

Effacing and Obscuring Autonomy:
the Effects of Structural Violence on the Transition to Adulthood of Street Involved Youth.

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Résumé

Cette thèse se penche sur le rôle de la violence structurelle dans la transition vers l'âge adulte des jeunes de la rue. Ancrée dans une perspective structurelle, l'étude fut menée en deux phases et fit appel à plusieurs méthodes de recherche : la recherche-action participative, les méthodes artistiques, des discussions de groupe ainsi que des entretiens semi-dirigés. L'autonomie se retrouve en filigrane des résultats de cette étude et constitue une composante centrale à la transition des jeunes vers l'âge adulte. Cependant, la violence structurelle tend à minimiser les stratégies de développement d'autonomie des jeunes de la rue. Celle-ci influence également de manière négative la perception sociale de la quête d'autonomie de ces jeunes. Ainsi, cette recherche met en exergue une violence structurelle qui se fait trop souvent invisible et qui nie les causes sociales des problèmes individuels. Finalement, cette thèse propose des pistes d'intervention, de recherche et d'élaboration de politiques axées sur des transformations systémiques dans le but de mieux soutenir les jeunes de la rue et le développement de leur autonomie durant leur transition vers l'âge adulte.

Mots-clés : jeunes de la rue; violence structurelle; travail social structurel; transition vers l'âge adulte; autonomie

Summary

This thesis examines the role of structural violence in the contemporary transition to adulthood of street involved youth. Anchored in structural social work, the study understands the origin of social problems and of violence to be structural rather than individual. Conducted in two phases, the study used participatory action and arts-informed methods, group discussions, and semi-structured interviews. Autonomy, a key component of the contemporary transition to adulthood, was central to the research results. The findings demonstrated that structural violence works to misrepresent or to nullify street involved youths' expressions of autonomy. Structural violence affects how they exercise and manifest their autonomy as well as how their autonomy is represented or socially valued. The findings made visible the invisible structural violence, illuminating social causes of individual problems. Accordingly, to better support street involved youth and the development of their autonomy during their transition to adulthood, the study proposes recommendations for practice, policy, and research that target systems level change.

Key words: street involved youth; structural violence; structural social work; transition to adulthood; autonomy

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Participatory Action Research	PAR
Ottawa Innercity Ministries	OIM
Youth Services Bureau	YSB
Passion for Youth Fine Arts Program	P4Y
Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario	CHEO
Ontario Disability Support Programme	ODSP
Ontario Works	OW
English as a Second Language	ESL
General Education Diploma	GED

Introduction

Setting the Scene

How often do you stop to think about the way that society is organised?

Sometimes? Never?

Do you move through society seamlessly, or do your experiences of society include impediments that are built into its very fabric, as though it were designed in a way that does not facilitate or promote your well being?

If I were to ask you to draw society, to make a visible representation of the social structures that organise us, that hold us together, what would that look like?

Take a minute and think about it.

This thesis shares the stories of street involved youth in Ottawa, for whom navigating society, growing up and into adulthood, and flourishing as individuals, was not a seamless process. Their voices, insights, knowledge, expertise, and experience were tools for making visible the invisible and taken-for-granted ways that we organise our society – ways that put them at a disadvantage.

Their skills as artists were another tool that was used in this study to educate the public and to bring to life their experiences of structural violence. The co-researchers¹ chose to represent a variety of violent social structures with a variety of artistic mediums. Our discussions and their art addressed the criminal justice system and police power, child protective services, school systems, the labour market, landlords, substance use, racism, violence against women, health care systems and hospitals, and stigma and discrimination based on street involvement, appearance, poverty, and age. In addition to representations of violent social structures, our discussions led to artistic representations of the effects of these social structures on their lives, their identities, their life chances, and the way they are seen and understood by society. We begin this thesis with their art, allowing it to speak to you directly, before I re-present the stories they shared with me.

¹ In keeping with participatory action research, the street involved youth involved in this study are from this point forward referred to as *co-researchers*.

Critical Impressions Art Show

A Question of Unequal Opportunity? Exploring the Role of Structural Violence in the Lives of Street-Engaged Youth²



ANGELS AND DEMONS

“Difference between the DPJ and CAS (Quebec and Ontario child and youth protection).”

² Full-page sized versions of all the art available as appendices.

1WORLDDEDIVIDED

"I wanted to portray that in every city certain areas are divided making attitudes and mentality hard to change."



PIXIE IN A BIRDCAGE

"Even if you can see the door sometimes the way out is not so easy to find."



JESUS WALKS IN THE 21st
CENTURY

"Jesus gives hope by filling
everybody with the Holy Spirit.
Depicting Jesus as a human
being."



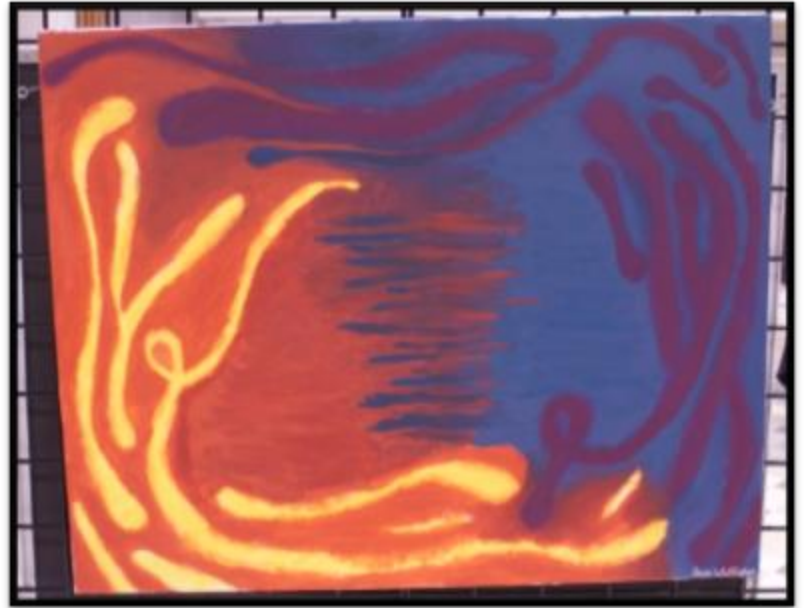
OH YOU OREO (GIRL IN A BOX)

"Poem and art piece representing
Immigration and mental health."



A CONTRAST IN LIFESTYLES

“This depicts the split between someone’s life while actively using drugs and someone’s life while in recovery. The middle represents the chaotic and torn struggle between those lifestyles.”



THE UNJUST SPLIT

“I think it’s unfair you have to have money to be where you want to be, to feel safe.”



AMAZE

"Life for a youth is like a maze. Only one way out....a million dead ends."



Out Growing Things and Overcoming Addictions

"She's breaking her bonds
and she's growing up and
changing as a being."



DON'T DRINK N' FLY

"Depicting the effects of
drunk driving."



DRUG
OVERDOSE
PREVENTION





THE DEVIL WITHIN

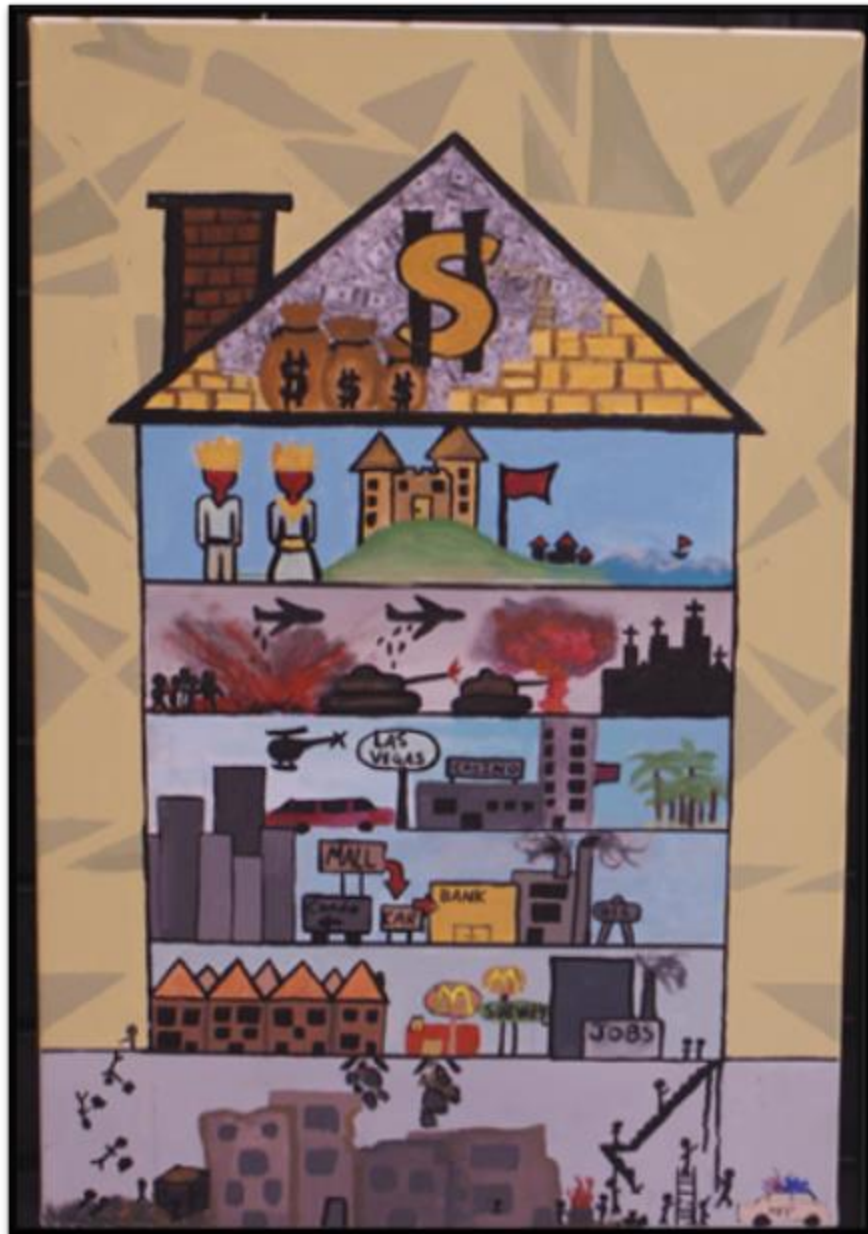
“The left side is imbued with broken mirror shards, representing the jagged sharpness of my anger, and also the fact that I think most people can relate to this picture (that's why I didn't do all 6 of us, I'd like this piece to be relatable). You'll notice the shards align on the throat area to represent the suicidality as well. The right side is adorned with plastic jewels of butterflies and gems and such, representing the childish happy side. This side also represents the fake smile I put on for the rest of the world, and most importantly, for myself.

2 days after the completion of this piece the artist was admitted to psychiatric care for an 8th time in the past 6 years.”



BABY SORTER

“This piece is intended to show the advantages and adversities children in this country/society experience based on their socio-economic status at birth and that of their parents and throughout their lives.”



WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME SYSTEM

"Money Structures: a choice or born into?
Struggle within the system. Hard to climb
up...easy to fall down."

Research Objectives

The general purpose of this study was to explore the role played by the violence of social structures in the transition to adulthood of street involved youth. As a participatory action research (PAR) study, the purpose was also to affect social change in the course of the research project. A third overarching objective of the study was to use research theories and methods that did not themselves perpetrate (failing that, that minimized) structural violence and that also actively served to compress and diminish social and structural hierarchies, thereby counteracting structural violence.

The specific research objectives were as follows:

1. Identify the social structures that street involved youth consider most significant in their lives.
2. Discover the effects of structural violence on the life course and transition to adulthood of street involved youth.
3. Document how street involved youth mobilize individually or collectively to deal with and/or overcome structural violence.
4. Educate the public with regards to the structural violence experienced by the street involved youth in the study.

Situating the current study in structural social work

Social work is a profession with an array of possible orientations to practice and research. Therefore, it is insufficient to simply locate a research study within *social work*, as that does not clarify for the reader what theories, values, and concepts underpin the project. Specificity is required. This doctoral research falls within a *structural* orientation to social work. Structural social work came into being in Canada in the 1980s with the work of Maurice Moreau (1987), of Carleton University (Murray & Hick, 2010). It traces its roots to Jane Addams and the settlement house movement, which began in the United States at the turn of the 20th century (Hare, 2004; Lundy, 2011; Mullaly, 2007). The settlement house movement emphasized community based interventions that sought to correct both macro scale social injustices as well as to improve the daily living conditions of those who suffered as a result of social injustice. Social workers subscribing to the settlement house approach to intervention lived in the communities they worked in, creating a strong sense of solidarity within their communities of practice. This approach stood in stark contrast to the dominant approach of the time, casework and case management, of which Mary Richmond was a foremost proponent. Casework endorsed an individualized and clinical model of intervention. Structural social works draws on the settlement house tradition of understanding individual suffering as connected to macro scale social issues and favouring community level intervention as well as helping individuals to meet their daily material needs (Lapierre & Levesque, 2013; Lundy, 2011; Moreau, 1987; Mullaly, 2007, 2010). Structural social work therefore rejects the tradition of psychologizing individuals' problems and the corresponding emphasis on clinical intervention as the primary form of professional practice (Murray & Hick, 2010). Structural social work is primarily concerned with intervention and research that addresses social problems such as sexism, ableism, heteronormativity, classism, and racism (Moreau, 1987),

through individual, group, family, and community level interventions (Lapierre & Levesque, 2013; Mullaly, 2007).

Importantly, structural social work provides a theoretical foundation that is complementary. In structural social work, as in the concept of structural violence, the origin of social problems is considered to be structural rather than individual. Mullaly (2010) usefully groups social theories typically used by social workers into three categories. The first category is one of neo-conservative views of social problems based on theories of individual deficiency. In this perspective, problems are solved by acting on, modifying, educating, and generally improving the problematic individual. The second grouping constructs social problems based on liberal-humanist theories, such as systems theory and ecological approaches, and is based on the premise of social disorganisation and deviance. In this perspective, problems emerge from social structures as well as from the individual's relation to those social structures. When people develop problems due to social structures, it is the role of social services to step in and help the person adjust to social structures. The premise of social structures themselves (such as capitalism) is never questioned. The third category of theories includes feminist, Marxist, anti-oppressive, post-colonial, and structural approaches to social work. They all emphasize social transformation and the need to locate problems in social structures, not in individuals. Mullaly (2010) groups the first two categories together as *order* theories, all of which concentrate on and maintain the existing social order. He identifies the third group as *conflict* theories.

A central principle of order theory is that society, composed of often selfish and competitive individuals, is held together by shared values. This premise serves to legitimate the

existing social order (Mullaly, 2010). However, societies are not stagnant; they change. In an order perspective, these changes are top down, ordained by the powerful and privileged (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003). When people's behaviours, values, and ideas conflict with the norm, it is assumed that they are maladjusted and that there is a problem with their socialisation (Mullaly, 2010). In an order perspective, the social problem of violence is conceived of as an individual or collective action; in other words, it is always associated with a person or people. Therefore, the primary concern is the intent of the violent person, rather than the outcome of the violence. This distracts from any potential structural, and therefore invisible, sources of violence and suffering. In this perspective, individual violence is said to result from individual deficiency. However, acts of violence that are used to maintain the social order and perpetuated by individuals and groups such as the police, are not seen as individual failing. Instead, violence that maintains the social order is legitimized (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003). Consequently, order theory based approaches to social work are theoretically incoherent with research which analyses the effects of structural violence as they individualize problems and humanize harmful social structures rather than change them. In this perspective, social work research becomes complicit in the reproduction of social suffering (Moreau, 1987).

Conflict theory offers a useful alternative to order theory. In conflict theory, society is comprised of opposing groups in competition for resources and power (Agger, 2006; Iadicola & Shupe, 2003; Lundy, 2011; Mullaly, 2007, 2010). Order is maintained through hierarchical relations that emerge based on categories of winners and losers resulting from the competition for resources and power. This hierarchy establishes and serves to perpetuate the inequitable distribution of power and resources. It is this inequity that causes suffering, violence, and

premature death. Any system that stratifies is, by definition, both a hierarchical social structure and a violent one, because it is based on relationships of exploitation (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003). In this perspective, social problems arise from “the exploitative and alienating practices of dominant groups” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 14). Social problems are also described in terms of “social injury on a broad scale” (Reasons & Perdue, 1981, p. 12). This description of a social problem connects injury (suffering and violence) to the broad scale (social structures). The emphasis on the big picture does not ignore acts of violence perpetrated by individuals; rather, these acts are connected back to social forces. For example, rapists are still held accountable for rape, but the crime is connected to, and in part explained by, patriarchy and gender based power imbalances. For social workers and social work researchers, the benefit of a conflict perspective is that it “reveals who is benefiting from established social arrangements; it shows how domination is maintained” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 15).

Several approaches to social work ascribe to conflict theory. These include, but are not limited to, structural, feminist, anti-racist, and post-colonial approaches (Lundy, 2011; Mullaly, 2010). Compared to the other approaches just listed, structural social work does not prioritize one form of oppression over others (Hick & Murray, 2009; Moreau, 1987), instead seeing various forms of oppression as intersecting, “creating a total system of oppression” (Mullaly, 2007, p. 212). As a social category, street involved youth represent various processes of marginalisation (e.g. economic, social) and individually often embody the intersection of various oppressed social groups (e.g. women, people living with a disability, Aboriginals) (Millar, 2009). That structural social works does not create a hierarchy of oppressions makes it the ideal social work approach for the study of the violence experienced by heterogeneous groups, such as street involved youth.

Structural social work is well recognized within the social work field, despite a current social context that does not favour its application (Lapierre & Levesque, 2013). Definitions of structural social work and the corresponding descriptions of the focus of structural social work vary from author to author, with notable authors such as Moreau (1979) and Murray and Hick (2010) speaking of *power*, Lundy (2011) focusing on *social injustice*, and Mullaly (2007, 2010) emphasizing *oppression*. However, what is common to most discussions of structural social work is the premise that “[social] structures are often the root cause of social problems ” (2010, p. 3) and that a critique of these social structures is required in order to transform them and the related social problems.

Therefore, research conducted within a structural orientation is interested in not only social interpretations and analysis of individual problems, but also analysis and suggestions for practices that run countercurrent to the social discourses which promote individualism and the neoliberal policies that reduce issues of social justice to individual failings and individual responsibility. This doctoral research situates itself within this structural orientation, committing to understanding the transition to adulthood of street involved youth in the context of powerful social forces. It will interpret the youths’ experiences of structural violence and their ‘problems’ in relation to their contexts and in relation to the social structures present in their lives.

Chapter One: Theoretical and conceptual framework and literature review

This first chapter outlines the theories and concepts related to youth and violence that underpin the current study. First, I will briefly mention a number of ways in which youth is currently studied. I will outline the theoretical and conceptual basis for understanding youth as the transition to adulthood, with an emphasis on what that means and how it can be studied in the contemporary context. This will be followed by a review of the state of research knowledge on the contemporary transition to adulthood of Canadian youth in general as well as that of street involved youth. The discussion of youth will end with the operationalization of *youth* for this study, as well as the operationalization of this study's preferred term *street involved youth*, locating the term within homelessness terminology.

I will then present the concept of structural violence, describing its origins and evolution as a concept, and discuss its most relevant aspects for the current study. This will be followed by a review of the state of research knowledge relating to street involved youths' experiences of violence, making the case for this study's emphasis on understanding the role of *structural* violence in their transitions to adulthood.

Youth: theories, definitions, and data

This section begins by introducing the concept of youth, explaining that it is a social construction, the meaning of which depends on the social, cultural, economic, and political forces of its time. I will then briefly identify some of the ways that youth is understood and studied in our current context. This will lead to an in-depth review of the understanding of youth that underpins

the current study, that of youth as the transition to adulthood. This review will involve juxtaposing the traditional formulation of the transition to adulthood, comprised of residential, relational, and professional spheres, with the contemporary formulation of the transition to adulthood, which emphasises autonomy and independence, and identifies an increasingly large number of life spheres, beyond the traditional three. I will then contextualise this theorisation of youth as the transition to adulthood with current data on the contemporary transition to adulthood, as it relates to the various spheres of the transition to adulthood.

I will also briefly outline the complexities relating to the task of establishing age parameters for the category of 'youth'. I will offer examples of the diversity of definitions that exist within federal and provincial jurisdictions as well as within the youth based service providers in Ottawa, where the study took place. I will define and explain the age-range attributed to 'youth' in this study. I will conclude this section with a review of the literature related to street involved youth as it pertains to the various spheres of the transition to adulthood, so that the results of this study can be juxtaposed with transition to adulthood of Canadian youth in general, but also with what research has already taught us about the transition to adulthood of street involved youth. This review of the literature will also serve to contextualize the experiences of street involved youth. This is important, for, as we will see in the discussion of structural violence, contextualisation is a key to revealing invisible structural violence.

Youth, a social construct

Youth is a social construct (Bourdieu, 1980; Galland, 2011; Jones, 2009; Mallett, Rosenthal, Keys, & Averill, 2010). While there is debate over the origins and nature of the category

youth, the existence of a ‘between childhood and adulthood’ has existed for centuries, manifesting in various ways in various contexts (Parazelli, 2007). For the purposes of this thesis, youth is defined as the period between adolescence and adulthood. Determining how youth as a concept is used, understood, and given meaning in today’s context requires a historical and sociological account of its various constructions (Galland, 2011). It is not the purpose of this thesis to provide such an account, and authors such as Galland (2011) and Ariès (1962) have contributed seminal works on the topic. Moreover, Parazelli (2007) has contributed to the historical and sociological account of marginal youth in particular. However, what those contributions reveal is pertinent to this study.

First, these authors have shown that youth is a relative concept, having meant different things in different eras, in different places, and for different social groups. This demonstrates that the concept of youth is not static, and there is neither one way nor a best way to define youth (Galland, 2011; Parazelli, 2007). For example, at one time, youth meant men, of good social standing, and was characterized by restlessness and frivolity, whereas later, with the onset of the democratisation of education, youth became a serious period, intended for study and personal accomplishment (Galland, 2011).

Secondly, historical and sociological analyses reveal that the concept of youth generally reflects the dominant social attitudes of a time and place (Galland, 2011; Karabanow, 2004). In other words, youth is a privilege of the privileged. These dominant social attitudes, which serve to establish the normative expectations of youth, are then expected of all youth, irrespective of their

ability to achieve them (Galland, 2011). Youth who do not fit the normative mold are considered socially marginal and deviant (Parazelli, 2007).

Thirdly, while epidemiological analyses provide risk-based representations of contemporary marginal youth, historical and social analyses help us to identify and validate (rather than render invisible) the social practices of marginal youth and their associated meaning (Parazelli, 2007). This prevents linking social practices of marginal youth with deviance and individual dysfunction (Parazelli, 2007). Youth as a social construction is a relative concept, normalized by the dominant social group, with the effect of disparaging marginal social practice. This is particularly relevant for the study of street involved youth whose transitions and social practices during this phase vary greatly from Canadian youth in general.

Different ways of understanding youth

Research affords different lenses through which to study, and to construct, youth. The concepts of *adolescence* (S. Hall, 1904) and *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2004, 2006, 2007) come to us from the field of psychology, and offer understandings based on developmental models. *Social generations*, an approach to youth studies that is popular in Australia, focuses on shifts in meaning and experiences of structural forces through intergenerational comparisons (Wyn & Woodman, 2006, 2007). *Youth culture and subculture*, which emerged in the 1950s, is used to research and understand the lives, lifestyles, norms, and values of young people (Brake, 1980, 1985; Weinstein, 1995).

Youth as the “transition to adulthood”

Youth, understood as the transition to adulthood, is the theoretical orientation employed in this thesis to describe the time between adolescence and adulthood. This has been chosen for two reasons. First, as a sociological theory rather than a psychological one, it allows for an analysis that does not psychologise, and thereby individualise or pathologize the youth’s experiences of structural violence. Secondly, it allows for the analysis of the youth’s experiences to be situated in their social context, thereby allowing for a social critique to emerge as a product of the analysis of their experiences. In other words, it aligns well with a structural research orientation as it allows us to “glimpse the wider processes that generate such different outcomes for young people as they reach adulthood: processes that continue to mean that some get a lot while others get very little” (MacDonald et al., 2001 para 5.7).

Rooted in life course theory (Elder, 1994, 1998; G. H. J. Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003), transitions research adopts a socio-biographic and holistic approach (Jones, 2009). Life course theory emerged in the 1970’s as a response to significant gaps in how life histories and future trajectories were studied (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2004; Jones, 2009). Until this point, research addressing human lives in relation to socio-historical context was rare. Additionally, the lack of longitudinal accounts of biography, the realization that child development models could not be applied to adolescents and adults, and the lack of knowledge of how social structures intersected with individual biographies all exposed the need for a new theoretical orientation. Little was known about how people lived from birth to death, about how their individual lives influenced development and aging, or about the importance of geographic and historical context (Elder et al., 2004). This prompted researchers, starting in the 1960’s, to study biographies across changing times and contexts. This produced research that charted “the continuity and change of human lives

in relation to interpersonal, structural, and historical forces” (Elder et al., 2004, p. 5). As a theory, Elder defines the life course as an orientation “that encourages the study of changing lives in changing contexts” (Elder & Shanahan, 2006, p. 667). As a concept, the life course “refers to a sequence of socially defined, age-graded events and roles that defines, in large measure, the contours of biography” (Elder & Shanahan, 2006, p. 667). In other words, both the theory and its conceptual application stress the social forces that shape biography (Elder, 1994). The life course offers a holistic approach to the study of biographies across time and context in terms of social change, life pathways, and individual development (Elder, 1998). For Elder, the pathways in question are those of education, work, and family (Elder et al., 2004). The focus of life course theory is on the relationships between individuals, social pathways, and institutions (Heinz, 2003). In this perspective, social pathways and institutions are seen to have normalizing and constraining effects on individual biographies (Heinz, 2003). While life course theory is designed to study biographies over the entire life course, it is also used to study particular transitions within the life course.

Youth is understood as one of many stages in the course of an individual’s life course. In youth research, the concept of *transitions* brings into focus not only the timing and length of the passage to adulthood, but also the way in which institutional regulations, individual decisions, and life chances are related. The term *transition* is often used in youth research, but it does not always carry the same meaning. For the purposes of this thesis, a transition is defined as the movement from one status or role to another. That movement can be quick or it can occur over a long period of time. As such, a transition can be both an event and a process (Jones, 2009).

The French sociologist Olivier Galland first identified three key transitions in the process of becoming an adult. They were residential (the move from the parent's home to one's own), professional (school to work), and relational (the move from being single to getting married and having a family) (Galland, 2011). Prior to the 1970s, these transitions were usually succinct and synchronous (Galland, 2001, 2011; Mallett et al., 2010; Molgat, 2007): people made earlier transitions to full and permanent employment, got married younger, bought their first homes younger, and soon thereafter had a first child. This meant that becoming an adult usually happened earlier and all at once.

However, it is generally agreed that in most industrialized countries the nature of the transition to adulthood has changed, becoming protracted and more complex (Allan & Jones, 2003; Arnett, 2006; Furlong, Fred, Biggart, Helen Sweeting, & West, 2003; Galland, 2001, 2011; Mallett et al., 2010; Molgat, 2007, 2011; Molgat & Maunaye, 2003). In our contemporary context, these transitions happen later in life, they overlap, and they are no longer necessarily concurrent or linear (Biggart & Walther, 2006; Walther et al., 2002). The transition to adulthood has become "increasingly de-standardized, reflecting more reversible, fragmented and uncertain 'yo-yo transitions' between youth and adulthood" (Molgat, 2007, p. 496). In the current context, this means that, in general, Canadians are staying in school longer, starting careers later, getting married and starting families later, and moving out of the family home later (Statistics Canada, n.d.-b). The contemporary transition includes frequent returns to the family home after having left it for the first time before eventually establishing a permanent residence, becoming parents before getting married, getting married while still in school, and simultaneously pursuing employment and education (Mallett et al., 2010; Molgat, 2011). This trend of delay and flexibility regarding

the achievement of previous markers of adulthood is attributed to various social and structural factors, including but not limited to, neoliberal policies, the discourse of individualism, the institutionalisation of risk, the cutting of the social safety net (Andres & Wyn, 2010; Franke, 2010), the emergence of birth control, the generalization and extension of post-secondary education (Molgat, 2007), the emergence of the knowledge economy (Goyette & Bellot, 2011), challenges to entering the job market (Molgat & Maunaye, 2003), changes in social attitudes towards dating, sexuality, and pre-marital sexual relations, and low paying and precarious youth employment (Molgat, 2007).

As a result of the increasingly complex nature of what it means to become an adult, youth are being forced “to define themselves outside the traditional social structures that attributed identity” (Molgat, 2002, p. 136). This means that, in addition to the transition to adulthood’s three traditional transition spheres, contemporary youth consider individual and psychological factors to influence their transition to adulthood (Mallett et al., 2010; Molgat, 2007). As a result, the contemporary transition to adulthood is in part an “existential maturation, based on how individuals [...] achieve a sense of personal responsibility and independence” (Molgat, 2007, p. 496). For young people, achieving adulthood means leaving the uncertainty of youth behind in favour of a newfound stability (Molgat & Maunaye, 2003). Youth is therefore the fusion of existential self-development and the achievement of certain traditional markers.

The contemporary transition to adulthood is characterized therefore by an increased emphasis on the achievement of independence and autonomy (Gaudet, 2001). Independence is associated with an individual’s financial and material ability (Franke, 2010). Autonomy “refers to

individuals' ability to choose their rules of behaviour while being responsible for their consequences" (Cicchelli & Martin, 2004; Franke, 2010, p. 9). Barker (2013, p. 765) describes autonomy as "the need for agency, self-actualization and independence." Becoming autonomous is a gradual process that unfolds throughout the transition to adulthood (Gaudet, 2007). Autonomy is not developed in isolation, it is a socialisation process, developed in relation to one's environment, and it is the process of defining one's identity (Gaudet, 2001).

In the contemporary context, autonomy has become the ultimate goal of interventions targeted at vulnerable youth, the strategy employed in interventions themselves, and the principle upon which a youth's engagement is evaluated (Moriau, 2011). This all-encompassing autonomy imperative is "intended to support youth in life project(s), that is to say his or her personal development, in short, in the management of his or her entire life" (Moriau, 2011, p. 23)³. The idea is that through the development of autonomy, youth develop their personal resources and maximize their skills and abilities so that they do not need to rely on social assistance. So doing, they become self-determining, a principle characteristic of the socially constructed status of adult (Moriau, 2011).

The increased choice that is made possible within this period of existential development exists within increased uncertainty, risk, and difficulty acquiring help from social institutions (Molgat & Maunaye, 2003). The responsibility for this stress and risk is shouldered by individuals (Molgat, 2002). This risk is institutionalised, becoming an unquestioned reality of social life and social structures, and it is expected that people will deal with the risks and uncertainties that they

³ Translated from French.

face all by themselves. Research has shown that these challenges are disproportionately faced by certain youth, further perpetuating social inequality (Molgat, 2002). For example, gender, ethnic origin, social class, geographic mobility, and level of education all serve to differentiate and divide youth in their quest for autonomy and independence during the transition to adulthood (Molgat & Maunaye, 2003). In other words, the increasingly individualized responsibility for the management of risk and uncertainty is not experienced equally across all social groups of youth. Moreover, Molgat and Maunaye (2003) note that social structures, such as the family and the job market, not only support the development of autonomy for some youth, but they can also constrain it, driving some groups of youth to the margins, to vulnerability, and even to 'failure' in their transition to adulthood. Moriau (2011) points out that the imperative of autonomy creates a paradox: youth who are forced to become autonomous the earliest, such as street involved youth, are the very youth who have the least supports in place to help them do so. These youth must do sooner and faster what more fortunate youth are not socially expected to achieve until later. The consequence is that autonomy itself undergoes a transformation; rather than being the idealized process of self-reflection and the process by which youth find their place in the world, for these youth, becoming autonomous means becoming self-sufficient, master of their own destiny, and the models of the individualised subject (Moriau, 2011).

Wyn's (2009) work on youth and (mental) health illustrates this call to independence and autonomy and is particularly relevant for the context of street involvement. Health, she argues, is situated at the intersection of discourses on risk and individualism. It has become a 'project of the self' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). This means that youth have a responsibility, a moral obligation, to insure their best possible health through their actions and choices (Wyn, 2009). The

expectation is that youth are autonomous and effective in their choices and actions, including their mental health/illness. Mental illness is constructed, in part at least, as a problem of social adaptation. In other words, people who are 'well' are those who adapt well to risk through their choices and actions. For marginal social groups, such as street involved youth, the individualisation of the 'project of the self' that is health and wellness fails to account for the social structures that not only limit well-being but in fact perpetrate violence and cause additional suffering.

Currently, considerable support is required in order to deal with the uncertainty, the risks, and the challenges of this longer and more complex period of transition (Jones, 2009; Molgat & Vultur, 2009). This need for support is generally met informally by parents or family. For example, youth return home between study sessions, between relationships, and between jobs and are often supported financially by their parents while pursuing post-secondary education. Many youth with these informal supports benefit from being able to experiment, to make mistakes, and to learn from them. However, importantly, access to parental support continues to create patterns of socio-economic inequality based on social class (Furlong, 2009; Furlong & Cartmel, 2010).

These changes to the transition to adulthood have led to the growing consensus that there is a need to "revise traditional end-of-youth markers" (Franke, 2010). This has led some researchers to offer contemporary formulations of the transition to adulthood that account for the current emphasis on autonomy, responsibility, independence, and existential maturation. These developments also serve as a response to the most popular critique of the transitions model, that it provides an overly economic explanation of young people's lives, emphasising the school to

work sphere, thereby narrowing our understanding of their transition to adulthood (Cohen & Ainley, 2000; Gunter & Watt, 2009; MacDonald et al., 2001; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Cohen and Ainley (2000) suggest that this emphasis on economism overlooks the socio-cultural construction of youth, sidesteps youths' cultural expression as a response to political and social change, and omits research themes related to youth movements and youth politics (Bynner, 2001). These sorts of critiques have led recent youth transitions research to take into account elements such as citizenship, identity, mental and physical health, leisure, and culture (Franke, 2010; Gunter & Watt, 2009; Molgat, 2007; Molgat & Taylor, 2012; Veilleux & Molgat, 2010). Bynner (2001, p. 6) argues that rather than seeing critiques of transitions research as cause to adopt new youth related research paradigms, they should serve "as a helpful corrective to what are sometimes too narrowly focused and uncoordinated youth research projects."

In two cases, researchers have proposed revised formulations of the contemporary transition to adulthood. In place of the three traditional spheres (residential, professional, relational) of the transition to adulthood conceived of by Galland (2011), Franke (2010) posits four principle trajectories in the contemporary transition to adulthood:

- 1) Family: autonomy in relation to family of origin
- 2) Education and Employment: learning and work relationships
- 3) Finances: financial responsibility
- 4) Social Participation: developing citizenships and identities

In Franke's formulation, the youth phase of the family sphere is characterized by living alone, living with peers, living with a partner, living with another parent temporarily, and

temporary autonomous residence. Furthermore, the process of separation from the family home occurs across three fields: physical, financial, and socio-psychological. In other words, a youth can be emotionally attached to the family home, while receiving the financial support necessary to live independently from their parents. Franke suggests that a number of interim stages are possible and are experimented before youth ultimately form a new family unit. In fact, Franke suggests that parenthood is the only non-reversible marker of the contemporary transition to adulthood, which is otherwise marked by yo-yo type events. In the youth phase, for Franke, education and work are shaped by a combination of full and or part time work and training. Youth is the time of moving from compulsory education to inclusion in the work force. It is during this time that young people develop their “occupational identities”, highlighting a strong connection between work and identity, as well as the acquisition of social status in addition to economic status. Franke describes youth as a time of gradual transition with regard to finances. Youth gradually move from sharing financial decisions with their parents during childhood to the full responsibility for financial decisions and activities. With regard to citizenship, the transition to adulthood is an opportunity for exploring various identities, experimenting with opportunities for social participation, and associating, even briefly, with different social groups.

Franke argues that her formulation of the contemporary transition to adulthood accounts for the fact that youth are increasingly seen as positive agents of social change. Youth are not simply acted upon by social structures; they are agents acting upon those social structures and shaping society. Franke’s formulation is also intended to provide a framework that enables policy makers and government to better deliver programming, given what Franke suggests is currently a fractured service delivery context fraught with service gaps and service duplication.

Molgat and Taylor (2012) also offer a four-prong formulation of the transition to adulthood:

1. Professional: school to work
2. Financial: material dependence on family of origin to independence
3. Relational: being responsible for self to being responsible for others
4. Identity: from ascribed identity to the construction of identities, positive self concept and competence in various life domains

Molgat and Taylor (2012) suggest that the professional sphere of the transition to adulthood is marked by four main elements: the completion of high school, the existence of a link between education and/or training and work, acquiring full time stable permanent work, and earning a living wage. Transitioning to adulthood with regard to finances includes achieving residential independence/autonomy, financial independence/autonomy, and financial literacy. In terms of relationships, the authors suggest that youth move from not being autonomous in one's family of origin in adolescence to becoming responsible for others as an adult. Responsibility for others can manifest through marriage/romantic partnerships, parenthood, and peer/social networks. The identity sphere of the contemporary transition to adulthood reflects the process of exploring the ascribed identities present during adolescence to ultimately assuming identities in various aspects of life as a result of experimentation and self-assessment, determining what identities fit and where youth feel competent.

Molgat and Taylor stress that these spheres are mutually influencing and that how they occur for each youth depends on individual contexts. Their framework is intended to help identify and describe groups of young people who experience greater difficulties than others during the

transition to adulthood and to define the factors that assist and constrain youth during this time of transition.

While Molgat and Taylor (2012) and Franke's (2010) contemporary interpretations of the transition to adulthood are not identical, they reflect a number of similar preoccupations. They both retain in some way the three traditional spheres, either as spheres or as an element of a new sphere. They also both introduce 'markers' that are less easily delineated, such as responsibility, learning, and identity, and which serve to extend research on the transition to adulthood beyond economistic boundaries. This raises questions the following questions, among others. What does it mean to be responsible for others? Who counts as an 'other' that youth become responsible for? Do autonomy and independence look the same for all youth? These questions are important theoretically, particularly when we consider that elements like responsibility, learning, and identity can be differently developed and expressed for dominant and marginal groups of youth. Additionally, the new formulations contribute a new and distinct element with their emphasis on identity-citizenship-social participation. The introduction of these elements reflects an attention within the contemporary transitions model attached to the subjective meaning assigned to youth and to the fact that society expects autonomy and independence to be achieved in the course of becoming an adult.

That the two formulations are not identical, but contain the same elements presented differently, highlights the interwoven nature of the spheres of the contemporary transition to adulthood. In this way, the new formulations are effective in presenting the spheres of the contemporary transition to adulthood as complex and overlapping. The differences between the

formulations suggests that research should remain open minded with regards to how the transition to adulthood may be differently experienced by different groups of youth in different contexts (social, cultural, political, etc.). In this sense, contemporary formulations of the transition to adulthood are coherent with life course theory's emphasis on holistic interpretation of biographies, in that they allow a greater number of aspects of a youth's transition to emerge as significant.

The contemporary transition to adulthood of Canadian youth

Citizenship in the transition to adulthood is tied to a recent shift from seeing youth as 'at-risk' to seeing them as a resource in which the state should invest (Cicchelli, 2006; Franke, 2010). In this perspective, youth are seen as agents of social change; rather than aim to solve all of youths' problems, policy aims instead to equip them with opportunities and skills to overcome challenges, to contribute to society's future, and to take on responsibility in areas such as humanitarianism, citizenship, and the environment (Franke, 2010). The citizenship sphere involves moving from what Franke terms 'passive' citizenship to 'active' citizenship, with the ultimate project of youth becoming responsible "for their contribution to social and civic life" (Franke, 2010, p. 34). This involves experimenting with different social groups and different identities. Citizenship also involves being able to exercise rights while assuming one's responsibilities and having sufficient resources to feel capable of action in the various spheres of social life (Franke, 2010). Franke also suggests that the development of citizenship and identities is tied to the bond between a youth and the institutions that organise the social life they come in contact with (e.g. school, the labour market). A lack of resources or a lack of bond with social institutions can make it difficult for youth to develop identities or explore citizenship in line with the values of dominant social institutions (Franke, 2010).

Identity and citizenship overlap in the contemporary transition to adulthood in that they are both influenced (limited or extended) by whether or not youth have at their disposal the resources (material, emotional, social, cultural) and capital (social and identity) necessary to choose their identities and to participate in society. In the contemporary context, researchers conceive of identity as a product of both ascribed identities (e.g. those acquired through family and social background) and self-achieved identities (e.g. experimentation with new experiences, new people, new ideas) (Côté, 2002; Molgat & Taylor, 2012; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). Youth as a social category is not embodied by a single age and generation specific identity (Molgat & Taylor, 2012). It is through interaction with their environments that youth construct their identities. Molgat and Taylor (2012) remark that while some youth do simply accept the identities that are prepared for them as consumers (Côté, 1997, 2002), research shows that other youth are actively engaged developing identities (Lock Kunz & Hanvey, 2000), which can be tied to language, culture, gender, geographic location, sexual orientation etc.

Recent research has shown that youth attribute a great deal of importance to their financial independence in terms of what it means to them to be an adult (Arnett, 1997, 2001, 2004; Molgat, 2007). For young people, financial independence signifies managing credit cards, paying off debt, signing leases, and eventually purchasing a home (Charbonneau & Molgat, 2003; Molgat, 2007). For youth, finances are therefore very much tied to home leaving. The percentage of young Canadians who continue to live at home longer is on the rise. Today, roughly 42% of all Canadians aged 20-29 live with their parents, which is almost double the figure in 1980 (Statistics Canada, 2012). According to the General Social Survey, approximately 28 % of women and 33 % of men aged 20 to 29 returned home at least once after their initial departure; of these youth, 80 % had

done so for financial reasons and 10 % reported that they had been ‘not ready’ to leave (B. Mitchell, 2000, 2006). The trend of staying at home longer derives from more democratic family relations and reduced generational conflict. The need to stay at home has been shown to be pushed by full time studies, unemployment, low wages, and being, or re-becoming single (Molgat, 2010). Despite longer stays in the family home, home ownership remains important to youth. According to Turcotte (2007), over 75% of 25 to 39 year olds feel that homeownership is very important to them.

While it has slowed in recent years, the rate at which youth drop out of high school⁴ continues to fall, and is currently less than 9% (Gilmore, 2010). For youth who do drop out, there are considerable concerns regarding the labour impacts on their job prospects. The average full time employed youth who has dropped out not only earns less money but during economic downturns that youth’s prospects are considerably worse than their peers who have completed high school (Gilmore, 2010; Sum, Ishwar, & McLaughlin, 2009).

Financial independence, while important to youth, can be hard to achieve. According to Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015), 13.3% of youth between 15- 24 in the general public are unemployed. For Canadian youth in general, debt load is often linked to post-secondary education. Acquiring a loan for post-secondary education is usually the first major financial obligation made by Canadian youth ((TFFL) Task Force On Financial Literacy, 2011). Financial literacy is now widely recognized as essential for young Canadians (Government of Canada, no date; Molgat & Taylor, 2012; TFFL 2011). Financial literacy is defined as the knowledge

⁴ In Canada, the drop-out rate is determined by studying youth aged 20-24. For a full explanation, see Gilmore, 2010.

(understanding of personal and broader financial matters), skills (ability to apply knowledge to everyday life), and confidence (the self-assurance to make important, responsible, and appropriate decisions) to make responsible financial decisions (TFFL n.d.).

With young people staying at home longer, earning less money, and staying in school longer, it is no surprise that they are also delaying the formation of new family units. With the emphasis on independence and autonomy as markers of adulthood, the traditional markers of marriage and parenthood may be present, but are no longer necessarily so (Molgat & Taylor, 2012). When young people do get married and become parents, it often happens later in life. During the 1960s and 1970s, the average age of first marriage for women was roughly 23 and for men roughly 25 (Milan, 2013). During the 1950s to 1970s the average age at first birth for women was approximately age 24 (Statistics Canada, n.d.-a). In 2008, on average women married for the first time at age 29.6 and men at 31 (Milan, 2013). In 2011, the average age of mothers at first birth was 28.5, the oldest age recorded to date (Statistics Canada, n.d.-a).

The contemporary transition to adulthood of street involved youth

Young people between the ages of 13 and 25 represent approximately 20% of all homeless people in Canada (Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd, & Schwan, 2016). This means that on any given night, at least 6,000 youth are homeless and over the course of the year there are 35,000 to 40,000 youth who experience homelessness (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). The situation of street involved youth "stands in stark contrast to [the] extended reliance on parents for accommodation and other support" (Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2002, p. 1) that typifies the transition to adulthood of Canadian youth in general. Research shows that street involved youth face an early

onset of adult responsibilities without having the supports (e.g. income, housing, and supportive adults) required to facilitate and to help them in their transition to adulthood (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). We will now explore the particularities of their unique transition to adulthood.

With regard to school experiences, the academic pathways of street involved youth are described as challenging and disrupted (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016; Karabanow, Carson, & Clement, 2010; Liljedahl, Rae, Aubry, & Klodawsky, 2013; O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004). The drop out rate among street involved youth is 53% (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). These low rates of school completion are in part attributed to factors such as the youths' addictions issues, mental health problems, trauma, and learning disabilities (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). For some youth, these challenges at school lead to dropping out, and consequently to leaving home and becoming street involved. For others, it is becoming street involved that leads to dropping out of school (Gaetz & Redman, 2016). Of those who have dropped out, approximately 73% indicate that they would like to return to school (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Among street involved youth, 83% report experiences of being bullied at school, making them four times more likely to experience bullying at school than Canadian youth in general (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Difficulties in school have been shown to be exacerbated by conflicts at home (Karabanow, 2004). Moreover, once in the street, difficulties already experienced at school become compounded by the challenges related to survival (Karabanow, 2004).

In terms of employment, research shows that street involved youth face challenges getting and keeping paid employment (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Karabanow, Hughes, Ticknor, Kidd, & Patterson, 2010; O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004). This difficulty is a function of social exclusion, not a

lack of interest in or motivation to work (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Not having housing makes it difficult to maintain regular work; it can be hard to establish a routine, provide an address to potential employers, and access the food, clothing, rest, and other supports needed to maintain work (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Compared to Canadian youth in general, street involved youth are less likely to have stable employment and are more likely to be involved in informal and illegal revenue generating activities (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016; Karabanow, 2004; Millar, 2009). Examples of such alternative money generating activities include 'panning', 'binning', 'under the table' work, participating in the survival sex, squeegeeing, stealing, and selling drugs (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016; Karabanow, Hughes, et al., 2010; O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004). In a 2016 pan-Canadian survey of street involved youth, 44.6% reported social assistance as their primary form of income (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Approximately 76% of street involved youth reported unemployment, and roughly 50% of street involved youth were not involved employment, education, or training (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016).

In terms of finances, research shows that approximately half of street involved youth use pay day loan companies (compared to 4% of Canadian families) and many are in debt (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Debt was most frequently owed to cell phone providers, then to family, and then to friends. Outstanding tickets, credit card debt, debt to drug dealers, and debt to landlords were also reported. Research suggest that those with the highest debt are the most likely to use pay day loan companies (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Street involved youth also report that drug use has a negative impact on their finances and on their ability to budget their money (Wilks, Hiscock, Joseph, Lemin, & Stafford, 2008).

According to Barker (2013), although street involved youth are sometimes represented as being isolated or alienated, in reality they actively seek the company of others, both as a form of support as well as something to be valued in and of itself. Barker suggests that relatedness, which he describes as “belonging, interdependence, union, dependence, closeness and communion” (Barker, 2013, p. 765), is in fact the second most prominent strategy of street involved youth, second only to autonomy. Supportive relationships, whether with a service provider, friend, or significant other, have been identified as important in the process of transitioning out of street involvement. These relationships provide street involved youth with a feeling of acceptance and support. When this relationship is with someone else who is street involved, shared experiences and knowledge can foster a relationship that is understanding and non-judgemental (Wilks et al., 2008). However, due to the unstable conditions of homelessness, the relationships of street involved youths have been found to be unreliable, volatile, and uncertain (Barker, 2013).

Barker (2013) identifies autonomy, defined as the individual project of maximizing advantages and minimizing disadvantages, as the primary strategy of street involved youth. His research suggests that autonomy is shaped by, and comes from, the instability of homelessness. Barker argues that the pursuit of autonomy, as he defines it, leads to a sense of isolation and alienation, which in turn inspires the strategy of relatedness, to counter the side effects of autonomy.

In terms of parenting, compared to Canadian youth in general, street involved youth are more likely to be pregnant and/or parenting (Millar, 2009). In one study, 13% of street involved youth were parents, only 38% of those young parents had their children living with them (Millar,

2009). In seizing children, the child welfare system has assumed parental roles typically associated with the family (Karabanow, 2004). Among street involved youth, approximately 58% report having themselves been involved with child protective services as children (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Karabanow (2004) argues that the overrepresentation of youth previously in care in the street youth population proves that the state has failed in its role as parent. Kelly and Caputo (2007) report that many street involved youth create 'street families'. These street families help youth to combat alienation and isolation as well as to meet their basic and emotional needs. The literature also shows that ties to these families can result in a stronger 'pull' to remaining in or returning to the street (Karabanow, 2004, 2008; K. Kelly & Caputo, 2007).

With regard to housing, compared to Canadian youth in general who leave home for school or work, street involved youth report conflict and difficult family situations as the primary reason for leaving home (Evenson & Barr, 2009; Gaetz, Gulliver, & Richter, 2014; Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; Janus, Archambault, Brown, & Welsh, 1995; Karabanow, 2004; Karabanow & Naylor, 2013; Mallett et al., 2010). For most street involved youth, the decision to leave home is not an impetuous one, but rather the end point of numerous previous episodes of 'running away' and continued family conflict (Mallett, Rosenthal, & Keys, 2005; Paradise & Cauce, 2002). Instability, violence, parental mental health and addictions issues, poverty, physical abuse, sexual orientation, and emotional and sexual abuse as well as not being able to get along with their parents number among the elements that contribute to their familial context of conflict (Evenson & Barr, 2009; Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016; Karabanow, 2004; Mallett et al., 2010). Unfortunately, once on the street, youth are often confronted with the same instability they faced at home. However, it is important to note that, according to these youth, the unknown dangers of

the street represent an improvement in their quality of life compared to their home life (Karabanow, 2004). Among street involved youth, 40% report leaving home before the age of 16, the age at which they typically become entitled to access homelessness related interventions and supports. These youth are more likely to experience multiple episodes of homelessness, experience bullying, have greater mental health and addictions symptoms, attempt suicide, and become chronically homeless (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016).

