# THE STORIES STATISTICS TELL

# THE STORIES STATISTICS TELL: AN ETHNOGRAPHER'S EXPLORATION OF HOMELESS SHELTERS' PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

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TITLE: The Stories Statistics Tell: An Ethnographer's Exploration of Homeless Shelters' Performance Measurements

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing institutional ethnography and a critical analysis, this thesis explicates the textually-mediated process and ruling relations of performance measurement data collection in emergency homeless shelters. The thesis aimed to answer the query of whether the performance measurements collected by a set of programs, within a non-profit social service, adequately captured the full contribution of the work the staff did at their respective emergency shelter. Using literature, that has captured the experiences and insights of frontline workers who feel their work is inadequately captured, as a launch pad, this study spoke to informants who are directly involved in the creation of data collection tools and the reporting of the output and outcome performance measurements. How were these tools created? Who influences the development of the tools? Are some performance indicators (i.e. outputs, quality assurance, outcomes) measured more frequently or thoroughly than others? What are some of the barriers to measuring performance indicators? The study is based on five one-to-one semi-structured interviews, with informants working for a non-profit social service in Southern Ontario, and an analysis of the data collection tools used to compile performance measurements. The purpose of this research is to help social services, especially those that focus on addressing homelessness, improve the tools used to collect statistics on service so as to better articulate the breadth of work done by these services.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

There is only so much foundation that one can build from reading articles, attending lectures or critically thinking when preparing oneself for real world social work practice. Once new graduates enter the vast field of social work practice, it becomes apparent that the field is starkly different than was once imagined in the classroom. As Donna Baines reminisced about her first workplace experience after receiving her Master of Social Work degree, she found her work "was always crisis work and was never long-term, therapy family or case work" and "discovered that many of the techniques [she] had been taught in university were little or no help in [her] work, while others seemed to make matters worse" (2007, p. 4). I now share her sentiments, after having spent a few years working in the emergency shelter system.

On the cusp of my impending graduation from my undergraduate program, I was fortunate to have been offered a part-time position at a local non-profit shelter. Apprehensive at best, I began my training at the shelter by becoming acquainted with a typical case file for a family residing at the shelter. A 400 plus page binder was handed to me. The volume of documentation, the plethora of referrals made on a daily basis, and the sheer complexity of each case was unlike anything I had ever seen. I was overwhelmed to say the least. Within a couple months, I developed a decent grasp of the day to day practice. The work was fast-paced, crisis work with short-term case work and no two days were the same.

Since starting my career in social work, I have found it difficult to explain to friends and loved ones what I do at work. Listing the individual tasks seems disjointed and unguided, while saying that I help individuals and families secure safe, affordable and sustainable housing after experiencing episodic homelessness feels scripted and shallow. If on an individual level I was having trouble describing the work I was doing, I wondered how the combined efforts of my colleagues was being articulated to the wider community, our funders and our government.

In school, social work students were encouraged to pull apart case scenarios and describe the services one would provide, or referrals one would make to alleviate the problems in a person's life or strengthen the existing qualities of the person. The case examples were long and descriptive. Our solutions were presented in a similar fashion. Story telling was the medium in which we both understood and addressed case scenarios. This may be why social work students have an affinity for qualitative research and narrative therapy. I expected that I would find story telling or qualitative research to be present in the representation of services my non-profit social service (NPSS) organization offered to our community, funders and government.

Over several years of being employed with the organization, I saw the evolution of our statistical collection tools and our processes in communicating the work we do on a daily basis. The only constants were that the tools were predominately quantitative, standardized, and time consuming. A great deal of data was being captured with these tools, including the number of residents served, the length of time residents spent in the program before transitioning in the community in some capacity, the number of referrals

made, the amount of time spent directly speaking with residents and the amount of time spent advocating on their behalf. It had not dawned on me how the full breadth of work became simplified as it sifted through these tools and became captured in formal reports. Hours of rapport building, countless skillful attempts to negotiate with landlords, and numerous completed housing applications were all reduced to checks in a tic-box or quantified. I became frustrated with the measurements used to capture the great work and service being done with residents. I decided then to pursue more education in the hopes that I could better understand and address my visceral reactions in a more substantial way.

During my Master of Social Work program, one of the assigned readings for a course was by Baines, Charlesworth, Turner and O'Neill (2014) about lean social care and worker identity. It introduced me to the concept and pocket of research that suggested "that outcome measures fail to capture the full contributions of social advocacy, community planning and development efforts" (p. 437), an area of research expanded upon by authors such as Benjamin (2012), Carman (2007), Hwang and Powell (2009), LeRoux and Wright (2010), and Smith (2010). One of the participants, in Baines' study, had even echoed what I had then realized, which was that "we know we don't measure what we really do" (Baines et al., 2014, p. 442). As I explored the literature, I found myself swimming in sea of likeminded sentiments about how the work that was being done within NPSS was neither adequately captured nor comprehensively communicated out into the community.

The literature includes many articles detailing testimonies of frontline workers, managers and supervisors who felt similarly. However, only two articles within this literature explored what shelter staff do and discussed how this is expressed through outcome measurements (see Harris, Wathen & Lynch, 2014; Wathen et al., 2015). The aforementioned research focused on VAW (violence against women) shelters and I was unable to find any research pertaining to youth shelters, men's shelters or family shelters and the use of outcome measures.

As a result of my professional experiences and the troubling gap in social work literature, I was compelled to explore the discrepancy between what workers, managers and supervisors in the shelter system 'know' they are doing and what they are either reporting or capturing through statistical measurements as 'what they are doing'. I want to complement the existing research by focusing on the tools used to capture the work, rather than focusing solely on the lived experiences and opinions of shelter staff which has already been explored by other researchers. My personal entry into the research was my experience in the field of temporary and emergency shelters and my passion to communicate more fully the work being done in the field. This entry point shapes my perspective, the research and the analysis.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Context regarding Non-Profit Emergency Shelter Services

The onus on governments to take responsibility to support service delivery to address episodic or chronic homelessness is a 'hot potato' issue currently passed primarily between the provincial and municipal governments. Both provincial and territorial governments, along with their municipal and regional subsidiaries, are primarily responsible for the delivery of services that intersect with homelessness including health care, housing, financial welfare, child care and corrections (Gaetz, 2013). However, there are some programs and specific facets of programs, such as specialized staff members, that are funded under federal grants. Few provinces have developed plans to address homelessness and fewer have committed themselves to developing Affordable Housing Plans (Gaetz, 2013). Ontario's recent unveiling of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2015) commits the provincial government to a 10-year action plan to end chronic homelessness. In the interim, while 'Housing First' and affordable housing solutions continue to be developed and rolled out, the immediate need for temporary emergency accommodation, advocacy, landlord negotiation and support continues to fall on shelters. Non-profit social services (hereafter NPSS) are often contracted by regional or municipal governments to provide said services.

