Identity, Connection & Responsibility: Insights from Feminist Poststructuralism and the Ethics of Care on Homelessness in Canada
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ABSTRACT

Recent narratives on homelessness and poverty in Canada at the time of COVID-19 have exposed contradictions and limitations to dominant conceptualizations of connection, responsibility, and care. The global pandemic has highlighted routes of connectivity that are normally obscured, and has thus prompted a surge in advocacy for the responsibility to care for the wellbeing of others to whom such a responsibility is not normally recognized. However, this sentiment of care has not been similarly extended to unhoused persons among the most vulnerable to the social, economic, and public health consequences of COVID-19. This thesis explores this contradiction as the product of neoliberal logics that individualize homelessness, stigmatize the people experiencing it, and deny the domiciled population's connection to the phenomenon and their shared responsibility for addressing it. Against neoliberalism's description, diagnosis, and treatment of homelessness, this thesis examines the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism as frameworks that can expand limited conceptualizations of connection and responsibility. The author argues that together, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care provide the impetus and foundation for countering the stigma of homelessness, the narratives that distance and separate the domiciled against the unhoused, and ultimately the inadequate social and political treatment of homelessness.

GENERAL SUMMARY

In Canada, neoliberalism informs understandings and treatments for the increasingly pervasive phenomenon of homelessness. Neoliberalism constructs homelessness as a problem of 'deviant individuals' rather than a product of unjust social, economic, and political systems. As a result, people experiencing homelessness are stigmatized and marginalized while the underlying factors that create homelessness are maintained. Against the harmful and inadequate ways that neoliberalism has informed common understandings of homelessness, this thesis explores two alternative frameworks: the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism. Together, these two frameworks recognize homelessness as the product of broad social and political systems that all individuals take part in maintaining. By connecting the housed and unhoused populations through relation to these systems, this thesis argues for a shared responsibility to transform the unjust systems that create and perpetuate homelessness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The strain placed on the health, resources, and social ties of communities and individuals since

the commencement of the global COVID-19 pandemic has been profound. Financial and personal

hardships have been experienced across socio-economic strata. Politicians, community leaders, and media

personalities alike have made public appeals for patience and empathy amidst these struggles (see for

example Nair, 2020); and indeed, news media provides abundant illustrations of such acts of generosity

and care (see for example, Grewal, 2020)[1]. Such narratives and acts of kindness seek to assure that 'we

are all in this together,' and yet it is doubtless that some are significantly more vulnerable to these

circumstances than are others. For individuals already experiencing homelessness and poverty Canada,

the global pandemic has drastically decreased the availability of essential supports for housing, health

care, and food security; it has also led to the rapid increase in fatal opioid-related deaths at a time when

drug toxicity and substance use disorders have long been a public health crisis (Conway et al., 2020). As a

proliferation of public resources, community support, and messages of care and inclusivity have been

directed toward the general population, those same sentiments and resources have not been similarly

extended to the unhoused community, despite their exceptional vulnerabilities at this time of intersecting

public health crises.

The global pandemic has both exacerbated and underscored the adverse conditions faced by

members of the unhoused community. At the same time, the sentiments of news media suggest that an

increase in suspicions aimed at this population, and a deepening of resentment for what minimal resources

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[1] Especially during the early months of the global pandemic, news media frequently showcased popular personalities and political figures such as Dr. Bonnie Henry, BC's Provincial Health Officer, calling for individual members of the public to exhibit "cooperation, kindness and compassion" (Nair, 2020). In this particular example, Henry was responding to expressions of anxiety regarding the return to in-person learning in September 2020, at which time the COVID-19 virus was spreading rapidly, and many were concerned whether schools had adequate measures to protect children and staff. Relatedly, news media also regularly provided illustration of public engagement in these acts of "support and encouragement" such as in one instance where one group of long-term care workers provided kind words, donuts, and bottled water to another long-term care facility experiencing a deadly COVID-19 outbreak in a "remarkable show of solidarity" (Grewal, 2020).

they are receiving at this moment of drastic vulnerability. This trend is especially accentuated in coverage on the proliferation of 'tent cities' and other encampments that force a public reckoning with the existence of homelessness across the country. That municipal and provincial governments have responded to these encampments with social resources and the provision of temporary housing projects has garnered further media coverage. Such news media narratives frequently conflated homelessness with criminal activity, welfare-seeking, violence, concerns for business interests, aggressive confrontations with innocent passers-by, and public health concerns (Chan, 2020; CTV news, 2020; James, 2020; Holliday, 2020). I have identified two primary discourses within these media narratives; the first advocating community care, and the second denouncing it. How might we make sense of the contradictions between these two simultaneously prevalent yet conflicting narratives? Is there an underlying tie between news media narratives that advocate compassion and solidarity within the broader population, while also transmitting expressions of animosity and indictment of those most vulnerable in these public health crises? In examining these questions, it is the aim of this thesis to find opportunities for collective reflection, social change, and political transformation.

The following thesis will explore how these dual discourses of broader community care and specific disdain towards the homeless population can co-exist. In Chapter One I will examine neoliberalism as the dominant discourse informing the 'othering' of people experiencing homelessness and the resentment of the resources being directed toward supporting this population. Chapter Two will further explore how narrative practices that marginalize people experiencing homelessness create divisive categories of the 'domiciled us' and the 'unhoused other', thereby legitimizing inequitable treatment of people experiencing homelessness. This chapter will also outline some of the critical scholarship coming from the fields of anthropology, social work, and public health that seek to challenge these stigmatizing narratives and the unjust practices and structures that result. Chapters Three and Four will examine feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care, respectively, as frameworks that may compliment and expand upon this critical literature on homelessness. In Chapter Five I will consider feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care together to argue how the individual strengths of each address

important shortcomings of the other. When used side-by-side, I argue these frameworks provide

formidable challenges to neoliberalism. I further argue that feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of

care can together contribute significant theoretical and practical insights toward the understanding and

treatment of homelessness as a structural problem in Canada. This thesis is guided by the following

research questions:

1. How do feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care scholarship challenge predominant conceptualizations of identity, responsibility[2], and solutions in discussions of homelessness? What new insights come about when looking at homelessness through these two frameworks?

2. How might these frameworks challenge predominant assumptions about homelessness informed by neoliberalism? And how might these alternative frameworks align with, and inform, critical scholarship on homelessness?

Among the myriad occasions of injustice worthy of research, I have selected homelessness in

Canada at the junction of the COVID-19 pandemic given the extensive social, political, economic, and

cultural challenges underscored by this point in time. COVID-19 has made obvious certain structural

failings and widespread inequalities, and as such has prompted public reflection and critique of shared

systems and institutions. I thus argue that this moment is significant for further inspecting these structures

and considering how they might be modified or even transformed. This thesis will argue that

homelessness in Canada is a symptom of widespread structural failings that ought to be addressed.

Homelessness is a circumstance of extreme of social and economic marginalization; and one that is

symptomatic of broader and generalizable structural failings occurring in greater political, economic, and

social structures (Arnold, 2004: 3). Rising rates of homelessness are indicative of increased inequalities

within societies; such inequalities have been both exacerbated and underscored throughout the COVID-19

pandemic (Dej, 2020: 30). Thus, an investigation into the social treatment of homelessness is not a

research endeavour limited to the circumstances of small and distinct subset of the population, but rather

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[2] I will use the term 'responsibility' to refer the relations of care that people owe one another as interconnected agents. That 'responsibility' can also be used to denote accountability for particular conditions or outcomes is also fitting given that some ethics of care scholars, but also feminist poststructuralists, have argued for a shared responsibility *for* the injustices caused by collective structures, histories, and cultures, and thus a responsibility *to* ensure that they promote the wellbeing of all.

one that also provides insight into the general condition of the societies that allow such injustices to occur (Asadi, 2013). That such inequalities are both increasingly prevalent and normalized further necessitates critique and challenge of the status-quo (Lyon-Callo, 2004: 10).

The experiences, resistance, and advocacy of people experiencing homelessness are equally valuable in locating opportunities for change and prompting transformation of the discursive and material structures that enable and perpetuate inequalities (Asadi, 2013: 77). There will be occasions where this change is specific to institutions and policies that exclusively affect people experiencing homelessness, which is of course inherently beneficial. However, it is also worth noting the thoughts of activist Dean Spade, who argues that when social justice is directed at furthest margins, it 'trickles up' from those most oppressed to those with more privilege (2011; cited in Reynolds and polanco, 2012). As such, the most oppressive and inequitable structural points must be the primary targets for change, because while the direct beneficiaries of such action may number in the few, positive systemic change is to the benefit of all. Lastly, I examine homelessness in Canada at the time of COVID-19, not only because of the continued relevance of the pandemic at the time of research, but also because I take from Rebecca Solnit that "disaster is a lot like revolution" by way of the insights and possibilities that arise from disruption and even destruction (2016: xviii). I suggest that perhaps the pandemic is a unique moment of opportunity, where amidst the loss and grief of COVID-19 there are also poignant insights into structures of inequality as well as openings in those structures for challenge and alternatives.

Much of this research endeavour will entail a critical examination of the language, narratives, images, and analytical frameworks predominantly used to understand and address homelessness. Erin Dej borrows the Foucauldian term 'regime of truth' to argue that the body of 'homelessness' knowledge constitutes and simultaneously limits our understanding of the phenomenon and the array of possibilities for addressing it (2020: 13). It is important that predominant discourses of homelessness be challenged, not only for the sake of knowledge itself, but also for the very material consequences that manifest from such understandings. Pre-existing narratives, but also the research that challenges them, have the potential to inform news media (Calder et al., 2011), advocacy work (Buck et al., 2004), public opinion (Harding,

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2016), practices in the emergency shelter and housing sector (Lyon-Callo, 2004), and even political policy (Kidd and Davidson, 2009). Thus, while much of this thesis is theoretical in nature, the intent is to examine ethical and theoretical frameworks that ultimately support and bolster practical initiatives toward changes to the structures that enable and perpetuate such extreme instances of marginalization and oppression as homelessness.

This thesis is first informed both by a philosophical purpose toward the explication of unexamined assumptions and structures undergirding political life (see, Williams, 2014; Connolly, 1991). It aims to disrupt restrictive and stigmatizing narratives within common discourses, lest uninformed judgements and reactions are left to guide policy and community response. Second, this thesis is rooted in my own experiential knowledge and professional background in supporting unhoused populations at the intersections of crises in homelessness, addictions, and the COVID-19 pandemic. It is my intention that this research might be an initial step in prompting assessment of the assumptions, narratives, and ethical frameworks that guide social and political action, to promote inclusive definitions of community and responsibility, and to advocate for a more equitable management of multiple public health crises. Lastly, the theoretical curiosities and political concerns foundational to this thesis can be attributed to a feminist poststructuralist influence, while an ethics of care is very much operative in the professional experiences that now inform its political concerns and advocacy.

CHAPTER ONE: ON NEOLIBERALISM

1.1 Introduction

Neoliberalism is the dominant paradigm through which the social, political, and moral landscape of Canada is conceptualized. While neoliberalism is a diverse and multidimensional concept, for the purposes of this thesis I narrow my focus of examination to the concept as an ideology that informs expectations and behaviour of the state and individuals alike. A more concise definition will follow shortly, but among the most relevant features of neoliberalism is the reorganization of attributions of responsibility within society according to market logic (Brown and Baker, 2012: 17). In this chapter I find that the transfer of responsibility for personal and societal well-being from the collective unit of the state to the individual is a key facet of neoliberalism, and one that is imperative for understanding the historical, social, and theoretical conditions for the crisis of homelessness being experienced today. This chapter seeks to explore some of the core neoliberal ideas informing the roles and responsibilities of individuals and governments. First, it will examine the key points defining neoliberalism, and briefly explore some historical moments associated with the rise of the neoliberal tradition. It will then be able to situate neoliberal thought against the Keynesian liberalism that preceded it. The second part of the chapter will then examine how neoliberalism conceptualizes the role of the state and has thus informed government policy. Most specifically, this section examines the simultaneous withdrawal of the state in public life, and its incursion into citizen's lives and matters of personal responsibility. As such, I look at reductions in wealth redistribution policies and social supports as well as increases in public surveillance and monitoring, respectively. The third and final part of this chapter examines the role of the individual within neoliberal thought. Citizens in the age of neoliberalism are assumed to be free and autonomous agents and are thus allotted the burden of personal responsibility not only for surviving in the age of

austerity and inequality, but also behaving according to the market logics that bolster the continuation of neoliberal regimes.

Present times could be defined by the dominance of the neoliberal paradigm, wherein economic logic has influenced and shaped social, political, and even moral structures since the early 1980s (Cahill, 2018: 977). This era is marked by the proliferation of capitalist values, ideals, and rationality into all realms of life, including human consciousness (Bloom, 2017: 1). However, neoliberalism, or 'economic libertarianism' as its proponents will often call it, is arguably more diverse and fragmented than its opponents generally assume (Gamble, 2013: 408). Nonetheless, the ideals and claims befitting the general category of neoliberal thought have come to dominate understandings and organization of personal and political realms to the extent that its particular market-based logic pervades even the mundane and intimate aspects of individual lives as common-sense (Gamble, 2013: 407). The neoliberal paradigm has thus become so ingrained in the individual and collective psyche, its claims have become elevated to the status of assumptions informing the interpretation, ideals, and structure of all scales of life, from the personal to the international (Harvey, 2005: 3). For Vincent Lyon-Callo (2004), the present crisis of poverty is inseparable from the dominance of neoliberal logic. Neoliberalism has not only enabled the conditions for vast disparities in wealth, but it has also normalized the economic oppression of those living in poverty and experiencing homelessness (Lyon-Callo, 2004: 10-11).

This thesis will examine neoliberalism as the primary tradition informing the economic, social, political, and moral conditions for the present crisis of homelessness in Canada. Certainly, there are other material structures and theoretical traditions important for understanding such extreme poverty, however I will examine neoliberalism for two primary reasons. First, neoliberalism is a predominant point of critique and analysis in critical scholarship on homelessness (Lyon-Callo, 2004), feminist poststructuralism (Davies et al., 2006) and ethics of care scholarship (Lynch et al., 2021). Relatedly, many other scholars from these traditions critique theoretical positions and material conditions that I would argue fit with my definition of neoliberalism, even if not explicitly referred to as such. Second, neoliberalism is an apt paradigm to critically examine because its influence spans both scales (from the

micro to the macro) and realms (including the psychological, economic, social, political, and moral). Thus, while neoliberalism may be only one specific framework I have chosen to critically examine, it is nonetheless expansive enough to allow me to explore the multiple ways that responsibility for the homelessness crisis is narrowed, and responsibility to those experiencing homelessness has been constricted.

It is notoriously challenging to provide a concise yet comprehensive definition for Neoliberalism. David Harvey construes it as a "theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2005: 2). However, Harvey's definition does not underscore the enormous significance of the centrality of market logic to not only economic matters, but also social and political ones. Employing a definition that better encapsulates the significance of neoliberalism as a dominant discourse, Brown and Baker argue that neoliberalism can be understood as a "social technology" (2012: 18). This conceptualization underscores how human value, behaviour, and organization is determined through the lens of economic liberty and growth (Davies and Petersen, 2005: 33). Similarly, Manfred Steger and Ravi Roy provide a useful illustration of neoliberalism as a three-dimensional phenomenon (2010: 12-14). They argue that neoliberalism is, first, an ideology that guides interpretation and informs behaviour and organization of the socio-political world. Second, it is a mode of governance where market logic informs government structure and the regulation of its citizens. Finally, it is a pattern of policies involving the reduced role of the state and the deregulation of the economy (Steger and Roy, 2010) For the parameters of this thesis, I here conceptualize neoliberalism as a dominant discourse that invokes the logic of a naturally self-regulating market to assert the ontological and normative claims of a minimal state, autonomous and free citizenry, and individualized responsibility to inform social, political, and ethical domains.

Among the key advocates of neoliberalism are Friedrich von Hayek, Milton Friedman, and Robert Nozick (Gamble, 2013: 405) whose intellectual contributions are widely understood as a reaction to a poorly functioning economy and the large state apparatus they held responsible for causing it (Steger

and Roy, 2010: 10). Hayek's intellectual pursuits took a highly activist turn through his advocacy for neoliberal reforms to 'big government' in the mid-20th century (Cahill, 2018: 986). Hayek's views later went on to inform Friedman's contributions to neoliberalism and its eventual accession to the dominant political economic paradigm by the 1980s (Steger and Roy, 2010: 17). The influence of neoliberalism was exemplified by the electoral wins and consequent policies of neoliberal political figures throughout the global north, most notably British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, US President Ronald Regan, and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (Steger and Roy, 2010: 21). While these proponents of neoliberalism advocated a reduction in the size of government and a retraction of the state from most realms of personal and economic activity, it is important to note the significant role of government in imposing these changes as well as in regulating and monitoring for their compliance. The increased deregulation of the economic realm initiated through neoliberal reform was thus paradoxically paired with a conservative propensity toward surveilling the behaviours and activities of individuals (Bloom, 2017: 10). This paradox will be explored in greater depth in the next section where the neoliberal state is examined as a primary force for promoting and propelling neoliberal reform in policy and individuals alike.

1.2 The Role of the State

The reduction of the role of government is a fundamental project for neoliberal thought. This section will examine the justification and consequences of a minimized state. Neoliberals advocate the withdrawal of the state for two primary reasons. First, the 'Efficiency Argument' suggests that the market is inherently self-regulating and interference from the state only perverts the natural balance of economic forces. Second, the 'Liberty Argument' proposes that the state is dangerously overbearing and coercive; and thereby concludes that a restricted government is the best guarantee of individual liberty and prosperity. Such a position is a legacy of classic liberalism, wherein individuals are conceptualized as autonomous entities that are best left to their own devices in an economic system that flourishes only without government handling (Steger and Roy, 2010: 3). This has been best articulated by Adam Smith

who asserted that free trade and an unregulated market, uninhibited by centralized regulation or government meddling, will naturally attend to the needs of the market and promote the prosperity of the people (Smith, 2007).

Neoliberals promote free, unregulated markets that can react according to the impulses of supply and demand forces as the best means to promoting an efficient and wealth-maximizing economy; as such, government interference in the economy can only disrupt and impede the right and natural regulation of markets (Steger and Roy, 2010: 17). Thinkers like Milton Friedman promote 'voluntary exchange' of free agents in a free market as the best means to ensure smooth operation of the economy because no agent, including the government, could possibly acquire all relevant knowledge to address market mishaps; rather its interference is only likely increase harm (1990). As opposed to disruptive government intervention and regulation, a market at liberty to react to demands of consumers is the only way to ensure the right and appropriate market response (Steger and Roy, 2010: 17).

As such, the first wave of neoliberal politicians, notably Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan, attributed the economic problems of their time to the bureaucracy of the large government, as well as the spending excesses and forced dependency promoted by the welfare state (Bloom, 2017: 43; Gamble, 2013: 407). They advocated substantive cuts in taxes and government regulations to promote the free market and to reduce the state deficit, but also sought to increase military spending against the communist regimes they viewed as threats to the liberties they valued most (Steger and Roy, 2010: 27). The aforementioned paradox of increased military spending at a time of decreased social welfare investments are justified by other non-market beliefs core to neoliberalism. Importantly, for thinkers like Friedrich von Hayek, economic liberty required more than just free markets, it also implied certain political and moral values (Steger and Roy, 2010: 15).

For neoliberals, any interference by the state in the economy is equated with an intrusion into the freedoms of individuals to pursue their personal prosperity (Gamble, 2013: 413-14). As such, the state is largely regarded with a degree of suspicion, and government regulation in social and economic affairs is generally opposed. Hayek was writing during an era of fear regarding the intrusion of the state, as well as

the creeping spread of communism and collectivist ideals that neoliberals claimed to threaten individual

freedom. Hayek's distaste for state intervention was rooted in his argument that government intervention

in the economy inevitably lead down the 'road to serfdom' because it enabled a strong government to

override natural inclinations of the market for some collectively imposed ideal of a 'common good'

(Cahill, 2018: 986). For Hayek, government "planning leads to dictatorship because dictatorship is the

most effective instrument of coercion and the enforcement of ideals and, as such, essential if central

planning on a large scale is to be possible" (1945: 50). Also taking issue with state interference, though

under slightly different rational, Robert Nozick directed his critique specifically at the state's role in

wealth and resource redistribution. For Nozick, state interference in voluntary exchanges between

individuals, as facilitated by a free market, is an infringement on their rights to liberty (Gamble, 2013:

414). Further, measures such as taxation of rightfully earned wages is equated with 'forced labour', and

thus is in no way compatible with a free society that proclaims individual liberty (Nozick, 1974: 323).

Thus, while neoliberals are generally skeptical of state involvement in the economy, many

nonetheless argue there is some role for government regulation (Gamble, 2013: 414). For Hayek, some

degree of state involvement is useful for protecting the natural order of market forces, which were

nonetheless the ultimate source for human flourishing (Cahill, 2018: 988; Gamble, 2013: 415).

Specifically, state intervention should be guided by the intent to promote the conditions for competition,

not to impede it (Hayek,1945: 45-46). Acceptable avenues of government involvement include, for

example, the protection of private property and the enforcement of contracts (Hayek, 1945: 46). What

little intervention Hayek deemed appropriate for the state was contained to well-articulated rules and

procedures that enable citizens to predict regulatory intervention and plan accordingly (Hayek, 1945: 57).

Friedman similarly accepted a limited role for the state in nurturing conditions for a free economy, most

especially the protection of private property (1990: 30). Whereas Nozick argued from this standpoint that

state intervention is permissible when ensuring the physical safety of the state and its citizens from threats

internal and external (Gamble, 2013: 414-15). While the academic proponents of neoliberalism had

idealizations of a truly minimized state apparatus, retracted from most realms of life, and especially the

economy, the political figures who attempted to implement neoliberal ideals found that the state was often a necessary tool with which to enact these changes. Regan and Thatcher alike sought to reduce the role of the state in impeding the free operation of the market, however in implementing neoliberal policies a strong state apparatus was simultaneously required to support such measures (Steger and Roy, 2010: 49). Critics of neoliberalism are frequently apt to point out that the state is irrevocably involved in supporting the 'free market', and governments frequently intervene in economic and social realms to do so (Bloom, 2017: 27).

In the absence of a strong state or centralized organizing authority, neoliberals advocate the role of competition in governing political and economic life. Julie Wilson argues that competition is central to neoliberalism beyond its function as the traditional arbiter in the economic realm; indeed, competition informs both daily lives and broad socio-political structures (2018: 2). In neoliberal thought, competition is understood as a bulwark against collectivism, a tool of market knowledge transmission, and I would also argue that it takes on a normative flavour as well. Competition, in this later sense, is lent the force of the natural order-of-things, the truest means of allocating limited resources, and the ideal method through which moral merit is determined.

Neoliberals advocate a competitive economy for two primary reasons. First, individuals in competition *against* one another are less likely to align *with* one another; thus competition naturally guards against centralized planning and collective initiatives, as made dangerous by the spectre of communism. Hayek regards the role of competition so highly, he even advocates the state take an active role in promoting the conditions for its optimization. For Hayek, a competitive system between men is a primary bulwark against the centralization of collective interests into a coercive force against individuals; "the competitive system is the only system designed to minimize the power exercised by man over man" (1945: 41). Second, competition in the market is the best tool with which to ensure the prices of goods and services reflect supply and demand. For neoliberals, this is because the transmission of knowledge, as reflected in these prices, is far more effective at coordinating market activity than any centralized planning could be. Hayek also proposed competition as the best means for administering the activities of

the market given the complexity of the modern economy (1945: 45). Friedman elaborates further on this. He credits classical liberal thinker Adam Smith for recognizing "that the prices that emerged from voluntary transactions between buyers and sellers—for short, in a free market—could coordinate the activity of millions of people, each seeking his own interest, in such a way as to make everyone better off" (1990: 14). From this, Friedman argues that competition is the only way to ensure that prices remain a true reflection of the status of market forces, and thus any government initiative to manipulate the cost of goods or labour would pervert the chain of knowledge transmitted through prices. As such, Friedman is a strong opponent of policies that would supplement the income of workers should the renumeration of their labour through market prices be deemed insufficient. To manipulate these prices would be to disincentivize the worker to acquire, act upon, and further transmit market information (Friedman, 1990: 23). Further, such initiatives would serve to disincentivize the very worker himself, for "if your income will be the same whether you work hard or not, why should you work hard?" (Friedman, 1990: 23). I find that it is this final rationale for competition that is most frequently cited in neoliberal opposition to social welfare programs and wealth redistribution.