Karabanow (2004) reports that, on average, street involved youth change their residence as many as six times a year and that youth shelters are important in the transitions of these youth. In Ottawa, in 2015, 903 individual youth, aged 16-25, used an emergency shelter, which was slightly down from 2014, when 924 youth accessed an emergency shelter ((ATEHO) Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, 2016). Couchsurfing is one of the most common types of homelessness among youth (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016).

Barriers to housing reported by street involved youth include landlord discrimination (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009; Eberle Planning and Research, Kraus, Woodward, & Greenberg, 2007) based on age, street involvement, and previous involvement with child protective services (Millar, 2009). For youth who have previously been in care, those experiences can shape a distrust in institutional supports, including housing supports; this distrust limits their ability to feel safe when accessing housing based supports (Millar, 2009). In terms of finances, low income assistance rates, low paid employment, and low availability of affordable housing are barriers to housing (Eberle Planning and Research et al., 2007; Millar, 2009). In terms of age, lack of supports for 16-18 year olds is a barrier to housing. Research shows that those youth who do

not wish to enter care at that age, because of their increased independence, require a different service response (Millar, 2009; Novac, Serge, Eberle, & Brown, 2002). For youth previously in care, the age of majority cut off can be a barrier to housing as they are cut off from a variety of services and financial supports before they are ready to assume independent living entirely on their own (Millar, 2009). Millar reports that various barriers are further compounded for some youth because of developmental disabilities that limit their ability to sign leases, and because of substance use, mental illness, and other health challenges that “impact their ability to present as ‘mainstream’ during the application process” (Millar, 2009, p. 18). These barriers highlight overlaps between the identity and housing spheres of the transition to adulthood.

In terms of identity, street involved youth have been identified as having unique needs compared to street involved adults. They are still experiencing important physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development, and street involvement can effect this development (Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016). Having stable accommodation has been tied, not only to transitions out of homelessness, but also to identity development for street involved youth (Wilks et al., 2008). For example, stable accommodation provides a basis for emotional security and social inclusion and allows for the development of higher self esteem. It can also decrease street involved youths’ sense of being judged by the non-homeless community. Having ‘your own place’ where pets are permitted or where it’s possible to express identity through aesthetic changes also encourages street involved youth to remain in their housing (Taylor, 2011; Wilks et al., 2008). All of the above also demonstrate a link between identity and housing in the transition to adulthood of street involved youth.

Parazelli (2002) presents identity for street involved youth as a function of their street environment. He connects their identity development to their geosocial practices and pathways. Parazelli conceives of the street as an important stage in the identity development of some youth and he argues that these youth should be supported as they transition through street life. This suggestion provides an interesting and critically important alternative to perspectives that pathologize street involved youth.

Approximately 57% of street involved youth identify as male, and 36% identify as female (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Approximately 30% identify as indigenous, 28% as members of racialized communities and 10% as being born outside of Canada (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Research shows that LGBTQ2S are also over-represented among street involved youth (Abramovich, 2013; Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; Gattis, 2009). In one study, 2% identified as transgender, 2% as two-spirit, 2.5% as gender non-binary (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Studies put the percentage of street involved youth who identify as LGBTQ2S between 20 and 40% (Gaetz, Dej, Richter, & Redman, 2016; Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). Gaetz, O'Grady et al. (2016) attribute this overrepresentation to persistent homophobia and transphobia in families, schools, and communities, which they suggest make it difficult for young people to remain at home. Transgender and LGBTQ2S youth are also more likely to leave home at an earlier age (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016).

While being street involved, youth acquire a high degree of independence, autonomy, and freedom (Wilks et al., 2008). Consequently, they "often do not respond favourably to situations of authority and relationships defined by imbalances of power" (Wilks et al., 2008, p. 68). This can

create challenges for housing providers who need to balance acknowledgement of the youth's autonomy and freedom with the provision of an environment with the strict boundaries that some youth say are required in order to make them feel safe (Wilks et al., 2008).

It is important to note that when reviewing the literature on street involved youth, health and well-being emerge as a central theme. Although, in general, street involved youth are more likely to suffer ill-health (mental and physical) than Canadian youth in general, a series of specific health issues are identified in the literature. In terms of physical health, the street environment puts youth at greater risk to contract tuberculosis and asthma (Feldmann & Middleman, 2003; Hwang, 2001). Foot related medical problems are more prevalent due to the wet and cold conditions without access to the necessary boots, shoes, and clean and dry socks (Dachner & Tarasuck, 2002). Dental problems are common, and street involved youth suffer multiple dermatological problems, such as acne, lice, and scabies (Sherman, 1992). Street involved youth are also more likely than Canadian youth in general to contract HIV and sexually transmitted infections (Frankish, Hwang, & Quantz, 2005; (PHAC) Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006; Tyler, Whitbeck, Chen, & Johnson, 2007). In terms of mental health, street involved youth are two and a half to five times more likely to suffer from mental illness ((TLCYH) The Learning Community on Youth Homelessness, 2012), including anxiety, trauma and depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and concurrent disorders. Up to 50% of street involved youth suffer from addictions (Evenson & Barr, 2009). For street involved youth, suicide, overdose and unintentional injury are the leading cause of death (Roy et al., 2004). The overall consequence of these disproportionately negative health outcomes is that street involved youth are also more likely to die than youth in general. According to a Montreal-based study, street involved youth are eight to 11 times likely to die than

Canadian youth in general (Roy et al., 2004). While health and well-being are not identified in either of the contemporary formulations of the transition to adulthood, they should not be overlooked, given the importance they occupy in the lives of these youth as they transition to adulthood. Moreover, given that structural violence is seen to produce negative effects on health and well-being, even causing pre-mature death⁵, a portrait of the health, well-being, and death of street involved youth is paramount.

Operationalizing the concept of youth

While theoretical discussions allow for broad statements defining youth as ‘the time between high school and full employment’, or the time ‘between dependence and independence’, policies and programs operate on strictly delineated age ranges. There is, however, no agreed upon ‘end point’ for youth, or for the beginning of adulthood. As noted by the United Way of Calgary and Area (UWCA2010) report, the age ranges attributed to youth are numerous and vary between organisations or even within the same institution or organisation depending on the service being offered and the data being collected. For example, the United Nations defines youth as being between the ages of 15-24, whereas in Canada, the legal definition of adulthood varies provincially between 18 and 19.

Federally, the Youth in Transitions Survey, administered by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and Statistics Canada, defined youth as 15-28 years of age. However, HRSDC defines youth as 15-24 in its Youth Employment Strategy; Statistics Canada

⁵ This is discussed in the next section of the thesis.

defines youth as 15-24 in its Labour Force Survey but as 16-23 in its National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. The Service Canada Federal Public Sector Youth Internship Program defines youth as 15-30 years of age. Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada's International Experience Canada program extends the definition of youth to include the 18-35 age range (UWCA, 2010).

In the province of Ontario, Children's Aid Societies offer services to youth in care until the 16, 18 or 21, depending on the circumstances ("Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011," 2011; "Child and Family Services Act, R.S.O.," 1990; (PACY) Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, 2012). With regard to criminal justice, the Government of Ontario recognizes that "young people ages 12 to 17 have different needs from adults. Also, that they require different responses and protections because of their age" ((OMCYS) Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2010). Consequently, Ontario's youth justice system provides specific services and programs, distinct from adult services, for 12 to 17 year olds who come into conflict with the law (ONCYS, 2010).

At the municipal level in Ottawa, organisations offering services that are accessed by street involved youth also operate according to varying age criteria. For instance, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario offers service to children and youth up to 18 years of age and the Royal Ottawa Hospital has a youth specific program available to youth aged 16 to 18. Operation Come Home's drop in program is available to youth age 16-25 and their various employment and housing programs are available to youth aged 16-29. The Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa's emergency shelters offer services for 'young people' aged 12-20, their Long-Term Housing Program is

available to youth aged 16-21, their Youth Health Clinic provides services for those aged 16-24, and their Drop-In services are for youth aged 16-20 with a once a week time slot for ages 21-24. Ottawa Innercity Ministries Innercity Arts programs offer programming to youth in the 16-24 age range as well as the 23-32 age range.

The considerable variability in age range delineations for ‘youth’ speaks to its social construction but also creates considerable challenges for youth attempting to navigate various social systems and social structures and maximize their access to social supports. For the purposes of this research, *youth* was operationalized in keeping with the age-related eligibility criteria for Ottawa Innercity Ministries Passion for Youth’s Fine Arts program, which, at the time of this study, was 16-28.

Defining street involved youth⁶

When preparing this study, one of the first decisions I needed to make was how to talk about, and therefore how to represent, the youth (the co-researchers) involved. The way the co-researchers were represented needed to reflect two main factors. First, it needed to reflect the co-researchers themselves, their identities, their contexts, and what they had in common. Secondly, it needed to represent their experiences of violence within the context of homelessness in a structural lens, thus as a social problem, rather than as strictly individual in nature. Attention to both these requirements led to the decision to use the term ‘street involved youth’ in this study, rather than

⁶ The section “Defining street involved youth” draws on “Structural violence, oppression, and the place-based marginality of homelessness,” a scientific journal article that I authored in 2013. Parts of the article were modified and or reproduced for their inclusion in this section of this thesis. For the full reference, see Taylor, 2013 in the bibliography.

‘homeless youth,’ or any of the many other, and often pejorative, terms that exist to describe this social group⁷.

The first requirement was to reflect the co-researchers themselves. At the time of this study, the youth who attended OIM’s P4Y program were not all homeless in the way the term is often popularly understood. That is to say that they were not all sleeping on the street, or in shelters, etc. Their housing status was varied and fluid, with some youth staying in shelters, some in mental health hospitals, some with parents, some with romantic partners, some in their own apartments, some on the street, and some back and forth between these options. While their housing conditions at the time of the study were not identical, and neither were their housing histories, what the youth did have in common was their relationship to public spaces. They all used public spaces in marginal ways, such as sleeping, eating, drinking, selling drugs, pan handling, sitting, and working. This shared use of public space led to the shared experiences of being persecuted for their uses of public spaces. This shared relationship to the *street*, and other public spaces, rather than to *home* or *housing*, contributed to the decision to speak about *street involved* rather than *homeless* youth.

Their shared relationship to public space tied into the second requirement, that the representation of the youth in this study reflect a structural understanding of their experiences. There is no universally agreed upon definition of homelessness (Echenberg & Jensen, 2008). That being said, in 2012, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2012) established the official Canadian Definition of Homelessness, and in 2016 elaborated on that definition, creating the official Canadian Definition of Youth Homelessness, which has been adopted by over 100

⁷ E.g. squatters, curbsiders, homeless youth, runaway youth, houseless, throw-away youth, youth at risk of homelessness, youth at risk, missing children.

individuals, organisations, and researchers across Canada (The Homeless Hub, 2016). According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2016), youth homelessness is defined as:

the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence (2016, p. 1).

While a national definition of youth homelessness is important and useful, this study does not adopt this definition as its own as it does not reflect that which was common to the experiences of the co-researchers, as described above. Instead, this study defines youth homelessness, termed *street involvement*, in a structural orientation that highlights the power relations that inform representations of, and solutions to, homelessness (Amster, 2003; Baskin, 2007; Doherty et al., 2008; D. Mitchell, 1997), with specific regard to public space.

In this perspective, homelessness can be defined as place-based marginalisation (Taylor, 2013). In research, structural accounts of homelessness have shown that the process of the privatisation of public places has caused and shaped modern homelessness as well as reinforced negative representations of homelessness (Amster, 2003; Doherty et al., 2008, Mitchell, 1997). Defining homelessness as place-based marginalisation helps to make visible the invisible structural violence that is the oppressed-oppressor relationship to public space (Taylor, 2013). In this way, homelessness is defined in terms of unequal power relations in public spaces.

For the purpose of this research, the term street involved youth is defined as youth who, regardless of the specifics of where they sleep at night, use public spaces in marginal ways, and as such, constitute an oppressed social group in one of many oppressed-oppressor dynamics that

dictate what constitutes legal, ‘appropriate’ (socially sanctioned and legitimated), and marginal uses of public space. This definition is further developed in the next section of this chapter where I define and set the parameters for *youth* as understood in this study.

Violence in the lives of street involved youth: theories, definitions, and data⁸

A discussion of structural violence must begin with a definition of *social structures*. The criteria for what constitutes social structures is not universally agreed upon. Social structures have been classified as concrete and objective (real), for example, policies, institutions, regulations, laws (Lundy, 2011; Mullaly, 2010), schools, welfare offices, and public transit systems (Middleman & Wood, 1994). Social structures are also described as abstract concepts, such as race, gender, and ability (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003; Moreau & Leonard, 1989). In this perspective, Mullaly (2010) and Clement (1984) include social processes, practices, and relationships in their definitions of social structures. This ties into the idea that ideologies such as neoliberalism and capitalism are considered social structures (Lundy, 2011; Parazelli, 2008). Mullaly’s criteria also includes “boundaries, barriers, expectations, [and] regulations” (Mullaly, 2007, p. 254). For Mullaly (2010), abstract concepts only become structuring in virtue of their integration into the tangible and concrete structures. In other words, concepts do not exist outside of their social application. Through their integration into concrete structures, concepts move from the realm of ideas to the realm of the real. This reification of concepts is achieved through the everyday

⁸ The section “Violence in the lives of street involved youth” and its sub-sections draw on “Structural violence, oppression, and the place-based marginality of homelessness,” a scientific journal article that I authored in 2013. Parts of the article were modified and/or reproduced for their inclusion in these sections of this thesis. For the full reference, see Taylor, 2013 in the bibliography.

interactions between individuals as well as through the transmission and social reproduction of inequality over generations.

Accordingly, how one defines social structures has significant implications for the study of structural violence and for a structural approach to social work research. If the definition of a social structure is limited to concrete elements, such as policy, then only concrete structures can be considered harmful. By extension, objects, and not reified concepts, become the target of social transformation. If, however, we allow that abstract as well as concrete elements structure society, then not only can concepts such as gender be seen as harmful, but our interventions can target ideas, attitudes, and values as well as practical elements like gender discriminatory laws and policies. In light of these definitional implications, the definition of social structure should include both concrete and abstract elements, articulated and lived differently depending on the context. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, social structures are defined as any arrangement that organises society. How and why social structures become violent and cause harm and suffering is addressed through the concept of structural violence.

Structural violence

The premise that social structures can be harmful is not new. In 1845, Friedrich Engels introduced the term ‘social murder’ to describe the economic and social systems of capitalism that brought about starvation and death, which led to premature misery and death of the working class (Mullaly, 2010). Johan Galtung, specialist in sociology, mathematics, and peace studies, further articulated the link between social structures and human suffering and death in his seminal article, “Violence, peace, and peace research” (1969), in which he coined the term structural violence. In

order to introduce the idea that structures, and not only individuals, can be violent, Galtung (1969, p. 68) argued for a definition of violence that moves beyond the traditional idea that a person suffers violence “at the hand of an actor who intends this to be the consequence”. He defined violence as “the difference between the potential and the actual” (1969, p. 68) when that difference is avoidable. This allowed him to argue that social structures can be violent, because, like people, they can play a role in limiting an individual or a group’s potential. This definitional advance included two principal changes. Violence is inadvertent (rather than intended) and the result of actions taken by no one in particular.

In recent years, Galtung’s formulation of structural violence has been critiqued. Flynn, Damant and Bernard’s (2014) review of the literature revealed that critiques relate principally to the formulation being overly deterministic, to a lack of clarity with regards to the three forms of violence originally posited by Galtung (direct, structural, cultural) and how they intersect, and for not considering power and intentionality in his formulation of structural violence (BenSon, 2008; Farmer, 1996, 2004; James et al., 2003; Parsons, 2007; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004).

The popularization and critiques of the concept have led to new and various formulations being used to study a multifold of situations of social injustice by researchers from disciplines such as anthropology (BenSon, 2008; Farmer, 1996, 1999, 2004; Salazar, 2006; Scheper-Hughes, 2004; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004), sociology, mathematics, and peace studies (Galtung, 1969, 1971, 1990), violence (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003; James et al., 2003; Parsons, 2007), law (Ho, 2007), medicine (Castro & Farmer, 2003; Farmer, Nizeye, Stulac, & Keshavjee, 2006), nursing (Kurtz, Nyberb, Tillart, & Mills, 2008), and social work (Baskin, 2007; Flynn et al., 2014; Flynn, Damant,

Bernard, & Lessard, 2016; Lessard et al., 2015; Mullaly, 2010; Parazelli, 2008; Rojas-Viger, 2008). For the purposes of this research, Iadicola and Shupe's (2003, p. 316) definition of structural violence has been adopted. Structural violence is that "violence that occurs in the context of establishing, maintaining, extending or reducing hierarchical relations between categories⁹ of people within a society". This allows structural violence to be understood as existing in the macro-level arrangements that organise society as well as in micro-level human interactions.

A review of the research across many disciplines that use the concept of structural violence reveals three common themes (Taylor, 2013). These themes, which are hierarchies, invisibility, and context, are relevant to the current study as they will contribute to the project of understanding the effect of structural violence on the transition to adulthood of street involved youth.

Hierarchies

Structural violence is tied to the "hierarchical ordering of the world" (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003, p. 350). Hierarchical structures produce unequal distributions of power, influence, and resources (Galtung, 1969; Ho, 2007; Iadicola & Shupe, 2003). Simply put, "power inequalities are built into their structures, yielding violent results" (Ho, 2007, p. 5). Accordingly, hierarchical social structures are inherently violent; their ontology is violent. Hierarchies structure society such that some people have less, struggle, suffer, and die *so that* others can have more, prosper, flourish, and live long lives. Hierarchical social structures are not just violent in nature; they also produce real

⁹ Please note, I do not consider these categories to be immutable and unchanging. They are social constructs that are created and reproduced to perpetuate hierarchical relations that benefit certain members of society. Moreover, I take the position that an individual's identity is complex and reflects the intersection of various different social identities.

acts of violence. This violence derives from the particular ways in which a society is organized, such as according to access to food and education (Farmer, 2004) or according to class, race/ethnicity and age (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003) or according to patriarchy and the oppression of women (Flynn, 2014; Flynn et al., 2014; Flynn, Damant, & Lessard, 2015). These mechanisms of division are beneficial to some and detrimental to others, causing suffering and death. For Galtung (1969), this is necessarily a question of the monopolization of resources by one group. It is through the particular mechanisms used to structure society that the hierarchy of influence is maintained (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003). In sum, both the idea of the hierarchical social structure and the actual social structure as action and reality are violent.

For Farmer (2004), Iadicola and Shupe (2003), and Galtung (1969), the violence of hierarchical structural arrangements is best expressed in terms of its impact on life chances, which are opportunities to realize one's potential "intellectually, physically, spiritually" (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003, p. 316). The categories and lines upon which society is structured yield differences in life chances by affecting quality of life and life expectancy (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003). The concept of 'one's potential' can be criticized for being highly subjective. Galtung and Hoivik (1971) used complex mathematical formulas to operationalize the concept, demonstrating in measurable terms that, when compared to standards of life expectancy, some people (typically social groups from the lower echelons of a hierarchy) suffer more and die sooner than others. The argument is not that structural violence is the cause every time someone is not able to do something that he or she wants to do. Rather, structural violence is the cause of limitations (limitations that restrict the agency of a person or group) related to a person's place in the social order. Consequently, it follows that "the concept of structural violence is intended to inform the study of

the social machinery of oppression” (Farmer, 2004, p. 307).

Invisibility

How are these hierarchical social structures maintained? If they are so harmful, why haven't people changed them? These questions bring us to the second aspect of structural violence: it is invisible (Farmer, 1999, 2004; Farmer et al., 2006; Galtung, 1969; Ho, 2007; Iadicola & Shupe, 2003; Parazelli, 2008). Structural violence is described as invisible, static, insidious, silent, taken-for-granted, and hidden. As Ho (2007, p. 1) explains, “there is no easy pointing of fingers”, and it is this very nature that makes it so dangerous (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003). Galtung (1969) attributes its insidious quality to the lack of an acting agent. He suggests that it is taken for granted that if there is no one to blame, then there is nothing to be blamed for. The critique by Farmer et al.'s (2006) of medical intervention in situations of structural violence shows how easily this can happen. Farmer et al. (2006, p. no page) explain that in medicine there is a priority placed on biological questions and the molecular level of disease, which has led to the “increasing ‘desocialization’ of scientific inquiry: a tendency to ask only biological questions about what are in fact *biosocial* phenomena”. Medical interventions designed for patients (victims of structural violence) fail to address the root cause of the suffering - the social structure. As a result, medicine, despite its best intentions, becomes complicit in the process of hiding and consequently reproducing the mechanisms that create the violence. Medical interventions become an individual level ‘band-aid’ solution. Medical interventions treat the symptoms (the people) of structural (social) problems.

As Scheper-Hughes (2004) explains, structural violence:

refers to the invisible social machinery of inequality that reproduces social relations of exclusion and marginalisation [...] Structural violence ‘naturalizes’ poverty, sickness, hunger, and premature death, erasing their social and political origins so that they are taken for granted and no one is held accountable except the poor themselves (p. 1).

For the social structures to remain, and for existing social divisions to persist, the social structures themselves must be naturalized (Ho, 2007; Scheper-Hughes, 2004). As a result, any and all social structure related suffering is attributed to individuals and to their choices. When social problems masquerade as individual problems, their true nature is unseen. It is this invisibility that allows the social structures to continue in their mechanisms of oppression and violence. In this sense, structural violence “is permissible, even encouraged,” (Scheper-Hughes, 2004, p. 13) for without it, the hierarchical social structure, as is, cannot persist. It is through the process of making the social structure invisible that the social structure tricks the oppressed into participating in their own oppression.

This has important consequences for affecting social change. The “silent” (Galtung, 1969, p. 173) quality of structural violence gives the impression that all is well – a stable society is a good society. This means that the structural violence underpinning society is unseen and that efforts to reveal the social structures as violent are instead represented as dangerous and subversive to the social order. Its invisibility makes it hard to quantify or qualify – it is hard to see, to name, and to talk about. Its nature is to be obscure, as well as to obscure, making appear as though something other than the cause of the violence – usually its victim – is in fact the cause of its own suffering (Salazar, 2006). Structural violence is a magician of transformation, making that which is, appear otherwise.

Context

Context is required in order to accurately label violence as structural. Without context, social problems are easily expressed as individual ones (Farmer, 2004) and rendered invisible. Individuals are not divorced from their context. Their decisions are heavily influenced by context, which is 'embedded' in structural forces (Ho, 2007). Illuminating context is therefore key to exposing structural violence. I will first address the aspects of context that were identified within the literature before concluding with reflections of the role of scale of contextualisation.

Structural violence needs to be contextualized historically (in time) (Farmer, 1999, 2004; Farmer et al., 2006; Ho, 2007). Understanding and identifying structural violence involves understanding that it mutates, taking on "new forms in every era" (Farmer, 1999, p. 315). As social structures change, so too do the means and mechanisms required to maintain their ascendancy. Geography and globalisation offer important contextualisation (Farmer, 2004; Farmer et al., 2006; Ho, 2007). In contemporary society, the global context has become an increasingly significant factor (Farmer, 1996; Ho, 2007; Lundy, 2011). Because of globalisation, it has become just as important to identify and evaluate hierarchical distributions of power and resources across regions and societies as within them (Farmer, 1996; Iadicola & Shupe, 2003). The economic context is also essential. Farmer (1996) suggests that in fact poverty is the common feature of groups affected by structural violence, a condition that often intersects with other factors, such as sexual orientation, gender, and ethnicity/race. In contrast, and in critique of Farmer, feminist researchers have suggested that a gendered analysis best contextualises our understanding of structural violence and that patriarchy is in fact at the heart of structural violence. Environmental, social, and political contexts have also been identified as key to the unmasking of structural violence (Farmer, 2004; Farmer et al., 2006; Ho, 2007). With specific relevance to the study of street involved youths'

experiences of social injustice, Buccieri (2012, p. 6) notes that “context is paramount” in identifying injustice located in “the routine exclusions that have embedded themselves in (the) daily practices” that occur in public and private spaces.

The scale of contextualisation is important to consider when assessing structural violence. Macrolevel observation leads to sweeping and often deterministic understandings of social structures, power relations, social groups, and oppression whereas micro level observations reveal intricate and complex relations and interactions that shift and depend on the particular social context of the individual (Iadicola & Shupe, 2003; Mullaly, 2010). Individual suffering is embedded in large scale social structures (Farmer, 2004). To understand that suffering, a macro scale contextualisation of microlevel biographies is required. In other words, the individual-social dichotomy must be bridged. In general, without proper contextualisation, the suffering of a group or individual is attributed to individual failings (poor choices, laziness, deficiency, etc.).

Representations of the violence experienced by street involved youth¹⁰

The violence experienced by street involved youth is studied, represented, and discussed in various ways in the literature. While these various representations of street involved youths’ experiences of violence do enhance our understanding of their lives, there exists an important gap within the literature: that of structural violence (Taylor, 2016). *Structural violence* should occupy a central role in the analysis of the violence experienced by these youth. In the same way that

¹⁰ The section “Representations of the violence experienced by street involved youth” draws on “*Les jeunes de la rue et la violence structurelle*,” a book chapter that I authored in 2016 based on my doctoral research. Parts of the book chapter were translated, modified, and reproduced for their inclusion in this part of this thesis. For the full reference, see Taylor, 2016 in the bibliography.

feminists evolved understandings and definitions of violence against women and domestic violence – a definition that progressed from physical violence to include psychological, emotional, and financial violence – so too must society’s understandings of the violence experienced by street involved youth evolve. This evolution is important so that interventions can target underlying violent systems and social structures, and not focus solely on individual youth (Taylor, 2016). This thesis contributes to the advancement of our understandings of the *structural violence* that exist in the lives of street involved youth.

The various representations of violence experienced by street involved youth, as presented in the existing literature, have been grouped into four categories. First, street involved youth are reported to be victims of violence perpetrated by others. Secondly, street involved youth are described as the victims of self-inflicted violence. Thirdly, violence in the lives of street involved youth is identified as crime related. Lastly, the oppression of street involved youth is presented as contributing to their experiences of violence. This categorization highlights the knowledge gaps regarding street involved youths’ experiences of structural violence.

Research presents street involved youth as being the victims of violence perpetrated by others. It is well established that this violence, often identified as family conflict, can begin in their family of origin prior to becoming street involved (Baron, 1999; Brannigan & Caputo, 1993; Gaetz & O’Grady, 2002; Hagan & McCarthy, 1994; Karabanow, 2004, 2009; McCarthy, 1995; McCreary Centre Society, 2001; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006; Smart & Ogborne, 1994; Webber, 1991; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). According to the 2016 Canadian study ‘Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey’, 63% of street involved youth report experiencing

childhood trauma and abuse. Of those surveyed, approximately 51% reported experiencing physical abuse as a child or adolescent, 24% reported experiencing sexual abuse, and 47.5% reported experiencing other forms of violence and abuse (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). This home-based violence includes sexual, emotional and physical abuse, parental neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence. Physical violence in the home includes being punched, pushed, kicked, and slapped, being struck with a belt, threats, and assaults with a weapon (Baron, 2003; Janus et al., 1995; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Ackley, 1997a; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Yoder, Cauce, & Paradise, 2001). Research shows that having been the victim of violence within the family of origin makes street involved youth more likely to be the victims of sexual violence (Baron, 2003). Baron (2003) suggests that experiences of violence in the home are linked to future experiences of violence in the street, both as a victim and an aggressor.

Street involved youth are also described as victims of violence because of issues related to their parents' use of drugs and alcohol, criminality, mental health problems and domestic violence (Russell, 1998). Baron (2003) concludes that street involved youth come from home environments where they are surrounded by violence. Other studies show that street involved youth are the perpetrators of violence in their home environment (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Ackley, 1997b). Baron (2003) however explains such results suggesting that this violence is likely related to self-defence.

Secondly, street involved youth are described in the literature as the victims of self-inflicted violence (Ayerst, 1999; Caputo, Weiler, & Kelly, 1994). Self-harming actions includes burning, cutting and scratching oneself, banging one's head against a wall, and opening old wounds. Ayerst

(1999) attributes these numerous forms of self-harm to youth who come from home environments mired in conflict. While research on these first two representations of violence in the lives of street involved youth is significant, in general it does not lead to critical and structural reflections on experiences of violence. For example, the vocabulary of « family conflict » is stigmatising and does not reflect relevant structural factors.

Thirdly, violence in the lives of street involved youth has also been represented through the lens of criminality (Baron, 1999; CS/RESORS Consulting Ltd, 2001; Gaetz, O’Grady, & Buccieri, 2010; Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016; McCarthy & Hagan, 1992). Approximately 69% of street involved youth report being the victim of a crime, and approximately 60% report being the victim of a violent crime (Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016). Young women and transgender/gender non-binary youth report higher levels of sexual assault than other street involved youth (Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016). In this perspective, youth are represented as both victims and perpetrators of crime related violence. Both cases are generally attributable to their involvement in activities such as prostitution, theft, and the drug trade (Baron, 1999; CS/RESORS Consulting Ltd, 2001; McCarthy & Hagan, 1992). The involvement of street involved youth in these activities is largely a function of their survival strategies, as they do what is required to be housed, to be fed, and to be clothed. Representations linking street involved youth to crime feeds the discourse that street involved youth lead violent lifestyles. Studies that associate street involved youths’ experiences of violence with crime are important. However, another (structural) perspective is required. Rather than criminalising youth who do what is necessary in order to survive on the street, our analysis and research lens should lead to identifying and transforming social structures that give rise to circumstances of extreme vulnerability and precariousness.

Lastly, research establishes links between the violence experienced by street involved youth and structural forces such as patriarchy, heteronormativity, neoliberalism, colonialism, racism, classism, ageism, and ableism (Abramovich, 2008; Baskin, 2007, 2013; Buccieri, 2012; CS/RESORS Consulting Ltd, 2001; Gaetz et al., 2010; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Studies discuss how the links between oppression and vulnerability contribute to the risk of being victimized. Buccieri (2012) highlights the complexity that can surround the study of violence contextualised by social structures, noting that the privileges of patriarchy and the oppressions of being street involved collide to make young men both aggressors and victims of patriarchy related interpersonal violence. Such studies establish links between hierarchical social structures and the vulnerability, precariousness, and struggles lived by street involved youth. However, the argument that violence *comes from* hierarchical social structures does not suffice. Without negating the importance of these studies, they obscure the next step of the argument – the step where the hierarchical social structures *themselves* are identified and named as perpetrators of violence. This is essential, for if social structures are not themselves labeled as violent, they cannot be held responsible for the violence they perpetrate, directly and indirectly.

Research Question

In exploring instances of structural violence, this study contributes to filling the existing gap in knowledge about street involved youth's experience of structural violence. Specifically, this study builds on existing research (Taylor, 2016) by analysing how social structures perpetrate violence against street involved youth and by analysing the effects of this structural violence on their transition to adulthood. Consequently, the research question guiding this thesis was 'what is the role of structural violence in the transition to adulthood of street involved youth?'

The next chapter outlines the epistemological and methodological orientations that underpin the current study, and outlines their coherence with a structural orientation to social work research. The next chapter also provides a detailed description of the research process.

Chapter Two: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research process adopted for the current study. I will begin by stating my epistemological position, which will link the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the research to my methodological framework, to the research process as it unfolded and, ultimately, to the analysis. I will then describe the two principle methodologies underpinning the research, those of PAR and arts-informed research, both of which support the anti-oppressive orientation of structural social work research. This will be followed by a detailed description of the research process which spanned a total of 19 months, from June 2013 to December 2014, and which occurred in two phases.

Phase One was a participatory action arts-informed project with a group of street involved youth and ran from June 2013 until December 2013. Phase Two consisted of semi-structured interviews that I conducted with youth from Phase One of the project. Phase Two ran from January 2014 until December 2014. Following the description of the research process, I will proceed to a description of the treatment and analysis of the data. I will conclude this chapter with a thorough account of my reflexive process as a researcher engaged in PAR and I will explore the conclusions that I drew with regard to the researcher's role in creating and maintaining anti-oppressive research practices, notably by increasing researcher risk and decreasing researcher privilege.

Epistemological statement

My epistemological position sits at the intersection of critical theory (Habermas, 1971) and constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In this interpretivist perspective, our knowledge of objective reality is always subjectively mediated. Our knowledge of both the physical world (the

built and the natural environments) and the social world is socially and subjectively constructed and conditioned. This means that knowledge is subjective, constructed, and produced. In other words, I reject the possibility of mind-independent (subject-independent) knowledge. However, my constructivism is not a form of radical relativism, like that of the postmodernists. While as a constructivist I take the position that there are multiple representations of reality, and that those realities are specific and co-constructed in their specific contexts, I also hold that those representations contribute to the production of objective realities that have a real influence on people, and that knowledge, while contextually produced, should contribute to social progress, and social justice on a large scale. I take the critical theorist's point of view that the way we come to know and understand those constructed realities, and, accordingly, the way they are recreated and maintained over time, is mediated by human interests and values (Habermas, 1971; Leonardo, 2004). My belief that value-free research and knowledge does not exist reflects a critical theory epistemology (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005). Given that humans are shaped by their interests it would be irresponsible to deny those interests. Instead, we should acknowledge them, and then orient our research accordingly. Within the critical social theory framework, those interests should be self-reflexive, oriented towards emancipation, and aimed at denouncing power differentials and oppression (Habermas, 1971; Leonardo, 2004). With this orientation, researchers have a responsibility to ask certain questions: In what ways, and for what purposes (to what ends) is knowledge produced? For whom is knowledge produced? Who benefits from the knowledge produced? Who is excluded from the knowledge production process?

At the juncture of critical theory, constructivism, and PAR, the expertise of the individual can be seen as tied to his or her particular situation and his or her point of view, and individual

voices are united to understand and to act on social forces of injustice and oppression. The discussion of both chosen research approaches and specific methods serve to show how they are coherent with and support this epistemological orientation.

Participatory action research

PAR is an appropriate fit for the current project for many reasons. First, at its heart, PAR is about the right to speak (B. Hall, 1993) and the purpose of this study has been to give voice to the co-researchers, and to understand their experiences of structural violence from their point of view. Secondly, it is concerned with forms of oppression such as gender, class, and sexual orientation, all of which are relevant to street involved youth (B. Hall, 1993). Thirdly, it seeks to dismantle the distinction between the researcher and the researched (Gaventa, 1993), which is appropriate when conducting research that seeks to eliminate or at least minimize its own participation in processes of structural violence. Fourthly, it challenges dominant ideas of how knowledge is created and who it is created for, and proposes both alternative forms of knowing and alternative and new knowledge from the point of view of the oppressed.

The first known usage of the term *participatory research* came from Tanzania in the early 1970s and was popularized by social groups in dominated nations who utilised it to resist colonial and neocolonial research practises (B. Hall, 1993). The emergence of *action research* in the 1930s has been attributed to the research of social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the United Kingdom (S. Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Since then, both participatory and action based research have developed in various disciplines across the world, leading to a whole family of participatory and action based research fields (e.g. action research, participatory research, youth PAR, community

based research). PAR has been aligned with social and revolutionary movements around the world (B. Hall, 1993; Swantz, 2008) and has its roots in the liberationist perspective, liberal humanism, critical theory, pragmatism, and social constructivism (Gergen & Gergen, 2008; S. Kemmis, 2008; Park, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). While PAR emerged in different areas of the world based on different needs, and therefore developed as a research approach in different ways, what participatory action researchers agree upon is the break from the false objectivism of positivist approaches in the social sciences (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Swantz, 2008).

In PAR, knowledge is that which is seen as constructed by those involved in the research project. In other words, knowledge is subjective. In PAR, the generated knowledge reflects the experiences, voices, and points of view of dominated and oppressed groups. This means that often knowledge generated in PAR runs counter to and challenges both dominant attitudes about and understandings of a given problem. Knowledge created through PAR serves to reframe and redefine social problems. Rather than deriving from or contributing to large scale generalizable theories, knowledge is tied to the experiences of particular people in a particular place. PAR seeks specifically to create new forms of knowledge that are emancipatory, democratic, just, practical, critical, creative, liberating, and value-driven. Knowledge is important not so that we will know more about society in general, but specifically so that we can improve the lives of those involved in the research and perhaps others; knowledge is a tool for social transformation.

While the aim of PAR, which is “to bring about a more just society in which no groups or classes of people suffer from the deprivation of life’s essentials... and in which all enjoy basic human freedoms and dignity,”(Park, 1993, p. 2) is clear, it is less clear how to bring about such a

society. For this reason, PAR has been described as an *orientation to inquiry* rather than as a methodology (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). In other words, there is no “how to” guide for conducting PAR. In fact, a guidebook or sequence of steps of ideal methods would be inappropriate, as a PAR project’s methods are supposed to be discussed and determined by those involved in the project as the project evolves. Kemmis and Taggart (2005, p. 563) explain that, in place of specific methodological steps, PAR is guided by a “spiral of self-reflective cycles” composed of the following: planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, planning again, and acting and observing again and so on. While this is the ideal, Kemmis and Taggart point out that in practice this cyclical spiral is never perfectly reproduced: phases overlap, and as learning and reflection occur, initial plans change and are replaced with new plans and goals. Accordingly, the success of a PAR project is not dependent on a research group’s fidelity to the ideal process but “whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their *practices*, their *understandings* of their practices, and the *situations* in which they practice” (S. Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 563).

Kemmis and Taggart (2005) have identified seven key features which delineate the elements that guide the PAR process. First, PAR is a social process which means that it examines the relationship between individual and social domains, and that it considers these domains to be mutually influencing. Secondly, PAR is participatory. Participation means that researchers work *with*, rather than *for* or *on*, the research participants; the participants are collaborators and therefore they are not seen as research subjects but rather as co-researchers. In fact, Park (1993, p. 3) suggests that the “real” researchers are the ordinary people who are looking to solve a problem,

and that they form a partnership with a researcher as a means of learning about and transforming the problem. Thirdly, PAR is both collaborative and practical. This involves the study of, and the attempt to improve, the social practices that link people through social interaction. The fourth key feature of PAR is that it is emancipatory. The aim is for people to release themselves from unjust social structures through the research process. This involves studying how individuals and groups are defined and bounded by wider social structures. PAR is also critical, in that it strives to contest and reconstitute ways of interpreting and describing the world (language), ways of relating to others (power) and ways of working that are unjust (work). PAR is also reflexive. This necessitates the recursive and dialectical processes described in the spiral of self-reflective cycles. Lastly, PAR aims to transform both theory and practice. This transformation is tied to seeing theory and practice as mutually influencing, with neither having greater importance than the other. In this regard, PAR does not strive to develop new theory that exists beyond the scope of practice. However, neither does it allow for practice to exist as self-justifying. Theories are used to facilitate the critical exploration and transformation of the particular problem at hand. The interplay between theory and practice is what allows PAR to connect the micro and macro spheres: the individual and the social, the local and the global, the personal and the political.

Reason and Bradbury suggest that PAR can be described quite simply as what transpires when “people try to work together to address key problems in their communities or organizations” (2008, p.1). To this I would add Kemmis and Taggart’s assertion that PAR is a “social process of collaborative learning” (2005, p. 563). The following methodology sections of this thesis are based on this understanding and offer an account of how we, a group of street involved youth and myself, worked together to learn about and to address the specific problems of the structural violence they

have experienced, learning from each other through discussions and through art, working towards a particular concrete action (the art show) that was intended to affect change in their geographic and social communities by creating awareness of the violence they suffer as well as changing the often stereotypical ways that people see street involved youth (e.g. delinquents, dangerous, powerless victims).

Arts-informed inquiry

Arts-informed (or arts-based) inquiry was a good fit for this study epistemologically, theoretically, and methodologically because of the relationships between art and knowledge construction, art and activism and social justice, and art and research with vulnerable populations. In arts-informed research, art, like research, advances dialogue, proposes new ideas, and is driven by curiosity for the production of new knowledge. Art is considered to produce knowledge, and, as such, to constitute research (Borgdorff, 2007; Leavy, 2009; Nowotny, 2011). It is also ideal for non-traditional knowledge building, as it allows multiple viewpoints to emerge (ibid). In these ways, arts-informed inquiry challenges logical positivism and technical rationality (Cole & Knowles, 2008). This implies that in arts-informed methods the artist is inherently a researcher, in virtue of his or her art. The idea of art as research often prompts the question ‘but is this research?’ to which the answer is that art is research in an unconventional format. Art expands conventional notions of knowledge and knowing, and favours the creation of multiple representations and understandings of a given phenomenon. In this way, arts-informed methodology is actively engaged in the critical and transformative (critical theory) production (constructivism) of knowledge. Arts-informed methods are particularly good at capturing process (Leavy, 2009), which is important to help us to understand the invisible processes of structural violence.

Arts-informed research is “a process that uses the expressive qualities of form to convey meaning” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. xii). In this sense, arts-informed research is interested in the meaning people attribute to their experiences rather than the pursuit of absolute truth (Eisner, 1981). This methodological approach is relevant for research with vulnerable and oppressed populations such as street involved youth, who have perhaps not had the privilege of sufficient education to express themselves in ways that are favourable to traditional data collection techniques, as it leads people to rethink important social issues *by going beyond the constraints of discourse* (Barone & Eisner, 2012). In this way, it can be an equalizer when working with people who don’t necessarily have the same language skills that other people have (Eisner, 1981). Moreover, arts-informed research is good for communicating the emotional elements of social life, for creating empathy and understanding, for prompting critical awareness and consciousness raising, for giving a voice to subjugated peoples, and for promoting dialogue (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2009).

Art can be action and it can be political (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; S. Finley, 2008). Accordingly, art can be activism (Susan Finley, 2008). In critical participatory research, the emphasis, as we have seen, is on social change, and this involves being political, taking a stance, fighting injustice, all of which is done through action. In the case of this current study, that art-action was an art exhibit open to the public on the campus of the University of Ottawa (Appendix G).

Art informs research in a variety of ways (Bergum & Godkin, 2008). Art can serve as *inspiration* for a research project, serving as the jumping off point for the developing of a research

into a particular concept or social problem. Art can also be a *method*, in that existing art (e.g. paintings, documentaries, narratives) is used as a tool to provoke discussion and elicit data amongst research participants much in the same way that a question stimulates the discussion in a focus group. Art can be, in and of itself, *data*. This is the case when research participants are asked, for example, to produce drawings or photographs that are related to their experience. These participant-created art pieces are then used to elicit group discussion, as is often the case with photo-voice research projects, or as the basis for individual follow-up interviews (Locsin, Barnard, Matua, & Bongomin, 2003). In research, art can also serve as a form of *intervention*. In this orientation, in addition to the value the art and artist process have as research data, the artistic process that occurs in the research is seen as being beneficial, transformative, nourishing, and therapeutic to the research participants. Art as a *dissemination tool* is tied to the idea that academic texts are not the only appropriate way to convey research results. In the case of the current study, art served the purpose of data, intervention, and dissemination tool.

Research design of the current study

Phase One

Phase One of the current study used participatory action and arts-informed methodologies, and was affiliated with “Voices Against Violence: Youth Stories Create Change,¹¹” a national study funded by the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR). The purpose of the national study was to work with vulnerable youth populations to explore “issues of inequality, exclusion and belonging, identity, health and wellbeing as they affect youth in Canada” and to “generate

¹¹ <http://www.voicesagainstvviolence.ca/>

knowledge to inform the development of programs and policies based on an understanding” of the needs and realities of those youth. Researchers engaged in participatory and arts-informed research groups in various cities across the country, working with various youth populations (e.g. newcomers to Canada; LGBTQ youth) and, in each case, using techniques and addressing topics that were appropriate to and chosen by the youth with whom the research was co-produced. For this study, I partnered with the *Ottawa Innercity Ministries* (OIM) and co-produced research with the members of OIM’s *Passion for Youth Fine Arts Program* (P4Y), a weekly art group run for street involved youth. The average attendance at the Phase One weekly meetings was 19 out of 21.¹² By the end of Phase One, one co-researcher had ceased participating in the study.

Phase One began in April 2013, at which time I approached OIM to explore the possibility of either recruiting the youth from their P4Y program for this research project or for the possibility of joining this project with their regular P4Y programming. OIM and its P4Y program were an ideal partner because they worked with street involved youth who attended a weekly program, thus assuring a high level of consistent attendance for the research project from week to week. As well, the weekly program was an art group and so the interest for and ability to engage with arts-informed methods was already established. After collaborating with the P4Y program facilitator to negotiate the logistics and the general structure of the research project I received the organisation’s consent on June 19th. It was agreed, between myself, the director of OIM and the P4Y program facilitator, that, in addition to (and prior to) obtaining individual consent from each co-researcher, I would obtain the assent of the group as a whole. This decision to collaborate with

¹² The breakdown is as follows: of nine paid weeks, there were 18 co-researchers x 3 weeks; 19 co-researchers x 1 week; 20 co-researchers x 4 weeks; 15 co-researchers x 1 week. While this was not tested, my hypothesis is that the reason for the drop to 15 co-researchers on one week was because this was also Halloween and so the co-researchers were perhaps otherwise engaged.

the youth by getting their collective assent is in keeping with the values of PAR. Thus began the second stage of the partnership: partnership with the youth, henceforth referred to as co-researchers. On the 30th of June 2013, I attended an art group session, explaining the research project to the co-researchers and answering their questions. I left immediately following my presentation. Staying would have compromised ethical processes as the co-researchers might have felt pressured or coerced into participating or they might not have felt free to have a full and honest discussion as a group prior to their decision. The co-researchers decided unanimously to participate.

The participation criterion for Phase One of the research project was that the co-researchers be members of OIM's P4Y art group. Additionally, the co-researchers needed to agree to the audio recording of the discussions that took place during the research project. The P4Y program had its own pre-existing participation criteria which the research project adopted. These criteria were considered desirable as they were nearly identical to the criteria originally imagined at the project proposal stage:

- be, or have been, street involved;
- be 16 to 30 years of age.

In PAR, ideally the co-researchers contribute to the development of the research project format and timeline. Given funding limitations, the restrictions of my thesis (e.g. time frames, academic expectations) as well as the large size of the group of co-researchers (on average 18 per week), decisions regarding the overarching structure of the project were made by myself and the P4Y program facilitator. We met frequently throughout July and August to develop the general

structure of the project. Once the project began, we met weekly to discuss the previous week, and to prepare for the next week. That being said, whenever possible, decisions were left to the co-researchers. Additionally, they were encouraged to voice their opinions regarding how the research process was unfolding and when they did so, their suggestions were immediately discussed by the whole group and integrated. The next section of this chapter provides a thorough account of the participatory components of this project.¹³

Phase One ran weekly on Thursday nights from 6-9pm from September to November 2013. During this time, the co-researchers put their own regular art projects on hold to dedicate their P4Y program time to the research project. Phase One culminated in the art-exhibit, *Critical Impressions: A Question of Unequal Power and Opportunity?* at the University of Ottawa in November 2013 (Appendix G). I returned to the group on two Thursdays in December 2013 to conduct Focus Groups with the co-researchers to collect their feedback regarding the research project and the art exhibit.

For the first two weeks of Phase One, the P4Y program facilitator, the co-researchers, and I worked together, participating in a Large Group Brainstorming Discussion (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Since the project was initially explained to the youth in June but did not begin until September, during the first two weeks, I re-introduced the research project and the principle concepts and elements: social structures, structural violence, and PAR. For the most part, the co-researchers readily grasped what could be seen as very abstract concepts. For example, I defined

¹³ Specific examples have been saved for the next chapter so that rather than simply enumerating them as a form of evidence of participation they will be used to advance an argument regarding the importance of addressing researcher privilege.

social structures as the arrangements that organise society and that organize their lives. I explained that:

Susannah: *There are abstract social structures and concrete ones. The abstract ones are kind of harder to identify. You can't look outside and see them as clearly as a building or see a rule written on piece of paper. They are values, ideas, and processes. Ideas we have about society.*

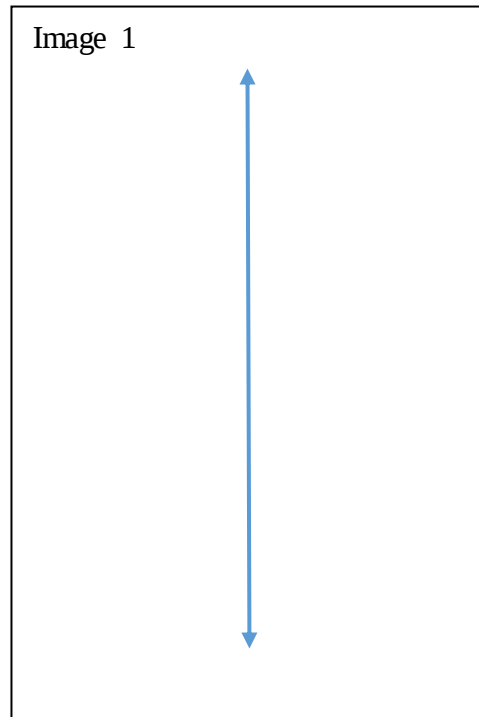
Jane: *Like morals and crap like that. Like the idea that people shouldn't be using drugs on the street because people are going to look and be "ew."*

Susannah: *Yeah. Absolutely. That's a social value, but it's harder to grasp in some ways, compared to a concrete structure like a law that says: "No drugs in public." (Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)*

On the first night of Phase One, I offered the official research definition of structural violence, explaining that structural violence has to do with the fact that "society is organised, in such a way, that there are groups of people up here, and there are groups of people down here" (Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion).

As I explained this I drew a vertical arrow on a chalk board (Image 1), and explained that:

structural violence is the violence that happens when society first creates those two places where we put people, it's the things we do keep people in those places, it's the violence that happens when we push those extremes even farther, and then sometimes it's even the violence that happens when people try and bring a balance to them. (Susannah, Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion).



Again, this concept was readily understood by the co-researchers. Kyle spoke up, suggesting that money and greed were a root cause of structural violence. He argued that parts of the economy, such as the job market, minimum wage, and the cost of living greatly affect social standing. Jane suggested that mandatory minimums were an example of how structural violence was used to keep people down. She argued that they were used to incarcerate people with addictions, and that those periods of incarceration left individuals worse off than before, getting beaten up in jail or developing issues related to stress.