Emergency and temporary shelters range in mandate, covering populations such as youth, men, families, seniors and women experiencing homelessness, and women fleeing domestic violence. Shelters often cater to specific demographics to best serve the needs

of a specific population; the crisis and trauma of homelessness impacts individuals across the lifespan. Shelters are located "in a society with a shifting public commitment to the welfare state" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 4 – 5). They are staffed by professionals who "share in their clients' moments of joy, anger, hope, fear, pain, and despair" and are "engaged in conceptualizing, planning, and organizing efforts to improve difficult life situations" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 5). The services are typically referred to as frontline work which is the "direct work staff and volunteers do with users – clients, residents, constituents, or peers – to change some circumstances and improve their lives" (Benjamin, 2012, p. 434). In the case of homeless shelters, the frontline work should be attempting to address and alleviate homelessness and the performance measurements should provide information regarding the performance of the service in doing so (Martin & Kettner, 1996).

**Terminology regarding Performance Measurements**

There are many different indicators and resources that organizations, such as NPSS, monitor, including throughputs (continuous resources like staff) and inputs (resources coming into the NPSS). This thesis will focus on outputs, outcomes and quality assurance performance measurements. The term performance measurements should not be conflated with the overarching concept of measuring the performance of staff or services. The three distinct and standalone performance measurement types will be defined in due time. We will begin with the most basic building block of performance measurements which are the direct activities and services produced by any type of service known as the outputs.

Output performance measurements capture information about the type (intermediate or final) and amount of outputs produced by a NPSS (Martin & Kettner, 1996). They are an attempt to quantify the volume of services offered by the NPSS. The number is often then compared with the specific targets initially intended or set by the organization and their funders. Output measurements are generally quantitative and capture statistics such as the number of people who have been served, the number of unduplicated service users, the amount of funding expended, and the number of services that have been offered (Lee & Nowell, 2015, Martin & Kettner, 1996; Moxham, 2009).

Quality performance measures are designed to ensure NPSS focus on more than only efficiency accountability, which output measurements often emphasize (Martin & Kettner, 1996). The quality performance measurement tools, often in the form of a survey, are typically completed by service users in order to capture the quality of the service from their perspective. Quality performance measures instead concentrate on service quality to ensure the reliability of the service, timeliness, competence, financial responsibility, and user satisfaction levels. Martin and Kettner (1996) found that one of the most recurring issues experienced by federal programs in selecting performance measurements was that federal officials "selected too few quality performance measurements" (p. 102).

Outcomes are "benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in a nonprofit's activities" (Morley, Vinson & Hatry, 2001, p. 5). Some authors use the phrase "quality-of-life changes" to describe the impact that must be experienced by the individual to constitute an outcome (Martin & Kettner, 1996, p. 51).

The different approaches to measuring outcomes "can be broadly grouped into two categories: (1) a behavioral and environmental changes approach and (2) a customer satisfaction approach", noting that "these two approaches can be used complementarily" (Lee & Nowell, 2015, p. 306). While organizations may be regarded as highly satisfactory for the number of people served, it is a different issue whether organizations made causal changes in the quality of life of users through these services (Lee & Nowell, 2015, p. 306).

Outcome performance measurements have been defined along, relatively, the same lines in the literature, however various articles have offered their own unique emphasis. Mullen offers the opinion that although the phrase outcome measurements is used often, there is confusion regarding what is truly meant and that a "common language pertaining to 'outcomes' and 'outcome measurement' is missing" (2004, p. 8). Outcome measurements are most often described as the "systematic, empirical" process of defining, showcasing and monitoring indicators of a program's success (Mullen, 2004, p. 78). They are used for the purposes of: (a) improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Poister, 2003; Mullen, 2004; Benjamin, 2012), (b) enhancing evaluation internally (New England Nonprofit Quarterly, 1998; Benjamin, 2012), (c) establishing a "causal relationship between programs and measureable results" (New England Nonprofit Quarterly, 1998; Benjamin, 2012, p. 432) and, (d) creating a clearer accountability path (Benjamin, 2013, p. 1225).

This section will briefly link the use of performance measurements to the means of fiscal accountability for funders of NPSS. Performance measurements were notably taken

up during the 1990s as a response to funder requirements for measureable results (Benjamin, 2012), although many authors have shown that the concepts and ideas for this type of performance measurement has roots in evaluation (Martin & Kettner, 1996; Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991; Wholey et al., 1986). This quote from Harris, Wathen and Lynch (2014) explains the precarious financial situation in which shelters, in Ontario, currently operate:

> The funding base for shelters in Ontario comes primarily from the Provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)… and generally has not kept pace with the addition of services… The shortfall was covered by shelters through a variety of strategies, mainly local fundraising… (p. 738).

Furthermore, the contracts made between NPSS and Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services set the program's annual budget, formulate the service descriptions and the output targets (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2010). In return, the agencies are required to report collected service data, which includes the outputs and the demographic information about service users (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2010). This has driven the volume of outcome statistics collected, as both an effort to fulfill the accountability requirements of the Ministry and as a means of communicating needs and services provided to the fundraising audience. We will now explore how this information applies to the greater literature regarding the reasons for why there might be a mismatch between the frontline work and the performance measurements used to capture the work.

