more beds and the respite sites need better conditions. On one side of the line of fault is ruling relations, under the guiding philosophy of Housing First. Federal and provincial government policies coordinate city programs through funding guidelines.

SSHA staff are the primary actors for the City on the map. SSHA has a close relationship with TAEH – the Housing First advocacy organization. Toronto Public Library is a TAEH Community Partner. Other City divisions involved in the campaign were Economic Development and Culture (EDC), Toronto Police Services and City Hall Security. These divisions did not take public positions about the number of beds in the Toronto shelter system. However, they all played a role in the suppression and/or repression of OCAP during the campaign. Additionally, the City has a lot of financial resources.

Straddling the disjuncture are the media and supportive city councillors. In my experience, the mainstream/mass media is more likely to write stories that show strong deference to City staff and provide us little space to present our case. Nevertheless, we would work to

frame our issues to the media in a way that we could get positive coverage – so would the City and TAEH. However, the alternative media, particularly *NOW Magazine*, tends to be more responsive to our position, including sometimes publishing articles by OCAP members (e.g. Acharya, 2017b, 2017c; Crowe & Hales, 2016). Several city councillors also navigate this disjuncture, changing positions when the political landscape required it (or, perhaps, when it was in their own interests).

On the side of the fault line, is a less resourced group of people who have come together for the shelter campaign. In addition to OCAP and our usual supporters, there was a key group of shelter campaign allies. However, missing from this map is the larger organized Left and organized labour, with a few key exceptions of supportive unions. OCAP recognizes the interconnectedness of poor people's struggles with a multitude of social justice issues and labour issues. However, this connection is often unidirectional; we organize around these issues and support other groups' work, but this support is often not reciprocated. Part of the absence of support from both unions and the organized Left is that there appears to be a decline in movement organizing in Toronto in general. At the base of the groups is homeless people themselves who were involved throughout the shelter campaign.

By examining this mapping of the social relations of struggle, the weaknesses of the shelter campaign become apparent: outside of OCAP, most of the organizing and support is concentrated within the agency and service sector. This means that the campaign is vulnerable to pressure from the City because many of these groups receive funding from the City (see Kinsman, forthcoming). Of course, this concentration is also a strength as those groups that are on-the-ground are also actively engaged in trying to change the social relations that result in too few beds and poor conditions.

### *Mobilization/Demobilization*

Social movement mobilizations take strategy and labour and happen in relation to the agents they are mobilizing against. Campaign mobilization cannot be understood simply as one-sided, linear progression. As OCAP employed various tactics to mobilize, the ruling regime responded with its own tactics of demobilization. There is a big difference in the power and resources that the City has versus what OCAP has. Nevertheless, there is still a simple formula to the strategic mobilization and demobilization dance: as OCAP acts, the City (staff, elected

officials or both) assesses and reacts, and then OCAP assesses and reacts. The City works to try to demobilize OCAP and we fight to win.

NSMT hasn't paid much attention to demobilization. However, I argue that there is an essential relationship between mobilization and demobilization: to understand mobilization, demobilization must also be understood. I think that by understanding demobilization tactics, organizers can better anticipate their use and plan to reduce their effectiveness.

In this chapter, I discuss stories of organizing during the shelter campaign and the different demobilization tactics that were used by the City. Rather than do that here, I will provide that table with the descriptions of each tactic.

**Table A1.7.1 Demobilization Tactics Used Against OCAP in the Shelter Campaign**

	<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Definition</b>
1.	Attrition	The wearing down of organizers over time, including by using other <u>demobilization tactics</u> .
2.	Banning	The prohibition from physical space and can be used as a <u>demobilization tactic</u> because it can prevent access to a mobilization ground (i.e. to where communities are, an event or a battle)
3.	Censorship	The suppression of the messaging of a movement, <u>campaign</u> or organization (verbal, written, visual) which prevents the ability to frame and promote an issue.
4.	Certifying the Competition	<u>Ruling relations</u> validating a rival organization.
5.	Concessions	Things that are given up by <u>ruling relations</u> ; they can be used to create the appearance of victory, ending the need to organize.
6.	Consultations	<u>Ruling regime's</u> engagement with individuals or groups; <u>ruling relations</u> control the timeline and, generally, the agenda and it can be used to delay (or possibly <u>delegitimize</u> ) organizing.
7.	Creation of Standards	The process of creation and the practice of the standards can both be used as <u>demobilization tactics</u> . Process: can be used to delay (or possibly <u>delegitimize</u> ) organizing often involves consultations. Practice: can be used to individualize and institutionalize grievances.
8.	Deferment	The delay in implementing <u>concessions</u> . Can be used to move the movement/ <u>campaign</u> from working towards new victories to trying to implement old ones and to force a shift in targets within the <u>ruling regime</u> (from elected politicians to bureaucrats).
9.	Delegitimization	Attempts to undermine the validity of the <u>campaign</u> and/or people organizing against the <u>ruling regime</u> by challenging their expertise or representativeness.
10.	Dissimulation	To hide or conceal your feelings under a contrived appearance which can be used to delay or dissuade organizers from organizing based on the (possibly false) promises of <u>ruling relations</u> .
11.	Divide and Conquer	Attempts to separate coalitions or organizations and defeat one or all of the weaker individual parts.
12.	Epistemic Injustice	Injustices related to organizers as knowers and/or the knowledge they have that are used to undermine organizers and/or a <u>campaign</u> (there is significant cross-over with <u>delegitimization</u> but <u>delegitimization</u> is not limited to the <u>epistemic realm</u> ).
13.	Ignoring	Refusal to acknowledge or consider actions and demands of social movements.
14.	Repression	Physical coercion (including arrest) or threat thereof; it is used to cause direct harm, remove people from the struggle (however temporarily) and/or deter people.
15.	Smokescreen Victories	Used the same way <u>concessions</u> are except there are no real <u>concessions</u> , just their appearance.
16.	Victory Hijacking	A competing organization works intentionally and in coordination with <u>ruling relations</u> to take credit for the work of the group that won the <u>concessions</u> .

I have described sixteen demobilization tactics that I argue were used against OCAP by the ruling regime during the shelter campaign. As I am mapping ruling relations from the standpoint of an OCAP organizer, my approach to demobilization is quite different from other scholars (e.g. Davenport, 2015; Earl, 2003; Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 1978). In examining the literature, I found that classification approaches to demobilization are very broad. This makes them not useful for people in social movements. My classification of the demobilization tactics can be applied to the actual things that people in ruling regimes do. Recognizing them as demobilization tactics, and, better yet, planning for them can make organizing more effective.

### *Organizational Competition*

In order to use some of these tactics, the ruling regime needs to engage in the practice of “forging alignments” with another organization. In this case, it was the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (Li, 2007b, p. 265). Indeed, TAEH was pivotal in enacting some of these tactics. TAEH and OCAP don’t really get along because of their very different political positions, tactical approaches and TAEH’s overt sabotage of the shelter campaign. Many OCAPers view TAEH as collaborators with the ruling regime who legitimize both the capitalist system that creates homelessness and the neoliberal and inadequate responses to homelessness by the City.

When the first 1,000 beds motion was passed at the committee level but the Mayor worked to destroy it, TAEH was at his side. TAEH legitimized the 400-bed motion in large part on the grounds that they could coordinate the Rapid Winter Housing Project (RWHP), up to 400 Housing First spaces by the end of February 2018. As of September 2019, over a year-and-a-half later, SSHA had yet to receive the final report from TAEH. But while RWHP was supposed to be housing up to 400 people, only 269 households were housed using housing allowances in all of Toronto, as the RWHP was to do (City of Toronto, 2019c). It appears, then, that TAEH failed miserably in its efforts to house people through this program. It seems like TAEH tried to house people but couldn’t because of the housing crisis in the city.

In addition to the December motion manoeuvring, TAEH also secretly worked to undermine the shelter campaign on at least one other occasion. In this instance, Cathy Crowe forwarded an email laying out the campaign positions for the June 2017 deputations to TAEH. Cathy was trying to get TAEH to “join in our concerns” about the upcoming, inadequate winter

respite plans (Crowe, 2017, p. 114). TAEH forwarded it to SSHA. SSHA used that document to anticipate our arguments and try to undermine our position (see Bédard, 2017b).

I argue that organizational competition informs the relationship between TAEH and OCAP - at least in part.

Hall (1995) argues that there are two kinds of competition between SMOs: territorial and organizational. Both groups work in Toronto - so, territorial competition is a given by Hall's definition. Organizational competition according to Hall's definition, involves things that would not be an issue of contention between OCAP and TAEH. This includes "recruitment of staff," and "leadership styles," which I argue doesn't apply. I say "recruitment of members" can apply if "membership" is interpreted broadly - both groups work to get agencies to adopt their demands (p. 53). "Trading strategies" also applies in a very limited way (p. 53). Both groups depute at City Hall and work to have city councillors and bureaucrats listen to their framing of the problems and solutions. However, OCAP primarily uses direct action and protest tactics which is frequently delegitimized by Housing First supporters (Schwan, 2016). The "definition of issues" is, I would argue, the primary site of competition between the organizations (p. 53). This is especially the case when it comes to who we define solutions.

While not examining OCAP and TAEH specifically, Schwan (2016) explores the divide between what she calls "first-wave", and "second-wave" advocacy. Again, this can be broken down into against and in favour of HF, respectively. Schwan argues these divides could usually be reduced to "differing tactics" (p. 211). 'First-wave' activists view 'second-wave' advocates as having "sold out or [being] co-opted" (p. 211). On the other hand, 'second-wave' advocates believed that "direct action tactics were no longer effective and could actually damage the movement" (p. 211). Applying this analysis to OCAP and TAEH, a central dividing factor, if not *the* central dividing factor between the organizations is tactical; it centres on *how* the groups work to achieve their goals.

However, I would argue that Schwan fails to appreciate that groups' tactical repertoires are deeply informed by political principles and philosophies. Tactical repertoires those tactics that are available to a group at a given time because of the organizational culture and broader context (Tilly, 1977). OCAP uses disruption because we believe it is necessary for poor people who are excluded from normative politics (Winchester & Clarke, 2016; Withers, 2019a; also see

Piven & Cloward, 1979). I argue OCAP is not motivated by its tactics but its tactics are a reflection of its worldview. Likewise, TAEH's tactical repertoire is influenced, if not determined, by its world view and social relations. TAEH (n.d.-b) is an organization made up of "local champions, landlords, developers, foundations, businesses and corporate sponsors" (n.p.). TAEH has direct access to decision-makers in the ruling regime and the organization has forged an alliance with the regime; consequently, disruptive tactics are unnecessary.

For many HF advocates, "if governments are shown how to change and given the tools to do better, they will" (Schwan, 2016, p. 149). Here, governments are allies who are willing to listen and want to do better. Whereas, for OCAP, governments are part of the problem and working in the interests of the rich (e.g. Acharya & Clarke, 2018; Biesterfeld, 2017b).

Schwan (2016) reports that Housing First advocates condemn the display of anger, the use of "'angry' tactics" (p. 218) and "aggressively demand[ing]" things from ruling relations (p. 216). For OCAP, anger is a driving force of organizing. Multiple people I interviewed stressed the importance of recognizing or channelling people's anger as a way to motivate them. One OCAP member said: "don't be sad; be mad" (anonymous). From OCAP's perspective, people face injustices; anger at those injustices is legitimate. Audre Lorde (1981) writes: "anger is loaded with information and energy" (p. 7). OCAP's protests attempt to direct that information and energy at an appropriate target to win the group's demands. In Housing First, however, anger is to be managed rather than expressed. One of the supports available through some Housing First programs is anger management (Gaetz, 2014; Guo et al., 2016; Henwood et al., 2015; Parhar et al., 2014).

OCAP and TAEH have oppositional worldviews and political analyses. I argue that it is out of these that the two organization's tactical differences emerge and they both draw particular kinds of members and resources. However, both organizations also compete for the ability to define the issues and gain support.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I examined the shelter campaign which was the largest and most sustained campaign during my research period. I categorized a number of demobilization tactics that the ruling regime used against OCAP and our allies during the campaign. Perhaps organizers can be better suited to anticipate these demobilization tactics and/or recognize them as they are being



deployed in order to resist them, try and create the conditions for backfire, or simply strategize endurance plans such that social justice organizing can be more effective and sustainable.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty is 30 years old this year. I have chronicled what we have done in just a tiny fraction of OCAP's lifetime and only one part of its organizing program. This final chapter brings together my findings and offers suggestions for future research and policy changes. I begin, however, with a mapping of the social relations of struggle that OCAP was a part.

OCAP, like its campaigns, does not exist in a bubble; it is a part of social relations and implicated in ruling relations. In various chapters and to varying degrees, I have mapped the social relations of struggle for different campaigns. But all of these things were happening at the same time and often changing

In this map of the social relations of struggle (see Figure 8.1), the City of Toronto looms over much of the map, directly influencing its own departments and interacting with groups like TAEH and the BIA. The City, and those governed by it, however, are also organized by federal and provincial policies, including Housing First and the *Safe Streets Act*.

A few supportive city councillors, while still a part of the ruling regime, have broken away from the dominant framing of homelessness issues and now straddle the line of fault - some more supportively or successfully than others. Also bridging the line of fault are the mass media and alternative media. Both sides compete to frame their issues so that the media will cover them favourably. Alternative media, however, was more likely to be favourable to OCAP and OCAP ran several articles in *NOW Magazine*, as well as managing their own media, like its videos and website.

Below the line of fault, OCAP and its allies push back against ruling relations. At the base of OCAP's organizing is homeless and other directly affected people as OCAP works to be grounded in the community. Largely absent, however, are the organized Left and organized labour (with some important exceptions - especially but not exclusively CUPE). The map of the social relations of struggle shows the intense lopsidedness between the two sides of the struggle. The City has billions of dollars and a police force and thousands of staff - OCAP has very little.