Given the neoliberal emphasis on the positive role of competition, it is unsurprising that its proponents strongly resist social welfare measures and other means of wealth redistribution. Indeed, taxation and other redistributive measures are among the strongest points of opposition by neoliberal thinkers and politicians alike. For neoliberals, there is a general acceptance that not all can prosper in a free market, but rather than offset these inevitable inequalities through welfare measures, the state ought to allow these inequalities to inspire competitive behaviour for the good of the market (Brown and Baker, 2012: 17). Inequality, in this sense, is imbued with a normative value, in that the threat of having less inspires one to work, learn, and self-discipline more. Wilson elaborates that "government support and care for its citizens is antithetical to this notion of competition because it—operating through support of social service agencies and welfare programs—makes people dependent on others, rather than self-sufficient, creative, and entrepreneurial" (2018: 3-4). Should there be measures to address the material

deprivation experienced by those living in poverty, such activities ought to be carried out as voluntary efforts by private citizens and charities, rather than state-funded initiatives (Gamble, 2013: 411).

Further, welfare and wealth redistribution measures are understood to be in violation of individual rights to freedom in neoliberal thought. Nozick perhaps states this most explicitly in his comparison of taxation to forced labour. To accept redistributed wealth, he argues, amounts to claiming the products of another's labours as one's own (1974: 325). This is not conducive to the liberty of individuals nor a competitive, self-regulating economic system. Neoliberalism's advocates have also argued that the welfare state has created a citizenry who are constrained in their dependence on government, rather than freed through their economic independence (Brown and Baker, 2012: 17). Ultimately, the neoliberal position generally views a strong welfare state as antithetical to a free society (Bloom, 2017: 6).

As neoliberal ideals manifested in state policy in the 1980s, cuts to taxation and the social policies taxation funded were implemented. Political figures like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan understood the economic crisis of their times not as one inherent to capitalism, but rather the excess intrusion and spending of the welfare state (Bloom, 2017: 67). Over his presidency, Regan radically cut welfare programs and the tax policies that funded them, thereby ceasing the social redistribution of resources and prompting the vast widening of the wealth gap between the rich and impoverished (Steger and Roy, 2010: 27-28). Prime Minister Thatcher attempted similar measures, however, was less politically successful in reducing welfare and social security programs given how deeply entrenched they were in the social and political structures at that time (Steger and Roy, 2010: 43). While citizens were made ever more responsible for their own wellbeing in the new era of neoliberalism, the state itself was increasingly tasked with providing individuals with the knowledge to regulate and govern their own behaviour according to market dictates (Bloom, 2017: 72). What welfare benefits the state continued to provide were contingent on individual citizens proving themselves effectively self-managed and worthy of such benefits, through strict government inspection and surveillance (Brown and Baker, 2012: 2).

As the provisions of the welfare state were decreased, individual citizens were increasingly tasked with responsibilities previously attended to by the state. As market-based logic was employed to address

political issues (Gamble, 2013: 406), the role of the state became less about cushioning citizens from the negative effects of capitalism, but rather remaking and equipping them to be more competitive agents of the market (Lyon-Callo, 2004: 11). Such efforts have come to be understood by the likes of Nikolas Rose and Michel Foucault as a process of 'governmentality', defined as the "government's attempt to produce those kinds of citizens best suited to fulfilling the government's policies" (Brown and Baker, 2012: 21). In the context of the present neoliberal era, governmentality can be understood as the means through which individuals internalize the values of the market, and come to regulate, govern, and discipline themselves according to capitalist logics. The neoliberal state thus renders the individual responsible for their own well-being and conduct, while educating the public on the parameters of acceptable freedom of choice, such that citizens are expected to exercise self-discipline of their behaviours in line with rational market expectations (Brown and Baker, 2012: 19). Of course, the emphasis on the self-governing of the individual does not preclude the use of state force upon those who do not choose to self-govern according to neoliberal expectations of the rational, self-interested individual. In addition to police presence and the ever present threat of incarceration, Brown and Baker suggest a 'new punitiveness' in modern methods of population surveillance and control of those who shirk neoliberal norms of the responsible citizen (2012: 5).

1.3 The Role of the Individual

Just as the role and behavior of the state has changed in accordance with the emergence of neoliberal discourse, so too has the expectations of the individual in these new regimes. This section will explore how the individual is conceptualized in neoliberal discourses, and how assertions of autonomy and personal responsibility bolster the structural preservation of neoliberal regimes. Prior to neoliberalism, the political domain was informed by the expectation of the 'social contract'; wherein the government saw to the general safety and welfare of its citizens in exchange for their fulfillment of certain social and political obligations deemed necessary to the maintenance of the state (Mariskind, 2017: 15). For example, John Maynard Keynes' advocacy of government intervention and income

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redistribution to optimize capitalist systems and promote widespread social prosperity was highly influential to the economic theory of the time (Ventelou et al., 2015). However, neoliberal doctrine prompted the withdrawal of the state from matters of civil welfare, and as such, what was required of individuals in this new paradigm have also changed dramatically. Under neoliberal regimes, the individual is now responsible for their own welfare despite ever-encroaching economic strains on it. Against these threats, the individual is expected to be entirely self-sufficient and constantly adaptive to changing economic conditions by acquiring knowledge and skills to maintain their own viability within the capitalist market (Brown and Baker, 2012: 3). As such, the well-being of the individual is contingent on their own self-discipline, aptitude, choice, and economic contribution (Mariskind, 2017: 15).

The individual is the key agent and the moral priority of neoliberal thought. Normatively and practically, the elevation of the individual in neoliberalism is a primary bulwark against the totalitarian threat of the collective good encroaching on personal freedoms. For Hayek, the centrality of the individual was a necessary measure against socialism in which the interests of the individual were sacrificed to the greater interests of the collective (1945). His advocacy of "individualism, in contrast to socialism and all other forms of totalitarianism, is based on the respect of Christianity for the individual man and the belief that it is desirable that men should be free to develop their own individual gifts and bents" (Hayek, 1945: 42). Thus, Hayek's practical concerns for the liberty of individuals contra the encroaching communist threat, were also deeply rooted in normative, moral, and theological beliefs about individual right and primacy. Similarly, Nozick invests primary 'moral authority' in the individual, wherein the person is the exclusive owner of themselves and by extension the products of their labour (Gamble, 2013: 414-15). Both Nozick and Hayek understand the individual's autonomy and independence as an ontological given, and as such resist any claims that infringe on personal liberty or property.

However, as Peter Bloom has argued, neoliberalism extends market logic beyond rational expectations of how economic systems tend to operate to include ontological assumptions and normative ideals of how the individual ought to behave (2017: 8). The individual is expected to be self-interested

and behave according to a rational desire for constant profit acquisition and commodity consumption (Bloom, 2017: 8-9). Thus, while individual liberty is a key value of neoliberalism, such liberties are constantly narrowed through market socialization (and legislated by the state) into acceptable capitalist behaviours that bolster neoliberal regimes rather than challenge them (Bloom, 2017: 32). Further, the neoliberal prioritization of the abstract individual does not necessarily equate to the valuation of all specific individuals. Under neoliberalism, the social value of the individual is practically synonymous with their market value, wherein their worth is contingent on their economic contribution (Bloom, 2017: 12; Brown and Baker, 2012: 23). Indeed, while it could be argued that individual interests may be sacrificed to the greater common interest in socialist thought, I argue that individual wellbeing is often sacrificed to market wellbeing in neoliberal thought. As such, the sanctity and centralization of the individual is an important aspect of neoliberalism but is nonetheless secondary to the priority of the market in practice. As the remainder of this section will explore, the individual of neoliberal thought functions as a tool of market preservation.

Neoliberalism conceptualizes the individual as autonomous, independent, and at liberty to pursue one's own self-interest and make choices accordingly (Brown and Baker, 2012: 12). For Friedman, freedom is what enables personal prosperity; and to engage in voluntary exchange in the market is the key to economic well-being (1990: 9). Neoliberalism, in applying economic logic to individual behaviour, argues that persons and markets alike function best when left alone to self-manage (Bloom, 2017: 6). This understanding of the individual greatly informs many normative components of neoliberal thought, not least the ideals of the minimized state, retraction of welfare measures, and increased personal responsibility.

For example, Hayek's primary justification for a minimized state is that large government not only interferes with the liberty and autonomy of the individual, but also creates dependent subjects (Bloom, 2017: 7). As discussed above, Hayek argued that a robust government apparatus, such as the sort exemplified by socialist regimes, poses a practical, material danger to the liberty of the individual (1945: 47). However, he also argued that regarding the theory of liberty, socialists perverted its meaning, from

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being free of coercion to being free of want (Hayek, 1945: 48). For Hayek then, individual freedom and autonomy also imply personal accountability for the consequences of how one chooses to act upon those rights. As such, for many neoliberals, not only is the redistribution of resources a transgression on the liberties of the wealthy, it is also an erasure of the accountability and personal responsibility for the choices of the have-nots. Of course, many critics argue that this emphasis on the autonomy of the individual, and hence their personal responsibility for their own circumstances, is only possible through other significant erasures. To centre independence and liberty of the person is to obscure the important ways that individuals are products of their social and historical positionality, including nationality, gender, race, class, or sexuality; none of which are products of individual choice. Emphasis on freedom and autonomy further obscure other important structural influences and barriers that shape individual choice, and the outcomes of those choices.

Nonetheless, the neoliberal focus on the liberty and autonomy of the individual has important implications for how responsibility for personal circumstance and wellbeing is conceptualized. As the individual's choices, conditions, and opportunities are divorced from historical, economic, and political contexts, and they become increasingly "disembedded" from social relations and circumstances, the moral significance of personal responsibility becomes increasingly relevant (Brown and Baker, 2012: 12). Friedman, for example, recognizes chance as a determinant of well-being, but nonetheless emphasises personal choice: "our decisions about how to use our resources, whether to work hard or take it easy, to enter one occupation or another, to engage in one venture or another, to save or spend—these may determine whether we dissipate our resources or improve and add to them" (1990: 22). The role of luck is virtually undeniable, but for neoliberalism, the role of hard work and informed choice outweighs the influence of chance, and absolutely eclipses the consequences of structural forces. In the context of social welfare and public health, individuals are increasingly deemed accountable for their poor circumstances, including in situations of political and economic marginalization, wherein they are accorded responsibility for 'fixing' their situation (Brown and Baker, 2012: 2). Individuals disadvantaged by social, political, and economic conditions are deemed individually responsible for their vulnerability to these

forces of inequality and oppression, and are thus exhorted to take responsibility for their life condition so as to no longer burden the collective with their need (Brown and Baker, 2012: 2).

Given the erasure of historical, social, and structural forces beyond individual control, personal responsibility for one's circumstances is emphasised in neoliberal thought. In order for a society and economy built on neoliberal ideals to function, it is the responsibility of the person to self-manage and self-discipline their minds and bodies into a configuration best suited to contribute to markets (Bloom, 2017: 13; Brown and Baker, 2012: 17). The presumption of the applicability of market logic to human behaviour means that neoliberal regimes require that individuals act accordingly (Bloom, 2017). As such, responsibility for collective and personal wellbeing in neoliberal times is transposed from the state to the citizen (Brown and Baker, 2012: 3). Assumptions of individual freedom, agency, and autonomy allow personal wellbeing to be understood through the lens of personal choice and capabilities (Brown and Baker, 2012: 4). As such, state intervention in the lives of the most marginalized is legitimized through surveillance, regulation, and policing of citizens failing to meet their personal responsibilities, rather than societies failing to meet their collective responsibilities. Responsibilization, paralleled with Foucault's concept of governmentality, in the neoliberal sense, entails the transfer of obligations to ensure economic and social viability of markets onto individuals, sculping them into predicable and self-managing agents of the market, and placing accountability and the impetus to change onto individuals when personal behaviours or social circumstances that are not in line with neoliberal ideals (Brown and Baker, 2012: 18).

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored key concepts and assumptions in neoliberal thought, including the centralization of the free and autonomous individual, and the role of competition in organizing the social and economic realms. Of particular significance is how neoliberalism has informed the state's retraction from its earlier roles and responsibilities for the promotion of public health, personal wellbeing, and

social welfare. At the same time, neoliberal reforms have prompted a transfer of this responsibility to the individual for attending to these matters.

There are important implications to the neoliberal emphasis on individualism and the retraction of the state. Individualism is especially rampant in the domains of public health and social welfare, wherein demands of the individual are made to take responsibility for their own well-being so that such a 'burden' does not have to be born by the collective (Brown and Baker, 2012: 2). This has significant ramifications for marginalized populations, such as unhoused communities. Lyon-Callo (2004) argues that the neoliberal individualization of social problems serves to portray people experiencing homelessness as personally deviant and thereby solely responsible for their circumstances, and thus erases the political and economic systems that make homelessness a structural inevitability, rather than a personal failing (2004). The state plays a particular role in the prompting of this individual responsibility, usually through the provision of knowledge, leading to a peculiar balance wherein citizens are "urged to be responsible yet at the same time to rely on expert guidance, education and nudges, governed by legislative frameworks that are apt to be punitive and who are encouraged to think of themselves as vulnerable and in need of assistance" (Brown and Baker, 2012: 6). Again, this is highly relevant for housing-deprived populations who are increasingly subject to surveillance and policing under the auspices of promoting personal responsibility for their circumstances (Brown and Baker, 2012: 6). The next chapter will provide further illustration of how neoliberalism has informed predominant understandings and treatment of homelessness, and will then examine the critical literature on homelessness that refutes and challenges these neoliberal assumptions.

CHAPTER TWO: ON HOMELESSNESS

2.1 Introduction

A conservative estimate of Canada's total homeless population is 235,000 people; and even this number fails to provide insight into the rapid increase in people experiencing poverty in the Global North even in calculations before the toll of economic hardship caused by COVID-19 (Dej, 2020: 29-32). Despite the proliferation of research, advocacy, and political interventions intended to treat homelessness, the number of people experiencing such extreme poverty in Canada has only increased, and the general well-being of that collective population has not seen noteworthy improvement (Gaetz et al., 2016: 1). In this chapter, I will argue that common schemas of understanding and treating homelessness, informed by neoliberal assumptions, have been misguided due to the employment of individualizing, rather than structural frameworks. This chapter aims to clarify the phenomenon and representation of homelessness from a critical perspective. I will first proceed with a literature review of the traditional and critical ways that homelessness has been understood by scholars as well as popular news media[3]. As I will argue, the ways in which homelessness has been conceptualized are foundational to the social and political methods used to address it. Thus, language and representation in both academic and popular knowledge realms manifest in the ways people experiencing homelessness are treated in individual, institutional, and political-economic structures. While this chapter examines the inadequacies of predominant narratives and interventions in homelessness, the following chapters in feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care provide theoretical and normative expansion to these presently limited discussions. I ultimately argue

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[3] Much of this chapter makes reference to media representation of homelessness. While popular narratives of homelessness are important to how the phenomenon is understood and treated, it is beyond the scope and space of this thesis to provide detailed analysis on the media narratives specific to homelessness in Canada during the time of COVID-19. Rather, this thesis aims to rely on the thorough body of literature that has already examined media representations of homelessness. Instead of replicating these pre-existing empirical studies, my aim is to use the insights of previous discourse analysis of media to inform my theoretical analysis.

that the critical literature on homelessness provides convincing claims that challenge individualizing

neoliberal models. These critical contentions further support the uptake of feminist poststructuralism and

the ethics of care that centre interdependence and relationality, and thus promote a greater responsibility

for the well-being of those with whom those connections are shared.

2.2 Definitions, demographics, and a Short History of Homelessness in Canada

Homelessness is a phenomenon notoriously complex to define and delimit. An established

conceptualization of homelessness is nonetheless required because how homelessness is defined has

significant material consequences for resource allocation and policy formation in political systems and

social services sectors (Frankish et al., 2005: 524; Sahlin. 2020: 44). In Canada, homelessness is an

escalating crisis of poverty (Calder et al., 2011: 2), in which economic deprivation includes housing

precarity or lack of access to suitable housing (Nichols, 2020: 589). The Canadian Homelessness

Research Network outlines a range of situations that constitute homelessness; these range from

'unsheltered', to 'emergency sheltered', to 'provisionally accommodated', to 'insecurely housed' (2012).

However, because the aforementioned definitions focus on the material circumstances of homelessness,

they may be limited from encompassing the broader experience of homelessness. As Erin Dej notes,

many individuals who no longer live according to the materially-defined circumstances of homelessness

maintain a self-identification as homeless given their continued experience as socially and economically

marginalized (2020: 12). As such, it is important that a conceptualization of homelessness allows for the

interplay of material, social, and discursive factors. Homelessness is defined, approached, and

experienced through cultural, economic, moral, and political discourses that are neither neutral nor

objective, but specific to time and place (Dej, 2020). While such a view does not deny that material

conditions are relevant, it does posit that these material conditions are made meaningful, and even

perpetuated, through the discursive practices that have been ascribed to them (Pascale, 2005: 252-6).

While understanding the demographic make-up of people experiencing homelessness in Canada

may assist in better conceptualizing the phenomenon, such a task also comes with theoretical risks.

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Vincent Lyon-Callo (2004) argues that statistics on unhoused persons hazard formulating an image of the problem as one occurring at the individual level; such depictions reinforce stereotypes of deviancy or disfunction of the person while obscuring the structural conditions and injustices they face. At the same time, some amalgamation of demographics may assist in understanding the general trends of marginalization and structural violence that these populations face (Runnels et al., 2009: 58). This is exemplified by the over-representation among homeless populations of Indigenous Peoples, who continue to experience oppression and violence perpetrated by the Canadian state and its settler-colonial institutions (Dej, 2020: 2). In Canada, Indigenous Peoples were systematically displaced from the lands they inhabited while policies were enacted to prohibit Indigenous acquisition and ownership of property under state law; such colonial legacies are maintained and illustrated in the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness today (Dej, 2020: 32). As such, to understand high statistics of Indigenous homelessness only at the scale of the individual, as with any other instance of homelessness, is to neglect the various historical, social, political, and economic structures that actively constitute and maintain the inequities that ensure such extreme poverty and marginalization an inevitability. Other groups especially vulnerable to economic marginalization, and thus homelessness include racialized and 2SLGBTQIA+, youth, persons with disabilities, people who experience mental health challenges, and people who use substances[4].

While homelessness is defined in material terms as acute economic marginalization, it is important to note the social and political marginalization that so often accompanies this experience. That the experience of homelessness is encumbered with stigma is overwhelmingly documented (see for

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[4] A significant group within the homeless population are those struggling with mental illness and substance use problems; I follow Dej (2020) in recognizing their distinction (especially given the specific stigmas associated with the later) but treating them together. Rolling substance use challenges in with mental illness is commonly done by people who have lived experience with both, as is similarly done in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V (Dej, 2020). Dominant discourses and assumptions also frequently associate homelessness with substance use and mental illness. However, while I acknowledge this relationship, it is among my intentions in this chapter to challenge the common beliefs that homelessness is somehow caused by a 'choice to abuse substances' or some innate mental deficiency. Similar to other groups overrepresented in the homeless population, people who use substances and/or experience mental illness are among the most marginalized and face a variety of structural barriers in their day-to-day lives (Didenko and Pankratz, 2007: 1).

example, Arnold, 2004; Dej, 2020; Phelan et al., 1997). Further, this perpetuation of stigma lends itself to further social exclusion and othering (Dej, 2020), public and political exclusion (Arnold, 2004), coercive treatment (Arnold, 2004), and the internalization of such stigma (Asadi, 2013) to the point of diminishing hope, resilience, and the potential for resistance (Dej, 2020). Thus, I argue that stigmatizing discourses on homelessness require critical analysis just as much as unjust economic and political systems.

Contemporary understandings of homelessness came about in Canada in the 1980s as extreme poverty culminated into its present state of crisis following a period neoliberal reforms, increased unemployment, and decreased government spending on social supports and affordable housing (Gaetz, 2010; Piat et al., 2015: 2379). It was at this time that news media began focusing on the growing phenomenon of homelessness (Schneider et al., 2010: 150). In this initial surge of coverage, homelessness was predominantly conceptualized as a structural problem rooted in recent political and economic changes (Calder et al., 2011: 3). At this time, homelessness was generally understood to result from structural problems, rather than personal deficits, and thus a greater sense of public sympathy and support for political initiatives to assist the 'deserving poor' was promoted through such coverage (Rosenthal, 2000: 1-2). However, homelessness today is increasingly portrayed according to neoliberal assumptions as a problem caused by the personal failings or deficits of the 'undeserving' or deviant poor (Schneider and Remillard, 2013: 105). As such, an important historical dynamic to recognize regarding homelessness in Canada is that its conceptualization has changed significantly over time, as have public attitudes regarding the people who experience this extreme form of poverty and the government's role in supporting them. Certainly public opinion on the topic is complex, and while it does appear that there is moderately more sympathetic and systemically-minded views on homelessness today than in earlier periods (Phelan et al., 1997; Tsai et al., 2017), it is also important to note that even sympathetic attitudes and representations of homelessness can be rife with stigma that ultimately works against unhoused individuals and efforts aimed at changing systemic conditions that maintain their oppression (Schneider and Remillard, 2013: 98). The following sections will investigate the complexities of how homelessness

is represented in news media and the consequences of the predominant discursive practices within such representations.

2.3 Understanding Homelessness: Popular (mis)Conceptions and Critical Perspectives

This section will outline the various arguments regarding the causes and determinants of homelessness. Importantly, how the phenomenon of homelessness is understood greatly affects how those who experience it are represented, and how solutions for treating it are conceptualized. Multiple and varied factors have been identified as causes of homelessness; combinations of different circumstances interact to bring an individual to such an extreme point of economic marginalization, and to lead a society to have such vast numbers of people who experience this acute form of poverty (Frankish et al., 2005: 524). These factors are complex combinations of occurrences in the life of the individual as well as the social, economic, and political structures that encompass them (Rosenthal, 2000: 1). Further, the experience of homelessness itself is a factor that perpetuates the condition of homelessness: while homelessness is caused generally by poverty and vulnerability, one's experiences of marginalization, and structural and interpersonal violence increases under the conditions of homelessness (Runnels et al., 2009: 59).

Of particular relevance to this research are the discursive practices that create conditions for homelessness and enact its perpetuation; for "discursive practices regarding homelessness produce the very conditions of alienation that they purport to describe" (Pascale, 2005: 263). Thus, an important conclusion in this research is that language and ideas can function to marginalize individuals. There are two predominant frameworks for locating the cause and solution to homelessness; the first framework examines homelessness as a structural phenomenon, the second as an individual problem. While I will ultimately argue the strengths of a structural perspective for understanding and addressing homelessness, I do not wish to deny the presence of micro-level factors and the worthiness of some individual-level interventions. Rather than posit these frameworks in absolute dichotomous terms, it is important that causes and solutions of homelessness at the scale of the individual be contextualized by the social,

political, and economic structures that people are guided and constrained by (Piat et al., 2015: 2369; Runnels et al., 2009: 58).

While this thesis primarily seeks to explore frameworks that may inform alternative approaches toward the solution of homelessness, it is key that the causes of homelessness are first understood. This is because the location of causal factors directly informs perceptions of the phenomenon as well as the logic of its treatment. In other words, the agent responsible for enacting a condition is generally the primary agent held accountable for changing it (Best, 2010; Calder et al., 2011: 13; Iyengar, 1990: 23). Thus, if it is the pathology or irrationality of an individual that leads them to homelessness, they can simply be left to pull themselves out of the circumstances they put themselves in in the first place (Pascale, 2005: 256). Such a logic also lends itself to stigmatization and moralization of the individual and their circumstances (Horsell, 2006: 218; Rosenthal, 2000: 1). But when homelessness is conceptualized as a problem of structural circumstances, then we may have a more diffuse understanding of responsibility that prompts broader socio-political changes to address it (Iyengar, 1990: 36).

While homelessness is popularly understood as caused by factors attributed to the lifestyles, choices, or the biopsychology of the individual, there is a burgeoning realm of critical scholarship that attributes the cause of homelessness to be predominantly at the structural level of institutional, political, economic, and social practices (Dej, 2020: 34). It is this scholarship that I now explore, and ultimately posit as most rich in new insights and opportunities for change. The particular structures that are found as causal factors in homelessness are varied. In examining these structural causes, Dej lists a multitude of historical and contemporary practices, including: "housing unaffordability, the commodification of housing, widespread under- and unemployment, multi-generational poverty, limited access to social services, deindustrialization, a minimum wage that does not keep up with the cost of living, discrimination based on race/ethnicity and/or disability, historical and contemporary colonization, gender inequality, and reduced benefits (especially pensions)…" (2020: 33). That poverty and homelessness are problems affecting increasing numbers of Canadians underscores the phenomenon as something broadly structural, rather than an aberrant problem of a few deviant individuals (Dej, 2020: 31).