In the months following the initial explanation and discussion of the concept, quite naturally, the formal term *structural violence* was mostly dropped from my increasingly familiar and informal conversations with the co-researchers. This meant that while structural violence was

always the topic of discussion, it was not always labelled explicitly. From time to time a co-researcher did specifically use the words structural violence. For example:

Your boss or manager lays you off or fires you because of piercings or something like that. That's like structural violence. But, he didn't hit, like physically, but you lose your job, you can't pay your bills. (John, age 26, Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)

It is important to note, and to address, the fact that while the co-researchers did sometimes use the term *structural violence*, it was rarely named explicitly. The very nature of structural violence is to disappear, to hide, and to fade into the background. It was therefore imperative to review the transcriptions and provide evidence of the ways that structural violence is discussed and named, even when it is not formally labelled. For, if an analysis limits itself to those situations explicitly identified and labeled as structural violence, the analysis will itself become a form of structural violence, having ignored the co-researchers' ways of talking that did not always or perfectly reflect academic research vocabulary, thereby obscuring experiences of structural violence and leaving them to be understood as individual problems requiring individual solutions.

Specifically, this analysis looked for the words, expressions, and turns of phrase used by the co-researchers when they were describing situations that were harmful and limiting in terms of their ability to meet their basic needs and/or to flourish, situations where they felt there was an imbalance of power, and situations where no matter what they did they could not seem to better their circumstances, where it seemed that society was organized to maintain their marginality.

The co-researchers' ways of speaking about structural violence were grouped into two categories. The first includes those that were easier to identify as they were terms recognized in

academic literature that addresses structural violence, social injustice, and oppression. These terms included stereotyping, harassment, discrimination, racism, judgement, and prejudice. For example:

*I've been **harassed** by police... (Avery, age 22, Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)*

*It's **discrimination**. No, it's **not legal**. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

*There's **prejudice** against our age to you know. I'm young, I get **judged** for being young and they assume the worst you know. (Emily, age 24, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)*

*Even store owners can be **stereotypical** with you because you know, you stop, you sit on the curb near the store to have a smoke or something, and they're like "get out of here. (John, age 26, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #1)*

The second category includes ways of describing structural violence that are less succinct, less research friendly, in short, less obvious. They come from common language and every day speech but are as important as the professional words that lend to academic analysis. These examples pertain to both institutional rules and regulations as well as individual people's attitudes and behaviours. These expressions all reflect a general frustration with circumstances that are unfair and unjust. One popular way of describing their experiences of social injustice was in terms of being *screwed over* or *getting fucked over*:

*You get a bit of training and then **they fuck you off** and you're on your own again (about getting employment assistance from Ontario Works). (Stan, age 24, Phase Two Interview)*

*And they sit you down and say, "OK – just wait!" And then once you're in the room, **you're screwed**, you can't go out again. (About hospital regulations that prohibit going outside for a smoke while you are having a mental health crisis.) (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

The exchange between three co-researchers in a Phase One focus group on policy regarding the mechanisms of the criminal justice system also shows the use of this type of vocabulary, as well as a few other useful descriptors:

John: *Honestly, I didn't stop getting charged until like two years ago. But then I got clean, got my life together from my YO days, but they brought everything up against me and used it against me, and then...*

Emily: *It completely fucks you over!*

John: *Yeah, it does. It can screw you right over.*

Blake: *It makes it worse.*

John: *Cause they say it goes away, and so I was under the impression that it goes away.*

Blake: *That's a misconception. Its total bullshit. (Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)*

Other descriptions of structural violence were not always as succinct as 'I'm fucked'. Often entire phrases were used to describe experiences of structural violence:

I feel like a circus animal that has to jump through all these hoops, just to have, just to like exist in the city sometimes. You know? It sucks. (Blake, age 26, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)

... and you're always being pushed down and it's hard to like climb up to do something. (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

Sponsored day cares usually end up looking down on you... (Jane, age 25, Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)

I've found that there were less people willing to help because I was an immigrant (About seeking mental health services.) (Julianna, age 22, Phase One, One-on-One Discussions)

As we have seen, some of the ways the co-researchers talked about structural violence aligned with an academic vocabulary (ie: discrimination) and accordingly lent more readily to analysis. Others ways of describing structural violence were longer, wordier, required an attentive

reading of the transcripts and were harder to succinctly report or represent. However, it is of particular importance to analyse and report on the latter category, as to even inadvertently ignore them would be to reproduce oppressive power structures tied to privileges associated with education, language, and research.

On the first night of Phase One, I explained that participatory research meant that I was not there to study them, but to study *with them* about a topic that affected them. I explained that *participatory and action* meant that:

this research takes the point of view that there are things in the world that aren't the best for everyone. That in your community, in your environment, there are things that are unjust and this method is intended to help groups say "what is not working for us?" The premise is there's something that's not working. Let's identify it and let's work on changing it together. (Susannah, Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)

Having reviewed the key concepts and elements of the project, the co-researchers brainstormed the following list of social structures that affected their lives:

1. Aboriginal
2. Addictions
3. Children's Aid Society
4. Churches (Clothing and Item donation services)
5. Commercial
6. Counter culture
7. Dental
8. Drug Culture (Social, parties, retail, black market, music, art, harm reduction)
9. Education system (public, secondary, continued, college, university)
10. Financial Institutions
11. Food
12. Food Banks/Drop-Ins
13. Government Policies

14. Housing (assistance, registry, landlord tenancy board)
15. Immigration
16. Institute of Health
17. Jail culture (“hardened”, “sneaky”)
18. Legal Aid
19. Liquor Control (Stores, Bars, etc)
20. Media, Entertainment, Social Media
21. Mental Health Services (Doctor’s, medications, diagnosis)
22. Ontario Health Insurance Program
23. PayDay Loans
24. Pharmacies
25. Police/Correctional/Discipline/Government (Recognisance, bail, parole, probation, John Howard)
26. Politics
27. Protesting
28. Recreation (Gyms, Programs)
29. Shelters
30. Shopping Malls
31. Social assistance, social Services/Ontario Disability Services Program/Employment Services
32. War culture
33. Welfare and Social Assistance (“jump through hoops”, limited income, limited benefits (dental))

Given the length of the list, it was necessary to transform it into working categories that would be easier to address in group discussions. The process of condensing the list was done by myself in collaboration with the P4Y program facilitator in our weekly discussion between Weeks One and Two. We grouped things that seemed to go together. On Week Two we proposed the following list to the co-researchers:

1. Money Structures

- Shopping Malls
- Financial Institutions
- PayDay Loans
- Welfare and Social Assistance (“jump through hoops”, limited income, limited benefits (dental))
- Commercial

2. Educational Structures

- Elementary and secondary schools
- Continuing education
- Alternative school systems
- College and university

3. Housing Structures

- Housing (assistance, registry, LTB)
- Shelters

4. Health Structures

- Institute of Health, Dental
- Mental Health Services (Doctor's, medications, diagnosis)
- OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan)

5. Corrections and Order Structures

- Jail culture ("hardened", "sneaky")
- Police/Correctional/Discipline/Government (recognisance, bail, parole, probation, John Howard)
- Legal Aid

6. Substance Use Related Structures

- Liquor Control (Stores, Bars, etc)
- Drug Culture (Social, parties, retail, black market, music, art, harm reduction)
- Addictions

After presenting these categories to the co-researchers, we consulted them about whether or not they agreed with these initial groupings as well as with regard to the remaining social structures from the initial list that had not made our categories. The discussion resulted in the following final list of eleven social structure groupings:

1. Money Structures
2. Educational Structures
3. Housing Structures
4. Health Structures
5. Corrections and Order Structures
6. Substance Use Related Structures
7. Immigration

8. Counter Culture
9. Media
10. Religion
11. Children's Aid Society

From this final list, the co-researchers decided which social structure or combination of social structures they wanted to address with their art. Thus concluded the first two weeks.

From Week Three to Week Twelve the co-researchers worked individually or in small groups, as they preferred, on their social structure related art. The co-researchers chose the artistic method that they wanted to use to represent and reflect on the social structure that they had chosen. The arts-informed methods used included poetry, mixed media, paint, and photography. Using a creative medium for self-expression allowed the co-researchers to tell their stories and share their experiences of violence in ways that were sensitive, empowering, meaningful, engaging, and that yielded critical reflection. For this study, the creative mediums were used to generate discussion regarding the issues and experiences of structural violence that the co-researchers identified as being relevant to their daily lives.

Between Week Three and Week Twelve, I also conducted three Focus Groups composed of three to five co-researchers in which we discussed specific examples of structural violence. Examples of how I opened the discussions include:

What are the rules, the policies, or the situations from everyday life you've been in where something has been very limiting for you? (Susannah, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #1)

What experiences do you have, or what rules do you encounter, that you find to be unfair or that limit your ability to do what you need to get done? (Susannah, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #2)

*The question is: what are the rules, guidelines, laws, policies that affect your lives?
(Susannah, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)*

Over the course of Week Three through Week Twelve, I also had the opportunity to speak informally with co-researchers one-on-one or in small groups about their experiences of structural violence. Sometimes I initiated these conversations and other times the co-researchers approached me, asking to talk, wanting to share an experience that they felt was relevant to the research. Between Week Three and Week Twelve the group chose a title for the art exhibit and established the list of community members who were to receive personal invitations. I also conducted a Focus Group regarding the sociodemographic questionnaire. When the sociodemographic questionnaire was filled out by each of the co-researchers in Phase One, I observed that it did not seem to be meeting everyone's needs. Examples justifying this observation include some of the co-researchers asking questions about the questionnaire, modifying the questions slightly, writing notes in the margin, or making suggestions about how to change it. Given the participatory and action elements of this research study I created the opportunity, for those who were interested, to give feedback on the questionnaire. My suggestion was that a new and improved version would serve as the sociodemographic questionnaire for Phase Two. Seven co-researchers elected to participate in this group discussion. More is said about their feedback later in the chapter.

On Week Thirteen the arts-informed portion of the PAR project culminated in the art exhibit entitled "Critical Impressions: A Question of Unequal Power and Opportunity?" It took place at the University of Ottawa. Approximately 200 people attended, including university students, professors, service providers, friends, family and members of the general public.

For the last two weeks of Phase One (December 2013) I returned to the art group and conducted the three Focus Groups on Research Study Feedback, each composed of three to five co-researchers, to gather feedback on the research project and the art show from their point of view. In total, 10 of the co-researchers chose to participate in a feedback Focus Group. The option of providing feedback on paper was also made available, and 10 co-researchers elected to do this, leading to an overlap of both methods of participation by some, but not by all. Feedback was not collected to perform an official evaluation of the PAR process in terms of attainment of outcomes. Rather, it was collected to help me reflect upon the extent to which the project was actually participatory and to what end the process itself was beneficial to the co-researchers (both of which are principles of PAR).

Phase Two

Phase Two of my research consisted of semi-structured interviews and was entirely independent of the national CIHR study “Voices against Violence: Youth Voices Create Change”. However, the interviews were shaped in such a way that they complemented and served as a continuation of the data collected in Phase One.

Of the 21 co-researchers who participated in Phase One, 16 decided to participate in Phase Two. During Phase One, I informed the co-researchers that there would be the possibility to participate in Phase Two. On the last night of Phase One a sign-up sheet was circulated for those interested in doing a semi-structured interview. Using a sign-up sheet as a recruitment strategy was the co-researchers’ idea, and they created it and circulated it themselves to avoid any potential pressures from the P4Y program staff and volunteers or myself. I then followed up with the

interested co-researchers either by email, text, or by phone. Connecting with some of the co-researchers proved difficult. I noted several reasons for this: their phones were cancelled, substance use and mental illness limited their ability to participate, or they moved away or left the art group. Additionally, I decided to not attend art group during Phase Two of the project in order to avoid the possibility that any of the co-researchers might interpret my presence as pressure to do a semi-structured interview. However, this endeavour to be ethical presented a drawback: it was harder to connect with the co-researchers who expressed interest when I no longer had in person contact with them on a weekly basis. While in research it is often preferable to recruit participants and conduct interviews until saturation has been achieved, in the case of this project it was more important to include everyone who was interested, which meant that even if saturation was achieved I would continue to do up to 21 interviews, and that a continuity be maintained within the overall project, which meant not introducing new co-researchers to the study simply to have a particular number of interviews.

Consent

Getting informed consent was a four-stage process. First, in Phase One, I got the consent of OIM. Second, as described above, I obtained the assent of the group as a whole. Third, I attended the P4Y program throughout the summer, taking the time to get to know the co-researchers and review with each one in greater detail the project and get their individual consent (Appendix A). As Park (1993) explains, this time spent hanging-out and getting to know the co-researchers was necessary in order to be accepted by the group as a participatory researcher. This was done for several reasons. It meant that the ‘boring’ paper work was completed in advance so that we could begin Week One of the PAR project in a more engaging way. Reviewing the consent forms

individually or in small groups (one to three co-researchers) provided me with a greater certainty that the consent and ethics information had been successfully conveyed. The individualised format allowed me to connect with the co-researchers in a more intimate way, meaning that I was not a complete stranger when the research officially started. Fourth, towards the end of the project I obtained consent from each co-researcher to use of a reproduction of their art in the dissemination of the research results (Appendix D). In Phase Two, I reviewed a consent form (specific to Phase Two of the project) with each co-researcher, individually, prior to their semi-structured interview (Appendix E).

Anonymity and Confidentiality

At the outset of Phase One, and at the start of every week during Phase One, I addressed anonymity and confidentiality with the co-researchers. I explained that within the context of the research project (group based discussions), anonymity amongst group members was not possible as each co-researcher would see who said what. I explained that it was important to not repeat outside of the group what other co-researchers said inside the group, in order to maintain confidentiality. I informed the co-researchers that their anonymity would be insured through the use of pseudonyms in any and all reporting of data. Because of the visibility inherent to the *action* and *art* elements of Phase One of the research project, particular attention was paid to issues surrounding anonymity and confidentiality. In all instances the co-researchers were given the choice of maintaining or waiving their anonymity. For example, at the art exhibit some of the co-researchers chose to keep a distance from their pieces while others preferred to stand next to their art and explain it to people. The co-researchers who consented to my use of a reproduction of their art in the dissemination of the results, chose how to be recognized (Appendix D), some choosing

to sign their art work with their real name, others choosing to use their artist name (a professional pseudonym), and some preferred ‘anonymous.’

An additional consideration related to anonymity and confidentiality had to do with the fact that the OIM volunteers, who were a consistent part of regular P4Y programming, were present throughout the research project. These volunteers are integral to the success of the weekly program, providing both supervisory support and artistic expertise, and building strong relationships of trust with the co-researchers. However, the concern was that if the co-researchers disclosed something in the research that they would not normally discuss in the weekly group, or if they were to say something negative regarding OIM within the scope of the research project, then those comments might affect how they were treated by the program volunteers. To address this concern, a confidentiality form was drafted, that the volunteers signed, stating that the services they provided the co-researchers would in no way be affected by anything said by the co-researchers (Appendix B). The co-researchers were then informed that the volunteers had all agreed to these conditions.

Compensation

As regular P4Y program members, the co-researchers received a weekly honorarium of \$20 for their attendance and participation from OIM. During the course of Phase One, instead of the \$20 honorarium from OIM, the co-researchers were paid \$30 for their participation through funding from the national CIHR study. This allowed OIM to save the money they would otherwise have put towards the weekly honorariums, which I was told they appreciated given a tight operating budget. Using research funds to pay the co-researchers for their time allowed me to

demonstrate to the co-researchers that their sharing of their experiences was valued from a research standpoint. It helped to affirm their experiences and knowledge as a valid and valuable form of expertise. In Phase Two, the co-researchers were compensated \$30 for their participation in the semi-structured interview. It was explained to them that they were free to leave at any point and they would still be paid. None of the co-researchers left before completing a full interview.

Data Collection

In Phase One, data was collected through various methods. The Large Group Brainstorming Discussions from Week One and Week Two, the formal small focus group discussions from Week Three through Week Fifteen as well as many informal discussions with the co-researchers were all audio recorded. Focus groups allowed the co-researchers to come together to address issues affecting more than just themselves, and to learn about and research those issues in a group (Carey & Asbury, 2012; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Krueger, 1994; Stewart et al., 2007). In this sense, they encouraged collaborative and critical meaning making, which aligns with the epistemological orientation of my methodologies. Focus group discussion offered the possibility of critical inquiry that engages in real-world problems related to issues of the distribution of resources, both economic and social. A sociodemographic questionnaire was answered by each co-researcher when they signed the consent forms (Appendix C). In addition to the data gathered through their discussions, I received permission to collect reproductions, in the form of photographs, of their art. (Appendix D).

I also used field notes and analytic memos (Tedlock, 2005). My field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) documented my co-researcher observations as well as my reflections

throughout the research process. However, the purpose of the observations was not in the ethnographic sense of observing a community but rather as a tool for the ethical observation of myself as researcher. I wanted to foster a reflexive process in order to minimize power imbalances that are inherent to the research process as well as, in an ongoing way, to critically evaluate the research as it was unfolding. I will say more about this in the last section of this chapter where I develop the concept of researcher privilege and researcher risk.

In Phase Two, semi-structured interviews were the primary form of data. Field notes were also taken following each interview, and analytic memos were made during transcription. The sociodemographic questionnaire improved by the co-researchers in Phase One was administered in its new form at the time of the semi-structured interview (Appendix F). While the current study has two sets of sociodemographic data, *no new co-researchers were introduced into the study* between the two phases, thereby ensuring a coherence and consistency within the study. Additionally, the Phase One sociodemographic questionnaire was modified during Phase One, in collaboration with the co-researchers meaning that the data gathered differed slightly between the two research phases. Thirdly, the number of answers is at times greater than the number of co-researchers. This is because some selected more than one answer for a given question, and this was encouraged if they felt so inclined. They also added their own categories to answers if they felt that their ideas would enrich the results.

The interview is not an unchanging research tool (Fontana & Frey, 2008). Interviews are an active process of a contextualised and co-constructed story. In this perspective, the interview is not intended for neutral data collection. Instead, it is invested with purpose, namely social

amelioration, social change, and social justice. In this way, the semi-structured interviews contribute to the overarching methodological orientation of social change espoused by the current study. The interviews took place at the location of youth's choosing, typically coffee shops throughout the city of Ottawa (e.g. Bridgehead, Tim Hortons), in a private room on the University of Ottawa Campus and in one case, in a mall food court. On average, the interviews lasted 1.5 hours. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Each interview took, as its starting point, the art itself, which was produced by the co-researcher in Phase One, and the social structure the art represented. The co-researchers who did not manage to complete their art in time for the show were invited to choose from the social structures, identified by the group in Phase One, that they most wanted to discuss. In this way, the knowledge produced in Phase One of the project informed Phase Two.

The major elements of the semi-structured interviews were:

- 1) The co-researcher's art piece(s) and the social structure(s) represented;
- 2) The co-researcher's personal experiences of structural violence in their transition to adulthood;
 - i. How they deal with that structural violence;
 - ii. The effects of that structural on their lives;
- 3) The co-researcher's future projects;
- 4) The co-researcher's reflections on the research project and the art show.

Data Analysis

I will now describe how I analysed the data generated by my various research methods. A preliminary analysis of the data occurred on an ongoing basis throughout the data collection. This allowed the research to better meet the needs and interests of the research participants. For

example, analysis of the field notes addressing the administration of the Phase One sociodemographic questionnaire revealed that changes should be made before Phase Two in order to better capture the necessary data. Additionally, an early organisation of the data revealed that not all the co-researchers managed to produce art pieces for the exhibit. Accordingly, the semi-structured interview questionnaire was slightly modified prior to the start Phase Two in order to accommodate that reality.

Data was collected from various sources across Phase One and Phase Two. The data are accounted for in the table below.

Phase One		
<u>Type of data</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Description\Details</u>
Art Work	17	With each co-researcher's permission, I took photographs of each piece. The co-researchers kept their originals.
Large Group Brainstorming Discussions	2	These were audio-recorded. From Week One and Week Two.
Focus Groups: Policy	3	These were audio-recorded.
Focus Groups: Feedback	4	These were audio-recorded.
Feedback Forms	10	These were filled out on paper by the youth who wanted to provide feedback in written form instead of or as well as in a focus group.
"Messages" from Meagan	2	On two occasions, co-researcher Meagan brought me messages that she had written at home while she was reflecting on the research study. The written messages spoke to issues of structural violence.
Field Notes	28	The initial short-hand notes were transformed into complete Word document notes as soon as possible.
Sociodemographic questionnaires	21	These were filled out on paper by the youth.

<u>Phase Two</u>		
<u>Type of Data</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Description</u>
Semi-structured interviews	16	These were audio-recorded.
Sociodemographic questionnaires	16	These were filled out on paper by the youth.

The audio data was transcribed and the field notes were transformed from their original short-hand to a more detailed and complete form as soon as possible.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Paillé & Mucchielli, 2008) was the principle analytic tool. My use of thematic analysis reflects Ely et al.'s (1997) view that the researcher plays an active role in theme identification, rather than a passive one where the researcher discovers embedded meaning which 'emerges' from within the text. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcriptions of the audio-recorded discussions from Phase One, the feedback forms from Phase One, the transcriptions of the audio-recorded semi-structured interviews from Phase Two and my field notes from Phase One and Phase Two. To code my data (Saldaña, 2009) into themes I first I re-read all my data. This enabled me to identify the key transcripts upon which to build my code book: eight of the 16 semi-structured interviews, both Large Group Brainstorming Discussions transcripts, and three of the seven focus group discussion transcripts. Using an inductive approach, I identified units of meaning and built categories up to global themes (Saldaña, 2009). This process produced an initial list of hundreds of units of meaning, which I grouped into a code book comprised of four overarching themes, sixteen sub-themes, further broken down into 38 sub-sub-themes (Appendix H). Once the code book was constructed, Nvivo was used to code the data.

In Phase One the data from the sociodemographic questionnaire was entered into an Excel spread sheet. In Phase Two, the majority of the data was entered into Nvivo. The Phase Two sociodemographic questions that were qualitative in nature were entered in Word document for analysis in Nvivo. Ideally, in PAR, co-researchers participate in the data analysis, as well as in the dissemination of the research results (McIntyre, 2008). While the participation of the co-researchers in all forms of dissemination of the research results was not feasible due to challenges related to time and logistics, they did however prepare and attend their art exhibit, which was one form of results dissemination.

In the context of this study, their participation in the data analysis was also not feasible. I did however return to the group to present results and have them validated by the co-researchers. Ten co-researchers attended the results session. This session proved quite challenging from a facilitation standpoint, due to issues related to group dynamics. One of the co-researchers self-identified as experiencing a period of mania, but was vehement with regard to her desire to participate in the process, and a second co-researcher's traumatic brain injury led to unsolicited interjections and discussion points that led away from the topic at hand. Both of these factors had an impact on overall tone and focus of the group: it was difficult to manage! As a result, I opted to modify my approach: I presented and had them comment on (validate) a more limited number of results and then ended the group portion of the session early. I explained to the co-researchers that I would 'hang-out' for the rest of the night in order to be available one-on-one to discuss further the results with any of the co-researchers.

Secondly, the analysis was transversal because the co-researchers' experiences of structural violence were intersectional; that is to say, they were characterized by the intersection of multiple social structures and extricating one from the other was not only impossible, but would have made it impossible to identify that structural violence derives its power, in part, from its complex and layered nature.

Challenges

The first challenge of this research project was tied to the extent to which I was able to adhere to the values and principles of PAR. Indeed, “tensions between ethical procedures and the ethics of meaningfully involving young people” (Fox, 2013, p. 990) were present in my research from the outset as I had to submit and get approval of my research project from both my defense panel and the Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa before beginning the project, making it too late to meaningfully involve the co-researchers in the construction of the large parameters of the project. While the documents I prepared were kept as general as possible, I was nevertheless responsible for the overarching framework and choice of topic.

The large size of the group of co-researchers presented a challenge (# = 21), in that during Week One and Week Two's Large Group Brainstorming Discussions not everyone got a chance to speak. This made it difficult to know if a true consensus was actually achieved, and in the weeks that followed it was impossible for me to check in with all of the co-researchers on a nightly basis. To compensate for these challenges, I ran focus group discussions, which never exceeded five co-researchers, and in Phase Two, for those who were interested (# = 16), I conducted individual semi-structured interviews. Both the focus groups and the semi-structured interviews gave the co-

researchers a chance to express themselves at length and to go into greater detail than was possible in the first two Large Group Brainstorming Discussions. The study also built in a great deal of flexibility in order to accommodate the various ideas, desires, and needs of the different co-researchers.

While the large group size was a challenge, it is important to acknowledge that the benefits of partnering with OIM and the P4Y program greatly outweighed the challenges. These benefits included using the regular P4Y program space where the co-researchers felt safe and at home, having extensive art supplies at their disposition, having the group run on a night when they were already available which diminished recruitment challenges and attrition rates, having certain logistic elements taken care of by OIM, having engaged in a process that did not exclude anyone who was already a P4Y program member and building on the trusting relationships that were already established between the group members.

Researcher Risk: Mitigating Researcher Privilege through Participation and Action

This last section of the methods chapter results from the fact that the field research, *in actuality*, as opposed to how PAR is described *in theory*, was a constant cause of reflection and self-doubt for me as a researcher. In truth, methodological accounts of PAR should offer more than a traditional account of the research process. This is because PAR is a tangle of ideal research processes and unforeseen developments, of individuality and solidarity, of privileges and oppressions, and of the emotions and relationships that are built while navigating these seeming contradictions and ethical quandaries. Accounts of PAR methods should tell the stories of these complex realities. This section is therefore written in that spirit. It tells the story of how, while my

understanding was that PAR was supposed to be a tool for combatting oppression and privilege, *out there, in the world*, throughout the research process I was continually confronted by issues of privilege and oppression *within the research process itself*. During the research, and after, I drew on a variety of sources to help me reflect on this challenge. For example, Fox (2013) and Vromen and Collin (2010) address questions about what counts as meaningful participation for youth in research. Dentith et al. (2009) discuss how the dilemmas that arise in emancipatory research with young people should be framed positively as “*opportunities to develop new understandings*” (p. 160). Löfman, Pelkonen, and Pietilä (2004) consider issues of power in their reflection on ethics in PAR. Karabanow et al. (2016) discuss the ethical considerations that emerge as a result of the researcher – co-researcher relationships that develop as a result of the longitudinal nature of PAR. Karabanow and Naylor (2015) discuss how research methods can be a form of academic oppression. Finally, Depalma’s (2010) research suggests that ethical considerations related to consent and safety that arise in PAR are best addressed during the study, by those involved in the study, rather than by formal “external evaluation of potential risk” (p. 216).

Therefore, this section of my methods chapter offers a novel contribution to the body of knowledge related to ethics in PAR. Specifically, I have framed the content in the form of a reflection on privilege – which is fitting given the structural orientation of this study and that a central focus of PAR is to identify, act and reflect upon, and transform oppression and privilege. This section explores two concepts that I have coined, researcher risk and researcher privilege, and I explain how the choices and actions that I took in this project led me to considerable reflection regarding my place within the research project and within the lives of the co-researchers.

As social workers, we learn about privilege in order to understand how it operates in society, marginalising and oppressing groups of people according to characteristics such as gender, age, education, social class, ability, and race. Hopefully, in the course of our education, we are encouraged to take stock of our own privileges in order to understand how they affect us, positively and negatively, both in our personal lives and in our professional practice. As social work *researchers*, we occupy a social role where we exercise certain privileges.

A privilege is an unearned right, advantage, or immunity granted only to a particular person or group of people in virtue of the social category or categories they occupy that play a role in maintaining an oppressive structure (McIntosh, 1986; Mullaly, 2010). Typically, as researchers we have the right and advantage to decide how research is done. We choose the topic, the methodology and the methods, the time frame, the criteria for participation, the way to disseminate knowledge. We interpret the results and so on. Often, all of this is done without consulting the people we are researching (with). The result is that, as researchers, we exercise a disproportionate control over what knowledge is constructed and how it is constructed. This is *researcher privilege*.

In PAR, the expectation is that the researcher and the co-researchers participate in a cyclical process of reflection and action with regard to the problem being researched. Ideally, this leads to the transformation of the problem into a situation of greater social justice. But that is a process of transforming *content*. By that I mean that the cycle of action and reflection pertains to the research problem. For PAR *itself* to truly be a tool for social justice, I contend that the researcher needs to be engaged in her own cycle of action and reflection with regard to the *form* of the research project and with regard to the researcher's role in establishing that form. For PAR itself to be a socially

just research tool, the researcher must address her *researcher privilege*, which can be achieved through *researcher reflexivity*.

Research ethics boards require researchers to identify the potential risks and benefits of participation to the research participants. This stipulation is of course important and exists for good reasons, but it creates the impression that socially just and ethical research is principally a question of the risks and benefits that exist for the research participants. I contend that socially just research also involves a consideration and itemization of the potential benefits and risks to the researcher. Potential researcher benefits include things like publishing articles, justifying new funding, prestige, and career advancement. Risks to the researcher are specifically tied to the privileges they typically occupy. Of course, some research is conducted in very dangerous environments, (e.g. war zones, harsh climates) but I am not speaking to that kind of risk. I am talking about risk to the *status* of the researcher. Examples of this sort of risk include, but are not limited to the possibilities that:

- the researcher won't control the whole process
- the researcher's authority will be questioned/challenged by the co-researchers
- the researcher will make mistakes and the co-researchers will see those mistakes
- the researcher will be seen as fallible
- the researcher may find herself in unanticipated ethical quandaries/dilemma
- the research topic may totally change, based on the needs of the group

But risks such as these are what contributes to the equalizing of privilege within the research process and are essential to PAR as a socially just methodology.

What is unique about PAR is that it actually creates the space and opportunities for challenging situations to occur. Its collaborative nature sets up the possibility for the researcher's privileged status to be questioned. In other words, by its very nature, PAR creates its own 'problems', but those problems, by their very nature, are opportunities to reflect, restart, reorient, redo, so that the research process itself is more socially just. It is the responsibility of the researcher to see challenging situations as a positive part of the research project and as an indicator of socially just research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to work to mitigate their privilege within the research project, rather than to mitigate their own risks.

I will now provide concrete examples from my doctoral research, to highlight things I did that mitigated my privilege as well as to discuss the limits of this project, reflecting on how I, and the research process, could be better next time. I do not claim to provide the best example of a PAR project. Rather, through a commitment to honesty and transparency, I aim to contribute to the advancement of academic discussions regarding how to conduct truly socially just research.

Arts-informed methods

Participation is said to work well for young people when it is informal, fun, draws on everyday ways of acting, and is suited to their ways of communicating and to their concerns (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010; Vromen & Collin, 2010). The co-researchers in this study are artists in their everyday lives. Art is a part of who they are and it's already a way that they communicate feelings and ideas. The choice of arts-informed methods was then appropriate for this study given that the co-researchers were already young artists and that the reason they came together on a weekly basis in the P4Y program was to do art. Art as a tool for research fit their lifestyle as artists.

Additionally, street involved youth often report challenges related to participation in formal educational systems (Evenson & Barr, 2009; Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016). In Phase One, only seven of the 21 (33%) co-researchers had completed high school and in the Phase Two semi-structured interviews, 14 of the 16 (88%) co-researchers spoke about negative experiences related to course content, peers, teachers, and/or managing school while dealing with mental health or substance use challenges. Fox (2013) explains that research methods that resemble formal school techniques, such as worksheets and discussions, privilege young people who have had successful school experiences and therefore can either exclude or discourage the full participation of some groups of young people. In this study, by focusing on artistic expression, this project was less like “school” and more like “fun”. In this way, an attempt was made to utilise a research method that would favour the skills and interests of the co-researchers. Having spent months getting to know each other and communicating through art, the eventual use of semi-structured interviews in the months that followed the arts-informed PAR then felt less like formal interviewing and more like informal discussion that flowed naturally from months of getting to know each other and talking on a weekly basis.

I have no background in art; the co-researchers were the art experts. They would explain to me their artistic process: what they were doing, how and why they were doing it and how it contributed to their message. That they had an expertise that I lacked served as a way of validating their contribution. I made a concerted effort to ask questions about their art and their artistic process, not only to learn from them, but to vigorously demonstrate to them that I knew that I had something to learn from them. Being the learner and the co-researchers the teachers was a way of flipping traditional power positions within the research framework.

Choices, choices, choices...

Unfortunately, a great deal of this study was pre-determined and, as a result, the co-researchers did not have a say in establishing the overarching framework. This was due to constraints related to my thesis as well as to the funding parameters of the national study. This limitation is explored further on in this section, along with other limits of the project. Given that a considerable amount of the study was predetermined, whenever possible all remaining choices regarding process and actions were made by the co-researchers. For example, they chose the title of the art exhibit; they decided whether to work on art pieces individually or in small groups; they chose the social structure that they wanted to address with their art; they chose what artistic medium to use; they chose which community organisations (e.g. media, social services, institutions) to invite to the art exhibit. While I first needed the approval of OIM, the ultimate choice of whether or not to participate in the study belonged to the group of co-researchers. This avoided the exclusionary issues that can arise when working with gate-keeper adults (Fox, 2013).

The commitment to having opportunities where the co-researchers made decisions was not a tokenistic or paternalistic “giving” of power to them. First, having them make as many decisions as possible stemmed from the belief that they know best what they want and need, and accordingly what is in the best interest of the research project. This aligns with the view that young people are capable of making decisions about their own lives and are well placed to have a say about and to transform the decisions that affect them (Lansdown, 1995). Recognizing their expertise of experience and allowing that expertise to guide choices that ultimately shaped the research project is a way to minimize power imbalances. Secondly, when the co-researchers made choices this opened the door for discussion, which in turn produced knowledge. For example, when asked to decide who should be invited to the show, some co-researchers said “not the police.” This led to a

debate amongst the co-researchers about the difficulty related to the need to educate the police to make them better at their job, but at the same time fearing the police presence and not wanting retribution from officers who might interpret the co-researchers' art as a critique of how they do their job. Thirdly, when the co-researchers chose the social structure they wanted to address with their art, they ultimately determined the orientation of the research, as those social structures would be the topic of conversation in small group discussions as well as in the semi-structured interviews.

Location, location, location...

In social work, discussion of the roles of place and space are uncommon. However, 'where you are' matters as all social experiences and all interventions occur somewhere. In this sense, acknowledging the importance and power of location for the research project became an opportunity to reduce my researcher privilege and also to incur some of the research risk myself. For example, the location of the weekly research sessions was the regular P4Y program space. This meant that the project took place on their turf. Each week I was the one who arrived to a place that was unfamiliar, having to decide where to sit, who to talk to, and how to try and fit in. I had to fit into their routine, which unfolded in a space that was familiar and comfortable to them. I was the one who was nervous at the start of each week, not the co-researchers.

Vromen and Collin (2010, p. 104) have shown that participation is, in part, a function of "going to where young people are." This increases the likelihood that a range of young people will be able to participate. Going to the co-researchers' regular location at the time of their regular art group, was a strategic attempt to minimize the impact of the research project on the time, resources, and well-being of the co-researchers and to maximize the number of co-researchers who would

choose to participate. This decision meant that I was not asking the co-researchers to find yet more time in their schedules in order to accommodate the research; I was not asking them to spend extra money getting to and from a location on a different night (e.g. bus tickets); I was not asking them to come to an unknown location and simultaneously learn to feel safe in that space and participate in order to participate in the project.

A final reflection on location as a tool for socially just research relates to the venue of the art exhibit. At a meeting with the P4Y program facilitator early in the project she mentioned that the youth had previously wanted to exhibit their art at a venue on the campus of the University of Ottawa, but the cost of renting the space was prohibitive. As a student at the University of Ottawa, I had the ability to navigate the room booking process in such a way as to access a reduced fee for the room, reduced enough to fit within the budget for the research project. In the course of this study the co-researchers gave me a great deal – they trusted me, confided in me, cried in front of me, collaborated with me, and one co-researcher even made me a cupcake. It was important to me to be able to give something back. Giving back allowed me to demonstrate to the co-researchers that I was not there to use them or to ‘take’ from them, but that I was there to contribute as well, in whatever way possible.

Be in relationship

Like it or not, if you are conducting PAR, you are in relationship with your co-researchers; you are working with a group of people, over an extended period of time, towards a goal together. While this relationship does not reach the level of friendship, it is more substantial than the

exchanges that exist between researcher and participant in other forms of research, such as in online or telephone surveys.

The very idea of being in relationship with a ‘research subject’ runs counter to the principles of traditional research, but that is the imperative of PAR. However, ethically beginning that relationship, navigating it and ultimately ending it, is complicated. Karabanow et al. (2016) use terms like ‘honest engagement,’ ‘trust building,’ ‘reciprocity,’ and ‘authentic relationships’ to describe the ways in which their research team members engaged with the youth in their longitudinal study. These are terms that I would also use to describe my approach to my research relationships. While these qualities reflect important criteria for ethical behaviour in relationships, they create ethical dilemmas when it comes to research relationships because of research’s roots in academic notions of ethics that derive from traditional and medical notions of research and ethics. I will now share situations that arose and strategies that I adopted as I began, maintained, and navigated the relationships established with the co-researchers. I will share my concerns (at the time and later upon reflection) regarding how I handled, or should have handled, certain situations.

The first concrete action I took in order to show the co-researchers that I saw them as people with whom I wanted to be in relationship, rather than just as people I was ‘there to study’ (in addition to saying more or less that very thing to them on Week One) was to go home and learn all their names. Perhaps this sounds insignificant and irrelevant given that there would be no means of testing the usefulness or effectiveness of this action. I decided to do it anyway. In Week Two of Phase One, I was able to call on each of them by name during our Large Group Brainstorming

Discussion. At the end of the night, one of the co-researchers approached me and we had the following conversation which I later transcribed into my fieldnotes:

***Emily:** Can I ask you how you learned all our names? I'm not good at learning names very fast.*

***Susannah:** Honestly?! (Feeling a little shy and uneasy about admitting that I had to work at it). I went home last week and drilled them until I had them memorized.*

***Emily:** Well, thanks, it meant a lot that you knew who we were.*

***Susannah:** Well, I want you to know that I don't think of you as research numbers but as people I'm working with. (Phase One, Field Note #3)*

In the split second before I answered her, I wondered if I should admit that I went home and studied their names. Would it be better to make light of the effort and pass it off as if it were nothing, or to be honest about what I had done? Would she be insulted that learning their names had been a 'task' or a 'project' I had taken on? Her response validated my choice. What I learned was that the instinct to be honest is the right one and that relationships of trust are built on honesty and transparency. Ultimately, being in trusting relationships is a way of mitigating my privilege as researcher and disrupting problematic dynamics of power in research.

At the start of the project the P4Y program facilitator spoke to me about the importance of not bringing money or valuables to art group, not because of the belief that the co-researchers would necessarily or maliciously steal, but because some of the co-researchers were facing situations (e.g. addictions) where they would find it nearly impossible to walk away from opportunities to meet their needs. Accordingly, money related trust issues are important in the context of working with the co-researchers in this project. In this study, I compensated each co-researcher 30\$ for their participation in a semi-structured interview. On one occasion, I had

scheduled back-to-back interviews with two co-researchers who were also romantic partners. When I noticed that the first interview was running long and that I would not be able to conduct the second interview at the agreed upon time I immediately contacted the second co-researcher to reschedule. He informed me that he had been counting on the money he was going to receive for doing the interview because he had already built it into his budget for that week. He asked if I could give the money to his partner (the co-researcher I was currently interviewing) to bring home to him and he would happily do the interview on another day. In the mere seconds that I had on the phone to decide how to proceed, a variety of thoughts and questions flew through my head. Financial compensation of research participants is a contested but accepted practice, but wouldn't established academics tell me that compensating a co-researcher in advance is the wrong thing to do? What if I gave the money to his partner and she did not give it to him? What if I gave it to him, through her, but he never does the interview? The most important question I asked myself ended up being the decisive one: what if I say no, and he takes it to mean that I don't trust him? In the balance, the risk of offending him by implying, even by accident, that I could not trust that he would show up for a future interview outweighed the risk that I would end up paying for an interview that never happened, or the risk that my colleagues might disagree with my course of action.¹⁴

The third situation relates to challenges that arose in my attempt to be authentic in my relationship with the co-researchers while also wearing the hat of researcher. As a student, I remember distinctly being told in my master's level research methods class that it was important

¹⁴ While I firmly believe that the outcome of this situation (whether or not an interview eventually took place) should not serve as a justification or guide for how one should proceed in such circumstances, the reader is likely intrigued to know that the co-researcher did follow through and attended an interview.

as a social work researcher never to blur the lines between practitioner and researcher. This premise is challenged by the theoretical and epistemological orientations of PAR, but in one case I really felt it pushed to the limits. In the Phase Two Interview, Julianna's sharing of her experiences living with mental illness, stigma, and judgement led to the following exchange about her sexual abuse:

Julianna: *Yeah, I mean, and then also, when I've talked about sexual abuse it's like 'Well it was your fault'.*

Susannah: *Really?*

Julianna: *Yeah. My mom kinda talks like that. When I was at the CHEO programme, she said "just get over it, it's time to move on".*

Susannah: *Are there people in your life telling you the opposite? That it's not your fault?*

Julianna: *Um. No!*

Susannah: *It's not your fault.*

Julianna: *I know it's not. (Laughter)*

Susannah: *Even if you didn't know it, I'm going to say it. Because people need to be saying that to you. (Julianna, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

To this day, I clearly remember this moment. My field notes showed that I had wondered and worried: Have I overstepped my bounds as a researcher? Should I have said that? Once again, one question I asked myself proved decisive: Could I have left that interview in good conscience with her thinking that by my silence, by my omission of contradiction, I too thought she was responsible? The answer was no.

Another incident that gave me cause to reflect was, perhaps, compared to issues of money and sexual abuse, seemingly small. At the art exhibit one of the co-researchers proudly presented me with a homemade cupcake that she had decorated specifically for me. She was excited, smiling, and it was evident from her body language that this gave her great pleasure. Admittedly, my first thought was: a researcher cannot accept gifts from a research participant. I accepted the cupcake

graciously but, again, this incident provided further substance for reflection about the nature of ethical research in the context of participatory action processes. What message would she receive if I had refused the cupcake? By accepting was I setting a precedent of accepting gifts from the co-researchers? Does it make a difference that this occurred at the end of Phase One compared to if it had occurred at the start of Phase One? Ultimately, I accepted the cupcake because I judged the harm was greater to refuse it than to accept it.

In the context of this research study, the challenges of being in relationship were amplified by the fact that I live in the same neighbourhood as most of the co-researchers. As a result, in the course of the research project I often crossed pathways with the co-researchers on the bus, in stores, at church, on the street, and while they were panhandling. In these situations, I wondered how to negotiate these interactions given that, on the one hand, I am supposed to preserve confidentiality and anonymity while on the other hand I'm committed to acting in ways that minimize problematic distributions of power in our research. Not acknowledging the co-researchers in public felt like a reinforcement of the me-them dichotomy and risked sending the message that outside of the research project I was indifferent to them as people. The most challenging situation I faced was when I came across a co-researcher while she was panhandling. I captured the experience and my reflections later that day in my field notes:

Today I ran into Meagan while she was panhandling outside the grocery store. As I was walking up the street we made eye contact, so I went over and said "hi." In that quick second when we saw each other I had wondered if maybe I shouldn't go over as she had not approached me herself, but then I wondered if she would feel rejected by me or hurt if I did not go over. We have developed a good research relationship; she is very invested in the project, even bringing in things she has written outside of the regular programming to contribute to the project and we have spent lots of time talking together. Based on her smile and quick conversation I judged that she was not unhappy or uncomfortable with my

decision to approach her. I asked to sit down beside her and we chatted for a while. Then she asked me what I was up to that day. I felt my chest tighten – I was headed to buy groceries and I know the state of her fridge: usually pretty empty. I was honest, and said I was heading in to get groceries. There was a tiny silence, and then I offered “is there anything I can get you?” As soon as I said it, I doubted it. Should I have offered that? Was that unethical? If she said yes, was she going to feel indebted to me? She said “yes”, and asked for peanuts, which I bought and gave her. I chatted a bit longer and then headed home.

*Since then I have been mostly consumed by the following question: is it ethical to **not** do for a co-researcher something that I **would** do for a total stranger? Is there a difference between what it means to treat humans ethically in our everyday life and in research? What happens when we believe that our standard for ethical treatment of people in everyday life challenges ethical standards for research? (Phase One, Field Note #15)*

In rereading this field note, I can see the choices I made in an attempt to diminish the power differential between us. I approached her because in the research project the co-researchers had talked about how it felt to be ignored because they “look poor” or “look homeless.” I was certain that she was more likely to be hurt if I avoided her than if I approached her, even if this meant entering a grey zone of anonymity in the research. I asked her permission before sitting with her to avoid imposing myself. Standing above someone who is seated, visibly and physically reinforces relationships of dominance and power. I offered to buy her something from the store. That is what I have done previously, and will continue to do, for people who are panhandling. I was determined not to do less for her because I knew her. I decided that honouring our relationship and her humanity was not achieved by doing less for her than I would do for a stranger.

I recognize that others might disagree with the choices I have made. However, I justify them by grounding them in a structural orientation to social work: we are called to question that which is taken-for-granted in order to uncover oppression and domination. In this sense, the traditional and medical notions of ethics must be scrutinized in order to learn how to produce

research that is truly socially just. In PAR, this means acknowledging that being in relationship complicates traditionally held understandings of ethics. To ignore that you are in relationship, and to conduct yourself like there is no relationship, reinforces researcher privilege.

The research and the researcher are flawed

Often research purporting to be participatory faults young people for their failure to adapt to the expectations of traditional research methods (Fox, 2013). This is problematic, as it reinforces the premise that research expertise lies solely in the hands of the researcher and that if the research methods don't work, it's because the youth are flawed, not the methods. A way to counteract this problematic power dynamic in PAR is to admit that as the researcher you make mistakes, you don't know everything and you don't know best, and you will work to do better and be better next time. In my case, this involved being corrected by the co-researchers, asking as many questions as possible and changing things when the co-researchers said things needed to change.

In this project, I endeavoured to ensure that I was not expecting the co-researchers to fit into the standards of the academic research, but that *I* was changing, and that *the research* was changing in order to better reflect the co-researchers' expertise as well as their ways of being and knowing.

I will cite three examples of this effort that I made. At our Week Two meeting, I was corrected by one of the co-researchers. We were discussing in the Large Group Brainstorming Discussion which co-researchers would work on which social structure. During the discussion,

myself and a few co-researchers were taking note of decisions on a chalk board. The following exchange occurred:

Susannah: *So, Jennifer is in substance abuse.*

John: *Substance use.*

Jane: *Use not abuse.*

Susannah: *Yeah, we can change that absolutely! (Looking to the chalk board, mistakenly thinking the co-researchers' comments were with reference to an error written on the chalk board).*

Jane: *No, it's use up there [on the board], I was just telling you. The point was use not abuse.*

Susannah: *Oh, yeah, I can change that. (Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)*

Taking feedback about my language choice was important in terms of diminishing power imbalances in a couple of ways. First, politely accepting the feedback and adjusting myself early on in the research process fully set the tone that I was approachable and correctable. Not taking the feedback in stride would have conveyed the idea that I saw myself as researcher as the person who 'knew best.' Secondly, by taking their feedback, I was trying to demonstrate that I believe that their way of seeing and talking about things is important and valid. This hopefully helped to establish that this research project was a space where their points of view held weight and were valued.

During the administration of the sociodemographic questionnaire in Phase One, several of the co-researchers made comments about some of the questions that led me to believe that the questionnaire was not as appropriate or useful as it could be. For example, in response to a question regarding parenthood, a couple of the male co-researchers explained that since they were men it was impossible to know for sure if they had children, an option I had not accounted for in the

questionnaire. Given the participatory nature of the study, I suggested to the co-researchers that we have a group discussion to re-work the questionnaire. Seven of the co-researchers elected to participate. Through that discussion, I discovered that the original questionnaire was flawed in two regards. First, it failed to fully capture all the information that the co-researchers thought was relevant, like the paternity question. Secondly, the way that some of the questions were phrased reflected normative ideas and could be insensitive, given the co-researchers' realities as street involved youth. For example, the question I had written to gather information on their education prompted the following discussion:

Jane: *Yeah, and instead of just asking right off the bat 'are you in school', cause a lot of people have bad backgrounds with school and a lot of the people, like me personally, I haven't been...*

Susannah: *Been in school for a while?*

John: *It's the same as me. Cause I missed so much and I'd go back...*

Jane: *So, for a lot of people, it's a touchy subject, right.*

Susannah: *So, that's good. Suggestions about how to make the questionnaire more sensitive are very good!*

John: *Yeah, to not make you feel dumb for not being in school. You know, I'm a pretty intelligent person even though I only went to grade 9, but, I'm very street smart, very smart in other things.*

Jane: *It makes me more, it makes me feel like that I'm an idiot cause I'm not in school and I haven't been in school for a while right. So, that's why easing into the question would be a lot better. Yeah, it makes you feel mentally inadequate, exactly. (Phase One, Focus Group on the Sociodemographic Questionnaire)*

As a result of this discussion the question about school was modified as follows, to allow for more open-ended and neutrally phrased questions:

Version 1

School Questions:

Question 1: Are you currently in school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Question 2: What level of education have you achieved?

Version 2

School Questions:

Question 1: Where are you at in school?

☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Question 2: What sort of things have you learned outside of the regular school system (street smarts type of stuff)?

Throughout the study, co-researchers provided *in vivo* suggestions about how to modify the research process and methods, requiring fast acting responses on my part. These suggestions were principally related to methodological flaws related to the appropriateness of a data collection methods, confidentiality, and peer pressure. For example, along with the P4Y program facilitator, I had decided that in Week Two when it came time to select the final list of social structures from the long list established on Week One, it would be done by a vote, with each co-researcher being given stickers which they would put next to the social structures they most wanted to work on. The social structures with the most stickers would be selected for the final list. However, in the middle of explaining this process to the co-researchers in Week Two, it was pointed out to me by one of the co-researchers that some of them might feel pressured to pick certain social structures if they had to put up stickers in front of other the co-researchers. The co-researcher suggested an anonymous voting process, which we duly adopted.

I have argued, and attempted to demonstrate through examples from my own research, that researcher reflexivity and researcher risk are tools for mitigating researcher privilege. I have argued that, unchallenged, researcher privilege is an impediment to achieving research methodologies that, in and of themselves, are socially just. While it is true that every PAR is different, based on the needs and interests of the co-researchers, that does not mean that there is no value in providing detailed accounts of PAR project methods. For future researchers, the learning gathered from a previous project's methods can serve as a comfort and an inspiration to draw upon when conducting a new project.