Nevertheless, we were able, sometimes in loose coalition and sometimes alone, to win important concessions.

### *Mapping the Social Relations of Struggle*

In various chapters and to varying degrees, I have mapped the social relations of struggle for different campaigns. These social relations are dynamic and co-occurring (see Figure 8.1: Mapping the Full Social Relations of Struggle on page 283). In this map, the moral economy looms over and influences the struggle. Who is valued and who is devalued – constructed as deserving and undeserving or “homeless” and “chronically homeless” or citizen and refugee – within and by ruling relations filters through the whole field of struggle. Countering the dominant moral economy, however, is OCAP’s fundamental political philosophy which asserts and centers social justice and the humanity of all – especially those who are denigrated in the moral economy. This philosophy can largely be summarized as anti-capitalism, decolonization and anti-oppression. Connected to this philosophy is homeless and directly affected people (e.g. HSF applicants, people at risk of homelessness, etc.), who ground the struggle and who OCAP takes leadership from. It is from here, at the bottom of this map and the top – with the global neoliberal capitalist austerity agenda, that the class hierarchy in the social relations of struggle are evident. The top represents and reflects the interests of the rich. There is a direct link from here to the neoliberal downloading of social spending, especially housing, from the federal government to the provincial government. The federal government conducted neoliberal downloading of social spending to the provincial government. The provincial government, in turn, downloaded onto the municipalities. Both levels of government HF policies. This map makes it evident that HF must be fought at the provincial and federal levels in addition to the municipal level.

The regulation and criminalization of the poor is also socially organized not only at the municipal level but also provincially and federally. The provincial government regulates social assistance. Social assistance is one of the main ways that ruling relations coordinates and controls poor people (Piven & Cloward, 1993). Poor people are also regulated through laws like the *Criminal Code of Canada* and the *Safe Streets Act* – what the Toronto Police enforce along with Toronto’s by-laws.

The OCAP campaigns focused at the local level to win access to public space, benefits and beds. Mapping the full social relations of struggle makes it clear that the problems that create the need for these struggles are not only socially organized municipally, but also provincially, federally and even transnationally. As mentioned earlier, OCAP was involved in provincial and federal campaigns for an increase in social assistance rates and housing, respectively. At the same time, organizing beyond the local level can be difficult because of the lack of resources available to poor people's organizations. It is evident that much larger mobilization is needed to resist the regulation and criminalization of the poor and gain real ground in the struggle for decent, affordable, accessible housing for all and livable incomes.

Below the line of fault on this map are organized labour and the organized Left are shown in negative space on the map, as they are largely absent from homelessness organizing in Toronto during this period. Some unions do fund OCAP's work. However, in terms of supporting the actual struggle of the campaigns, it was almost only specific CUPE locals and CUPE Ontario that were involved. OPSEU and CUPW also contributed to the struggle in terms of space booking and organizing one delegation, respectively. Overall, however, OCAP members – unionized and nonunionized – were critical of organized labour for its lack of support. Poor people are also a part of the working class. The absence of union support, with a few exceptions, means there is a great deal of lost potential.

The broader organized Left in Toronto is also largely missing from this map. OCAP recognizes the interconnectedness of poor people's struggles with a multitude of social justice issues. But this connection is often one-way; we recognize the connection of poverty to these struggles and both organize around these issues and support other groups' work around them, but this support is often not reciprocated. While lots of activists and other "OCAP supporters" would come to OCAP events, there was a general absence of organizational support and mobilization from social justice groups. Part of the absence of support from both unions and the organized Left is that there appears to be a decline in movement organizing in Toronto in general.

This map also depicts the profound lopsidedness between the two sides of the struggle. The City has an armed police force, much easier access to the mainstream media and nearly 35,000 employees (City of Toronto, 2019f). OCAP, on the other hand, has two paid staff.

The media straddles the line of fault. Both OCAP and the ruling regime compete for positive media attention. The alternative media is much more on the side of OCAP but still spans the line of fault. Alternative media includes publications like *Now Magazine* as well as OCAP's own media, including our: videos, reports, posters and website.

Homeless people and directly affected people are the base of the social relations of struggle. The many homeless and poor people involved in and providing leadership to the campaigns give homelessness organizing direction and keep it rooted in the daily material realities of poor and homeless people in the community. There are many groups of allies on this map which is a strength. Some of these ally groups, such as "HSF Allies," includes a broad coalition. OCAP also relied on our relationships with legal clinics. Similarly, we relied on some key progressive agencies to act as a bridge between OCAP and homelessness agencies (many of which we had no contact with). The role of these agencies in the campaign was very important. At the same time, however, that many of these allies rely on funding from the municipal or provincial government is a clear weakness. The group of "Shelter Campaign Allies" primarily includes key individuals who were centrally involved throughout the campaign and Health Providers Against Poverty, which was, perhaps, less constrained by relationships to the ruling regime.

Mapping the social relations of struggle for OCAP's homelessness organizing over the entire research period helps put this organizing and the specific campaigns into perspective. OCAP worked with an array of different people and groups. We were able, sometimes in loose coalition and sometimes on our own, to win concessions even though we are a relatively small number of people up against a large and well-resourced ruling regime.

#### *The Power of Disruption, The Power of OCAP*

Many of the chapters in this dissertation demonstrated the power of OCAP – a degree of power that we are not always aware of. For example, SSHA told OCAP of an important announcement about new respite sites even before telling city councillors responsible, or the media. Examples like this indicate that the ruling regime was concerned about OCAP and what the organization was capable of. The evidence indicates that this concern, possibly even fear, is rooted in OCAP's direct action and disruptive tactics. Perhaps the clearest example of this was in Chapter Four, where I discussed how TESS staff did not take action regarding an HSF case that

we had no intention of doing direct action over. TESS was willing to violate its own policies to resolve a similar case because we took public, direct action. OCAP poses a threat of disruption that is useful in making City staff responsive to OCAP's demands, as long as that threat is not an empty one.

### *Research Contributions*

This dissertation contributes to social work practice, social policy and activism. It is a good example for how social workers can work *with* communities, including with extralegal practice (Yu & Mandell, 2015). Also, the OCAP model of direct action casework coupled with mass mobilizing could be especially useful for social workers. OCAP's community-rootedness also sets an important model for social workers. Political activist ethnography is also well suited to social work, as this dissertation shows. This work also puts forward an important challenge to Housing First and the way it employs harm reduction. Lastly, the categorization of demobilization tactics that I offer fill a big gap in social movement literature. They can be used by activists to help limit the effectiveness of those tactics.

### *Policy Implications*

I also make some policy recommendations. If these changes were made, people's lives would see big improvements. These are my recommendations:

#### **All levels of government:**

1. All levels of government to abandon the Housing First model as it is a failed experiment

#### **City of Toronto:**

1. Substantial and ongoing investment in low-income housing
2. More shelter beds - enough to bring the shelter system down to 90 percent occupancy with many of these beds as low-barrier beds
3. Person-based tracking system that tracks actual people looking for beds and when they get beds

#### **Government of Ontario:**

1. Implement policy that is reflective of, and responsive to, the current housing climate
2. Substantial increases in Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program

## *Future Research*

I have identified four areas for future research: activist research, resisting ruling relations/regimes, Housing First, and City of Toronto policy.

### i. Activist Research

In Chapter 2, I set out five guiding principles for my research: utility, reciprocity, reflexivity, accountability, and accessibility. The ethical labour of activist scholars continues to be thoughtfully developed (Erickson, 2015; Fortier, 2015) but has not yet been sufficiently tested. There is a need for activist researchers to work with activist research participants to better understand and develop reflexive and ethical research practices for activist scholars.

### ii. Resisting Ruling Relations/Regimes

There are several specific questions that arise out of this study that warrant much closer examination. These include, but are not limited to, how to more effectively counter neoliberal managerialism, epistemic injustice and violence and demobilization tactics? Further, what other demobilization tactics have been employed by other ruling regimes and how have different groups of activists worked to counter those tactics?

### iii. Housing First

More critical research is needed into Toronto's Streets to Homes program. This includes determining how many people, if any, are returning to homelessness downtown, why, and what conditions are they living in? What impact participating in clearing people from parks and ravines has on the relationships between S2H workers and their clients? What are the realities of Toronto's Housing First clients over time?

Further examination is required of the pathologization of "chronically homeless" people from a critical disability studies perspective.

### iv. City of Toronto Policy

Parks Ambassadors treatment of homeless people needs further research. This includes how often they dispose of people's belongings, and to what extent they follow their *Suspension and Ban Policy*.

Statistical research about the number of people looking for shelter beds who are unable to access them.

## *Conclusion*

In January 2019, four homeless people died in awful and shocking ways. OCAP organized vigils and speak-outs where their deaths were marked, remembered, grieved. The Homeless Memorial added its 1,000<sup>th</sup> name in January 2020 (Mathieu, 2020).

Toronto has profound wealth and many new condos are being constructed yet homelessness is on the rise. With so much prosperity, there is a profound disparity in how resources are distributed. What OCAP won during the time period of which I write seems insignificant compared to what we need to win. However, for the person who needed a bed on a particular night and got one because of the shelter campaign or who secured housing because of the HSF campaign, it made all the difference. In these times, as ruling relations further invade the daily lives of poor people with neoliberal policies and practices, I sometimes feel that resistance is hopeless. At the same time, the work of OCAP, in conjunction with our allies, has helped hold back the onslaught, hold on to what we have, and win essential gains. OCAP has shown not only that the organized, disruptive resistance of poor people and their allies is possible, but also that it is practical. As this chapter ends, another begins. The struggle continues. Fight to win.

## Appendix 2: Glossary

anti-politics – a practice of assemblage discussed by Li (2007b). Closely linked to her practice of “rendering technical” which recasts political issues as technical ones by “closing down debate” and/or encouraging debate “while limiting the agenda” (p. 265).

assemblage – a collection of different parts (which may include: information, regulations, objects, etc.) that are put into a single context. Assemblages are not fixed or stable but are, rather, in flux, being made and remade by people (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Li, 2007).

astroturf – a group or campaign made to appear grassroots or originating from the community but which in reality has been engineered by and works to further corporate interests.

attrition – wearing down of organizers over time, including by using other demobilization tactics.

authorizing knowledge – a practice of assemblage. This includes setting the boundaries of what knowledge counts and is required. It can also occur when groups contesting the ruling regime withhold their own criticisms (“containing critique” [Li, 2007b, p. 265]) so as not to undermine their own agendas.

backfire – when there is a large and ongoing mobilization against repressive action taken by ruling relations as it tried/tries to demobilize a social movement. This specifically refers to collective responses to repression (see Hess & Martin, 2006).

banning – prohibition from physical space.

banishment – exile from a community (permanent or temporary).

campaign – a sustained, organized effort to win a demand or a related set of demands.

chronic homelessness/chronically homeless – people who have been street homeless or in the shelter system for more than 6 months, and are often disabled.

cis – someone who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth; not trans.

cissist – discrimination or prejudice against a person or people who is/are trans or non-binary; the social relations that create and support the gender binary and the assumptions that people are cis rather than trans or non-binary.

concessions - things of value that are given up by ruling relations in response to a challenge by a political or social movement.



criminalize/criminalization – to make something criminal; the act of making something criminal.

deferment - The delay in implementing concessions.

delegitimize –to undermine or attempt to undermine the validity of the campaign and/or people organizing against the ruling regime by challenging their expertise or representativeness; opposite of legitimize.

demobilization – the decline in social movement activity that, ultimately, results in its end.

demobilization tactic – a tactic deployed by ruling relations to trigger or encourage demobilization.

denigrate - to put down; deny the validity of; belittle; devalue.

direct action – the practice of social and/or political action that challenges ruling relations. It can include legal or illegal activity. Punk rock band Painted Thin (1997) says: “direct action, like every good child-care worker knows, must be immediate and appropriate and offer honesty, inspiration and alternatives.”

discourse – discourses are created and circulated through social relations (especially circulated through text). They are grounded in expert knowledge but everyone participates in the circulation of discourse.

disjuncture – an epistemic schism or rupture in consciousness between the official accounts and discourses of ruling relations and the actual experiences of everyday people. Frampton et al. (2006a) provide an example of a disjuncture as the difference between one’s experiential account of a protest and the very different mainstream media account of that same protest. In IE and PAE, this is the starting place for inquiry. *Also see line of fault.*

disruption – a disturbance; the prevention of “business as usual”; defined by Piven and Cloward (1979) as “the application of a negative sanction, the withdrawal of a crucial contribution on which others depend, and it is therefore a natural resource for exerting power over others” (p. 24).

dissimulation – to hide or conceal your feelings under a contrived appearance.

epistemic – relating to knowledge, knowing, or how we know.

epistemic deference - uncritical acceptance of expert opinion.

epistemic injustice - injustices related to organizers as knowers and/or the knowledge they have

that are used to undermine organizers and/or a campaign. Very similar to delegitimization but delegitimization is not limited to the epistemic realm).

epistemic violence - forms of harm done to people “against or through knowledge” (Galván-Álvarez, 2010, p. 12). Epistemic violence includes, but is not limited to, testimonial injustice, gaslighting, institutional gaslighting.

epistemological – relating to epistemology (see epistemology below).

epistemology – the study of knowledge and theories of knowledge. This is concerned with how we know things, what we know, how is knowledge produced, etc.

ethnography – a kind of research that provides detailed description of a culture or subculture.

exalted/exaltation – celebrated or elevated to a position of moral superiority; highly regarded.

exclusion of critique - ruling relations shut out, omit, prohibit, or even preclude critique.

explicate – to expand, analyze and fully explain. Bisaillon (Bisaillon, 2012) says: “In institutional and political activist ethnography, explication involves producing analytic descriptions of how things are socially organized to occur (p. 613).

forging alignment – one of Li’s (2007b) practices of assemblage that involves the linking or coalescing into two or more groups: one that is part of the ruling regime and the other that has less power and influence.

frame(s) – the message of a movement. People do work to make meaning, to decide what ideas are important to “mobiliz[e] and countermobilize[e]” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613) – this is the framing process – the work of making frames, or of messaging.

gentrification – The process of pushing poor people out of a neighbourhood, making room (physical, social and/or cultural) for middle- and upper-class people.

grassroots – grounded and rooted in the community.

grassroots theory – theory about social movements that is grounded in and emerges out of social movements (see Walia, p. 18).

hegemonic/hegemony – social, cultural, economic, political and/or ideological dominance

hidden homelessness – a kind of homelessness that is less likely to be tracked or noticed by government statistics or social service workers. It includes couch surfing, staying with

friends and family, trading sex for somewhere to stay and it can include squatting.

inductive – going from the specific to the general.

institutional gaslighting - a textually mediated, translocal and transtemporal practice through which institutions make oppressed people doubt their knowledge, themselves and their realities.

iterative – a back-and-forth relation that develops or is built upon through the relation.