An important insight from critical scholarship on the structural factors of homelessness is that often the *symptoms* of injustice, socioeconomic inequalities, and marginalization are mistaken as their *cause.* This is a particularly frequent discursive practice when regarding substance use, mental illness, and criminality as the cause of homelessness. Critical scholarship challenges the directionality of this causal chain and inserts structural inequalities and marginalization as factors in the development of substance use challenges, mental illness, and criminal records. Together, these factors may lend themselves to *causing* homelessness, however critical scholarship also considers them to be *consequences* initiated or exacerbated through the hardships of experiencing of homelessness. The relationship between mental illness and homelessness is further complicated by interventions by the criminal justice system. People experiencing homelessness are more likely to be incarcerated because they are frequently more publicly visible and thus subjected to higher degrees of scrutiny and surveillance (Dej, 2020: 47). Further, those who have been incarcerated are significantly more likely to experience homelessness following their release, due primarily to a lack of transitional resources (Dej, 2020: 49). Thus, what a structural understanding of homelessness underscores is that it is not factors such as criminal activity, mental illness, or substance use challenges that cause a person to experience homelessness. Rather it is the underlying factors of marginalization, socioeconomic inequality, and systemic failings that are precipitants to mental illness, substance use challenges, involvement in the criminal justice system. As such, it is these structural factors that must be addressed and challenged by any framework that seeks to address homelessness.

While structural understandings of homelessness are generally only found in the critical subset of scholarship on the subject, such explanations are even less common in popular depictions of the subject. In news media, structural understandings of homelessness are typically absent or reduced to individualized explanations of the phenomenon (Calder et al., 2011; Iyengar, 1990). Broad patterns of injustice, inequality, and oppression are found to be largely absent in media narratives (Hackett et al., 2000 cited in Harding, 2016: 43). Rachel Best (2010) found the use of structural explanations to be less frequent in news media; however, when present, such frames were successful in connecting broad societal

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responsibility for homelessness to societal responsibility to address homelessness. I ultimately argue that structural perspectives on the causes of homelessness are important foundations for structural action toward addressing homelessness. Jack Tsai et al. (2017) have found that there are certain historical moments, such as mass economic recessions, that highlight the relevance of structural forces in day-to-day lives, and thus strengthen conditions of receptivity to structural explanations of homelessness (2017: 5-6). I suggest that the occasion of a global pandemic may be among those moments.

When homelessness in the Global North was initially emerging as a topic of media coverage in the early 1980s it was primarily understood in structural terms (Pascale, 2005). The surge in numbers of 'new homeless' was attributed to then-recent economic and political changes at the local and international scales (Pascale, 2005: 254). However, over time this structural understanding gave way to more individualized conceptualizations of homelessness as a problem inherent in the person experiencing it (Pascale, 2005: 254; Schneider and Remillard, 2013: 105). There are two primary versions of this individualizing narrative of homelessness. The first is a moralizing argument[5] in which the person experiencing homelessness is blamed as responsible for their situation. Here homelessness is a choice (Pascale, 2005: 254), a matter of character defects (Asadi, 2013: 78), an indication of moral corruption (Toft, 2014: 799), or a result of pure laziness (Arnold, 2004: 13). Such narratives further legitimize and naturalize their marginalization as groups 'inferior' and unworthy of inclusion (Harding, 2016: 30). The second narrative of individualized explanations for homelessness entail its medicalization[6]. Here, the mind or body of the individual is presumed flawed; the person cannot be held morally accountable for such defects, but because they lack the agency to change their circumstances, they are deemed helpless and are thus still heavily stigmatized within such narratives (Dej, 2020: 115-16).

These individualized understandings are predominant in both research (Horsell, 2006; Sahlin, 2020), and in popular news media (See for example Best, 2010; Buck et al., 2004; Calder et al., 2011;

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[5] A detailed account and examples of the moralization and medicalization of homelessness are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, for illustration and elaboration of the moralization of homelessness, see Asadi, 2013: 77; Harding, 2016.

[6] For illustration and elaboration of the medicalization of homelessness, see Dej, 2020 and Lyon-Callo 2004.

Lyons and Smedley, 2021; Pascale, 2005; Schneider et al., 2010; Toft, 2014). When neoliberal, individualized understandings dominate narratives and explanations of homelessness, broader social, economic, and political causal explanations are obscured, historical context is erased, and a sense of broader responsibility for the effects of shared institutions and structures is negated (Arnold, 2004: 7; Harding, 2016: 44; Horsell, 2006: 214; Lyons and Smedley, 2021; Schneider and Remillard, 2013). While I do not deny the relevance of the individual in explanations of homelessness, I do take from feminist thought a skepticism of strict public/private and personal/political binaries. For example, the erasure of structural causal factors in the causation of homelessness occurs frequently in discussions of mental illness and substance use challenges within this population. While explanations of homelessness citing high rates of addictions and mental illness using a medicalized model may be somewhat more sympathetic to persons experiencing homelessness, Lyon-Callo (2004) notes that they nonetheless focus almost exclusively on the issues within an individual's body or mind rather than their broader social circumstances or the greater political-economic contexts. This medicalization of marginalization thus obscures systemic inequalities and injustices (Dej, 2020: 3 Reynolds and polanco, 2012: 27). Importantly, explanations that erase systemic factors of homelessness necessarily render systemic solutions invisible (Rosenthal, 2000: 2). When the problem lies exclusively in the individual, narrative conditions for stigma and further marginalization are rife (Rosenthal, 2000). Homelessness comes to be understood as a natural and inevitable condition of flawed individuals; responsibility for addressing such conditions lies with these individuals and is thus beyond the realm of concern for the housed population (Harding, 2016).

Individualized perspectives on the causation of homelessness are highly correlated with stigmatizing portrayals of the unhoused population. In popular representation[7], individuals experiencing homelessness are commonly described as "untrustworthy, dirty, lazy, pathological" (Arnold, 2004: 7). Such portrayals fixate on acts of deviancy, dependency, and danger in portrayals of homelessness. These

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[7] There is ample literature analysing and illustrating how homelessness is represented in popular media. For further examples, see Harding 2016, Lyons and Smedley 2021, Remillard & Schneider 2010.

depictions characterize people experiencing homelessness as individuals constantly engaging in illegal acts, using prohibited substances, and thus caught up in the criminal justice system (Toft, 2014: 793). People experiencing homelessness and the spaces they inhabit are frequently portrayed as unclean; they are problematized as unsightly, but also 'public health hazards' (Toft, 2014: 795). These narratives frequently describe people experiencing homelessness as dependent on the social support systems and thus indebted to society, without providing reciprocally positive contributions in turn (Horsell, 2006: 219). Such discursive practices contribute to the narrative that people experiencing homelessness are a nuisance, or worse, a threat to the rest of society (Harding, 2016: 32; Horsell, 2006: 214; Toft, 2014: 800). However, it is also important to note that stigmatizing and harmful narratives about homelessness are not only operative in overtly negative narratives. Stigmatizing and harmful discourses are also prevalent in sympathetic portrayals of homelessness. Such narratives are found to simultaneously convey care and compassion while depicting people experiencing homelessness as incompetent and untrustworthy, and thus distinct from the rest of society (Schneider and Remillard, 2013; Schneider et al., 2010). All stigmatizing portrayals of people experiencing homelessness are distressing and hurtful on a personal level, but also have large-scale social and political consequences. Such narratives function to erase the diversity of the population by limiting their conceptualization as one homogenized group (Arnold, 2004: 37), and to obscure the complexity and nuances of the causes and conditions of homelessness (Calder et al., 2011: 6). The consequences of these depictions of homelessness include the legitimization of patronizing and objectifying treatment options that continue to limit solutions to homelessness to interventions in individual lives, often with little consultation on the preferences of those individuals themselves.

Especially significant for the purposes of this research is an understanding of how individual causal explanations and stigmatizing narratives serve to construct those experiencing homelessness as 'other'. The discursive practice of 'othering' unhoused people does not just emphasise difference, but sets 'them' as apart from, and even in opposition to 'us' (Toft, 2014). Dehumanizing perceptions of people experiencing poverty function to deny their distinct and diverse personhood and instead construct a

homogenizing category of person based solely on socioeconomic status, while simultaneously positioning them as distinctly different from, and dangerous to, the rest of the population (Donnison, 1987). News media 'others' people experiencing homelessness by primarily portraying the homeless population as a group in conflict with the rest of society; thereby creating and dividing two distinct and antagonistic parties by employing 'us' against 'them' narratives (Calder et al., 2011: 9). News articles typically portray homelessness as a problem inconveniencing the rest of the population (Pascale, 2005: 256), rather than an occasion of great suffering and violence for those actually experiencing it. Such a perverse reversal of burden and victimhood also functions to minimize any occasion for the domiciled population to question and consider their own role and complicity in maintaining the structural conditions in which such vast inequalities can exist within their society. Such distinctions between 'us' and 'them' naturalize division (Remillard and Schneider 2010: 78), legitimize inequality and injustice (Asadi, 2013: 77), and promote control and coercion of people experiencing homelessness (Schneider and Remillard, 2013: 105). People experiencing homelessness are thus rendered non-members of society and as such not entitled to its shared resources or space in political platforms, rather they are considered 'debtors' or 'parasites' that live off of, and simultaneously threaten social structures (Arnold, 2004: 13). Thus, the question of homelessness encompasses far more than the economics of housing; it is the exclusive construction of identity and community against those who are deemed unworthy in sharing in it (Pascale, 2005: 258).

Against the constructed deficiencies and incapacities of the othered 'homeless object' is the image of the agentic, beneficent self: the citizen-subject. A particular logic of the self/ other binary is that the citizen-subject is both the innocent victim of the 'homeless problem' (Pascale, 2005: 262) and the only actor deemed sufficiently good and worthy of fixing it (Harding, 2016: 33). Through constant juxtaposition of the domiciled self versus unhoused other, the citizen-subject is as much a discursive construct elevated in its superiority by its comparison against the homeless-object (see for example, Harding, 2016: 33; Schneider and Chaseton, 2013: 110). The domiciled population by implicit contrast is deemed capable, hardworking, beneficent, citizens who contribute to shared social resources and are thus

deemed worthy of participating in the political processes whereby these resources are allocated and distributed (Arnold, 2004: 17).

The binary logic of the incompetent-other/worthy-self functions to limit the realm of possible solutions to homelessness; such that all that is required to solve homelessness is for individuals to simply pull themselves out of the circumstances they are responsible for in the first place, perhaps supported by the occasional act of goodness and charity from the citizen-subject (Rosenthal, 2000: 5). Importantly, stigmatizing narratives inform how responsibility to assist is perceived and enacted. When the homeless are understood as fundamentally other-than, and absolutely responsible for their own circumstances of deprivation, then the faith and security in the self and its institutions are preserved as right and just (Pascale, 2005: 260-61). Because unhoused persons are frequently portrayed as freeloaders plundering public resources and services, the idea that the domiciled population may bear even greater responsibility for the conditions of the unhoused, is made to seem illogical and even unjust itself. These narratives thus direct the dispersal of resources, the formation of policy, and ultimately manifest into very real social and material consequences (Schneider and Remillard, 2013). The following section will explore some of the consequences of the stigmatizing and othering the homeless identity while maintaining an unreflective image of the agentic and righteous self.

2.4 Responding to Homelessness: How Discourse Shapes Approaches to Homelessness

The pervasive othering, stigmatisation, and individualization of homelessness affects how solutions to the phenomenon are conceptualized. This section investigates how negative and limited representations of the causes of homelessness and the people who experience it inform societal conceptions of responsibility to address such extreme inequalities, and this in turn informs the approaches used by political and social services institutions. I argue that when the predominant understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness is limited, and when the portrayals of people experiencing homelessness lack complexity and depth, the potential solutions for addressing homelessness are restricted.

How homelessness is commonly conceptualized, as well as whether society's institutions and structures are understood as implicated in the causes of homelessness, shapes the political and societal

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approaches for addressing it. The 'solutions' to homelessness are shaped, but also limited by, the language and ideas used to understand it (Donnison, 1987: 109; Remillard and Schneider, 2010: 81). When cast as a problem of deviant, immoral behaviour, the solutions to homelessness are generally reduced to the individual 'fixing' themselves (Harding, 2016). One particularly disconcerting narrative in Canadian news media is the 'naturalization' of poverty, thought which homelessness is seen as a normal and inevitable circumstance of even just socio-economic systems (Arnold, 2004: 7; Harding, 2016: 27, Lyon-Callo, 2004: 17). Given this naturalization of poverty, any challenge to this inevitable order of society is deemed "irrational" (Lyon-Callo, 2004: 47). Government intervention in thus understood to interfere with the right and proper outcomes of market forces and further permits dependency on social services (Harding, 2016: 33). Where outside intervention is permissible, it is in the realm of policing, control, and regulation (Pascale, 2005: 256), or individual, episodic acts of 'charity' (Remillard and Schneider, 2010).

In the absence of structural explanations for homelessness, ideas about personal deficits and incompetence abound. Thus, treatment options either excuse inaction, or position people experiencing homelessness as needing to be saved from themselves (Harding, 2016: 33). Where society is called to action under this formulation, it is in the form of individual members performing the role of 'hero' through the enactment of charity (Harding, 2016: 33: Schneider and Chaseton, 2013: 103; Remillard and Schneider, 2010: 84). Not only are short-term individual acts inadequate in addressing structural failings (Calder et al., 2011; Remillard and Schneider, 2010), they also obscure the complicity of the domiciled population in maintaining the very inequities that cause homelessness. Ultimately, the structural circumstances that prompt inequity are less simple and morally satisfying to hold to account for the phenomenon of homelessness, and so other actors are charged with finding the solution (Sahlin, 2020: 49). By holding individuals experiencing homelessness as solely responsible for their circumstances, and thus obscuring structural forces and societal complicity, homelessness as a phenomenon persists and intensifies despite the immense resources poured into addressing it (Lyon-Callo, 2004). These resources, even when allocated with compassionate intentions, generally only serve to alleviate some of the

symptoms of inequality and provide for the most immediate of subsistence needs (Arnold, 2004: 169; Donnison, 1987: 109). Not only are such provisions inadequate in attending to the long-term needs of people experiencing homelessness, they serve to perpetuate the very stigmas and misconceptions that undercut structural change and perpetuate the conditions of inequality and injustice that cause homelessness (Arnold, 2004: 169; Donnison, 1987: 109; Rosenthal, 2000: 7; Schneider and Remillard, 2013: 97).

Just as sentiments of care and compassion are not necessarily precluded from containing stigmatizing assumptions about people experiencing homeless; even well-intended interventions to support those experiencing homelessness can have dehumanizing consequences. Through a series of interviews conducted with people who identified themselves as 'caring about homelessness' Schneider and Remillard (2013) found that sentiments of care were coupled with desires to control and regulate people experiencing homelessness. Judgement and scorn were implicitly foundational to the act and interpretation of charity for the participants of this study, who expressed resentment of the recipients of their charity for failing to show sufficient gratitude or to utilise the aid in ways the participants deemed appropriate (Schneider and Remillard, 2013: 104). This co-existence of care and coercion in narratives on the treatment of homelessness is well documented (see, for example Arnold, 2004: 2, 39-41; Dej, 2020: 15-16; Schneider et al., 2010: 165, Schneider and Chaseton 2013). Such narratives include sentiments sympathetic to the condition of people experiencing homelessness simultaneously called for increased regulation and control of their lives for their own betterment, as well as for the greater comfort of the domiciled public (Schneider et al., 2010: 165). These calls for the surveillance and control of people experiencing homelessness have been taken up even by service providers that exist precisely to assist this population (see for example Lyon-Callo, 2004). While most of these service providers recognize the greater structural factors to homelessness, funding requirements and the need to maintain public support mean that advocacy for radical structural change is silenced by the priority of organizational viability; as such, efforts are limited to more popularly appealing avenues for 'fixing' individual homeless persons (Dej, 2020: 9). Even in organizations and movements where domiciled activists advocate for systemic

change and subscribe to structural causal explanations of homelessness, individuals experiencing homelessness are frequently sidelined by their domiciled allies and are assumed to be less competent and politically capable (Rosenthal, 2000: 4). Thus, people experiencing homelessness are stigmatized and marginalized through compassionate discursive practices and the very organizations set to support them. Sentiments of care are underpinned by patronizing attitudes that deny the competence, agency, and subjecthood of people experiencing homelessness.

How the causes of homelessness are understood necessarily informs how responsibility is conceptualized. In news media, individualized approaches to homelessness posit that the persons experiencing homelessness are both responsible for their situation and thus accountable for seeing themselves out of such circumstances; in contrast, structural understandings of homelessness include broader social, economic, and political circumstances as causal factors, and thus invites a broad societal responsibility for addressing it (Iyengar, 1990: 35). Importantly, when people experiencing homelessness are portrayed in more humanizing terms in news media, the wider community is typically more receptive to accepting responsibility for the problem of homelessness and engaging in solutions (Schneider et al., 2010: 164). However, given that predominant representations of homelessness focus on individual causal factors and stigmatizing portrayals of people experiencing homelessness, any greater sense of social obligation or duty to address structural injustices are minimized and denied.

Kathleen Arnold (2004) has argued that the basic tenets upon which our political structures were built include individual equality and the right to basic subsistence. In the absence of either, the sense of guilt over neglected obligation becomes so overwhelming it degenerates into denial, and even spite (Arnold, 2004). This rejection and contempt could be illustrated by the stigma apparent in popular and news media depictions of homelessness. Through discursive practices of dehumanizing and 'othering' people experiencing homelessness, the interconnections between 'us' and 'them' are erased, and the moral discomfort of collective responsibility for injustice is eased, while the shame of unmet obligation is diminished (Remillard and Schneider, 2010: 79). By denying the structural nature of homelessness as a problem of injustice, the realities of mutual interdependence, inequality and oppression are obscured by

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neoliberal ideals of meritocracy and autonomy; and the potential for collective responsibility and structural solutions are denied (Arnold, 2004: 166).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored predominant narratives on homelessness informed by neoliberalism as the primary schema for understanding and treating 'problematic persons'. Neoliberal frameworks individualize homelessness and thus construe the phenomenon as the failure of deviant or otherwise incompetent individuals, and thus propose those individuals ought to fix themselves to be included among the productive citizens of society. In contrast to neoliberal conceptualizations of homelessness, critical literature understands the phenomenon at the structural level, whereby failures of social, economic, and political systems create the conditions for homelessness, and then further stigmatize and marginalize the persons experiencing it. Against neoliberal narratives that construe homelessness as the responsibility of unhoused individuals, I have used critical scholarship on homelessness to lay the foundation for recognizing the importance of two frameworks, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care, that can conceptualize this problem as one of systemic failures, and thus reformulate responsibility for transformation of these systems as shared by the wider collective.

CHAPTER THREE: FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALISM

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will argue that a feminist poststructural framework is a necessary but insufficient tool with which to examine and address the social and economic inequalities that enable homelessness to occur at such high rates across Canada. I first examine some of the conceptual tools originating in poststructural scholarship[8], later taken up by feminist poststructuralists, and specifically show how this framework challenges neoliberal notions of power and knowledge. I then engage with the tool of deconstruction to explore the 'discursive subject' as prime exemplification of how feminist poststructuralism challenges certain constrictive dichotomies that plague neoliberalism. From there, I argue that in breaking these dualisms, feminist poststructuralism is thus able to provide insight into deep social structure *and* its potential for change. By positing subjects as simultaneously constituted by and constituting of, the discourses that make up the political, feminist poststructuralism is able to promote both normative positionality *and* ongoing self-reflexive critique. My overall argument in this chapter is that feminist poststructuralism is an ideal framework with which to theorize the phenomenon of homelessness. Feminist poststructuralism posits that the building blocks of our sociopolitical world, discourse, power, knowledges [9], and subjectivity, are firmly entrenched yet amenable to change and resistance. Further, that such transformations can effectively be guided and prompted forward using large

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[8] I use the term poststructuralist given its predominance in more recent literature, and given its application to the work of Michel Foucault, whose work informs the strain of feminist poststructuralism I here engage with. In the remainder of this chapter, I sometimes engage with the earlier scholarship of many who used the term postmodern to describe their theoretical standpoints before the term fell out of favour; in citing such work I take on term 'postmodern', however these further references to 'postmodernism' can, I argue, be understood as more aptly labeled poststructural in today's sense of the words.

[9] Poststructuralists typically pluralize this term to signify the existence of knowledge outside of dominant paradigms of truth and legitimacy. Feminist poststructuralists, too, allow for the existence and validity of various knowledges, while examining the dominant ones for the relation to power (Hekman, 1990: 9). The recognition of multiple 'knowledges' further acknowledges the practices, ideas, experiences, and norms that have been erased and marginalized by the dominance of primary discourses. For these reasons, I too, will primarily refer to knowledge in the plural.

theoretical tools and normative claims for justice-seeking, while also encouraging ongoing critique of both the structures such efforts are meant to change, as well as the very processes and practices of that advocacy itself.

Feminist poststructuralism has much to say on the nature of social, political and economic realms that may inform an understanding of the structural causes of homelessness, as well as the current impediments to enacting change. While this framework certainly creates space for normative accounts of what a more just society could look like, often these new spaces are left open, with only vague parameters and details on practices and structures that ought to take that place. Feminist poststructural advocacy regarding the normative direction of change is generally less detailed than its challenge to theories that would otherwise posit the world as static (Allen, 2008). However, there are some noteworthy exceptions I explore, including Elizabeth St. Pierre's position on the ethical responsibilities of subjects with discursive agency. I ultimately argue that these gaps are best addressed by introducing the ethics of care as complimentary framework which provides space to directly consider topics of moral duty and responsibility that so pervade discourses on homelessness. In Chapter Four I explore the ethics of care in greater detail, however it is worth noting that many of the strengths of feminist poststructuralism in challenging predominant liberal accounts are also acutely necessary in addressing the certain essentializing, dichotomizing, and patronizing pitfalls within much of the ethics of care scholarship. Thus, a feminist poststructural account and an ethics of care framework are highly complimentary and therefore both necessary in a critical account of the societal conditions of homelessness.

I employ a feminist poststructuralist framework, rather than a feminist or poststructuralist perspective alone for its strengths as both a critical and politically practicable approach. While poststructuralism is highly critical of neoliberalism, much feminist thought has been influenced by some of the key assumptions of this dominant discourse. (Moore and Fraser, 2006: 3043). Much of feminist advocacy in the Global North has employed individual rights frameworks to pursue equality for women but are nonetheless limited in pursuing radical structural change and equitable life conditions for marginalized groups because of other dominating assumptions within neoliberal regimes (Moore and

Fraser, 2006: 2043). Some strains of feminism sought equality for women by claiming their equal moral worth to men, as determined through the demonstration of neoliberal values of rationality and autonomy. However, feminist poststructuralism challenges the very neoliberal values that inform the gendered binary that marginalizes women and their experiences. As the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, feminist poststructuralism is critical of many of the assumptions that other strains of feminism have shared with predominant neoliberal thought. In turn, the feminist influences on feminist poststructuralism have shaped a framework that is far more normatively oriented and politically practical than poststructuralism alone. While poststructuralism has traditionally been more concerned with the project of philosophy, feminism historically prioritizes the political aims of social transformation (Fraser and Nicholson, 1988). The tensions brought forth in the merging of feminist and poststructuralist traditions, I argue, are ultimately highly conducive to a framework that is both critical of neoliberal discourses and decidedly capable of transforming them. A feminist poststructuralist framework is committed to both critique of the status quo and its reconstruction into something more just. Taking from both traditions, feminist poststructuralism employs critical thought and practical action as dual prongs of its social justice pursuits, as such, they are tools that are complimentary rather than contradictory.

3.2 Foucauldian Concepts

I follow Nancy Fraser (1989), Chris Weedon (1987), St. Pierre (2000), and various other feminist scholars who align their poststructural influence largely (but not uncritically) with the work of Michel Foucault. Weedon (1997) posits that the applicability of Foucault's writings to the feminist project is primarily due to his analysis of power rooted in historical insights. Foucault's proposition of power as 'productive' challenges early feminist theorizing that primarily understands power as purely repressive. Further, Foucault offers a unique and cutting critique of the dominant forms of political subjectivity, one not articulated by other prominent poststructural thinkers (Barrett, 1991; in Brooks, 1997: 53). This section will discuss two concepts, discourse and power, as core to poststructuralism, and specifically Foucauldian thought. These concepts have come to proliferate in much feminist poststructuralism

scholarship. While Foucault himself never self-identified as a poststructuralist (nor with any particular theoretical tradition, instead preferring to avoid categorical placement altogether), much of his thought has been identified as such by other scholars. In exploring the following Foucauldian concepts as prototypically poststructuralist, I will be primarily using feminist poststructural scholars as secondary sources with which to explicate these concepts and their implications. In doing so, this section will explore how Foucauldian concepts of discourse and power challenge predominant assumptions of neoliberalism. I argue that the concepts discourse and power are foundational to critiquing, challenging, and resisting oppressive and marginalizing social conditions and political structures.