The commitment to more socially just research means that reflections on the ethics of our research practise must be made public; they must extend beyond the individual researcher's internal reflexive process. As stated at the outset of this section, for the researcher, that involves a certain risk – the potential of admitting one's failings to one's colleagues (particularly in the case of a thesis defense!). It is for that very reason that I have written this chapter. If we do not assume any risk ourselves, we only further reinforce our researcher privilege, which impedes the actualization of socially just research. As Fox (2013, p. 997) explains, “good participatory research with young people should necessarily be a threat to the existing institutional powerful forces which mediate their lives,” and to this I would add that it includes the institution and practice of research itself. PAR should not only seek to challenge the status quo of the social issue it is addressing, but also, it should challenge the status quo of research theories, research ethics, and research practices.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the empirical aspects of the research study and demonstrated the coherence between the concepts and theories outlined in the first two chapters, and the research methodologies and methods used. It reviewed the time-line and process of the field work and explained how the data was collected and analysed. It also shed considerable light on my reflexive process as a researcher, which served to demonstrate the rigour and ethics of the study, as well as to contribute to the limited body of research that addresses researcher privilege.

The next three chapters present the findings of the current study. The first of the three chapters, Chapter Three, describes the transition to adulthood of the co-researchers. It contains the sociodemographic data, as well as the results pertaining to the residential, professional, financial, and relational spheres of the co-researchers' lives. Chapters Four and Five step away from the transitions of the co-researchers to explore in-depth the role of structural violence in their lives. Specifically, Chapter Four describes the different types of experiences of structural violence as lived by the co-researchers and Chapter Five reviews the strategies employed by the co-researchers for dealing with their experiences of structural violence.

Chapter Three: The transition to adulthood of the co-researchers

This first results chapter focuses on the co-researchers' stories of their transition to adulthood. The chapter begins by introducing the co-researchers to the reader by way of a presentation of their sociodemographic data. The chapter is then divided into five sections, each of which describes a different sphere in the transition to adulthood of the co-researchers. The first section considers the *residential sphere*, where the topics of leaving home, institutions as housing, housing conditions, and future residential aspirations are identified as significant. The second section looks at the *professional sphere*, with a focus on education and learning, work and income, and future professional aspirations. The third section, the *financial sphere*, describes the co-researcher's relationship to money, which is described as a contrary one, with money being seen as a necessary evil. The fourth section outlines the co-researchers' *relational sphere*, where the topics of relationships with parents, becoming responsible for others, and relationships as a conduit for violent social structures are identified as significant. The fifth and final section considers the *identity and citizenship spheres*, considering the aspects of the co-researchers' transitions relating to the development of the self and the self-in-society.

Introducing the co-researchers

A total of 22 co-researchers initially signed up to participate in Phase One of the current study. Prior to the start of Phase One, one co-researcher withdrew from the project. Accordingly, all Phase One sociodemographic data is based on 21 co-researchers. Sixteen of the 21 co-researchers from Phase One chose to participate in the Phase Two semi-structured interviews. A sociodemographic questionnaire was administered at the start of each phase to each co-researcher.

In Phase One, of the 21 co-researchers, with regard to gender identity, eight identified as male, 10 identified as female, one identified as multiple personalities, two identified as not believing in gender identities, one identified as genderqueer, one identified as androgynous and one identified as human. With regard to sexual orientation, 11 co-researchers identified as heterosexual, one identified as Two-Spirit, two identified as bi-sexual, three identified as gay or lesbian, four identified as not believing in categorizing sexual orientation, one identified as homoflexible and one identified as not sure. The co-researchers ranged in age from 18-28. Five co-researchers were aged 18-20, 11 were 22 to 24 years of age, and five were 25 to 28 years of age. Four of the co-researchers indicated they had children. Fourteen co-researchers indicated that they were paying rent (range: 350\$-1000\$/month).

In Phase Two, of the 16 co-researchers, with regard to gender identity, seven identified as female, six as male, two as Two-Spirit and one as human. With regard to sexual orientation, seven identified as heterosexual, two identified as lesbian, and one co-researcher each as bisexual, bicurious, pansexual, Two-Spirit, not sure, and I don't believe in categorizing sexual orientation. The co-researchers ranged in age from 19 to 26. One was 19, two were 20, four were 22, one was 23, five were 24, and two were 25. In terms of romantic relationships, 10 co-researchers indicated they were in a romantic relationship, four indicated that they were single, one preferred not to answer and one described her relationship status as 'wiggly'. Two of the co-researchers indicated

that they had children, one indicated that he used to have children¹⁵ and one indicated that he did not know.¹⁶ Thirteen co-researchers indicated that they paid rent (range: 350\$-900\$/month).

Residential Sphere

The residential sphere in the transition to adulthood is traditionally understood as the process of moving from living at home with one's family of origin to eventually owning one's own home. As described in Chapter One, in the contemporary context, this transition is not a one-off event: young people rarely go directly from their parents' home to new home ownership. The residential sphere is marked by yo-yo transitions to and from the family of origin, for example, during post secondary education. The transition also often contains periods of non-permanent cohabitation, with roommates and significant others. With regard to the results of the current study, four elements were identified as significant in the co-researchers' residential sphere of their transition to adulthood, including leaving home, institutions as housing, housing conditions, and future housing aspirations.

Leaving Home

The co-researchers reported leaving home between the ages of 14 and 21. One co-researcher had not yet officially left home. The average age at which they left home was 16.5 and

¹⁵ The option of indicating that the co-researcher used to have children was the result of feedback provided on the first questionnaire. The feedback pointed out that some people have had the custody of their children taken away from them by child protective services.

¹⁶ The option of indicating that the co-researcher was not sure if he had fathered children was added to the questionnaire following feedback on the first questionnaire. The feedback pointed out that, for men, it is possible to have unknowingly fathered a child.

the mode was 16 years of age¹⁷. For some, leaving was a process whereas for others it was a one-off event. Upon leaving home, the co-researchers had a variety of destinations: shelters, couch-surfing at a friend's, staying with other family, squatting, and staying outside rough sleeping. The reasons for leaving home were divided into two categories. The first includes those who talked about being kicked out by their parents (N = 6) and the second includes those co-researchers who described home leaving in terms of running away or choosing to leave (N = 7). The co-researcher who had never officially left home was living with his mother at the time of the interview. However, he had left the family home to spend periods of time in jail, so while he was neither kicked out, nor chose to leave, he had left to spend time 'living' elsewhere.

For those who were kicked out, home leaving was generally abrupt; one moment they had access to the family home, the next moment they did not. While over time some of these co-researchers reconnected with their family of origin, which often gave rise to renewed access to the family home, the initial eviction was followed by a period of total denial of access to the family home. The co-researchers attributed being kicked out to mental health problems, either their own, or their parents', to behavioural issues (being accused of stealing from their parents or of using drugs in the house), to not attending school, or to their parents' intolerance of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

¹⁷ This information was only gathered in Phase Two, and was not available for three of the 16 co-researchers. The breakdown is as follows: one co-researcher left home at 14, two at 15, six at 16, one at 17, two at 18, and one at 21, and one had not yet left home to live independently, although he had 'lived' in prison.

Those co-researchers who stated that they had run away or that they had chosen to move out cited their parents' mental health, physically abusive home environments, the negative influence of siblings, and wanting to party as their reasons for leaving the family home.

Institutions as Housing

Four types of institutions played a significant role in the housing pathways of the co-researchers: shelters, prisons, mental health hospitals, and addictions treatment facilities. Of these four types of institutions that provided a housing function, shelters were the most accessed institution by the co-researchers. While it may seem obvious that street involved youth access shelters, it nevertheless warrants note, given that shelter stays do not figure in the housing transitions of youth in general. Understanding the role played by shelters in the housing pathways of the co-researchers necessitates, of course, analysing their use of shelters, but it also necessitates attending to the discussions of when and why, despite their housing needs, the co-researchers would elect to not access a shelter.

Young men's and young women's shelters were generally seen by the co-researchers as positive places to be and as having a positive impact on their transition to adulthood. Lain, Eva, and Jane all explained that they liked and benefited from the shelters designed for young people because they had their own room, access to food, staff were helpful, it was a place to make friends, and the shelter provided the stability necessary in order to return to school. As Lain explained, the young women's shelter not only provided for basic needs, but also provided the opportunity, in a safe and supportive environment for Lain, to learn and grow as a person:

And then I entered the shelter and everyone was so nice and I had my own room and everything. They connected me with like OW and all this crazy stuff. And I started making friends, and going back to school, and I switched schools, and all this stuff and like, yeah, just experimented with like so much stuff, with like myself and I taught myself so much shit it's not funny. (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

The co-researchers' experiences with adult shelters stood in stark contrast to their experiences in youth specific shelters. With the exception of one co-researcher, the consensus was that adult shelters were a place of last resort and to be avoided at all costs:

Worst case scenario, actually worst case scenario would be the shelter, but we would sleep outside before the shelter. (Mark, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Fuck that! I wouldn't want to go stay at the Sheps (an adult shelter). (Jane, age 25, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #1)

While Ryan pointed out that adult shelters provide meals, the consensus was that the benefits offered by shelters did not outweigh the risks and negatives. The aversion to adult shelters was due to a variety of factors. Adult shelters were not seen as clean places. Rather, they were places where the co-researchers could contract medical conditions, which was the case for Ryan who caught head lice and for Eva who developed respiratory problems. Both Meagan and Jane explained that adult shelters were also not a safe place where you could trust people. Both your belongings and your person were at risk in an adult shelter. Mark explained that since you could not trust anyone, adult shelters were not a restful place either. Adult shelters also came with limitations and impositions. For Naomi and Natalie, the requirement that they were expected to contribute to shelter life with chores and by taking on responsibilities was sufficient for them to decide to leave. For Jessica, the fact that she and her boyfriend could not access an adult shelter as a couple meant that they preferred to sleep outside. The adult shelter did not allow Jane to be

accompanied by her dog and so she choose not to stay in the shelter. For Sean, the only co-researcher who expressed that staying at an adult shelter was “not bad” because of the food and money it provided him, the fact that he could not go out to a bar and then bring a date back “home to the shelter” (Sean, age 24, Phase Two Interview) deterred him from a prolonged shelter stay and a contributed to his decision to return to his mother’s home.

In the first Focus Group on Policy, the co-researchers discussed the differences between adult and youth shelters and noted the attitude of the shelter workers. In general, as youth in youth shelters, the co-researchers, were still seen as exhibiting potential and therefore were still seen as a worthwhile investment, whereas adults were a ‘lost cause’:

John: *Like say if you just turned 22 and you just got into drugs and now you’re homeless and you have to go, instead of going to the youth place where they could really help you, you know what I mean, you end up in one where you’re more like a lost cause, you know what I mean?*

Jane: *Yeah, where, they actually look at it differently in the shelters too... the young women’s shelter they actually help to get you places and help get you out of that, but the older places they just more look at it like, ok – we feed you, we give you your bed, like get out of here.*

John: *Yeah, exactly, it’s like there’s more hope for the young person who has more potential than someone who’s fifty. I mean, everyone’s equal, but I mean you’ve got more potential of getting a job, of getting off drugs cause you’re young. Someone who’s done it for 50 years it’s gonna be harder for them to do those things. (Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #1)*

In addition to living in shelters, it was common for the co-researchers to have spent time living in other institutional settings. While shelters were the most commonly used institution that served a housing function, 12 of the 16 co-researchers reported stays at one or more of three additional institutions: prisons (N=3), mental health hospitals (N=6), and addictions treatment

facilities (N=3). The co-researchers did not elaborate on their experiences in these institutions as extensively as they did about shelters. That being said, in general, stays in prison were seen as disruptive to ensuring continuity in their transition to adulthood:

Ryan: *I was living on Bronson, but then I went to jail for half a year.*

Susannah: *So, does that effect your housing? If you go to jail do you lose your lease?*

Ryan: *You lose your place. You know, cause you can't, obviously, unless you have someone trusted outside to take care of that for you. How you supposed to pay rent when you are in jail. Can't work, can't make money. Sucks, sucks being there and having no control of your life outside of those walls. Just ah, losing everything I owned, tossed to the curb. (Ryan, age 25, Phase Two Interview)*

As Ryan's example shows, spending time in prison had consequences that extended beyond acquiring a criminal record which, incidentally, was identified by a number of co-researchers as a factor that limited their ability to get work and accordingly meet their basic needs. Extended time spent in prison meant losing housing and losing work. While living in prison, Ryan's basic needs were met; however, upon release he had to begin to rebuild the various spheres of his life from scratch.

Mental health hospitals were described in both positive and negative terms, positive in the sense that the co-researchers saw hospitalisation as a necessary tool in addressing their mental health, and negative in that often the co-researchers felt that their needs were not adequately addressed. Doctors often ignored the co-researchers' voice and input, and the co-researchers felt that the length of their hospital stays were too short to address their needs. Addictions treatment facilities were also described in both positive and negative terms, positive in that they were necessary for addressing addictions, but negative in that they were hard to access, due to a shortage

of beds in the Ottawa area, and due to admission criteria. These factors made it difficult for the co-researchers to access the service at the moment they needed it.

Housing conditions

From their departure from their family home, the housing and living conditions of the co-researchers were varied: condominiums, apartments, houses, rooming houses, outside on the street and in bushes, squats, friends' couches and closets, and as we have seen, various institutions. The common thread that underpinned these diverse housing conditions was the feeling of dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction was observable in the frustration the co-researchers expressed with regard to current or past housing coupled with the desire for something different or better. Dissatisfaction with their housing conditions was tied to three main factors. The first was safety concerns, the second was the fear of eviction, and the third was that the size of their accommodations were too small. The analysis showed that money was seen by the co-researchers as the solution to their housing problems. Unfortunately, they did not have the money required to escape their dissatisfaction.

With the exception of the concerns expressed by all the co-researchers regarding the safety of adult shelters, issues of safety in housing were largely a concern voiced by the female co-researchers. Safety concerns were expressed by the female co-researchers for themselves as well as for their children. Their concerns related to the physical conditions of the housing as well as to the other individuals who lived nearby or shared the same address. Two of the female co-researchers expressed concerns regarding their decision to continue to live with an abusive partner because their housing alternatives were not better. Tessa shared that a lack of physical safety lead

to her sustaining physical injuries while living in social housing because of inadequate repairs and responses from her housing provider to damage within her unit. Meagan explained that she felt unsafe in her rooming house room because of the men that lived there too. Naomi discussed her frustrations with a landlord who saw her as a ‘problem tenant’ because she was trying to stand up for her rights to have a safe living environment:

In the basement, the lights didn't have covers on them. And [to the landlord] I was like, well, we need covers on it, cause its kinda dangerous just to have lights when they're low. And she's like 'we're creating a bad relationship' because we're asking her to fix things that don't really need to be fixed she says. (Naomi, age 23, Phase Two Interview)

In addition to safety, the real or perceived threat of eviction was a source of housing dissatisfaction for the female co-researchers. Fear of eviction for the female co-researchers derived from the interactions they had with neighbours and landlords:

I accidentally asked my neighbour for change, and he gave me a weird look. So, I'm afraid he's going to tell my landlord and I'm going to get evicted. So, I'm just waiting for a note or something. (Natalie, age 20, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #2)

I want to get a new place. A little bit bigger, or like, even if its not bigger, on a basement floor or somewhere where [my kids] can run around cause right now I'm getting noise complaints cause they are running around. Kids live, they do stuff, and its not all the time, its just when they are playing. The guy's a douche, sorry for the language, but I hate that guy. He's a bachelor. And I don't complain when he throws parties and plays video games so loud it wakes my kids up, I don't complain when that happens, cause I figure, he's just living, and I'm not going to complain. But he complains when my kids are running around and if they jump he bangs on the ceiling. I've got a written complaint now. And they're like "put in area rugs" and I have rugs, and I'm allergic to rugs, and this is bad (Tessa, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

[The landlord] would come into our house without us knowing and take pictures and was like, "they're dirty"... She was trying to say that we were doing drugs and stuff, cause I think that's grounds to evict. (Naomi, age 23, Phase Two Interview)

The threat of eviction lead to a permanent state of fear and sense of housing precariousness that was tied to a strong sentiment that it was not fair, because this had been an “accident” as Natalie explained, or that someone was being unreasonable, as in Tessa’s case, or that someone was doing something illegal, as in Naomi’s case, with the landlord entering the apartment without permission.

Housing size was a source of dissatisfaction for both male and female co-researchers. For Meagan who lived in a rooming house, she expressed the need for “something better than a room” (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview). For Tessa, she needed something big enough for her family. For those co-researchers living with their romantic partner, small housing proved to be a source of dissatisfaction as it put a strain on their relationship:

Just six months ago, I had nothing. I was living with my partner, in a tiny little apartment and we were arguing constantly because we had a tiny bedroom, the size of a bathroom, to share with each other. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Its hard living in a bachelor with another person cause, you know, she has weird sleeping habits. She wakes up every two hours and has a cigarette during the night ... that wakes me up. Not only that, if she is up early, then I can't sleep in. [A one-bedroom would be nice] cause then you know, if I'm up, I want to be up early, I can just go to the living room. If she's up, she's in the living room. (Ryan, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

Blake’s reflections on his housing conditions captures the majority of the dissatisfactions and frustrations expressed by the co-researchers related to issues of independence and personal development:

I need a standalone house. I need a standalone house, with three bedrooms, a basement. Finished basement. That's good. And as soon as possible because I want the freedom to be

able to do what I want. And, nobody, not a lot of people can put up with the neighbours playing the drums. Which, I should literally be doing, every day. But I'm too nice, and respectful of the baby and whatever, the child that's upstairs, to you know, to push it. Also, I have the pressure from my roommate. As much as I love the guy, he's a cheap ass, he's self-serving, he literally only gives a shit about himself. He powertrips over possessions and because he owns things it means he feels a sense of entitlement. Like, if I unplug his phone charger to charge the laptop that I was using to write my 90% fucking paper, I had to hear him bitching at me because I was "fucking with his shit". I don't need that. That's why I want to move. But I need more money, so in the mean time I have to put up with him being a dick. It sucks. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)

While Blake, like the other male co-researchers, did not share the safety concerns faced by the female co-researchers, his statement reflects the other elements of dissatisfaction with their housing conditions (roommates and housing size) and demonstrates how these dissatisfactions are tied to his inability to thrive and grow as a person, pursue his interests and education.

As highlighted at the end of Blake's quote, in general the analysis also showed that the solution to the co-researchers' dissatisfaction was financial. The co-researchers simply could not afford to improve their living conditions. They could not afford to "move out" of the problem:

And then when I moved out of that place into the other place, the rent was a lot more expensive so I had to take - cause I was still on OW and they gave me spending money and rent money - I had to take half of my spending money and turn it towards rent. And after I paid my rent I'm only really left with 100, 75, like 75 to 100 dollars. And then we have bills and stuff, that's kinda hard because I would want to spend it on this, or go out with my friends, and then my roommates would come and be like, ok can we have 40 dollars for this month's thing, and I'm just like, sorry, I don't have it. That kinda got me in a little bit of troubles and my roommates didn't like it. (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

I'd like to get a bigger place so my kids have more room. I have two kids, in a two-bedroom apartment and me and my partner. I'd like more space, and I can't do that because more space is more expensive and we don't make that much money and I don't want to go on social assistance housing because its really bad quality. I've not ever been to a social assistance place that you could live that wasn't infested with something or full of violence.

Even the townhouses there's gangs and people that go and rob people. (Tessa, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

The analysis shows that the co-researchers' limited finances had far reaching consequences. It limited their ability to access housing free from the threat of eviction, inhibited their ability to live in safety, strained their romantic relationships, restricted their access to housing where they would be free to pursue their interests and passions or to work towards goals that would help them to better their social circumstances. The analysis suggests that for the co-researchers' safety, space, and independence within that space were privileges tied to gender (being a man) and money (having certain financial means).

Future Aspirations

The future housing aspirations of the co-researchers were varied but three general topics dominated their discourses: home ownership, having a place of their own, and improving their housing situation. With regard to home ownership, for three of the co-researchers owning their own home was an idealized, dream-like, and fanciful housing goal; it was the unrealistic dream. Ryan and Stan shared wistful hopefulness, expressed by the sentiment that 'one day...' home ownership might be possible. But, for these co-researchers, hopes and dreams were tempered by reality. While Stan hoped maybe 'one day...' he might own a home, the reality of his financial situation made that impossible:

One day I hope to have a real house. That's mine and I don't have to pay rent. But that's like, that's a dream, that's not reality. In reality, I'm fucked. (Stan, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

While Ryan hoped maybe ‘one day...’, he readily admitted that his dreams were not realistic:

I don't think that far ahead in the future. I mean, I have dreams, where I would like, like a mansion (laughter), you know, but nothing realistically, really. (Ryan, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

For Julianna home ownership was described, with a laugh and a smile, as only possible “if I won the lottery”. For Julianna, the reality that her “credit is terrible” and that her bank had suggested she declare bankruptcy meant that short of winning the lottery, home ownership was an unlikely eventuality.

In terms of home ownership, Blake, Avery, and Sean felt that home ownership was a legitimate possibility and they spoke of the hard work and saving that would be required to realize that dream. This realistic home ownership was a long-term project. Blake could not be more specific than hoping that home ownership would happen “as soon as possible”, Sean hoped “eventually” with a job and credit to manage a down payment. Avery, who had more financial resources at his disposal than the other co-researchers, was working towards purchasing the house he was renting, and Mark anticipated that, without a lottery win, it would be at least 10 years before he could afford a home. While for some it was a fanciful dream, and for others it was a true possibility, home ownership in one way or another did dominate the housing aspirations of seven of the co-researchers.

Those co-researchers who did not mention home ownership or who did not envision home ownership as part of their future, including those who felt home ownership was fanciful, had what

can be described as simpler and less financially involved housing goals. Some expressed the goal of having their own place:

I'd prefer to be on my own again. (Mark, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

I'm moving out in April though, so, to get my own place. (Sean, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

The desire to have one's own place was tied to the desire to acquire freedom and to operate with autonomy in their housing. For example, as Lain explained:

My plan is... to have an apartment only by myself, so that I can have my space, but also have the space to have my friends over and stuff like that. (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

For Meagan, having her own place one day would mean she could move out of the rooming house and thereby access a freedom otherwise impossible in her current housing situation:

I'd like something better than a room. It would be nice to get out of bed and go to the bathroom in my own apartment or to have an oven that I can cook in. That would be nice. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

Even though her dream is simple - an apartment - and not as financially ambitious as a house, Meagan's dream seemed far away given the practical realities of her life. As she explained, "right now I don't see very much for me in [my housing] future" (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview). Her limited education, limited employment possibilities, and ongoing challenges related to her mental illness made it difficult for her to be stable in her current housing and made

it difficult to imagine acquiring independent housing. For Jessica, getting her own place would mean no longer living with an abusive partner: housing free from violence. For these co-researchers, a place of their own meant independence: from roommates and family, from abusive partners, and the simple freedom of going to the bathroom with ease or to use the stove.

For the co-researchers who already had their own place, their goals were to improve their housing situation. For example, Tessa hoped to get a slightly bigger apartment to accommodate her growing sons. For both Natalie and Naomi, improving meant not moving. They sought to improve their circumstances by successfully maintaining their current apartments. As Naomi explained, “I want to stay where I am. I want to stay in one spot and not move” (Naomi, age 23, Phase Two Interview). For Avery, improvement meant getting a patio set and BBQ in order to enjoy his backyard. Ryan dreamed of reacquiring the possessions he lost while in prison, having a couch, and having a bathtub to relax in.

Big or small, the co-researchers housing aspirations all revolved around the pursuit of autonomy and independence. This independence and autonomy were tied to decision making, to being able to feel safe and secure in their housing, and to improving the material conditions of their housing. For some this meant home ownership, even if it were a plan for the distant future. For others, autonomy and independence could be exercised without owning a home, but were nevertheless dependent upon improving and modifying their current housing conditions.

Professional Sphere: School to Work

During the transition to adulthood, the contemporary school to work sphere is typically concerned with the transition from being a student in high school to becoming a full time permanent employee earning a livable wage. In the contemporary context, this transition is characterized by the successful completion of high school, the pursuit of post secondary education, part-time work during high school and post-secondary studies, and the hope that eventual permanent employment will align with the course of study pursued by the young person and their interests. The analysis of the results highlighted three areas of significance in the professional sphere of the co-researchers. The first addresses education and learning, the second relates to work and income, and the third highlights the co-researcher's future school and work aspirations.

Education and Learning

The themes of education and learning emerged as significant in the stories the co-researchers told about their school experiences. Their stories raised two questions: how does one or should one access education and what counts as learning? The themes of mainstream educational institutions and alternative learning experiences dominated the co-researchers' discussions of their education and learning. With regard to their experiences in mainstream educational institutions, the analysis showed that these experiences were characterized by narratives of exclusion, judgement, and intolerance and the co-researchers' reflections on their alternative learning experiences highlight issues relating to what counts as legitimate learning.

When telling stories about their experiences of mainstream educational institutions, the co-researchers included reflections on their peers and on their teachers, as well as on the institutional

policies and practices that circumscribed their ability to stay in traditional education environments. With regard to their peers, judgement, bullying, and exclusion were experiences common to the co-researchers:

It was a pretentious high school with a lot of white people that are pretty big bullies... so, it was full of dicks and all that. (Stan, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

I was never allowed to play hockey because my parents couldn't afford it, so I didn't have that privilege. So, I didn't get to fit in with that social clique. I identified with all the other people at my school who were in the same socioeconomic class as me. It definitely had an effect on my sense of self. I went to a school where there was a lot of rich kids. A lot of them. I never had the same clothes the other kids had. I didn't you know, have 30 ball caps, I didn't have 30 pairs of shoes, or even four, I didn't even have two. So, you know, I got treated as such by those kids, by those who had more privilege than me. ... yeah, that helped to shape my identity. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)

I think I was about 12 when I was telling my mom every day I was getting bullied a lot. I was like coming home, I was crying, and I was really grumpy. And my uncle was like, there is something going on with Julianna, she is not happy. I had even told my mom I wanted to switch schools... so as a solution they tried putting me in ESL [English as a second language], to separate me from people. (Julianna, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

The stories of Stan, Blake, and Julianna demonstrate that they were subjected to racism and classism by their peers. As immigrants and people of colour, Stan and Julianna were treated differently because of their skin colour: they were different than the white kids. Stan and Blake describe being treated differently, being treated poorly, by their peers because they came from contexts of poverty. Julianna's experience reveals a secondary and systemic form of social exclusion and racism. The school's solution to the bullying was to put her in an ESL class, which is akin to victim blaming. Rather than address the bullying or the bullies, she was removed from the situation and put in a second language class, one which she did not need, but could be justified based on her race and status as an immigrant.

Teachers and principals (authority figures within the school context) were not universally vilified in the co-researchers' stories of their school experiences. However, the principal difference made by co-researchers who spoke about 'good' authority figures and 'bad' authority figures is that while the 'good' ones were memorable, their influence was never cited as being sufficient to keep the co-researchers in high school, whereas the 'bad' authority figures played a prominent role in the co-researcher's early school leaving:

Education all depends on whether or not your teacher cares or whether or not you care for an education. A lot of [teachers] they don't believe in a lot of people from the neighbourhood, so they're not going to see their potential. (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

I got kicked out of grade 12 three or four times. And I could have passed every single time, but ah, the vice principal was a really sick man and he killed my educational hopes and dreams at an early age. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)

They tried to tell me that I had Oppositional Defiance Disorder, which was even not from a counsellor, it was just a teacher who told me that. I asked to see a counsellor one day and they said "I don't think you need to see a counsellor, I think you just need to finish your homework and come in on time". So, I was like "eee..." So eventually one day, my principal told me "Ok, either you can try to get a job or you can come to school on time every day." And I was like "Wait, I actually have the choice to not go to school and try to have a job?" Probably not the best thing to say to a 14-year-old who doesn't like school in the first place. So, I went and tried to get a job and then my mom kicked me out because she didn't like the idea of me not going to school. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

My experience with high schools is that principals and teachers will categorize you and then always blame you for stuff that you've never done. Like, if your group of friends did something but you have nothing to do with it you're also in trouble. (Lain, age 19, Phase One Focus Group on Policy #2)

In grade seven I made a penny bomb and it went off. I whipped it at the chalk board when we were just coming into our French class. Our teacher, what she did was she took the six worst kids in the class, and just lined them up in the hallway and called the principal on us. She didn't know who did it. She had no idea that it was one of us six even... She was assuming and so she called the principal, and she left us out in the hallway, and everybody was nervous. They were all "man up Ryan, just say you did it" ... Fuck that you know! She

doesn't know, she has no idea who did it, she's just discriminating right now, I said to stick to "none of us did it" and none of us got in trouble, but still, the fact that she just took the seven biggest trouble makers in the class and automatically assumed that it was one of us and sent us all to the hallways, was pretty messed up. (Ryan, age 25, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy, #2).

The co-researchers' experiences showed that their experiences with authority figures in the mainstream school system often ranged from feeling like nobody believed in them to feeling like people actively assumed the worst about them. Having authority figures repeatedly blame them, suspend them, and demonstrate an indifference to their academic success had the cumulative effect that the co-researchers left high school early. In fact, 14 (67%) of the co-researchers in Phase One left high school early while seven (33%) had finished high school. Six (28%) of the co-researchers either had or were in the process of returning to formal education at the time of the study, through one means or another, such as an adult education school, an art school, or self-directed learning in order to write their GED. Only one co-researcher proceeded to university upon completion of her high school diploma, however she left university before finishing her degree.

Despite low rates of high school graduation and disproportionately high negative experiences within the mainstream education system, the co-researchers placed a high value on learning and education. However, while their efforts to complete traditional education through GEDs or alternative adult education suggests a recognition of the social value of formalized education for their resume, they were very vocal about the non-institutional learning that they had acquired through their varied and challenging life experiences.

That they placed a high value on their alternative educational experiences was a theme that first came up in Phase One during the discussion group assembled to review the sociodemographic questionnaire. The co-researchers initiated a discussion regarding the question on the questionnaire that addressed their 'educational achievement'. It was identified that the word 'achievement' could cause someone to be made to feel dumb for not having had traditional successes within the traditional education stream. As John explained:

I'm a pretty intelligent person even though I went to grade 9. But, I'm very street smart, very smart in other things. There's a lot of other people out there that are your age that, for instance, here's an analogy, that are graduated from high school, going to college, stayed at home, still live at home with their parents. But you're out on your ass, at you know, 14, 15, trying to support yourself right. That doesn't mean they're any smarter than you are because you've learned a lot of other stuff on the street that could make you, that if they had to do what you do on the street every day, they'd be lost because they've lived a totally different life. (John, age 26, Phase One, Focus Group on Sociodemographic Questionnaire)

The beliefs that not having finished high school did not mean they were dumb, and that valued learning had occurred in the scope of their daily life experiences related to surviving challenging circumstances, were shared by the co-researchers involved in the group discussion as well as many in their answers in the Phase Two sociodemographic questionnaire and in their semi-structured interviews.

The co-researchers' alternative learning experiences were wide ranging. For example, Mark's interest in psychology developed as a result of time spent living with a particular roommate:

I shared a room with the friend and ah, yeah, he was some crazy. His personality got me interested in psychology. I forgot to write that [on my questionnaire] as something that I learned outside of school. (Mark, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

In general, the learning that was valued by the co-researchers was learning that aligned with their interests but that also had a value and application for their daily lives. For example, of those co-researchers who had returned to school, some were taking art courses, one was enrolled in a youth employment programme, and two were upgrading their school credits in order to qualify for specific college programmes that interested them.

The learning they did in non-traditional environments was classified into two categories. The first was learning concrete skills. Examples taken from the Phase Two sociodemographic questionnaire include:

- *Basic math skills by panhandling;*
- *How to help someone who was overdosing;*
- *How to budget and prioritize living expenses;*
- *Project planning and implementation;*
- *Harm reduction;*
- *Public speaking;*
- *Learned about the law, addictions, social resources and mental illness;*
- *Computers, writing, geopolitics;*
- *How to make money.*

The second category was learning more abstract skills, equally important to surviving street involvement. Once again, examples were taken from the Phase Two sociodemographic questionnaire:

- *How to be responsible for actions and understanding consequences more;*
- *Learning what types of people to trust;*
- *That doing the right thing often isn't by doing the right thing;*
- *I have learned about people: what drives us, perspectives, beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, human nature (good and bad);*
- *Street culture and the social dynamics of street life.*
- *Independence. I had to rely on myself and my well being.*

Deriving from interest as well as from need, the co-researchers' learning was largely self-directed and for the acquisition of this knowledge they relied on their own ingenuity, their reflexive capabilities, and non-traditional tools, rather than on school based text books and knowledge passed on through teachers:

I'm mostly self-educated. I believe in self-education. I'm half way through high school, but I don't like that setting. It's not for me, it's not my style of learning if you will. But I do plan to finish it, I just procrastinate. But I plan to finish it for sure. I got half way through my GED, I think that's the way I'm going to go about it: do my GED. Cause I really want to go to college. That's more my style of learning. I don't like high school. I'm more of a hands-on kinda of... and I like to teach myself. I watch a lot of documentaries. I'm always reading. I like a lot of nonfiction and things like that. I spend hours reading Wikipedia and things like that. (Ryan, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

Significantly, the mainstream formal education system was described as having failed the co-researchers in terms of preparing them for their street involvement. As Lain explains:

They never teach you that stuff in high school. They never teach like, how to protect yourself, how to get food, how to find your own shelter, how to make friends that aren't in your class, how to do your taxes, teach you to drive ... (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

Not only are these things not taught in high school, but the co-researchers' experiences suggest that this learning is not socially valued or socially legitimized. For example, there is no

diploma or certificate for having learned how to survive absolute homelessness at the age of 14, as was Jane's experience. There is no recognized mechanism that lends legitimacy to the learning that occurs in the street. In other words, there is no socially acceptable way to put their learning on their resume. Meagan, in a note she wrote at home and brought in during Phase One as a contribution to the research project, offered a suggestion to help address these problems in terms of access to learning opportunities:

You know WHIMIS and CPR Training. It would be cool if there were training lessons that specified in certain job positions like:

- *How to manage a retail store*
or
- *Bank Training*

If it were free and only known to people in shelters or youth drop-ins, like OCH, YSB or other humanitarian services we'd have our foot in the door to a better life. That would make me happy. (Meagan, age 22, Phase One Personal Letter One)

Meagan's note highlights the desire for concrete and tangible skill acquisition that will be socially recognized. It also highlights the desire shared by the co-researchers to be able to have a 'legit job' and participate in the formal economy, a topic addressed more fully in the subsequent section.

Work and Income: Money Generating Activities

In the co-researchers' stories about their experiences with money generation activities four elements emerged as significant: the nature and characteristics of their work, the link between education and work, off-the-books work, and social assistance. As the title of this section suggests,

I am reframing the concepts of work and income to better represent the entirety of the ‘work’ experiences described by the co-researchers’ as well as to highlight the challenges they face when it comes to ‘working.’ Accordingly, I have replaced the concepts of ‘work’ and ‘income’ with ‘money generating activities.’ The former two terms connote legal and taxable employment. The scope of activities in which the co-researchers engaged in order to meet their basic needs extended beyond the confines of legal and taxable employment, all the while retaining, from the co-researchers view point, a certain legitimacy because of the learning, skill, effort, and time involved in the activity or because there was no other way for them to meet their basic needs. Therefore, illegal activities, such as theft and drug selling, and legal “off-the-books” activities (Phase One, Focus Group on the Sociodemographic Questionnaire), such as panhandling, were seen by the co-researchers to be as valid as “legit jobs” (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview). In Phase One, where work was more narrowly defined on the sociodemographic questionnaire, five (24%) co-researchers indicated that they were engaged in money generating activities, and in Phase Two, 13 (62%) of the co-researchers indicated that they were engaged in money generating activities.

The co-researchers had engaged in the following forms of money generating activities: door-to-door commission based sales, being involved in the music industry, providing child care, being a merchandiser, a shelf stocker, a part time labourer, and a farm helper, selling drugs, panhandling, selling their art through the P4Y program, prostitution, working in the food industry, customer service, busking, and theft. In general, the co-researchers’ money generating experiences were precarious.

The co-researchers told stories of being fired for their appearance or for being pregnant, they cited verbal abuse and harassment from colleagues and supervisors, and much of the off-the-books work put them at risk of coming into contact with the law. Money generating activities were generally poorly remunerated. The co-researchers were earning minimum wage or less. Two mentioned not returning to a past work place to collect their final pay. One co-researcher's commission based sales job meant that she never got paid at all for her time. Money generating activities were generally short-term or sporadic, with the co-researchers quitting jobs that had abusive work environments, leaving jobs because of their own substance use and mental health challenges, or engaging in money generating activities that didn't involve a set schedule and didn't guarantee a certain level of income, such as busking, panhandling, and selling their art. None of the co-researchers had part-time or full-time permanent 'on-the-books' money generating activities that earned them a livable wage.

The co-researchers identified a link between their level of education and their difficulties accessing stable and socially sanctioned money generating activities: a high school education or higher was required first to get a job, and second for that job to pay a livable wage. The co-researchers explained that it was inappropriate and unfair that a certain level of education was required in order to access even the most basic and entry-level of positions:

I don't have no credits in high school so I can't write a resume. I have written a resume, but the education topic, I didn't even put that in there cause I have no education. You have to know, math, you have to know this, you have to know that, you have to know history to be able to be a dishwasher in a restaurant? You have to know social studies to be able to sweep a floor at night? Like, what the fuck? (Natalie, age 20, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #2)

Natalie astutely observed that without at minimum a high school diploma it is hard to access even an entry level job. The co-researchers pointed out that the consequence was that they were unable to better their financial situation within the legal job market. Additionally, the co-researchers understood that if despite a limited education, they were able to get an entry level job, that job would not afford them the money needed to achieve their life goals or to realize the social mobility to which they aspired. The frustration with being either totally excluded from employment opportunities or the realization that employment opportunities and income would be limited as a result of their education and social situation meant that for some of the co-researchers such as Blake, engaging in off-the-books forms of money generation was necessary or preferable:

Yeah, I learned at an early age that it was much easier to make more money illegally than it is to make money working the “honest way”. I learned that I could make a great deal more money than I could working any job that I was qualified for in much shorter amount of time with much less effort however the means was illegal. You might get lucky, and as a teenager and have a gardening job but most everything you’re gonna get are what they call entry level, and require no formal education or experience and you therefore have to settle with minimum wage. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)

Social assistance played a major role in the co-researcher’s sources of money generation. It was accessed by and served as the principle source of income for 16 of 21 co-researchers in Phase One (76%) and for 12 of 16 co-researchers in Phase Two (75%). The types of financial social assistance received the co-researchers indicated that they received included Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Ontario Works (OW), Child Subsidy, and the Street Allowance. While the majority of the co-researchers accessed social assistance, feelings were mixed about its use and its usefulness. The predominant feeling expressed by the co-researchers was that while social assistance, notably OW and ODSP, were necessary for survival and for

meeting their basic needs, the monthly amount was insufficient. For example, Naomi explained that she received in total \$725 a month, with \$425 automatically assigned to her rent. The remaining \$300 had to cover all her other expenses, including groceries, bus pass, cell phone, internet, heat and hydro, cigarettes etc.

While the view that social assistance was both necessary and insufficient was common to most of the co-researchers, others expressed concern with how it was being used. When asked if OW was enough to live on, Mark explained the following:

That's a hard one to say because the money is not meant for cigarettes and things like that, but everyone I know who is on OW is a smoker. But if the person wasn't a smoker I'd say it could be enough to be comfortable for one week a month, but that is about it. Cause, especially healthy food, its more expensive. Like, fruits and vegetables and things like that. I don't think it is enough but it's better than what some other people have. I just, you know, even the people I know who are on it, they abuse it too, and I think it's just unfortunate. (Mark, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

While Mark concluded, like Naomi, that the amount of money provided by social assistance is not enough, he was concerned that the money provided by social assistance was used to support addictions, which he suggested is not its purpose. As Julianna explained, she preferred to have no income then to be on social assistance:

Susannah: So, while you didn't have a job, did you get any OW or ODSP?

Julianna: No, I didn't want to be. I was avoiding it at all costs. Cause I've seen too many people use it for the wrong reasons. I had one friend who ah, they ended up, anyways, they ended up not paying their rent, they were living off bread and frosting, and spending all their money on weed and booze. (Julianna, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

While the fear or possibility of ‘mis-using’ social assistance was very real for Julianna, Emily explained the role of social assistance in her own substance use journey:

Ontario Works is a great resource. They helped me get on assistance, which helped me fund my drug addiction, but it also gave me the time to deal with my drug addiction. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

The results show that some of the co-researchers had concerns about how social assistance is spent. However, Emily’s nuanced reflection on the relationship between her substance use and her social assistance offers an important insight and reminder for youth transitions research. For the co-researchers, coupled with money, time could be a valuable resource. The co-researchers benefitted from social supports that allowed them to ‘deal’ with their struggles in the absence of supports that youth in general receive from their family.

Future Aspirations: School and Work

Of the 16 co-researchers who participated in the Phase Two semi-structured interviews, all addressed, at least briefly, their future school and work aspirations. The two principal results that emerged from the co-researchers’ discussion of their professional aspirations related to their passion for helping people and to the difficulties anticipated in the pursuit of their goals. For all the co-researchers, it was clear that their future professional and academic aspirations were tied to wanting to help people. To do so, nine of the co-researchers hoped to draw on their life experiences relating to abuse, violence, crime, mental health, and street involvement. For example, Avery’s experience of court-ordered community service in an elementary school inspired him to want to go to university to study social work. He dreamed of becoming a youth social worker to “make a

difference in people's lives", (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview) as he had done while doing his community service:

Once I'm done my studies I want to be like one of those youth social workers, cause like, when I was volunteering at the school, like I told you earlier, I used to have the kids coming up to me and talking to me about their problem, and a lot of the times when I was helping them fix their problem it made me feel really good about myself. (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

Eva intended to draw on her own experiences of mental illness. She felt that the best help she had received was from people who had lived experience with mental illness and so she aspired to be a support for others the way that some professionals had supported her:

Susannah: *Do you have a dream job?*

Eva: *Maybe being ah, a counsellor or something. Something like that.*

Susannah: *Draw on some of your personal experience?*

Eva: *Yeah, yeah. Cause I can definitely tell the difference when I talk to a professional that's been through stuff and the ones that haven't. And it's just completely, the bad experiences are with the people that are just completely cold and they're just like, they have no idea what it's like.*

Susannah: *So it helps when you are talking to someone who has gone through something?*

Eva: *Yeah, and you can tell, you can tell. If they just nod their head and kinda, like, don't know what to say. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)*

For other co-researchers, their desire to help others did not necessarily involve paid work, but for the time being involved volunteering. For example, Naomi hoped to volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club and Meagan and Tessa hoped to volunteer with street outreach teams.

For the other seven co-researchers, the desire to help others was tied to their passions as artists, rather than to their personal experience. For example, Stan hoped to have a job where he

got to be creative (Stan, age 24, Phase Two Interview), as an artist or a farmer. Blake hoped to combine his passion for music with therapy, becoming a musical therapy professional. Emily hoped to become an electrician, in part to have a financially solid “fall back” (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview) career, but primarily so that she could inspire and uplift people through modern light installations:

I got a message from somebody at the festival and they said, “you were so magical and inspiring. Thank you”. And it’s like, “Yes!” It’s like, I can spread that, you know. So, I’m really glad to know that I can help people be more positive and grow. It’s just like, just gonna keep growing you know. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

These results demonstrate that the co-researcher saw themselves as a force for positivity in the lives of others and as people who have immense value and who can contribute positively, both socially and economically, to society.

However, a high degree of realism was expressed by the co-researchers with regard to what needed to happen in order for them to achieve their goals: they were aware that their professional aspirations were by no means a given. The co-researchers identified a multitude of factors that would be necessary in order for them to realize their dreams, including needing to relocate to another city, needing to stop using substances, needing encouragement from other people in their lives, needing to work very hard, needing money and other resources, needing to overcome employer stigma and discrimination, needing some form of education, and needing experience in their field to compensate for a lack of formal education. They also indicated the need for time, often years, to get everything in order that needs to happen. Blake astutely ties these barriers to a

lack of privilege, noting the extra work and effort it will take to make his dreams come true as well as to earn the income he wants for himself:

Susannah: *And what do you have to do in that time to make that happen?*

Blake: *I have to work my ass off. I have to make tons of sacrifices. I have to do so much to get there. It's going to be really hard. You know, I wasn't privileged to even have a computer growing up. You know, I wasn't even allowed cable growing up.*

Susannah: *You talked about making sacrifices. What sacrifices do you envision going forward, to pull it all off?*

Blake: *Time, I have to sacrifice my time. I have to stress, I have to sweat, I have to lose sleep, I have to work hard, I have to put out effort, I have to like... I have to... mostly my time. It's mostly my time and time is the thing. I have to put a lot of time in, and I'm gonna have to be wise with my decision making. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)*

Two of the co-researchers expressed discouragement and a skepticism regarding the possibility of ever realizing their career objectives. For Ryan, the challenges that lay ahead were not enough to entirely dissuade him, but they left him uncertain:

Ryan: *But it takes a long time to become a gas fitter. About five years. Take about five years of my time.*

Susannah: *So that would be a long term plan?*

Ryan: *Yeah. But you know...maybe I could pull it off. (Ryan, age 25, Phase Two Interview)*

For Jessica, past experience had taught her to not count too much on future plans working out. In discussing her professional aspirations, Jessica described a reluctance to plan too far into the future:

Susannah: *Do you plan? For tomorrow, for a week from now? Do you plan an hour from now?*

***Jessica:** I just take one day at a time. I try to make little plans, but nothing too big. One thing at a time. It's hard to make plans when they don't always go the way you want them to.*

***Susannah:** It can be disappointing when they don't go the way you want?*

***Jessica:** Yeah, that's why I don't put my hopes too high. I just try to be a happy go lucky every day kind of person. Even though it's shitty sometimes, you try to make the best out of it. (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

It was self-evident for the co-researchers that the ability to realize their professional aspirations was not a given and for these two co-researchers in particular, the knowledge that life did not necessarily go the way they wanted was enough to prevent them from having firm professional aspirations.

Financial Sphere

Given that finances are tied to employment, there is considerable overlap between the financial sphere and the professional sphere. Income, in relation to employment, was addressed in the professional sphere. However, in addition to the tangible realities of money generating activities, the co-researchers' relationship to money and to financial systems, as well as to their ideas about the effects of having money and of not having money, on their lives and on their well-being, emerged as a significant theme in the results, and are presented here.

The co-researchers' discussions of their relationship to money were unambiguous: the recurring theme was that money, and financial systems, notably capitalism, were evil, but a necessary evil. In this sense, the co-researchers described a love-hate relationship with money:

Money is the only thing that makes anything possible though. You know, as much as I'd like to be, like have the idea of "oh, no money", like you know "hippie love" you know, NO – you do need money! (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Money: the root of all evil

As for the negative side of the conflicting relationship, money was described as disgusting, hateful, and as the root of all evil:

Money is such a disgusting horrible thing that runs our lives and, even to like breath air, you have to pay money, to do anything in life you have to pay money. I hate that... I really, really hate it. And its just like, working for money and spending money, just really disgusts me. If I could have one wish in life, its to not have money exist. (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

If ever people were created equal, children born into a world where they're on equal level to each other, they will experience less socioeconomic problems. As cliché as it is, money being the root of all evil, if we reduced the socioeconomic problems that come with poverty, and varying degrees of poverty, [children would be] less likely to experience trauma in their lives that can contribute to mental health issues. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)

That's where social assistance comes into social structure. Social assistance comes hand in hand with low class people. You want these low-class people to stop doing crimes? Give them more money a month. You want your streets to be safe, it all roots down to money. Money is the root of all evil. Somebody doesn't have money they are going to shoot somebody for money, they are going to rob a bank for money, they are going to sell drugs for money. Its money. (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

As the data shows, financial systems, and not having money, were perceived as evil because they were limiting factors. As Blake described above, they limited the co-researchers' life opportunities in a deterministic sense, restricting their access to opportunities making it difficult to achieve what other Canadian youth achieve. Moreover, money systems and their lack of money not only cost the co-researchers in terms of restrictions, but it did them additional harm in that it

contributed additional struggles to their lives, such as mental health issues. While Lain stressed his personal distaste for money, Blake and Avery's comments reveal the systemic nature of financial inequality. Naomi shared a concrete and practical example of this financially rooted systemic injustice. She explained that the City of Ottawa had recently changed its transit system's payment process and switched from an emphasis on tickets to pre-loaded 'Presto Cards'. When Naomi attempted to load her card with the six dollars she had, she was informed that a minimum of 10 dollars was required to load a card. This meant she had to purchase bus tickets instead – which were more expensive per ride, than the fare charged per ride when you used a loaded card. The consequence was that those with less money had to pay more for the same service than those with more money. Naomi summed up the situation eloquently:

It's just like annoying, a system created to make you poor and keep you poor. (Naomi, age 23, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #1)

As Avery described above, as a result of the limits imposed by poverty, the co-researchers tended to seek non-socially sanctioned¹⁸ ways of making up the difference. For Naomi, this meant jumping the bus (traveling without paying) rather than paying the premium for tickets.

Blake, Avery, and Naomi's insights reflected the sentiment shared by the co-researchers in general: the fact that they were living in poverty was not an indicator of personal failing or individual deficiency. They were keenly aware that the problem was structural, that money systems were 'keeping them down':

¹⁸ Attention has been paid here to not use the word illegal. The co-researchers pointed out that the distinction made between legal (e.g. methadone) and illegal (e.g. heroin) often seemed arbitrary from their point of view and simply done in order to favour the wealthy and privileged.

The system that we live in is not set up to facilitate the lower classes to be able to jump the social echelons to get to a higher point and have more. To become...the system does not provide opportunity for the poor to become wealthy. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)

Being kept down manifested itself in various specific ways. Mark and Lain spoke of the challenges and negative effects that being short on money could have on their relationships with their roommates: if in a given month you could not pay your portion of the bills or rent this could lead to tension with roommates and put your housing in jeopardy. Mark and Blake spoke of how having limited finances impinged on their ability to make healthy food choices, which they saw as affecting their health. Tessa offered a similar reflection, but in her case her limited finances meant that she felt she could not provide healthy food choices for her children and on one occasion was caught stealing milk, which resulted in a criminal record, in an attempt to provide proper nutrition for her children.

Not having enough money was also tied to debt, and to negative consequences of debt. Several of the co-researchers spoke of situations of owing money to other people or to financial institutions. Jessica was “hopeful” that the fact she was not in a position to pay back the money she owed to another individual would not have serious consequences for her:

Jessica: *So, art group is closed today eh?*

Susannah: *Yeah*

Jessica: *So, that sucks.*

Susannah: *That does suck. You were looking forward to that?*

Jessica: *Well, kinda. It just, it would have helped me pay this person back. Cause I like to pay people back right away instead of ...*

Susannah: *Having to wait?*

Jessica: *And it's not that much of a big deal, it's not that bad. I'm not getting killed for that... for that amount.*

Susannah: *Good.*

Jessica: *So, it's not that bad. Hopefully.*

Susannah: *Yeah – hopefully!*

Jessica: *No – I don't think he'll make much of an issue. [He] just won't do that same favour again. I don't mind really. (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

As he explained it, Mark borrowed money from his mother to spend on drugs and alcohol, and from his roommates to cover rent. In the case of his roommates, this led to strained relationships at home, as his roommates were not happy that he could not afford his portion of rent. Julianna hoped to start a business, and was taking a business course from a local youth homelessness service provider. However, because of her debt she was unable to begin the process of opening her business, and it had been recommended to her that she declare bankruptcy. For the co-researchers, debt had consequences for the quality of their relationships, for their sense of safety, and for their future plans.