Organizing is iterative because the movement doesn't act and act and act. It acts, waits for the reaction, and modifies or builds on its strategy before acting again.

legitimize – to make meritorious or recognize as having merit, being verified, credible and/or correct.

line of fault – a metaphor used Dorothy Smith (1987) to describe a disjuncture. It is a fault line, a rupture, that can highlight “differences in social locations that people occupy” (Bisaillon, 2012, p. 611). *Also see disjuncture*

managing failure (and contradictions) - a practice of assemblage observed by Li (2007b); this includes making compromises, “smoothing out contradictions so that they seem superficial rather than fundamental” and making failures appear as if they are the result of remediable deficits (p. 265).

medical model of disability – dominant way of understanding disability in which disability is understood as an individual failing and a medical problem. Within this model, healthcare practitioners are the experts about disability.

methodology – The overarching theory guiding the research. The methodology for this dissertation is political activist ethnography.

methods – the processes for how the research is carried out, including data collection and analysis.

moral economy - the value that is imposed on people within and through social relations (see Thobani, 2007).

neoliberal – something or someone that exhibits or espouses neoliberalism.

neoliberalism - a political/economic philosophy and set of capitalist political and economic policies that supports individual responsibility, privatization, and free-markets.

normative – conforming to an evaluative standard; following or prescribing to set norms.

normative politics – institutional avenues (e.g. lobbying, deputing) and electoral politics that are the standard routes to policy change within a democratic state formation.

normative social movement theory – mainstream sociological study of social movements.

ontology – the theory of being, existence or what is real. Marx argues that the social world is created by people and their interactions with one another (see D. E. Smith, 2001; G. W. Smith, 1990).

pathologize – to treat someone or something as diseased or disordered (or disabled under the medical model of disability).

pathologization – the process of pathologizing someone or something.

propaganda – one-sided material that conveys a political position or serves a political purpose. In social movement work, this is not a negative term.

reassembling – This Li's (2007b) final practice of assemblage. It brings together new or refurbished elements into the assemblage rendering it unrecognizable when compared to the original.

reciprocity/reciprocal – mutual benefit. Reciprocity in research, or reciprocal research, means that the researcher works to ensure that the research provides, either directly or indirectly, mutual benefit to both the individual researcher and the community being researched, rather than the researcher simply extracting knowledge or expertise while providing nothing in return.

reflexive/reflexivity –

1. In IE and PAE: the social world and knowledge about it are mutually determined and interactive.
2. In qualitative methodology and social work: awareness and examination of oneself in relation to others and the environment. Here, it means exploring the ways oneself impacts and is impacted by those around them and how one is or could potentially be causing harm.

reify – to make something real or to thing-ify something; the social process of erasure of social relations and replacing them with thing-relations. For example: “Class in much of sociology becomes a classification scheme, a thing and not a social relation between groups of people” (Frampton et al., 2006a; also see D. E. Smith, 1999).

rendering technical – one of Li’s practices of assemblage, it is a practice of depoliticization by transforming something viewed to be problematic by ruling relations into a technical issue.

The formula for this practice is “problem (a) plus intervention (b) will produce (c), a beneficial result” (Li, 2007b, p. 265; also see Li, 2007a).

repression - physical coercion (including arrest) or threat thereof; it is used to cause direct harm, remove people from the political struggle (however temporarily) and/or deter people.

requisite gratitude - oppressors require expressions of gratitude make a small change to their continued oppression.

revanchism/revanchist – a form of revenge against homeless people and the urban poor. Upper- and middle-class, usually white, people use moralistic security discourse as well as laws and policies, urban design and other tools to both construct the poor as the enemy and then penalize and displace them (see N. Smith, 1996).

ruling regime – I tend to loosely use this term as what George Smith (1990) calls “politico-administrative *regimes*” (p. 637, emphasis in original). George Smith says this has two arms: a political and a bureaucratic and “is a stable form of organization with a distinctive mode of regulation with a distinctive mode of regulation provided by particular institutional forms, networks and explicit or implicit norms” (Smith, 1990, p. 637n5). A ruling regime is a part of ruling relations; I often use it interchangeably with “the City of Toronto” or to describe the City.

ruling relations (/relations of ruling) – the relations that coordinate people’s activities and include but are not limited to state, corporate and bureaucratic relations. Dorothy Smith (1990) defines them as: “the total complex of activities differentiated into many spheres by which our kind of society is ruled, managed and administered. It includes what the business world calls management, it includes the professions, it includes government and the activities of those who are selecting, training, and indoctrinating those who will be its governors... These are the institutions through which we are ruled and through which we, and I emphasize this we, participate in ruling” (p. 14).

social location – an individual or group’s position in the moral economy in relation to others.

social relations – people’s “interdependent actions that shape people’s daily practices. The

interplay of social relations constitutes social organization that connects people's immediate worlds to places beyond" (Bisaillon, 2012, p. 619). All of us take part in social relations (even when we are alone – because we use things that are a part of the web of social relations – like computers and toilets).

social relations of struggle – the whole dynamic field or terrain of struggle including both ruling relations and the social movements who resist them, including the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for movements (see Kinsman, 2006; 2011; forthcoming).

smokescreen victory – something that is made to appear like a victory but isn't a real victory.

stakeholder – an individual, group or business with an interest (a stake) in something.

standard of proof - how high an evidentiary burden is for a finding in one's favour (i.e. beyond a reasonable doubt, ordinary proof, etc.).

standpoint – the social position that is the methodological starting place to find something out (see D. E. Smith, 1987, 2005).

taxonomy – classification system.

testimonial injustice - diminishment or disregard of someone as a knower (see Fricker, 2007)

text – material (i.e. physical) items, including books, online articles, newspapers, audio, video, photos and computer technologies, produced and can be replicated by people. Texts are used by ruling relations to coordinate the activities of people (see D. E. Smith, 1999, pp. 79–81).

textually mediated – texts don't *do* anything- people do things with text. When texts are used by people to coordinate their activities or those of others, that coordination is textually mediated (see D.E. Smith, 1999).

translocal – across or in multiple locations.

transtemporal – across time, in multiple points of time.

validating knowledge – a practice of assembly (by author) through which ruling relations confirm, authenticate, and recognize both a body of knowledge and its producers. The practice of validation is one of boundary-making: by validating some things, others are invalidated. Part of this practice is the exclusion of critique.

For references, see References section of this dissertation.

### **Additional Resources Referred To:**

- Bisaillon, L. (2012). An analytic glossary to social inquiry using institutional and political activist ethnography.
- Bloor, M., & Wood, F. (2006). *Keywords in qualitative methods: A vocabulary of research concepts*. SAGE Publications.
- Deveau, J. (2008). Examining the institutional ethnographer's toolkit. *Socialist Studies*, 4(2), 1-20.
- Frampton, C., Kinsman, G., Thompson, A. K., & Tilleczek, K. (2006). Glossary. In C. Frampton, G. Kinsman, A. K. Thompson, & K. Tilleczek (Eds.), *Sociology for changing the world: Social movements/social research* (pp. 27–38). Fernwood.
- Harvey, L., 2012–20, *Social research glossary*, Quality Research International, <http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/>
- Bloor, M., & Wood, F. (2006). *Keywords in qualitative methods: A vocabulary of research concepts*. Sage.
- Oxford English dictionary (Online). 1989. Oxford University Press.

### Appendix 3: OCAP Influences Around the World



*These groups were founded because of OCAP or replicated its organizing model in full or in part.*



### **Appendix 3 Sources:**

Auckland Action Against Poverty (Auckland Action Against Poverty, n.d.-a, n.d.-b)

Campaign for Renter's Rights (Crass, 2015)