3.2.1 On Discourse

Discourse is a key concept in understanding poststructuralism and Foucauldian thought; as such it has significantly informed feminist poststructuralism. Discursive conditions, such as the dominant meaning and language used to understand homelessness, are also significant to critical literature on homelessness, as has been alluded to in the previous chapter. In my discussion of discourse, I will first explore its definition, and then examine the mutually constitutive relationship of discourse with power relations and structures. Next, I argue that a discursive perspective exposes the dynamics of power in informing social systems and political subjectivity. Most significantly, this discursive perspective also illuminates opportunities for resistance and transformation of unjust power relations and structures. Lastly, a discursive perspective prompts a shift in how responsibility for injustice is conceptualized, which I argue is necessary for promoting structural change.

A discursive approach to understanding the socio-political world radically challenges predominant ways of knowing, as such it is a provocative and complex concept to approach and engage with. Throughout this thesis, I primarily use discourse to refer to the dominant ways of speaking and knowing the world. Susan Gannon and Bronwyn Davies provide the following definition:

> Discourses are complex interconnected webs of being, thinking, and acting. They are in constant flux and often contradictory. They are always located on temporal and spatial axes; thus, they are historically and culturally specific. We are always already constituted within discourse, and discourses operate on and in us simultaneously through constituting desires and modes of reasoning. The concept of discourse is used by post-structural

thinkers to bring language into the material world where what can be understood and
what can be said and done is seen as historically, socially, culturally, and materially
constituted (2012: 12).

Importantly, discourses are intricately tied to power relations. They function as "sets of rules" that vary

across time and place, enabling certain ways of speaking, believing, and acting, while delegitimizing and

even erasing alternatives (Ramazanoglu, 1993: 19). As such, discourses become naturalized such that

first, they become assumed, normalized, ahistorical, and seemingly inevitable; and second, as taken-for-

granted, discourses come to evade critical scrutiny (St. Pierre, 2000: 485).

As much as discourses are nonmaterial, they manifest in the world in material ways, such that

Foucault describes them as having a dimension of "exteriority" (Foucault, 1991: 60). That is, the systems,

structures, and institutions that are often taken to be themselves markers of objective reality, are rather

constituted by discourses that both produce such constructs and then inscribe them with this quality of

'exteriority'. Discourses both produce and reproduce these powerful constructs (Gannon and Davies,

2012: 4). To take an example from Chapter Two, the very discourses that are understood to simply

describe the quality of the homeless, in fact actively stigmatize and marginalize people experiencing

homelessness, thereby naturalizing, entrenching, and reproducing the material conditions of deprivation.

In turn, discourses are responsive to power; thus, the two are mutually constitutive. In poststructural

thought, discourses are not only understood to be in constitutive relation to the structural world, but also

the realms of knowledge and subjectivity. Discourses, as moderated by power relations, shape the

production of truth and legitimate knowledge (Foucault, 1980: 119). Further, discourses function to sculpt

subjectivity by shaping individual thoughts, feelings, desires, and ultimately behaviours (Butler, 1993).

A discursive perspective in research explicates many important political dynamics to language,

thought, and practice. Here, I will outline three that are especially relevant to this thesis. First, discursive

analysis enables insight into the power relations undergirding life, ranging in scale from daily individual

actions to the operations of vast networks and structures. Together, discourse and power are implicated in

political institutions and social structures, thus, an examination of discourse is simultaneously an

investigation of the greater socio-political realm within which it operates (Fraser, 1997: 160). Second, and

relatedly, discourses are also implicated in the formation of individuals as political subjects. While I will

discuss subjectivity in greater detail further in this chapter, it is important to note Foucault's point that

subjects are both products and producers of discourse (Foucault, 1991: 58). Lastly, while discourse and

power together undergird the structure of our socio-political realm, they are nonetheless heterogenous,

self-contradictory, and circumscribed. Foucault explains that "discourse transmits and produces power; it

reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it."

(Foucault, 1978: 101). As such, a discursive perspective is key to any project of social and political

transformation, for discourses contain within themselves the seeds of their own resistance. Even though

these constituted realities are firmly entrenched, discourses are opened up to critique and transformation

in the moment of recognition that they are socially constructed rather than inevitable (Gannon and Davies,

2012). In particular, the poststructural concept of discourse creates an opening for marginalized groups to

challenge the very structures and knowledges that oppress them (St. Pierre, 2000: 481). As a fundamental

element of the socio-political world, discourses are a primary site for the instigation and maintenance of

injustice and oppression, but also resistance, critique, and transformation.

3.2.2 Power

Foucault presented a conceptualization of power that challenged many pre-existing theories of

how modern power exists and operates; this has impacted poststructuralism and feminism alike. Feminist

poststructuralism has adopted a Foucauldian conceptualization of power that understands power and

discourse as intricately and mutually constituting; wherein power is at once constituted by discourse, and

constituting of discourse. Following Clarissa Hayward's definition, power is here conceptualized as

"social boundaries-such as laws, rules, norms, institutional arrangements, and social identities and

exclusions-that constrain and enable action for all actors" (1998: 2). This section will first examine three

key points Foucault presented on the nature of modern power. Foucault conceptualizes power as plural,

productive, and omnipresent. He thus recognizes the profound hold that power has even over the daily

practices of individuals. However, he also allows that power is nonetheless amenable to critique and

resistance. Following this discussion, I recognize that Foucault's conception of power implies important points of caution and limitation to knowledge projects, including my own.

The poststructuralist and feminist poststructuralist conceptualization of power challenges many assumptions built into neoliberal thought. Foucault articulates three key aspects of power that counter these assumptions: power as omnipresent, power as plural, and power as productive. First, Foucault challenges where power is located. For Foucault, power is everywhere. Power is not an object in the sense that it has an origin of location; not can it be possessed or wielded (Ramazanoglu 1993, 20). Rather, power can only be exercised, it is a practice that exists only in relations (Grosz, 1990a: 87).

Second, Foucault understands power in the plural. It does not simply flow in a top-down fashion from a central, authoritative agent, nor does it operate as a singular or uniform force (Brooks, 1997: 57). Rather, power emanates from the ground up, it is non-hierarchical in that it does not simply produce a dichotomy of the powerful and the powerless (Foucault, 1978: 94). Power, as a dynamic and varied force, moves through discourses, subjectivities, and relations in a 'capillary' fashion, it operates at the level of daily practice and speech (Brooks, 1997: 58; Grimshaw, 1993: 54). Foucault draws an important distinction in stating that power is not synonymous with political structures like the state or social structures like the patriarchy (Grosz, 1990a: 88); however, these structures can be the embodiment of power (Foucault, 1978: 93). Foucault thus challenges theories that centre the state and other traditionally powerful agents as the only actors worthy of critique or transformative capabilities (Fraser, 1989: 18). Indeed, Foucault argues for an "ascending analysis of power" to first understand how power operates in subtle, everyday, moments, and then expand the scope of examination to understand how these 'infinitesimal mechanisms' of power are utilised in more sweeping forms of domination in larger realms (Foucault, 1980: 99).

An important facet of Foucault's conception of power as plural is that it underscores the fragility of dominating structures and discourses. While power inevitably exists in all human relationships, it does so as a plurality that is consistent only in being at odds with itself, and thus amenable to critique and deconstruction (Foucault, 1997: 292). While Foucault does not deny the firm entrenchment of powerful

structures and discourses, he nonetheless argues that there is always at least a small degree of room for

resistance to them (Foucault, 1997: 292). As internally contradictory, constantly in flux, and always

unstable, power relations are thus inevitably rife with points of resistance (Foucault, 1978). As Elizabeth

St. Pierre points out, powerful discursive structures rely on strict categories, boundaries, and norms, that

are susceptible to provocation and transgression once made visible as arbitrary constructs (2000: 479).

Thus, what makes certain discursive regimes, such as neoliberalism so powerful, is also what makes them

especially apt for critique and resistance.

The third and final point of Foucault's definition of power, is his challenge that to the

predominant understanding of power as primarily prohibitive. Rather, Foucault contends, power is largely

productive (1980: 119). As a creative force, power produces knowledge and discourse, practices and

subjectivities, while ensuring that its uptake is interpreted as positive, desirable, and even pleasurable

(Foucault, 1980: 119). In effect, power "produces reality" (Foucault, 1995: 194). As such, power cannot

be understood exclusively as a limiting, repressive force that acts *against* us. Rather, power is a

fundamental architect of the very truths, ideals, and behaviours that *forms* us. That power functions as a

primarily productive force has important implications not only for understanding subjectivity, but also for

knowledge.

According to Foucault, power and knowledge operate as entwined forces in the modern era.

Caroline Ramazanoglu concisely captures the nature of this relationship in her summation that "power is

constituted in discourses and it is in discourses … that power lies" (1993: 19). If discourses are

historically and locationally specific frameworks for knowledge, truth, and speech, then discourses are

inherently power-laden (Ramazanoglu, 1993: 19). One way that power operates through discourse is by

legitimizing and condoning certain knowledges and practices, while delegitimizing and marginalizing

others. This discourse/power nexus was especially highlighted in Foucault's examination of scientific and

medical discourses, which asserted certain modes of practice and thought, located authoritative voices and

institutions, while subjugating and othering all else. This dynamic is echoed by critical scholars of

homelessness, who have found that legitimacy on the topic of homelessness is generally accorded to those

powerful voices least proximate to the experience of homelessness itself. Those most marginalized from power, and most knowledgeable about the lived realities of homelessness, are frequently dismissed as valid sources of truth on the topic.

This knowledge/power relationship is particularly consequential for the following two reasons. First, one cannot wholly remove themselves from the influences of power when engaging with knowledge. This is the case in instances of learning and interpreting new knowledge, when discussing and producing new forms of knowledge, and even in efforts to critique existing forms of knowledge. If there is no outside to power, then the task of critiquing, deconstructing and resisting power is itself influenced by power (Butler, 1992: 6-7). Second, the concept of the power/knowledge nexus implies that predominant discourses cannot simply be countered and replaced with more-just, more-accurate discourses. For power influences both the content of knowledge as well as which knowledges gain dominant status (Miller, 2000: 328). Power, rather than ideals of 'truth', moderate which knowledge claims are recognized as authoritative (Miller, 2000: 319). The first point serves as a warning. Intentions of objectivity, benevolence, or even justice will not shield a knowledge project, including this one, from intrusions of power. This point will prove important in my later critiques of certain patronizing prescriptions in the ethics of care scholarship in later chapters. However, in the next section I will explore some of the tools the feminist poststructuralists use to flag and minimize the intrusion of power in knowledge projects. The second point serves as a clear limitation to the invocation of alternative knowledge in political projects aimed at structural and material transformation. As this is in essence the intent of this thesis, I concede this to be a limitation of my own project as well.

3.3 Core Assets of Feminist Poststructuralism

As examined in the previous section, Foucault has largely informed the scholarship of many feminist poststructuralists on the concepts of discourse and power. This section will look at two topics on which feminist poststructuralism has made important expansions on Foucauldian thought by responding to its limitations and critiques. The two topics I examine are the feminist poststructuralist treatment of

knowledge through its particular epistemological stance and its treatment of identity. I focus first on feminist poststructuralist epistemology for its capacity to provide broadly-encompassing systemic theorizing that can nonetheless recognize complexity and difference. Additionally, I advocate feminist poststructuralism that is epistemologically equipped to provide both critique of the status quo and prescriptive directions for changing it. Thus, the strengths of feminist poststructuralism are in its recognition of both systemic patterns and individual differences, and in its centring of both deconstruction and reconstruction. Such a capacity enables feminist poststructuralism to be both highly critical and widely practicable for knowledge projects such as this thesis. Second, I focus on feminist poststructural treatment of identity for the very specific insights it lends to the dualistic construction of 'housed' versus 'unhoused' identities. Such insights prompt critical reflection upon the harmful and stigmatizing understanding of homelessness, and further challenge the myopic conception of the beneficent and deservingly housed against which it is constructed.

3.3.1 Epistemology

Feminist poststructuralists challenge predominant epistemological frameworks[10] that advocate objectivity and neutrality. Such a position, they argue, marginalizes other knowledges and voices by recognizing truth as singular. Feminist poststructuralists argue against sweeping metanarratives that simplify complex historical and sociopolitical phenomenon. However, they do advocate broad systemic

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[10] The dominant epistemological assumptions I speak of here have a complex relationship in informing neoliberalism. This predominant epistemology is informed by an array of theoretical traditions, a detailed discussion of which is far beyond the scope of this thesis. Across feminist poststructuralist literature, this dominant epistemology is identified as informed by a vast array of influences, including liberal humanism (St. Pierre, 2000), the enlightenment (Miller, 2000) and of course, neoliberalism (Davies, 2010). While this thesis generally focuses its critique specifically against neoliberalism, the feminist poststructuralist critiques of this predominant epistemology I explore here do not map perfectly onto a critique of neoliberalism. This is at least in part due to the tensions within neoliberal thought between the epistemological assumptions of Hayek and Freidman (See, Davies and McGoey, 2012). There is a noted ambivalence, and even contradiction, in neoliberal epistemological assumptions regarding the role of authoritative knowledge and the possibility for rational calculations of market behaviour (Davies and McGoey, 2012). Nonetheless, what I will argue here is that neoliberal thought informs and is informed by many of the key assumptions of this predominant epistemology, not least the rationality of individuals and the ideals of objective inquiry. While acknowledging the ambiguity I leave regarding the intellectual influences of this 'dominant epistemological tradition', I nonetheless argue that insights gleaned from the feminist poststructural critique of it are too significant to the following case study to be dismissed.

thinking that can recognize patterns without erasing difference and diversion from the norm. Subjectivity and explicitly political pursuits are accepted in feminist poststructural scholarship which recognizes the values and bias of academics and knowledge-producers. Rather than attempting to erase such influences, scholars of this tradition acknowledge how subjectivity influences their work and attempt to harness such influences toward explicitly political goals. Following Foucault, feminist poststructuralists seek to disrupt these epistemological assumptions that have been uncritically taken up by other scholars (Ramazanoglu, 1993: 4). Binary categorization and dichotomous logic, in particular, are questioned in feminist poststructuralist literature. Susan Hekman argues that these binaries that privilege and marginalize such as subject/object, rational/irrational, man/woman, housed/unhoused cannot be challenged without bringing into question the entirety of the dominant epistemology that enabled them (Hekman, 1990: 48). As such, I argue that feminist poststructuralist epistemology is an abstract, yet foundational aspect of the framework in its relationality to the case study of houselessness in Canada

Dominant epistemological assumptions assert that the subject can objectively stand apart from knowledge, that he can act as impartial observer, autonomous from the socio-political conditions of his time, to rationally survey knowledge and understand what may be claimed as truth (Davies and Peterson, 2005: 52). Foucault sought to problematize the epistemological assumptions that assert logic, reason, and language can objectively capture a universal, value-neutral truth (Brooks, 1997: 64; St. Pierre, 2000: 480). Following Foucault, postmoderns challenged metanarratives that privilege ideals of binary thought and value-neutral research as unnecessarily simplistic tools that diminish complexity of the social political world (Hekman, 1990: 4). They questioned whether these epistemological ideals of rationality that knowledge can and should be formed in abstraction from the social-political conditions informing the observer (Hekman, 1990: 30). Counter to this dominant epistemology, Foucault argues that power and knowledge are mutually implicated: "that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1995: 27). In this sense, knowledge cannot be claimed to be absent of social, political, historical influences (Pierre, 2000: 496). Subsequent thinkers following Foucault understood

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objective, abstracted knowledge as a fallacy; "and that the very distinction between scientific and other ways of knowing (typically discredited as prejudice, ignorance, and myth) is itself a discursive strategy meant to legitimate the perspective of society's dominant groups at the expense of the marginalized" (Miller, 2000: 319). This veil of objectivity allows power to masquerade as value-free fact, to circumvent critique as a political practice because it is assumed to be an indisputable truth (Grosz, 1990a: 83). Against critics who argue that the pursuit of absolute truth is key to emancipatory goals, Miller asserts that what knowledge gains the status of 'truth' is not related to its content so much as the power relations it aligns with (2000: 328).

For Foucault, the dominance of present epistemological assumptions does not reflect the transcendence of human thought, but rather just one knowledge era among many that is particular to its given time and place within history (Foucault, 1983: 205). Reason itself is understood as a social and historically specific product, not a universal (St. Pierre, 2000: 487). As such, a Foucauldian epistemology is built from his idea that knowledge and power are mutually implicated (Hekman 1990: 176). Feminist poststructuralists follow Foucault on this, finding that a concept of discourse prompts a skepticism of any knowledge claiming an objective grasp on reality, because reality is constituted according to knowledge, not the other way around (Gannon and Davies, 2012: 12). The individual cannot be positioned as an objective observer of this world because they, too, are implicated in the discursive relations that constitute it (Gannon and Davies, 2012: 12). Hekman argues for the acknowledgement of many potential truths, while in practice only one is privileged according to its relationality to power (1990: 9).

Feminist poststructuralists such as Nancy Fraser question 'ahistorical metanarratives' that posit grand overarching truths while paying little attention to historical and regionally specificities; at the same time she does seek to make claims of certain social structures, specific to time and place (Brooks, 1997: 54; Fraser and Nicholson, 1988). Fraser is cognisant of the dangers of 'grand theorizing' as articulated by postmoderns, but ultimately argues we must be able create knowledge that encompasses large historical, social, and political patterns (Fraser et al., 2004: 381). She accepts postmodern thought and deconstructive practices that are skeptical of metanarratives and totalizing thought, but not to the extent

that they forgo attempts to comprehend macro power operations in oppressive systems and make normatively-informed suggestions to address them (Fraser, 1997: 5). As such, feminist poststructuralism is attuned to differences and complexities while dubious of sweeping generalizations. It is nonetheless capable of positing important patterns and structures undergirding in the socio-political world. This balance, I argue, is important for theorizing widespread injustices, while also recommending and implementing practical actions that must accommodate the diversity of ways that these injustices manifest to marginalize individuals.

While feminist poststructuralist approaches to knowledge are certainly informed by Foucault's thought, there are three important ways that this framework has diverged from or built upon Foucauldian epistemological insight. First, feminist poststructuralism has taken Foucault's thought on resistance and expanded upon it such that it is a central focus in much of their scholarship. Foucault's critics have argued that his position is defeatist and disempowering because it postulates an infinitely dominating knowledge/power nexus (see for example, Benhabib, 1995). In response to these critiques, Hekman argues that Foucault's thought disturbs political complacency through his disruption of the assumed and the denaturalization of the status quo (1990: 176-178). Implicit in Foucault's writing in that more just socio-political conditions are possible. While Foucault certainly notes the potential for resistance to the knowledge/power nexus, feminist poststructuralists have made resistance and structural transformation central in their research. This has been especially prominent in their approach to discourse and knowledge, as well as in their work on subjectivity and agency, which will be explored in the final section of this chapter. Second, other critics (see, Fraser, 1989) have argued that Foucault fails to take a normative stance in his work. Further, that his position on the knowledge/power nexus discourages such a stance given the inevitable corruption of power on prescriptive ideals (Benhabib, 1995). Feminist poststructuralists, in light of these shortcomings, have worked to provide normative evaluations and suggestions, while simultaneously subjecting their own thought to the very same critical standards they apply to other scholarship. Third, feminist poststructuralists actively elevate the voices and knowledges that are otherwise marginalized in dominant discourses. Caroline Ramazanoglu, for example, argues

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Foucault's refutation of traditional epistemological assumptions on singular truth are significant, however he does not do enough to make space for experiences and knowledges marginalized by these assumptions (1993). In contrast, feminist poststructuralists have actively validated knowledges voiced by marginalized populations, and centred theses experiences and insights in their research endeavours. I use insights from the feminist poststructural epistemological framework not only for guiding the design of this thesis, but also for examining and critiquing the claims of neoliberalism and ethics of care scholars in their understanding and treatment of homelessness. I argue that these insights from feminist poststructural scholars make their literature more applicable to the political project foundational to this thesis, as will be explored in further detail in Chapter Five.

3.3.2 Identity

Identity is an important concept to feminist poststructural theorizing, and takes much from Foucault's ideas of discourse, power, and deconstruction. Identity is understood to be socially constructed, not unlike other discourses. As such, identity is a product of context in that it is socially and historically informed (Fraser, 1997: 152). The concept of identity is therefore always practically plural in that one individual may hold numerous intersecting identities in practice, and that each categorical strand of identity is heterogenous and multifaceted (Fraser, 1997: 152) Foucault's concepts of discourse and power shed light on the social construction of collective identity and how such groups organize to navigate, disrupt, and transform the political realm (Fraser, 1997: 153). While identities are socially constituted, they nonetheless influence individual experience of the world, and in turn, how the world interacts with the individual; that is, identity is a social construct that manifests in concrete realities. Thus, identity is a key concept for political understanding and action. For example, while feminism has long struggled to define and distinguish the differences between women and men; feminist poststructuralism, following Foucault's lead, disrupts these binaries altogether (Davies and Gannon, 2011: 312). Foucault's thought has encouraged the complication of essentializing and universalizing identity categories that disregard important differences within identity groups (Brooks, 1997: 58). I argue that the challenges to

ideas of sex and gender posed by feminist poststructuralism is highly instructive to broader questions of identity and difference, including regarding the binaries of housed/unhoused.

Nancy Fraser (1997), especially, provides illuminating direction on avoiding the pitfalls of an essentialism that minimizes differences, an anti-essentialism that is skeptical of identity altogether, and an uncritically neutral acceptance of all identity categories. In doing so, Fraser (1997) seeks to ground these tensions within an overarching question of justice by reconnecting the social politics of identity representation and interpretation to the material considerations of political-economic inequality. In doing so, Fraser advocates a practical theoretical stance that balances a deconstructive critique of existing discourse and structures with an allowance for modest, fallibilistic ontological and normative positions necessary for any social justice project (see, Fraser and Nicholson, 1988).

This balancing of deconstruction and reconstruction, as well as critical analysis and practicable political tools, is what makes feminist poststructuralism an apt theoretical device with which to approach the complex topic of homelessness. Such a position prompts acknowledgment of important differences in identity that require attentiveness and recognition for socially just projects (Fraser and Nicholson, 1988: 386). Furthermore, such identity differences are resources in alternative knowledge and experiences, which are practically important for political advocacy that both disrupts the status quo and forwards more-just alternatives (Fraser, 2012: 50). Feminist poststructuralism can at once posit and critique the socially constructed nature of the 'homeless identity', allow for the vast diversities in experiences and intersecting identities of those actually experiencing homelessness, and root such an analysis in an overarching project that both dismantles the unjust systems that marginalize people experiencing homelessness through stigmatizing narratives and material political-economic structures. Feminist poststructuralism can understand identity differences not as a threat to a categorical coherence necessary for a unified political project (Miller, 2000: 340), but rather as a source of alternative politicking, of "emergent possibilities within the multiplicities of being and knowing" (Davies, 2010: 59). Importantly, feminist poststructuralists do not only examine and centre differences in 'othered' identities, they also critically deconstruct assumptions about the 'self'. To rethink the status of the 'self' is imperative to

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challenging ethical standards that privilege the dominant identity, that marginalize difference, and that individualize the structurally produced problems faced by the other. Ultimately, I argue that the oppression of the other cannot be resisted without also confronting the complicity of the self in maintaining and benefiting from the systems that oppress the other.

The feminist poststructuralist treatment of epistemology and identity illustrates the ability of the framework to theoretically approach the socio-political world with nuance often missed by other frameworks. I specifically highly its approach to epistemology and identity as important ways that feminist poststructuralism prompt a rethinking of how predominant, neoliberal ways conceptualize homelessness. Specifically, a feminist poststructural epistemological stance understands difference and complexity, while still allowing for large, patterned theorizing, as well as the uptake of normative and advocative stances. Through its conceptualization of the knowledge/power nexus, feminist poststructuralism can critique the status quo, actively agitate against it, and still maintain a reflexive position against its own activism and thought. Importantly, a feminist poststructuralist epistemological stance challenges the powerful hold that dominant discourses have on claims to 'truth', such that marginalized knowledges and voices have space that was previously denied to them. On the topic of identity, feminist poststructuralism provides an understanding of this concept as a malleable, complex social construct, while still recognizing that it has real, lived, material affects on the lives of individuals. Feminist poststructuralism challenges the hierarchical binaries of self/other, man/woman, housed/unhoused by exposing their relationality to power and unearthing otherwise unexamined assumptions undergirding them. Thus, feminist poststructuralism, through its insights on epistemology and identity, provide significant avenues through which the marginalization of unhoused persons can be examined and challenged. The next section will examine how feminist poststructuralism, through its deconstructive tools and approach to subjectivity, prompts practical resistance to predominant, neoliberal ways of treating homelessness.