For Blake and Meagan, the effect of limited finances on their ability to eat nutritiously was tied into their ability to make choices that would further their social mobility. For both, the need to make money in order to eat well ran in direct conflict with their desire to attend school, and both recognized that they could not do both, make money and go to school simultaneously, and have the same level of success at either as when they did them one at a time. Ultimately, this meant that they attended school and ate less well, and performed less well at school. As Meagan explained:

Like, with the situation I'm in I can either go to school and have no money, or I could panhandle and not go to school but have money and be able to do groceries. Cause welfare is only 100\$, that's gone in like... and even though they'd pay for a Presto Pass¹⁹ to go to the school, it's really not paying for anything else, whereas I'd need more food now, cause I'm moving around a lot and people aren't giving me sandwiches on the streets (when I'm

¹⁹ A Presto Pass is a City of Ottawa bus pass.

at school). So, I don't know, you kinda get stuck here once you're here. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

Meagan's explanation highlights the dilemma both she, Blake, and the other co-researchers frequently faced, that of trying to make choices to improve their lives but in incredibly limited circumstances. Meagan's statement that "you kinda get stuck here once you're here" (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview) also resonates with Blake's reflection, quoted above, that the system is not designed for people living in poverty to improve their situation, and that in fact, the whole financial system rests on the fact that some people remain poor.

Money: increasing opportunities and a source of possibility and hope

With regard to the positive side of the co-researchers' love-hate relationship to money, while money was described as evil and problematic and a source of structural injustice, it was also common among the co-researchers to wish they had more of it. This is because while money was problematic, it was also the gateway to good things. Stan articulated the tension between wanting to reject money and the need for it in order to improve his life and that of his growing family:

Well, I guess money is not right because you need it to eat and survive and whatever. There's always not enough. No matter how hard you try. I don't know. I don't really care too much about money, but I know like right now, like when I have a kid I have to like double up what I'm doing to like, get even more, and that's going to be super stressful. (Stan, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

For Stan, having money was key to providing the necessities for his future child. Similarly, for Tessa, having money meant providing for her son. She explained during Phase One of the

research project that the money she received that night for her participation meant that she had enough money to make her son's birthday cake. For Lain, having money meant being able to buy nice clothes. For Emily, the thought of having money meant being able to, eventually, have a life where she could pursue her passions and realize her dreams:

I feel like with money I can do a lot of things. Because, for me, right now, I have 15\$ in my bank account, and that's it till the end of the month. I have my VISA too, but I'd like to not use it, so, two dollars, three dollars, is a lot for me, being someone who is on the street, and being someone who is on assistance. Whereas two, three dollars to someone else is like nothing. They could like throw that down the sewer and not care you know. So, it's um, it's giving me great value and it's helped me realize that when I do make a lot of money, I'm not going to spend my money. I'm going to save it, and I'm gonna have amazing things. I'm going to have beautiful black lights set up all over my house with the most gorgeous art and I'm going to have the most psychedelic life. I'm gonna be going to festivals all over the world. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

For Blake, having money meant eating better which improved his health. For Emily and Julianna, having money would mean being able to pay off debts.

Saving money in order to travel was a common theme among the co-researchers: Ryan was trying to save money so that he could make a trip to Niagara Falls, Tessa and Emily were both saving for trips to India, Julianna was hoping to travel to her home in Nicaragua, and Lain was saving for extensive travel to Mexico, Amsterdam, and Vancouver.

In sum, the results showed that money was sorely lacking in the lives of the co-researchers. As Naomi put it, "I'm broke a lot" (Naomi, age 23, Phase Two Interview). The co-researchers expressed a general distaste for money, as it was seen as a social evil and a source of social injustice. It limited their access to opportunities and created circumstances where their choices put

them in conflict with the law in order to meet their basic needs. Nevertheless, money was necessary, and seen as a source of hope and possibility and all of the co-researchers aspired to increase their access to money to one degree or another, as it would allow them to improve their circumstances. Tessa's description of her relationship to money encapsulated this tension:

Tessa: *I think everybody thinks its [money] what everything is about. I think everybody is like, just in it for the money now, which is stupid, cause its paper. Little pieces of paper. Sometimes I get mad, and I rip up money, and then I regret it.*

Susannah: *Really?!*

Tessa: *Yeah. I really don't like it. Bad feeling, money in general, having it and like, the power it holds behind it, and everything to do with it is scary, and I don't like it. But at the same time, that's all that everybody is working for. I'm just thinking, what would be a good idea, is to save it until I get really old and then use it for something, like building a little house or something, or traveling somewhere, or retiring and dying in a place where I feel safe. (Tessa, age 24, Phase Two Interview)*

Relational Sphere

Traditionally, the relational sphere addresses the transition from living with the family of origin, being in a couple, getting married, having children, and thereby starting a new family unit. In its contemporary formulation, the relational sphere has been framed as the transition from a state of dependence on one's family of origin to having others depend on you, such as a significant other or a child. This transition is achieved through a process of gaining independence and autonomy in the relationships with the family of origin. This contemporary formulation no longer requires marriage as a final indicator, nor does it stipulate a transition to the traditional nuclear family model. The results in the relationship sphere from this current study therefore emerged from all significant data that related to relationship development – leaving and building relationships – as well as ultimately the process of becoming responsible for others in the broadest of senses.

It should be noted that relationships, particularly those with the family of origin, figured less prominently in the data collected for the current study. This was for two reasons. First, street involved youth leave home earlier than youth in general, typically due to family conflict. Accordingly, it is not surprising that in many cases ties to the family of origin are either severed entirely or they are limited or strained.

Secondly, given that current study focused on social structures, and that in and of themselves interpersonal relationships are not social structures, relationships were rarely the explicit focus of discussions. Rather, relationships were addressed in a secondary way, and as a function of another topic, such as housing.

Relationships with parents

The data showed that all but one co-researcher became independent of their family of origin very early, on average at the age of 16.5, before having completed their secondary education, and typically without a concrete or stable plan for where they would stay next. As was discussed in the residential sphere, the departure from the family of origin was typically the result of family conflict, which in most cases was conflict with parents.

Despite an early departure from the family of origin, for some of the co-researchers, the relationship with their parents was either never entirely severed or it was rebuilt over the years. This meant that for some of the co-researchers, their relationship with their parent(s) was characterized by friendship and this was greatly valued by the co-researchers:

Oh fuck, my mom is my best friend. (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

My mom is good. I can talk to her about anything, she is my crazy lady, I love her. She is cool. She is kind of ignorantly helpful is the way to put it. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

In addition to emotional support derived from friendship, housing was the primary type of support received by co-researchers who had ongoing and active relationships with their parent(s), with parents often not charging rent or saving the rent that came from the co-researchers' OW or ODSP so that the co-researcher could save up for their own place or for a return to school:

And my mom is extremely supportive in the sense that she allows me to live at home and pay minimal rent and save the rest of my cheque to do what I want to do in life because she never had that chance you know, to like just do whatever she wanted. So, she's giving me the chance to, to test the waters, around places, since I missed out on those few years in such a crucial time in my life you know. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

I'm on ODSP. I pay my mom rent but she just saves the money for me. I'm really lucky to have that. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

It was common for the co-researchers to return to living with their family of origin, on and off, when the relationship was doing well. The co-researchers expressed that during those times it was great to benefit from, in particular, the financial advantages of having housing provided by their parents.

Becoming responsible for others

In terms of the transition from depending on the family of origin to becoming responsible for others, for some co-researchers this meant starting a new family unit. At the time of the study,

seven of the co-researchers were living with their romantic partner and all of the co-researchers save two had had a romantic relationship at some point in their lives. Four of the co-researchers currently had children or were expecting children, and three of the co-researchers identified having had children that had been permanently placed in the custody of child protective services.

However, the results revealed that being responsible for others extended beyond traditional relationships with children and significant others. For example, Mark's commitment to a particular friend was so strong that he relocated across the country when she became sick. Eva, who struggled with severe mental illness, felt so responsible for her siblings that she explained that despite the desire to take her own life she had on several occasions put off suicide attempts because of how it would devastate her siblings. Similarly, Jessica chose to sleep outside with her boyfriend rather than be separated by shelters that are gender specific. Meagan's commitment to her dog was a relationship she prioritized above all others, even above her own well-being, a point she addressed in a "arty letter" she wrote at home and brought in during Phase One as a contribution to the study:

Dear Ottawa U,

We have a serious need for a shelter that will take pets. I get my face tenderized every time my ex comes home but I can't leave because I cannot leave my dog behind or give him up as he is my reason to wake up each day and the reason I wipe the blood from my lips and carry on.

It's too cold to sleep outside now and I can only imagine how worse off other women are who are in the same boat.

I love my body, but it will heal. My dog, my "Best Friend" cannot be replaced.

Though I might die with blood in my mouth, I hope to spare the lives of others. (Meagan, age 22, Phase One, Personal Letter Two)

Meagan's letter illustrates the way social structures (shelters) are organized to her disadvantage, the violence in her same-sex relationship and the impact it has on her physical well-being, the depth of her relationship with her dog and the value that relationship adds to her life, and the precarity of her housing. Her letter illustrates how the various spheres of adulthood overlap, with explicit references to housing and relationships, and implicit understanding that money (financial sphere) would help to alleviate some of the issues described here. Identity and citizenship are also implicitly present, in that the desire to help others is a form of social engagement, and the way she speaks about her dog, her best friend, reflects her values and touches on where she derives meaning in life. All these examples speak to the fact that while the sense of responsibility for someone other than themselves in these examples did not always fit the traditional children/spouse model, the gravity of the consequences that came from the choices the co-researchers made reflects the depth of responsibility they felt and had assumed.

Relationships revealing social structures

While relationships do not constitute social structures, they were often an indicator of subtly embedded abstract social structures and structural violence. For example, in terms of leaving home, both Meagan and Lain had to leave home because their parents did not accept their sexual orientation or gender identity. This reflects heteronormativity. Additionally, for a number of the female co-researchers, their relationships with their significant others revealed examples of violence against women, including rape, physical and psychological violence, and economic violence. This reflects patriarchy.

In addition to relationships reflecting structural violence deriving from patriarchy and heteronormativity, the co-researchers' reflections on their (in)ability to be dependent financially on their family of origin demonstrated the structural violence of poverty, financial structures, and capitalism. Avery explained that when he was growing up his parents did not have the financial means to provide for him or rather, how at least looking back, he could not figure out how his parents managed to provide for him given their low income:

My mom was on assistance when I was growing up you know, she fed me on two dollars a day. I don't know how she did it, but she did it. And then, at 11 she taught me how to make money, not the best way of making money but at least she was thinking about her son never going broke. (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interviews)

The co-researchers' discussions of the poverty of their family of origin revealed that this poverty meant that at a young age they realized that they needed to be, or needed to become, independent, and that they would have to learn to rely on themselves. As was discussed in the residential sphere, for Eva this meant recognizing that she was better fed if she became independent of her family of origin and moved to a shelter. Blake explained what effect the poverty of his family of origin had on his self-conception as well as on his life chances and opportunities:

I grew up poor... My entire life you know, my whole youth life, I grew up, with a sense of certainty that anything that I get for myself has to come from me and only me. My parents could not afford to send me to school, nor would they. I was a musician but I didn't have the luxury of my parents buying me instruments. You know, I was never allowed to play hockey because my parents couldn't afford it. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)

With regard to the relational sphere, the results reveal that in addition to considerable overlap between the relational sphere and the residential sphere, there was considerable overlap

between the relational sphere and financial matters. In general, the results show that the co-researchers achieved independence and autonomy from the family of origin early in their transition to adulthood. For some, it was possible to renew relations with their parents, which allowed them access to the benefits of the emotional support of friendship with their parent as well as the financial benefits of returns to the family home. The transition from dependence on the family of origin to becoming responsible involved becoming responsible for significant others, friends, children, parents, siblings, and pets. Lastly, while relationships themselves are not social structures, the nature of the significant relationships held by the co-researchers illuminated the presence of abstract social structures at play in their lives, such as heteronormativity, patriarchy, and capitalism.

Citizenship and Identity Spheres

In the contemporary transition to adulthood, citizenship is tied to seeing youth as agents of social change. It is the process of moving from ‘passive’ to ‘active’ citizenship. It involves experimenting with different social groups. It involves being able to exercise rights and assume responsibilities. It involves having sufficient resources to feel capable of action in the various spheres of social life. Tied to citizenship, is identity. Identity is the process of moving from ascribed to self-achieved identities, by way of experimentation with new experiences, new people, and new ideas; by engaging with and participating in one’s environment. Identity and citizenship are respectively the development of the self, and of the self in society.

In terms of identity, moving from ascribed to self-achieved identities presented a challenge for two of the co-researchers who did not identify with their parents’ heteronormative expectations

of gender identity and sexual orientation. For Lain and Meagan, being themselves meant not being who their parents wanted them to be. When these two things came into conflict, being true to themselves came at a cost: both had to leave the family home because their parents did not accept their gender identities or sexual orientation.

Being accepted for who they were, or who they were becoming, was also an issue for the co-researchers who identified with counter culture. They shared experiences of needing to conform their appearance to social expectations in order to access things like housing and work. They also noted that success in society was contingent on looking like society wanted them to. Since they generally refused to conform, they found that they were less successful by social standards and that, because of the ways they were counter culture, society was unwilling to provide them with the opportunities more readily afforded to youth in general.

Identity was often built through social engagement for the co-researchers. For example, Emily participated in psychedelic art festivals where she found herself and where she found kindred spirits. For Lain, who was transitioning to the opposite gender, Lain's move into and out of a collective housing community that was totally accepting had a huge effect on the way Lain pursued their identity acquisition:

I was medically starting to transition to the opposite gender. I was on hormones and whatever, and um, when I moved into this [collective] house I was like, you know what, like these people accept me for whoever I am, it could be this today, I could be that tomorrow, I could be nothing tomorrow. So, I kinda like, I stayed on the medical stuff, but I stopped the physical transitioning and stuff and then by the end of that, I was like you know what, I'm stopping the medical stuff, I'm ok with myself, whatever. If I wanted to like dress up today, I'll do it. I don't need this. And ah, when I moved into the other house in the winter, stuff like that came up again. I was like 'Oh no, why did I stop.' It was just like,

it was really hard. And I was like “do I really want to do this, do I not want to do this” it was just like, it just like got very like crowded and head space. And it just, was not, the best place, and then after that, I moved back into the old house, [the collective]. And then that kinda cloudiness went away because I was back to like somewhere where I knew what it was like, and ah, yeah, helped me put that stuff sort of like, away, it’s still there. Just like, kinda putting it away, being like “you know, just be comfortable with yourself, learn to start loving yourself” (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

Lain’s limited finances also played a significant role in Lain’s identity development: insufficient money meant not being able to get surgery to complete their transition.

In terms of social engagement and identity, Meagan survived the streets by living and working “in community” with other street involved peers, which even contributed to her self-imposed identity as a “Rideau Rat” (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview). Ryan and Lain participated in social protests, which allowed them to share their concerns for environmental and social justice with the wider community. Avery’s identity was tied to the low-income neighbourhood where he grew up, and to which he was fiercely loyal and with which he was heavily involved. The theme of social engagement is further addressed in Chapter Five, where community is explored as a survival strategy of the co-researchers.

Most of the co-researchers identified as artists and developed as artists by participating in the P4Y program. Many spoke of how, were it not for the P4Y program which provided unlimited art supplies, it would be impossible for them to pursue their art. And, their art was essential to them. It was not just an activity to fill their time; it was part of their human development:

I wanted to do something [for the art show] that I hadn’t done before because I want to, I want to constantly grow and like learn you know, so, just challenging myself and knowing

that whatever, whatever it was going to turn out, was how it was supposed to turn out. And it turned out really cool, which shows me that I can do it again. So, it's that constant challenging of myself and testing the waters and being reintegrated back into things you know. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Significantly, the ways that the co-researchers developed their selves, and their selves in society, were mostly through free activities. For example, it did not cost anything to participate in social protests. Recreation and leisure programming such as the P4Y program, mental health support groups, employment programmes, and healthy living programs were all free. The scope of activities available to the co-researchers to explore in the development and pursuit of their identity was bounded by their limited finances. For Avery, limited finances meant that even 'at home' he could not fully engage in the activities that shaped who he was. He explained that, if he had more money:

Ah, I'd be able to afford a place where I could do the things that I want to do. Chiefly, play music loudly. Because of you know, I play the drums, this is a loud instrument, I can't get away with that. Ah, with my income right now, I cannot afford my own house, like I did before, when I was selling drugs. I cannot afford that. (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

Citizenship and identity were both very much tied to being able to access resources, ranging from money, to art supplies, to housing. Finances also limited identity development in that the co-researchers who wanted to return to school to pursue a career tied to their passions and interests could not afford to do so because of their limited financial situation. In this sense, access to resources not only limited who the co-researchers were, but also who they were *trying to become*.

The results showed that identity, but especially citizenship, were not just a matter of the co-researchers' self-conceptions. The co-researchers' ability to exercise their rights as citizens was largely a function of how they were seen by society. When it came to their rights, their experiences of how they were viewed by society were manifest in their interactions with the police. The co-researchers who busked or panhandled were forced to 'move on', or were approached by the police who wanted to 'just check in' so to speak even when they were not doing anything 'wrong':

Meagan: *There's police there that know me by name, that will just pull me over just to check that I haven't broken the law yet. It's like, really? I'm sitting out here panning cause I haven't broken a law. If I had broken a law, I wouldn't be out here bumming money. I'd have money, somebody else's money!*

Susannah: *The cops just stop you and like ask, ...*

Meagan: *Yep. What are you doing? Hey Meagan! What's your date of birth again? Oh Cool, you're still at James? Oh cool, you're not supposed to be here, here's a written citation... Dicks! But then they'll be an older panhandler across the street that he doesn't even bother... I'm like, what, but... we're both poor... what's the difference? (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

In Meagan's case, *being Meagan*, was enough for her to be singled out by the police. For Jessica, being singled out for being a panhandler meant being persecuted in a way that required additional panhandling, which put her in a continual cycle of potential conflict with the law:

cops give you panhandling tickets and its like, what, you expect me to panhandle for money [to pay the ticket]? (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

The co-researchers shared the feeling they were more likely to get caught up in the criminal justice system because of who they were, because of their identity. Blake explained how, even if

you were the victim in a situation, as soon as your name was run by the police, who you were in the eyes of the police would (unfairly) change how they treated you:

Blake: *Having to take extra precautions you know, be aware of what's going on all the time. Not being able to be fully present in the moment because you're always nervous, just keeping a watch, watching your back you know. You have to walk on egg shells and take extra precautions not to do something that could get you in trouble because the fear of having your name ran, and then being searched and caught with something illegal, especially while having conditions to keep the peace and be of good behaviour or any other condition at all, just the risk of having – of the impact on your daily life is just so huge, its huge and it affects your thinking, it affects your emotional ability to relax and things like that.*

Susannah: *So even say, like, riding a bike, and thinking about getting stopped for running a red light could lead to something much more significant that has nothing to do with whether or not you...*

Blake: *You got it! You got it! You know, or even I could be on a bike and get clipped by a car door, and the other person all they have to do is make an argument against you and once your name's ran up on that computer, if you already have a criminal record or you already have a background check, that has something on it, you're already getting the prejudice of that, without having, you know, doesn't matter what the situation, what your life is like now, it doesn't even matter. You're gonna get treated like that forever. (Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)*

The co-researchers didn't just feel like they were 'known' individually, as 'Jessica,' 'Meagan,' or 'Blake.' They also expressed considerable frustration with society's violence toward them based on a social group society saw them as belonging to:

people kick me for being a panhandler. (Jane, age 25, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)

For the co-researchers, it was often based on an identity attributed to them by others that violence against them was justified. Jane explained that it was unthinkable that it was considered socially acceptable to treat people differently – worse – because they were homeless:

It's odd, like, one of the few last things that you're allowed to be racist towards is the middle class and lower classes. When they call somebody a bum, and like, treat them like shit, but you wouldn't do that to a person of colour, you wouldn't do that to a gay person... but no, no... its ok to be mean and tell the person to get a job if they're homeless. I like to think of it this way: if I was gay or black or anything else, you wouldn't be able to like yell at me randomly on the street, you wouldn't be able to spit on me or kick me. Daily people do that to homeless people and they don't give a shit. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the co-researchers' stories of their transition to adulthood. Specifically, the residential, professional, financial, and relational spheres of their transitions were discussed. While the spheres were each addressed independently of the other, as the chapter progressed it became increasingly apparent the extent to which the spheres were not, in fact, independent of each other. For example, where the co-researchers lived was often tied to their relationships. Their ability to access legal work was often related to their education. Their ability to access stable housing was tied to income and money, which were themselves tied to the ability to work. The fifth and final section, which considered the identity (the self) and citizenship (the self in society) spheres, demonstrated how every other aspect of the transition to adulthood, be it housing, school, work, relationships, or money were threads in the tapestry that make up the self and the self-in-society. For the most part, the limitations the co-researchers faced in the other spheres adversely affected their ability to fully and freely develop their citizenship and identity, and by extension, their autonomy. As we will see in Chapter Four, this is significant because the

co-researchers' ability to be themselves, and to fully, proudly, and rightfully be themselves in society comes under attack by structural violence.

Chapter Four: Experiences of Structural Violence

This second results chapter focuses on the co-researchers' stories of structural violence. Given the participatory nature of the current study, the co-researchers were encouraged to address the social structure(s) that was most significant to them. This directive respected the interests and rights of the co-researchers and provided very rich data for analysis, however this meant that the results were not easily grouped in themes related to specific social structures. Instead, what emerged were three transversal themes across the many social structures identified by the co-researchers.

This chapter is divided into three sections, each of which describes a different type of experience of structural violence as lived by the co-researchers. The first section considers experiences of *being silenced*. The theme of being silenced has to do with the co-researchers' ability to use their voice: to express themselves and to speak up for themselves. The second section looks at experiences of *being paralyzed*. The theme of paralysis is used to describe the co-researchers' experiences of being limited in their freedom of movement, in other words, it refers to the limitations of their ability to move their bodies according to their own will. The third section explores experiences of *being denied something*. The theme of being denied something relates to being denied tangible and concrete things, like access to mental health services, to education and to housing, as well as to intangibles, such as emotional support, love, tolerance and acceptance. It is important to note that there is often overlap between experiences of being silenced, being paralyzed, and being denied something. The results were divided into one of the three categories based on an analysis of the central element of the experience as described by the co-researchers.

Being silenced

Tessa: *I want to help you [in this research project].*

Susannah: *I appreciate that! And you always have all kinds of things to say, so...*

Tessa: *I do. Some people don't like that.*

Susannah: *What?*

Tessa: *That I have all kinds of things to say... (laughter) (Tessa, age 24, Phase Two Interview)*

This first section addresses the co-researchers' experiences of *being silenced*. Specifically, the theme of being silenced has to do with their ability to use their voice: to express themselves and to speak up for themselves. This theme emerged across many social structures, both concrete and abstract, including but not limited to their interactions with the police, teachers and the education system, family, doctors and the medical system, social services providers as well as with the general public. Experiences of being silenced have been broken down into two categories. The first deals with not being heard or being ignored when the co-researchers did express themselves and the second addresses not being free to speak in the first place.

When words fall on deaf ears

The co-researchers were often ignored or not heard when they spoke up to express things like dissatisfaction or a difference of opinion or to identify situations of social injustice or a need that was not being met. When they did this their ideas and values were often silenced. In terms of analysis, these situations were relatively easy to identify as the co-researchers described these situations with phrases such as 'I tried to tell them', 'they didn't listen to me', 'they ignore you', 'get over it and move on' and 'I didn't feel like I was being heard.' The range of contexts where

the co-researchers had the experience of being ignored or not heard was vast, and included but was not limited to school, the police, mental health, issues of identity, sexual assault, and panhandling. The sources of this silencing were diverse but specific to their context and included teachers, police officers, doctors, romantic partners, parents, and total strangers on the street.

As a result of being ignored or not heard, the co-researchers often felt they did not get what they needed, and rather than continue to receive that which they judged to be inappropriate, insufficient, or harmful, they severed their contact with the source of the silencing. In Julianna's case, she was silenced by mental health practitioners:

I didn't feel like I was heard, cause they would put me on medications and I'd be like, "Listen, I'm getting really sick, I'm losing a lot of weight and stuff like that," and then they would just increase my dose, and I'd keep getting sicker and sicker and eventually I just stopped. (Julianna, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

While Julianna was silenced by mental health practitioners and consequently cut ties with her mental health services, Jane was silenced by authority figures in her school who dismissed and disregarded her concerns about the decisions being made on her behalf about her education. She felt that she did not receive what she judged to be an education appropriate to her abilities and as a result ultimately severed her ties to formal education:

At the end of grade 7 I skipped grade 8 and then they put me ahead into grade 9 and I was failing. I had As in English and Art and something else and then everything else was straight 40s. They totally should of kept me behind but instead they were like "Oh, we are just going to put you ahead and then put you in applied." Yeah, so I tried to tell them I wasn't going to be able to do it. I tried to tell my mom that too, and she didn't... she was like "oh my kid is a genius, they are skipping her ahead" and she didn't listen to me. So then I got to school and like, kept having anxiety attacks because I didn't understand the

course load or anything so I just didn't go. And then I started to use drugs, then became homeless... (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

Jane's example also highlights the fact that further consequences and suffering extended beyond the initial violence of being silenced. In Jane's case, having her opinion and voice dismissed led to her decision to leave school. For Jane, this further connected to her drug use and homelessness. In other words, the consequences of being silenced extended through the transition to adulthood beyond the initial and specific situation.

In these examples where the co-researchers' voice was ignored or dismissed as not important, the silencing was laden, implicitly, with strong messages: their voice carried no authority; their opinion did not matter; their knowledge was in fact wrong; they had been ill-informed; their self-knowledge and life experience did not measure up compared with adults, authority figures, and educated professionals; they didn't actually know what they needed or what was in their own best interest; other people better understood their needs and how to help them. While in many cases these messages were implied, some of the co-researchers, particularly those who occupied public space in more prominent ways, such as Meagan, had experiences of explicitly having their voice silenced:

Susannah: *So then when you're panning and you are faced with these various challenges, do you feel in those situations you are able to exercise any power?*

Meagan: *Not really, like, if you fly a sign²⁰, or if your head is held too high, someone will come and stomp you down. So, like, either the cops will come around, bylaw will come*

²⁰ To "fly a sign" means to hold a sign, typically a piece of cardboard, with writing on it. Typically, a request for food, water, money or support of some kind is expressed on the sign. This can be done instead of verbalizing requests for assistance.

around, or some random person will come to tell you like, what a piece of shit you are. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

In this example, Meagan's voice, not spoken allowed, but articulated through words on a piece of cardboard (flying a sign) was stamped out. Diminishing her voice was tied to diminishing her as a person. The explicit silencing was extended beyond insults to a discourse of blaming:

Julianna: *Yeah, I mean, and then also, when I've talked about sexual abuse it's like "well, it was your fault."*

Susannah: *Really?*

Julianna: *Yeah. My mom kinda talks like that. When I was at the CHEO programme, she said "Just get over it, it's time to move on (from the sexual assault)." (Julianna, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

During Phase One, Jane approached me to explain that she and her partner had been discussing the research study, and they had decided that an experience she had had, a few years before, constituted structural violence, and that she wanted to share it with me for the study. She explained that she had been asked by a local journalist to sit for a photo and to be interviewed, in support of a local youth serving organisation. Jane agreed. However, when the article was published, she felt that her voice, and consequently her person, had been entirely silenced and thereby misrepresented. The photo was a close up shot of her face, with her name printed directly below, making her easily identifiable. The article read as follows:

Ask 19-year-old *Jane* what *the local youth organisation* did for her in 2008 and her she answers quickly. 'I have a job now because of *the youth organisation*,' she says, as she grips a coffee thermos and half-smoked cigarette in her hand. It wasn't too long ago that

she would have likely been holding a crack pipe and an old Tim Hortons cup begging for money. That was until *the local youth organisation* gave her hope.²¹

Jane explained that the journalist had never asked her any questions about drug use or begging, and therefore had invented the hypothetical ‘would likely have.’ She told me that, as a result of the publication, her grandmother had called her very worried and surprised to read that she had likely used crack (according to the article). Jane had objected to being portrayed as someone who had used crack, who had begged, and whose life had previously been without hope. She had felt entirely misrepresented by the journalist, and so spoke up, seeking the help of the very same local youth organisation that she had supported by giving the interview. She had asked them what she could do to get the story fixed, or retracted. She explained that they had let her down. The individual at the local youth organisation told her that there was nothing to be done, that journalists had latitude in their representation of the story, and so there was no wrong doing on the journalist’s part.

In terms of being silenced, Jane’s story is revelatory on two counts. First, her identity, her past, her truth so to speak, was silenced by the journalist, who had used his own words, rather than hers, to represent her as he saw fit, in a way that served his purposes. His careful use of ‘would likely have’ buffered him from Jane’s outrage that he lied about and manipulated her story. However, those carefully chosen words, which were no more than speculation, created for readers, such as Jane’s grandmother, a very powerful impression of truth. His voice replaced her voice in the telling of her story. Secondly, Jane’s story reveals the additional structural violence that the

²¹ To protect the anonymity of the co-researcher the following was done. The name of the co-researcher and the youth serving agency in question, which appear in italics, have been altered. The citation for the local paper which ran the story has been withheld. Phrasing and certain additional details have been altered slightly in order to prevent identification of the excerpt with a google search.

co-researchers face when they do speak up for themselves. Jane sought to affect change, to right a wrong, and she was told her opinion did not matter, that her voice, her opinion, her interpretation of the situation held insufficient or no weight. Both these points raise important questions about who exercises authority over the co-researchers' own voices, and subsequently, over the way the co-researchers are represented in the world.

These examples demonstrate that being silenced, in the sense of ignoring or rejecting the co-researchers' voice, took many forms and had many consequences. In terms of forms, being silenced was explicit or implicit, it was subtle or direct, and it could even involve blaming the co-researcher. All of these strategies served to shut down the co-researcher, to maintain control over them, and to maintain the authority of the person doing the silencing. In terms of consequences, results showed that when the co-researcher received the message that their opinion, experiences and voice were not valued, they did not receive the services they needed which often resulted in their withdrawal from the often inappropriate services being offered or imposed and ultimately had effects on other aspects of their life (and transition to adulthood).

When silence is 'golden'

While in many instances the co-researchers did speak up and advocate for themselves, even though they were ignored or dismissed, at other times, they chose to do the opposite: they chose to remain silent. What emerged from the analysis of these instances of silencing was the overwhelming risk to the co-researcher of losing something were they to speak up and make an issue of the way they were being treated or point out an injustice. Whereas when the co-researchers spoke up and were silenced, ignored or simply told they were wrong, the structural violence was

evident in the way they were treated by the person they encountered. However, in instances where the co-researchers elected to remain silent, the structural violence was of an entirely different kind: it was an invisible violence of latent possibility. In this case, the structural violence was an invisible lurking reality which threatened with the possibility of yet-to-come concrete violent consequences.

For example, in a Phase One policy related focus group, some of the co-researchers discussed a situation that had occurred at the P4Y program itself. To appreciate the example, it is important to know that the P4Y program ran out of a church, which lent and rented rooms to various community groups. At the same time that the P4Y program took place, an orchestra rehearsed in an adjacent room. In the focus group, the co-researchers described a situation where they overheard comments made by members of the orchestra:

Tessa: *Like when those people said, “oh the poor people are having luncheon.”*

Susannah: *When did someone say that?*

Avery: *What the fuck is wrong with people?*

Tessa: *Said it to like Jane a while back, when they, the people come and play the music in that room.*

Susannah: *Oh yeah?*

Unidentified: *Yeah.*

Tessa: *Like, we eat food every time and they’re like “oh look, the poor people are having like a luncheon or something” ... and it’s like...*

Susannah: *So what... do you just walk the other way? Do you challenge them in those ideas? What do you do in those situations?*

Ryan: *You should challenge them.*

Tessa: *We should it’s just I don’t feel appropriate doing it here, because I respect the space. If somebody did it to me like on the street like walking down the street I’d be like “Yo, who do you think you are? But here, I don’t, I really like being here, and we’ve already had a few strikes...”*

Avery: *That’s why you try to hold back. (Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)*

While the condescending and ignorant remark of the musician could be part of an analysis unto its own of the social discourses regarding poverty, or perceived poverty, what is important for our analysis of voice is Tessa's reflection that she felt trapped and could not speak up because the risk was that the P4Y program would lose its space, which could mean the end of the programme. As we will see in another section, the coming together in a community at the P4Y program was an essential survival strategy employed by many of the co-researchers. Accordingly, Tessa did not speak up and confront the orchestra members as it would have involved the potential of too great a loss.

While this example regarding the art space illustrates the invisible power that people (society) exercise without even knowing it (because of their invisible privilege), the co-researchers also had experiences where they remained silent in the face of authority figures who had full knowledge of the power they yielded. In the following example, Ryan explained the futility he felt with regard to explaining his rights to the police:

Ryan: *One more thing is how they (the police) think that certain things like panhandling... It is not illegal right, but you can't tell them that. You can't tell them that at all, they won't accept it. They won't take it. Just ah, again abuse of power, they don't even want to be wrong and they hate homeless people. They don't understand, they don't think they have ever been... I don't think any of them have ever been in the kinda position that a homeless person has. They couldn't put themselves in a homeless person's shoes. They can't. They think they do. I don't get them man.*

Susannah: *So what happens, you said they don't like to be wrong. What if you try to explain something to them, does that work, do you ever do it...?*

Ryan: *Ah, I've given up doing that. They'll either like throw you into cuffs and ... I don't know. They won't back down and they won't be wrong at all. And they'll ask you questions and then interrupt you with other questions before you answer the first question, and things like that. They try to agitate you. And, ah, they have all these weird little games and tactics and things like that. (Ryan, age 25, Phase Two Interview)*

In this example, Ryan explained that he has learned how to manage situations in order to minimize the consequences to himself. He has learned that when he raises his voice he could suffer considerable concrete consequences, like being cuffed, arrested, or worse. In this situation, Ryan could lose his freedom if he spoke up. Furthermore, what this example illustrates is that from Ryan's point of view, the police were fully aware of the imbalance in their power and authority, and even tried to bait Ryan into using his voice to get himself into trouble. Ryan has learned that using his voice could leave him worse off than he was to begin with.

These first two examples illustrate that the co-researchers could avoid future violence – losing access to their art group space or being cuffed and arrested, or worse, by the police – by not speaking up, but this meant tolerating and not challenging the structural violence evident in the social discourses perpetuated by the orchestra members or actions of the police officers. In this way, structural violence maintained itself as the status quo. Built in disincentives discouraged the co-researchers from speaking up and naming the structural violence they experienced in an effort to affect change or to be treated justly.

Unexpectedly, this research study itself produced two situations that further highlighted the co-researchers' concern about and limited ability to express themselves freely. In the first instance, during the Phase One Large Group Brainstorming Discussion, Jane offered the following reflection on her experience receiving services from the Salvation Army:

[The Salvation Army] were supposed to help me find a place but they didn't want to help me, and now they're trying to help me find a place again and... hopefully its going to be a better experience. So, nobody tell them I was bashing them! (laughter in the room) (Jane, age 25, Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)

Jane's comment was significant on a few counts. First, her concern that voicing her opinion that "they didn't want to help me," was enough to potentially affect her current relationship with the Salvation Army and the quality of the services she would receive indicates how tenuous the offer of service could be. Additionally, her comment demonstrates that her access to something as essential and fundamental as housing could depend on how politely and favourably, or on the other hand how angrily, rudely and critically, she described the service provider. It was important to be a 'good service user' in order to receive services. What is implied in her statement is that she would not be able to voice her opinion directly to the Salvation Army, for fear of it affecting the current service relationship. Lastly, while from a PAR standpoint, it was encouraging to realize that the space created in the research context was safe enough for Jane to voice her opinion, it remains that should someone else repeat her comment outside the confines of the research space, she believed that she could be dropped by the Salvation Army.

The other example to emerge from the research process itself that highlighted the co-researchers' concerns over the potential consequences resulting from their use of their voice related to the sociodemographic questionnaire. During the Phase One Focus Group on the Sociodemographic Questionnaire, the following exchange regarding the employment section of the questionnaire occurred:

Susannah: *Anything you fill out remains anonymous. Outside of me, no one will know.*

John: *So if you were on welfare and working and you wrote it down you're not going to get charged with fraud?*

Jane: *He was worried about the revenue agency knowing from you guys. (Phase One, Focus Group on the Sociodemographic Questionnaire)*

This example speaks to the pervasive and permanent wariness and concern that permeates the lives of the co-researchers with regard to the fear of losing something as a result of speaking up. When filling out the sociodemographic questionnaire there was no immediate threat and there was no authority figure from the government present. The co-researchers had adopted a hyper-vigilance regarding the potential for loss, not just in the immediate present, but for their future. In this example, John was checking with me that choosing to express himself honestly now (not even out loud, but anonymously through pen and paper) would not mean the risk of a loss or consequences even potentially in the years to come when the research is published.

The analysis of the situations where the co-researchers elected not to use their voice has shown that structural violence lives in the invisible threat of possible future suffering. The potential loss of something that was valued, such as a safe space like the P4Y program, their freedom or their housing, was so potent that it was greater than the loss of the freedom of expression. When the co-researchers were not free to speak up, they were unable to challenge or contest the sources of injustice and structural violence that they experienced. In this way, structural violence derived its power from its ability to prevent its being named – the fear of loss and potential future suffering maintained the invisibility of the structural violence experienced by the co-researchers.

Being paralyzed

While the experiences of being silenced had to do with freedom of expression, experiences grouped into the category of being paralyzed have to do with freedom of movement. In other words, to what extent did the co-researchers move in and through spaces and places according to their own will and what experiences did they have where that ability to move freely was controlled

or limited by someone, or something, else? The analysis revealed three categories of experiences related to being paralyzed, the first involving issues of legal sanctions, the second relating to constraints imposed in medical contexts, and the third relating to situations of violence against women.

Paralyzed by the law

Four of the co-researchers drew connections between legal sanctions and their (in)ability to move freely. As result of conflict with the law, Ryan was not permitted to travel to the United States and Avery had been banned from traveling to Toronto as well as parts of Quebec. For Avery, this carried with it significant consequences in terms of his ability to maintain his family relationships: he was unable to visit his dying aunt in Quebec and when he visited his dad in Toronto he did so illegally. In Blake's case, the legal sanctions that limited his mobility in turn limited his ability to meet his basic needs. In one of the Phase One policy related focus group discussions, Blake and other members of the group discussed the effects of being 'red zoned':

Emily: *Another thing is like, conditions, like red zoning. We can't go for a walk in the market cause he's got a red zone in the market.*

Susannah: *Can you tell me what a red zone is?*

Blake: *I'm not allowed to be within certain designated areas.*

Isabelle: *I got red zoned from Rideau Street for three years for panhandling.*

Susannah: *So when you're red zoned, what does that do to like... if you talk about the market, there's tons and tons of services down there!*

Emily: *He can't go, he can't access the sexual health centre, he can't go to any of the shelters. It's all shut down to him.*

Blake: *I can't access any of the services down there. The shelters, I can't go to the Sal, I can't go to the Shephard's, I can't go to any of that. (Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)*

The area of Ottawa being discussed is the hub for social services for people who are homeless or people who are living in poverty. It is an area where the co-researchers panhandled to make money, accessed services like shelters to sleep and eat meals, and accessed the sexual health clinics for free checkups and supplies. Restricting their ability to move through this area of town went beyond simply limiting their ability to repeat their initial infraction in that area. The legal sanction disproportionately penalized in that it prevented them from meeting their basic needs.

Rather than be prohibited from *moving into a given space or place*, as was the case for Ryan, Avery, and Blake, John's legal sanctions limited his movement in the opposite way: he was prohibited from *moving out of a given space* while under house arrest for 22 months. John shared his intense frustration regarding the 22 months of house arrest he served. He found them particularly unjust given that he was eventually acquitted of all the charges brought against him. Additionally, for John, there was a direct connection between this initial injustice and his subsequent problems with substance use and the law:

Because my YO record was so bad they jumped the gun on their charges instead of doing an investigation and then charged me with something that I didn't even do. Took me 22 months of house arrest and going to trial and then I got acquitted on all counts. 22 months and it affected my life. Check this out, it affected my life so much that I started using drugs again. I started re-offending after I did the 22 months. (John, age 26, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)

Similar to Jane's experience of being ignored and silenced by her mother and teacher, John's experience touches on the idea that the initial experience of structural violence contributes to a process that leads to future and further suffering.

Paralyzed by the medical system

The second category of experiences of being paralyzed related to experiences with the medical system. For both Jane and Ryan, their experiences of limited mobility were directly related to their use of methadone. Both explained that they were unable to leave the City of Ottawa as they were bound by weekly visits to the doctor and daily visits to the pharmacy to get their daily dose of methadone. For Jane, the frustration associated with the feeling of being physically trapped in the city was compounded on two counts. First, by the sense that methadone itself was also a trap, as she described it as “harder to get off than morphine” (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview). Secondly, she had been told by the doctor that the only way she could have a surgery she needed would be if she were off illegal drugs and on methadone, thus leaving her to feel as though she had no choice but to take the methadone. Jane’s description of her entrapment and her interactions with her doctor highlight the imbalance in power within the medical system:

Susannah: *So, what if you needed to leave the city, what happens?*

Jane: *If my doctor believed me, he would sign me a week’s worth of carries, but I can’t leave for over a week. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)*

Jane’s frustration with the constraining conditions of the medical system extended even further to what she perceived to be a significant double standard, or hypocrisy, rooted in social attitudes and laws governing the legal and illegality of drugs:

[The doctor’s] idea of helping you get off drugs [is to] put you on another drug. You pay 10 bucks a day to the pharmacist, so now the pharmacist has become my drug dealer. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

Meagan's experiences with having her physical freedom limited by the medical system come from her experiences of seeking help in emergency rooms for her mental illness. She explained how, upon arriving at the emergency room, the whole process could be stressful and infused with judgement and stigma based on how she looked, but that once she was moved from the waiting room to a treatment room, she always knew she was trapped:

Meagan: *Once you're in the room, you're screwed. You can't go out again, so if you haven't had a cigarette in the time you were waiting you're even more agitated now, and then they say "no, we can't let you leave you might run away, we're putting you on a form cause you want to go outside". Form 1 is when you can't leave the premise or they'll call the cops. I get a lot of gruff from security guards when I'm there cause once I do finally snap and make a fuss they have you like contained into a little room with a guard standing at the door with his back towards you. So, I fidget, cause I'm like, you know what, I'm in trouble anyways, and they're just like "stop or I'll have to restrain you".*

Susannah: And how often does that happen?

Meagan: Every time

Susannah: And what's your...

Meagan: restraint? Its little twist ties, the zips.

Susannah: And based on your experience, what is your opinion about the zips?

Meagan: *They are really sharp. I don't like them. And if you do struggle, or if not even struggling, just like move in the wrong way, you have tightened it, and they have to cut it off, and do it again. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

From the start, Meagan's experience was designed by the medical system to limit her freedom of movement: she had to stay in the room, not leaving even for a smoke, she could be legally "formed", the police could be called and ultimately, she could be physically restrained. All of these strategies sent the messages that there was a specific and desired way for her to behave and that she was the problem if she did not conform; the system was not the problem. The way she was treated also conveyed the message that someone, or something else – the faceless social structure that is the emergency medical system - knows better than you what you need.

The small room and the application of the zip ties provide an excellent metaphor for the process and machinery of structural violence. As you struggle, you become increasingly constrained and the ‘consequences’ increase in an effort to deter your resistance. As you resist, the ties literally become so tight, so constraining, that you cannot move: you are paralyzed, your resistance feels futile.

Implied in Meagan and Jane’s examples, is the same thing that came up with regard to Jane’s comment in the previous section about the Salvation Army: the co-researchers were beholden to their service providers. They needed to be good patients or service recipients. They needed to be polite, prove themselves, and build trust in order to get what they needed – the basics and essentials that most people take for granted, such as housing, medication, and freedom of movement. Jane’s experience highlights the extent to which the co-researchers found themselves caught, physically and metaphorically, in social structures that organized their lives, that seemed designed to create and perpetuate their disadvantage and that paternalistically dictated their choices (and movement) rather than increase their spectrum of choice and opportunities.

Paralyzed by patriarchy: violence against women

The third category of experiences dealing with limitations and controls imposed on the co-researchers’ freedom of movement relates to issues of violence against women. For two of the co-researchers, Julianna and Jessica, the violence was located in their intimate relationships, while the third co-researcher, Meagan, was subjected to male violence while panhandling. Whereas in the examples we have already seen, the co-researchers were explicitly directed to ‘go to a given place’ (to the pharmacy), to ‘not go to a given place’ (the market) or to ‘not leave a given place’

(house arrest) as a way of controlling their freedom of mobility, Jessica's situation offers a subtler variation on the ways the co-researchers freedom of movement was constrained. Jessica, who lived with her boyfriend, explained that he tried to control her social assistance check, pressuring her and wearing her down until she would give in and spend it on drugs, as he wanted. She explained how she managed the problem:

I'm tired of that. I don't do that with his cheque, so leave me be. So, its kinda, sad, that I have to go shopping, and do everything that I want to do in one day, once I get my check, instead of just going home, where its just going to disappear. (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

Jessica could not go home with her cheque, which limited her ability to access her own home without fear of psychological and financial violence on the part of her boyfriend. Not only did she feel that she had to avoid her home, which was a form of paralysis in the sense that she could not move freely based on her own will, but she also felt forced to go out immediately to the stores and places where she could buy what she needed, before returning home. While going out and doing her errands does not at first glance seem like paralysis in the same way as zip ties, Jessica's freedom of movement was limited in that her decisions about where she went and when were imposed on her by the gendered violence she was living at the hands of her boyfriend. In Julianna's case, she felt that she could not leave her abusive relationship because it was the source of her housing. In this sense, her freedom of movement was limited because it was tied to access to shelter. While Julianna expressed the desire to leave the abusive relationship, constraining factors such as her limited income meant that she could not move out on her own. Accordingly, she had to choose between housing and personal safety. At the time of the interview, she was choosing housing.

Meagan's experiences of gendered violence, occurred while panhandling. She explained that harassment by men affected her ability to use and occupy public space freely and in such a way that she could earn money panhandling. This violence occurred on a daily basis, and she offered this example, as it had occurred just days prior to the interview:

I was outside (panhandling) and this guy, he started off really cool, like, "Hey, want a cigarette?" and then, "Hey, let me go buy you pizza" and I was like "no, that's okay". [He was like] "LET ME GO BUY YOU PIZZA" ... oh god... "ok"... so I went. I just kind of did what he said, cause he was like a beast, so I was like, if I just say yes, and I just keep walking, he'll be chill and someone will find us. I couldn't get away from him, so I could only send one word texts to my friend, who called the cops. Yeah, so the cops found us, they couldn't really do anything or take a report or anything like, he lived in my building, so he is just downstairs from me. I had expected more from the police, to like,... cause he was messed up, and they didn't even take him away. He was in the streets messed up and anyone else, they would have said "Okay, well, you're coming to the drunk tank for a couple hours"... that kind of peeved me off that if I was richer or had more stuff, like, something valuable he could have taken, then the police would have done more. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

In terms of violence against women, Meagan's example shows how a strange man on the street was able to paralyze her freedom of movement to the point where she judged it best to move in accordance with his will, not her own, in order to be safe. In addition to highlighting the gendered nature of structural violence, this example highlights how structural violence can be layered, intersecting issues of gendered violence with housing, class, and the police. I asked Meagan what her strategies were for dealing with this daily violence. Meagan's answer illustrates the extent to which mechanisms of structural violence are such that even her strategy for survival further reinforced the limitations imposed on her freedom of movement:

Susannah: *So, what do you do? When these guys follow you to the rooming house or when they make you uncomfortable in that space, what do you do?*

Meagan: *If it's in my room I have my dog which is basically my only rely on, cause, he is my first line of defense, and other than that it's just staying inside and locking my door. If I want to, I can just stay in there and be safe, or I can come out and try and get food and everything to go back in there to be safe. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

Meagan's experience highlights how systems worked to trap the co-researchers and then implicated them in their own suffering; Meagan's safety was achieved when she circumscribes her own freedom of movement.

Being denied something

The third category of experiences of structural violence lived by the co-researchers was characterised by being denied something. Specifically, the theme of being denied something relates to the denial of tangible and concrete things, such as access to shelter, as well as to intangibles, such as emotional support. The full list of things the co-researchers reported being denied was extensive: health services and mental health services, substance use services, education, housing (shelters, private market), food banks, employment, use of public space, the right to shop in certain stores, money (social assistance; inadequate social assistance), emotional support and relationships, tolerance, and acceptance. They were denied these things by a variety of people, such as doctors, teachers and principals, landlords, employers, police officers, business owners and store employees, and front line social service workers. Across these various contexts in which they were denied something they needed, and across the various people who did the denying, one overarching theme emerged that shed light on how structural violence plays out in refusals of service, support, and rights. The co-researchers were denied things for reasons related to their 'being'. Something about who they were was seen as problematic and used as justification

to refuse them something. In other words, they were denied things because of who or how they were, specifically with regard to their age, their appearance, and their behaviour.