**Mismatch between frontline work and performance measurements**

Over the last two decades, there has been an increase in literature that has illustrated evidence that NPSS' staff feel as though outcome measurements do not represent important aspects of their work (Benjamin, 2012; Baines et al., 2014; Carman, 2007; Hwang & Powell, 2009; LeRoux & Wright, 2010; Smith, 2010). A participant in Baines et al.'s study boldly states "we know we don't measure what we really do – we know that" (2014, p. 442). The literature has shown a lively, constructive debate over the reasons for the "mismatch between outcome measurement frameworks and the work that staff do to ensure positive outcomes for those they serve" (Baines et al., 2014; Benjamin, 2012, p. 433; Botcheva, White & Huffman, 2002; Carman & Fredericks, 2008; Carnochan et al., 2014; Christensen & Ebrahim, 2006; Cutt & Murray, 2000; Ebrahim, 2005; Harris, Wathen & Lynch, 2014; Hwang & Powell, 2009; Knutsen & Brower, 2010; Smith, 2010; Wathen et al., 2015). However, articles that discuss this phenomenon seldom look at the textual processes of performance measurements to explore the discrepancy between what is reported by and what is done by frontline workers. Only two articles, written by the same authors, fulfilled this requirement and explored what shelters, specifically VAW (violence against women) shelters, do and discussed how this is communicated through outcome measurements (see Harris, Wathen & Lynch, 2014; Wathen et al., 2015).

I am deeply intrigued by the stories that performance measurements (which encompasses outputs, outcomes and quality assurance) currently tell about the work that the measurement tools are meant to accurately report on. The type of evidence of

misalignment and the degree to which this is occurring will assist us in understanding the theorized reasons for the mismatch. This section of the paper will engage with the current debate regarding the theorized reasons for the mismatch found in the literature between the reported outcomes and the work frontline staff claim to do.

The aforementioned articles present five theories on the reasons for the mismatch between the frontline work done by staff and what the measurements articulate about the work done. First, outcome measurements have become more closely connected with funding requirements, which has made their role in internal development secondary (Cutt & Murray, 2000; Ebrahim, 2005; Christensen & Ebrahim, 2006; Carnochan et al., 2014). Second, current measurements do not measure mezzo or macro level citizen engagement (Knutsen & Brower, 2010; Smith, 2010; Baines et al., 2014). Third, NPSS do not have the ability to adequately measure outcomes (Botcheva, White, & Huffman, 2002; Carman & Fredericks, 2008). This is exacerbated by their inability to define outcomes properly (Carnochan et al., 2014), the lack of expertise in creating the performance measurement frameworks (Benjamin, 2012), and monetary limitations (Sandraluz & Steinberg, 2006; Harris, Wathen & Lynch, 2014). Fourth, disgruntled workers participating in resistance work (not explicitly claimed in the literature but can be extrapolated from study participants in Baines et al., 2014) may directly or indirectly sabotage the data collection, and impact the culture aimed at maintaining collection methods in the organization (Carnochan et al., 2014). Last but not least, there exists confusion regarding who NPSS are accountable to and the way this information is presented to various audiences

(Benjamin, 2012; Harris, Wathen & Lynch, 2014). Each of these theories is elaborated below.

*Connected to Funding Requirements*

New Public Management "is a set of assumptions and value statements about how public sector organizations should be designed, organized, managed and how, in a quasi-business manner, they should function" (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 893). There exists the assumption that the same quasi-business management designs that brought success to the private sector would positively impact NPSS. The performance driven, cost reductionist and audit-oriented models of NPSS have replicated similar consequences for the for profit sector; competition, low wages with longer hours, more services with less resources, to name a few. This change has been detrimental to the shelter system which values, but poorly adopts, statistics and outcome measurements when attempting accountability to funders. It is important to establish the catalyst for the fiscally responsible culture that has permeated NPSS as it reinforces the argument that NPSS focus data collection on what is necessary to satisfy funders. Even then, what is necessary to satisfy funders in the name of 'accountability' is not always made clear, argue Harris, Wathen and Lynch (2014).

Cutt and Murray (2000), Ebrahim (2005), Christensen and Ebrahim (2006), and Carnochan et al. (2014) all argued that the aim to satisfy financial stakeholders should not supersede the process of internal development. When only what is necessary to complete a report to a funder is collected, many key elements of frontline work are neither accounted for nor reviewed. This causes incredible friction for frontline workers and

other staff who believe their work is not accurately represented by a mechanism that has the ability to influence internal practices and funding.

*Capturing work outside the box of micro-level frontline work*

Some scholars raise the argument that a reason for the mismatch may be that the performance measurement simply do not measure what work is done to engage citizens, and this is primarily what is missing (Knutsen & Brower, 2010; Smith, 2010). Baines et al. (2014) raised the issue that many workers did not have the time to continue with community-engaged, social justice-directed practices nor to document those activities with all of the documentation required by their work and the performance measurement. This work was seen as deeply important to them as workers and its lack of recognition, and cessation, impacted their self-esteem (Baines et al., 2014). The managers and supervisors who were interviewed by Baines et al. (2014) addressed this issue by reconceptualising the performance measurement "to reflect aspects of community practice seen as pivotal and important to workers" (p. 444). However, it may not be that important to the program's management staff or service users to have this information collected if it is not directly relevant to the operation of the program itself. This point would need to be explored more with the various stakeholders who are benefitted or impacted by this mezzo level community practice and macro level citizen engagement, to ensure that it is pivotal and important to measure.

*The ability to name and measure*

The most compelling reason as to why there is a discrepancy between what work is done and what is reported through performance measurements may be that NPSS do not have

capacity to adequately measure outcomes, as argued by Botcheva, White, and Huffman (2002), and Carman and Fredericks (2008). As noted previously, the contributing factors may be the inability to define outcomes, the lack of expert development, and monetary limitations. First, as was discussed previously, there is not a consistent language on outcomes or performance measurements. With this in mind, one must acknowledge the complexity of frontline work and the challenges that might be accompanied with translating the work into representative outcomes. There are a number of unaddressed challenges in defining client outcomes, including "the complex nature of client progress toward goals", the "lack of systemic process for defining outcomes" and the "tensions between funder-mandated measures and staff conceptualizations of client progress" (Carnochan et al., 2014, p. 1019). Second, Benjamin brought forth evidence that 79% of nonprofits are measuring their own performance without the use or consultation of a professional evaluator and instead are turning to 'how to' guidebooks and tools (Benjamin, 2012). While professional evaluators are not the only individuals who can create a comprehensive performance measurement framework or produce a reliable evaluation, there is merit to seeking professional navigation through the complexities of the frontline work and translating that into the corresponding outcome. Third, in a study brought forth by Sandraluz and Steinberg, it was reported that a NPSS organization, in the United States, spent 11% of its resources on "funder compliance" activities (Sandraluz and Steinberg, 2006, in Harris, Wathen & Lynch, 2014, p. 738). However, it was not clear whether those organizations had it budgeted for those monetary resources to go to funder compliance or whether that was money that had to be reallocated to be

compliant. Although this evidence comes from a vastly different geopolitical setting, it matches the anecdotal evidence and is supported in the literature that there is little funding available to organizations to adequately develop or maintain performance measurements (Carman & Fredericks, 2008; Carnochan et al., 2014; Ebrahim, 2002; Edward & Hulme, 1995). This was touched upon earlier, and a suggestion was offered to embed these costs into the budget that is presented to the funders, perhaps as a means of bringing to life the phrase "you get what you pay for".