London Coalition Against Poverty (n.d.) and local groups

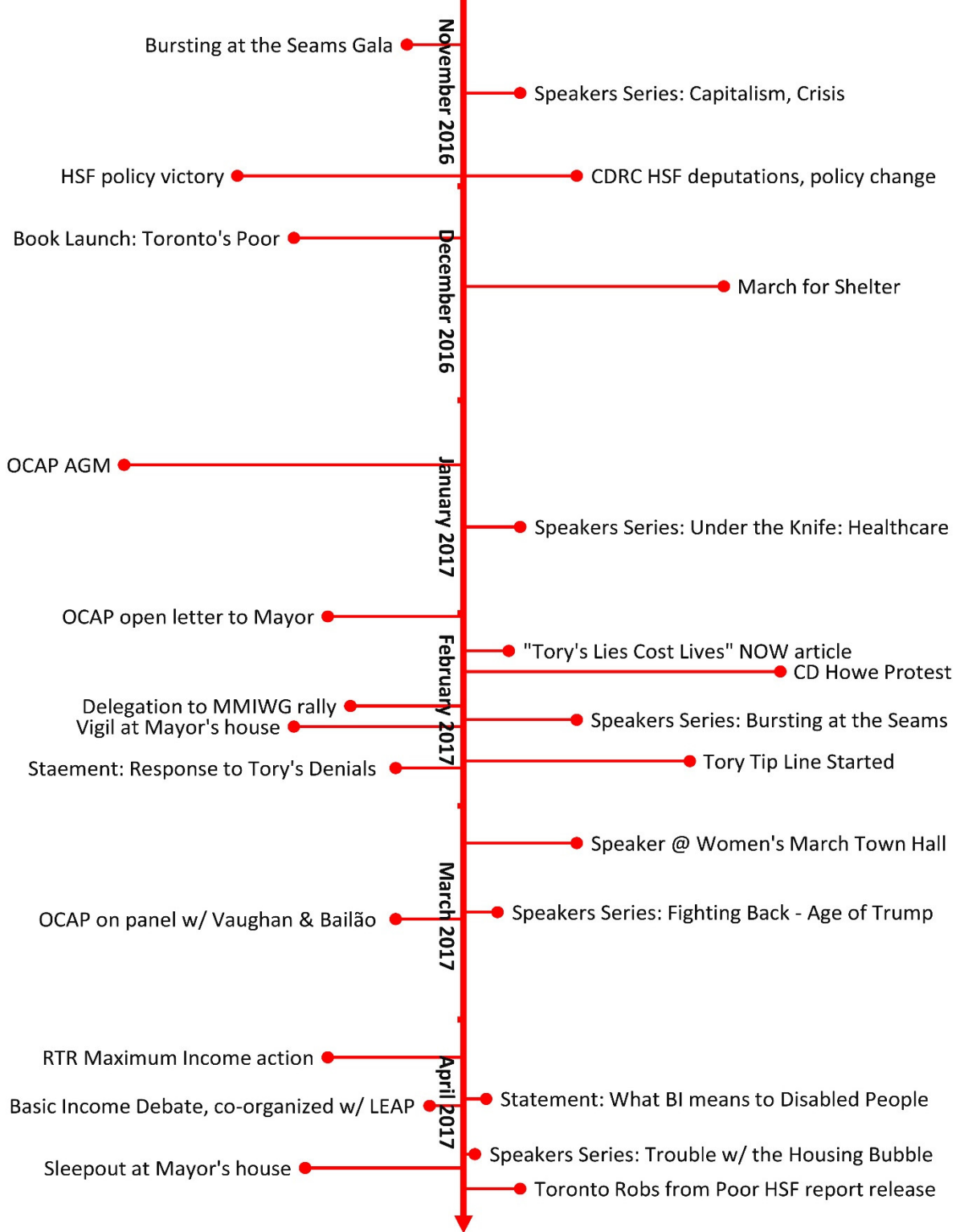
No One is Illegal

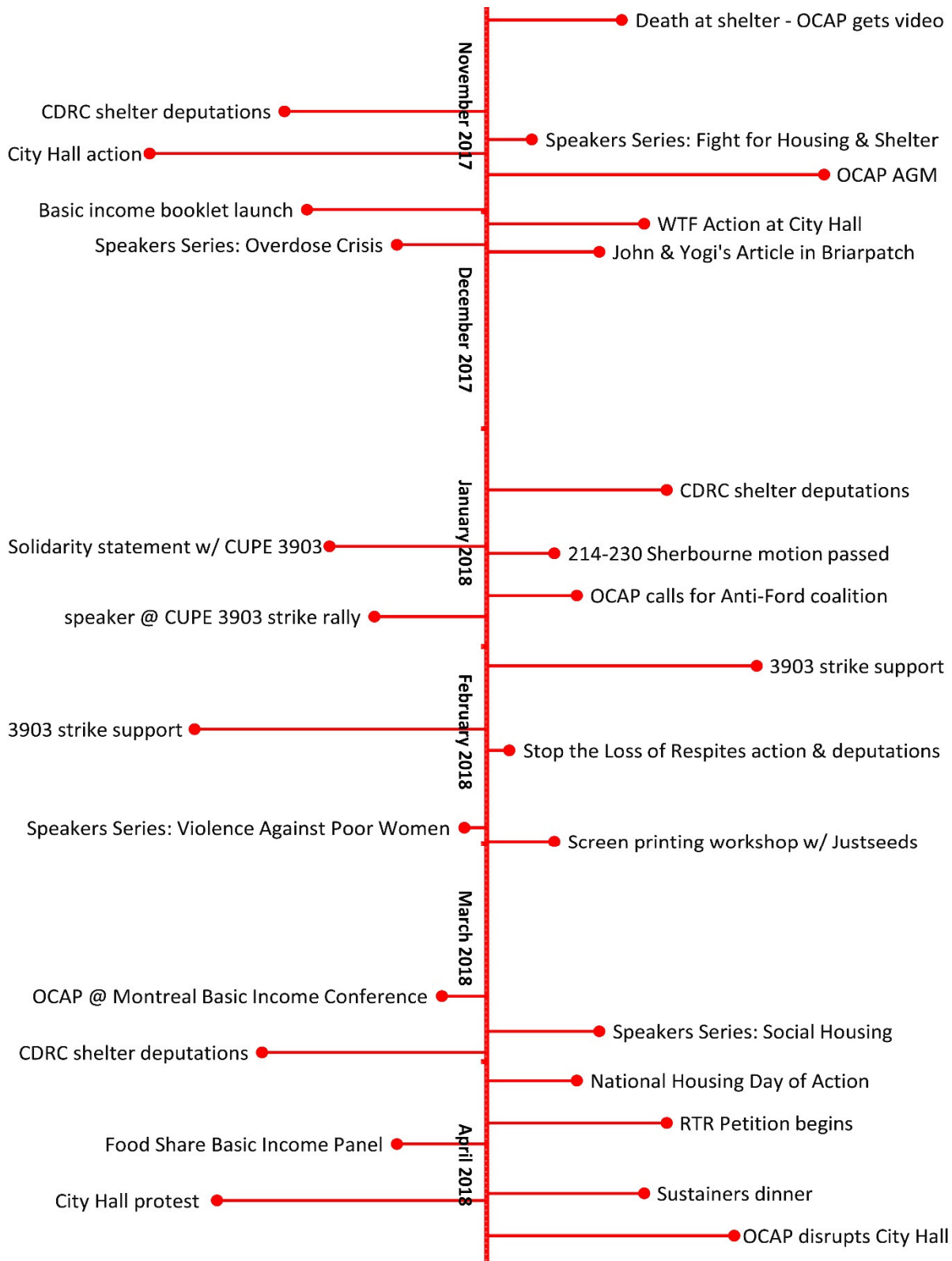
Ontario: based on my own recollection/interactions with these groups.

Other CAPs: based on my own recollection/interactions with these groups.

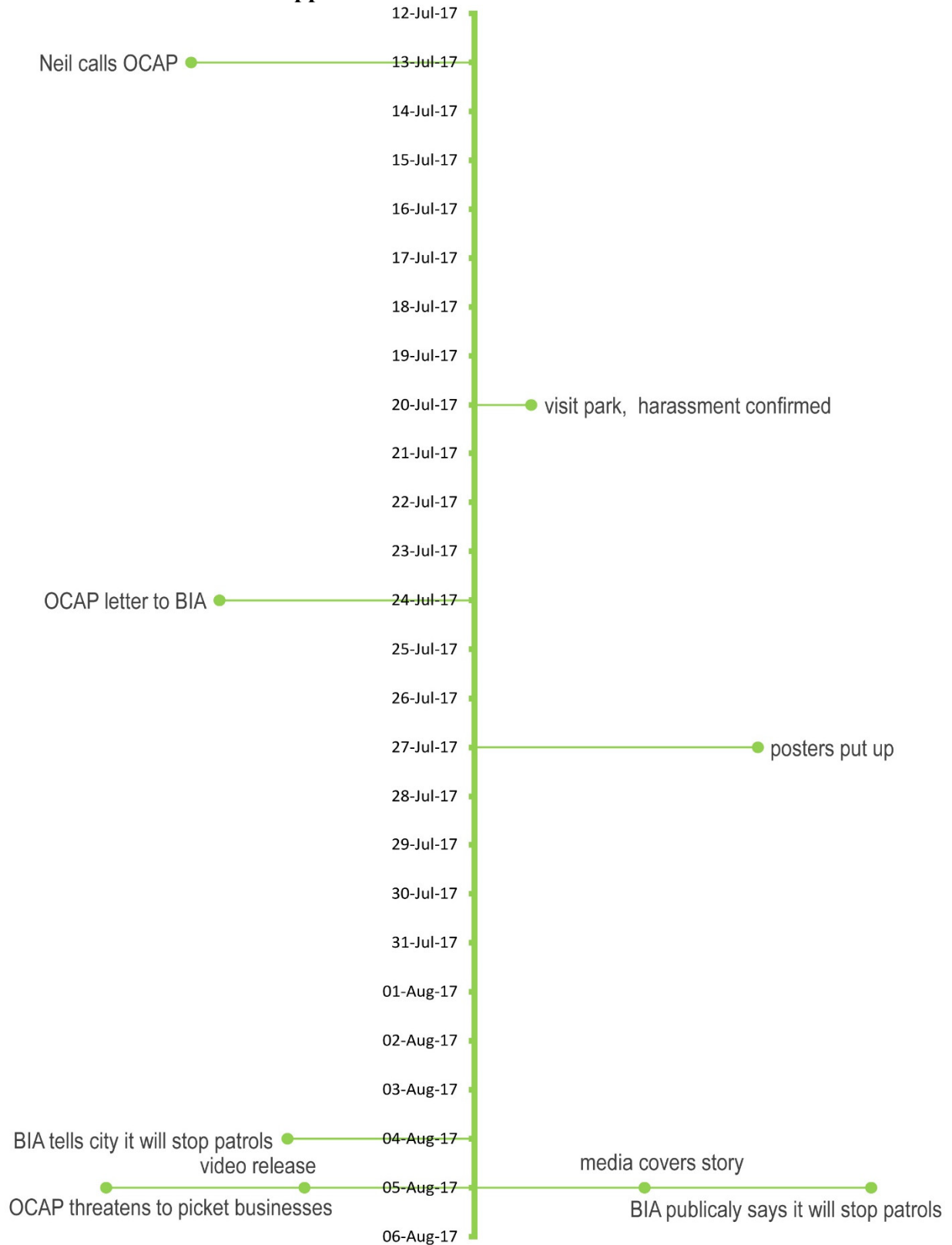
Seattle Solidarity Network (Libcom.org, 2010) other Solidarity Networks are offshoots.

### Appendix 4a: OCAP Timeline, Nov. 2016-April 2018

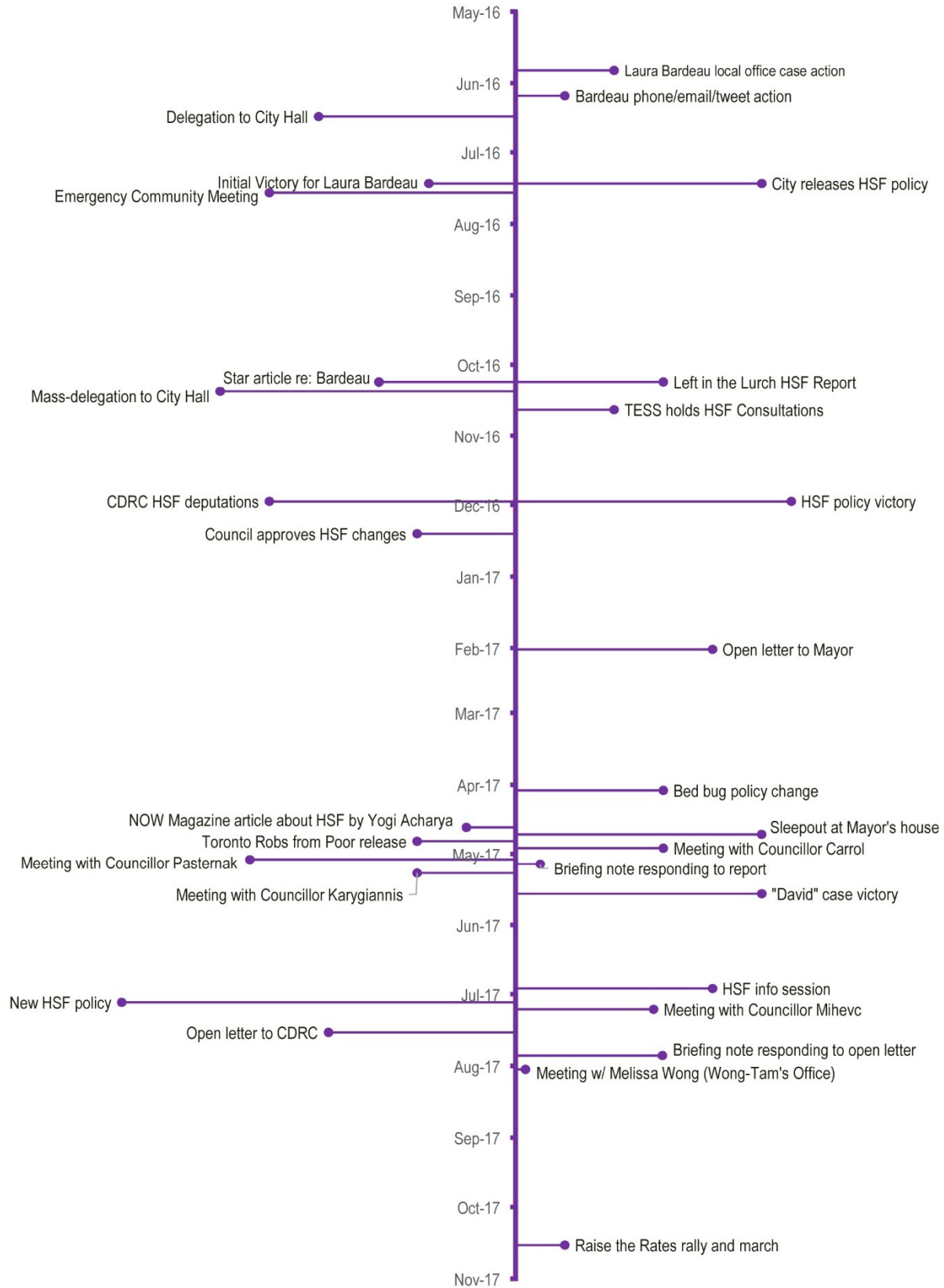




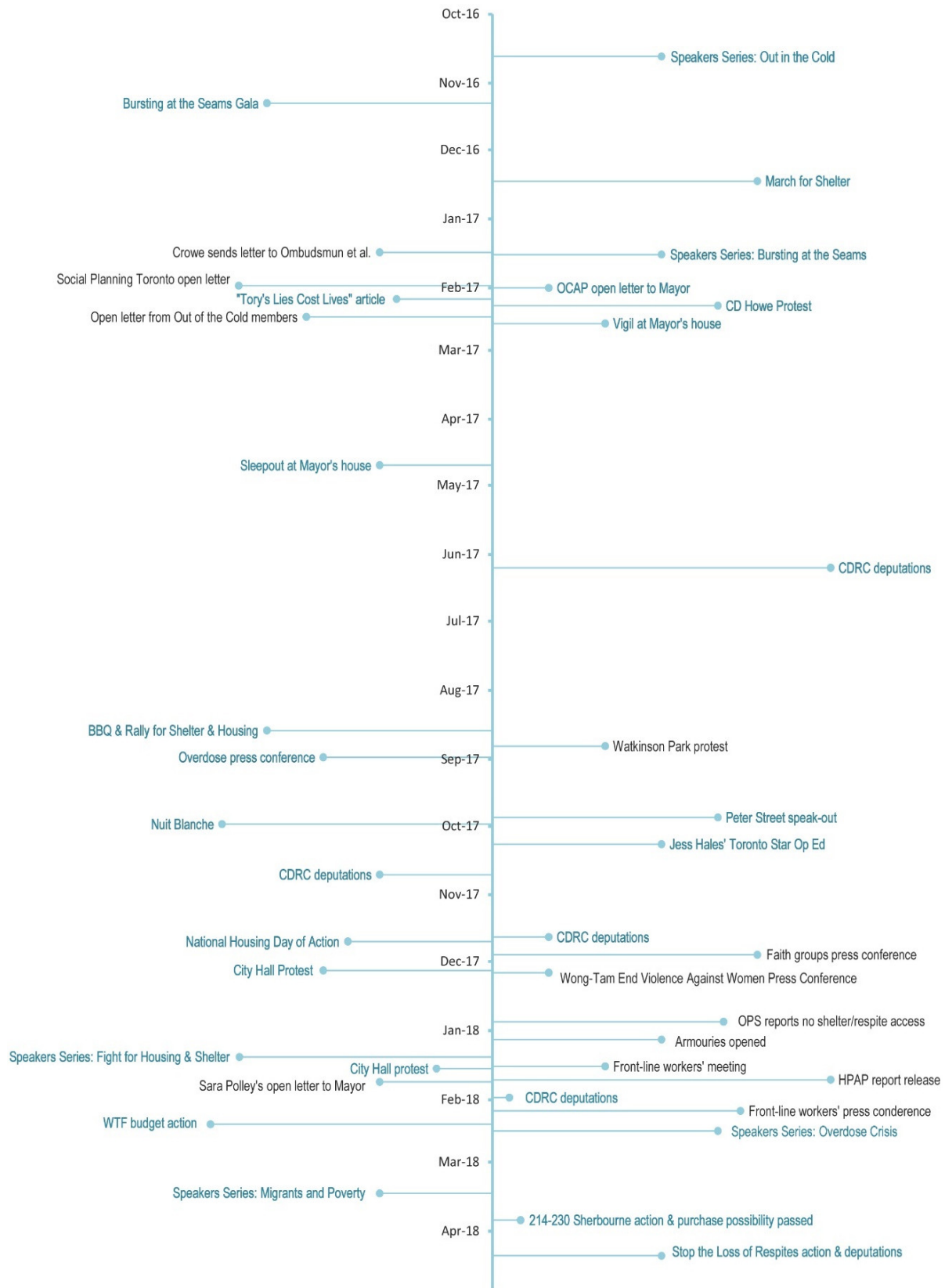
### Appendix 4b: St. James Park Timeline



## Appendix 4c: Housing Stabilization Fund Timeline



## Appendix 4d: Shelter Campaign Timeline



## **Appendix 5a: Informed Consent Letter for OCAP Members**

**Study name:** Mapping ruling relations through poor people's resistance

### **Researcher:**

A.J. Withers  
PhD student, Social Work  
S880 Ross Building  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M3J 1P3  
[ajwither@yorku.ca](mailto:ajwither@yorku.ca)

**Purpose of the research:** This research is being conducted for a dissertation as a requirement for a PhD degree in Social Work. It consists of observing the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and interviewing people who engage with the organization. This study will explore when and how one organization, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), is effective in making gains for poor people and what can be learned about the social relations of struggle through this work. Social relations of struggle refers to both the relations that coordinate the lives of poor people (including state and corporate power) and activist relations that work towards social justice (including organizing strengths, weaknesses, contradictions and opportunities).