Wrong age

One of the principle reasons the co-researchers were denied services was their age. During the transition to adulthood, roughly between the ages of 18 to 30, different services cut the co-researchers off at different ages, redirecting them to adult services. The co-researchers spoke extensively about being cut off from youth shelters and food banks, and one co-researcher spoke of being cut off from youth mental health services. Their ineligibility for youth services and the corresponding transition to adult services could be quite harsh, as Jane explained:

I aged out of the drop-in food banks so I can't go. I actually forgot that I was going to age out so I went and they told us: "No, you can't do the food bank." And I'm like "what?" and they are like, "you just had your birthday." (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

Jane's experience with the food bank was representative of a 'one day you're in, the next you're out' reality for the co-researchers with regard to youth services. As they navigated the transition to adult services, they felt the full effect of being refused youth services: first, adult services were described as less safe:

So, I'm too young to really want to go to the other places like the Mission and crap like that cause there are scary old men there but I'm too old now to go to the youth services so it's like, I'm in this awkward in between place. (Jane, age 25, Focus Group on Policy #1)

Secondly, in addition to being less safe, in contrast to youth services, adult services were described as more rigid and more restrictive, and less flexible and less understanding:

Well yeah, they look at you as just another number. I go to the emergency [food bank] at Overbrook so it's the older one, and they're just like "ok, like here, these are all the people in your house, that's all the food you're getting. That's it, that's all." At YSB at least you can be like, "ah, can I have an extra box of this" and they'll give it to you, just cause they're nice. [At Overbrook], it's like "no." I feel like they look at you like, you're like, it's like pathetic, that you're like coming. I don't know... (Naomi, age 23, Focus Group on Policy #1)

Naomi's experience of feeling "like they look at you ... like pathetic" at the Overbrook adult foodbank highlighted a sentiment common to the co-researchers, that they were looked at differently as adults compared to when they were youth. The co-researchers noted a distinct shift in the attitude from the youth service providers:

The staff members are just so different (in the adult ward). In the youth wards they care. They'll actually sit down with you and talk and in the adult ward there's no therapy. There's no, nothing: meds that's it. Just medication. And sedating someone to the point where they can't tell you that something's wrong isn't the same as helping them. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

Yeah, where, they actually look at it differently in the shelters too... the young women's shelter and stuff like that they actually help to get you places and help get you out of that, but the older places they just more look at it like, ok – we feed you, we give you your bed, like get out of here. (Jane, age 25, Focus Group on Policy #1)

Adult services felt colder, less human, and impersonal. The co-researchers described feeling as though the staff delivering adult services did not see them as people with potential. There was less care put into the delivery of adult services. In this sense, being denied something because of their age meant being denied all the advantages that come with being a 'youth', and

those advantages often had to do with accessing services that were hopeful, personalized, positive, and invested in the co-researchers in virtue of their potential as youth.

In addition to feeling like they were being looked at and treated differently ‘as adults’, being denied youth services had very practical consequences for the co-researchers. For example, adult food banks operated on strict schedules, and for the co-researchers who worked or attended school, that meant conflicts between their personal schedules and the operating hours of the food bank. So, they had to choose: miss work, miss school, or miss the food bank. Which, as Jane pointed out, is a catch 22: food is essential in order to perform well at school or at work, but if you skip either of those things in order to go to the food bank, you are likely to be fired from your job or not do well in school.

Wrong ‘look’

The co-researchers were also denied things because of their appearance. They shared stories of being denied things because they were homeless, or because they appeared homeless. The co-researchers received the message that being homeless made them undesirable or untrustworthy and that this justified the denial of services and their rights:

Nobody wants to house you when you are homeless. When you go to a landlord they are like “ok, references?” and you’re like, “I don’t have any references” and they’re like “Ok, where are you staying now” and you are like, “in a shelter” and they are like “Oh, its already rented, sorry. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

Yeah, yeah, and like, I can’t sit on a bench without being told to move along, and being told that I can’t panhandle there when I’m not even panhandling, like, I’ll be sitting there eating a yogourt or something and a cop will come along and be like “no, no, no, you can’t

stay here” it’s like, it’s not like there’s a no vagrancy sign, or... (Jane, age 25, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #1)

The results show that being denied something based on their appearance had significant consequences, as it limited their ability to access housing, health care and make use of public space. In addition to these concrete consequences, being judged based on their appearance also led to being denied something more ephemeral: the benefit of the doubt. The co-researchers spoke of the frustration they experienced when people, especially authority figures, assumed something about them because of how they looked, for example, because of their hair and their clothes. While less tangible than housing, being denied the benefit of the doubt was proof of structural violence because they were being targeted and treated differently than other youth because of they looked different, or like ‘trouble’:

Tessa: *I was gonna say, [structural violence] also has to do with for example, appearance. On the way here I got stopped and questioned about somebody getting robbed because apparently I fit the description of multicolored hair, lip piercing punk person.*

Susannah: *So there is some stereotyping that goes along with categories of people?*

John: *Yeah.*

Avery: *There’s been a few times where I’ve been harassed by police because I fit the description of somebody.*

Jane: *I think all of us have!*

(Resounding chorus of “yeah’s” throughout the room).

Unidentified: *I actually have to agree with her. When you’re from a certain group and you have a certain appearance...*

Avery: *When you have a certain appearance, and you’re from like, different groups of friends and stuff, that has a lot to do with it too. So, its not only about who you are as an individual but who you are hanging out with as well. (Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)*

Wrong behaviour

The third category of results related to being denied something because of how they behaved. They had to be good and well-behaved, playing by the rules of the authority figure who controlled access to whatever it was that the co-researcher needed. They were expected to know the rules, to always ask politely and on time, and only for the things they are allowed to have. Any deviation from being the ‘ideal recipient’ was cause for being denied what they needed. In short, if their behaviour or the way they asked for services did not suit the service provider they were denied services. Taking Eva’s extensive experiences in the mental health system as a mini-case study highlights a number of the ways the co-researchers were constructed as being problematic services users. First, showing up, on time and regularly, was essential. Failure to do so justified the denial of services:

With most mental health services, if you fail to show up to appointments then they’ll drop you even though that’s part of being sick. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

Secondly, the co-researcher had to do what was necessary to be ‘ready’ to receive the service they sought. In other words, the co-researcher had to take the initiative to adapt themselves to the service as it existed, rather than expecting the service to adapt to their particular needs and realities. For example, in order to access a detox facility, one co-researcher explained that she was required to call every day to check in until a spot was available to prove herself. If she failed to call, it was interpreted as being unready for treatment. As someone dealing with both a mental illness and a substance use problem, Eva felt trapped by impossible service provider expectations:

They'd be like "you're not mentally fit enough to be in rehab" [because of my mental illness] but then ... any psychiatrist or anything wouldn't see me if I'm doing drugs so. It was just awful." (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

In short, if the co-researchers had not 'properly' prepared themselves to receive a service, that justified the denial of services.

Thirdly, the co-researchers felt that they could not overstep by asking for 'too much':

It happens a lot that the doctor's just like "No, I don't think so, so no." Like even with like, my GP, I overdosed and didn't go the hospital and didn't get any check-ups or anything and I asked for maybe an MRI, or something, cause there was some really weird things going on and she was just like "no, cause if I let you have an MRI then next time you're gonna come back and want an x-ray of your foot, and next time its going to be something else and something else" and it's like she was trying to blame my anxiety disorder for it and that's just not fair. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

Accordingly, the co-researchers had to anticipate what a service provider would judge to be an appropriate service and then only ask for that. In short, the co-researchers' own ideas of what they needed had to match what the service provider judged that they need.

In order to access what they need to survive or flourish, the co-researchers were required to 'play by the rules.' Their behaviour had to conform, and if it did not they were denied something. However, the rules were set by authority figures without consulting the co-researchers. When the co-researchers failed to behave according to expectation, they were painted as 'problematic patients, clients, or children.' It was also the co-researcher who was expected to change, never the rule governing the behaviour.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the co-researchers' stories of their experiences of structural violence. The analysis was transversal, that is to say, it cut across the various social structures encountered by the co-researchers. The analysis revealed three categories of experiences of structural violence: being silenced, being paralyzed, and being denied something. Being silenced concerned the co-researchers' ability to use their voice: to express themselves and to speak up for themselves. The results showed that while at times the co-researchers were not heard or they were ignored in other instances they did not feel that they had the freedom to speak up in the first place. The theme of paralysis was used to describe the co-researchers' experiences of being limited in their freedom of movement, in other words, it referred to the limitations of their ability to move their bodies according to their own will. The results showed that this metaphor of paralysis occurred in relation to legal sanctions, medical contexts, and violence against women. The third theme, that of being denied something relates to the denial of tangible and concrete things, like access to mental health services, to education and to housing as well as to intangibles, such as emotional support, love, tolerance and acceptance. The results showed that being denied something had to do with the co-researchers age, appearance, and behaviour.

Chapter Five: Strategies employed for dealing with structural violence

In the current chapter, I present the co-researchers' stories of what they did in response to their experiences of structural violence. The current chapter is then interested in finding out how they managed these situations, how they reacted, how they resisted, what their choices were, and how the accumulation of previous experiences of structural violence informed their responses to ongoing experiences of structural violence. In other words, I was interested in the strategies the co-researchers employed when faced with structural violence. When recounting their experiences of structural violence, of their own accord some of the co-researchers addressed the strategies they used and at times I had to prompt the discussion of strategies with a question such as 'What do you do in those situations?'

This chapter is divided into four sections, each of which describes a different category of strategy employed by the co-researchers. The first section considers *fleeing* as a means of dealing with structural violence. Flight has to do with the co-researchers' need to get out of, or away from, a particular situation, and the benefits of so doing. The second section looks at the use of *deceiving and stealing* as tools for dealing with structural violence. In general, this theme explores the idea of 'doing the wrong thing for the right reasons.' *Co-operating and complying* is the third strategy explored. This section describes the ways in which the co-researchers' responded to structural violence with acquiescence. In contrast with the second theme, this third theme explores the idea of 'doing the right thing for the wrong reasons.' Whereas the first three categories discuss what are principally individual strategies for dealing with structural violence, the fourth section distinguishes itself as it addresses the importance of *seeking community* as a means of dealing with structural violence.

Fleeing, leaving, running and quitting: liberation from the forces of structural violence

The results showed that the co-researchers ‘left’ situations of structural violence as a way to survive them. These experiences were readily identifiable:

I got scared and I left. I just left (home) because, I left longer and longer, and I looked for people that would help me get out of my mom’s home. (Julianna, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

So, I just, like, left to Vancouver, and I was like “ok, now I don’t have to deal with it.” I was like, I’m just going to run away from this. (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

So, I told him (my dad) he was nuts and we ended up getting in a fist fight and I left. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

I was like “I’m done, I quit.” (Mark, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

I usually just quit (laughs). Just like, “I’m done with school, screw school, its less important.” (Naomi, age 23, Phase Two Interview)

The co-researchers’ experiences of running away, quitting, and leaving occurred in five different contexts: home, towns, services, jobs, and school. Reasons for leaving various contexts included physical violence or the threat of physical violence, disrespectful bosses and intolerable work environments, inadequate services and judgemental service providers, mental health problems, and pressures from various significant relationships (parents, romantic partners, and siblings).

Benefits

The co-researchers identified many benefits of their decision to leave a situation of structural violence. For some of the co-researchers, leaving was a way to minimize or to avoid

being subjected to physical violence. For example, Jane and Julianna both left home to avoid the mental health problems and the physical violence of a parent. Meagan avoided the physical dangers she experienced while panhandling that came from other panhandlers, aggressive (male) strangers on the street, and drug dealers by leaving her environment:

It was better to just try and be quiet, polite, and walk away. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

For Jane and Eva, there were financial and food benefits to leaving home, as both were in greater supply on the street and in the shelters than in their home environment:

Yeah, when you are a cute little fourteen-year-old, people give you money, lots of money. I was like, whenever I would go fly a sign I would get like a 20 drop within the first five minutes so like the first couple of years was awesome. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)

I've been in the shelter a few times. The shelter was kinda better than home anyway, cause it was the young women's shelter which is really good. We were really poor and stuff and we didn't have, um, enough money for food and stuff so at the shelter there was always food. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

There were also benefits in terms of identity, emotions, and character development. For Mark, leaving a job with an abusive boss represented a show of strength, meant sticking up for himself, and reflected positive personality traits and strengths that allowed him to assert who he was as a person:

In the moment when the chef was yelling at me, I was like "no!" It was literally all this weight off my shoulders. I was like "I'm done, I quit. Good luck!" You need me more than I need you. You know, that is what I was showing him. The other chef like ran to grab me, like "No, no, no, stay, stay, stay." But ah, I guess my strength, I don't know, if I just put

one word, either stubborn or being incorruptible but yeah, stubborn is probably the best word. Ardent. That is a good word too. (Mark, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Similarly, for Emily, leaving town was a validating and an empowering experience:

I decided that I needed to leave town because the city was just going to suck me back in, you know, and my boyfriend's going to suck me back in because my heart is just like that. So, I start driving and driving and driving, for like hours, and its like a really nice great drive, like knowing that I'm leaving everything. It was like "Yes, I can do this" you know. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Costs

While leaving was positive in many regards, it was not without its costs. For Meagan, Mark, and Naomi there was a financial cost associated with leaving their job. For Lain, leaving town meant the loss of social networks, housing, and employment. For Julianna, leaving a mental health service provider meant not getting access to the support she needed. For Mark, leaving the Ontario Works office had a significant financial cost, as it meant not collecting his social assistance:

Mark: ... I remember [OW] calling me one day and saying, "you have two checks to pick up" and I was like, "ok." So I went to pick them up and then the woman behind the counter she was like, she said "you can't scam us" and something like that, and I remember getting really insulted and I didn't even take the checks and I just walked out and I was like, I don't need it anymore. And I went like years without anything. I was living off nothing. Just off the food that my friend had.

Susannah: Because of what she said?

Mark: Cause like, they said I was committing fraud or something like that and I, I just ran from it. (Mark, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Mark's example highlights the high cost of leaving. Even if leaving is favourable, it has consequences that reach beyond the initial situation and that can last for years, such as not receiving the financial assistance of Ontario Works and not accessing the opportunities that would be available to him if he had an income. Ultimately, the cost of leaving meant that the co-researchers did not always get that to which they were entitled to, such as housing, safety, respect in the work place, or social assistance, which in turn meant that they did not get what they needed to meet their basic needs let alone to flourish and transition to adulthood.

Deceiving and stealing: doing the 'wrong' thing for the 'right' reason

Deceiving and stealing were popular strategies employed by the co-researchers. In terms of deception, a number of co-researchers talked about lying in order to gain access to housing. For Naomi, it was necessary to lie about her age in order to access a youth shelter and avoid the adult shelter. For Jane and Ryan, lying about their social status – saying that they were employed and were students - was necessary in order to overcome the discrimination of landlords who don't like to rent to people living on social assistance. Jane also talked about lying as a strategy to counteract the food insecurity she faces. She explained that if she lied about how many people were living at her address she got more food at the food bank. A number of the co-researchers described experiences that involved lying about their name. They lied, providing fake names to transit cops to avoid getting tickets for having jumped a bus, and they lied, providing fake names to police officers, to avoid getting tickets and fines for how they were using public space (e.g. 'aggressive' panhandling, loitering). A number of co-researchers also described lying about their income when filling out ODSP and OW forms. They would say that they had not earned any additional money,

omitting any work where they were paid in cash. This was done in order to supplement what was seen as insufficient financial support from Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works.

Stealing, or omitting to pay for something, was another strategy employed by the co-researchers to deal with the structural violence they faced. Emily, Sean, and Naomi described experiences of jumping the bus (not paying) because they could not afford the bus fare but still needed to be somewhere, such as a job interview. Meagan described breaking into cars to steal items that could be re-sold to supplement her income. Jessica described shop lifting in order to have the finances required to meet both her basic needs and her drug addiction.

'Wrong' for the 'right' reasons

The results showed that the co-researchers' frustrations related to structural violence were two-fold. First, they were frustrated about the initial structural violence they faced. Secondly, they were upset that they found themselves in situations where they had to 'do the wrong thing' in order to access their basic rights:

Ryan: *When it comes to housing, that's what I do. I say I go to school, and they're like "oh, university?" I'm like "no." They're like "college?" I'm like "No, I'm doing my GED" they're like "oh... ok, we'll get back to you" or like um, if they as you if you have a job, "no." "Well, where do you get your money" I say "social assistance"... "Well, okay, we'll get back to you" so they're really reluctant to rent to people who are just trying to get on their feet basically right, so a lot of people discriminate.*

Susannah: *So what do you do, how...*

Ryan: *I lied to them. I told them, "I'm going to college." I told them I do have references, I have been on a lease before, I have to lie to the guy for him to rent for me. So he rented to me, but, you know, I had to lie.*

Natalie: *You shouldn't have to lie.*

Ryan: *I couldn't tell him, you know ...*

Natalie: But like you shouldn't have to go that far you know, he should just let you in even if you're on social assistance. (Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #2)

Natalie's comment illustrates that the co-researchers fully grasp that the circumstances in which they find themselves are wrong and that in order to meet their basic needs they need to do something 'wrong' themselves. This constitutes an additional layer of structural violence. In the case of this strategy, the consequence is that the co-researchers put themselves at great risk for legal and financial consequences if they are caught, particularly in those situations involving stealing or lying to the police. That they judge the risk to be worth it suggests the extent to which their need is great. It is perhaps not surprising that in the majority of these cases the lying and stealing were a strategy to meet their basic needs, like housing, food and transportation.

While the experiences described by the co-researchers concern a variety of different contexts, such as housing, social assistance, the use of public space, interaction with the police, public transit, and food insecurity, in all cases the co-researchers employed the strategy of lying and stealing as a means to overcome structural violence tied directly or indirectly to poverty. At times, poverty was easily discernable or explicitly named as such by the co-researchers as the underlying structural violence that their lying or stealing responded too. For example, Avery offers the following reflection based on his experience living in a low-income neighbourhood:

You can tell that people from lower, lower class, like the lowest of the lower class, they do stuff [like rob banks] cause they can't get by. Ontario works doesn't help, disability doesn't help. How you going to have 600 dollars to live a whole month? How many people on OW do you think actually get subsidized housing? 600\$ is paying for what? Three quarters of their rent! So they're driven to sell drugs, they're driven to rob banks, they're driven to do stuff like that. You give somebody like 600\$ more than the normal whatever they get and they are not going to need to rob a bank, they're not going to need to shoot somebody,

and rob them, they're not going to need to sell drugs and poison they're community... Somebody doesn't have money they are going to shoot somebody for money they are going to rob a bank for money they are going to sell drugs for money. Its money. Yeah. You need it, you need it to eat. You can't have a farm in the city, you can't grow your food in the city, you can't kill your own cow in the city. You have to buy that shit. How you supposed to buy that on 600\$ a month, for a whole month to eat, and pay your bills, and pay for your hygiene shit, your tooth paste and shit, how you supposed to pay your dental. Like thank god we have free health care here. (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

At other times, poverty as a source of structural violence was more insidious and harder to spot. For example, Naomi's lied about her age in order to access a youth shelter. However, if there were a guaranteed minimum income or guaranteed housing, Naomi might not have needed to access a shelter at all, let alone a youth shelter, where she could feel safe. If housing were provided as a basic right she might not have been put in a position where she felt she had to lie.

Cooperating and complying: doing the 'right' thing for the 'wrong' reason

The strategy of cooperating and complying includes examples where the co-researchers describe doing what they are told, giving in, towing the line, backing down from injustice, following the rules and orders of an authority figure, and doing things to fit in or to achieve a larger goal. The 'right' thing was the legal thing, the socially expected thing, the polite thing. They did it, not because they believed it to be fair, but because they had figured out that it was the only way to get what they needed or to avoid further suffering and structural violence. Doing the 'right' thing was a survival strategy as it minimized or eliminated actual and potential harm and suffering. The 'right' thing is 'wrong' because it was a response to structural violence and the co-researchers believed that it should not have needed to be the case at all. Co-operation and complying was

‘wrong’ because it came at the expense of the co-researchers’ values, convictions, and ability to denounce the violence they suffer.

Making the best of a bad situation

The co-researchers’ used the language of co-operation and compliance in their descriptions of instances of doing the ‘right’ thing:

Susannah: *So, what do you do then when the doctors don’t listen, when they just give you these ultimatums?*

Jane: *Usually you comply, because if you like tell them off then they are just going to phone a security guard and get you kicked out anyways. There is not much you really can do about it. So far it has just been to comply. I don’t go to doctors unless I really, really have to. (Jane, age 25, Phase Two Interview)*

In Jessica’s case, she explained that it was better to just co-operate when faced with a ‘bad cop’:

Jessica: *Bad cops don’t give you a right at all. They’ll ignore you. They just think they are a lot higher up and there’s nothing you can do about it, right.*

Susannah: *So when you are faced with those cops? What’s your strategy? Are you quiet and hope it goes away, do you fight back, do you complain...? What do you do?*

Jessica: *It’s not a good idea to fight back. It’s better to just deal with the situation and hope for the best and, just cooperate.*

Susannah: *Even if what they are doing is wrong?*

Jessica: *Yeah. (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview)*

Jessica went on to explain that when it came to the police and laws, "it is up to you to do nothing wrong" (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview). This was echoed by Sean who explained

that because he had been given an order to ‘keep the peace’ he avoids certain places, like bars, where it would be more likely that he might get into a fight or run into trouble. This meant that the onus was on the co-researchers to ensure that their actions, choices, activities, behaviours do not transgress the boundaries of legal or socially acceptable behaviour, particularly in the case of public space. Jessica explained that in order to avoid getting into trouble, she stayed home, or stayed inside when she had been drinking.

The potential consequences of getting caught up in the legal system were so extreme, that Blake explained that it was better to just comply – *to in fact plead guilty when innocent* – to minimize the overall harm to one’s well-being and one’s life:

If you can’t make bail because you’re homeless and on the street and you skipped a lot of court dates because you’re fucked up, then you’re gonna plead guilty to it, to get out faster, rather than sit and wait in the fuckin bucket just for them to call your name to go to court to try to plead your case which can take months. So basically, what would take weeks, to just say, to just plead guilty to it, will take months to try to fight it and you have to sit there, and do time in there, the whole time, while your whole life is on hold outside, you know, your bills can’t get paid, you can’t get anything done, you’re whole life is... so that’s why people plead guilty. (Blake, age 26, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)

Blake suggested he should cut his losses, capitulate, and comply with the system in order to minimize the additional harm that getting caught up in the system will cost him. The risk was that if Blake stood up for himself, insisted on his innocence, he risked losing everything in his life on the outside, like his housing.

This strategy of constant self-monitoring and self-censoring extended beyond the goal of avoiding further implication in the criminal justice system and effected more than just how the co-researchers made use of and existed in public and private spaces. As Emily explained, it was necessary to fit in to society in general in order to get what she needed. This meant cooperating and acquiescing to social norms and standards everyday, all the time, in terms of how she dressed, how she did her hair and how she spoke:

Emily: *There is a lot of conforming you know...*

Susannah: *Conforming to what? For example... ?*

Emily: *Like that you know, you're, you gotta conform to like a certain, certain type of, lifestyle you know, in order to like succeed in this society. You know? Otherwise, you're out-casted and it's hard for you to get jobs, and it's hard for you, you know, to do other things. (Emily, age 24, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)*

Emily's insight speaks to the need to conform in general in order to succeed. During the Phase One Large Group Brainstorming Discussion, counter culture was addressed, leading Jane to offer a concrete example of the need to conform one's appearance – a reflection of one's identity – to appease social norms and attitudes in cases where other people are in a position of power and able to deny you your basic rights based on who you are, or who you appear to be:

Susannah: *So, anyone else have any strong feelings about the structures listed at the bottom of the page?*

Meagan: *Counter culture.*

Jane: *Yeah.*

Meagan: *Cause if you're outside of the box, it's like, "well..."*

Jane: *I know. I have to put my hair like "this" (positions her hair a certain way that looks like a more typical hair style) before I go to a housing interview. Every time I gotta make it look like I have a really skinny bob. (Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)*

In these examples, cooperating and complying was advantageous in that in the immediate moment and in the short term, suffering and additional violence (structural or otherwise) was avoided. For example, Jane was able to continue to have a relationship with her doctor and thereby access medical services she needed and Jessica avoided further mistreatment at the hands of the police. However, these examples also highlighted the real cost of cooperating and complying: the co-researchers had to sacrifice, to varying degrees, their principles, their sense of social justice, their values, or their identity in order to survive or to meet their basic needs. It is in this sense that the ‘right thing’ was actually wrong and done for the wrong reasons.

The data also demonstrated that there was burden and responsibility placed on the co-researchers. They had to be always anticipating social expectations; they had to be one step ahead of structural violence in order to minimize its actual and potential effects; they had to be hyper vigilant with regard to how structural violence might manifest itself. Unfortunately, as a survival strategy, this hypervigilance, this self-monitoring, which manifested as complying and cooperating, did not in any way minimize or eliminate structural violence itself. The structural violence was still there in its latent potential. In order to meet their basic needs, the co-researchers ‘played by the rules’ but so doing allowed the rules to continue to exist, even if the rules had been set up to penalize them.

Seeking community

The fourth and final strategy to emerge from the analysis was that of seeking community. This fourth strategy marks a departure from the first three, which were highly individualized strategies for dealing with structural violence. Seeking community was a strategy that allowed the

co-researchers to collectivize with regard to a particular need or interest. The sharing of experiences that was achieved through participation in a community was a source of support, reassurance, positivity, and hope. The word community was the principle term used by the co-researchers to name the types of experiences they were describing when they talked about receiving support in a group context. Other words that were used to explain similar experiences included family, friends, and fellowship. While community was principally used to describe people who had a shared experience, interest, objective, or need, it was also tied to the ‘where’ of an experience. In this sense, community was both social and geographic in nature.

Safe to be me

For the co-researchers, having a community meant being accepted for who they were. In other words, community existed where their identity was validated; community meant being safe to be yourself:

Its community. Exactly. Um, it's ah, it's small, everybody gets a chance to talk and we get to talk about like what happened that week in our life. And, what things are going good, what things are going bad. And it's very comfortable. You can say anything and it's very confidential. So it's very, it's a nice environment like that you know. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Yeah, I feel like [art group] is a place where you can just relax and be yourself, and not have to, as long as you are respectful and not crossing any lines, like you can be in a bad mood and be having a bad day and no one's going to think any less of you for it. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

My friend was like “there's like this punk anarchist house, we're having a meeting about Occupy” and I was like, you got me at punk and anarchist, so let's go! And it was like, a collective house, with people living together. And right before the meeting started the guy who started the house was like, “we are looking for a few more roommates” and I was like

“I’m in.” So then I moved into this collective house then, that summer, I just, that’s where I found myself truly in that community. Cause I was always like, I’m a punk-ish, but I don’t know how to be a punk. And then, I’m an anarchist, I don’t know what anarchist is. They just like taught me like so much stuff. It was really awesome, it really helped me actually, cause like, every year I always went through like, “I need to find myself this year” and I found myself again there. I was like “ok, now I’m this person.” (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

Community was a safe place where the co-researchers were accepted for who they were, their identity was validated, but it was also a place to grow and change as your identity changes over time. Community also provided the co-researchers with an environment where people had a deep understanding of each other and a commitment to supporting each other:

My community is very big, and very good at supporting each other. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

[Art group] is just a lot of people going through the same stuff. And, safe space. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

You do need like, that community of peers that understand each other and like, that like group up together in a sense. (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

Art group is helpful, and like, my friends are helpful, they’re good. They can let me know if they see that I’m not like myself. (Naomi, age 23, Phase Two Interview)

They kinda all encourage each other. There’s a lot of respect and everyone’s knows’ what everyone’s going through, or went through, addictions or whatever else, like being homeless. I think we’re all a big family almost you know. All good friends. (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

Source of hope, joy, and inspiration

Given that community meant safety, the freedom to be yourself and a space where the co-researchers were supported and felt that they were understood, community based activities were

described by the co-researchers as entirely positive forces in their lives. Having a community, typically tied to a particular activity, meant having somewhere to go, people to see, and something to look forward to. In this sense, community was a source of hope, joy and inspiration:

[Art group] has been one of the main reasons that I'm, I'm doing so well right now. It's because I have that to look forward to every week. Without that thing to look forward to, I get that stagnate feeling, that leads to all these shitty feeling of like inadequacy, you know? So, it's like, even going to that thing once a week and knowing that I got myself up, and I get myself out and there every week, it's perfect. It's exactly what I need in my life. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

Art group is the best part of the week. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

I didn't have the will to draw anymore. Once I started the art group it took me a while but after being with kids my age again, and it kinda reminded me of the art class I had in high school and I kinda missed that so it kinda gave me the same atmosphere and ... so I love going to the art group just cause it got me back into it. (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

As a source of hope, joy, and inspiration it was even suggested by Isabelle that having access to a community based activity would be a useful crime prevention strategy. She argued that people just needed something like the P4Y program:

... to keep them going on the right track. (Isabelle, age 20, Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #3)

Material benefits

In addition to emotional and identity based benefits, community also served as a means for the co-researchers to meet their basic material needs in terms of financial resources, food, and safety. For example, in a Phase One focus group on policy, the co-researchers identified that the

meals and weekly honorarium provided by art group were essential as they tried to get by week to week:

Jane: Yeah. So now *[because of the foodbank's hours]* I don't get to eat till Monday!

John: Thank god for art group eh!

Jane: I know!

Susannah: Free dinner.

John: And money.

Jane: And Money. Otherwise, I'd probably starve. I was thinking, "yeah, I'm gonna get a whole fridge of food *[at the food bank]* and then make 60 dollars and have more food" but then, *[no food bank]*! (Phase One, Focus Group on Policy #1)

Meagan reflected on the past when she had a street community with other street involved youth that helped to take care of each other, making sure they all had enough to eat and that they were safe:

... when things got too tight there I hit Rideau and then I found like a group of punks down there that I'd hang out with. In the summer its ok, if you have a support group, like someone will be panning across the street from you and you can just holler out, over to them, ... like, if you get a sandwich, when you are panning, you can be like "hey buddy, sandwich!!!" ... You helped each other. Ours was a decent sized group. It was me, two other girls and three other boys. The boys would go out and they'd try and find us food and money and we'd do other stuff like trying to get us beer, or free cigarettes, it was a good time back then. (Meagan, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

For Meagan, she and her friends were all better off if they worked together to pool their resources and to look out for each other. In addition to meeting the basics needed for survival, community – particularly activities accessed in a community setting – provided the opportunity for the co-researchers to pursue their interests and passions or to access services that otherwise would not be available to them – such as mental health support groups, cooking groups, sports teams, and the P4Y program:

... the food, the vibe, the incentive, the free art products to use. It's like, something that people would pay to do, but you get paid to do it. So, it's like, really good. And I think It's really smart too because like as much as people want to maybe do good things for themselves, like work on art, they might, street involved people are more um, what's more important usually is like, food and money, so, to be like, we'll take care of that for you, as long as you come in. (Eva, age 20, Phase Two Interview)

Yeah, [art group] helps me out artistically, because before art group I wasn't thinking about art at all. And art group, they've given me a bunch of supplies, like pastels and stuff like that. (Sean, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

The space and place of community

For a number of the co-researchers, the support derived from community was not just tied to identity or to meeting their basic needs, it was also a function of space and place. In other words, community was not just a question of social interests, but also of social geography. For Meagan, her community of support was tied to Rideau Street, and she even went so far as to refer to herself as a “Rideau Rat.” For Lain, the geographic role of community was broader than that identified by Meagan, but still tied to street involvement:

Most of my friends and my community and my culture is on the streets. (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

For Avery, his community was tied to the (neighbour) ‘hood’ where he grew up. He and his neighbours were bonded and were supportive of each other in virtue of their shared experience of growing up in a particular neighbourhood where poverty, crime, and gang membership were prevalent:

We lift our people up. You don't see people from the hood getting bullied, even though half the time it leads to them doing something bad... gotta change that. So, when you grow up

in the hood its like having a huge sense of family, because when you grow up in the hood you don't have your mom, you don't have your dad. Your mom or dad are either addicted to drugs, doing illegal stuff and don't have time for you, or both... so, like, you take care of your own, you take care of your hood, you take care of your community. (Avery, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

Power in the people

Avery's reflection that 'we lift our people up' speaks to another positive aspect to come from community: there is strength in numbers. At the most basic level, strength in numbers meant not feeling as lonely:

Well, I think community is the most important thing in the whole world. I didn't feel that way until I found my community. Cause I felt lost. And I felt like, I felt really alone. I think for me as long as people are in a community that is doing well for them, and they feel positive, I could never ask for more for them. But I think that, people that lack community tend to, tend to go inside themselves a little too much sometimes because they don't feel like they have anyone to reach out to. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

For others, such as Lain and Ryan, strength in numbers was something they experienced when they participated in social protests. Gathering in large numbers to protest social injustice, such as environmental issues, was important for them as it was an opportunity to try to affect change. The current study was seen by the co-researchers as a community space that could effect change because of the collectivisation of ideas, energy, and knowledge. As John explained, coming together as co-researchers' meant that there was power in numbers:

30 people's opinion would be better than one person. One person can't change everything, but as a group we can, you know, maybe get someone to listen to us. (John, age 26, Phase One, Large Group Brainstorming Discussion)

For Lain, the presentation of Lain's art piece to the public was an opportunity to collectivize through education:

I just wanted to show them like what the actual reality of money is. I really want people to actually open their eyes a little bit and start like, thinking about it, and once you start thinking, it starts pissing you off, the idea, and that's when you want to start changing stuff. So if there's a lot of people who want to change something together, then it would work, but if there's only one person they're just gonna "Hmmm". (Lain, age 19, Phase Two Interview)

Coming together for this research study to effect change and to achieve an objective as a group was also something to be celebrated:

Yeah, and that's one's thing I noticed. Everybody, even as rushed as they were, or as much as disorganized as everyone was, you know in the end, when we were all at that crunch time and bringing it together we all supported each other and helped each other come up and everyone was just like "ah, it's done, yeah! Celebrate" (Emily, age 24, Phase One, Focus Group on Research Study Feedback #3)

Family

As a last aspect of community, for many of the co-researchers, community was akin to having family:

That group was nice because there's re-occurring people that you see every week which keeps it keeps it like family. (Emily, age 24, Phase Two Interview)

I think we're all a big family almost you know. All good friends. And they all make you feel comfortable, and it's a nice area, environment. Its ah... it's alright...they are all welcoming. So, that's what I like about it. (Jessica, age 22, Phase Two Interview)

The co-researchers were involved in a variety of communities that spanned their interests and experiences: mental health, housing, social activism, recreation, neighbourhood, earning money, staying safe. These various types of community served a variety of important functions in their life and helped to combat the structural violence they face. These were communities where they were accepted for who they were, where they shared resources in order to make sure they had enough to eat or a safe place to sleep, where they were able to protest or speak up about the social injustices they saw around them, where they collectivized their problems and where they found family.

Conclusion

This chapter described the strategies employed by the co-researchers for dealing with their experiences of structural violence. Four strategies were identified and were portrayed to accurately reflect the way the co-researchers' spoke about their strategies. The first three strategies were 1) fleeing, leaving, running and quitting: or 'liberation from forces of structural violence,' 2) deceiving and stealing: or 'doing the wrong thing for the right reason,' and 3) cooperating and complying: or 'doing the right thing for the wrong reason'. In the case of the first three, alternate titles were juxtaposed as a means of, from the outset, drawing the reader's attention to the inherent tensions that existed within each type of strategy. In general, these tensions related to differences in the ways the co-researchers' perceived their strategies (e.g. necessary, positive, informed) and the way society judged their strategies (e.g. delinquent, criminal). The fourth strategy, that of seeking community, distinguished itself from the first three in that it was a group based strategy for dealing with structural violence.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Imagine dropping a rock into a body of water. The co-researchers' experiences of structural violence and their strategies to survive that violence are the rock, and their lives are the body of water. The rock is dropped and immediately waves ripple and extend outwards from the point of entry. Those waves are the additional consequences that move outward, extending the scope of suffering beyond the bounds of the initial experience of structural violence and the strategy used to survive it. However, once the rock drops below the surface, all that remains are the waves, the consequences of dropping the rock, the rock itself having become invisible, disappearing from view below the surface. Therefore, even as the waves grow smaller and smaller, having a reduced effect, they remain significant because, divorced from the rock as their cause, they appear as though they are the natural property of the water. In other words, a co-researcher struggling with mental illness and addictions, no longer in school, and living on the street is easily blamed for his or her circumstances, because the experiences of structural violence are not evident.

Now image a handful of rocks being dropped into the water. Waves begin to ripple out in all directions from the various rocks, crashing one into the other, creating new waves, making it often impossible to discern what wave came from where, particularly once the rocks fall beneath the surface. Thus, a life awash in (invisible) experiences of structural violence becomes chaotic in appearance, and the causes of the structurally induced violence and suffering are readily, and naturally, attributed to the individual.

I began this discussion with this metaphor as an attempt to present to you, the reader, as clearly as possible, a picture, an impression, of what has been, and continues to be, a very

complicated situation. As I wrestled with the results, I was constantly at odds about how to represent them. Why was that? It was because the lives of the co-researchers were so filled with crashing waves that it was hard, and at times seemingly impossible, to fully and fairly represent the rocks below the surface as being central to understanding their transition to adulthood.

The first challenge was that the spheres that made up the co-researchers' transitions to adulthood were quite enmeshed. In an attempt to lend clarity to a complicated situation, I presented the spheres separately (Chapter Three), identifying moments where they co-researchers' stories highlighted how the spheres did in fact overlap. However, the spheres were not experienced separately by the co-researchers as distinct, isolated one from the other. For example, being kicked out of the family home for being a lesbian, seemed equal parts housing, relationships, and identity. Moreover, a situation that may have begun in one sphere, quickly cascaded into other spheres. For example, being kicked out of the family home made it too hard to stay in school, which made it hard to get a job without a high school diploma, which made it hard to pay rent and afford food, which in turn made it hard to be stable enough to think about returning to school or finding a job.

Secondly, what further complicated the analysis was that the three types of structural violence experienced by the co-researchers (Chapter Four) and their four strategies for overcoming these experiences (Chapter Five) were not each affiliated with a specific sphere of the transition to adulthood. For example, the co-researchers were just as likely to be silenced in different spheres – at home, at school, and at work – as in just one. They were paralyzed in the street and at the doctor's. They were denied things by service providers as well as by their parents.

I have concluded that this severe complexity of analysis was not something to be overcome, but was itself central to understanding the effects of structural violence on the transitions of the co-researchers. In short, the co-researchers were enmeshed in a web-like total system of structural violence, akin to Mullaly's "total system of oppression" (2007, p. 212). The spheres of their transition to adulthood, their experiences of structural violence, and their survival strategies were all interwoven and interconnected. This conclusion is significant, because it highlights a central analytic result, one of (mis)representation: structural violence in the transition to adulthood of the co-researchers *made it look like* they were not carrying out their responsibility as citizens *to exercise and develop their autonomy*, in socially sanctioned ways. The trick of structural violence was that it reduced their expressions of autonomy to a dichotomous representation as either good or bad, legal or illegal, sanctioned or unsanctioned, legitimate or illegitimate. The damaging effect of structural violence on the co-researchers' *autonomy*, and the representation of the co-researchers' expressions of autonomy, brought a third layer of complexity to this discussion. The complexity comes because autonomy can be difficult to study, given that it principally reveals that which is symbolic and relational in nature (Gaudet, 2001). This means that it's easier to study things like housing and employment than it is to study autonomy, citizenship, and identity in the transition to adulthood. Accordingly, it is even easier for structural violence, which thrives by making itself invisible, to make autonomy also appear absent.

The co-researchers did not exercise the power to represent their choices according to the meaning that they gave them. Authority figures, and those 'in power', exercised the power of representation. Ultimately, structural violence operated to obscure and efface the co-researchers' expressions of autonomy. This discussion will first address how structural violence acted on their

material circumstances, making it difficult to do the concrete things required in order to become autonomous, or to produce socially acceptable outcomes as a result of autonomously made decisions. Specifically, housing, institutions, finances, relationships, health, and citizenship and identity are discussed. Secondly, this discussion will review how, even when the co-researchers did exercise their autonomy, the treatment they received (being silenced, paralyzed, denied things) served as a means to make their expressions of autonomy disappear, seemingly to never have existed, or to appear ‘bad’ and socially undesirable. In this section, issues of representation and legitimacy are discussed in relation to the co-researchers’ autonomy. The chapter concludes with an extensive discussion of implications of the results for practice, policy, and research. The implications are numerous as social work is a profession, which makes practical application of the research inherently necessary. Moreover, the structural orientation to this social work research requires that these implications contribute to social change and to the reduction of structurally violent social arrangements, including interventions, policies, and research.

Comparing and contrasting transitions

The research results showed that the transition to adulthood of the co-researchers differed vastly from the transition to adulthood of youth in general, despite the fact that the social expectations of autonomy and independence remain the same. These results confirm existing research showing that street involved youth, at this life stage when they require increased support, are in fact receiving less (CHRA 2002; Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016). Mallet et al. (2010, p. 35) summarize the challenging nature of this contemporary context for street involved youth:

the fact that early exiting of the family home is statistically becoming increasingly rare only renders those who do so under duress or in difficult circumstances all the more vulnerable. As youth policies, services and discourses adjust and respond to this new, more complex mode of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, young people who experience homelessness are at risk of becoming more marginalized than ever (p. 35).

While it is beneficial for youth in general that life course expectations adjust to reflect contemporary realities, Mallet et al. (2010) rightly highlight the increased vulnerability and marginality that the adjustments produce for street involved youth. In short, street involved youth are expected to transition sooner, and with less support and fewer resources, than Canadian youth in general, who transition more slowly, and with the support of their parents. Since early transitions have important consequences for autonomy (Molgat & Maunaye, 2003; Moriau, 2011), street involved youth are set at a disadvantage from the outset.

Co-researcher Blake illustrated this difference in the piece “The Baby Sorter” that he created for the *Critical Impressions Art Show*, during Phase One of the current study (Appendix N). Blake explained that he wanted to show how from an early age the deck was stacked against him because he was living in poverty. He sought to depict how, as he progressed towards adulthood and through street involvement, the disparity of opportunities persisted and compounded. He explained that the work required of him to overcome this disparity would be unequalled by Canadian youth in general. He explained that while it would be possible to overcome this socially created disadvantage, it would be extremely difficult. In this sense, he did not offer an entirely deterministic view of violent structural social arrangements, but an incredibly discouraging one. His piece represented the material disadvantage experienced by the co-researchers.

Housing

In terms of housing, the co-researchers' residential pathways were characterized by disruption. Not just a yo-yo transition, to and from the family home, like Canadian youth in general (Biggart & Walther, 2006; Molgat, 2007), but frequent moves to and from a variety of locations. The average age of home-leaving among the co-researchers was 16.5, which is in line with what is reported in the research on street involved youth (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016)²², but considerably lower than Canadian youth in general, who are living at home longer (Statistics Canada, 2012). The co-researchers' reasons for leaving home, and doing so 'early', were mostly due to conflict, which is in keeping with the literature on street involved youth (Karabanow, 2004; Mallett et al., 2005; Mallett et al., 2010). While Canadian youth in general are living at their parent's home longer, the co-researchers' housing pathways included rooming houses, rough sleeping, being trapped in housing shared with an abusive partner, shelters, and stays in other institutions. For the co-researchers, home-leaving entailed, either temporarily or permanently, the loss of the support of their parents. For Canadian youth in general, staying at home longer is a way of accessing continued supports in their transition to adulthood (Molgat & Taylor, 2012).

Institutions

Institutions figured prominently in the residential sphere of the co-researchers. All the co-researchers had stayed in one or more of four institutions (shelters, prisons, mental health hospitals, substance use rehabilitation facilities). Apart from shelters, each institution considered on its own may not appear significant given that only three co-researchers reported stays in a prison, six

²² Gaetz, O'Grady et al. found that 40.1% of street involved youth "reported that they were under the age of 16 when they first experienced homelessness" (p.7).

reported stays in mental health hospitals, and three reported stays in addictions treatment facilities. I would draw the reader's attention to two points. First, given the largely self-directed nature of the semi-structured interviews, not all the co-researchers addressed all the topics addressed by the other co-researchers. Therefore, it is possible – and, in fact, likely given statistics regarding street involved youth and mental health (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016; Kidd, 2013; The Learning Community on Youth Homelessness, 2012), substance use (Baron, 1999; Boivin, Roy, Haley, & Galbaud du Fort, 2005; Evenson & Barr, 2009; Gaetz et al., 2010), and involvement in the criminal justice system (Evenson & Barr, 2009; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997; O'Grady, Gaetz, & Buccieri, 2011) – that the numbers reported here do not reflect the true percentage of co-researchers who would have spent time in these institutions.

Secondly, it is not in their breakdown by institution that these numbers become significant for our understanding of the co-researchers' transition to adulthood and the structural violence they face, but rather in their aggregation: 100% of the co-researchers spent time living in at least one of the four institutional settings. Even if shelters were removed from that calculation, as they are an “obvious” institution in the housing pathway of street involved youth, 75% of the co-researchers spent time living in at least one of the three other institutions (prisons, mental health hospitals, substance use rehabilitation facilities). This result is significant given that Canadian youth in general live at home with their parents, not in institutions.

According to Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., (2016), youth homelessness is not explained by individual or even social relationship factors alone. “Institutional or systems failures” play a huge role in youth homelessness. They argue that:

institutional or systems failures powerfully contribute to youth homelessness. We define such failures as instances in which young people who transition from institutional care – including child protection, juvenile detention or adult corrections, in-patient mental health care – become homeless because they lack access to housing or the necessary and ongoing supports needed to maintain housing. At a policy and practice level, our failure to provide adequate and effective transitional supports means we create a pipeline into homelessness (Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016, p. 34).

Accordingly, the consequences of the co-researchers’ stays in institutions, are *institutional or systems failures*, not *individual failures*. Losing their housing, their furniture, or their job because of a prison stay, and not having any supports in place when leaving prison, is an example of the pipeline into homelessness. The added complications related either to having a criminal record, like not being able to find work, or being ‘known’ by the police every time a new minor infraction is incurred, or to suffering additional trauma while staying in a mental health institution, all contributed to keeping the co-researchers at the bottom of social hierarchies. In this way, given these widespread implications, institutions play a central role in the structural violence experienced by street involved youth, as well as in their ability to transition to adulthood in the ways that society expects of them. How youth come and go from institutions is of vital importance for their transition to adulthood.

These results also suggest a number of critical reflections for transitions researchers. Who gets to decide what is a legitimate place to live and how to operationalise the idea of ‘living somewhere’? If a co-researcher spent six months in prison, if he or she spent on average three months a year in a psychiatric facility, or had repeated stays in an addictions treatment facility, how should that affect how we understand what it means ‘to live’ somewhere and how we understand and determine what is ‘normal’ within a housing pathway? This should prompt us to

broaden our conceptual and theoretical understandings of residential pathways to avoid stigmatising discourses regarding ‘alterative’ residential experiences. It also raises important questions. What counts as housing? Are mainstream notions of housing within residential transitions privileged understandings of housing? How can understandings of housing be opened up to make space for non-traditional experiences of housing?

In addition to Gaetz, O’Grady, et al.’s (2016) reflection that there are serious consequences for street involved youth who leave institutions without adequate supports, these statistics require a reflection regarding the mechanisms that lead to such high rates of stays in these institutional settings as well as their potentially positive and/or negative effect on those who live in them.

Finances

In terms of finances, social assistance emerged as a point of comparison to Canadian youth in general. The majority of the co-researchers (Phase One 76%, Phase Two 75%) accessed social assistance, meaning that the primary source of revenue for the co-researchers was social assistance. This stands in stark contrast with Ontarians in general²³, less than 3.3% of whom rely on social assistance as their main source of income (Ministry of Finance, 2011). If, as Moriau (2011) suggests, the purpose of helping at-risk youth, such as street involved youth, to become autonomous is to enable them able to live on their own, without accessing social assistance, does this suggest that, by social and economic standards, street involved youth are not autonomous? In

²³ 3.3% represents all “other government transfers”, which include social assistance, workers’ compensation and refundable tax credits.

short, the answer is no. It is important to not construe the consequences of the autonomously exercised decisions made by street involved youth as proof of their ‘failing’ at becoming autonomous. It is paramount that social assistance be framed as a legitimate source of income. Secondly, the majority of the co-researchers felt that the amount of money provided by social assistance was not sufficient to meet their basic needs. These first two points suggest that structural considerations are at play in the work and income pathway of the co-researchers, and raises numerous questions. Why are these youth excluded from traditional employment opportunities? Why are they over represented in their access of social assistance? Why does society not provide sufficient social assistance to meet basic needs? Thirdly, while it is tempting to frame those who spend their social assistance on drugs and alcohol as ‘bad social assistance recipients’, this individualization of the problem fails to take into account the structural problems potentially at play, such as issues of access to substance use treatment programs, mental health issues, and exclusion from mainstream employment opportunities and educational institutions.

The co-researchers’ alternative money generating activities raise important questions such as who gets to work, and who gets to decide how ‘alternative’ work is represented and socially (un)valued? Moreover, what counts as legitimate work? The co-researchers’ stories revealed that the ability to access socially recognized work is a privilege. Despite continual efforts, they were excluded from the formal job market (because they were pregnant, because of their appearance, because of their mental health). Their exclusion could be represented as a result of ‘problematic behaviours’ or because they don’t ‘fit’ into existing systems, but a structural analysis would suggest that in fact systems and social structures are not set up to accommodate, tolerate, or encourage their difference or their unique needs. Rather than representing the co-researchers as

inherently ‘at-risk’, interventions should target ‘risk creating’ social structures that exclude these youth from being able to participate in society in the ways they strive to. The co-researchers’ professional aspirations speak to their genuine desire to participate in society. The question becomes what space society is prepared to make for them in order to make that possible.

The co-researchers expressed frustration with the fact that their money generating activities carried no currency in society. Their money generating activities could not go on a resume; they were not seen as having any value. As a result, their experiences were kept invisible. This served to keep them at the bottom of social arrangements. This aligns with the principle finding of Karabanow, Hughes et al.’s (2010) study of the formal and informal work economies of street involved youth:

Popular public myths suggest that street youth are unintelligent, lazy and delinquent. In fact, these young people appear thoughtful and reflective with a strong work ethic that is steeped within civil society, not outside of it. Rather than deviant and criminal in nature, youth participants increasingly seek out employment that is deemed legal and lawful within their contexts [...] they are left with in-formal labor that provides them with survival money, pride, self-worth and accomplishment, despite the belittlement, harassment and mockery that comes with such activities (p. 61).

The co-researchers experienced a similar frustration with their educational experiences. The co-researchers knew that they were smart but they knew that society did not recognize the ‘street smarts’ that they had acquired.

Being excluded from standardized pathways should raise questions about what society values and judges legitimate in terms of both revenue generation and knowledge generation. The co-researchers’ professional aspirations demonstrate that despite the challenges experienced in

their professional pathways, the co-researchers share a desire to be socially and economically contributing and as integrated members of society. This poses more questions. If society does not value or legitimize what a person knows or what they do, does society value that person? If society does not acknowledge how you dress, what you do, what you like, how you live, where you live, does it acknowledge you in your personhood? In this way, the ties between personal economies and issues of identity and citizenship are glaring. By stamping out the co-researchers' economic value, their value as people in society is simultaneously negated. This representation suggests that because of the choices that they have made, they are not socially valuable.