*Possible Sabotage?*

Laura O'Neil, a co-author on the article by Baines et al. (2014), has challenged her students to evaluate whether a professional action is an act of compliance or resistance (personal communications, March 4, 2016). With this in mind, although it was not explicitly categorized as resistance, the sentiments expressed by the participants of the Baines et al. (2014) article were resistant to performance measurements. "One workers reported 'hating' the way that outcome measures require workers to remake their work as 'snapshots'" Baines and et al. report (2014, p. 442). The article goes on to discuss how "most managers were keenly aware of the negative impact statistics keeping and other forms of performance-monitoring metrics had on their employees" (Baines et al., 2014, p. 442). Perhaps the mismatch of the work done and the work reported is an unintentional act of sabotage of the performance measurements and a conscious act of resistance. It is not out of the realm of plausibility that a significant number of staff would refuse to accurately capture their work due to their strong dislike or hatred of the process and the neoliberal tool for accountability. When only the testimonies of staff are collected, one

neglects to examine the tools that might actually ask the proper questions to accurately represent the work but are thwarted by the lack of accurate data fed into them. Developing further the point about resistance work, some of the literature suggested that there may be a lack of institutional culture aimed at maintaining and support performance measurements (Carnochan et al., 2014). When the institutional culture is defiant, implicitly resistant to the tool, and disgruntled by the purpose of performance measurements, it is not unlikely that the tool is accurate or useful as it is activated by the frontline staff.

*Accountable to whom?*

NPSS operate in a complex accountability environment (Benjamin, 2013; Kearns, 1996). NPSS are engaged in accountability *up* to board members, funders and government and accountability *down* to service users, community members, and community partners (Edwards & Hulme, 1996, in Benjamin, 2013). Benjamin (2012) explains that NPSS could work in three domains; the individual level, the neighbourhood level and the policy levels. This can cause great confusion when a NPSS must consider who it is aiming to be accountable to and how it will present its findings to that appropriate audience. The multiple stakeholders that demand accountability from a NPSS operate and exist in multiple domains; service users and community members may benefit on an individual level but are also involved in the neighbourhood level of the work done. Each of these different stakeholders "may use different criteria to judge the standard of public services and may apply different weights to the same criterion" (Boyne, 2003, p. 368, in Harris, Wathen, Lynch, 2014). Often the downward accountability (in the individual and

community domains) are completed as a second thought to the upward accountability to funders and political stakeholders. The mismatch may be that some objectives are measured with more emphasis than others, and perhaps the performance measurements that are most meaningful to staff are not as important to the stakeholders, including service users or community members. Sanger (2008) offers solutions by advocating for local stakeholder involvement in the process of performance measurement development and "continually fine-tuning measures and goals that are strategically linked to balancing the needs of federal and state funders with those of clients and local citizens" (in Carnochan et al., 2014, p. 1016). One would need to map the process of creating and modifying the performance measurement to see why certain emphasis is placed on which set of measurements.

**Importance of the Literature for an Institutional Ethnographer**

The absorption and reflection of the literature in this topic is important for establishing the current knowledge of the topic, but it also serves a different purpose for students of institutional ethnography. As Campbell and Gregor (2002) explain, an institutional ethnographer's reading of the literature is "for both conventional reasons – to discover the scope of research knowledge in this area – and for a particular reason related to her own positioning" (p. 51). I have chosen to explore this topic and conduct my research using this methodology which I will thoroughly explain in Chapter Four. It is important to acknowledge the ramification it has on how I folded the literature into my standpoint in the study.

As noted in my introduction, I am an employee of a temporary emergency shelter that serves individuals experiencing episodic homelessness. This personal experience and invested interest in the operation of my own and other shelters impacts my outlook and perspective. While my standpoint in the study is as an observer of the process in which statistics are collected and captured using the tools of a specific NPSS, I am acutely aware of the process as a regular active participant in the service delivery and data collection. My position in the research, as a consumer of the literature, is complex as I can relate to the literature on a professional level but am also challenged by it when it discusses the onus of workers to ensure accurate reporting of the work. The literature helped ground me as an amateur institutional ethnographer to ensure that I was present when conducting interviews with my informants. It ensured that the interviews were guided by questions around the process of data collection, the tools and the services provided by the unique programs I spoke to, rather than attempting to confirm my own biases and opinions on the topic. The methodology also ensured that I used the advantage of my professional experience to help me navigate the language used in the shelter system and also challenge my informants to explain the terms as if I was not familiar with them.

**Prevailing Gap in the Literature**

I found the scarcity of literature regarding homeless shelters and performance measurements to be quite surprising. The scarcity, as caused by the location of research (Canada) and the specific field (homeless shelters) can be understood, however the sheer lack of investigation into what performance measurements are currently collected by

homeless shelters was baffling. Most of the literature on performance measurements in homeless shelters focused on explaining the phenomena of frontline workers' sentiments, while the most recent literature over the past five years has explored what work shelter workers truly do but has yet to connect it to what is articulated in the measurements collected. This may be because the minimal number of statistics requested by funders, within the homeless shelter system, is well documented in the literature. The literature has shown the key metrics, as required by bodies like the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, revolve almost exhaustively around cost per individual, cost per interaction, cost per bed day, occupancy rates, bed capacity, average number of interactions and other demographic questions (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2010). Harris, Wathen and Lynch described these data elements as "low hanging fruit of performance indicators" (2014, p. 742). Even so, there is a world of performance measurements that are collected internally that are not requested by funders and are ignored when presented; this represents a source of intrigue for me. An example of this phenomenon is the number of individuals who were turned away from the shelter because the shelter was full. Although collected, it is neither requested nor acknowledged when presented. Perhaps there is room to recommend that it is these internal reports that may bridge the gap for frontline workers who do not see their full contribution represented to all stakeholders.