### **Data use:**

The information provided by research participants will be used for the researcher's doctoral dissertation and may be used for future publication, upon further consent. In the event of the death of the participant consent for future use will be presumed unless the researcher is notified in advance.

### **What you will be asked to do in the research:**

Participate in an in-person conversational interview - approximately 1-2 hours in length. You may participate in a small group interview with people you did/do common work with (2-3 people) if you prefer.

In recognition of your time, an honorarium of \$20 will be provided to you. If you need to take public transit, your fare will be reimbursed. You will receive this if you choose to withdraw from the study.

**Risks and discomforts of the research:**

Individuals who elect to be named in the research findings, have the additional risk of facing discrimination because of their participation in the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. This could include discrimination in hiring or promotion, ridicule from others and harassment by police or social assistance workers. This risk is not specific to this research; it is extended to all OCAP members who take on a public role (e.g. speaking to media or at an event, authoring articles about OCAP's work, representing OCAP at coalition meetings, attending a public protest, etc.).

If subpoenaed, information collected through this research could be used by police to identify individuals engaged in protest activities deemed criminal. This risk will be mitigated by not writing identifying notes about protesters who engage in what could be perceived as criminal activity. If videotaping protests, the researcher will videotape in accordance with the principles of activist legal observation. This includes filming the actions of the police but not those of protesters if arrests take place, have been threatened and/or protesters engage in illegal activities. The researcher will also inform interview participants at the outset of the interview of the risk of subpoena of research materials including video and audio recordings and stop the interview if it seems that the participant is about to or begins to disclose identifying information about criminal activity. All or some of any recordings or transcripts will be deleted upon request.

**Benefits of the research and benefits to you:**

Participants will benefit from any knowledge produced about ruling relations and anti-poverty work.

Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their work and, if doing a small group interview, to have an in-depth conversation with people they work with that might otherwise not have taken place.

OCAP members and staff will benefit from the possibility of understanding how OCAP can be more effective. They will also benefit from assistance with tasks, casework and organizing through the researcher's ethnographic field work.



**Voluntary participation:**

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and participants may choose to stop participating at any time. At any time, you may also decline to answer any question(s) in the interview. A participant's decision not to continue participating will not influence your relationship or the nature of your relationship with researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

**Withdrawal from the study:**

You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed. If you participate in a group interview, your material will be destroyed after the responses from other participants are transcribed. This transcription will occur as quickly as reasonably possible.

**Confidentiality:**

Your name and identity will remain confidential unless you express the desire to be named in the study. Interviews will be recorded with a digital audio recorder or a digital video recorder and the researcher will take notes during the interview. Digital information and notes will not contain the participant's personal information. Digital information will be stored on a password protected device that only the researcher has access to. Interview recording will be archived and provided to the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty unless you prefer otherwise. The information will be archived indefinitely so that the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty can collect historical information; it could be used by other researchers for future and unrelated research. In this instance, the information can be destroyed or provided to the participant no later than 12 months from successful completion of the dissertation defense, no later than March 1, 2024, or whichever is sooner.

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law

You can choose to change your consent about confidentiality at any point by notifying the researcher, A.J. Withers.

**Confidentiality of Identity:**

- I wish to have my name used in the study.

- I wish to have my name kept confidential and all identifying characteristics kept confidential.

#### Recording:

- I wish to be audio recorded only
- I wish to be audio or video recorded

#### Archiving or Disposal of Data:

- I wish to have the audio/video of my interview and any transcribed materials from my interview archived with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty upon completion of the study. I understand that this material may be retained indefinitely and could be used by others for future research.
- I wish to have the audio/video recordings and any transcribed materials from my interview destroyed no later than 12 months from successful completion of the dissertation defense and no later than March 1, 2024, or whichever is sooner.
- I wish to have the audio/video recordings and any transcribed materials from my interview provided to me no later than 12 months from successful completion of the dissertation defense and no later than March 1, 2024, or whichever is sooner and have the researcher's copies destroyed.

Any files from Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program files obtained through the *Freedom of Information Act and Protection of Privacy* requests made by the researcher or the participant will be returned to the participant no later than 12 months from successful completion of the dissertation defense and no later than March 1, 2024, or whichever is sooner (however, upon request by the participant or if the research is unable to contact the participant, they will be destroyed no later than 12 months after the successful completion of the dissertation defense and no later than March 1, 2024 or whichever is sooner).

**Questions about the research?** If you have questions about the research, please feel free to contact me, my supervisor or the graduate program office. I can be reached at [ajwithers@riseup.net](mailto:ajwithers@riseup.net). My supervisor is Wendy McKeen, she can be contacted at by email at [wmckeen@yorku.ca](mailto:wmckeen@yorku.ca), or by phone at 416-736-2100 Ext: 23081. My graduate program office can be reached at [lapssowk@yorku.ca](mailto:lapssowk@yorku.ca) or 416-736-5226.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, York research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail [ore@yorku.ca](mailto:ore@yorku.ca)

**Legal Rights and Signatures:** I \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in *Mapping ruling relations through poor people's resistance* conducted by A.J. Withers. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

A.J. Withers, Researcher

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 5b: Informed Consent Letter for City Staff/Councillors/Media**

**Study name:** Mapping ruling relations through poor people's resistance

### **Researcher:**

A.J. Withers  
PhD student, School of Social Work  
S880 Ross Building  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M3J 1P3

**[ajwither@yorku.ca](mailto:ajwither@yorku.ca)**

### **Purpose of the research:**

This research is being conducted for a dissertation as a requirement for a PhD degree in Social Work. It consists of observing the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and interviewing people who engage with the organization.

This study will explore when and how one organization, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), is effective in making gains for poor people and what can be learned about social relations of struggle through this work. Social relations of struggle refers to both the relations that coordinate the lives of poor people (including state and corporate power) and activist relations that work towards social justice (including organizing strengths, weaknesses, contradictions and opportunities).

### **Data use:**

The information provided by research participants will be used for the researcher's doctoral dissertation and may be used for future publication, upon further consent. In the event of the death of the participant consent for future use will be presumed unless the researcher is notified in advance.

### **What you will be asked to do in the research:**

Participate in an in-person conversational interview - approximately 1-2 hours in length. You may participate in a small group interview (2-3 people if you prefer).

### **Risks and discomforts of the research:**

Individuals who participate in this research, if identified, could experience negative consequences in their employment, including delayed promotion, demotion or being fired because of a possible association with OCAP.

**Benefits of the research and benefits to you:**

Participants will benefit from any knowledge produced about ruling relations and anti-poverty work.

Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their work and, if doing a small group interview, to have an in-depth conversation with people they work with that otherwise might not have happened.

**Voluntary participation:**

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and participants may choose to stop participating at any time. At any time, you may also decline to answer any question(s) in the interview. A participant's decision not to continue participating will not influence your relationship or the nature of your relationship with researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

**Withdrawal from the study:**

You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. If you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed. If you participate in a group interview, your material will be destroyed after the responses from other participants are transcribed. This transcription will occur as quickly as reasonably possible.

**Confidentiality:**

Your name and identity will remain confidential unless you express the desire to be named in the study. Interviews will be recorded with a digital audio recorder or a digital video recorder and the researcher will take notes during the interview. Digital information and notes will not contain the participant's name. Digital information will be stored on a password protected device that only the researcher has access to. Interview recording will be archived and provided to the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty unless you prefer otherwise. The information will be archived indefinitely so that the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty can collect historical information; it could be used by other researchers for future and unrelated research. In this instance, the information can be destroyed or provided to the participant no later than 12 months from successful completion of the dissertation defense.

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

You can choose to change your consent about confidentiality at any point by notifying the researcher, A.J. Withers.

#### Confidentiality of Identity:

- I wish to have my name used in the study.
- I wish to be I wish have my name kept confidential and have all identifying characteristics kept confidential.

#### Recording:

- I wish to be audio recorded only
- I wish to be audio or video recorded

#### Archiving or Disposal of Data:

- I wish to have the audio/video of my interview and any transcribed materials from my interview archived with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty upon completion of the study. I understand that this material may be retained indefinitely and could be used by others for future research.
- I wish to have the audio/video recordings and any transcribed materials from my interview destroyed no later than 12 months from successful completion of the dissertation defense and no later than March 1, 2024, or whichever is sooner.
- I wish to have the audio/video recordings and any transcribed materials from my interview provided to me no later than 12 months from successful completion of the dissertation defense and no later than March 1, 2024, or whichever is sooner and have the researcher's copies destroyed.

**Questions about the research?** If you have questions about the research, please feel free to contact me, my supervisor or the graduate program office. My supervisor is Wendy McKeen, by email at [wmckeen@yorku.ca](mailto:wmckeen@yorku.ca), or by phone at 416-736-2100 Ext: 23081. My graduate program office can be reached at [lapssowk@yorku.ca](mailto:lapssowk@yorku.ca) or 416-736-5226.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, York research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail [ore@yorku.ca](mailto:ore@yorku.ca)

**Legal Rights and Signatures:** I \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in *Mapping ruling relations through poor people's resistance* conducted by A.J. Withers. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

A.J. Withers, Researcher

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 6a: Interview Guide for OCAP Members and Paid Organizers**

### **Possible Questions:**

1. How would you like to be described by me in this study?
2. Can you tell me about what brought you to OCAP?
3. Can you tell me about the work you do/have done with OCAP?
4. I would like you to think about a campaign or action that was successful in the sense that OCAP won all or part of what it was demanding and then go through with me what work you did as a part of that action or campaign.
  - a) What action or campaign do you want to talk about and can you tell me about it?
  - b) Can we go over with me what you did during this period?
  - c) How did the people or body OCAP targeted respond?
  - d) Did you have to learn about any rules, policies or regulations in order to do this work? What did you learn?
  - e) Do you recall what some of the emotions you had while working on this were? Can you tell me about those?
  - f) Did you learn anything from this work or from the campaign/action, if you did, can you tell me about that?
  - g) Was what you learned talked about or shared within OCAP? How did that happen?
  - h) Why do you think that the campaign/action was successful?
5. I would like you to think about a campaign or action that was not successful in the sense that OCAP did not win all or part of what it was demanding and then go through with me what work you did as a part of that action or campaign.
  - a) What action or campaign do you want to talk about and can you tell me about it?
  - b) Can we go over with me what you did during this period?
  - c) How did the people or body OCAP was targeting respond?
  - d) Do you recall what some of the emotions you had while working on this were? Can you tell me about those?
  - e) Did you/OCAP learn anything from this work or from the campaign/action, if you did, can you tell me about that?



- f) Why do you think that the campaign/action was unsuccessful?
6. Do you do or have you done work with OCAP that is not about specific actions or campaigns (like administration, mentoring, emotional support, membership development, etc.) and, if so, can you tell me about it?
  7. As you know, I have focused a lot of my work on changing [insert demand] at the [jurisdiction (municipal/provincial/federal)] level. Can you tell me, in your time in OCAP, what you have learned about how [jurisdiction] operates and how you learned it?
  8. Can you tell me about any documents, policies or regulations that you worked within or around in relation to this campaign?
  9. Can we go over with me what you did during this period?
    - a) How did the people or body OCAP was targeting respond?
    - b) Do you recall what some of the emotions you had while working on this were?
    - c) Can you tell me about those?
    - d) Did you learn anything from this work or from the campaign/action, if you did, can you tell me about that?
    - e) Why do you think that the campaign/action was un/successful?
  10. Why do you think OCAP is effective when it is?
  11. Why do you think OCAP is ineffective when it is?
  12. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

**Possible prompt questions participants:**

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What work did you do as a part of that?
- Can you tell me how that made you feel?
- Can you break that down for me?
- What steps did you take?
- Can you expand on that more?