Finances are tied to debt. The majority of the co-researchers who discussed debt described debts owed to friends, roommates, or acquaintances. This aligns more with the data available on debt types of street involved youth (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016), and stands in contrast to other types of debt such as student loans and money owed to banks and credit cards. The results relating to debt also speak to issues of representation. Financial experts often characterize debt as 'good' and 'bad.' Good debt is debt incurred in order to better one's situation and increase value, such as debt for post-secondary education or home ownership ((FCAC) Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, n.d.). It is worthy of note that the traditional markers of adulthood fall into the category of 'good' debt while 'bad' debt includes money spent on things "you cannot repay in full or on time" and examples include "a personal loan to pay monthly expenses" (Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, n.d.). Bad debt would include money owing to friends, drug dealers, pay day loan companies, and cell phone providers. Paukttuutit Inuit Women of Canada's debt fact sheet targeting Inuit youth suggests that "good debt generally means that you have borrowed money to improve your life in a meaningful way" whereas bad debt includes "buying things on credit cards

you cannot afford” (Pauktuutit: Inuit Women of Canada, n.d.). This taken for granted as sensible financial advice needs to be considered in relation to those living in extreme poverty, such as the co-researchers and street involved youth in general. It is essential to critically examine preconceptions and privilege informed judgements regarding what choices, items, and purchases, ‘will improve life in a meaningful way,’ acknowledging that this determination is subjectively constructed at least in part by one’s financial situation. Moreover, if incurring credit card debt that knowingly cannot be repaid in full or on time is the only way to access the things needed in order to survive, then incurring that debt is not inherently irresponsible. Debt incurred to survive could be represented as carefully calculated debt, where in the balance of credit ratings and debt levels versus meeting one’s basic needs, the scale tips to the latter.

Importantly, street involved youth are not in a position to incur ‘good’ debt and thereby access all of the positive social benefits that accompany it (social advancement and increased wealth). Instead, they are often in situations where they need to incur bad debt, and the disadvantages that go with that (strained relationships with roommates, fear of debts being called in, outrageous pay day loan interest rates), which reinforce vulnerability and poverty. Unchallenged, in the context of the co-researchers, these notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ debt reinforce representations of the co-researchers as youth who cannot manage money and who make bad financial decisions.

In the same vein, the concept of financial literacy (Task Force On Financial Literacy, 2011, n.d.) raises issues of representation for the co-researchers. Given that financial literacy is generally acquired through secondary education and that the majority of the co-researchers had not

completed high school, it is likely that they did not have extensive training in financial literacy. Given that this was not a specific question during interviews with the co-researchers, that remains a hypothesis. A few of the co-researchers did mention that they had budgeting classes through employment programmes. Regardless of their levels of formal financial literacy training, the results showed that the co-researchers *knew and understood* their financial situations very well: they knew that they did not have enough money! They knew that they did not have the financial resources they needed in order to achieve the things they wanted for themselves in life. They knew that money lender companies were mechanisms of structural violence. They knew that if they did not have enough money to make it to the end of the month, then at the end of the month they would be out of money. They also knew that running out of money before the end of the month, when you did not have enough in the first place was not proof of poor budgeting skills. In sum, living in poverty is not proof that you cannot budget.

Money was a recurring theme for the co-researchers. Specifically, not having enough money was the problem. Money was an issue that ran transversally across all the spheres of the transition to adulthood. Insufficient money had many consequences for the co-researchers: they did not have enough money to eat well, to return to school, or to afford safe or sufficient housing. This meant that they were in poorer health, they slept rough or stayed in unsafe housing situations, they did not pursue their education, they worried about their nutrition, and they could not afford to develop their passions or interests. Without money, they got stuck. This put them in situations that were hard to get out of. Because they could not do what they would otherwise have done with money, it appeared as though they were not doing what they should be doing in their transition to adulthood. It appeared as though they were not bettering their lives, that they were not engaging

in the ‘project of the self.’ Despite the fact that research shows that “youth homelessness as a broad social problem ... traps young people in an ongoing state of emergency, without access to permanent housing and necessary supports, and which leads to declining health and well-being, and most certainly an uncertain future,” (Gaetz, 2013) the representation of individual failure and fault persists. As the 2011 Salvation Army report, “The Dignity Project” shows, many Canadians hold the belief that “the poor are the problem” and that “their decisions and choices led them to a life of poverty” (Salvation Army, 2011).

Relationships

In terms of relationships, many of the co-researchers had severed ties with their family of origin, and had done so at a young age, which is not the trend of Canadian youth in general who are staying at home longer (Clark, n.d.). Those co-researchers did not receive support of any kind from their parents. Other co-researchers had maintained or renewed contact with their parents despite having initially left home. Those co-researchers did benefit from some support from their parents, but for the most part it was that they were ‘friends’ with their parents and were able to enjoy a friendly relationship. A few of the co-researchers’ parents were able to offer them rent-free accommodations or were able to put aside the rent the co-researcher paid them as savings. The co-researchers were also engaged in becoming responsible for others (e.g. pets, siblings, friends, children), just not always in the ways more traditionally conceived of in the transition to adulthood.

Health

In Chapter One it was noted that health (physical and mental) plays a significant role in the lives of street involved youth. Specifically, they have considerably worse health outcomes than their peers. Health issues did not, however, emerge as a central theme in the current study. This was not surprising given that health was not the explicit focus of the study. The state of the co-researchers' health was most often addressed as a by-product of their stories about their experiences of structural violence that resulted from their interactions with health care systems and institutions. That being said, the co-researchers mentioned health issues such as depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorder, addictions, Hepatitis C, dental problems, Staff infections, eating disorders, lung infections, ear infections, MRSA²⁴, a slipped disk, extreme weight loss, breathing problems, sexually transmitted infections, diabetes, and poor nutrition. In Phase Two, a staggering 87.5% (N = 14) of the co-researchers indicated that they had mental health issues.²⁵ Importantly, in addition to these problems, the co-researchers stressed frustrations with doctors who would not listen to them or believe them when they talked about their health problems. The co-researchers also pointed out that generally they lacked the financial or other material resources, such as food and adequate shelter, to take care of themselves when they were sick. In relation to the transition to adulthood, their health issues, coupled with the structural barriers they faced when addressing their health issues, contributed to "being pushing down" (Lain,19, semi-structured interview), and made it harder for them to do things like get and keep a job or attend school.

²⁴ Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*

²⁵ This data was not gathered in Phase One.

Citizenship and Identity

Citizenship is about seeing youth as agents of social change, moving from ‘passive’ to ‘active’ citizenship, experimenting with different social groups, being able to exercise rights and assume responsibilities, and having sufficient resources to feel capable of action in the various spheres of social life (Franke, 2010; Molgat & Taylor, 2012). Identity is closely tied to citizenship. Identity is the process of moving from ascribed to self-achieved identities, by way of experimentation with new experiences, new people, and new ideas, by engaging with and participating in one’s environment. Identity and citizenship are respectively the development of the self, and of the self in society. In a sense then, everything is part of identity and citizenship: pursuing schooling and finding a job that reflects your interests, finding a home that allows you to be yourself, to be safe, and to engage with others, developing extra-curricular activities that allow you to meet new people and try new things, choosing relationships that nourish you as a person and that allow you to nourish others. In this light, the residential, financial, relational, and professional spheres were all reflective of the co-researchers’ attempts to explore and express their identity and their citizenship.

In the sphere of identity, the co-researchers told stories about being subjected to social attitudes and judgements regarding their potential as human beings in virtue of their journey through the shelter system. They perceived these social judgements to have become increasingly negative and unfavourable assessments of their worth and potential as human beings as they aged. The co-researchers felt they were treated and seen differently in youth and adult shelters. In youth shelters they were seen to have potential; in adult shelters they were not. This is important for ideas of citizenship and identity as the co-researchers’ stories touch on the idea that on the one hand, as *youth* they are seen as having potential – as having social value and social promise. As they age,

this disappears. On the other hand, they are *street involved* youth, which means that they are not performing their transition to adulthood according to social expectations. None of these representations had anything to do with how they saw themselves, or what they were *actually* doing, which was exercising their autonomy to the best of their abilities in the circumstances provided. Canadian youth in general, who live at home longer and then who cohabitate in residences of their own choosing, are not subjected to these social discourses regarding their social and human value. Neither are they subjected to the same level of critical social scrutiny regarding their circumstances. For Canadian youth in general, their housing choices are not mediated by service providers and are not eligible to become a reflection on their worth as human beings. Despite their differences, street involved youth are still *youth*. As such, “street youth, as with youth culture in general, are at a time in their lives when they are continually seeking a sense of self and environment” (Karabanow, Carson, et al., 2010). It should not be surprising then that if their environments are different than those of Canadian youth in general (e.g. the street, shelters), their identities will reflect those different environmental realities.

This highlights an important result to emerge in relation to the identity sphere. For the co-researchers, there was on the one hand, their self-attributed identity, and on the other hand, the identity assigned to them by society. The socially imposed representations were rarely positive, and included the documented social view (Parazelli, 2002) that street involved youth are, for example, victims or delinquents, and in need of remediation or education. This raises important questions related to power, such as, who ultimately exercises the power to control representation? The results of the current study suggest that the co-researchers themselves did not exercise the power to control how they were represented socially. They did not control their identity as it was

constructed by society. In terms of access to services and social justice, the results suggest that society's conception of the co-researchers carried more weight than their self-conceptions. Moreover, the results demonstrated that the consequences of this social power to represent were devastating in terms of the co-researchers' ability to meet their basic needs in their transition to adulthood.

In the sphere of citizenship, rights emerged as a central area affected by structural violence in the lives of the co-researchers. Landlords attempted to evict the co-researchers by discriminating against them and denying them housing. Doctors refused to acknowledge the co-researchers' input and voice in regards to their health. Police abused their privilege and power, baiting the co-researchers, picking on them and trespassing on their rights. Teachers judged them based on their peer groups. Strangers spoke of them derisively and even kicked them while they panhandled. This denial of both their legal rights as well as the moral and human right to be treated with dignity and respect, to be heard, and to meet their basic needs had a direct impact on their development of citizenship. In short, the co-researchers either did not have the resources necessary to exercise their citizenship (Franke, 2010), or when they did, their rights were ignored or denied.

Campbell and Trotter (2007) argue that research (Dean, 1997; Gill, 2003) shows that few youth living in homelessness, poverty, and unemployment "experience any real kind of citizenship in terms of rights or responsibilities" (Campbell & Trotter, 2007, p. 32). The current study showed that it was not so much that the co-researchers did not 'experience *any real* kind of citizenship in terms of rights or responsibilities,' but that they exercised rights and responsibilities, to the degree

that society permitted and often in ways that were seemingly not valued in traditional expectations or understandings of the contemporary transition to adulthood.

The dehumanizing of the homeless, the negation of personhood, the representation of their very existence as unsafe and unclean, all of which make it illegal and impossible *to be*, is well documented (Amster, 2003; Bellot & St-Jacques, 2007; Catherine Chesnay, Bellot, & Sylvestre, 2013; Catherine Chesnay, Bellot, & Sylvestre, 2014; D. Mitchell, 1997; Parazelli & Colombo, 2004). These dehumanizing social processes constitute structural violence (Taylor, 2013). In the case of street involved youth, research shows that structural violence operates through means such as criminalization (O'Grady et al., 2011; O'Grady, Gaetz, & Buccieri, 2013). This doctoral research shows that structural violence also operates by obscuring and effacing of the autonomy of street involved youth. What the co-researchers were allowed to say, where they were allowed to go, what they were allowed to access, are issues which were all tied to material resources (relational, residential, professional, financial) as well as to issues of identity and citizenship. Importantly, they are also tied to autonomy – to the development of self through having what you need to survive and flourish, through the ability to exercise your rights. In other words, autonomy is tied to all the spheres of adulthood, and all the spheres of the transition to adulthood offer arenas for the development of autonomy.

Structural violence: effacing and obscuring the co-researchers' autonomy

Ultimately, in the contemporary transition to adulthood of the co-researchers, structural violence threatens, misrepresents, and restricts autonomy. Structural violence makes it look like

the co-researchers' expressions of autonomy haven't in fact happened or that their expressions of autonomy are bad and blameworthy. In other words, structural violence makes it seem that either the co-researchers aren't autonomous, or, if they are, their autonomy has led to poor choices. To be clear, the co-researchers were in fact still able to take action, action bounded by the social structures that constrained their lives. Their choices were often just socially unpalatable.

I would argue that acknowledging the extent to which their options are limited is socially undesirable because it means admitting a social culpability in their circumstances. It's easier to see the struggle and suffering of street involved youth as the result of their own inaction, or their own wrong actions. This is why the analysis in Chapter Three is so important. It provides the contextualization necessary to make invisible structural violence visible. It creates an understanding of why the co-researchers made the choices they made, and what circumstances and contexts surrounded those choices.

The co-researchers' experiences of structural violence highlighted the extent of society's attempts to extinguish their identities and their citizenship, which ultimately contributed to obscuring the development of their autonomy. A structural critique behooves us to consider how their expressions of identity and citizenship illuminate the extent to which *society is not* prepared to accept and accommodate them, *as they are*. The revelation of the structural violence embedded in their experiences challenges society to be held accountable for its role in their suffering.

In the 2016 national study "Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey," Terrilee Kelford of Cornerstone Landing Youth services stated that:

there is this perceived notion that kids want to be partying in an apartment somewhere. They don't. Kids go home and try to make it work so many times before they become chronically homeless. Its unbelievable. They try and they try and they try... (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016, p. 34).

The conclusion that they 'try, try, try to make it work' was generally applicable to all spheres of the transition to adulthood of the co-researchers. They were not necessarily trying to *go home*, as that was not always appropriate, but they were trying to do what was necessary to survive, and what was best for themselves given their circumstances. This 'trying' was their expressions of autonomy. They were trying to get jobs, trying to finish school, trying to find enough to eat, trying to better manage their substance use, trying to manage their mental illness, trying to be artists, trying to be socially engaged, trying to be good parents. There was no shortage of hard work and attempts to better their circumstances. What the research results revealed was that often this effort was not reciprocated by the social structures they came into contact with. Society did not appear to be 'trying' to make space for the co-researchers.

Why not? The results would suggest that the fundamental differences between the co-researchers and Canadian youth in general served as the foundation and the justification for treating the co-researchers differently. Rather than interpreting the concrete and measurable differences in their transition to adulthood as an indicator of embedded structural injustice and violence, differences are construed as proof of individual failing. Accordingly, the co-researchers were treated poorly and as though they were not deserving of that which Canadian youth in general were deserving as citizens: the ability to meet their basic needs (or have them met by others), to develop as people, and to exercise their rights.

Specifically, structural violence serves to misrepresent or nullify the co-researchers' expressions of autonomy. Their choices are misrepresented, either to look non-existent, or to look bad. This delegitimizes their autonomy, their identity, and their citizenship. Structural violence obscures the expressions of autonomy of the co-researchers, serving to invalidate their choices, their experiences, and their knowledge. This is possible because the choices, experience, and knowledge of the co-researchers are so strikingly different than Canadian youth in general that, unless they are all properly contextualised, it is possible to represent the co-researchers and their expressions of autonomy as anti-social and irresponsible.

The conclusion is not to suggest that differences in the co-researchers' transitions be analysed in order to make them better fit into existing life course regimes. This would reflect an understanding of society and social interventions based on order theory. Differences tied to the co-researchers ascribed identities should be understood as credible and legitimate. Moreover, differences in the co-researchers' material circumstances during their transition to adulthood must be critically analysed, so that they can reveal the socially produced inequality and violence that made it difficult, or impossible, for them to achieve the same things as Canadian youth in general. In keeping with a structural, conflict based analysis, the recognition of these differences and the social injustice that, at least in part, creates them, should serve a two-fold purpose. First, it should lend credibility to these transitions, admitting that they do reflect the co-researcher's exercise of their autonomy in extremely limiting and challenging circumstances. Secondly, it should compel social transformation of unjust social arrangements, which would create contexts more favourable to the flourishing of youth who find themselves either on the precipice of, or already entrenched in, street involvement.

As the researcher tasked with re-presenting the experiences and voices of the co-researchers, I faced the power of representation as I prepared the results. This was because language matters; how we say what we say matters as it frames, connotes, and represents things in specific ways. In an attempt to balance this power of representation, I offered the alternative title format, characterized by the “ : ” format, to each of the strategies described in the first three subsections of Chapter Five.

The first strategy, which bears the partial label *fleeing, leaving, running and quitting*, was not incorrectly named given that the co-researchers themselves used terms like quitting, leaving, and running away to describe how they managed certain situations. However, the idea of running away, fleeing, giving up, or quitting carries a pejorative connotation and can be seen in a negative light. Quitting, giving up, and running away from one's problems are not socially valued ways of problem solving. Therefore, when framed in terms of *fleeing*, the co-researchers' strategy can be seen to reinforce the culpability and failing of the person who 'quit' or who 'ran away.' However, it would not be honest to disregard the co-researchers' word choice in order to represent their actions, not just in a more favourable light, but in a perspective in keeping with a structural analysis of their experiences. Thus, a tension presented itself to me, the researcher, between the word choice - the voice - of the co-researcher, and the greater context within which I sought to locate that voice.

I would suggest that the reader contextualise the stories of 'quitting, feeling, giving up, and running away' in a structural orientation – that is to say to locate them within coercive and limiting social structures and unequal power dynamics. This implies learning to see 'quitting' not as a negative choice, but as a reasonable solution given the context or environment. It is therefore important to see beyond the status quo connotations of 'quitting' or 'leaving' and frame the

described experiences with the positive meaning associated with words such as *evade*, *extricate*, and *liberate*. For example, consider that rather than ‘running away from home’ the co-researcher liberated him or herself from a physically abusive and homophobic parent. If the idea of liberating oneself from a particular situation supplants the idea of quitting or fleeing, a significant analytic shift can be achieved. The delinquent youth becomes an activist, an agent of change, a survivor, and a person who recognizes and rejects oppression and violence, albeit with a limited field of possible outcomes and choices. Failing to reframe these experiences of quitting, giving up, or running away in this analysis would be to perpetuate the structural violence of language and social discourse that invisibly shapes our perceptions of street involved young people. In a structural orientation, it is imperative to reframe the strategies of the co-researchers which at a surface level may seem like ‘bad choices.’

As the researcher, I also experienced difficulty in determining how to name and describe the strategy of *deceiving and stealing*. I addressed this challenge with the co-researchers when I returned to the group with research results in February 2016. I sought their reaction to the challenge of representation and their input regarding how to handle this issue (Phase Two, Field Note, Return with Results). The consensus was that they were lying and stealing. That was not disputed. What was disputed was the appropriateness of a negative judgement applied to those actions given the circumstances they found themselves in, given the discrimination and injustice they were facing. In other words, it seemed that while a lie was still a lie, it was also a legitimate and necessary way to respond to structural violence. Ultimately, I titled the second strategy *Deceiving and stealing: doing the ‘wrong’ thing for the ‘right’ reason*, because it addressed issues of how we represent actions, such as stealing, to be ‘right’ and ‘wrong.’ The third strategy, that of complying and co-

operating, further highlighted this tension between the representation of right and wrong. That section highlighted how the coresearchers did socially sanctioned things, things that were 'right', even though they were counter to their values and identities, and how those things felt very 'wrong.' In terms of identity, the co-researchers were often put in a bind between being true to themselves and doing what was socially expected of them, which highlights the social intolerance for their personhood.

The co-researchers' knew that lying and stealing were perhaps less than ideal strategies. This challenges popular conceptions of street involved youth as either delinquents in need of reforming in order to stop them from stealing and lying, or as wayward youth simply in need of being educated about right and wrong; they knew quite well the difference between right and wrong and they were faced with it daily. If circumstances and the distribution of resources were more equitable and if structural violence were the target of our interventions rather than the youth themselves then the need to steal or lie could be greatly diminish.

These results highlight the idea of 'doing the wrong thing for the right reason' and challenge us to question the social attribution of the categories of 'right' and 'wrong'. Who is served by the boundaries set for what constitutes an illegal act? The analysis supports the reflections of the co-researchers themselves, that first and foremost it is social structures that operate upon principles that are 'wrong' and that as a result, force the co-researchers to do things that are 'wrong' simply to get by. While their strategies highlighted their strengths, their abilities, their passions, their ideas, their learning, and their choices they were not always conventional, not always palatable to the status quo or even legal, which meant that the strategies of the co-

researchers were not socially validated or acknowledged. Instead, their strategies were often condemned, judged, and even criminalized. Their strategies were choices, expressions of their autonomy, which reflected their values and skills. In condemning their strategies, we condemn, who they are, their identity. Structural violence operates by criminalizing the choices that make up and reflect who they were as people.

The purpose of the “ : ” format, in keeping with a structural analysis, was to reframe the negative social discourses and labels applied to choices made by street involved youth. What emerged from the research results was that most of the time the co-researchers viewed the choices they made as legitimate, even positive, for one reason or another. This was the case even when they told stories of engaging in illegal activities. That society does not validate and legitimize either their strategies and solutions, or the reasons for them, reinforces the idea that street involved youth are not, simply as they are, socially acceptable: the way they think about things and the way they make decisions – the expressions of their autonomy – are wrong and need fixing. This reinforces the view that street involved youth do not matter and in their current state, are not socially valuable. Tension emerges when research shows that what counts as well reasoned on their part still counts as illegal socially. This tension confronts us with questions about the nature of expertise, the legitimacy of law, and the legitimacy of experience. Reflections of this kind are essential, as they pose a threat to the status quo and thus to structural violence.

Several of the co-researchers’ art pieces spoke to this interplay between structural violence and the pursuit of autonomy, to their process of coming into their own and finding their place in society as they became adults. Jane’s first piece “Out growing things and overcoming addictions”

(Appendix R) is positive and hopeful, and represents a young woman breaking her bonds and growing up and changing as a person. However, her second piece, “Pixie in a Birdcage” (Appendix V), is less optimistic, and reflects the reality of structural violence. It represents how “even if you can see the door sometimes the way out is not easy to find.” In the same vein, Isabelle’s piece “Amaze” (Appendix M) is meant to depict the fact that “life for a youth is like a maze. Only one way out....a million dead ends.” In general, these pieces reflect that the co-researchers’ hopefulness is tempered by and firmly grounded in the challenges and violence of their lived experiences.

Structural violence operated to keep the co-researchers at the bottom of social hierarchies. It did so both consciously and intentionally as well as unconsciously and inadvertently. The current study showed that structural violence operated by silencing the co-researchers voices, which confirms research that shows that silencing of voice constitutes structural violence (Kurtz et al., 2008). As with previous research (Kurtz et al., 2008), the silencing of voice led the co-researchers to avoid essential services despite their need of those services. In the same way that Kurtz et al. showed in their research exploring Aboriginal women’s experiences with health care services, this silencing of voice affected the co-researchers “when they [were] most vulnerable and least able to protect themselves” – during their transition to adulthood when they are largely without support and when they are physically, psychologically, financially, and emotionally vulnerable – “[which] demonstrates a need for urgent action to stop the perpetual cycle that supports such structural violence” (Kurtz et al., 2008)

The current study demonstrated that structural violence also operated by paralysing the co-researchers and denying them that which they needed to survive and thrive. Examples of the ways

that structural violence was consciously manifested include the doctors who ignored the co-researchers' opinions and concerns about their health and their medications, and the red zone rules that made it impossible for the co-researchers' to meet their basic needs by restricting their access to essential services. Unconscious examples include situations like the one at the art-group where the orchestra members remarked to themselves about the 'poor kids having a luncheon'. Those people could not fathom the consequences of their ignorant remarks that reflected their privilege and classist prejudice.

The co-researchers' strategy of cooperating and complying highlighted the structural violence operating in their lives to obscure their autonomy through the mechanisms of dangerous and threatening 'possibility' and 'potential'. Structural violence merely had to present itself as a threat, for it to have its desired effect. Its absence, haunted by the possibility of its presence, could be as effective as its actual presence. This reflects Mullaly's (2007, p. 268) contention that "the oppression of violence lies not only in direct victimization, but in the constant fear that violence may occur, solely on the basis of one's group identity." The co-researchers cooperated and complied to avoid future suffering. The threat of potential structural violence meant that they did not fully pursue their desires and their needs, to the detriment of their well-being and their sense of self. And the opportunities to suffer structural violence based on their group identity were as numerous as their identities: street involved, poor, youth, criminal, women.

The issue of representation is at the heart of structural violence. The current study reinforced that structural violence maintained unjust hierarchical social arrangements by staying invisible (Farmer, 1999, 2004; Farmer et al., 2006; Galtung, 1969; Iadicola & Shupe, 2003;

Parazelli, 2008), *making the status-quo look natural* (get a job, become autonomous, finish school) and that which was ‘other’ (the co-researchers’ experiences) appear illegitimate, illegal, unsanctioned, and ‘bad.’ The current study showed this representation was achieved by silencing and paralyzing the co-researchers and by denying them things they needed to survive as well as to flourish. The problem is that as long as the spheres of the transition to adulthood are not themselves questioned, there is no space for different transitions, and so those different transitions will sit outside the mainstream model – they will not be the status quo. In order theory, if something does not align or fit in with the current social order, it is constructed as the problem; the social arrangements themselves are not called into question (Mullaly, 2010). This is why it was imperative to use conflict theory and *structural* social work to understand the co-researchers’ transition to adulthood. Connecting their individual experiences to the competitive social arrangements that framed their lives unmasked the structural violence, allowed for representations of the co-researchers as not exercising their autonomy to emerge as false, and enlightened us to the extent to which social arrangements collude to sustain this representation. This representation of the co-researcher as unsanctioned and illegitimate is essential to society. Without it, we are confronted with the truth, that society is the ‘failed parent’ not taking care of its vulnerable young people. The co-researchers’ alternative transitions risk remaining forever outside the bounds of the status-quo unless research, such as the current study, intervention, and policy argue for an awakening and disrupting of the status quo.

Implications for intervention, policy, and research

In keeping with the structural orientation of this study, the implications suggested here reflect analysis and suggestions for practices that run countercurrent to the social discourses which promote individualism and the neoliberal policies that reduce issues of social justice to individual failings and individual responsibility. These implications take into account the structural view that individuals are intimately tied to the economic, social, and political structures within which they live and that improvements to an individual's living conditions require changes to social, economic, and political structures (Murray & Hick, 2010). The implications not only span all three levels of structural intervention, individual, groups, and community (Lapierre & Levesque, 2013), but overlap at times as well (e.g. policy related to individual intervention). They also incorporate different principles of structural intervention, including defense practices, collectivization practices, materialization practices, increasing the youth's power in the worker-youth relationship, unmasking oppressive social structures, and social activism and political change (Carniol, 1992; Moreau et al., 1993; Moreau & Leonard, 1989; Mullaly, 1993; Murray & Hick, 2010). In general, these suggestions are intended to right power imbalances in the dynamic between street involved youth and the social arrangements that frame their lives, as well as promote the exercise, recognition, and validation of their autonomy in the course of their transition to adulthood.

One of the ways this can be achieved is by creating space for the *voices* of street involved youth. The results showed that the co-researchers were well aware of the structural violence in their lives. Their consciousness was already raised, so to speak. The results showed that they knew when things 'weren't fair,' 'were bullshit,' or 'were designed to keep them poor'. The results showed however, that there was a distinct lack of interest, discouragement and denial in fact, of space for the co-researchers' voice. The results thoroughly outlined the negative consequences to

the co-researchers' health, happiness, and well-being when their voice and autonomy were obscured. Therefore, most of the suggestions for intervention, policy, and research advocate for creating a space for the voice of street involved youth.

Implications for individual and group intervention

A person's difficulties in accessing services often relate to unfair and restrictive institutional procedures (Hick & Murray, 2009). This was the case in this study in terms of age restrictions placed on service provision. Closing a co-researcher's file when they became 'too old' to access services was detrimental to their well-being and their transition to adulthood. It produced a cascade of disadvantage, suffering, and violence, which limited their ability to meet their basic needs or access the supports that Canadian youth in general would otherwise access from or with the help of their parents. Accordingly, the results support a number of suggestions with regards to time limited services. First, organisations should not close a youth's file before the youth requests that the file be closed. Secondly, even if a youth requests that their file be closed, he or she should be able to return to the organisation and have their file re-opened. This would reflect the yo-yo nature of the transition to adulthood, wherein youth in general come and go from the home and the support of their parents. Service providers that are stand-ins for parents should have the same responsibility as parents – to be there as a support for youth as they come and go throughout the transition to adulthood. In this light, recent changes to child protection legislation in Ontario allow for youth to return to services and supports (granted, for a limited time period) despite having previously cut ties with the institution ("Child and Family Services Act, R.S.O.," 1990). While this is a positive development, especially for street involved youth, so many of whom have previously been in care, such measures should be adopted by organisations beyond child protection. Thirdly,

youth serving organisations should extend age eligibility to at least 25, but potentially until as old as 30 years of age, thus reflecting the extended nature of the contemporary transition to adulthood.

A fourth recommendation for individual intervention also relates to the refusal of services. The results support the suggestion that organisations should not be able to close the file of a street involved youth because of his or her behaviour, because he or she did not act in the way desired by the service provider. Behaviours exhibited by individuals seeking services that are interpreted and represented as “difficult or manipulative” (Tew, 2005) by authority figures, may in fact be expressions of power as service seekers “become adept at resisting or subverting the expectations that may be made of them, or the identities that they may be expected to perform” (Tew, 2005, pp. 73-74). Additionally, given that the transition to adulthood is a time for the acquisition of autonomy and the development of identity and citizenship, it should be expected that street involved youth are engaged in processes of speaking up for what they need, what they want, and what they like, and self-expression should be encouraged and supported.

Millar notes that:

when housing support is predicated on mainstream behaviour and compliance rather than the condition of absolute or relative housing, then the more deeply youth are entrenched in the street environment and the less likely they are to access services, resulting in an ever deepening cycle of homelessness (2009, p. 19).

Accordingly, for example, service providers should not be able to close a youth’s file because they fail to show up for appointments, because they criticize a service provider, or because they aren’t polite. Moreover, research shows that a disproportionate number of street involved

youth live with mental illness (TLCYH, 2012). Research also shows that individuals living with mental illness struggle with things like making appointments (A. J. Mitchell & Selmes, 2007). It constitutes discrimination to exclude street involved youth from essential services because of a health-related behaviour. Therefore, losing services because of non-mainstream compliant behaviours is a loss of basic human rights, which in turn negatively affects the various spheres of the transition to adulthood and serves to reinforce street involvement and cycles of homelessness.

In terms of group intervention, the results support two ideas. First, peer involvement or peer support programming could play a role in the delivery of street involved youth services. Peer support “involves people drawing on shared personal experience to provide knowledge, social interaction, emotional assistance or practical help to each other, often in a way that is mutually beneficial” (NESTA, 2015). The results demonstrated among the co-researchers an overwhelming interest in ‘giving back’, by returning to their peers as qualified professionals or volunteers. However, as many of them noted, their limited educational background and lack of employment experience were a barrier to building the resume needed to get the jobs they wanted. Additionally, a lack of finances prevented them from returning to school to get the education required. Some co-researchers had plans of long term volunteering in order to try to make up for what might be seen as deficits in other areas of their professional development.

The inclusion of street involved youth, such as the co-researchers, in peer support programs would combat hierarchical mechanisms of structural violence on several fronts. First, it would provide a degree of validation for the co-researchers’ lived experiences and knowledge within the mainstream job market. Secondly, it would put something concrete on their resume, hopefully

contributing to their eventual integration into the job market. Third, it would also provide them with an income. Being a peer would allow street involved youth to make a connection between their interests and skills and their professional opportunities, a suggested element of the contemporary professional sphere of the transition to adulthood (Molgat & Taylor, 2012). Lastly, it could contribute to their identity development. Peer support been shown “to help people feel more knowledgeable, confident and happy and less isolated and alone” (NESTA, 2015). These elements show that peer programming would be a way that the social service sector could counteract the structural violence perpetrated by the labour market and education systems that make it very difficult for street involved youth to earn a living wage and a stable income.

A second implication for group intervention would be the provision of free recreation and leisure programming, or what is also known as “meaningful activity” (Broadway Street to Home, 2005). There is an “increased recognition that access to recreational opportunities can improve the quality of life of homeless people in important way” (Harrington & Dawson, 1997, para. 2; Ward, 1990). Research shows “ordinary” leisure activities such as hanging-out, going for walks, and watching movies to be beneficial to street involved women (Klitzing, 2004, p. 358) and the results of this study showed that the co-researchers participated in a number of ordinary and free activities. However, the structural lens adopted in this research requires that recommendations extend beyond a call for individual examples of resourcefulness in terms of recreation opportunities: socially funded access to recreation and leisure programs is essential for street involved youth. As Blake explained, it is not fair that some children and youth, because of their parents’ financial resources, have limitless opportunities and others do not:

It’s not fair that children have these extra obstacles in their lives to overcome, to attempt to achieve a similar quality of life as the other ones who with little to no effort can easily

have the same thing. I would have to say that that's not fair, and it is the responsibility of society as a whole to make those changes. To allow for opportunities to be available to the less fortunate. (Blake, age 26, Phase Two Interview)

Given the contemporary emphasis on autonomy, and the development of identity and citizenship, it is the responsibility of society to make opportunities available to street involved youth, opportunities to develop those things that are already otherwise available to other youth from their parents.

The results of this study demonstrated that participation in recreation and leisure activities provided a structuring function in the lives of the co-researchers, anchoring their days and weeks, which they described as often lacking routine or activity. The results also showed that recreation and leisure activities were a strategy employed by street involved youth to overcome experiences of structural violence: they provided access to safe spaces, they provided a sense of community that was often described as 'family', they afforded opportunities for the co-researchers to meet their basic needs (programs often provided honorariums and food), and they furnished opportunities to pursue their interests, to try new things, to have physical activity, and to be part of a group. Limited finances prevented the co-researchers from pursuing recreation and leisure activities beyond those that were available to them for free. These results are in line with research demonstrating that for street involved individuals, recreation and leisure activities give purpose (Knestaut, Devine, & Verlezza, 2010) and improve health (Broadway Street to Home, 2005). Access to recreation and leisure is essential in terms of providing opportunities to street involved youth to explore their identities, and move from 'ascribed' identities to ones they choose for themselves. Moreover, both of these suggestions play on the co-researchers' strategy of seeking

community, which suggests that they would welcome interventions that provide them with things they valued, like a sense of family, safety, reassurance, and hope.

The results also showed that interventions (individual and group) that helped the co-researchers meet their basic material needs were essential, both for their own well-being, as well as for their families (notably children). Examples included the honorarium provided by this research project, recreation and leisure programs that involved a meal or were related to building cooking skills, and the honorarium provided by the OIM art group. Acquiring food and needing to eat were ongoing concerns for the co-researchers. Importantly, providing for the nutritional needs, as well as other material needs of street involved youth aligns with a structural orientation to individual, and group, intervention (Lapierre & Levesque, 2013).

In terms of community intervention, the objective in structural social work is to promote the reduction of social injustice through the recognition of individual and group rights and to create social change, both in the short and the long term. To that end, the next two subsections, those of implications for policy and implications for research, speak to that.

Implication for policy

A first implication for policy is financial. The results showed that social assistance was the primary source of income for 75-76% of the co-researchers. This was higher than street involved youth in general, 45.6% of whom report social assistance as their main source of income (Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016). The results also showed that the co-researchers identified a lack of money as a barrier to improving their circumstances, pursuing their interests, and assuring their well-being.

For example, for the co-researchers, insufficient money meant nutritional insecurity, housing insecurity, exposure to gendered violence, and difficulties in returning to education. As a result of difficulties acquiring a 'legit' income, the co-researchers engaged in alternative forms of money generating activities, such as panhandling, theft, and drug selling, which research shows put them at increased risk for violence and implication with the criminal justice system (Baron, 1999, 2003; CS/RESORS Consulting Ltd, 2001; McCarthy & Hagan, 1992). This would suggest the need to increase Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program allocations, a position that is supported by the Ontario Association of Social Workers (Social Action Committee, 2012). It is also supported by research which suggests that, due to social assistance levels, and other factors, "Ontario's social assistance system is punitive and traps people in poverty" (ISAC, 2005, p. 7). Housing is a fundamental human right (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2008), and while increasing social assistance would not guarantee housing, it would increase the ability of street involved youth to enter the housing market. Increased allocations would allow street involved youth on social assistance to avoid precarious and dangerous housing. It could help them to avoid rooming houses which, in Ottawa, have been shown to be unsafe, in poor physical condition, plagued by bed bugs, and owned by landlords who disregard legal obligations and ethical behaviours (Centretown Community Health Centre & Somerset West Community Health Centre, 2016). It could allow female street involved youth to escape living situations characterized by domestic violence. It could provide an alternative for street involved youth as they otherwise make the transition from youth to adult shelters.

Higher social assistance allocations could contribute to the prevention of youth homelessness. If upon leaving home, or shortly thereafter, youth could afford to transition to stable

and safe housing, this could prevent them from becoming entrenched in the streets. This would also have important positive consequences for their physical and mental health, which has been shown to be effected adversely by street involvement (Dachner & Tarasuck, 2002; Evenson & Barr, 2009; Feldmann & Middleman, 2003; Gaetz, Dej, et al., 2016; Gaetz, O'Grady, et al., 2016; Hwang, 2001; PHAC, 2006; Roy et al., 2004; Sherman, 1992). In conclusion, increased social assistance allocations would contribute to minimizing the divides (e.g. economic, social, health, gender) that stratify society. As such, it would be a step towards minimizing the structurally violent hierarchical social arrangements that are disadvantageous to street involved youth.

A second implication for policy relates to age. As was shown in Chapter One, the transition to adulthood has extended the youth phase of the life course well beyond the legal age of majority (Biggart & Walther, 2006; Furlong et al., 2003; Galland, 2001, 2011; Molgat, 2007, 2011; Walther et al., 2002). It was also shown that federal, provincial, and municipal definitions of youth are varied, ranging from 12 to 35. In Chapter Three, the results highlighted four age-related challenges faced by the co-researchers. First, different services and institutions with different age parameters for youth was confusing for the co-researchers. Second, this variability in age parameters led to difficulty accessing services at the right time and the right place. In other words, it meant that the co-researchers could not always get what they needed to meet their basic needs. Third, this led the co-researchers to be excluded from services they enjoyed and benefitted from before they were ready. Lastly, exclusion from youth services resulted in being thrust into adult services which they described as rougher, more dangerous, less appropriate, and where they felt that adult service providers no longer saw them as young people with hope and promise. The co-researchers

indicated that they preferred not to access adult services, and to do without the benefits of that service, rather than to expose themselves to adult service environments.

This highlights the difference between social and legal definitions of *youth* and *adult*. Whereas an individual legally becomes an adult upon the age of majority, socially, institutions and service providers have flexibility in terms of the age-related delineation of services. Federal surveys and municipal services have, to varying degrees, modified their age-based criteria of youth, reflecting the contemporary social and economic realities that make it difficult for youth achieve independence in the various spheres of their transition to adulthood.

Government institutions that are direct service providers have been slower to make this policy adjustment. Gaetz, O’Grady et al, (2016, p. 47) have rightly critiqued “child protection services that cut off support for young people at the age of 18 or even 21 [and] leave young people in jeopardy and at risk of homelessness.” Child protective services in Ontario are now exploring an ‘until 25’ service provision model (PACY, 2012). The results of the current study suggest that two other institutions, the criminal justice system and the mental health system, need to integrate the extended transition to adulthood which would incorporate the youth specific needs associated with the social and economic realities of that life stage, especially for marginal youth such as the street involved. The results do not suggest changing the legal criteria of youth. Rather, they support policy changes that would allow youth, who have reached the legal age of majority, to continue to receive services that reflect their youth related needs. For example, this would mean offering services in mental health facilities, notably hospitals, in non-adult contexts for youth who, at 18 years of age and older, are legally adults. Such changes better reflect the realities of the

contemporary transition to adulthood. The results suggest that it would extend the length of time street involved youth were able to access services where the service providers still saw them as people with value and potential, encouraging, benefitting, and supporting their identity in the transition to adulthood.

Given the vast body of literature addressing the transition to adulthood as well as the realities of street involved youth, failure to make such policy changes is tantamount to discrimination based on age. Ignoring the specific needs of this population ensures their position at the bottom of social hierarchies and produces institutionalized structural violence.

Implications for research

The implications for research suggested here have an overarching theme: research itself should not produce structural violence. Research needs to be conducted and analysed in ways that are not structurally violent. Prioritization of the co-researcher voice contributes to this objective. This allows co-researchers to shape research purpose and design, and to identify violent research processes if and when they appear in the course of research. This is one way to ensure that research does not constitute yet another social hierarchy that excludes them from the processes that shape their lives and contribute to 'keeping them down'. This involves the shifting of traditional understandings of 'expert' in research, from the researcher to the co-researchers.

The non-violence of research processes is not solely contingent on the evocation of the co-researcher voice. In fact, it would be wrong to place the full weight of responsibility on co-researchers. In the Chapter Two, the methods chapter, I made the case for researchers to

acknowledge and address their *researcher risk* and *researcher privilege*. For research to not perpetuate structural violence, it is paramount that future researchers engage in similar reflexive processes, thereby working towards research processes that are more accountable and ‘do no harm.’ Researchers need to contribute to the body of work that addresses ethics in research by being forthcoming about their experiences, sharing concrete examples of missteps, learning, and self-doubt. In this way, researchers can acknowledge the role they play in dynamics of oppression and take steps to share more equitably power within research relationships. Specifically, in social work, this is a way for the practitioner-researcher to acknowledge and attempt to correct the fact that social work can be complicit in oppression (Dominelli, 2002; C. Kelly & Chapman, 2015).

Therefore, a specific recommendation is that research ethics boards integrate the concepts of *researcher risk* and *researcher privilege* into their ethics approval processes. Researchers should be required to identify these risks and privileges in their ethics applications. They should also be required to disclose, to the research participants, the benefits to the researcher (e.g. prestige, employment opportunities, bolstered CV) in the same way that the potential benefits to the research participant are disclosed to the research participant.

Secondly, research theories, like research methods, need to avoid actively perpetrating structural violence. In the case of this study, the use of inductive analysis was a way to minimize structural violence by not applying uncritically the transitions framework that reflects the transitions of Canadian youth in general (the dominant youth) on experiences unique to the co-researchers as street involved youth. The inductive analysis allowed unexpected elements to

emerge, such as the role of institutions as housing and the co-researchers' insight that their knowledge is not recognized by mainstream education systems.

The implication is that these unexpected elements, which challenge conventional and status quo understandings of the transition to adulthood, force researchers to acknowledge evolutions in the theory, not unlike the changes that have occurred in the evolution of the traditional transition to adulthood and recent formulations of the contemporary transition to adulthood. Complacent theory is dangerous theory. Transitions researchers must avoid turning theory into a source of oppression, which would come with denying difference (Singh, 1996). Instead, differences in the transitions to adulthood of street involved youth should be "promote[d], affirm[e] and even celebrate[d]" (Mullaly, 2007). Of course, I am not suggesting we 'celebrate' the poverty or suffering that differentiates them from youth in general. But how research responds to the large difference in the co-researchers' transitions determines whether or not these differences are seen as evidence of 'failed' transitions, or if they are used to highlight the agency and autonomy of street involved youth as well as to highlight structural violence and social injustice that creates the context for difference characterized by disadvantage. If research does not pay attention to how difference is accounted for within theory, the risk is that 'outlier' transitions are represented as deviant, rather than as different, which only further marginalizes street involved youth. Jones (2009) explains that:

there is a whole terminology associated with such deviance, including the concept of 'failed', 'stalled', 'broken', or 'blocked' transitions. The assumption is that young people who have not achieved their transition to adulthood are somehow in limbo, trapped in their youth (p. 86).

The concept of failure conveys an image of people who have failed to self-manage, an image typically projected on street involved adults (Mallett et al., 2010). Structural social work researchers have an obligation to not produce structural violence by representing street involved youth as having ‘failed’ in their transitions.

It is the responsibility of research and policy to collaborate in order to denounce violent policy and violent social structures. These results have identified services that cut youth off from services, either due to age or behaviours, institutions (mental health and criminal justice) that do not reflect the extended transition to adulthood, insufficient allocations of provincial social assistance, and not being required to disclose researcher privilege and research risk in applications to research ethics boards, in the attempt to enable research to assist in the eradication of structurally violent social policy.

The implications for intervention, policy, and practice were intended to contribute to the reduction and elimination of the structural violence in the lives of street involved youth. To achieve this, the implications often emphasized creating spaces for the voice of the co-researchers to be heard, promoting the development and recognition of their autonomy, and correcting social arrangements that do not reflect their realities and that are predicated on unequal hierarchical arrangements.

Conclusion

There is a vast body of research on homelessness, in general, and street involved youth in particular, which includes considerable research dedicated to understanding the violence (e.g. physical, sexual emotional, family, domestic) experienced by street involved youth. However, little has been written on the experiences of structural violence in the lives of street involved youth, and none with an emphasis on their transition to adulthood. The structurally oriented study reported in this thesis addresses that knowledge gap. The study was conducted within the discipline of social work, and therefore has also offered concrete implications and recommendations for future practice, policy, and research in that discipline. Specifically, the study sought to understand the role of structural violence in the lives of street involved youth by:

1. Identifying the social structures that street involved youth consider most significant in their lives.
2. Unearthing and analysing the invisible processes by which the structural violence suffered by street involved youth is made to look like an individual problem rather than a structural problem; making the invisible processes of structural violence visible.
3. Discovering the effect of structural violence on the life course and transitions of street involved youth.
4. Documenting how street involved youth mobilize individually or collectively to deal with and/or overcome structural violence.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that structural violence ultimately affected the transition to adulthood of the co-researchers both in terms of its impact on their autonomy as well as its effect on how their autonomy was represented or socially valued. Structural violence limited their material resources in such a way to make it more difficult for them to exercise their autonomy fully. When the co-researchers did exercise their autonomy, the choices they made were often seen

as undesirable given that they do not reflect the transition to adulthood of Canadian youth in general. This highlighted an issue of representation: their choices were seen as bad, illegitimate, illegal, and socially unsanctioned. Structural violence operated to make their exercise of their autonomy seem absent, or when present, poorly executed. The consequence was that the co-researchers could be blamed for their own situation, seen as having brought about their suffering by their own poor choices.

The results of this study highlighted the contexts in which the co-researchers' choices were made. The results also showed the way that unequal distributions of power operated in the lives of the co-researchers to silence them, to paralyze them, and to deny them the things they needed to survive and to flourish. The findings demonstrated that the co-researchers employed many strategies for overcoming the structural violence that operated in their lives, but that these strategies fell victim to the problem of representation. The co-researchers were aware that they were caught up in a tension between right and wrong, legal and illegal, and that they did not have the power to correct this violent binary. The co-researchers exercised agency, but not surprisingly only within the bounds of the possibilities available to them. This suggests that rather than judge their choices, a critical evaluation of the social arrangements that organized their lives is in order.

The findings of the current study point to a number of important avenues for future research with street involved youth. First, there is a lack of knowledge in general regarding the experiences of structural violence experienced by street involved youth. Only a few studies have addressed the topic (Flynn et al., 2015; Robson, Ashbourne, & DeLeon, 2016; Scheper-Hughes, 2004). A scan of two of the most prominent and recent pan-Canadian publications on street involved youth

(Gaetz, O’Grady, Buccieri, Karabanow, & Marsolais, 2013; Gaetz, O’Grady, et al., 2016) found that, while *violence* in many forms (e.g. interpersonal, physical, sexual, domestic, family) was discussed, reference to and reflections on *structural violence* were absent. The current study sought to bring particular attention to the role of structural violence *in the transition to adulthood* of street involved youth, and as such was the first on the topic. Additional research into structural violence in the transition to adulthood of specific sub-groups of street involved youth would be important. For example, research is needed on gender related differences in the experiences of structural violence of street involved youth, and could address some of the differences between the young women and young men co-researchers’ experiences of structural violence noted in this study.

Secondly, the findings highlighted the considerable place that institutions occupied in the (residential) transition to adulthood of the co-researchers. Further study of the role of institutions in the transition to adulthood of these youth could consider and evaluate the time spent ‘living’ in institutions in a structural orientation that will not interpret these alternative living arrangements as proof of deviance and failure on the part of the street involved youth. In this vein, research could enhance our understanding in many ways: how street involved youth come to be overrepresented in institutions, the relationship between stays in institutions, identity, and autonomy, the positive and negative effects of ‘living’ in institutions on the other spheres of the transition to adulthood and the transition itself, of street involved youth. All of this would improve policy and intervention directed at street involved youth.

Further research could also address the following hypothesis about institutions: institutions themselves constitute a sphere of the contemporary transition to adulthood for street involved

youth, rather than being seen as a form of housing. The often-repeated transitions into, through, and out of, one or more institutions could be studied in the same way that, for example, the transition from school to work is studied. A related avenue for future research would be to study street involvement as a sphere in the transition to adulthood. Research has already addressed the processes by which youth enter and exit homelessness and street involvement (Bellot, Rivard, & Greissler, 2010; Colombo, 2003; Colombo & Larouche, 2007; Karabanow, 2009; Karabanow, Carson, et al., 2010; Karabanow & Naylor, 2013; Mallett et al., 2005; Mallett et al., 2010; Rosenthal, Mallett, & Myers, 2006; Winland, 2013), but studying the street as a legitimate sphere unto itself in the transition to adulthood of street involved youth would enhance our understanding of the role that spending time in the street – using public space in marginal ways – has in their transition to adulthood. Both of these options would contribute to countering the structural violence resulting from the non-recognition and non-legitimization of institutions as reasonable and significant elements of their transition to adulthood.

A third avenue for future research relates to understanding the importance of autonomy in the contemporary transition to adulthood. In addition to this thesis, only limited studies specifically address autonomy in street involved youth (Barker, 2013; Bellot, 2003). While the study of autonomy can be difficult (Gaudet, 2001), further research focusing specifically on autonomy in the transition to adulthood of street involved youth is truly needed. With an interest in social justice, such research should explore the role that social structures do and could play in creating opportunities for the development of autonomy.

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In keeping with a structural critique and orientation to social work research and practice, all of these avenues for future research should not have as their goal to develop recommendations for interventions designed to enhance street involved youth's ability to manage themselves. In other words, given that autonomy has to do with an individual's coming into making decisions for him or herself, it is paramount that social work research, and its recommendations for policy and practice, not turn to individualizing and psychologizing orientations when addressing autonomy in the transition to adulthood of street involved youth. Instead, they should consider the violent social structures that circumscribe the circumstances within which their autonomy is cultivated.