3.4 Feminist Poststructuralism in Practice

Deconstruction and the discursive subject are two important concepts from the feminist poststructuralist tradition for the discursive resistance and reshaping of power relations. Both concepts acknowledge the potency of dominant discourses through the hold they have over imagination, speech, and behavior. Thus, I argue that both may be employed as tools to highlight the force of dominant discourses over individual lives, and in this way imply an important degree of understanding and even compassion for the struggles of persons caught within these discursive confines. At the same time, because discourses are constituted and maintained collectively, the acknowledgement of such also implies an important shared responsibility to deconstruct the assumptions and power relations that undergird them. Both deconstruction and the discursive subject show that in significant ways discourse, and hence the social and political structures built upon them, can be challenged and changed. Despite the entrenchment of power in dominant discourses and subjectivities, feminist poststructuralism shows how, through the use of these tools, individual and community agency may be discerned.

3.4.1 Deconstruction

Deconstruction as an analytical tool is employed across poststructuralist thought. The intent of deconstructive analysis is to examine and disrupt predominant discourses: the practices and knowledges so ingrained in the status quo that they are assumed, taken for granted and naturalized. Deconstruction may be most strongly associated with Jacques Derrida's scholarship. However, Foucault's writing too, is located within the deconstructive project given his predilection to examine the contractions of the everyday and assumed as clues to unearthing new and marginalized ways of knowing and being (Grimshaw, 1993: 64). The intention of deconstruction is to highlight the power relations undergirding dominant discourses, to seek the contradictions and paradoxes within established truth and practice, to destabilize the hold of powerful discourses over imagination and action, and to challenge their status as natural, inevitable, and permanent (Davies and Gannon, 2011: 314). Binary logic is especially fallible to deconstructive analysis that troubles simple dualisms of man/woman, housed/unhoused,

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deserving/undeserving. Critique of this sort serves to dismantle the hierarchies built into identity

categories, and open space for complexity and nuance in its stead (Davies and Gannon, 2011: 312;

Gannon and Davies, 2012: 16). While feminist poststructuralism often critiques categories when

employed as rigid and simplistic containers of truth, many scholars of this tradition continue to use

categories, such as woman/man, and unhoused/housed, but with the acknowledgement of the complexities

of such categories, and the recognition of the many possible existences outside them (Gannon and Davies,

2012: 5).

While deconstruction focuses primarily on immaterial practices, structures, and language usage, it

is important to recall that such discursive formations do have very material manifestations (St. Pierre,

2000: 481). As such, deconstruction can be a practice vested in the active transformation of the social

political world. Indeed, for Foucault, radical change of the sort he advocated is predicated on this very

form of critique (2000a: 457). Similarly, Nancy Fraser finds that any effort to discern a positive

conceptualization of justice is contingent on first deconstructing the instances of injustice we wish to

rectify (2012: 50). She further argues that an attempt at change that does not initially involve

deconstruction will simply leave the underlying conditions for injustice intact, thereby rendering futile

subsequent attempts toward structural transformation (Fraser, 1997: 24). Thus, for feminist

poststructuralism, deconstruction is a primary step in social transformation because in interrogating the

status quo, and in subjecting assumption to critique, its dominant position is destabilized (Miller, 2000:

322). Deconstruction of the old makes room for previously marginalized thought, alternative practices,

and the space to reenvision and rebuild according to critical frameworks of justice (St. Pierre, 2000: 482).

For feminist poststructuralists, the deconstructive task continues long after critique of the status quo is

complete. Deconstruction is an ongoing process not only of dominant discourses, but also of that which

follows. Thus, continual deconstruction does not prevent action, but it does place all practices, including

those with benign intentions, under critical scrutiny. As such, ongoing critique and reflection of one's

own potential complicity in acts of injustice are necessary components of deconstruction within feminist

poststructuralism. However, such a process is often partial and messy, because one can never be outside

the power relations that one wishes to critique, and thus deconstruction of such structures is always and simultaneously a critique of the 'self'; its identity, thought, and practice (Davies et al., 2006: 90). Thus, deconstruction is not only a tool meant for employment against external discourses, but also, and significantly, for the discourses that inform one's own subjectivity.

3.4.2 A Feminist Poststructuralist Subjectivity

Following deconstruction, the second key implement of resistance is the feminist poststructuralist conceptualization of the discursive subject. I argue that a feminist poststructuralist subjectivity is a bulwark against judgement, scorn, and stigma. This conceptualization of the subject as discursively produced allows for a more understanding, even compassionate perspective on the lives of others, given the restrictive force of powerful discourses and structures over personal opportunities, choices, and behaviors. Such a position is important for challenging stigma, but also highly individualized models of blame and responsibility used against marginalized populations, including those experiencing homelessness.

At the same time that individualized responsibility is challenged by the feminist poststructuralist subject, personal agency, too, is reclaimed from the individualized model asserted by neoliberals. For feminist poststructuralists, agency is as much a collective endeavour as it is a personal one. This final section will examine how the feminist poststructuralist understandings of social connection, responsibility, and agency, as illustrated through the conceptualization of the discursive subject, may inform efforts are resisting oppression and transforming the systems that perpetuate these injustices.

The Neoliberal Subject

Neoliberalism is frequently cited in poststructuralist and feminist poststructuralist work, as well as critical scholarship on homelessness, as a powerful operative discourse on the formation of individual subjectivities (for example, Davies and Petersen, 2005; Lyon-Callo 2004). Within neoliberal frameworks, the subject is posited in very specific, and arguably limiting ways. This subject is defined by an ideal of 'hyper-individualism', wherein the subject is "singular, self-contained", rational, and responsible for both individual actions and outcomes (Davies, 2010: 54). This subject is given rather than constituted, a

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sovereign unto himself, autonomous and self-determined, rather than an embedded social product of the discourses around him (Brooks, 1997). The neoliberal subject is posited to exist and operate outside of the world within he is embedded, siloed from social influence, in possession of full direction over himself, his identity and destiny; he is ahistorical, self-originating, and self-determined (Davies et al., 2006: 88-89; Davies and Gannon, 2011: 312). Within this dominant mode of subjectivity, the agency of the individual is central. As an individual separate from its social world, the neoliberal subject may observe, account for, and ultimately control its environment (St. Pierre 2000: 500). Within this framework, domination and dependency are juxtaposed to agency. Freedom from domination is achieved by enacting autonomy as individuated, rational agents (St. Pierre, 2000: 489).

This neoliberal conceptualization of subjectivity has been commonly critiqued as highly masculinist; its emphasis on autonomy, will, control, and objectivity marginalizes much of the social and political experiences of women, as well as other subjugated groups (Gannon and Davies, 2012: 9). Rather than emphasising individualism and autonomy, many alternative descriptions of subjecthood illustrate the centrality of dependency and interconnection in life (Hekman, 1990: 55). Feminist poststructuralists have argued that the strict inscription of dominant subjectivity, such as that defined by neoliberalism, erases difference and alternatives in experience and possibility (Hekman, 1992: 1115). As such, Feminist poststructuralists argue that the subject is not as independent, autonomous, or free as assumed by neoliberal thought. It is constrained in its freedom of thought and action by the focus on the individual as the primary agent and 'others' as his competitor for scarce resources, and by its social and material vulnerability in this neoliberal era of survivalism and competition (Davies, 2010: 65). As understood through this critique, the neoliberal subject is thereby less agentic, less free, and less capable of original thought. For while this neoliberal subject may have some choice, his choice is restricted to the highly circumscribed options presented to him, bound by the limits of acceptability in this neoliberal framework (Davies, 2010: 67).

Against this neoliberal conceptualization, Foucault's challenges the neoliberal subject that is autonomous, independent, free, and self-determining. In opposing this dominant subjectivity; Foucault

instead asserts that individual subjectivity is discursively constituted (Grimshaw, 1993: 13). Foucault's strongest argument against the neoliberal subject is that the imposition of ideals of freedom, in fact limits actual autonomy of this subject. He argued that the ideal of the autonomous and free subject is a highly oppressive doctrine that obfuscates the limitations in thought and action imposed on individuals by neoliberalism (Hekman, 1990: 82). For Foucault, the subject that believes himself to be inherently free, autonomous, and agentic, is in fact limited in agency by these discourses of neoliberal subjectivity (Davies, 2010: 58). Such discourses obscure the social constitution of the subject, and thus limit their ability to understand, critique, and resist the discourses and powers that limit them.

Foucault's Subject

For Foucault, subjects, like objects, are constituted through powerful discourses, they are social-historical products (Brooks, 1997: 63; Hekman, 1990: 68-69). While many social theories make claims regarding a particular human nature or fixed traits related to an essential quality of a population, Foucault articulates a subject that is plural in its multiple identities, and ever transforming as a product of discourses constantly in flux (Ramazanoglu, 1993). For Foucault's constituted subject, agency is claimed through the critique of the discourses and power that constitutes them (Davies, 2010: 58). To resist power and oppression, the Foucauldian subject does not challenge such phenomena directly, but rather questions how they influence and inform its subjectification (Brooks, 1997: 62). As such, Foucault asks how certain subjectivities gain predominance, and how they might transform over time (Foucault, 1997: 87).

Foucault provides important insights into the formation of subjectivity under the influences of modern power. Modern power is distinguished from earlier forms of power by its subtler use of force, wherein power is so pervasive in the institutions, discourses, and subjectivities of individuals, that actual coercion is not a primary tool of power because subjects are socialized to monitor and discipline one another as well as themselves (Fraser, 1989: 24). Foucault (1995) finds that disciplinary mechanisms, practices, and discourses pervade society, such that one feels themselves to be under constant surveillance, and thus constantly disciplines their actions, thoughts, and language accordingly. In this way modern power, as a productive force, creates and informs individual subjectivities such that modes of

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practice and being that align with predominant discourses are understood as natural and ideal, and are thus taken up voluntarily, producing both pleasure and legitimacy for the individual by doing so (Davies and Gannon, 2011: 312). For Foucault, this is power operating at its most granular; subjecting individuals through small but pervasive everyday practices, so minor that the subjected individual nonetheless becomes attached to the identity accorded to them (2000b: 331). Foucault further establishes that subjectivity and power are mutually constitutive, where the individual, as an "effect of power", then too becomes "the element of its articulation" (1980: 98).

Foucault termed the "project of desubjectification" (Foucault and Trombadori, 2000: 241) the process whereby an individual may reflect on their selfhood critically, to deconstruct the predominant discourses that constitute their subjectivity and social world, to consider that which is outside of this purview and become open to new and different thought and behaviour (Davies, 2010: 58). In essence, this 'project of desubjectification' is a radically different form of agency compared to that which has been assumed by neoliberals. Instead, Foucault argued that critical thought on behalf of the subject may enable creative capacities for change within the subject; for ". . . as soon as people begin to have trouble thinking things the way they have been thought, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult, and entirely possible" (Foucault, 2000a: 457). As such, freedom, agency, and the capacity for change, to Foucault, is attained by detaching oneself from the dominant discourses through which the self is constituted and looking critically upon those very ideas that inform this subjectivity (Foucault; in Rabinow, 1997: xxxv). Such a process entails that the subject conscientiously defamiliarize what is assumed about themselves and their surroundings, enough to be able to gaze upon it discerningly (Grimshaw, 1993). In this way, the subject may enact some freedom and autonomy from the discourses that otherwise constitute its thought and practice, and further reclaim a degree of agency by operating outside of these previously set boundaries.

There are two important critiques of the Foucauldian subject worth examining. First, critics of Foucault claim that his constituted subject as merely a pre-determined construct of the given social order, and thus 'impotent', passive and non-agentic (Brooks, 1997: 53; Hekman 1990: 80-81). Following this

line of critique Jean Grimshaw asks, if Foucault's subject is so constituted by power, how might this subject resist the forces that constrain it (1993: 54)? Against these critics, feminist poststructuralists have argued that resistance to domination is made possible by the very contentious, imperfect, heterogenous nature of discourses that inform the constituted subject (Brooks, 1997: 64; Weedon, 1987: 125). Recall, Foucault's conception of power as heterogenous, non-totalising, and constantly in tension, allows that such relations are constantly in motion, 'unstable', and thus always amenable to critique and resistance (Grimshaw, 1993: 54). No discourse, however potent or predominant, operates as a perfect totality, nor can it fully subsume all other knowledge or practices. Foucault thus finds potential for resistance to power in the paradoxes and tensions of discourse, as well as within the alternative knowledges that have been obscured. Foucault's subject is both constituted by powerful discourses, and capable of resisting them; his subject thus opposes power by challenging the discursive terms of its subjectivity, and enacting practices counter to them (Hekman, 1992: 1119). For Susan Hekman, the critique of Foucault's subject as passive is reliant on a false dichotomy between wholly agentic constituting subject, and an entirely determined, and therefor passive constituted subject (1992: 1099). Against this, Hekman (1990) argues that Foucault effectively challenges the modernist dichotomy of the self-constituting, agentic subject, versus the socially-constituted, passive object.

A second important critique of Foucault's subject is articulated by Jean Grimshaw (1993). She argues that while Foucault's subject is socially constituted, it is nonetheless insufficiently positioned within greater goals and ideals, and principles of morality rooted in "mutuality and collectivity" that transcends the interests of individual (Grimshaw, 1993: 68). As Grimshaw explains, this problem is one that plagues feminist thought as well, the "problem of how to realise ideals of community and mutuality while preserving the forms of autonomy, individuality and care for self without which ideals of community and mutuality can sometimes be as coercive and constraining as those forms of individualism they have wished to replace" (1993: 69). While Foucault's own thought serves as an effective rebuttal to the first critique of his subject as passive, I turn to feminist poststructuralism to articulate a discursive subject that is connected to community without being subsumed by it.

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Discursive Subject

Susan Hekman, following Foucault's conceptualization of the subject, terms the subject that is both constituted and creative the 'discursive subject' (1992). Categorizing Hekman's thought within the feminist poststructuralist tradition, I too, use the 'discursive subject' to point to conceptualizations of subjectivity within this framework. Within feminist poststructuralism, agency of the constituted-subject is limited in some respects as a subject that is neither entirely independent nor self-determined. At the same time, drawing attention to the socially constituted nature of individual subjectivity and a shared social-political world brings forth insights on resistance and more collective forms of agency and capacity for change. Transformation, as well as the freedom and capacity to enact it, are enabled, first, through the acknowledgment of subjectivity and structure as contingent, rather than immutable, inevitable, or natural (Davies and Gannon, 2011: 313). As such, discursive constitution may foreclose neoliberal conceptualizations of agency and determination, but it opens up many others.

Feminist poststructuralists posit a 'radically conditioned' agency (Butler, 1997: 15). Wherein the subject is at once limited by the power relations that constitute them, and simultaneously open to resistance and transformation through critical engagement with the inconsistencies of these very same power relations (Gannon and Davies, 2012: 7). Thus, for Judith Butler, "the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency" (1992: 12). Encountering new thought, practice, and ways of being, and allowing oneself to be challenged by such difference, may allow the subject's determination by relations other than predominant powerful discourses and to "eclipse the conditions of its own emergence" (Butler, 1997: 14). Hekman, too, argues that a constituted subject is not without agency, indeed, the constituted subject resists power by recognizing and employing contradictions and deviations in pre-existing discourses (1992: 1114). "Ultimately," she contends, "both resistance and creativity can come from nowhere else but the multiplicity of discursive resources that we possess" (Hekman, 1992: 1117). This 'multiplicity of discursive resources' is, importantly, a product of the thought and resistance efforts of diverse individuals over time and throughout communities. The reference list at the end of this thesis, citing the intellectual labours of dozens of scholars, is perhaps among the strongest examples of

how individual efforts at critique and resistance are dependent on the work of various communities of others. In turn, this singular work may feed back into and inform further efforts of other individuals and communities seeking to challenge and transform predominant ways of conceptualizing and treating homelessness in Canada. While only briefly treated here, these themes of connection and community figure prominently in discussions in the following two chapters.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that feminist poststructuralism is a key theoretical framework with which to challenge unjust socio-political discourses and structures. Feminist poststructuralism is apt in theorizing how power undergirds social and political relations, but also how this entrenchment of power may be resisted. Feminist poststructuralism advocates ongoing critique and self-reflexivity, while allowing for the normative stances and advocacy. Thus, I find that feminist poststructuralism is a highly critical and reasonably practical tool with which to address real-world concerns. This chapter began by introducing two key Foucauldian concepts, discourse and power. Together, these concepts illustrate both the contingency of social and political systems, and thus the potential for resistance and transformation of these systems. Next, these concepts were further explored in how they inform feminist poststructuralism. Specifically, this chapter examined how a feminist poststructuralist understanding of epistemology and identity enables important theoretical challenges to neoliberalism while producing key systemic insights relevant to resisting stigmatizing and unjust treatment of unhoused populations. Finally, this chapter assessed the feminist poststructuralist use of deconstruction and the discursive subject as tools with which to practically instigate transformative change to unjust structures that marginalize unhoused persons. However, after exposing undergirding power relations and opening discursive space, feminist poststructuralists often leave unanswered the question of what ought to follow in this place. Importantly, feminist poststructuralism makes important allusions to considerations of connection and community, it further disrupts neoliberal formulations of individualized accountability and responsibility. In the following chapter I look to the ethics of care to supplement feminist poststructuralisms' openings and

insights on these questions. In the final chapter, I then bring the two frameworks together to argue for an approach to structural injustices, such as homelessness, that centre interpersonal connection and a shared sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of one another given mutual engagement in shared systems.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ETHICS OF CARE

4.1 Introduction

As a theoretical framework, the ethics of care is highly compatible with feminist poststructuralism in its challenge to neoliberal assumptions and values. Where feminist poststructuralism leaves gaps, the ethics of care provides highly normative, practical, and accessible ideals with which to guide and assess social and political justice initiatives. At its essence, the ethics of care advocates concern for the wellbeing of others as a responsibility necessitated by the interconnectivity of all human beings. Because human life and society are inevitably dependent on connectivity and care, this framework centres the theory and practice of care in the social and political realms. Unlike predominant neoliberal thought that begins with the assumption of individual autonomy, the ethics of care starts from the assertion of mutual dependence and social connectivity. The ethics of care framework ultimately promotes care acts between parties as an overall normative good that benefits individuals, relationships, and the community, given the greater interdependence of personal livelihoods and fates.

In this chapter, I will first explore how the ethics of care challenges neoliberal thought on the autonomy of the individual, and how this informs conceptualizations of duty and obligation. I will argue that this emphasis on interdependency and interconnectivity is a primary strength of the ethics of care scholarship. Because the ethics of care conceptualizes humans as connected rather than autonomous, it advocates for a broader understanding of responsibility than does neoliberalism. This, I argue, is another key strength of ethics of care scholarship; it challenges the expectation implicit in human rights frameworks that those who are experiencing oppression are also meant to be the primary advocates for change. Rather than focusing exclusively on the claims of individuals and groups who are denied rights, the ethics of care holds society's most powerful as responsible for ensuring the rights of marginalized persons are met. Thus, while the ethics of care is often understood to be a framework only applicable to relationships at the micro-scale: the home, family, and small networks; I argue alongside many of its

proponents that important takeaways from ethics of care can inform radical changes to macro level social structures and political policy.

However, the ethics of care also has certain pitfalls that must be addressed. At the end of the chapter, I explore two primary problems within the ethics of care literature. First, it tends to portray certain individual traits as universals inherent to human nature and care. Second, some scholarship in this tradition has advocated patronizing, and even coercive practices, under the guise of care. Both problems within this literature, I argue, stem from a failure to recognize and attend to differences in the experiences and needs of others. In pointing to these oversights, I do not advocate that the ethics of care framework be entirely dismissed. Rather, I advance my primary argument that the ethics of care scholarship be complimented by the critical insights from feminist poststructuralists. Together, I find that these frameworks present a formidable challenge to the limiting and stigmatizing discourses that inform treatment of homelessness in Canada, and make important suggestions to how related social practices and policy can be transformed in alignment with ideals of connection and shared responsibility.

4.2 The Ethics of Care: A Critique of Neoliberalism

The ethics of care literature challenges two primary assumptions of neoliberal theory. First, this framework posits that humans are far more dependent on and connected to one another and than neoliberal assumptions of autonomy entail. Second, given this understanding of interpersonal connection and dependency, the ethics of care thus posits a radically different framework for social and political organization based on care and attentiveness to the wellbeing of others.

Within neoliberal thought, the autonomy, self-sufficiency, and independence of the person is presented as both a fact of human nature, and the normative ideal guiding personal maturation and moral reasoning. Carol Gilligan has explored the way that detachment from social and familial connections has become the signifier of moral development in youth (2003). This detachment, she argues, is a highly gendered and exclusionary trajectory of development that privileges the outcomes of masculinized socialization (separation and independence) and denigrates the outcomes of femininized socialization

(connectivity and interdependence) (Gilligan, 2003: 17). As Nancy Hirschmann explores, the ideal of autonomy relies on the assumption of the individual as 'an isolated entity' whose existence is understood outside of its social ties and relationships (2018: 5). The development and actions of the free, autonomous individual is not contextualized within community, but rather is 'at odds' with it (Hirschmann, 2018: 9). Neoliberalism, in proposing a self-actualizing, rational, autonomous being, effectively erases the historical and cultural influences, political structures, and relationships that ethics of cares and feminist poststructuralism argue are formative in the development of personhood and subjectivity. In neglecting the ways that the individual is informed by forces outside of itself, neoliberalism, too, obscures the way that individual speech and actions, in turn, affect the social and political world external to it.

Adjacent to the ideal of the individual removed from social connectivity, neoliberalism understands human behaviour and systems as animated primarily by market logic. Rationality, as informed by market logic, is understood as the best means to uncovering objective truths (Held, 2006: 11). Neoliberalism juxtaposes and elevates this logic and rationality against emotional and relational thought (Lynch et al., 2021: 59). Such an exclusionary view of human motivation serves to abstract emotion and social consequences from moral and political reasoning. Neoliberalism thereby reduces moral reasoning to abstract calculations of rule, logic, fairness and equality that oftentimes prioritize process over outcome. In opposition, ethics of care scholars such as Carol Gilligan have argued that such logic is inadequate in capturing the complexities of human behaviour and meaning, and frequently simplifies complex circumstances and moral dilemmas into mere 'mathematic equations' (2003: 37). Market logic and the presumption of rational self-interest may enable certain insights, but ultimately limits acknowledgement of the manifold other dimensions of thought informing the socio-political world.

Against neoliberal ideals of autonomy and self-interested rationality, ethics of care scholars argue that personhood, is, and ought to be, developed in the context of connection (Tronto, 1995: 142). While some degree of autonomy may be attained in adulthood, neoliberalism obscures the way this developmental outcome is contingent on caring relationships and structures. Autonomy at its fullest actualization is still partial and precarious; old age, disability, illness, and a myriad of other factors will

necessarily impinge on personal independence (Kittay, 2011). The extent to which autonomy is attained is dependent on early childhood, if not ongoing care acts preformed by others; however the idealization of autonomy often renders invisible these care acts and the persons who provide them (Held, 2006: 14). Care acts are both socially necessary for the development of autonomy *and* socially undervalued because they complicate the ideal of autonomy by proving the contingency of independence on interdependence (Gilligan, 1995). Thus, a paradox exists, where care is necessary for the wellbeing of individuals and the maintenance of society, but it is also undervalued as a personal trait and a public good.

Ethics of care scholars have additionally noted that individual autonomy is not only an ontological assumption of neoliberalism, but also a normative ideal in political theory and moral thought (Lynch et al., 2021: 59). Such an oversight further lends to the neoliberal neglect of the realities of human dependency (Kittay, 2020: 206), enabling its disregard for the care-based needs of persons and the value of care-giving itself (Kittay, 2011: 51). Counter to neoliberal theory, ethics of care scholars thus posit that autonomy is only present insofar as it is contingent on care, and thus they centre these facets of human relationships in their conceptualization of social life and the basic structures of society.

Given the ontological assumption and normative ideal of the disconnected individual, neoliberalism prescribes a framework of justice that seeks to preserve the independence and autonomy of the person. Virginia Held identifies various aspects of this dominant justice paradigm, notably an assumption of public life as the realm of equal, rational, egoistic individuals with competing interests, whose conflicting rights can be neutrally assessed and treated (2006). This position places emphasis on the fairness and consistency of rules and procedure, abstracted of context in favor of objective, universal application (Held, 2006). Important to neoliberal conceptions of justice is the underlying contingency of individual equality and fairness on notions of desert. Within a neoliberal justice framework, the individual is required to prove themselves as a contributing member of society to be considered deserving of equal and fair treatment in the public realm. Critics from the ethics of care tradition argue against that this neoliberal notion of desert restricts understandings of social value to economic contribution, and thus oppose this framework as highly exclusionary (Kittay, 2020: 208; Tronto, 1995: 146).

Given the presumption and ideal of personal autonomy, the central political right for neoliberals is the freedom to pursue their self-determined interests without the interference of other individuals or the state (Hirschmann, 2018). Thus, pivotal to neoliberal thought, is the responsibility of individuals as well as the state to refrain from interfering in the lives of autonomous individuals. However, this expectation of autonomy and responsibility of non-interference fundamentally restricts the possibility of other rights and responsibilities within neoliberal thought. In other words, because 'my' relationality to others is limited, so too, is 'my' political responsibilities to them (Hirschmann, 2018). Once again, marginalized individuals whose experiences do not align with the norm of autonomy, also find that neoliberalism fails to account for the ways interpersonal connection, interdependence, and responsibility informs their relations with others and their communities (Hirschmann, 2018). Indeed, the recognition of these responsibilities, counter to neoliberalism's emphasis on non-interference, is necessary to the maintenance of individuals and society. In the following sections, I explore how an ontological position of human connectivity, as posited in the ethics of care scholarship, challenges neoliberal ideals of autonomy and non-interference.