**Appendix 6b: Interview Guide for Workers, Government Representatives & Media**  
**Possible Questions:**

1. How would you like to be described by me in this study?
2. What is your experience with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP)?
3. What do you think makes OCAP effective?
4. What do you think makes OCAP ineffective?
5. OCAP engaged you with respect to [issue] can we talk about that for a little bit?
  - a) Can we go over with me what work you did in relation to this issue?
  - b) Can you tell me how much of this was an anticipation of OCAP's work/intervention?
  - c) Can you tell me how much of this was a response to OCAP's work/intervention?
  - d) Do you recall what some of the emotions you had while working on this were? Can you tell me about those?
  - e) Did you learn anything from this work on [issue], if you did, can you tell me about that?

**Possible prompt questions participants:**

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What work did you do as a part of that?
- Can you tell me how that made you feel?
- Can you break that down for me?
- What steps did you take?
- Can you expand on that more?
- Can you give me an example of that?

# Appendix 7: Toronto Map



**Appendix 8: Issues with “The Misuse of the Housing Stabilization Fund” Report by TESS and OCAP’s Rebuttal**

	<b>Page</b>	<b>Issue Raised by OCAP</b>	<b>City Response</b>	<b>Rebuttal</b>
1	1/7	The transfer of HSF surpluses in 2013 / 2014 / 2015 was in violation of the CHPI funding rules which state that the funds must be spent on or allocated to programs tackling homelessness in the year they are provided.	The City’s annual spending on CHPI eligible programs far exceeds provincial CHPI funding. In the four years from 2013 to 2016, the City spent \$626.6 million on CHPI eligible homeless and housing expenses while receiving only \$438.9 million in Provincial CHPI funding. \$187.7 million in homeless and housing supports and services were funded by the City. This means that all Provincial CHPI dollars are being spent on homelessness prevention in the year the funds are provided and in accordance with provincial program guidelines.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is correct that the city can take the surpluses because it filed vague variances with the province each year saying that it would spend more than the allotted CHPI funds on the hostel system and move any surplus funds elsewhere to adjust for this spending. OCAP did not appreciate that the city had more funds invested in CHPI eligible programs than it was getting CHPI funding for and so was incorrect in this claim.</li> <li>2. The City’s response is somewhat misleading as it negates the fact that a large amount of so-called city spending was federal funds (see discussion about Glenn Morgan’s concerns above).</li> <li>3. Once the CHPI reports to the Province were acquired through FOI requests, another discrepancy was identified. The City told the Province that it had budgeted \$27.1 million for the 2014-15 CHPI funding period and all of it was CHPI funding (City of Toronto, 2015b). However, the 2014 and 2015 City HSF budget was \$27,957 million per year, \$1.525 million being City funds (City of Toronto, 2016).</li> </ol>
2	2	It was promised that a housing allowance program would be setup that	Established in 2013, the Housing Stability Allowance has been provided to 320 households through referrals from TESS, Hostel Services and Streets to Homes. It	<p>Providing this answer now does not address the fact that SSHA director Glenn Morgan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Could not answer OCAP organizer Yogi Acharya’s</li> </ol>

		would give 260 homeless and at-risk people access to \$400 per month of rent subsidy between 2013 and 2017. Even though the program is now supposed to be in its final year of operation, city officials cannot say what that housing allowance program is called or confirm its operation.	was offered to those within the following target groups: at-risk seniors transitioning from Ontario Works to Old Age Security; homeless seniors in the shelter system, and individuals experiencing chronic outdoor homelessness. The monthly rent subsidy is \$400. This housing allowance program is expected to end June 30, 2017, and the plan is to transition eligible households into the TTHAP Extension Housing Allowance Program (under the Investment in Affordable Housing Program fund, a federal/provincial program).	<p>questions and said he was unaware of Ministry of Finance reports</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Said he would look into it and did not follow up</li> <li>3. Did not provide this information when Yogi followed up</li> </ol>
3	2/8	Nevertheless, another \$3.8 million from the projected 2016 HSF surplus was approved to be transferred into this same housing allowance reserve last November	In November, City Council requested that the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer consider making a one-time contribution of up to \$3.8 million from the 2016 year-end surplus to the Housing Stabilization Reserve (XQ1112). Approval is still pending and no contribution has been made.	Approval by Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer is a formality.
4	2	By the end of this year, there will be \$8 million in the Housing Allowance Reserve fund with no plan to spend any of it.	The Housing Allowance Reserve was established to receive funds from a number of sources for the purpose of providing City of Toronto housing allowance programs. In addition to surplus funds from the Housing Stabilization Fund, Council has also approved an annual contribution of approximately \$1.07 M to this fund. As of year end 2016, the uncommitted balance in the reserve is \$4.2 M. A draft plan has been developed to provide housing allowances and other directly housing-related supports to vulnerable individuals to allocate this uncommitted balance and the anticipated \$3.8 M 2016 surplus from the Housing Stabilization Fund which has yet to be transferred.	\$4.2 million (2016) + \$3.8 million (2017) = \$8 million, for which there was no plan at the time to spend the funds.

			More details are provided in the Briefing Note, page 6.	
5	2, 9, 16	There is a discrepancy in 2014 HSF expenditures of \$1,004,925 between publicly reported data and what was disclosed to us in a Freedom of Information Act request (Appendix F)	As part of the numerous Freedom of Information Act requests OCAP has made, they received a working document containing preliminary data on HSF expenditures. This was not a report but rather a working excel spreadsheet attached to an email between TESS' finance and HSF program teams. While OCAP correctly surmised on page 16 of their report that the columns for November and December of 2014 were greyed in because the data for those two months were estimates, they nevertheless used the data in Appendix F to conclude that there are systematic data collection and financial management issues within TESS. While financial reporting was a challenge for several months after the implementation of SAMS late in 2014, the annual HSF expenditures reported in all public reports are accurate and consistent with both SAMS and SAP, the City's financial system.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TESS should not have provided a "working document" when actual expenditures were requested for 2013-2016 in FOI # 2016-001537.</li> <li>2. TESS should have indicated that this was a "working document" and that Nov. and Dec. 2014 were estimates.</li> <li>3. This document was provided following a mediation after OCAP filed an appeal to the province. OCAP received the documents in late 2016/early 2017, there was no reason not to provide an actual document rather than a "working document." Consequently, there is a high likelihood TESS was in violation of the <i>Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act</i>.</li> <li>4. This discrepancy was clearly one of many used to make conclusions about the management of the HSF.</li> </ol>
6	2, 10, 14	TESS reported a difference of 8,000 HSF recipients in 2013 between the various reports it issued for that year.	In the 2013 report, applications were based on total requests, while in the 2014 report they were based on cases. As there could be multiple requests per case, the 2013 number was significantly higher. The 2014 staff report failed to note the change in definition.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The explanation here is for 37,778 eligible applications, however, FOI # 2017-00044 reports 41,326 eligible applications using the definition.</li> <li>2. TESS should note definition changes, or more importantly, define basic terms, in its reports.</li> </ol>
7	2	However, the Tracking Tool and TESS' data is demonstrably flawed	The staff report dated November 14, 2016 – Update on the Delivery of the Housing Stabilization Fund, identifies and commits to developing and implementing an improved HSF reporting tool now that SAMS is stabilized. Scheduled implementation date is the second quarter of 2017.	While stating that they are changing the Tracking Tool, TESS does not acknowledge that the program ran for 3 years with a "demonstrably flawed" tool.

8	5	<p>People were being denied for outrageous reasons; they were getting less money than they were entitled to; they were having their applications delayed by TESS for weeks on end the City applied a secret formula to HSF applications that was so secret that even the HSF workers weren't allowed to know what it was</p> <p>documenting the discriminatory practices of TESS in administering the HSF. We exposed the discrimination as well as TESS' unfair and opaque decision making processes.</p>	<p>The OCAP report correctly identifies that HSF previously had eligibility criteria that included a separate calculation of available income and assets. Income such as Child Tax Benefit, employment and pension income was taken into consideration in calculating eligibility.</p> <p>As noted in the staff report to Council dated November 14, 2016 this eligibility criteria was removed beginning December 1, 2016. As a result of this change available assets and income are no longer considered in an application for HSF. All low income residents who qualified for OW / ODSP qualify for HSF, pending verification of their emergency housing needs. The change made was in line with recent reforms to social assistance including the change made to ending the claw back of child support payments.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This answer does not acknowledge that the eligibility formula was discriminatory.</li> <li>2. It does not address the claims that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) "People were being denied for outrageous reasons"</li> <li>b) "they were getting less money than they were entitled to"</li> <li>c) "they were having their applications delayed by TESS"</li> <li>d) "the City applied a secret formula"</li> <li>e) "even the HSF workers weren't allowed to know what [the formula] was"</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
10	6	<p>the surpluses listed in Table 1.1, totaling \$10 million, seemed to just vanish.</p>	<p>All divisional surpluses are transferred to the City's general surplus and allocated in accordance with the Council approved Surplus Management policy.</p>	<p>OCAP is pointing to the fact that these surpluses were very difficult to trace and TESS did not report what happened to them. This is why OCAP used the term "seemed to" – a term to describe OCAP's experience that cannot be negated with TESS's response.</p>
11	6	<p>If the HSF surplus was going to be spent in one of the CHPI mandated areas, it would have to be transferred outside of TESS. For this to happen, there would have to</p>	<p>City Council approval is not required. Service Managers are required to submit both an annual investment plan and a year-end financial report to the Ministry. The year-end financial report outlines actual expenditures for the prior fiscal year. It is important to note that the Province allows Service</p>	<p>While TESS is correct that the Province permits in-year adjustments, money cannot be transferred between city departments (i.e. from TESS to SSHA without City Council approval).</p>

		be City Council approval	Managers to make in-year adjustments to service charges based on variances (Page 12 of the Program Guidelines). This includes moving funding between services based on variances. The City has received Ministry sign-off for all of its CHPI investment plans and year-end reconciliation reports.	
12	8	Shelter, Support and Housing Administration was penning the budget for the next year and planning to further cut the already overstretched shelter system. Inexplicably, they proposed a \$2.7 million contribution to the Housing Allowance Reserve	The budgeted contribution in 2017 is \$2.07 M. In addition to the base budget contribution of \$1.07 M, City Council directed that \$1M of the Christie Gardens settlement money be contributed to the Housing Allowance Reserve for future use.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SSHA is correct that OCAP has a typo. Total projected contribution was \$5.87 million. HSF surplus was \$3.8 million, leaving \$2.07 million (SSHA, 2017c).</li> <li>2. SSHA, therefore inexplicably budgeted \$1.07 million further for the housing allowance while cutting the shelter budget.</li> <li>3. City Council moved a further \$1 million into the housing allowance reserve from the Christie Gardens settlement. This was based on a SSHA Staff Report requesting these funds be moved into the Housing Allowance Reserve Fund (SSHA, 2016).</li> </ol>
13	8	SSHA has no reports from the Ministry of Finance about who has received the allowance, how many allowances have been issued	<p>As provided to OCAP, the following information from the Ministry of Finance details the flow of Housing Stability Allowances since inception. Note that since there is confirmation of eligibility by the Ministry on an annual basis, some allowances are not renewed:</p> <p>2013 – 90 new clients  2014 – 153 new clients, 86 renewals = 239 total  2015 – 71 new clients, 209 renewals = 280 total  2016 – 14 new clients, 247 renewals = 261 total</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SSHA did not provide this information to OCAP.</li> <li>2. We obtained this information through a FOI request which is supposed to be anonymous.</li> <li>3. We obtained this information after the report was released (see footnote 14 in Chapter 4).</li> <li>4. The numbers used to arrive at 320 clients helped by the program requires the use of 2013 numbers, before the program was established.</li> </ol>
14	10	The FOI appears to be a printout from the HSF Tracking Tool (unlike some of	The printout was not from the HSF Tracking Tool. It was a working document containing preliminary data on HSF expenditures for 2014 and 2015 from TESS' finance team.	Why was a working document provided for expenditures for 2013, 2014, and 2015 in late 2016/early 2017 as the actual expenditures?