Appendix A: Phase One Consent Form

Project title: **Structural Violence and Street Involved Youth**

Invitation: We would like to invite you to participate in a research project about how structural violence, which is another way of saying social injustice, impacts the lives of homeless youth before, during, and after any periods of homelessness. This study is funded by the Canadian Institute of Health Research, and is run by Professor Marc Molgat of the school of Social Work at the University of Ottawa.

Participation: Your participation is voluntary. If you take part in this study, you will participate with other youth in group discussions and art-based activities that relate to your individual experiences of structural violence and homelessness. The group will meet weekly, for about two hours, for eight weeks. The focus groups will be audio recorded. At the first meeting you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire.

The focus groups will take place in the evenings or on the weekends, in either a conference room at the University of Ottawa, located in Ottawa, Ontario or in the art rooms designed for Ottawa Innercity Ministries at Dominion Chalmers United Church, 355 Cooper St Ottawa, ON, on the 2nd floor. Except for Ottawa Innercity Ministries, none of the organisations that advertised this research study are involved in the project. This means that your choice to participate or not to participate in this project does not affect the services that you receive from them.

Ottawa Innercity Ministries is partnering with us in this research project since they already have art programming for youth. Should you choose to participate in this research project, nothing you say or do in the course of the focus groups will negatively affect your regular services with Ottawa Innercity Ministries. The staff and volunteers from Ottawa Innercity Ministries who will be present during the focus groups will sign confidentiality agreements that say that they will keep what they see and hear in the group confidential and that what they see and hear in the focus groups will not negatively affect the services they usually provide you with.

It is our hope that the information learned in this project will help us to develop programs and policies that are based on an understanding of the needs and realities faced by young people who have experienced structural violence.

Benefits and Risks: There are several ways that this study may be helpful to you. For many young people, just having the chance to talk about important experiences can be helpful. It is also possible that, in talking about your experiences you will begin to understand them in a different way. Most likely, the issues we will raise will be ones that you have thought about before, but maybe not had a chance to discuss.

While there are no risks in this study, it is possible that you may feel some discomfort since your participation involves sharing personal experiences in group discussions. You may refuse to participate, to answer any questions, or withdraw from the project at any time. A list of community resources is included at the end of this form and the list will also be made available at the end of every focus group session.

Confidentiality and anonymity: Because of the nature of participatory action research, it is not possible to guarantee the protection of the identity of the youth doing the research.

Focus group artistic activities: Since the focus group sessions are art-based, it is possible that the group will chose to use videography or photography. If you do not want to be photographed or videotaped, you do not have to be. You can participate in ways that do not involved being in front of the camera. The focus group will decide if and how they want their art-based collective activities to be performed, displayed or exposed. The research team will have the right to analyse and reference the art-based activities in future research and publications; however, any art that you produce all on your own (ex: a painting) will belong to you.

Focus group discussions: The experiences that you share in the focus groups will remain confidential. Since the project is based on group discussion, you are asked not to share the comments of the other group participants outside of the group. The focus group discussions will only be read or listened to by the researchers. The analysis of the focus group discussions will not in any way reveal your identity.

Storing the data: The data collected will be recorded digitally and then transcribed in their entirety to paper. All the data will be stored in the office of the principal researcher, under lock and key. The audio recordings and the transcriptions will be destroyed after a period of ten years. Since this is a focus group, should you leave the study before it is over, the data collected about you will be used in the research results.

Compensation: In appreciation for your participation, you will be given 30\$ for every session that you start.

Agreement: I _____ agree to participate in this research project run by Marc Molgat of the University of Ottawa.

Additional information: If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the principal researcher (information removed for confidentiality in thesis publication). OR the research assistant (information removed for confidentiality in thesis publication).

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which you can keep.

Research participant signature:

Date:

Research assistant signature:

Date:

For all information regarding any ethical considerations relating to this research project you can contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, room 154, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

List of community resources for youth in Ottawa

- 1. 24hr Crisis line - Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa**
613-260-2360 or 1-877-377-7775
- 2. Youth and Family Counselling – Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa**
613-562-3004
- 3. The Homeless Phone Line**
(613) 580-2626
Lundi à jeudi, 03h00 à 15h00
Vendredi à dimanche, 11h00 à 03h00
- 4. Kids Help Phone**
1-800-668-6868
www.kidshelpphone.ca
- counseling is available by phone on online
- 5. Operation Come Home – 24 hr Crisis line**
1-800-668-4663

Appendix B: Phase One Ottawa Innercity Ministries Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement

Project title: Structural Violence and Street Involved Youth

I understand that Ottawa Innercity Ministries, where I am already a volunteer, is partnering with Professor Marc Molgat and Susannah Taylor, research assistant, in a research project through the University of Ottawa.

I understand that in the course of my volunteer time associated with this research project, I may become aware of confidential information about specific youth, which may include such information related to the youth's academic status, family, behavior, health, disabilities, finances, and related matters.

I understand that I will also be privileged to the opinions and ideas expressed in confidentiality by the youth involved in the study. I agree that in no way will the things I learn or see during the course of the focus groups affect negatively the services and support I provide the youth outside of the context of the focus groups.

I understand and agree that I will not disclose such confidential information and I understand that all such information is to be treated confidentially.

I have read, understand, and agree to the information presented above.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Phase One Sociodemographic Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ 16 | ☐ 20 | ☐ 24 | ☐ 28 |
| ☐ 17 | ☐ 21 | ☐ 25 | ☐ 29 |
| ☐ 18 | ☐ 22 | ☐ 26 | ☐ 30 |
| ☐ 19 | ☐ 23 | ☐ 27 | |

2. What is your gender identity?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Intersex
- ☐ Genderqueer/androgynous
- ☐ FTM (female to male)
- ☐ MTF (male to female)
- ☐ I do not believe in gender identities

- ☐ Transsexual
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Cross-dresser
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other: _____

3. Do you consider yourself to be?

- ☐ Gay/Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Heterosexual or straight
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ I do not believe in categorizing sexual orientation.

4. Please define your ethnic origin?

5. Are you currently in school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. What level of education have you achieved?

7. Do you have children? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Are you employed? [☐] Yes [☐] No

- If yes, what do you do?

9. Do you receive financial assistance or other government support? [☐] Yes [☐] No

- If yes, which ones and how much are they?

10. Do you pay rent at the moment? [☐] Yes [☐] No

- If yes, how much do you pay per month? _____

11. Please describe your current living situation?

12. Have you been involved with any of the following?

- [☐] The Children's Aid Society
- [☐] La DPJ (La direction de la protection de la jeunesse)
- [☐] The Royal Ottawa Hospital
- [☐] The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- [☐] The court and/ the prison system
- [☐] The police
- [☐] Shelters/transitional housing/supportive housing etc.
- [☐] Employment services (any organisation that has helped you get a job)
- [☐] Alternative school programs (any school program that you used after having left the regular school system)

Appendix D: Phase One Consent for Use of Art Work

We would like to be able to use the art (poems, paintings, drawings, etc.) you have made during our group sessions or that you have brought in to share with us during those sessions. Specifically, we would like to be able to use your art when we present our research findings.

The first thing is that we are looking for your permission to use your art. Please check one of the two boxes below:

☐ I give permission for my art to be used.

☐ I do not give permission for my art to be used.

The second thing we would like to know is how you want the issue of artistic credit to be handled. Please check the box below:

☐ I want this name _____ to appear on all references to my art.

☐ I want to remain anonymous in regard to my art. This means I do not want my name to be mentioned in reference to my art.

The last thing we want to know is if you would ever be interested in participating in presentations about this project. Ex: university classes; community organisations.

☐ YES, I would be interested. I give permission for Susannah Taylor to get in touch with me when such opportunities come up.

☐ NO, I am not interested. Please don't ask me to participate.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Phase Two Consent Form

Project title: The Role of Social Injustice in the life course of Street Involved Youth

Invitation: We would like to invite you to participate in a research project about how structural violence, which is another way of saying social injustice, impacts the lives of homeless youth before, during, and after any periods of homelessness. This study is part of my doctoral research at the University of Ottawa, and also makes use of the data from the arts-based participatory study we worked on together, “Structural Violence and Street Involved Youth”.

Participation: Your participation is voluntary. If you take part in this study, it will involve doing an interview where you talk your experiences of structural violence and homelessness. The interview will last roughly 1-2 hours and it will be audio recorded. When we do the interview I will also ask you to fill out a short questionnaire.

The interview can be scheduled to fit your schedule, and can happen either in a conference room at the University of Ottawa, located in Ottawa, Ontario in the art rooms designed for Ottawa Innerscity Ministries at Dominion Chalmers United Church, 355 Cooper St Ottawa, ON, on the 2nd floor or in another location that is comfortable and safe for you. Your choice to participate or not to participate in this project does not affect the services that you receive from them.

It is our hope that the information learned in this project will help us to develop programs and policies that are based on an understanding of the needs and realities faced by young people who have experienced structural violence.

Benefits and Risks: There are several ways that this study may be helpful to you. For many young people, just having the chance to talk about important experiences can be helpful. It is also possible that, in talking about your experiences you will begin to understand them in a different way. Most likely, the issues we will raise will be ones that you have thought about before, but maybe not had a chance to discuss.

While there are no risks in this study, it is possible that you may feel some discomfort since your participation involves sharing personal experiences. You may refuse to participate, to answer any questions, or withdraw from the project at any time. A list of community resources is included at the end of this form and the list will also be made available to you when you leave the interview.

Confidentiality and anonymity: What you share with the researcher remains confidential. The information gathered will only be used for her doctoral research and any subsequent publications or presentations related to the data collected. What you share will only be read or listened to by the researcher and her supervisors. Anonymity is guaranteed in the following ways: your first and last names and your address will not be included in any material used for analysis, including the transcription of your interview. The way the analysis and results are written will not in any way reveal your identity.

We would like to be able to use the art (poems, paintings, drawings, etc.) you have made during our group sessions or that you have brought in to share with us during those sessions. Specifically, we would like to be able to use your art when we present our research findings.

The first thing is that we are looking for your permission to use your art. Please check one of the two boxes below:

☐ I give permission for my art to be used.

☐ I do not give permission for my art to be used.

The second thing we would like to know is how you want the issue of artistic credit to be handled. Please check the box below:

☐ I want this name _____ (please spell your real name, or your name as an artist, as you would like it to appear on your art) to appear on all references to my art.

☐ I want to remain anonymous in regard to my art. This means I do not want my name to be mentioned in reference to my art.

Storing the data: The data collected will be recorded digitally and then transcribed in their entirety to paper. All the data will be stored in the office of the thesis supervisor, under lock and key. The audio recordings and the transcriptions will be destroyed after a period of ten years.

Compensation: In appreciation for your participation, you will be given 30\$ for the interview, even if you withdraw before the interview is finished.

Agreement: I _____ agree to participate in this research project run by Susannah Taylor of the University of Ottawa.

Additional information: If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the principal researcher (information removed for confidentiality in thesis publication) or her research supervisor (information removed for confidentiality in thesis publication).

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which you can keep.

Research participant signature:

Date:

Research assistant signature:

Date:

For all information regarding any ethical considerations relating to this research project you can contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, room 154, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

List of community resources for youth in Ottawa

- 1. 24hr Crisis line - Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa**
613-260-2360 or 1-877-377-7775
- 2. Youth and Family Counselling – Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa**
613-562-3004
- 3. The Homeless Phone Line**
(613) 580-2626

Lundi à jeudi, 03h00 à 15h00
Vendredi à dimanche, 11h00 à 03h00
- 4. Kids Help Phone**
1-800-668-6868

www.kidshelpphone.ca

- counseling is available by phone on online
- 5. Operation Come Home – 24 hr Crisis line**
1-800-668-4663

Appendix F: Phase Two Sociodemographic Questionnaire

This questionnaire is the questionnaire from the first study, but it has been modified based on the feedback that some of the youth in the first study provided. They wanted to improve the first questionnaire. They felt that some important information was missing (about health status, about school, and employment activities). This meant that they added a few more questions, some of which are personal in nature. So, please remember that this questionnaire is anonymous and your answers will not trace back to you individually. Also, remember you do not ever have to answer questions that make you uncomfortable.

Identity

How old are you?

- ☐ J16 ☐ J17 ☐ J18 ☐ J19 ☐ J20 ☐ J21 ☐ J22 ☐ J23
☐ J24 ☐ J25 ☐ J26 ☐ J27 ☐ J29 ☐ J30
☐ I prefer not to answer this question

How would you describe your gender identity?

- ☐ Female
☐ MTF (male to female)
☐ I do not believe in gender identities
☐ Transsexual
☐ Cross-dresser
☐ Not sure
☐ I prefer not to answer this question
- ☐ Male
☐ FTM (female to male)
☐ Genderqueer/androgynous
☐ Transgender
☐ Two-spirited
☐ Other: _____

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Gay ☐ Lesbian
☐ Bisexual ☐ Heterosexual/straight
☐ Not sure ☐ Other: _____
☐ I do not believe in categorizing sexual orientation.
☐ I prefer not to answer this question.

Check any and all that describe your ethnic/family background:

- [] Canadian [] American
[] Italian [] Native/Aboriginal
[] Polish [] Irish
[] English [] Scottish
[] French [] Middle-Eastern
[] Nicaraguan [] Lebanese
[] Other: _____ [] Not sure
[] I prefer not to answer this question

School

Where are you at in school?

☐ I prefer not to answer this question

What sort of things have you learned outside of the regular school system (street smarts type of stuff)?

☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Relationships

Are you...:

☐ Married ☐ In a relationship ☐ Single

☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Do you have biological children?

☐ Yes, if so, how many? _____

☐ No

☐ I used to

☐ It's possible, but I don't know.

☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Do you help to take care of someone else's children?

☐ Yes, if so, how many? _____

☐ No

☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Housing

How would you describe your current living situation (check all that apply):

☐ Staying at a shelter ☐ Sleeping outside

- ☐ Couch surfing/staying with a friend ☐ Have my own apartment
☐ Share an apartment with roommates ☐ Live with my parents
☐ Share my apartment with my partner/spouse/children
☐ Other: _____
☐ I prefer not to answer this question

In the past, have you ever:

- ☐ Stayed at a shelter – If yes, for how about how many nights? _____
☐ Slept outside – If yes, for how about how many nights? _____
☐ Couch surfed/stayed with a friend – If yes, for about how many nights? _____
☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Do you pay rent at the moment?

- ☐ Yes - If so, how much? _____
☐ No
☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Money

Please describe your work experience (the various ways you earn money) by checking any of the activities that apply to you and by writing down how much you make at each job on a monthly basis. (Please remember that this questionnaire is anonymous and your answers will not trace back to you individually. Also, remember you do not ever have to answer questions that make you uncomfortable).

	How much you make a month
☐ Busking	
☐ Panhandling	
☐ Selling your Art	
☐ Drug selling	
☐ Manual labour	
☐ Prostitution	
☐ Theft	
☐ Performance Art	
☐ “On the books” work with a pay stub	
☐ I volunteer	

Other: (please describe the job and say how much you earn):

- ☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Do you receive financial assistance or other government support?

- [] Ontario Works - How much: _____
- [] ODSP - How much: _____
- [] Other: _____ - How much: _____
- [] I prefer not to answer this question

Social Structures

Do you have a criminal record?

- [] Yes
- [] No
- [] I prefer not to answer this question

Do you currently have any of these pieces of identification?:

- [] Social Insurance Card (SIN) [] Passport
- [] Health Card [] Drivers Licence
- [] I prefer not to answer this question.

Have you been involved with any of the following?

- [] The Royal Ottawa Hospital
- [] The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- [] The court and/ the prison system
- [] The police
- [] Shelters/transitional housing/supportive housing etc.
- [] Employment services (any organisation that has helped you get a job)
- [] Alternative school programs (school that you used after having left the regular school system)
- [] When *I was a kid* : The Children's Aid Society
- [] As a *parent, with my own kids* : The Children's Aid Society
- [] When *I was a kid* : La DPJ (La direction de la protection de la jeunesse)
- [] As a *parent, with my own kid* : La DPJ (La direction de la protection de la jeunesse)
- [] I prefer not to answer this question

Health

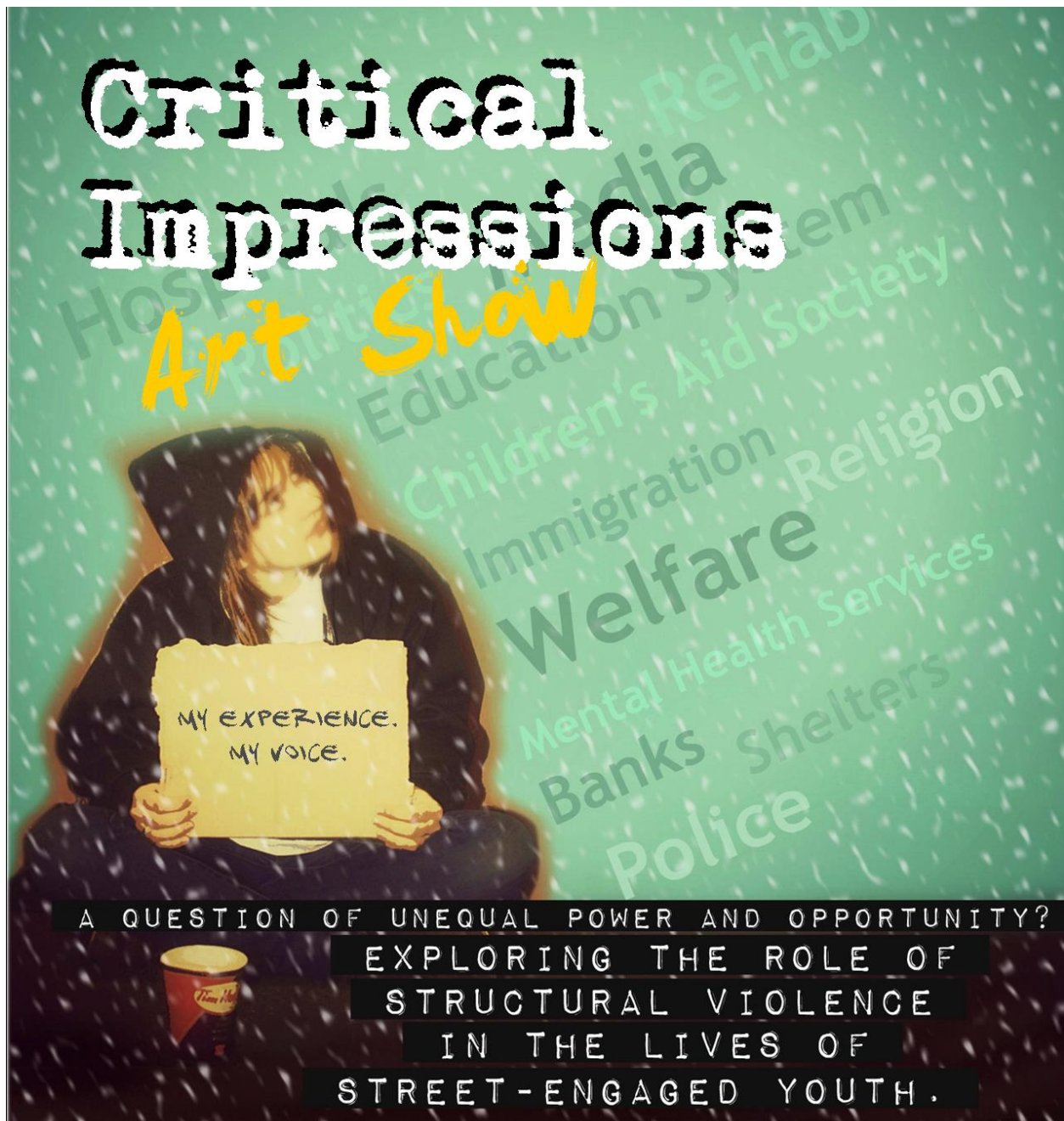
Please check any off any of the health issues that apply to you and describe them based on the categories provided.

<u>Health Issue</u>	<u>I got this before being street involved</u>	<u>I got this after becoming street involved</u>	<u>Being street involved made it worse</u>	<u>It is cured</u>	<u>There were services to help me deal with it.</u>	<u>The services could have been better.</u>

☐	Hepatitis C	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	HIV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	AIDS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Dental/Teeth problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Alcohol use	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Drug use	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	HPV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Merca	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	STIs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Breathing problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	Mental health issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other?		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other?		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other?		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

☐ I prefer not to answer this question

Appendix G: Phase One Art Show Poster



Nov 28th @ 7pm-9pm

Tabaret Hall, Room 112 (University of Ottawa)
550 Cumberland St.

Admission by donation (\$5 suggested)

All proceeds support the Passion 4 Youth Fine Arts Program

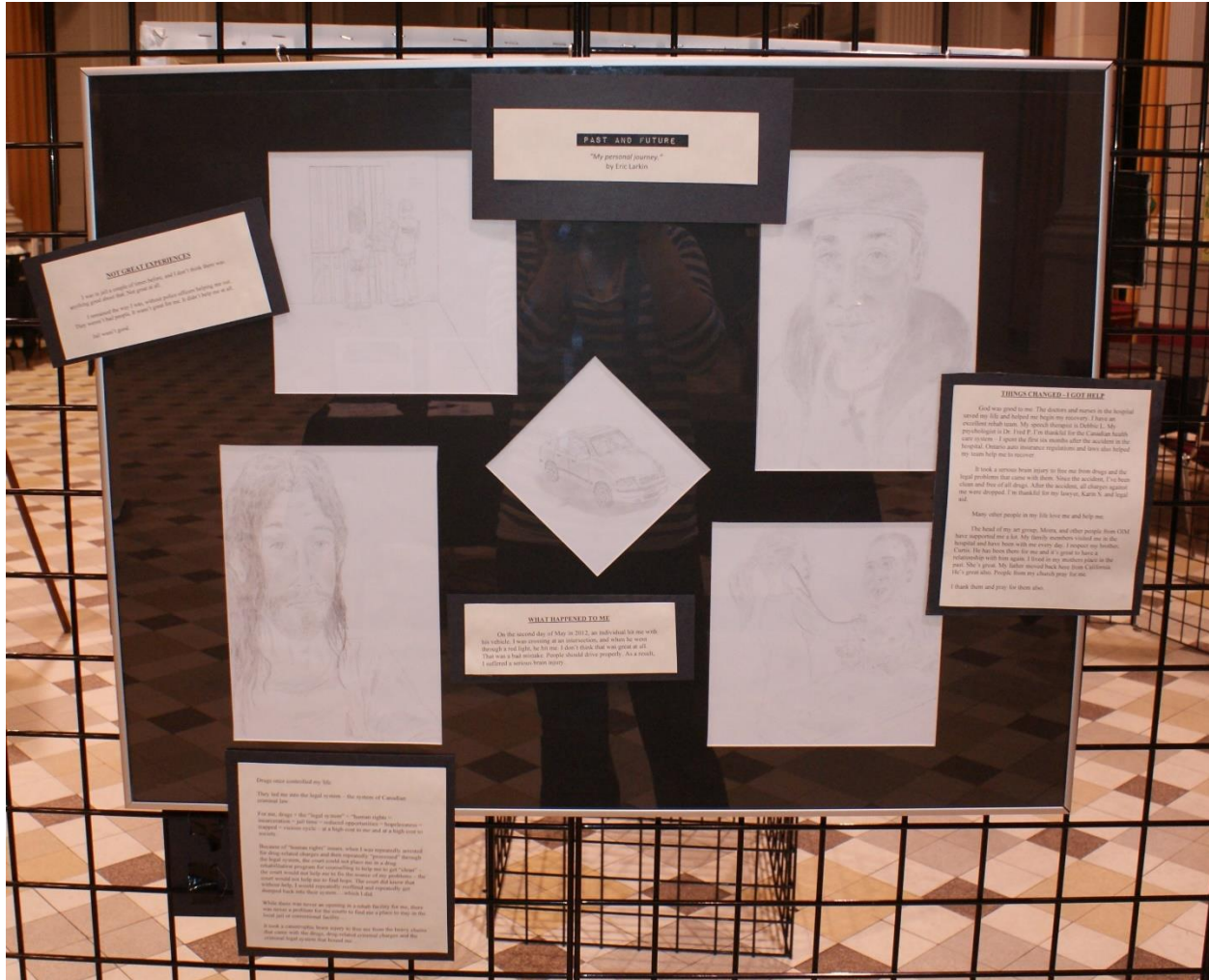


Appendix H: Code Book

Transition to Adulthood	Professional	Leaving Home
		Institutions as Housing
		Housing Conditions
		Future Aspirations
	Residential	Education and Learning
		Work and Income
		Future Aspirations
	Financial	Money: 'Bad'
		Money: 'Good'
	Relational	Relationships with Parents
		Responsible for Others
		Relationships Revealing Social Structures
	Citizenship and Identity	
Experiences of Structural Violence	Being silenced	Speaking up: Being ignored, not Heard
		Not Speaking up: as Survival
	Being Paralyzed	Legal
		Medical
		Violence Against Women
	Being Denied Things	Age
		Appearance
		Behaviour
Strategies for Surviving and Overcoming Violence	Fleeing, leaving, running and quitting	Benefits
		Costs
	Deceiving and Stealing	Lying
		Stealing
		Co-researchers Insights
	Cooperating and Complying	Best of Bad Situation
	Seeking Community	Safety (identity)
		Source of Hope, Joy, Inspiration
		Material Benefits
		Social Geography
		Power in Numbers
		Family
Methodology and Ethics	Arts-informed Methods	
	Choices	
	Location	
	Relationships	
	Mistakes and Change	

Appendix I: Past and Future

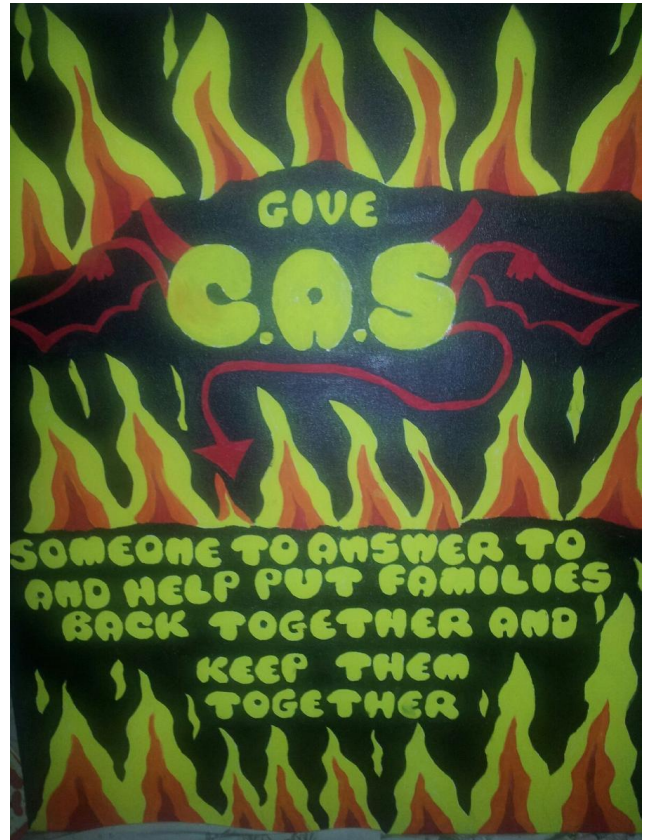
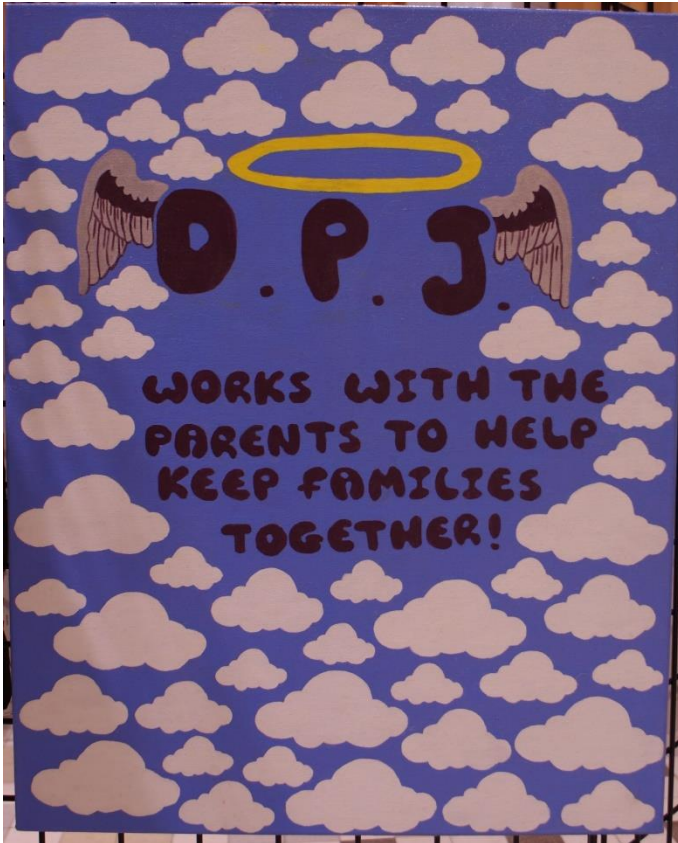
Past and Future My personal Journey.



Appendix J: Angels and Demons

Angels and Demons

Difference between the DPJ and CAS
(Quebec and Ontario child and youth protection).



Appendix K: 1Worlddivided

1Worlddivided

I wanted to portray that in every city certain areas are divided making attitudes and mentality hard to change.



Appendix L: The Devil Within

The Devil Within

(A Piece on Multiple Personalities)

The left side is imbued with broken mirror shards, representing the jagged sharpness of my anger, and also the fact that I think most people can relate to this picture (that's why I didn't do all 6 of us, I'd like this piece to be relatable). You'll notice the shards align on the throat area to represent the suicidality as well. The right side is adorned with plastic jewels of butterflies and gems and such, representing the childish happy side. This side also represents the fake smile I put on for the rest of the world, and most importantly, for myself.

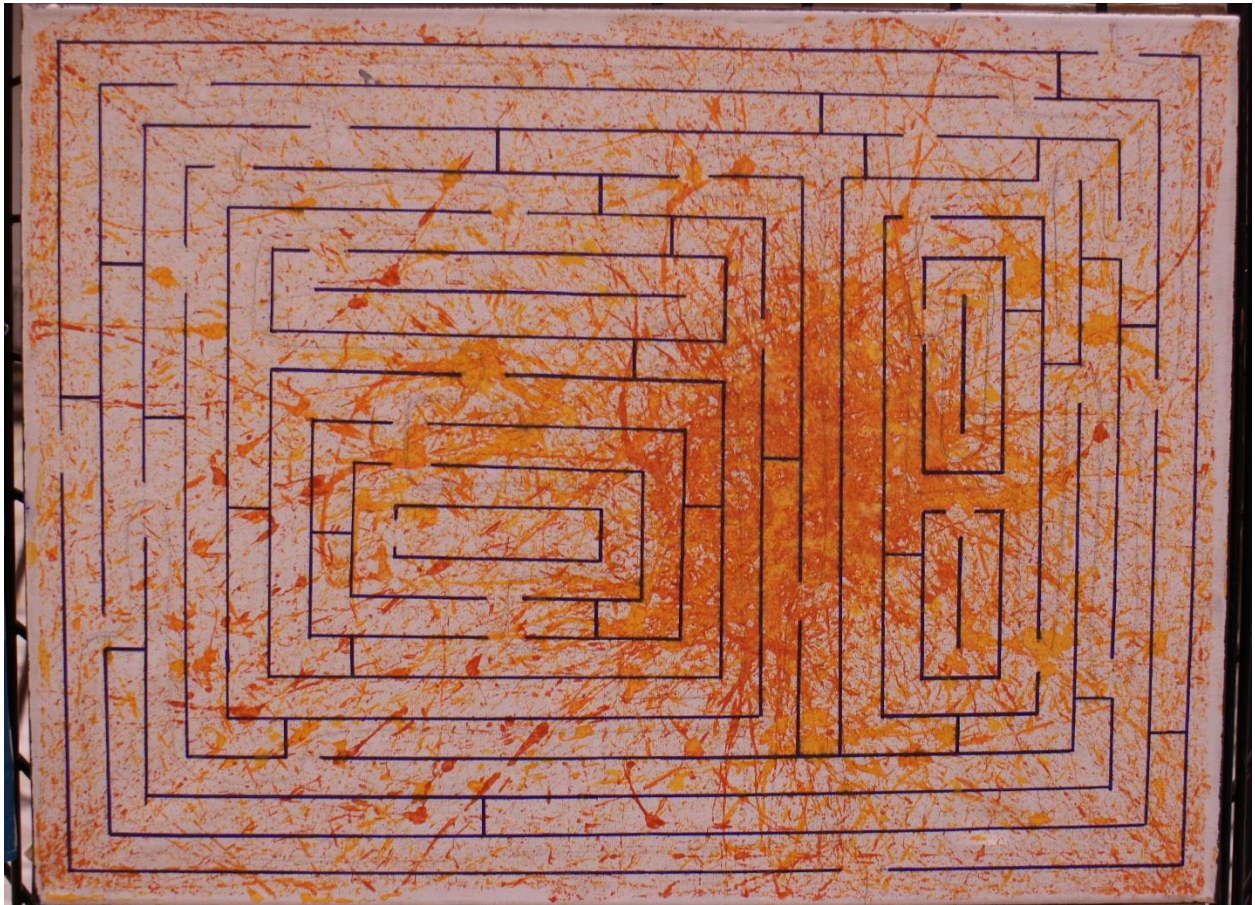
2 days after the completion of this piece the artist was admitted to psychiatric care for an 8th time in the past 6 years.



Appendix M: Amaze

Amaze

Life for a youth is like a maze.
Only one way out.... a million dead ends.



Appendix N : Baby Sorter

Baby Sorter

This piece is intended to show the advantages and adversities children in this country/society experience based on their socio-economic status at birth and that of their parents and throughout their lives.

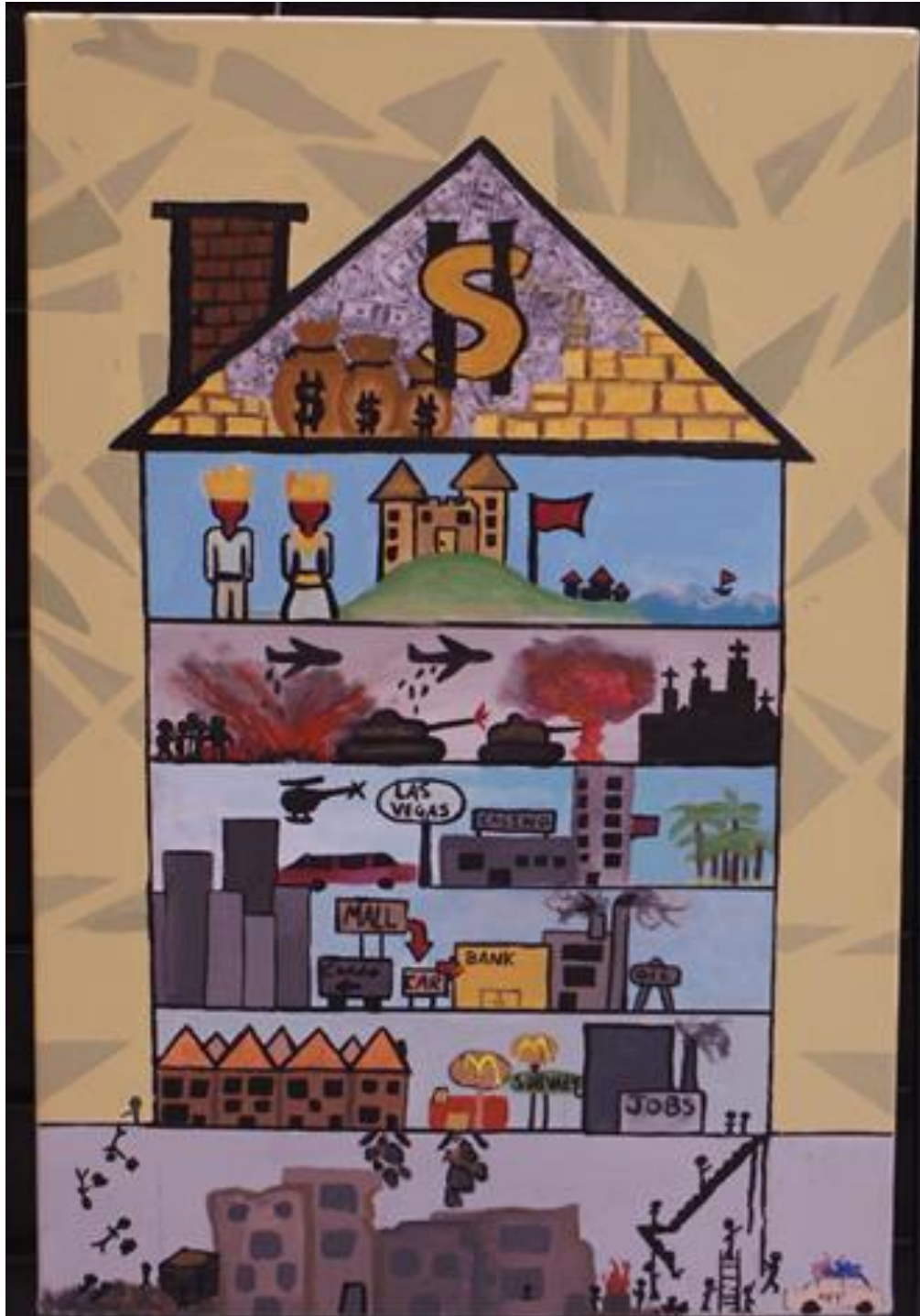


Appendix O: We're all in the Same System

We're all in the Same System

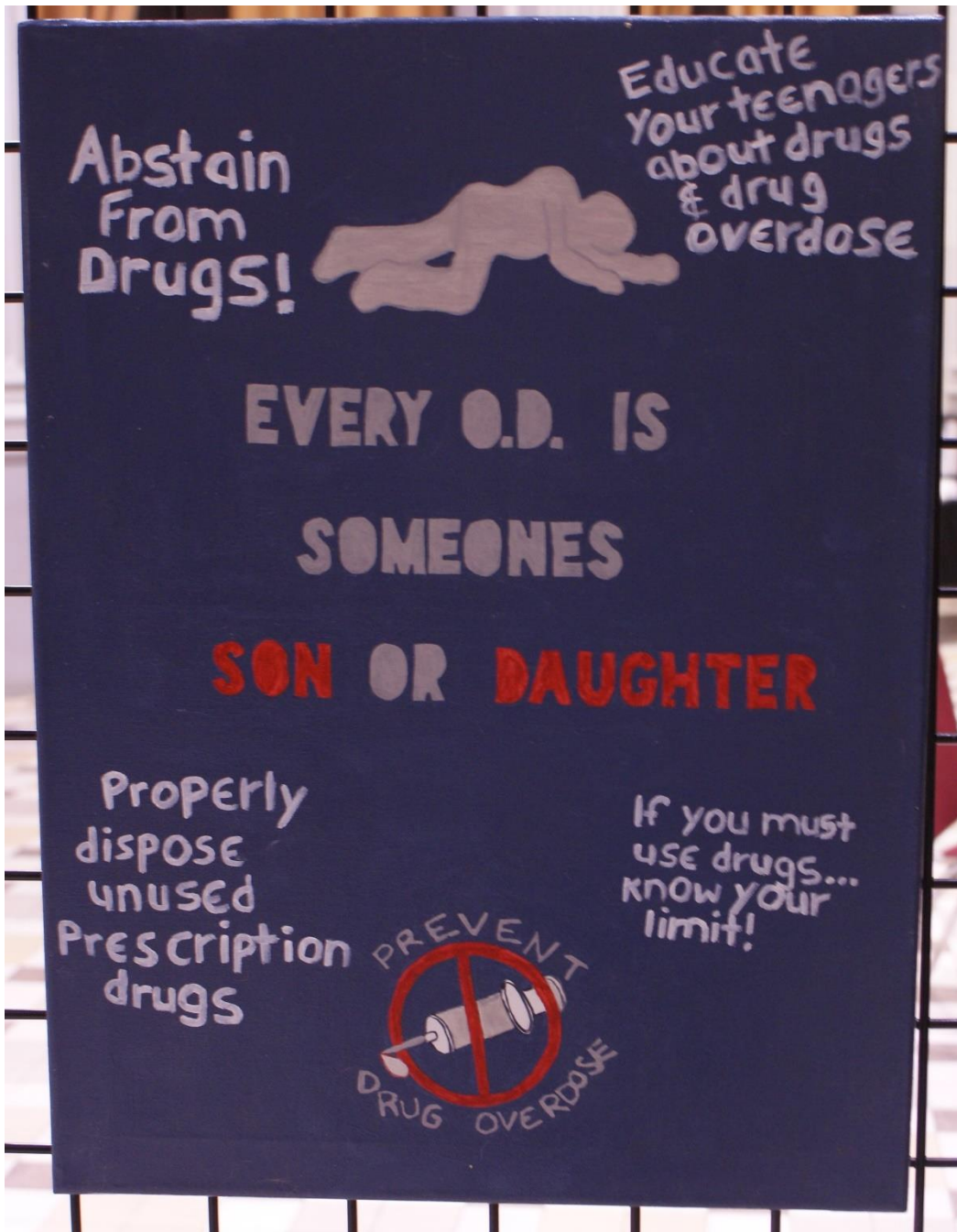
Money structures: a choice or born into? Struggle within the system.

Hard to climb up...Easy to fall down.



Appendix P: Drug Overdose Prevention

Drug Overdose Prevention



Appendix Q: The Unjust Split

The Unjust Split

I think it's unfair you have to have money to be where you want to be, to feel safe.



Appendix R: Out Growing Things and Overcoming Addictions

Out Growing Things and Overcoming Addictions

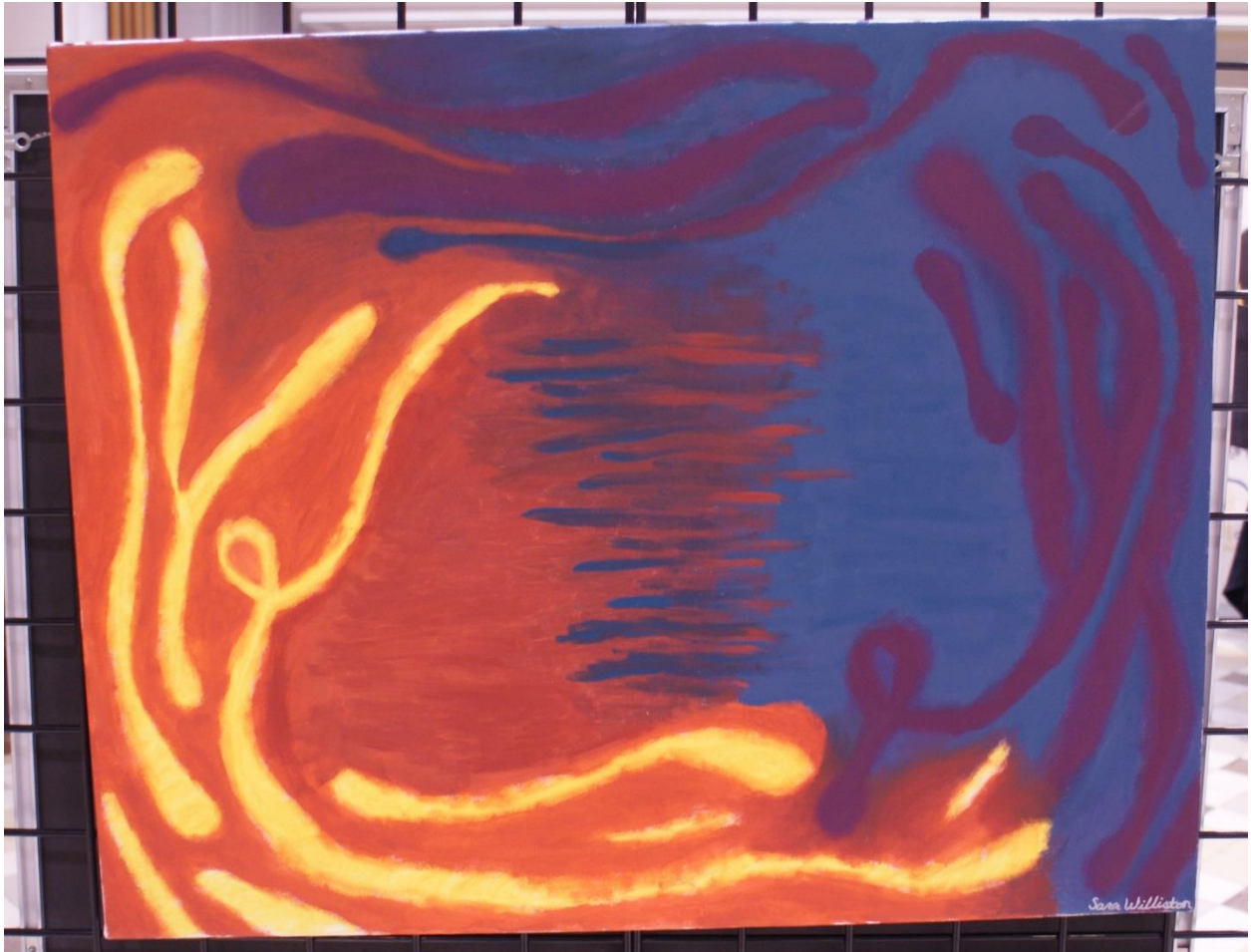
She's breaking her bonds and she's growing up and changing as a being.



Appendix S: A Contrast in Lifestyles

A Contrast in Lifestyles

This depicts the split between someone's life while actively using drugs and someone's life while in recovery. The middle represents the chaotic and torn struggle between those lifestyles.



Appendix T: Don't Drink N' Fly

Don't Drink N' Fly
Depicting the effects of drunk driving



t

Appendix U: Jesus Walks in the 21st Century

Jesus Walks in the 21st Century

Jesus gives hope by filling everybody with the Holy Spirit. Depicting Jesus as a human being.



Appendix V: Pixie in a Bird Cage

Pixie in a Bird Cage

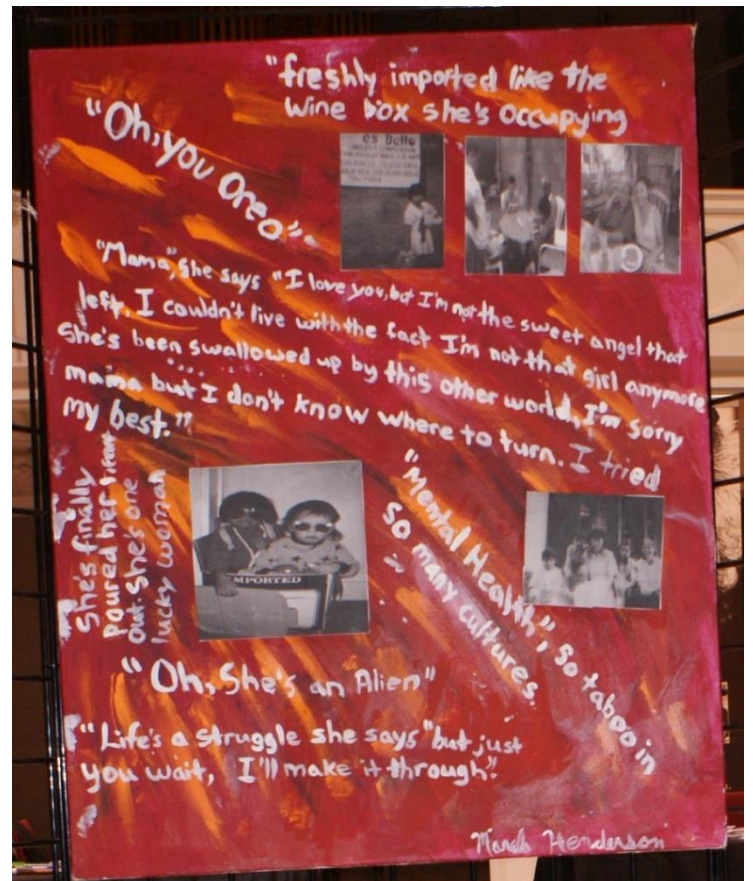
Even if you can see the door sometimes the way out is not so easy to find.



Appendix W: Oh You Oreo (Girl in a Box)

Oh You Oreo (Girl in a Box)

Poem and art piece representing Immigration and mental health.



"Oh, You Oreo"

Well, she sits in her box pondering, why her? Freshly "imported" like the wine box she's occupying.

Divided between two worlds, feeling like she's been pulled out of her skin.

Feeling like the alien people in society often treat her, her roots are becoming less familiar. Not feeling quite Canadian but been gone too long to be considered Spanish either.

"Oh, she's an alien," they say. Been passed on to so many different homes,
Well, where is home anyways? Where does she go?

Well, she struggles every day. Running every which way she can, passed from health service to health service.

"Well, miss we can't help you, sorry but you have the mentality of an infant."

Each day she picks herself up again. "Life's a struggle" she says. "But just you wait, I'll make it through."

I've got all the love in my heart; I'm stronger than you think."

Images of people's face flowing through her mind, their whispered voices repeating over and over again "Oh, you Oreo" Why? Because of her "caramel" coloured skin and her "vanilla" upbringing.

Peers judging her for her upbringing, Mental Health programs telling her she's still the same little girl, who built a wall of toys around her, barricading herself from the world. "Grow up" they said.

The world hasn't changed. It's like dance class all over again. She has her white upbringing but it's the colour of her skin people see. Well, being the only brown person around, she must be a criminal.

Years pass. She's been fearing what her family back home will say about her life choices, since they sent her on her way to a "life with better opportunities". Well, the day has come and she has crumbled.

"Mama," she says "I love you, but I'm not the sweet angel that left, I couldn't live with the fact I'm not that girl anymore. She's been swallowed up by this other world. I'm sorry mama but I don't know where to turn. I tried my best"

Visions and dreams cloud her mind, telling her time is running out.

It's been eleven years since she visited the place where love will take you further than material goods.

She's finally poured her heart out. She's one lucky woman.

As an immigrant she's blessed to have family that understands where others might have cast her out.

“Mental health,” so taboo in so many cultures.

Her mama replies by saying “I’m sorry its been hard, it tears me apart but as your mama, your pain is my pain, your sorrows are my sorrows and I will always love you.”

It’s funny but in that moment, she no longer felt like an alien, no longer that girl trapped in that box with “imported” written all over it.

Those whispers calling out, “Oh, you Oreo” and the faced that matched, vaporizing before her very eyes.

Well, she now has a face full of smiles.

With the loving words of a mother she hasn’t seen in years and the help of Ottawa Inner City Ministries, she no longer feels like such an alien and finally feels like she’s been heard.

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