4.3 Core Assumptions of the Ethics of Care

In contrast to neoliberal conceptualizations, ethics of care scholars understand human relationships as fundamental to individual development, social and political structural integrity, as well as questions of ethics and justice. Ontologically, the ethics of care literature understands social connectivity and interdependence as central to individual life and political organization. This section will first outline how the ethics of care conceptualizes interpersonal and community connection, and the role connection plays in informing how social and political life ought to be organized. Following this, I will explore how the centralization of connection informs ethical reflection and the practical assessment of political relations. Counter to neoliberal ideals, objectivity and value-neutrality do not figure prominently in this framework of thought. The ethics of care centres social relationships and influences, rather than removing them from political processes and ethical reflections. Connectivity is understood as both an inevitability

and a normative good that is generally obscured by dominant neoliberal thought. If neoliberalism forwards a notion of humans as rational, egoistic, and self-interested, a care-centred approach recognizes how emotions and relationships with others can inform individual interests and world views in ways that are both rational and normatively ideal (Lynch et al., 2021). Moral dilemmas, political conflict, and questions of justice require more than rational calculations for fairness of process and equality in treatment.

4.3.1 Connection

In opposition to neoliberalism, the ethics of care posits that humans are deeply and broadly interconnected, and that centring these relationships in moral and political thought is a normative good[11]. Rather than autonomous, singular, self-sufficient units, humans are understood as beings inherently dependent on one another (Kittay, 2011, 2020). While degrees of individual autonomy are certainly possible, the development of such is dpendent on nurturing and caring relationships (Held, 2006: 14; Hirschmann, 2018: 8). The ethics of care takes the interdependence of human life as empirical fact, and thus postulates "connection as primary and fundamental" (Gilligan, 1995: 122). Within this framework, individuals are understood as connected in their development as social beings, but also connected by their shared environments, institutions, and structures. Persons connected by social, political, economic, or environmental systems are thus ethically connected, for the life conditions and possibilities of one individual cannot be abstracted from the actions of another within shared systems. From this position, individual interests are understood not as inevitably competitive, but rather as aligned, because the fate of intertwined lives is necessarily shared, and thus the wellbeing of one is linked to the wellbeing of the other (Held, 2006: 12). The realities of interconnection and dependency thus demand an ethical framework that acknowledges these relationships and the responsibilities that flow from them (Held, 2006:10). Indeed, the present functioning of a shared social and political world is predicated on such

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[11] Human interconnection is foundational to the ethics of care, both in how it critiques the status quo, and how it seeks to transform it. The significance of interconnection is reiterated throughout the chapter as various core tenets of the ethics of care build upon it, as such, the point bears repeating.

relationships, however obscured, privatized, and devalued they may be. Thus, the ethics of care builds

ethical and political reflection from this foundational assumption that individuals are interdependent, and

social and political structures ought to be formulated not to deny the interconnections of persons under the

guise of non-interference, but rather to ensure that such relationships are equitable and just.

4.3.2 Ethical & Political Reflection

Three primary values guide moral thought and political reflection in ethics of care scholarship.

First, ethics of care intentionally incorporates and even centres the recipient of care, while holding those

in power accountable for the inaction and harms they have caused. For Nel Noddings, dominant theories

tend to centre abstract and generalized values, or the motivations of care-providers; instead, she argues

that ethics of care ought to prioritize the specific needs of the care-recipient (2002: 20). At the same time,

ethics of care scholarship reverses the neoliberal focus. Instead of emphasising what rights 'I' can claim

from others, the ethics of care focuses on what responsibilities 'I' owe to others (Gilligan, 2003: 19). In

this sense, the ethics of care makes two important contributions by centring the needs and interests of

care-recipients, also underscoring the ethical imperative of those, especially with power and privilege, to

uptake responsibility for attending to the well-being of others.

Second, the ethics of care seeks to be contextual, specific, and attuned to differences in its

considerations of care. Counter to the abstract, value-neutral, and generalized impositions of rules and

principles, the ethics of care advocates ethical considerations be ground in lived experiences and daily

practices (Gilligan, 2003; Held, 2006; Tronto, 1995). Not only is the neoliberal prioritization of objective

rationality deemed morally 'deficient' (Held, 2006: 10), it is considered myopic by narrowing the field of

cognizance and possibility that is otherwise opened by a relational understanding of human action and

thought (Tronto, 1995: 144). The ethics of care complicates political thought by directing attention to the

diversity of interests, relational dynamics, and subjective experiences, thereby increasing the challenges

of political and ethical reflection, but also expanding its ability to attend to the lived realities of these

realms (Tronto, 1995: 145). Gilligan acknowledges that within this framework there is a hesitancy to pass

judgements on others; but rather than understanding this as a sign of moral ambivalence and immaturity,

she argues this as a sign of personal humility amidst the complexity of moral decisions and a recognition of the possible harms of passing such a judgement (2003). Such a position of tentativeness and modesty is important in approaching the complexity of moral and ethical concerns presented in everyday situations.

Third, the ethics of care can be attuned to differences in power, to the potential for domination, coercion, and harm in well-intentioned care-practices. Sarah Lucia Hoagland argues against essentialized visions of care practices built exclusively on emotional intuition or empathetic response; rather care must be a highly reflective exercise in which the provider is constantly aware and critical of how their own biases and privileges can impose on a caring relation and thus potentially lead to the domination of the care recipient (1990: 111). In this sense, the care-giver ought to be constantly mindful of potential dynamics of power and oppression in the process and outcomes of care "since even the helpful emotions can often become misguided or worse - as when excessive empathy with others leads to a wrongful degree of self-denial or when benevolent concern crosses over into controlling domination" (Held, 2006: 11). I argue that critical reflection and ongoing assessment of care practices are of absolute necessity given, first, the practice of care-provision almost always involves an imbalance of power, and second, the long history of oppressive and coercive care-giving that has centred the interests and experiences of the caregiver over the needs and demands of the recipient. However, this critical reflection is not always present the ethics of care scholarship. I explore Nel Nodding's conservative care framework later in the chapter to further exemplify the need for a critical assessment of care practices.

4.4 On Care & its Breadth of Applicability

Within the ethics of care scholarship, care is fundamental necessity for the prosperity of individuals, communities, and whole societies. The primary argument I seek to make in this chapter is that a responsibility to care applies to all persons, for all persons, given a ubiquitous embeddedness in global systems that connect all persons. This section will first explore how care is defined in the ethics of care. Next, it will outline the normative argument for care as a collective good. Finally, I will argue for a

reading of the ethics of care that acknowledges connection across interpersonal difference and geographical distance, such that the responsibility to care extends globally.

Before exploring this responsibility to care, it is important to establish what care is and what an emphasis on care implies. In defining care, ethics of care scholars have discussed four main qualities. First, care is other-centered. Lynch et al distinguish a care-based system of social relations from its neoliberal counterpart by its 'ethic of other-centredness' in which the well-being of the other is of primary concern to the self (2021: 58). The 'other' need not earn the right to receive care, rather, by being in relation with all, their wellbeing is connected to all, and therefore the responsibility of all. In this sense, care is a "species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Fisher and Tronto, 1991: 40).

A second concern regarding care is the question of how it is motivated. Nel Noddings for example, distinguishes between 'natural care' that is motivated by an almost instinctual reaction to the need of someone with whom one has a relation, against 'ethical care' that is motivated by the abstract intellectual understanding that to provide care is to promote an idealized vision of self or society (2002). While Noddings recognizes both forms of care as valid, she prioritizes the former because the later may be understood by the recipient of care as less authentic, and thus resent the act as a performative duty rather than a genuine response (2002: 30). However, Virginia Held expresses doubt whether the sensation of care is necessary for the practice of it and warns against essentialized and unnecessarily narrow definitions of care (2006: 30-31). I, too, argue that Noddings draws too strict a distinction between the two motivations of care, and that motivation for care in even the closest relationships may oscillate between both forms. More significantly, ethical care may be the only motivational source available in instances where relationality is obscured, as it so often is, either through geographical distance or stigmatizing discourse that would emphasis the difference or 'otherness' of certain groups. A broadly encompassing definition of care is important to ensuring that marginalized groups, including those experiencing homelessness, are included in relations of care. Nonetheless, I do support Noddings' conclusion that at its foundation:

> Care must be made attractive. It must be emphasized that a life of
> care is not necessarily a life of "cares and burdens" but, rather, one of
> joy and fulfillment. It may require occasional sacrifices (what ethic does
> not?), but it does not require self-abnegation. (2002: 46)

Thus, while care is a responsibility of relationality, a begrudging sense of obligation ought not be the primary motivator of care acts. But rather, a recognition that all persons and social systems require care, that the well-being of the other is bound to the well-being of the self, and that engaging in care can be a mutually valuable practice.

Third, the ethics of care prioritizes action. It is not enough to simply 'feel' care for another. Even if the sentiment of care is a primary source of motivation, it is key to act upon this care (Lynch et al., 2021: 56). The rooting of care in practice has key benefits. Held argues that as both value and action, the actual labours of caring ensure that considerations of care are grounded in practical concerns rather than the idealization of the concept (2006: 9). Lynch et al. argue that an internal provocation occurs through the practice of care-giving, whereby witnessing and acting directly upon the stated needs and experiences of other groups and persons, care-givers are prompted to agitate for care at the structural scale of policies and institutions (2021: 63; see also, Tironi and Rodríguez-Giralt, 2017: 91). Further, care as practice not only stems from connection and relation, but also strengthens it, especially where stigma or distance otherwise obscures this connection.

Fourth, care need not be confined to the private realm. Rather, it can broadly inform social and political dispositions. Virginia Held, for example, argues the boundaries of care ought to extend beyond the family, to nurses and teachers (2006: 31). I argue that the boundaries ought to be pushed further to include the social, economic and political structures by which all humans are affected, and through which all humans are connected. Not only is the practice of care applicable to large systemic matters, care itself, as a radical practice may provoke new insights and transformations of these structures. Lynch et al., for example argue that engaging in direct interpersonal care acts can enable the recognition of oppression and injustice, and thus prompt systemic change (2021: 63). The practice of care thus challenges predominant ways of understanding and engaging with the world and one another, care is therefore a profoundly

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political act whereby alternative, more just, relations and systems are made visible and possible (Tironi and Rodríguez-Giralt, 2017: 93). In essence, care is a practice that challenges neoliberal assertions of autonomy and independence and resists the limitations of justice to non-interference.

Thus, care that is other-centred, mutually beneficial, practical, and systemically-oriented is understood as fundamental good in the ethics of care scholarship. What scholars generally agree on, is that the wellbeing promoted by care acts extends beyond the direct recipient of care to benefit the broader community. Of course, care is valuable at the individual level of analysis. Given the precarity of the life and livelihood of all individuals, as well as the inevitable dependency demanded by infancy and old age, to cultivate a caring culture could certainly be understood within the rational self-interest, in the neoliberal sense, of the individual. Also, at the individual level of analysis, Nel Noddings asserts the "intrinsic reward" of providing care, in witnessing the affect of one's labours in the response of the care recipient (2002: 19). While I do not disagree with the personal advantages to care practice, these understandings are mistaken to limit practices of care and assessments of benefit to the scale of the individual. For example, the "intrinsic reward" of providing direct interpersonal care might not be available should one be providing it at a distance or working to change systems and structures that may be slow and cumbersome to affect. But it would be terribly misguided to dismiss the profound benefits of caring for individual well-being by bettering the structures that affect their daily lives. Further, I argue that the benefits of care, whether it be directed at individuals or communities, necessarily extends beyond the intended beneficiaries of the care-act. Because persons and communities are connected by vast and intricate structures, the good that care imparts at the individual scale always contributes to the betterment of the broader systems of which they are a part. As such, I find the most compelling argument for the value of care does not prioritize its individualized benefits, but rather underscores interpersonal and community connections as the diffuse avenues through which care acts, from micro through macro scales, disperse the benefits of care. Such an argument does not deny the individualized benefits to 'you' or 'me', but rather recognizes that both care and harm alike are never siloed within individual bodies or experiences. Given that ethics of care literature acknowledges the interconnections of individual lives, the

cultivation of social and political structures around a culture of care is thus understood as a collective good (Gilligan, 2003; Held, 2006; Kittay, 2011; Tronto, 1995).

4.4.1 Care across Difference & Distance

While I argue for an understanding of care that is inclusive of different and distant relations, various ethics of care scholars approach this subject differently. This section will explore how this topic is treated, for, as will be explored in this chapter and the next, how the relationship between care-giver and care-recipient is conceived by different scholars has direct implications for the justification and assessment care. Whether care is contingent on 'knowing' the other has implications for whether a responsibility to care can be invoked for relations across distance and difference. Following the arguments of Nel Noddings and her critics, I find that the extent that one can 'know' another's experiences and needs has implications for the degree to which patronizing and coercive care can be rationalized. Given the preponderance of harm enacted under the guise of 'care' for marginalized populations, this discussion is highly relevant to any potential applicability of the ethics of care scholarship to the case study of homelessness in Canada.

Regarding the extent to which a care-giver may understand the needs of a care-recipient, Noddings argues that through an openness to experience outside of oneself, one may be able to feel in alignment with the emotions of another (2002: 14). During such instances, she advocates for the adoption of an 'affective state' of sympathetic engrossment, in which one may temporarily set aside their own self-interests to fully attune themselves to the experiences, feelings, and needs of another. Noddings advocates for the language of 'sympathy' to describe this relational moment, one which she contrasts against 'empathy'. Empathy, she contests, projects the assumptions of the self onto the other; whereas her version of sympathy works in the opposite direction by opening the self to the other (2002: 14). Michael Slote is among the ethics of care scholars who advocate an empathetic relation to the other. In witnessing the condition and need of the other, those same feelings are 'involuntarily aroused' in the self (Slote, 2007: 13). Regarding the difference between the positions of Noddings and Slote, I have two critiques.

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First, my position aligns with Noddings when she states that advocates of an empathetic relation are apt to overestimate the extent that one can know and feel as another does. I further agree with Noddings' warning against any stance on the other that relies on a similarity to the self for relational theory (2002: 15). Such a stance parallels Carol Gilligan's (2003) position on listening. She asserts that one cannot assume themselves in another's shoes, rather, listening ought to be attuned to interpersonal differences, and thus attempt to understand how another's perspective diverges from one's own experiences, as well as from the interpretive scheme of dominant paradigms (2014). Where I remain skeptical of Noddings is the extent to which she assumes one may set aside their own interpretive bias in order to be engrossed in the story and needs of another. I do not argue against such an attempt, but as with Slote and Gilligan's assertions, I find that Noddings too, overestimates the extent to which the self can set their own biases aside in order to glean some objectively true understanding of the other. Rather than erase these prejudices, I would argue that the best method for their mitigation is to first acknowledge them. In allowing preconceptions to remain unrecognized and unvoiced, they have more power, and the individual holding them is less accountable for how they manifest in their relations with another.

Second, Slote and Noddings alike seem to advocate for a joining of the self and other, or even a momentary loss of the self in the experience of another. Hoagland (1990) argues against this collapse of two separate entities into one another: "one who cares must perceive herself not just as both separate and related, but as ethically both separate and related; otherwise she cannot acknowledge difference" (1990: 111). To ignore this difference, she argues, will serve to obscure and thereby enable power differentials and structural oppression while neglecting the relational connection of individuals bound together by such structures (1990: 111). Differences between a care-giver and receiver should thus be acknowledged, imbalances in power and privilege should be addressed. Oppression and domination, as often justified by difference, ought to be challenged. But difference, nonetheless, should not be erased, it must be recognized and incorporated in every care practice.

The extent to which one may know another, especially across difference and distance, has clear implications for the terms and assessment of care. While Slote finds that similarity of identity and

geographical proximity support empathetic ties to another, they are not a necessity for inciting feelings

and acts of care (2007: 28-29). He, alongside other ethics of care scholars, argues against Noddings'

definition of care as contingent on personal sympathetic ties, as it thereby neglects care for strangers and

distant others (Slote, 2007: 11; see also, Card, 1990: 102; and Hoagland 1990). Slote (2007) argues that

while feeling and practicing care for others across difference and distance may pose additional barriers

than what exists in more proximate relations, such barriers can be broached through learning and effort.

Virginia Held finds that the same standards of care that apply to proximate relations must also apply to

distant ones (2006: 18). I argue much the same. Even if relations across geographical and social space

seem distant and obscure, individual actions nonetheless affect others, while personal and community

fates are absolutely bound together. Thus, a responsibility to care still exists. However, differences in

social, political, and geographical location further expand potential differences in experience and need.

All practices of care, especially ones across distance and difference, require personal humility and

absolute openness to the voiced experiences and needs of another. The potential for harm occurs when a

care-giver is permitted to believe that they understand the care-recipient, perhaps even better that the care-

recipient themselves. I will use the final section of this chapter to further explore how the ethics of care

has at times been conducive to the patronizing attitudes and coercive social policies used against

marginalized communities.

4.5 Critiques of the Ethics of Care

While I ultimately argue that the ethics of care is a highly effective framework for approaching

systemic injustices, such as poverty and homelessness, it is not without its shortcomings. Here I examine

two critiques most relevant to my case study. First, the tendency of some ethics of care scholars to make

sweeping generalizations of human nature and the act of care. The second, and stemming from this failure

to recognize difference, is the inclination to propose patronizing, generalizing programs of care that often

promote coercive measures over individuals and groups. Such proposals, I argue, are most apt to

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perpetuate oppression and injustice, rather than rectify it. As such, in the following chapter I explore how a feminist poststructuralist framework is a necessary compliment to ethics of care scholarship.

4.5.1 Essentialism in the Ethics of Care

Some ethics of care scholars have suggested certain traits or desires as essential to human nature, or universal in their applicability. Here I look to a more recent piece, *Moral Injury and the Ethic of Care: Reframing the Conversation about Differences* by Carol Gilligan (2014). In this work, Gilligan bases her care framework on a 'common humanity', wherein "deep assumptions of what's right and wrong, what's praiseworthy and blameworthy, are rooted not only in culture but also in our humanity" (2014: 93). To be sure, in this piece, Gilligan also notes the prevalence and significance of difference within caring relations, and advocates attentiveness and openness to such differences. However, Gilligan's argument for care verges dangerously close to contingency on finding this 'common humanity', such that differences are minimized or neglected altogether. Here, I do not intend to argue for or against the existence of a 'common humanity'; what I do put forward is that an argument for care that is justified by a universal similarity is not sufficiently robust to withstand the practical pressures of application. Given the proliferation of discourses that 'other' those different from the 'self', that vilify and stigmatize difference, the identification of this 'common humanity', should it exist, becomes increasingly challenging. Rather, I argue that a responsibility to care based in connection and relationality is a far more convincing foundation. Global membership in political and economic structures is empirically demonstrable; shared fate in broad financial, climactic, and social tends is increasingly evident. Interconnection is the strongest basis for an ethic of care as it is more evident. Further, the recognition of connection acknowledges common histories, structures, and environments, without erasing how experiences and circumstances within shared systems will vary and diverge vastly. Thus, a recognition of difference can be incorporated into this framework to prompt reflection into patterns of power and oppression without threatening the imperative to care.

4.5.2 Patronizing and Coercive Care

A second concerning tendency in ethics of care literature is a penchant for generalizing solutions, patronizing attitudes, coercive care. I suspect that because the scholars who hold the above noted assumptions of essential characteristics of human nature and generalizable traits of care, that certain universal and coercive prescriptive solutions can be justified under the assumed basic similarity in need for care. By neglecting difference, by assuming that a care-giver can know the needs of another better than the care-recipient themselves, the ethics of care runs the danger of slipping into harmful care practices. These practices elevate the assumptions of a care-giver over the stated experiences and needs of a care-recipient, thereby enabling patronizing perspectives, coercive treatment, and ultimately ineffective solutions. Here I examine the work of Nel Noddings to see how an ethics of care framework can be compatible with oppressive and harmful practices. I will argue in Chapter Five that these dangerous presumptions in some ethics of care literature can be addressed by employing a supplemental framework, specifically feminist poststructuralism.

As an illustration of the potential pitfalls of the ethics of care, I look to the care model that Nel Noddings (2002) advocates[12]. While I do not assume it is her intention to cause harm, I believe that the patronizing and coercive conclusions she draws in her model of care stem from a misstep in her conceptualization of connection, and the extent to which the caring 'self' can know the recipient 'other'. Noddings conceptualizes care as a highly relational phenomenon, wherein empathy, defined as one's "engrossment" in the needs of another, allows the care-giver total immersion in the experience of the recipient (2002: 14). Noddings contrasts the passive feelings of care 'about' an object, against the direct interpersonal act of care, which she deems superior (2002: 22-24). She defines this practical act of care in accordance with the ideals of the home, motherhood, and the (presumably, nuclear) family (2002: 27, 29).

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[12] In critiquing Noddings' approach, it is not my intent to accuse the whole body of the ethics of care scholarship of succumbing to the same weaknesses. Rather, it is my aim to address one particular inadequacy, exemplified in Noddings' work, to show how insights from feminist poststructuralism may guard against this shortcoming. With more time and space, this thesis might further detail Nodding's argument. It might also compare Nodding's argument with contemporary ethics of care literature to see how recent scholars have approached related social phenomena. However, given limitations of space and time, these elaborations are outside the scope of this thesis.

With these assumptions and values informing her framework of care, it is understandable that Noddings would advocate the acceptability of patronizing and coercive care in certain instances. Perhaps such practices may be appropriate at times when raising young children: humans whose entire lives a parent has experienced, humans for whom a parent has full responsibility for their actions and wellbeing. However, at a certain age, a parent cannot presume to know or understand the entirety of a youth's experience or needs, and thus cannot make fully-informed decisions on behalf of a teenager or young-adult. When scaled up to Nodding's understanding of care-based policy making, this oversight becomes even more significant and potentially harmful.

Noddings advocates that social policy can be informed by the very same logic of caring used in the family home (2002: 61). Here Noddings relies on the care logic of parenting young children, as thus assumes that one can intimately and fully know the recipient of care such that the care-giver may rightly choose to practice care in ways contrary to the stated needs of the recipient. She argues that "despite classical liberalism's fears of paternalism, a caring society must sometimes intervene in the lives of adults to prevent them from harming themselves" (Noddings, 2002: 2). For Noddings, this does not simply apply to individuals suspected to be in imminent danger of attempting severe self-harm or suicide. Rather, as I will detail below, Noddings advocates forced treatment in many instances wherein "a better life" may be promoted (2002: 258). Noddings does not say who is the authoritative voice on the standards and achievement of this 'better life', however the implied answer does not prioritize the opinions of those coerced into it. Regardless, I argue that such patronizing and coercive care practices are harmful, ineffective, and ultimately antithetical to the definition of care provided in the section above. A care-giver cannot fully know or understand the needs of another adult; they thus cannot make decisions or pursue practices counter to the stated needs of a recipient without doing harm, especially when care must navigate power differentials and complex historic and systemic patterns of oppression and injustice. Nonetheless, Noddings neglects these considerations when she seeks to inform public policy and institutional care practices with the ideals of direct motherly care and the assumption that an 'other' can

be so fully known that a care-giver can anticipate the care-recipient's needs better than the recipient themselves.