		the obviously incorrect FOI information provided elsewhere), making this discrepancy concerning		
15	10, 16	One set of numbers provided by the city for 2015 states \$24.3 million was spent on HSF, excluding December (Appendix F). Another set, which includes December, indicates a total yearly expenditure of \$24.9 million (Appendix E).	The data referenced in Appendix F is from a working excel spreadsheet attached to an email between TESS' finance and HSF program teams. While financial reporting was a challenge for several months after the implementation of SAMS late in 2014, the annual HSF expenditures reported in all public reports are accurate and consistent with both SAMS and SAP, the City's financial system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. See above.</li> <li>2. This does not address the concern that only \$0.6 million was spent in December 2015 according to this 'working document' – this is an abnormally low number. TESS provides no explanation why the 2015 numbers are irregular for 2015 in this document.</li> </ol>
16	11	we already know that TESS is building systematic low-balling of poor people into the new plan	The OCAP report assumes that if there is a surplus in 2017, the number of monthly payments would remain at budgeted levels and hence the average per payment would fall. In fact if HSF were to be underspent in 2017, it would be mainly because the number of payments would be lower, not the average payment.	The comment calculating the average disbursement based on an assumed surplus of about \$3 million is removed. The metamathematical logic in this response is correct. However, TESS planned for approximately 3,600 eligible applications a month, allowing for an average disbursement of \$648.15. The maximum allocation per benefit unit is \$1,600 for singles/couples and up to \$3,000 for families. The concern about "low-balling," therefore, remains valid.
17	12	The replacement of "soft furniture," in addition to beds, can now be paid for through the HSF. This amount is up to \$250 for a single person or couple or \$300 for a family. However, soft furniture is	The HSF criteria for the replacement of furniture when items have been discarded due to bed bug infestations was expanded to include soft furniture in addition to beds. Soft furniture remains undefined in the current policy to allow clients flexibility to replace a wide-variety of household items impacted by bed bug infestation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of a definition creates: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) confusion for people applying for the fund;</li> <li>b) inconsistency and, potentially, unfairness and discrimination in application of the policy.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. If no definition was necessary, why did TESS then create a definition for soft furniture (City of Toronto, n.d.-e)?</li> </ol>

		undefined anywhere in the policy.		
18	12	TESS General Manager, Patricia Walcott told the CDRC that the flat rate would be based on a review of the market. However, TESS Director Phil Eisler told us that a review of the HSF Tracking Tool database was taking place to establish the flat rates	The staff report dated November 14, 2016 – Update on the Delivery of the Housing Stabilization Fund, identifies that in relation to the implementation of flat rates, TESS will consult with stakeholders and will also use a range of data and information (estimates of the costs of furniture) to establish flat rates.	TESS did not conduct consultations with respect to the flat rates that were implemented.
19	14	There were also substantial financial irregularities for the first 6 months of 2013, with one report indicating that \$1.4 million less was spent than other reports indicated (see Table 3.2).	In the two HSF staff reports in 2013, the data on HSF expenditures was for OW recipients only. In subsequent reports, data on HSF expenditures was sourced from SAP, the City's accounting system, and included payments to both OW and ODSP recipients. The 2014 staff report failed to note the change.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The reports that use this data repeatedly discuss the benefit being accessible to people on OW and ODSP and make no mention of the data only applying to OW recipients (Toronto Employment and Social Services, 2013; Toronto Employment and Social Services &amp; Shelter Support and Housing Administration, 2013b).</li> <li>2. TESS staff reported, in response to an FOI, that it was not possible to separate OW and ODSP in the first few months of the HSF even though the first of the 2 reports with this same data came out in April, 2013 (4 months into the program) (FOI #2017-00044, 2017).</li> </ol>
20	15, 17	Table 3.4 shows a difference between the sub-total and total	OCAP is correct. The table in the April 2014 staff report had a typo. The sub-total is the correct number	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For some reason they do not use a direct quote from the report for this item, perhaps it is to obscure the scale of the error.</li> <li>2. This is raised twice in the report. Once under the table drawing attention to the error and once pointing out the \$700,000</li> </ol>

				<p>difference between the sub-total and total.</p> <p>3. This error is not treated as significant in the report but used as an example of careless errors by TESS.</p>
21	17	How is it that in 2014 and 2015, millions more were spent out of CHPI funds on the HSF than the total CHPI funding	The data on total CHPI funding was provided to OCAP through an FOI request. Unfortunately, the request was misinterpreted, and the number provided as total CHPI funding was in fact CHPI funding for HSF. As well, the number provided as CHPI funding allocated to HSF was the total HSF budget.	<p>1. Using the term “misinterpreted” creates the appearance that OCAP may have been unclear.</p> <p>2. The FOI wasn’t misinterpreted for 2013, only for 2014 and 2015 – this is clearly a mistake that TESS will not admit.</p> <p>3. The “minor variance,” based on this answer was \$4 million for 2014 \$1.5 million for 2015.</p>
22	17	The statistics on eligible and ineligible applications do not equal the total applications for 2015	OCAP is correct. There was a minor variance in the numbers	This variance is very small but demonstrative of the lack of attention to detail in TESS HSF reports.

**Unaddressed Complaints Raised by OCAP**

	Page	Critique
1	4	There is no mechanism in the policy to accommodate people on the grounds of disability - something that we argue is a gross violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code.
2	8	It is unclear why more than \$1 million was put in this reserve without any plan to spend it.
3	9	HSF data has never been fully publicly reported for the years 2014, 2015 or 2016.
4	12	In a review of market prices that OCAP did in November 2016, we found that there were no major stores that offered beds at that price. The average cost of a bed was at least \$100 more than what TESS paid. <sup>283</sup>
5	12	‘Verification of pest control treatment will be required.’ But, it gives no indication what that means.
6	15	2013: There are also different numbers provided in 2013 for the ‘reasons for requests.’
7	15	2013 Report C: The average provided do (sic) not have a logical mathematical relationship to the number of eligible applications, amount of funds issued, number of applications, or any other relevant data.
8	15	There are fewer reasons for issuance of the HSF than there are eligible applications for the months of January and April in 2013.

<sup>283</sup> In an email enquiry I made to one TESS Director asking for the list of stores that sell beds for those prices because we had someone who couldn’t find a bed. The Director offered to talk to the individual directly. I countered by saying “your providing bed shopping advice for one client doesn’t address the problem... Would it be easier for me to simply put your phone number on our website so that each individual who has difficulty finding beds at that price can contact you directly?” She unhelpfully said “I can suggest you and the clients may want to check weekly flyers for sales” (Withers & Thompson, 2017, pp. 132–3)

9	15	Appendix F lists Shelter Fund Enhancement payments of \$53,596 for July and \$13,000 for May. This line is not provided in any other HSF reports for any other years.
10	16	When we added the total number of OW and ODSP eligible and ineligible applications, it did not equal the total number of applications: the difference was 2,444 applications.
11	16	\$583,722 was spent on the HSF in December, 2015... How was it that there was over a \$1.4 m decrease from the average in HSF in December, 2015.

### Appendix 9: TAEH Community Partners: Organizational Information

Community Partner	Description	Supportive Housing Provider	Exerts control over homeless people*	Source
Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness	"leads a national movement of individuals, organizations and communities working together to end homelessness in Canada."	No	No	<a href="http://caeh.ca/mission">caeh.ca/mission</a>
Canadian Mental Health Association	"CMHA facilitates access to the resources people require to maintain and improve mental health and community integration, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://cmha.ca/about-cmha">cmha.ca/about-cmha</a>
Community Living Toronto	"a source of support for thousands of individuals with an intellectual disability searching for accessible and meaningful ways to live in the community"	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://cltoronto.ca/about-us">cltoronto.ca/about-us</a>
COTA	"supporting adults with mental health and cognitive challenges to live well within their communities."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://cotainspires.ca">cotainspires.ca</a>
Covenant House	"Canada's largest agency serving youth who are homeless, trafficked or at risk."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://covenanthouse.toronto.ca/about-us">covenanthouse.toronto.ca/about-us</a>
Daily Bread Food Bank	"We collaborate with all to eliminate food insecurity, and advocate solutions to end poverty."	No	Yes (food)	<a href="http://dailybread.ca/about/mission-and-vision">dailybread.ca/about/mission-and-vision</a>
Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services	"We create lasting solutions to end poverty, social injustices, and isolation in Toronto."	No	Yes (Out of the Cold)	<a href="http://dixonhall.org/ourmission">dixonhall.org/ourmission</a>
Fife House	"Proudly providing secure and affordable supportive housing and support services for people living with HIV/AIDS."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://fifehouse.org">fifehouse.org</a>
Fred Victor	"a social service charitable organization that fosters long-lasting and positive change in the lives of homeless and low-income people living across Toronto."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://fredvictor.org/about-us">fredvictor.org/about-us</a>
Gerstein Centre	"a 24 hour community based mental health crisis service."	No	Yes (crisis beds)	<a href="http://gersteincentre.org">gersteincentre.org</a>

Community Partner	Description	Supportive Housing Provider	Exerts control over homeless people*	Source
Habitat Services	"strives to improve the quality of housing for tenants marginalized by poverty and their mental health status by contracting with landlords and providing recovery based support."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://habitat-services.org/about-us">habitat-services.org/about-us</a>
Haven Toronto	"a sanctuary for elder homeless men."	No	Yes (drop-in)	<a href="http://haventoronto.ca">haventoronto.ca</a>
Homeless Connect Toronto	"coordinates "one-stop-shop" events for individuals at-risk-of and experiencing homelessness."	No	Yes (ID clinics, health care, etc.)	<a href="http://hctoronto.org/about-1">hctoronto.org/about-1</a>
Homes First	"providing supportive housing and shelter for over 35 years to all populations, with a focus on the chronically homeless, people with complex mental health and addictions issues, and seniors."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://homesfirst.on.ca/who-we-are">homesfirst.on.ca/who-we-are</a>
Houselink	"a leader in offering supportive housing and recovery for people living with persistent mental health and addiction issues."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://houelink.on.ca">houelink.on.ca</a>
Housing help centres	"works with both individuals and families in the City of Toronto to find and maintain affordable, safe housing."	S2H referrals	Yes (housing help)	<a href="http://shhc.ca/housing-help-toronto">shhc.ca/housing-help-toronto</a>
Inner City Family Health Team	"The Inner City Family Health Team is for men who use Seaton House Shelter."	No	Yes (medical care)	<a href="http://innercityfht.ca/about-us">innercityfht.ca/about-us</a>
John Howard Society	"Effective, just and humane responses to the causes and consequences of crime."	Provides supports, partners with provider of housing	Yes	<a href="http://johnhoward.ca">johnhoward.ca</a> <a href="http://johnhoward.on.ca/toronto/services/post-incarceration-housing-services">johnhoward.on.ca/toronto/services/post-incarceration-housing-services</a>
LOFT	"LOFT steps up to serve those most in need by offering them the safety and stability of <b>housing</b> and the practical <b>support</b> they need to regain their dignity and take control of their lives."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://loftcs.org/about">loftcs.org/about</a>

Community Partner	Description	Supportive Housing Provider	Exerts control over homeless people*	Source
Maddison Community Services	"exists to promote the health, recovery and community integration of persons with mental health challenges through advocacy, education and the provision of a broad range of high quality community based support services."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://maddisonsones.org/about-madison">maddisonsones.org/about-madison</a>
Mainstay Housing	"non-profit agency which provides housing for mental health consumer-survivors."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://mainstayhousing.ca/about/overview">mainstayhousing.ca/about/overview</a>
Services and Housing in the Province	"Our health services are recovery based and client-directed. We work closely with clients from youth to seniors, enabling them to embrace their full potential and to achieve their goals of recovery and living successfully in their community."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://shipshey.ca">shipshey.ca</a>
Sojourn House	"Sojourn House provides Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing services to newly arrived refugees coming from all parts of the world."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://sojournhouse.org/who-we-are">sojournhouse.org/who-we-are</a> <a href="http://sojournhouse.org/programs-services/transitional-housing">sojournhouse.org/programs-services/transitional-housing</a>
St. Michaels Homes	"We provide integrated and holistic care focused on enhanced quality of life for individuals living with the challenges associated with addiction."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://stmichaelshomes.org">stmichaelshomes.org</a>
St. Stephen's Community House	"St. Stephen's works with individuals and communities in the city of Toronto to identify, prevent and alleviate social and economic inequality by creating and providing a range of effective and innovative programs and services."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://sschto.ca/About-Us">sschto.ca/About-Us</a> ; <a href="http://sschto.ca/Adults/Housing-Services">sschto.ca/Adults/Housing-Services</a>
Street Haven	"Street Haven at the Crossroads offers pathways for women experiencing or at risk of homelessness, through a variety of integrated services."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://streethaven.org">streethaven.org</a>
The Access Point	"The Access Point is a centralized point where you can apply for individual mental health and addictions support services and supportive housing"	Provides referrals to supportive housing	Yes (referral)	<a href="http://theaccesspoint.ca">theaccesspoint.ca</a>

Community Partner	Description	Supportive Housing Provider	Exerts control over homeless people*	Source
The Salvation Army	"a Christian organization that gives hope and support to vulnerable people in 400 communities across Canada and in 131 countries. The Salvation Army exists to share the love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://salvationarmy.ca/salvationarmy.ca/what-we-do/in-your-community/housing-and-">salvationarmy.ca salvationarmy.ca/what-we-do/in-your-community/housing-and-</a>
Toronto Hostles Training Centre	"offers practical, financially accessible training curriculum for hostel/shelter staff, managers, volunteers, students in job placements and agency board members."	No	No	<a href="http://thtcentre.com/about-toronto-hostles-training-centre">thtcentre.com/about-toronto-hostles-training-centre</a>
Toronto Public Library	"provides free and equitable access to services which meet the changing needs of Torontonians. The Library preserves and promotes universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment."	No	Yes (wash-rooms, etc.)	<a href="http://torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/mision-vision-values">torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/mision-vision-values</a>
Toronto Shelter Network	"made of Toronto's shelter providers. Together, we support emergency shelters across Toronto to more effectively meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness."	No	No (but members do)	<a href="http://torontoshelternetwork.com">torontoshelternetwork.com</a>
Ve'ahavta	"a Jewish humanitarian organization dedicated to promoting positive change in the lives of people of all faiths and backgrounds who have been marginalized by poverty and hardship."	No	Yes (food, etc.)	<a href="http://veahavta.org/about-veahavta">veahavta.org/about-veahavta</a> <a href="http://veahavta.org/programs/mjrh">veahavta.org/programs/mjrh</a>
Wellsley Institute	"works in research and policy to improve health and health equity in the GTA through action on the social determinants of health."	No	No	<a href="http://wellesleyinstitute.com">wellesleyinstitute.com</a>
West Neighbourhood House	"enables less advantaged individuals, families and groups in the community to gain greater control over their lives and within their community."	No	Yes (Drop-in)	<a href="http://westnh.org/about-us">westnh.org/about-us</a>
Woodgreen	"we help people find safe, affordable housing, seniors live independently, internationally-trained professionals enter the job market, parents access childcare, children and youth access after-school programs, newcomers settle in to Canadian life, homeless and marginalized people get off the streets, youth find meaningful employment and training and provide a wide range of mental health supports."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://woodgreen.org/woodgreen.org/services/housing">woodgreen.org/woodgreen.org/services/housing</a>



Community Partner	Description	Supportive Housing Provider	Exerts control over homeless people*	Source
Yes in my Backyard (Home-coming)	"supports inclusive communities where everyone belongs. We promote the rights of people who face Not-In-My-Backyard discrimination"	No	No	<a href="http://yesinmybackyard.ca/about">yesinmybackyard.ca/about</a>
YMCA of Greater Toronto	"a charity tackling the most critical social issues in the GTA. For more than 160 years, we have offered children, teens, young adults and families the opportunity for personal growth, community involvement and leadership."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://ymcagta.org/youth-programs/youth-housing">ymcagta.org/youth-programs/youth-housing</a>
Yonge Street Mission	"a local, Christian development agency... All our resources and energy at YSM are focused on working to respond to immediate needs and help people move from surviving to thriving."	Supportive housing provider	Yes	<a href="http://ysm.ca/mission">ysm.ca/mission</a> <a href="http://ysm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/YSM-Housing-Dec2018.p">ysm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/YSM-Housing-Dec2018.p</a>
total			38	
total no			15	

\* I define exerting control over homeless people here as direct material control such as food and shelter. Including indirect control, all of these organizations excluding, perhaps, one (Yes In My Back Yard) exert control over homeless people.