> While this literature sheds some light on why nonprofit staff believe that outcome measurement frameworks are missing valuable aspects of their work, there has been no systematic examination of how nonprofits are actually guided to measure their performance or how these outcome

> measurement frameworks align with what nonprofits do to achieve positive outcomes for those they serve. (Benjamin, 2012, p. 433)

This is the quote that launched my inquiry forward. I decided that I was going to further examine how a particular non-profit provider, of services to individuals experiencing homelessness, was guided to measure their outputs, outcomes and quality assurance performances. I would use this information to see how their performance measurements aligned with what they do to achieve positive outcomes for those they serve.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH PROBLEM

The literature has been consistent about reporting that "nonprofit staff express a persistent concern that outcome measurement misses important aspects of their work" (Carman, 2007; Hwang & Powell, 2009; as cited in Benjamin, 2012, p. 432). However, the current body of literature would be well served by an in depth examination of how NPSS come to develop their performance measurement tools, how well the tools capture all of the activities completed by staff and how the work is formally communicated out to stakeholders.

As noted at the end of Chapter Two, the quote by Benjamin (2012), regarding the lack of systemic examination of how NPSS actually measure their performance, launched my inquiry forward as it oriented the study toward what was missing in the literature. I decided that I was going to further examine how a particular non-profit provider, of services to individuals experiencing homelessness, was guided to measure their outputs, outcomes and quality assurance performances. I would use this information to see how their performance measurements aligned with what they do to achieve positive outcomes for those they serve. It is the goal of this research to add to the literature on the development of outcome measurements (for social work agencies) for future reflection on what should be collected, how to best collect the data and how to communicate the stories of social service providers to funders to convey the full contribution of the work of staff teams. The aim is to benefit nonprofit social services in their development of outcome measurement tools.

*Central Question:* How well do the statistics collected by a social service provider capture the full contribution of the services and breadth of work done by its staff?

It is important to examine how the tools to measure outputs, outcomes and quality are created and how they align with the full breadth of services offered by the NPSS. As Campbell (2002) found in the field of nursing, when the work of workers is "not part of the official and textual organization" of the workplace, "it tends to be overlooked, thus not attributable to them as their knowledge, judgment or action" (as cited in Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 21). I believe that this finding is consistent in various helping professions, as many of the participants of the study by Baines et al. (2014) showcased the importance of having the work properly captured by the official statistics.

When the activities completed and outcomes produced by workers is not captured or part of the official reports of their organization, it may not become factored when funders look at the overall efficiency and success of the program or service. As was highlighted in the discussion about the literature (Chapter Two), it is well documented that performance measurements have become "tightly coupled with funding requirements" (Christensen & Ebrahim, 2006; Cutt & Murray, 2000; Ebrahim, 2005; as cited in Benjamin, 2012, p. 433). When NPSS appear "to run efficiently on the basis of abstract information" or even missing information, "[workers] may find their jobs being cut" (Campbell, 2000; as cited in Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 21). This is among the many reasons why it is so important for workers to ensure that their hard work is adequately captured in the performance measurement tools and official reports.

In summation, my research problem is the examination of the complex processes that end with a homeless shelter's performance measurements being presented to various stakeholders as a testament of the work completed by staff and the benefit to society that the shelters achieve. This process commences well before the work begins – targets are set, meetings are held, tools are selected or created. Once the organization begins to take the inputs and throughputs, and starts to produce outputs and outcomes, the process has already run into several issues which lead to an inaccurate final reporting of the shelter's contributions to its service users and community. My objective is to map this textually mediated process, within the confines of the study's scope, in the hopes that it may reveal what is captured by the performance measurements, how it is reported, and what has been left out in the final product of the tools used.

# CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

On the first day of my studies, all of the Masters of Social Work students were welcomed to participate in an orientation to meet and speak with faculty members. I was reacquainted with the Director of Social Work as she asked me if I had an idea about what my thesis topic might be. At that point, I recalled fumbling over my words as I discussed wanting to explore the type of statistics organizations collect. She asked me if I had considered 'institutional ethnography'. As I am known to do, I nodded confidently even though I had never heard those two words coupled in a sentence before. I found a moment to do a quick search of the methodology on my smart phone before I continued the discussion. This moment marks the beginning of my scholarship into this fascinating and expansive methodology.

Developed by Dorothy E. Smith, a Canadian sociologist, in the early 1980s, institutional ethnography (hereafter IE) (Smith, 1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006) has attracted academics across a variety of fields. One of the motivating factors to use this methodology for some students, myself included, is "the potential for the marriage of scholarly research and political engagement" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 14). I sought to use my thesis based program to produce research that would be useful for organizations across Canada and add to the literature on homeless that has been slightly apolitical.

Establishing knowledge about a research topic can be done in a variety of ways. Followers of various methodologies contest and challenge the validity, reliability and

universality of differing methods. Practitioners of IE believe that "being a knowing subject is where knowing begins" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 23). The process begins with the 'knowing subject' who is often the interviewee; their standpoint and position impacts how they 'see' and 'know' reality and thus create knowledge at that moment. There are few methodologies that attempt to "explicate everyday experiences and people's accounts of them, not just collect and describe them", and IE is among those methodologies (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 86). The ethnographer is "both storyteller and scientist" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 12; Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The ethnographer draws on "local experience in confronting and analyzing how people's lives come to be dominated and shaped by forces outside of them" (i.e. local ruling relations, extra local ruling relations) "and their purpose" (i.e. social relations) (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 12). By doing so, the ethnographer is 'mapping the relations' in that knower's life.

> Institutional ethnography is driven by the search to discover "how it happens," with the underlying assumptions that (a) social "happenings" consists in the concerted activities of people and (b) in contemporary society, local practices and experiences are tied into extended social relations or chains of action, many of which are mediated by documentary forms of knowledge. (Smith, 2006, p. 19)

A practitioner of institutional ethnography should "see herself as a knower located in the everyday world and finding meaning there, in contrast to reliance on library research and the application of theories" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 11). This unique positioning while doing the data collection and analysis allows for the data and evidence to speak for itself in many ways while being curated by the knower. The ruling relations and processes by which the institution is organized, that IE researchers aim to explicate, are the primary focus of data analysis.