Noddings' particular care framework is especially harmful when applied to policy for unhoused and unsheltered populations (2002). Here, it is worth exploring Noddings' argument more extensively. Her chapter on "The Mentally Ill Homeless" begins with a statistic and a proposition:

> Many of today's homeless are mentally ill. Estimates range from 40 percent to 60 percent. With these people, the first coercion—one that forbids sleeping on the streets— must be followed by another—treatment of the illness. (Noddings, 2002: 256)

Noddings proposes that a caring society ought to intervene to prevent self-inflicted harms (2002: 256). She allows that coercion towards treatment of mental illness should provide for multiple options that the coerced care-recipient be able to choose between (2002: 256). Finally, she considers the potential harm that comes from coercion and the loss of freedom, but ultimate defends her plan because "if, by coercion of the mentally ill, we produce for them a better life than they might have had, the loss of freedom is to that degree justified" (2002: 258). She concludes her framework with the prompt towards moderation:

> A defensible plan, then, will avoid extremes. The mentally ill will not be left alone in the name of freedom, nor will they be incarcerated in what is claimed to be their best interests. The plan will lay out the goods that should be preserved or sought. It will employ coercion sparingly and always with consideration of these questions: Is the stated end a good that all rational people seek? Is there any other way, one that is less coercive, to achieve it? What can we do to make the coercion tolerable? What do those coerced suggest? We engage in negotiation. (Noddings, 2002: 258)

I argue that Noddings' care framework for unhoused individuals suffers from three main oversights. First, Noddings overestimates the extent that she, or anyone else, can know or understand the experiences and needs of another. Forced treatment is likely not the route that will lead individuals out of mental illness, and then out of houselessness. Rather, as Chapter One explored, improving life conditions is increasingly understood to improve challenges with mental illness and substance use. This generally entails the creation of a broad and secure social safety net, including the provision of safe and appropriate housing, and addressing social stigma. Second, while Noddings advocates for relationality between care-givers and recipients, I suspect

that Noddings, like most of the domiciled population, has little, if any relationality to the people who are unhoused. In listening to the lived experiences of houselessness and mental illness, it is apparent that forced treatment and institutionalization causes more harm than healing (for example, Solomon, 2016; Watson et al., 2014). Lastly, Noddings individualizes the problems of mental illness and houselessness. It is individuals who experience these problems, but it is social, political, and economic structures that create and maintain them. It makes little sense to coerce individuals into treatment or institutions when structural solutions and options have yet to be implemented. Houselessness and mental illness are not individual choices that individuals must be forced out of, rather, they are largely attributable to large systemic failures that ought to be addressed first in any policy that seeks to care for the wellbeing of people living in such circumstances.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the core assumptions and values guiding the ethics of care framework. I have explored how these ideas oppose and challenge many of the key tenets of neoliberal thought and structure. Specifically, this chapter investigated how the interdependence between individuals and communities informs a responsibility to care for the persons and populations to whom one is in connection with. These connections need not be limited to proximate and interpersonal relations. Rather, these connections are vast, complex, and at times obscure. Nonetheless, I argue that given the nature of modern social systems, political-economic institutions, and environmental crisis, we can understand all persons and societies as bound together by these shared structures and circumstances. Further, I argue that the ethics of care thus enables a strong argument for a shared responsibility for one another given our mutual embeddedness in these relations and conditions. However, it is important to recognize that these common relations should not obscure vast differences in how people experience life. Power informs how individuals interact with systems, their role in maintaining or resisting these systems, and their degree of responsibility for transforming them. The final chapter will explore how together, feminist

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poststructuralism and the ethics of care provide a persuasive framework for understanding how

connection entails a responsibility to care, and thus provides the ethical imperative for radical systemic

change of unjust systems.

CHAPTER FIVE: BRIDGING THE ETHICS OF CARE AND FEMINIST

POSTSTRUCTURALISM

5.1 Introduction

At the outset of this thesis, I suggested there was a contradiction in narratives regarding community care during the time of COVID-19. I observed that as the effects of a global pandemic became apparent, a chorus of appeals for patience and generosity rang through society to advocate compassion and care between individuals and throughout society. The glaring exception that I noted was a clear ambiguity in tone and coverage of one of the most vulnerable populations at this time. Popular media narratives of homelessness were in frequent contradiction to the generalized calls for community care that were direct to the domiciled population. Such coverage often used stigmatizing and 'othering' language to describe people experiencing homelessness by stressing differences and points of opposition between the housed versus unhoused populations, and frequently depicted the latter as outsiders, deviants, and threats to the former. Throughout this thesis I have argued that language and representation matter; how homelessness is illustrated and understood has implications for the treatment of individuals experiencing this phenomenon, but also informs greater social and political schemas for the treatment of the phenomenon itself. As such, I was struck by the contradiction in narratives. How can a call to care be so vigorously prescribed for the housed population, yet denied to the unhoused community, who by nature of their situation are markedly more vulnerable? This contradiction prompted further queries regarding how conceptualizations of the identity of housed and unhoused persons informed understandings of responsibility to address the structural injustices of widespread homelessness in Canada. These queries were ultimately formulated into the two following research questions:

1. How do feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care scholarship challenge predominant conceptualizations of identity, responsibility, and solutions in discussions of homelessness? What new insights come about when looking at homelessness through these two frameworks?

2. How might these frameworks challenge predominant assumptions of homelessness informed by neoliberalism? And how might these alternative frameworks align with, and inform, critical scholarship on homelessness?

In addressing these two sets of research questions, I argue for the two following positions, respectively. First, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care scholarship together challenge the dichotomous juxtaposition of identity categories of self/other, housed/unhoused. Rather than understanding individuals as isolated entities, these frameworks posit that humans are irrefutably interconnected through shared discourses, socio-political structures, histories, and even fates as a result of global co-existence. While feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care each emphasise different avenues through which individuals are interconnected, they nonetheless conclude that this connection necessitates a shared ethical responsibility for the outcomes of these shared systems. Further, there is an ethical responsibility to address and transform these systems when they produce unjust outcomes. Later in this chapter I will further expand on the themes of connection and responsibility within feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care to elaborate on how they might apply to the phenomenon of homelessness in Canada. Second, these frameworks are consistent with the critical literature on homelessness that advocate a structural lens be used to understand the causes and solutions to the phenomenon. Across all three realms of scholarship, homelessness can be understood as a product of large-scale failures of social, political, economic systems, and all three advocate structural changes to these systems so that they produce more just outcomes. The radical transformations suggested across these three frameworks challenge predominant neoliberal logic that locates homelessness as a failure of individual persons and thus advocates individual responsibility as the solution to personal shortcomings. In sum, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism are together compatible with the critical literature on homelessness and provide substantive challenges to the core assumptions and prescriptions of neoliberalism as it relates to homelessness. I argue that feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care together provide a robust critique of neoliberalism, present convincing justification for conceptualizing

greater social connectivity and thus shared social responsibility for shared social structures. Lastly, I outline theoretical and practical routes to enact changes in these structures.

5.2 Responses to Critique

Feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care together provide a formidable challenge to neoliberal assumptions and provide insights compatible with critical literature on homelessness. However, as individual frameworks, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism each have points of fallibility. The critiques of each framework were explored in their respective chapters. What this chapter will argue is that the problematic tendencies toward patronizing assumptions and coercive conclusions of some ethics of care scholars can largely be addressed by feminist poststructuralist critique. In turn, the normative shortcomings of feminist poststructuralism are well supplemented by the insights of ethics of care scholarship. That is, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism are here argued to be mutually remedial, such that together they provide a framework rich in insights for conceptualizing and addressing homelessness in Canada.

5.2.1 Critical Capacities of the Ethics of Care

As earlier discussed and illustrated through the work of Nel Noddings (2002) in Chapter Four, the ethics of care scholarship has at times essentialized, simplified, or neglected important complexities and points of variation within the social world it seeks to analyse. To return to the example of Noddings' understanding and prescriptions for homelessness and mental illness, I have argued that Noddings fails to acknowledge important differences between persons. Given Noddings' epistemological position that the individual can set aside their subjective positionality in order to understand and attend to the needs of another, I argue that her aims toward caring objectivity allow her to mistakenly assume that a care-giver can fully 'know' the recipient of their care. Such an assumption further enables Noddings to make the claim that a care-giver may know the needs of a care-recipient better than the care-recipient themselves. As a result, Noddings makes dangerous essentializing assumptions and harmfully patronizing conclusions about the care for others, including those experiencing homelessness, that promote the use of public

surveillance, forced treatment and other coercive measures. However, this limitation need not apply to all ethics of care scholarship, and I here argue that employing feminist poststructuralism in tandem with the ethics of care assists in imbuing analysis with an appreciation for difference and complexity, and thus directing prescriptions away from patronizing and coercive policies.

Noddings' advocacy of coercion is contingent on a particular epistemological stance that feminist poststructuralism resists. While Noddings claims that a care-giver can set aside their own subjective experience to glean the needs of a care-recipient, feminist poststructuralism remains skeptical of any claim to personal neutrality in observing the social world and further warns of the way power infringes on aims for objective observation, interpretation, and action. Feminist poststructuralism provides a thorough analysis of the way power informs knowledge, discourse, individual subjectivities, and socio-political structures. Objective observation, of the sort Noddings claims, is thus challenged on the grounds that power constitutes both the "known object" and the "knowing subject" (Hekman, 1990: 9). Rather than aim to put aside one's own positionality and power, feminist poststructuralists strive to examine and deconstruct it. As such, a feminist poststructural framework can acknowledge power imbalances that exist between a care-giver and care-recipient, it can recognize the way that power informs the interpretive schema of the former and thus actively mitigate the ways that this materializes in the oppression of the later.

From the feminist poststructuralist position, forcible treatment, as advocated by Noddings, even under the most caring of intentions, is untenable for two primary reasons. First, the experiences and needs of one can never be fully known by another, just as 'truth', when our concern is social relations, can never be fully known due to the ways power and knowledge are mutually implicated. Power will necessarily influence a care-givers interpretation of the needs of a care-recipient. To advocate that a care-giver's interpretation of the care-recipient's needs is superior to that of the care-recipient themselves only solidifies the domination of a care-giver's interpretations and actions. This is a prime recipe for oppression, injustice, and policy routes that are quite simply ineffective. As such, the justifications fall short for coercive practices predicated on Nodding's position that a domiciled person can best understand

and dictate the treatment of an unhoused person, even when these treatment options run counter to the expressed needs of that unhoused person. I argue that feminist poststructuralism can be used to deconstruct the power/knowledge nexus that undergirds the patronizing and coercive tendencies in some ethics of care scholarship. Further, feminist poststructuralism can be utilized to deconstruct identity binaries that presume stigmatizing and othering representations of the unhoused as dysfunctional, irrational, incompetent or deviant, as well as the representations of housed populations as respectable citizens that thereby know best how to address the individual failings of the unhoused. Feminist poststructuralism provides tools to recognize these depictions of the housed/unhoused identity binaries as social constructs that nonetheless have harmful consequences when manifest in the treatment of homelessness, even when done with beneficent intentions, such as in the instance of Nodding's policy prescriptions.

The second reason why forcible treatment is inconsistent with feminist poststructuralism is that said approach is limited to a scale of analysis in which homelessness and mental illness are indicative of failures of individuals. Nodding's assumption is that the benign and caring domiciled population ought to compel the unhoused into treatment and shelter, thereby correcting for the personal inadequacies and poor choices that left them without housing in the first place. Such a position is inconsistent with evidence from critical scholarship that finds homelessness not to be a problem of personal shortcomings, but rather failings of social, political, and economic structures. Feminist poststructuralism is strong in its analysis of structural defects and is compatible with an ethics of care that addresses issues of homelessness as a product of inequities and injustices within shared structures and institutions, rather than the deficits of individuals.

Nodding's inappropriate policy prescriptions for addressing homelessness ultimately stem from an oversight of how power informs both her analysis of the phenomenon, as well as the phenomenon itself. Because feminist poststructuralists understand that power is a permanent feature of human relationships and structures, simply addressing this one instance of Noddings' oversight of power is insufficient. Rather, the deconstruction of power through a feminist poststructuralist lens must be an

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ongoing project. This deconstruction must not only be aimed at the structures and practices at the root of homelessness; deconstruction must also be used in analysing any prescriptions meant to treat homelessness (as I have attempted to illustrate in deconstructing some of the problems with the treatment options Noddings advocates).

5.2.2 Normative Direction in Feminist Poststructuralism

In my discussion of feminist poststructuralism, I have showed how this framework has attempted to address the concerns of Foucault's critics that his poststructuralism lacked a normative direction. I found that feminist poststructuralism is compatible with political advocacy and practices for social change. Feminist poststructuralism provides a forceful critique of power and injustice; it has the capacity to recognize opportunities for structural change while also acknowledging the potency of small-scale daily practices in bringing this about. Importantly, while feminist poststructuralism is adept in critique, its deconstructive projects may simultaneously open space for marginalized voices and knowledge to gain platforms that were previously dominated by powerful discourses. Clearly, there is a strong normative flavour to the dismantling of the status quo on the grounds of social justice. Nonetheless, I find that feminist poststructuralist scholarship frequently lacks a robust normative vision. When engaging with this literature, I am often left with the question of what the scholar imagines might take the place of the dominant discourse or structure they aim to deconstruct. On this open-endedness I have two primary points.

First, unanswered questions of this nature may be morally unsatisfying, politically inconvenient, and yet ethically valuable. From my positionality, as someone whose research and career has been predominantly related to poverty and homelessness, and yet who has been privileged enough to have never personally experienced these life circumstances, I remain highly hesitant to offer my own ideals for specific solutions or treatment options for this phenomenon. Unless I explicitly align my proposals and prescriptions with the ideas and voices of persons and organizations with lived experience of this particular form of marginalization, I risk falling in the same patronizing trap that I ascribe to Noddings' (2002) argument in the above section. To further complicate this matter, the experiences of homelessness

are not monolithic, and the voices of people who experience it are not homogeneous. As such, there is not 'one' viewpoint with which outside researchers or observers can align.

Nonetheless, there is practical value to having an open-ended normative direction that can guide practices according to stated values and goals. I argue that the ethics of care provides a normative direction that can act as a blueprint for action, while still remaining compatible with the feminist poststructuralist emphasis on critique and the need to ensure that those who are most marginalized by particular systems are at the helm of efforts to transform them. The ethics of care advocates a concern for the wellbeing of others as a responsibility necessitated by the interconnectivity of all human lives and fates. Within this framework, care is understood as a fundamental good, but must be guided by the needs and experiences of the care-recipient. Care should always be attuned to power differences in these relationships and remain mindful and attentive to differences in life circumstances and experiences. Care-givers must recognize themselves as at once separate and related to the care-recipient, thereby acknowledging differences and complexities as equally significant as points of connection and similarity. Care can thus span difference and distance. It can be proximate and intimate; it can also be large in scale and systemic in approach. While this certainly challenges the core assumptions of neoliberalism that inform so much of daily life, there is an accessibility, simplicity, and flexibility to the normative values of ethics of care that make it highly practical. Normatively, the ethics of care might not detail all that much more than what feminist poststructuralist literature implies: care is a fundamental good when enacted with power dynamics in mind, and the other's articulated needs and differences made central. But this explicitly stated goal of care, and the three guiding values for the practice of care, are practically significant for guiding action while still sufficiently open-ended to allow for the terms and outcomes of care to be guided by its recipients. The ethics of care, understood in this way, expands on the normative direction of feminist poststructuralism by centring the voices of the marginalized, while still giving a clear direction, value system, and ethical impetus for action.

Ultimately, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism can each be interpreted to have far more compatibilities than points of opposition. I take Noddings' advocacy of patronizing and coercive

policy prescription as an extreme illustration the potential pitfalls of the ethics of care that may benefit

from a feminist poststructuralist analysis. However, it is also important to recognize that there are plenty

of other ethics of care scholars that are mindful of power and privilege in their understanding of care, and

acknowledge, rather than erase these differences (see for example Hoagland, 1990; Tronto, 1995).

Conversely, the ethics of care offers an important set of values-of-care in political practices that are

already articulated by feminist poststructuralists. As such, I find that ethics of care and feminist

poststructuralism are each highly complimentary frameworks for addressing the weaknesses of their

counterparts. Perhaps most significantly, both separately and together, these frameworks provide

powerful arguments for understanding social and political interconnectivity, and thus advocating shared

ethical responsibilities accordingly. I will explore how ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism

together provide convincing positions on connection and responsibility in the next section.

5.3 The Ethics of Care and Feminist Poststructuralism in Tandem

In addition to creating a mutually corrective dynamic of individual shortcomings, when paired,

the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism together provide critique of neoliberal assertions of

individualism and individualized responsibility. The ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism forward

a robust claim of interconnectivity, wherein individual life conditions, opportunities, and fates are bridged

by large structures, global systems, and a shared planet. Together, they posit that responsibility for the

injustices and oppressions are shared widely by privileged populations complicit in maintaining, if not

active in perpetuating these structures. They understand that while those experiencing marginalization

from these shared structures do not bear the burden of responsibility for that which oppresses them, they

are nonetheless key agents in directing and enacting resistance to these injustices. For those who are

active or simply complicit in perpetuating unjust structures, the ethics of care and feminist

poststructuralism together advocate an ethical responsibility to address these injustices. They further posit

the ways that said structures may be resisted, challenged, and transformed.

5.3.1 On Connection

Ethics of care scholars have argued that humans are both inherently interconnected and deeply interdependent. First, the ethics of care posits interconnection given shared social norms, economic structures, political systems, ecological and historical pasts. As such, the circumstances of one individual are always necessarily related to those of another. Just as no individual can operate outside the influence of others, no individual can operate without influencing others. Further, ethics of care literature generally proposes that given modern globalization and technological connectivity, individuals are connected in numerous if at times inconceivable ways (Held, 2006: 14). Over thirty years ago Claudia Card argued that as a result of technology, every individual could be understood to be in relation with every other person globally, even if those connections are tangled or tenuous (1990: 102-103). I would argue that advances in technology and trade, the expanded reach of global corporate and state power, the encroaching climate crisis, and the global spread of multiple waves of COVID-19 are all illustrative of the increased relevance of Card's point at this moment.

Second, and relatedly, the ethics of care posits all humans as inevitably interdependent. Eva Kittay, for example, argues that the attainment of relative autonomy is contingent on care from others during developmental periods of dependency (2011; 2020). Importantly, whatever independence and autonomy may be achieved is never permanent, but precarious and waning, often impeded by illness, disability, financial duress, or simply old age. Thus, Kittay concludes that dependence on caring relations is not an exception but a rule. At a greater scale, the interdependence of individuals is made inevitable by the intricacies of modern life, whereby most individuals can only develop self-sufficiency in a handful of necessary skills and are thus reliant of a host of other persons and structures to provide or assist with the other pertinent services and resources imperative for life. As such, the way modern life is organized ensures individuals and collectivities are deeply connected and interdependent.

Feminist poststructuralists emphasise a similar human connectivity to the ethics of care scholars. Like the ethics of care, feminist poststructuralists understand that individuals are interconnected through the social structuring of political, economic and cultural realms. Feminist poststructuralists specifically

understand this through a discursive lens, in which the social world individuals inhabit, and indeed the subjectivity of these individuals themselves, are constituted through discursive relations. These discursive relations are then replicated, perpetuated, or resisted by individuals and communities. Importantly, however, is that discursive relations are understood as collective phenomena that link individual lives and social systems. Elizabeth St. Pierre, for example, argues that because a discursive approach underscores the mutual constitution of persons and structures, and the contingency and malleability of our social subjectivities and structures, this implies that all individuals, in a small but significant way, share responsibility for these structures that bind us together (2000: 483).

Feminist poststructuralism has underscored the social constitution of the subject through relationality. Susan Gannon and Bronwyn Davies (2012), for example, are influenced by Jacques Derrida's socially situated subject that is ontologically and ethically connected to the other. Derridean ethics, in particular, posits a subject that is constituted in and through their social relations with the other (2012: 23). Davies and Gannon thus argue that feminist post-structuralism must understand individual identity and subjectivity as constructed in social relations, not abstract or independent of them (2011: 312). Similarly, Jean Grimshaw has argued that a feminist poststructuralist ethics must allow for the "possibility of mutuality and collectivity" in understanding social and community relationality (1993: 68). Thus, human interconnection is a core takeaway from feminist poststructuralism, wherein shared discursive practices, structures, and the mutual constitution of systems and subjectivity, implies strong webs of connectivity between the lives, opportunities, and circumstances of individuals.

Together, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care challenge the individualism of neoliberalism. When applied to the case study of homelessness, I argue that these two frameworks highlight the interconnectivity of the circumstances of extreme poverty to the structures and practices enacted by the domiciled population. While neoliberalism would diminish and divorce the conditions of homelessness from shared social and political structures by emphasising the individual, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism can prove how homelessness occurs in the context of these systems. They

further can connect personal, organizational, and broadly structured practices to the perpetuation of conditions of injustice in which homelessness occurs.

5.3.2 On Responsibility

Given the greater connectivity between human lives and structures, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism both posit a responsibility *for* the systems we maintain, and a responsibility *to* change them when they enact injustice. Both frameworks emphasis distinct forms of connection and draw different routes from this connection to claims of responsibility for the wellbeing other others with whom connection is shared. While the ethics of care primarily understands this responsibility to result from the fact of inherent relationality between persons, feminist poststructuralism advocates for responsibility based on the shared act of constituting the structures and conditions under which all persons are connected. Despite these differences, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care each come to analogous conclusions that emphasise responsibility to address structural failures and harms. I thus argue that together the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism provide a highly convincing ethical imperative for the responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of those to whom we are connected. Feminist poststructuralists understand responsibility for injustice in two primary ways: first, a responsibility relationally derived through the mutual constitution of subjectivity, and second, a responsibility to the other as a result of mutual implication in shared structures.

Regarding this first form of responsibility, feminist poststructuralists lean heavily on texts from Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. Feminist poststructuralists like Susan Gannon and Bronwyn Davies cite Derridean ethics as providing ethical guidance through his claim that individual subjectivity is constituted in relation to the other, and therefore that individual has an ethical responsibility to that other (2012: 23). Similarly, Levinas argues that there is a responsibility to the other because the privileges enjoyed by the self necessarily come at the expense of another: "my being-in-the-world or my 'place in the sun', my being at home, have these not also been the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man whom I have already oppressed or starved, or driven out into a third world; are these not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing?" (1989: 82). In this sense, a shared responsibility to one another is

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an unavoidable consequence of a shared world (Popke, 2003: 303). It is this social relationality of the subject in feminist poststructuralism that informs an ethics of responsibility and accountability to the other (Gannon and Davies, 2012: 24).

Regarding this second form of responsibility, feminist poststructuralists argue that given the inevitable implication of individuals in shared structures, there is also a shared responsibility for failings and injustices enabled by these structures. For Elizabeth St. Pierre, a discursive approach underscores the mutual constitutions of persons and structures, as well as the contingency and malleability of our social subjectivities and structures; thereby implying that all individuals implicated in maintaining these structures share responsibility for the injustices caused by said structures (St. Pierre, 2000: 483). For St. Pierre, there is a responsibility for transformation of these unjust structures, for if "we have constructed the world as it is through language and cultural practice, and we can also deconstruct and reconstruct it" (2000: 483). This critical focus on discourse, its role in constituting our reality and subjectivity, is a key facet of feminist poststructuralism for reminding us of our own role in the ongoing reconstitution of structures of injustice and our capacity to change them (Miller, 2000: 331). However, recognizing the complicity of the collective in perpetuating these structural injustices does not simply serve to lay blame for inequity and oppression (St. Pierre, 2000). More importantly, this acknowledgement of complicity can serve to empower the collective by highlighting the radical contingencies of our social world, the vast array of alternate possibilities of political structures, and ultimately a shared responsibility to work towards remaking them into something more just and sustainable (St. Pierre, 2000: 484).

Importantly, feminist poststructuralists recognize deeply embedded macro structural injustices, but also acknowledge that such phenomena manifest at the micro scale in the everyday practices of individuals and communities (St. Pierre, 2000: 483). For St. Pierre, the recognition of collective complicity in injustice radically challenges the generalized complacency embedded in the idea that political practices are too deeply entrenched to be challenged by ordinary folk, or that change may only be enacted by those in positions of great power and authority (2000: 483). Instead, a feminist poststructuralist stance on discourse proves the contingency of what otherwise appears natural and

inevitable, and points to the ways in which individuals are implicated in constituting these structures, and are thus potential agents of change (St. Pierre, 2000). As such, even large-scale structural changes can be affected in daily practice. While feminist poststructuralists recognize responsibility for injustice and change as a broadly collective issue, they also allow space for action and resistance at the level of the individual and community. Again, the acknowledgement that large structures may be affected by micro actions not only implies the possibility of change, but also creates a responsibility to enact it (St. Pierre, 2000: 484). St. Pierre thus affirms the ability of ordinary people to transform systemic injustices for which the individuals and societies share responsibility (St. Pierre, 2000: 484). As products of, and active producers of discursive and power relations, feminist poststructuralism advocates as ethical practice a constant reflexivity regarding one's situatedness and complicity within said relations (Davies and Gannon, 2011: 313). As such, there is an ethical imperative for all individuals to be critically attentive to daily complicity in power relations and the unjust social conditions they produce (St. Pierre, 2000: 484).

The ethics of care, too, acknowledges a responsibility to others. This responsibility is primarily rooted in the recognition of mutual interdependence and interconnectivity. Thus, while the ethics of care sources the rationale for responsibility differently from feminist poststructuralism, the two frameworks come to an aligned conclusion: there is a community and individual responsibility to attend to the well-being of others. Ethics of care scholars argue that people are inherently connected to one another, and thus responsibilities to attend to those individuals and relationships are core to its frameworks of social justice. Alongside some feminist poststructuralists, ethics of care scholars have also taken from Emmanuel Levinas the argument that an inherent connection of self and other create a mutual responsibility; as such, Nel Noddings who concludes: "in encounter, obligation happens" (2002: 50).