## Appendix 10: TAEH and Toronto Libraries Community Partner Agreement

# COMMUNITY PARTNER AGREEMENT 2017-2018



Community Partners are the foundation of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH). They are groups, businesses or organizations that, together, with Individual Supporters, make up the eco-system of TAEH's collective impact initiative to end homelessness in Toronto.

In addition, the TAEH Steering Committee and its constellation of Working Groups are rooted in Community Partners. CPs are thus central to implementing TAEH strategies. The TAEH's integrity and authority is grounded in these partners, and the TAEH Steering Committee is ultimately accountable to the community.

Community Partners have access to a variety of opportunities to learn about and engage in the TAEH goal to end chronic and episodic homelessness in Toronto and in its strategies and activities.

### TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

Community Partners is the category of supporters of the TAEH collective impact initiative for organizations. Individuals are referred to the "Individual Supporter" category.

In order to become and remain a Community Partner, organizations must sign a Partnership Agreement on an annual basis that lays out the following commitments and benefits:

### COMMITMENTS

1. To uphold the vision, mission and beliefs of the TAEH as laid out in the founding Charter.
2. To participate in and uphold TAEH common agenda as laid out in our Theory of Change.
3. To secure Board of Director's (or analogous leadership table) approval of TAEH's common agenda and to explore participation in shared measurement plan once defined.
4. To participate in TAEH meetings, events and campaign activities on a regular basis.
5. To work respectfully and collaboratively with fellow TAEH partners.
6. To commit to the principles of collective impact and work to align organizational strategic goals to the TAEH common agenda.

### BENEFITS

1. Contributing to ending homelessness in Toronto.
2. Staff and designates from Community Partners can chair Working Groups.
3. Enhanced profile with all orders of government and City-wide stakeholders with listing as a Community Partner on TAEH website and promotional material.
4. Ability to share information as part of a Community Partner Room on TAEH website.

5. Linking of websites with TAEH (if desired).
6. Staff and designates from Community Partner access to exclusive speakers, training at TAEH Days (2 times/year).
7. Staff and designates from Community Partner free access to TAEH newsletters, reports, publications etc.
8. A community partner certificate.

### COMMUNITY PARTNER - SIGNED AGREEMENT

By signing this agreement **TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY** confirms its commitment to the TAEH as a *Community Partner* and agrees with the following:

- To actively support the TAEH goal to end chronic and episodic homelessness in Toronto and its Theory of Change (*see attached Board of Directors' Resolution from <enter date here>*)
- To participate in TAEH's collective impact initiative by sharing its common agenda and shared measurement strategy as is reasonable for our organization.
- To ensure that elements of the strategic goals of **TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY** align, over time, with the TAEH's Theory of Change.
- To uphold the Terms of Engagement for Community Partners as outlined above.

DATE: April 3, 2018

SIGNED BY:  <name and title of Board Chair>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pam Ryan,  
Director, Service Development & Innovation

By signing this agreement the TAEH Steering Committee confirms that it will uphold the Terms of Engagement for *Community Partners* as outlined above as well as support **TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY** to the best of its ability to be a successful *Community Partner*.

DATE: Nov 19 '18

SIGNED BY: , TAEH Co-Chair

### Appendix 11: Deputants, Time Speaking and Warning Times

Affiliation	Date	Deputant	Min. talking	Length Over (sec.)	sec. for warning	# of Questioners
Ally	June 7, 2017	Cathy Crowe, Street Nurse, Distinguished Visiting Practitioner, Ryerson University	5:01	1		1
Ally	June 7, 2017	Emily Green	5:50	50	33	1
Ally	June 7, 2017	Joyce Rankin, Street Health	3:54	-66		1
Ally	June 7, 2017	Maurice Adongo, Street Health	5:34	34	-9	0
Ally	June 7, 2017	Melissa Goldstein, Toronto Drop-In Network, Housing Support Now	6:54	114	81	4
Ally	June 7, 2017	Rafi Aaron, Spokesperson, The Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness	5:22	22	22	3
Ally	June 7, 2017	Roxanne Danielson, Street Nurses Network	3:53	-67		0
Ally	June 7, 2017	Teya Greenberg, Sistering	4:29	-31	-148	0
OCAP	June 7, 2017	A. J. Withers, PhD Candidate, York	5:31	31	5	0
OCAP	June 7, 2017	Beric German, OCAP	5:17	17		0
OCAP	June 7, 2017	Lesley Wood	1:59	-181		0
OCAP	June 7, 2017	Randy McLin	5:37	37	22	1
Ally	October 23, 2017	Dan Rutembesa, Sojourn House	3:56	-64		1
Ally	October 23, 2017	Loly Rico, FCJ Refugee Centre	3:56	-64		1
Ally	October 23, 2017	Steve Meagher, Christie Refugee Welcome Centre	3:56	-64		1
OCAP	October 23, 2017	Macdonald Scott, Immigration Consultant, No One is Illegal	3:56	-64		1
Ally	November 20, 2017	Calvin Henschell, Regent Park CHC	5:19	19		1
Ally	November 20, 2017	Cathy Crowe, Street Nurse, Visiting	4:50	-10		0
Ally	November 20, 2017	Kapri Rabin, Street Health	4:28	-32		2
Ally	November 20, 2017	Patricia O'Connell, Executive Director, Sistering	4:29	-31		2
Ally	November 20, 2017	Rafi Aaron, Spokesperson, The Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness	5:15	15		1
Ally	November 20, 2017	Steve Meagher, Christie Refugee Welcome Centre	4:26	-34		1
Ally	November 20, 2017	Tim Maguire, President, CUPE Local 79	4:18	-42		0
Ally	November 20, 2017	Timothy Brown & Peter Wlodarek Sound Times	4:40	-20		0
Ally	November 20, 2017	Toby Nicol, Member, Advocacy Committee	4:50	-10		0

Affiliation	Date	Deputant	Min. talking	Length Over (sec.)	sec. for warning	# of Questioners
OCAP	November 20, 2017	Gaetan Heroux, OCAP	5:51	51	17	1
Ally	January 17, 2018	Cathy Crowe, Street Nurse, Ryerson University	5:33	33	8	3
Ally	January 17, 2018	Dana Dack, Sistering	1:15	-225		1
Ally	January 17, 2018	Greg Cook, Outreach	5:51	-9	11	3
Ally	January 17, 2018	Maurice Adongo, Community Health Worker, Street Health	6:39	99	26	1
Ally	January 17, 2018	Patricia O'Connell, Executive Director, Sistering	2:34	-146		4
OCAP	January 17, 2018	A.J. Withers, OCAP	5:25	25	-6	2
OCAP	January 17, 2018	<i>Yogi Acharya, OCAP</i>	4:45	-15		0
Ally	February 28, 2018	Calvin Henschell, Regent Park CHC	6:52	112	4	0
Ally	February 28, 2018	Dr. Kate Hayman, Lois Didyk and Drew Silverthorn, Health Providers Against Poverty	6:58	118		2
Ally	February 28, 2018	Greg Cook, Sanctuary Toronto	5:09	9	-4	0
Ally	February 28, 2018	Howard Ramonaitis, St. Stephen's	2:50	-130		2
Ally	February 28, 2018	Melody Grant, Sistering	5:14	14	-7	1
Ally	February 28, 2018	Susan Bender, Toronto Drop-In Network	5:36	36	-1	2
Ally	February 28, 2018	Tina James, Sistering	5:20	20	10	1
OCAP	February 28, 2018	Beric German	6:00	1	19	0
OCAP	February 28, 2018	Yogi Acharya, OCAP	3:52	-68		0
Ally	April 12, 2018	Greg Cook, Sanctuary Ministries	4:29	-31		0
Ally	April 12, 2018	Maurice Adongo, Street Health	5:27	27		0
OCAP	April 12, 2018	A.J. Withers	5:47	47	22	2
OCAP	April 12, 2018	Yogi Acharya	4:07	-53		0
<b>Shelter Campaign Average</b>						
(n=46)						
				<b>-11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>

\* Oct 23 all deputants deputed together; times and number of questions averaged.

\*\* Cathy Crowe is listed here as an ally. I interviewed her as an OCAP member, but it was clear in my interviews that Councillors did not regard her as such.

Affiliation	Date	Deputant	Min. talking	Length Over (sec.)	sec. for warning	# of Questioners
TAEH	November 20, 2017	Kira Heineck, TAEH	6:13	73	38	1
TAEH	November 20, 2017	Paul Dowling, Project Manager, HomeComing Community Choice Coalition	2:26	154		0
TAEH	January 17, 2018	Debbie Hill-Corrigan, Executive Director, Sojourn House	7:21	141	71	4
TAEH	January 17, 2018	Jean Stevenson, Executive Director, Madison Community Services	6:08	68	45	4
TAEH	January 17, 2018	Kira Heineck, TAEH	5:00	0		4
TAEH	January 17, 2018	Leslie McDonald, Executive Director, Habitat Services	3:33	-87		1
TAEH	January 17, 2018	Louise Smith, Covenant House Toronto	2:21	-159		4
TAEH	January 17, 2018	Mark Aston, Executive Director, Fred Victor Centre	6:54	114	87	5
TAEH	January 17, 2018	Paul Bruce, Cota Health	6:24	84	23	1
TAEH	February 28, 2018	Jean Stevenson, Madison Community Services	6:52	112	69	3
TAEH	February 28, 2018	Kira Heineck, TAEH	5:33	33		3
<b>TAEH Average</b> (n=11)				<b>20.5</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>3</b>

Affiliation	Date	Deputant	Min. talking	Length Over (sec.)	sec. for warning	# of Questioners
Unaffiliated/ Unclear	June 7, 2017	Emily Jane Daigle	4:45			0
Unaffiliated/ Unclear	November 20, 2017	Derek George, St. Stephens	5:43	43	17	1
Unaffiliated/ Unclear	January 17, 2018	Gregory Rodriguez, Out of the Cold - Ward 33	3:57			3
Unaffiliated/ Unclear	February 28, 2018	Emily Jane Daigle	8:04	184		1
Unaffiliated/ Unclear	February 28, 2018	George Smitherman	5:38	38		5
<b>Unaffiliated/Unclear Average</b> (n=5)				<b>114</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Appendix 12: Written Deputation to Jan. 17, 2018 CDRC Meeting**

January 16, 2018

Community Development and Recreation Committee to speak on item 2018.CD25.5, Review of Current Winter Respite and Shelter Services During the Recent Cold Weather

Dear Members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee:

In addition to my verbal deputation, please see the attached table demonstrating the needed number of emergency shelter beds.

As you can see, on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018, there were 713 people staying in the Winter Overnight system. As you are aware, this system is scheduled to close on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and these people will be forced back onto the streets. This is unacceptable.

We have identified that there are at least 1500 beds needed this year in order to bring occupancy levels down to City Council mandated 90% capacity levels.

These numbers are estimates because the 2013 Street Needs Assessment is outdated and had methodological issues. Since then, data and the experience of anti-poverty advocacy and frontline workers indicates that homelessness has gone up dramatically in Toronto. This is based on direct observations and informed by the increase in rents and decrease in social assistance rates (in real dollars, due to inflation).

While there has been an increase in shelter beds since 2013, this doesn't come near the increase in homelessness.

The 1500 needed beds also increases if calculated by sector.

This number also increases dramatically if it were to include the many families using the shelter portion of their social assistance cheques on motel rooms while they wait to get into the city shelter motel rooms. These people could spend their entire shelter cheques in a portion of the month, ensuring they will remain homeless for the rest of the month with no guarantee there will be space in the family shelters.

The 1500 beds increases if Shelter, Support and Housing stops counting family motel beds that are permanently inaccessible as empty (eg. room occupancy of 4 with a room with 3 people does not actually equal 1 open bed).

The number also increases dramatically if it were to attempt to include the hundreds, if not thousands, of people who are hidden homeless – those sleeping on floors, etc., sometimes in abusive or dangerous conditions.

I look forward to discussing other issues with the shelter and winter respite system with you in my verbal deputation.

Regards,

A.J. Withers

<b>Estimated Number of Emergency Shelters Needed</b>		
		<b>15-Jan</b>
<b>Shelters</b>	Total # of beds in system	5,896
	Occupancy	5,632
	Shelter occupancy rate	96%
	Required occupancy rate	90%
	% difference	6%
	<b># beds needed for 90%</b>	<b>354</b>
<b>Winter Overnight Usage</b>	Out of the Cold	113
	Winter Respite	455
	24hr Women's Drop-ins	95
	Warming Centres	50
	<b>Total Winter Overnight Usage</b>	<b>713</b>
<b>Sleeping Rough</b>	<b>2013 Street Needs Assessment</b>	<b>447</b>
	<b>Total Beds Needed</b>	<b>1,514</b>