**Terms**

Four major concepts to introduce when discussing IE are 'the problematic', 'standpoint', 'ruling relations', and 'texts'. The 'problematic' is the instance when a "researcher notices a disjunction (contradiction) between the official explanation of how things happen, or even the explanations provided by people who are experiencing the issue, and the observations of what actually goes on" (Smith, 1990a; in Benjamin & Rankin, 2014, p. 92). The 'standpoint' is the entry point for the researcher to position herself to look at a specific location within the institution. It is typically of those that are being ruled (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Benjamin & Rankin, 2014). Whereas 'ruling' is the socially organized exercise of power that influence people's behaviour, 'ruling relations' is the process where people know how to take up the rules without continuous reminders (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Institutions will often use texts to infuse specific values or interest into the local setting (Rankin et al., 2010). Texts, as defined within IE, are forms of media (including visual depictions, interviews, written words) that can be "replicated across time and geography" (Benjamin & Rankin, 2014, p. 94). Ethnographers aim to explicate these concepts in the research and form knowledge from it.

Two additional terms that must be introduced are the 'local' and the 'extra-local', which are the primary sites of interest for an institutional ethnographer. The 'local' setting is where life is lived and experienced by people, whereas the 'extra-local' or 'trans-local' is located outside the boundaries of one's everyday experience and may encompass systems and social organizations (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 28). In the context of homeless shelters, the 'local' would be the daily activities occurring within the

shelter that are experienced by the residents and workers, whereas the 'extra-local' may include the policymakers that are discussing the funding structure for said shelter outside the local setting.

**Scope, setting and participants**

The objective of IE is not to study or map out an institution in its entirety, as this may not be feasible for the study; rather the goal of IE is to "explore particular corners or strands within a specific institutional complex" and make those connections visible (Smith, 2006, p. 17). For that reason, as well as the time constrain of my program, it was important to limit the scope of the study in a way that would not hinder the exploration.

This study focused on an organization in Southern Ontario with multiple programs that provide emergency accommodation or shelter to individuals experiencing episodic homelessness. These various programs provide service to individuals across the lifespan as the programs house women with children, single women, youth, and families. I decided to look at four distinct programs, two of which prioritize serving women fleeing domestic violence. One of the contributions that IE makes when it maps processes is that it connects issues across multiple sites and provides insight on how to foster change at the local level (Wright, 2003, p. 247). It is important to explore whether the performance measurements across multiple programs within one organization adequately capture the activities of the workers. If one program fails to adequately capture the activities, it may be isolated to that location; however, a pattern among various programs within the same organization using similar processes may produce more reliable findings.

The study included five key informants. Each individual was in a position where they were directly involved with data collection. Although all frontline staff at homeless shelters aid in data collection, by documenting their 'stats' for example, these informants were involved in reporting statistics and creating the tools used to capture performance measurements. The decision to interview these specific informants was made to utilize their unique standpoint to better explore and understand the process of creating the tools before they are utilized. These informants also had more knowledge of how the collected performance measurements are used. This allows for an understanding of the process of performance measurement collection from the creation of the tool to the final reports sent out to funders.

**Methods**

Two of the preliminary steps for conducting an inquiry with this methodology is to discover a problematic phenomenon in the everyday world as the central inquiry and then to develop a conceptual framework for exploring said problematic (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 46). There exists a 'line of fault', as Dorothy Smith would call it, or "disjunctures between participants' experiential accounts of their work and institutionally-organized texts" in the field of homeless shelters (Smith, 1987; as cited in Nichols & Griffith, 2009, p. 244). Workers do not see the full breadth of their work and contributions captured in the performance measurement tools or the reports about their work. Although this has been marginally reported on in the literature, there has not been a focused look at or analysis of the tools used themselves.

The word 'institution' in IE has a slightly different connotation than the word itself; it must be understood as the "coordinated and intersecting work processes taking place in multiple sites" (Smith, 2006, p. 7). For that reason, IE is not exactly the study of institutions. Rather "it proposes a sociology that does not begin in theory but in people's experience" (Smith, 2006, p. 3). To best understand the experience and the process of performance measurement development and collection, short semi-structured interviews were used to explore "the nexus of coordinated work processes and courses of action" (Smith, 2006, p. 7).

The informants were recruited indirectly; I had corresponded with an individual at this organization to send an email on my behalf to no more than 10 staff members of this organization that met the eligibility requirements. The requirements were simple; they needed to work for one of the homeless shelter programs and they needed to be directly involved in the process of performance measurement collection. Five individuals replied voluntarily to the call for participation and I hit the ground running. I met each informant in their private office at their earliest convenience for a half hour interview. Most of the interviews finished after exactly thirty minutes, however some went slightly over. A fascinating phenomenon occurred during each interview; they were all interrupted briefly because the informant needed to respond to a question from a colleague. As someone with experience in this line of work, I know that there is not an hour that can go by without me apologizing to someone for either being interrupted or interrupting someone else's conversation. The work is hectic, fast-paced and in a constant state of organized chaos. I greatly appreciate the time that each informant found in their incredibly busy

days to volunteer for the study, meet with me, complete an interview and then provide me with the necessary textual documents I required.

Although IE is not directive when approaching the analysis of a set of findings, the methodology is clear about what questions have been and are suitable for IE. One of the guiding queries one might use, when reading the data analytically, is "what does it tell me about how this setting or event happens as it does?' (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 85). The interview can ask questions like 'What do you do?' and each major disclosure or comment from the interviewee, that unpacks rules or relations, must be followed up with 'why are you doing that at this moment in time?'. These questions help to set up the data collected to fulfill the two main goals of IE. One is "to develop an understanding and appreciation of individual's embodied experience", whereas the second goal is "to use those stories and accounts to bring into view the institutional field … for the purpose of identifying institutional sites and processes for future investigation" (McCoy, 2006; in Smith, 2006, p. 117). The methodology has clear implications as to how the data is collected, what questions are asked of the data and the goals it aims to achieve through the analysis.

As outlined in Appendix C, the questions that I used were aimed at achieving the second aforementioned goal of bringing into view the institutional field. Each informant spent the majority of their time responding to the very first question of "What services does your program offer?". This question allowed me to learn what exact services and activities the program was involving in on a daily basis and which workers were responsible for each task. The next questions moved on to understand the performance

measurements captured by the organization. From there, the questions ranged from "who creates the tools" to "to whom does your program report the collected measurements". Although no direct questions were posed to develop an understanding of the informant's embodied experience when collecting data, the responses for various questions often carried their sentiments. I chose not to ask any direct questions about embodied experience, contrary to the suggestions of Campbell and Gregor, because the literature has already provided me with enough consistent testimonies across varying geographical settings and roles (i.e. staff and managers and supervisors). However, it was beneficial that many of the responses fulfilled that goal of a typical IE interview.