The ethics of care position on connection and responsibility is particularly positioned in opposition to neoliberal frameworks that center individual rights from interference, and personal responsibilities to refrain from interfering in the individual lives of others. Against this neoliberal logic, the ethics of care posit an inherent interconnectedness, thereby denying the very possibility that individuals can simply choose to refrain from affecting the lives of others. Against neoliberal assertions of

autonomy, independence, and non-interference, Eva Kittay argues that this minimization of connection to and responsibility for one another neglects the inevitability of dependency. Given this dependency, she advocates those responsibilities to one another be recognized as relevant to the public and political realms, and not simply left to the private realm of personal responsibilities (Kittay, 2020: 207). In this vein, the ethics of care scholars argue that it is not interference that necessarily causes harm, but rather the failure to recognize the inevitability of interference and thus the responsibility for the wellbeing of others with whom we are in relation (Kittay, 2011).

The ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism each put forward persuasive challenges to neoliberal assumptions. They denounce neoliberal ontological and normative claims for individualism based in presumptions of autonomy and independence. In doing so, they dispute the foundations of neoliberal responsibility that is restricted to non-interference. By arguing for an inevitable interdependence of individuals and societies, any possibility of interference is negated. Instead, feminist poststructuralists and the ethics of care propose that interdependence necessitates a form of responsibility that does not seek to diminish and neglect these connections, but rather attend to them. Together, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care forward an expanded responsibility, a recognition of one's inevitable role in contributing to the circumstances of another's life, and thereby an acknowledgment of the ethical imperative to promote just relations and structures that promote the wellbeing of that life. The final section of this chapter will explore the implications of this position on connection and responsibility, both in its theoretical significance, and in the practical consequences as related to the case study of homelessness in Canada.

5.4 Bringing Together the Ethics of Care and Feminist Poststructuralism: Implications

Together, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care make formidable contributions to understanding the causes and treatment options for structural injustices such as homelessness. In this final section I will explore three core strengths of these frameworks when employed in tandem. First, that feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care allow for a balance between critique of the status quo and

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practical actions for resisting and recreating the status quo. Second, these frameworks together destabilize the epistemological primacy of logic and rationality, as well as the unexamined nexus of knowledge/power. They therefore allow space and legitimacy for the lived experiences, subjective reactions, and voices of persons who have previously been marginalized by neoliberalism. Third, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care acknowledge important nuances that may counter dominant dichotomies of agency/passivity, individualism/collectivism that make important contributions for how change is understood and instigated.

5.4.1 Critical & Practical Capacities

Feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care may each be most formidable in the respective domains of critique and practice. However, when employed in conjunction, they provide a highly robust framework for understanding and remediating injustice in the socio-political world. The ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism together provide a critical stance against predominant neoliberal assumptions and their material manifestations. Together, these frameworks provide insight into the status quo by deconstructing the moral and ethical assumptions that undergird it. While critique may be the domain primarily associated with the deconstructive work of feminist poststructuralists, it is also the case that much of the ethics of care scholarship yields critical analysis of neoliberal assumptions, practices, and structures. At the junctures where the ethics of care has lacked a sufficiently critical lens, especially regarding key facets of power, identity, and difference, feminist poststructuralism is particularly adept. Where the ethics of care may guide practical steps for action, feminist poststructuralism importantly prompts ongoing reflexivity and self-critique of the processes and outcomes of these actions.

In addition to this critical foundation, these two frameworks together show important routes for practical action. Feminist poststructuralism emphasises resistance in day-to-day life as a vital ethical response against unjust relations and towards alternative modes of social behaviour and political structuring. It further connects the everyday thoughts, speech, and practices of individuals to larger systems, thereby galvanizing the small but nonetheless significant modes of resistance made by persons and communities. In advocating care as a key practice for individual and society alike, I argue that an

ethics of care is compatible with feminist poststructuralist visions for political action and resistance. I would further argue that an emphasis on care provides a simple and accessible model for action that can nonetheless by flexible to contextual specificity and nuance. In this sense, the imperative to care provides an important roadmap to action that is not often apparent in feminist poststructural scholarship. In turn, the critical strengths of feminist poststructuralism can assist in ongoing assessment of care efforts at both individual and structural levels of action. Together, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care demonstrate that critique and practice cannot be thought of as dualistically opposed, or even separate components of a social justice endeavour. Rather, the marriage of these two frameworks proves the advantages of dismissing this common dichotomy and illuminate the necessity of each component to the other.

This duality of critique and action between feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care is well illustrated by their shared emphasis on responsibility. This shift, I argue, promotes the practicability of action in two key ways. First, I argue that a focus on shared responsibility demands accountability and action from those who are most culpable for, and thus most capable of changing structural conditions of injustice. Against a rights-based framework such as neoliberalism that does little to create accountability for structural injustice, Onora O'Neill (2008) argues for the practicability of a responsibilities-based framework that assigns duties to powerful agents. Such a move better promotes the protection of the rights of minority and marginalized populations by appointing responsibility for action to the actors most politically capable of enacting it (O'Neill, 2008: 149). Counter to a focus on individual and group rights, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism shifts the imperative of action from individuals and groups experiencing marginalization or deprivation, and instead highlights the harms and failures caused by persons in positions of power and privilege.

Second, responsibility as an ethical imperative to attend to structural injustices and promote the wellbeing of others is a far more dignifying and sustainable justification for care than one reliant on the whims of charity. Charity, recall, is reliant on the identification of the powerful and privileged with the dichotomized identity of the selfless, beneficent giver who provides for the passive, incompetent, if

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grateful, recipient. The concept of shared responsibility, however, is an acknowledgement of complicity in the harms caused by shared histories, discourses, institutions, and structures. To acquiesce shared responsibility for these harms is to also to accept the ethical imperative to address and transform structural conditions for harm. The practical benefits of recognizing a shared responsibility for structural harm is the increased burden of action on those with the most power to initiate change. The logic of this understanding of responsibility is not contingent on stigmatizing and individualizing binaries of the self saving the other from their own poor choices or personal inadequacies. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that the same systems that have privileged and empowered the self have marginalized and oppressed the other. It is the recognition of the resilience and resistance of the other despite these injustices and inequities, as well as the ethical imperative of the self to address the harms caused by these systems and work to transforms them into ones less destructive. Such efforts are not charity, but justice; and while they ought to centre the voices and needs of the marginalized, it is also important to recognize that the changes that come about as a result are nonetheless to the benefit of the collective.

When applied to the case study of homelessness in Canada, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care together exhibit strengths of critique and practicality that demonstrate their ability to theorize and enact transformation of unjust relations and structures. On the critical advantages displayed by feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care, I emphasise four main points. First, these two frameworks can provide important critique of stigmatizing understandings and representations of homelessness as 'other'. They can deconstruct the common narratives and neoliberal assumptions that depict people experiencing homelessness as incompetent, deviant, or threatening to the 'self'. Not only can feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care provide analysis of the discursive construction of homelessness, but they can also show how the material and structural manifestations of these constructions lend to the further marginalization of unhoused persons. They show how predominant discourses of homelessness contribute to producing the very conditions of deprivation they intend to describe. Further, these frameworks can challenge homogenizing narratives of homelessness. Feminist poststructuralism is particularly well-equipped to engage with heterogeneity and nuance when addressing

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identity, difference, and experience of marginalized groups. Nonetheless, it is still adept at considering large theories of power and oppression while maintaining space for complexity. As such, feminist poststructuralism is a formidable deterrent against certain impulses in the ethics of care scholarship to neglect difference, thereby lending to the propagation of patronizing attitudes and coercive treatment ideals that are otherwise obscured by charitable and beneficent intentions.

Second, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism provide important critique on identity constructions of the domiciled 'self'. Together, these frameworks can contribute key analysis of discourses that present this 'self' as the competent, independent, charitable citizen that is constructed against the 'incompetent', 'deviant' 'lazy' 'other'. Such representations allow a perverse reversal of victimhood whereby the domiciled are somehow victims of the homeless. Further, these constructs allow 'us' to remain in our comfortable complicity without examining our own problematic contributions to the narratives, relations, and structures that enable homelessness. Lastly, these frameworks show how the housed are implicated in the structural maintenance of homelessness, how the housed are complicit in the marginalization of the unhoused, and thus demonstrate an ethical imperative of action toward the rectification of these injustices.

Third, against individualizing narratives that would erase systemic causes, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism both enable analyses of the structural conditions that explain homelessness. These frameworks have the capacity to critique the individualization of homelessness, the erasure of structural conditions of injustice in individualized models for understanding the phenomenon, as well as the medicalizing and moralizing arguments that purport to source the cause of homelessness in the person rather than their conditions. Particularly regarding common narratives that relate mental illness and substance use to homelessness, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism together caution against confusing the symptoms of homelessness as their cause.

Fourth, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism together chart important changes in attitudes, identities, and structures over time. They are critical of any arguments that naturalize the conditions and stigmatization of homelessness, and further disprove their inevitability. In examining these

changes across time and location, they together prove the potential for resistance and transformation, as well as the possibility of their continuation toward more just circumstances.

Lastly, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism together make important contributions on the practicality of positive changes to the conditions and treatment of homelessness. The ethics of care in particular provides important guidance on how care can guide daily, institutional, and policy changes in the addressment of homelessness. However, a key takeaway from the two frameworks together is how a recognition of shared responsibility can refocus orientation of accountability and action from individualized to collective models. Rather than promote treatment plans that aim to 'fix' individual persons experiencing homelessness, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism together prompt action from those most powerful. In the case of homelessness, this includes media, social service organizations, academics, think tanks, and political figures. However, this practical emphasis on the responsibility of the powerful does not in any way negate the ethical imperative of ordinary domiciled persons to ensure that everyday speech and practice aligns and bolsters transformative efforts toward social justice.

5.4.2 The Space for Subjectivity, Advocacy, & the Elevation of Marginalized Voices

The second primary advantage of using feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care in tandem with one another is their combined strength in promoting subjectivity, emotion, and experience as legitimate points of analysis. Specifically, this enables feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care to be tools of political advocacy. As opposed to objectivity and value-neutrality, both frameworks enable scholars to recognize personal bias, social location, privilege, and power as important determinants of knowledge and action. Rather than leave these elements unexamined, feminist poststructuralism, in particular, encourages the extrication and deconstruction of power in its relation to knowledge. An important contribution from the ethics of care is its acknowledgement of emotion and experience as essential features of interpersonal relationships, and thus elevates them among other terms of analysis when assessing practices and outcomes of care.

This explicit acknowledgement of the subjective is important for two key reasons. First, this gives space for scholars, policy-makers, and front-line workers to recognize the subjective elements that inevitably colour perspectives and action. Rather than let bias and power lurk unnamed and unacknowledged in publications or policy initiatives, preconception and prejudice are examined and discussed. By extension, it is further recognized that all knowledge is entwined with power, and so detached objectivity may be replaced with active advocacy. As this relates to homelessness, the uptake of the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralist perspectives can legitimize the explicit alignment of agents and initiatives with the voiced experiences and needs of the very people experiencing this phenomenon.

Second, the views of marginalized communities are given more space and more legitimacy when the claims on validity held by objectivity is dislodged by frameworks such as the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism. That marginalized communities have direct and personal experience with systems of oppression and injustice has been used to delegitimize their voices as 'too proximate, too emotional, too subjective'. In contrast, both feminist poststructuralism and ethics of care validate this knowledge and elevate its significance as key determinants for resistance and care, respectively. This has important implications for advancing the experiences of unhoused people in directing and guiding systemic approaches toward addressing homelessness.

Undomiciled persons are frequently excluded from discussions about homelessness in media, social services, and policy realms. Against this, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism provide insights on power and knowledge that can serve to challenge predominant ideals of legitimacy and authority, and thus leave space for experiential knowledge and first-person analysis to guide reflection and treatment of homelessness. Critique of power and knowledge enables care that is based in, and guided by, the expressed needs, experiences and expertise of care-recipients.

5.4.3 New Conceptualizations of Agency, Responsibility & Change

Lastly, I argue that the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism together break down powerfully limiting dichotomies that, left unchallenged, impede possibilities of change and structural

transformation. They challenge the neoliberal impulse to hold individuals responsible for what are ultimately systemic failures, and task those individuals with finding personal solutions to those structural injustices. This, I find, is a result of how agency and responsibility are understood through these frameworks. In feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care, agency and responsibility are not the exclusive domains of the individual, but rather are broadly diffuse, unevenly shared. By reconceptualizing agency and responsibility in collective terms, I argue that feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care reinvigorates the possibilities of resistance, change, and transformation at the personal and systemic scales.

Regarding agency, feminist poststructuralism is adept in recognizing the structural barriers to "individual freedom" as conceptualized by neoliberalism. However, the feminist poststructuralist subject is not passive either. Rather the individual has capacities of critique, deconstruction, and resistance. I argue this balance struck between individual agency and structural barriers to agency is highly significant because it can simultaneously recognize the immense challenges of living within such structures, while allowing that resistance is possible, especially with collective assistance and care. This balance is important because it allows for a certain understanding and compassion for those struggling to survive and resist injustice, as well as for those, often with more power and privilege, who have yet to acknowledge its hold over them. This is further important for how responsibility is understood and approached.

By acknowledging the power of structure over individual lives and social conditions, responsibility can therefore be reformulated from an individualistic to expansive and collective conceptualization. It is from this acknowledgement of structural injustice that persons experiencing marginalization can be reframed from individual 'deviants' to casualties of systemic failures. This structural understanding is important for addressing problems of stigma and negative representation. Further, in reframing the problem in broader terms, the proposed solutions, too, become structural in nature. As a final point, reframing situations of injustice under structural, rather than individualistic terms, not only aids in redressing the stigma applied to the marginalized 'other'; such a reframing also highlights

the collective complicity of the 'self' in maintaining the structural conditions of inequity and oppression. Underscoring complicity in injustice destabilizes the comforting identifications with the self as a 'competent', 'beneficent' and 'productive' member of society. Such identity attachments serve to maintain negative identity ascriptions of the other, while minimizing connection between the self and other, and thus diminishing responsibility to attend to the wellbeing of the other.

The reconceptualization of agency and responsibility as informed by the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism has important implications when applied to the case study of homelessness in Canada. From these two frameworks, we can understand that resistance, even as enacted by individuals, even as practiced at the micro scale, can be an important and relevant act of agency and initiator of change. Given the enormous barriers to understanding, care, and structural transformation posed by stigmatizing and individualizing conceptualizations of homelessness, resistance to these barriers in the realm of language, narrative, and discourse are significant ways that persons can affect change. However, while the individual is not passive in this resistance and instigation of change, individual-level analysis of change is insufficient. Personal practices must be situated in community and collective efforts, culminating in changes to cultural attitudes, social service organizations, political policies, and economic institutions. This starts with individuals agitating for change, but ultimately requires an expansive sense of responsibility for the structural failures that cause homelessness, and a shared sense of responsibility for transforming those structures into something more just. Additionally, when homelessness is reconceptualized as a structural problem for which there is a shared responsibility, two important reconceptualizations follow. First, this shared responsibility serves to challenge the stigmatizing labels applied to individual people experiencing homelessness. Such persons are no longer deviant, incompetent, or morally corrupt; rather their circumstances are a product of systemic failures, for which we all share in maintaining. This leads to the second reconceptualization, that domiciled folk, by nature of their contrasting circumstances, are no longer immune from implication in the 'homelessness problem'. The housed population can no longer be understood as somehow morally separate and superior to the

unhoused population. Rather, both are connected as groups that are either privileged or marginalized by these systems.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the strengths of combining the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism. Together, these two frameworks posit a persuasive argument for understanding individuals as interpersonally and structurally connected to one another, despite seeming differences or distances between them. As such, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care provide a formidable challenge to neoliberal claims of autonomy and individualism, as well as the neoliberal ideal of non-interference. Instead, these frameworks forward an understanding of shared responsibility for the well-being of others based on a foundation of interdependence and connection. They challenge neoliberal individualism, as well as the rights-based frameworks and the responsibility of non-interference that are built from it. Under neoliberal logic, it is often individuals with least access to collective agency that are blamed and held responsible for systemic social ailments that are further enabled by a complicit collective. What feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care importantly emphasise is that agency and responsibility alike, are not the exclusive domains of the individual, but rather are broadly diffuse and unevenly collective. As such, this chapter found that when applied to the case study, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism first provided theoretical challenges to individualizing and stigmatizing discourses on homelessness that understood and treated the phenomenon as a problem of persons who experience it. Second, these frameworks may provide the theoretical and practical tools with which to address the structural failures that enable homelessness; not least of which is the concept of shared responsibility which may galvanize an otherwise complicit domiciled public, and the ideal of care as both guide to personal resistance and structural transformation. In sum, I have argued that together, feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care provide important insights into structural injustices, flexible ideals for challenging and resisting said injustices, and important points for ongoing assessment of efforts at affecting transformation at levels of personal practice, institutional processes, and systemic policies.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In Canada, understandings of homelessness and approaches to addressing it have been largely informed by neoliberal assumptions and ideals. Throughout this thesis, my intention has been to show how neoliberalism is a deficient framework with which to examine and approach homelessness. I have shown how neoliberal reforms were a primary catalyst of increased homelessness in the Global North, and examined the failures of neoliberalism to theoretically, normatively, and practically engage systemic failures, social injustice, and political marginalization.

At the outset of this thesis, I noted a curious contradiction in media narratives at the outset of COVID-19. A global pandemic is among the modern phenomena that makes undeniable the connectivity of individuals and communities. Indeed, calls for care, patience, and kindness proliferated as popular narratives, first demanded by influential personalities, and then echoed by news media. However, this contradiction to which I refer entailed that in the midst of these calls for community care, at a time of increased vulnerability of all, those among the most vulnerable to the virus and related harms were actively stigmatized and further marginalized by these very same media publications. What I noted from this contradiction, and what ultimately came to form the research questions that guided this thesis, was that during a period of profound vulnerability, homeless populations were increasingly excluded from definitions of 'self' and 'community' deemed deserving of care and resources to cope with this public health crisis and its associated harms. As such, I came to ask how the common conceptualizations of identity and responsibility informed predominant understandings and approaches to the phenomenon on homelessness in Canada.

I first examined neoliberalism as the primary framework in informing social, political, and economic discourses on inequality, resource distribution, individualism, and thus homelessness. I then looked to critical scholarship specific to the subject of homelessness. A primary theme of this literature is that neoliberal ideals of liberty, autonomy, and competition inform a highly individualized, highly

stigmatizing understanding of persons experiencing homelessness. Neoliberalism erases the systemic causes and potential solution of homelessness, thereby rendering unhoused individuals as agents bearing sole responsibility for their circumstances. In doing so, neoliberal perspectives fail to understand homelessness as a structural issue with structural solutions, and further serve to obscure the relational and systemic connections between the domiciled 'self', and the undomiciled 'other'. By denying the relationality of the housed and unhoused populations, neoliberal narratives thus negate an important route through which the 'self' may recognize responsibility for the unjust circumstances of the other, and thus a responsibility to attend to those injustices.

To return to this contradiction in calls for community care witnessed as COVID-19 burgeoned in the early months of 2020, I argue that neoliberal narratives undergird understandings of unhoused persons as 'other', thereby denying a potential acknowledgement of housed populations of connection to, and shared responsibility for, the circumstances of injustice experienced by the homelessness community. In recognition of the deficiencies of neoliberalism, I turned to feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care as frameworks that might be better equipped to theorize structural injustice and how it might be addressed. I ultimately argue that feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care together pose a formidable duo in approaching this task. In this concluding chapter, I revisit five core contributions of these frameworks and their relevance to the case study of homelessness in Canada.

6.1 Connection

Feminist poststructuralism and the ethics of care both posit social, political, and economic connection as foundational to their respective frameworks. Each provides important illustration for how connection is fundamental to life, and thus theory. The ethics of care focuses on the dependency of individual lives on care from others, as well as the substantial yet undervalued role of caring relations for the maintenance of individual and societal wellbeing. Feminist poststructuralism shows how discourses and political-economic structures each serve to connect individuals; how each shapes personal lives and circumstances, and how persons may affect them in turn. The world-wide effects of COVID-19

epitomizes this connectivity. The virus has spread across the globe many times over in multiple waves and variants, each time affecting individuals with the same ailment across vast distances, despite significant differences. However, it is important not to erase the inequalities in how COVID affects individuals and communities. Privilege and proximity to power has shielded many from the worst affects of the pandemic, while marginalization has ensured the harms of this virus has disproportionately fallen on others. As it relates to homelessness in Canada, the unhoused have been among those most exposed to harms of the virus, but also harmful by-products of social and political responses to the pandemic. While homelessness is predominantly represented as an ailment befalling the weak, incompetent, deviant 'other', what I have argued is that homelessness is a product of the very same ideals and structures that privilege the 'self'. As such, the unhoused 'other' and the domiciled 'self' cannot be understood separately, and their circumstances cannot be divorced one another, nor the discursive and structural realms they together inhabit. Rather, homelessness is intricately connected to the systems perpetuated and maintained by the housed, and this has important ethical and practical implications.

6.2 Responsibility

Given this connectivity, the ethics of care and feminist poststructuralism argue that there is a shared responsibility for injustices caused by shared discourses and structures, and thus a shared responsibility to rectify the source of these harms. This has important implications for how homelessness is addressed. Homelessness is first, understood to be caused by failures of social, political, and economic structures, and second, it is understood to be exacerbated by discourses that stigmatize and further marginalize those experiencing homelessness. These discourses and structures are formed and maintained in small but significant ways by the population at large. Through simple practices such as speech, market activity, and electoral choice, individuals who are not actively resisting these systems are thereby implicated in them. By contributing to the harms caused by these systems, individuals thus share in responsibility for amending them, and tending to those who are most affected by their harms.

6.3 Practice Guided by Care

Toward a transformation of harmful systems and an attendance to those most affected by them, I have argued that care, as posited by the ethics of care scholarship, can offer practical, accessible, and scalable values with which to approach these changes. Care of this sort is guided by the needs, experience, and consent of the recipient, while simultaneously motivated by a recognition of connection and that mutual benefits produced through the promotion of wellbeing always spreads throughout relations. Care may be a feeling of regard for another, but ultimately it is action upon this feeling that is of highest relevance. Lastly, care is important in proximate and intimate relationships, but it can also motivate and direct practices to address systemic harms committed against even those persons with whom relationality is not obvious. When applied to the phenomenon of homelessness, these care principles can orient day-to-day practices of ordinary domiciled folk, for example through changes to language and speech that address the stigmatization and othering of unhoused persons. Further, care can animate institutional practices in social service sectors, for example through the implementation of policies that centre the expertise of unhoused individuals in guiding organizational protocol and services related to homelessness. And finally, care can orient policy, law, and resource distribution at the centre of political and economic structures, not least of which includes government itself. Such measures may include defunding police budgets and increasing taxation of the wealthy to more equitably redistribute resources to the most marginalized, and strengthening social assistance for all, but specifically for those most vulnerable to extreme poverty, including the elderly, the 2SLGBTQA+ community, BIPOC individuals, people who use illicit substances, and individuals experiencing mental illness.

6.4 Ongoing Critique

Care, as outlined by the ethics of care literature, has enormous potential to animate significant practical change and radical transformation of structures related to homelessness. However, 'care' has also been used against marginalized groups through patronizing, coercive, and often harmful policies. Seemingly benign intentions have a long history of informing the forced treatment of individuals and

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marginalized groups, including those experiencing homelessness. As such, I have argued that the ongoing application of critique, as informed by feminist poststructuralism, is required throughout the implementation of care-informed practice or policy. Critical perspectives on the operation of power must not only be applied to systems of the status quo, but also all initiatives intended to challenge it. Even, and especially, benign intentions can go astray, and the veneer of good intentions often serves to obscure ignorance, superiority, power that inform efforts to 'fix' the other and fail to see the failures of the 'self' and the structures it enables.

6.5 Structural Transformation

Finally, this thesis has sough to show that changes in personal practice, discursive relations, and even systems related to homelessness are not only necessary, but entirely possible. Further, these scales of action and resistance, from the individual through to the structural level, are not discrete, but rather overlapping and mutually reinforcing. Rather than focusing exclusively on changes to individual behaviour, this thesis has promoted a structural understanding of the transformations necessary for addressing homelessness in Canada. I have argued that responsibility for enacting these changes should not be placed solely, or even primarily, on persons experiencing homelessness. Rather, such responsibility ought to be taken up by those empowered by unjust structures, as they are typically best positioned to instigate these structural transformations. In other words, the housed population ought to take on a greater and more active role in affecting changes to the unjust systems in which they participate and uphold. That said, the voices and experiences of unhoused persons ought to be the central influence of efforts towards resistance and transformation. While the labours of change ought to be borne primarily by those with the most power and privilege to shoulder that burden, such endeavours should always and necessarily be directed by those most marginalized by the systems at which these efforts are aimed. This thesis has above all been an attempt at taking their cue.

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