In addition to the interviews that were conducted with the five informants, I requested from each a series of documents. As Smith (2006) emphasizes, a prominent area of interest for IE is the explication of "text-based forms" of "discursive practices" that "are central to large-scale organization and relations of rulings" (p. 33). I requested that the informants provide me with the tools used to collect performance measurements (output, quality assurance, and outcome). All of the documents were to be blank and not filled out with client information or actual statistics. I did not receive any documents created by municipalities or provincial government departments, although some informants described them in their interviews. I was provided with tools used internally to capture statistics for Directors' Reports and spreadsheets that amalgamated what statistics would be reported to funders. Some of these documents were explained during the interview, whereas some needed some additional clarification after the interview.

**Ethical Considerations**

This research study was reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. As described above, the study used semi-structured interviews to capture the breadth of the activities carried out by the shelter workers and to introduce the process in which performance measures are collected. To ensure that the informants did not feel pressured to participate in the study, I recruited the informants using an indirect recruiter who sent out an email to potential participants who would then reply directly to me if they wanted more information or to participate. The call for participation was entirely voluntary and participants could withdraw their interest or participation at any time until the end of the recruitment phase.

Each interested participant was provided a letter of information (LOI, see Appendix B) outlining both consent and confidentiality of the study, before the scheduled interview (if the participant had agreed to meet). At the interview, before it began, I reviewed the LOI with the participant, answered any questions they had, and signed the consent form that the participant would have read, reviewed and signed prior to beginning the interview. During this process, the informants were reminded that they could withdraw their participation at any time, could skip any questions they did not wish to answer, could answer with as much depth as they felt comfortable to, and could remove their contributions after the interview was completed until the end of the writing phase.

All interviews were conducted in a private office that was selected by the informant. The interview questions were designed to be oriented toward explicating the process of collecting performance measurements and developing measurement tools as

oppose to seeking out their opinions on topics that might be uncomfortable to discuss with a researcher. There is the risk that we might be identified by the stories we tell, which is why I have interviewed multiple people throughout the organization and within different sites. Instead of using a pseudonym, each informant was assigned a number that their quotes will be connected to (i.e. 'Informant 1' and so on). This will ensure further anonymity for that person. The quotes have also been thoughtfully selected to protect confidentiality, as some of the discussion may have insinuated the organization or agency in which the informant works.

# CHAPTER FIVE: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

> Some of us will be activists, some of us will not. But we will all have a social responsibility. Our responsibility is to make text that express the standpoint of people and to help make them available to those who will use the work's subversive capacity in their own struggles. (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 128)

One of the first components I learned about IE was that "inquiry in institutional ethnography is about [the researcher] and their ways of knowing… or rather, as institutional ethnographers, they cannot stand apart from what they know and what they learned about the world" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 23). A personal trait of mine that is important to disclose, as it shapes my personal standpoint in the study, is my history as a social activist. I cannot detach myself from my critical outlook on social structures and institutions. As a disciplined scholar and decade long debate enthusiast, I felt a special affinity for IE for its commitment to present findings as they appear to the knower. I used a Critical theoretical framework along with my education, knowledge and thoughts to build my analysis in Chapter Seven.

Critical analysis of institutions and organizations "confront complex, multi-layered problems and dynamics" in order to change society, which contrasts with other theories which are oriented toward understanding and explaining society (Casey, 2002, p. 3). Critical Theory is "grounded in oppositional critical activity which necessitates a contextual understanding of all social phenomena, and aims to achieve the transformation of society" (Casey, 2002, p. 58). Critical Theory takes that story to achieve transformation or to change the discourse in society.

This theoretical framework complements IE, as an important feature of the methodology is "its critique of ruling processes that objectify people's lives" as it explicates "the actualities of people's daily lives and seeks to explore how these actualities are brought into being through coordinated sequences of activity" (Mykhalovsky & McCoy, 2002, p. 19). Critical theory and IE share an interest in the way individuals make sense of their own experience (Peirce, 1995).

Being a Critical theorist or an activist does not disqualify me from presenting valid and reliable data. Often times, critiques of researchers who have firm opinions or beliefs is that they are unable to be unbiased or objective. To that, Peirce (1995) would say that "critical research rejects the view that any research can claim to be objective or unbiased" (p. 570). An assumption about IE that I support is that the researcher does in fact play a constitutive role in the development of the research study. As Simon and Dippo (1986) have pointed out, the creation of knowledge cannot be fully understood without appreciating the histories of the researcher and context in which the researcher operates. They also suggest that a critical ethnographer should define the findings and analytic procedures in a way that is consistent with its pedagogical and political framework (Simon & Dippo, 1986). As noted previously, the purpose of this study is to both add to the literature on the subject but to also to assist individuals who work with and in homeless shelters to better capture the full contributions of all shelter staff. As Brodkey (1987) argues, "the goal of critical ethnography is always the same: to help create the possibility of transforming such institutions" (p. 67).

A Critical researcher would "aim to investigate the complex relationship between social structure… and human agency… without resorting to deterministic or reductionist analyses" (Peirce, 1995, p. 570-571). IE does not dictate a specific way to go about the analysis of a set of findings, rather it encourages the researcher to carefully map out the coordination of activities that make up the problematic. The combination of Critical theory and IE will ensure that the findings are not reduced into a theory but rather will help open the discussion around what is happening within the institution of homeless shelter data collection.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE FINDINGS

I began the process of each interview by walking to the respective shelters. I circled the block a couple times, as I have a tendency to arrive to meetings early. With each shelter, I had to use an intercom before I was permitted to enter the building. This was among the precautions used to increase the building's safety for residents. At each site, I was greeted by a worker at the front desk who was balancing multiple tasks; welcoming me as I sat waiting for the informant to meet me, taking phone calls, addressing the needs of residents, filling out papers, and answering the intercom. Although I am no stranger to the hustle and bustle of this type of work, I felt slightly guilty for taking time out of the busy days of the workers who were not even involved in my research. As I waited, the warm smiles of the workers put me at ease. I would soon be greeted by the informant and taken to either their private office or another private office. With each shelter, I was amazed to see their offices located so close to where the bulk of the frontline work occurs. No informant was more than half a minute's walk from either the front desk or the offices of the case managers. The utility of their locations became self evident during the interviews. As mentioned earlier, and not by sheer coincidence, each of the five interviews was interrupted at some point by a colleague needing to confirm a detail with the informant or to ask a question. Although I know this to be true in my own practice, it was confirming to witness that no matter which shelter I found myself in, all of the workers were balancing at least two tasks at once. I could not fathom how my informants found the time to spend almost an hour with me, much less how they were balancing all

of the frontline and paperwork they complete on a daily basis. Fortunately for me, the answer to my query would reveal itself in two of the interviews.

Five informants were interviewed and their quotes will be identified as such: Informant 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. I identified with a statement Smith (2006) made about focusing on the institutional relations when she stated "the identification of speakers, can support or interrupt that focus" (p. 40). I felt that the disclosure of their program or position, apart from diluting confidentiality, would take away the focus on the explication of the ruling relations and textually-mediated process of data collection. In order to avoid the "risk of inviting an individualizing line of analysis" of specific informants' contributions to the study, the speakers will be identified as previous stated (Smith, 2006, p. 40). However, it is important to note that the location of the quoted speakers in the institutional work process is that they are all directly involved in creating the internal tools and reporting the summarized performance measurements.

This section of the paper will cover the common themes that emerged after examining the interviews as well as the documents collected from informants. Throughout the interviews, the accounts of the informants revealed multiple themes including: (1) the undiscussed processes behind capturing performance measurements, (2) the different purposes for collecting performance measurement dependant on who is using them, (3) the ever-changing requirements of what stakeholders are requesting from the performance measurements, (4) the one-dimensional design of the tools, (5) the challenges of capturing the complexity of frontline work and the growing programs, and

(6) a perception of what might produce a more holistic picture of the work done by homeless shelters.

Briefly, before these trends are unpacked, it is important to clarify two terms that will emerge in this section. These terms are 'direct' and 'indirect'. These two terms are used as names for broad categories under which units of time are recorded. 'Direct' is work that is done face-to-face with residents, which may include short-term counselling, social contact, providing information, or discussing a referral. 'Indirect' is the work that happens behind the scenes, which may include calling a landlord, advocating with a social assistant case worker, liaising with the children's aid societies, or printing market rent searches for the resident. The time it took to complete said tasks would be captured under the appropriate category.

**The Process of Collecting Performance Measurements**

I spoke to five informants who worked for one of four programs within a single organization. There were differences between how each went about the process of collecting their performance measurements. The slight differences included how many reports they would complete each month (typically more than 2, some sites had as many as five), how staff went about filling in certain tools (at the end of their shift, or the end of the week, etc.) and what types of methods for quality performance measurement were used. Some of the programs had to report to Ministries (such as the MSCC or the MCYS), but each one had to report to the City in which they operate. There is a standard skeletal structure of how the forms are to be filled, by which I am referring to processes such as forms being completed by staff and then inputted or double checked by a

program or administrative assistant before being sent to the management team. There were also similarities that emerged in the interviews which unravelled processes like management staff creating the tools, the management team staying late to complete reports, and the room for human error.

Regarding the physical tools that are used, "right now we use an old fashioned excel spreadsheet, we have paper and pen and logs" (Informant 4) which was reinforced by three other informants. It was clarified that some data is captured into a database such as HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System) and then entered in the appropriate places in the reports to stakeholders. However, the bulk of the data is collected through paper forms which are then inputted into excel spreadsheets. There is nothing inherently awry with such an arrangement; it is quite standard to have paper copies of tallies and tracking sheets which are then formatting into an electronic copy. However, the sheer volume of separate forms, tally-charts, tracking sheets and documents is overwhelming.

It is important to outline the process by which the tools are created. When asked about whether a template was provided for the City requested data, an informant stated that "the City provides us a template that we have to use to report our stats on every month, so the tools that we've used, that we've created, as based on what the city is asking for" (Informant 1). The management team is provided with some training from the City and are then instructed about the type of information they must report on. When explored further, it became clear that the City provides a spreadsheet on which the data is to be filled, in order to correlate with the targets or questions about the demographics of

service users. However, the actual performance measurement tools used to collect, capture and codify the activities into data is created by the management teams of each site. This was further clarified by the comment that "[The City] doesn't tell us how to collect that data, they just say 'this is what we want' and we figure it out internally" (Informant 2). It is this comment that is reminiscent of the point, discussed in Chapter Two, regarding the onus placed on workers to create the tools without proper consultation or development.

Management staff are not only spending time revamping and evolving the performance measurements tools, but they are responsible for reporting to all of their funders in a timely manner. Every month, there are numerous reports due to various stakeholders and the deadlines are firm. When asked about how the informants manage this responsibility, the replies included: "it's really challenging, and often I think it means you stay late and you do it" (Informant 3). Another informant supported this statement when they said that the reports are often completed "after working our eight or nine hours… so I'm often doing this at night" and that "we're non-profit, nobody's going to tell you not to do more. You just do what you got to do to make it work" (Informant 5). When funding is resting on the accuracy and presentation of these reports, it is understandable why these workers felt it necessary to do whatever it took to complete them on time.

One of the reasons the reports take so much time is the importance for the reports to be accurate and for the data to be correct. An informant stated it well when they said that "statistics are only as good as those people inputting the data" (Informant 3). A few of the

informants spoke about how they would have to double check data twice, even after it had been checked by the workers and an administrative assistant. Ensuring that all the days of the month were captured (i.e. correcting an error like logging occupancy rates for 30 days on a 31-day month), that the numbers match (i.e. individual unit occupancy rates matching up to the total number of individuals residing) and other key elements would delay an already arduous process. Although human error is inevitable in any data inputting system, the consequences of incorrect data could be detrimental for a program.

The interviews also revealed possible reasons for why there was human error. The shelter system is a "very fast paced environment, and I think as social workers, we tend not to be so much into gathering those numbers sometimes, and helping [residents] has always been our priority". When frontline workers must choose to complete a document and tally up activities or attend to a resident in crisis or an important phone call, it is almost always the case that they will chose the latter. The informants discussed how they focus on "emphasizing the importance of capturing data" even when "it's really challenging to balance the needs of the people we support" because of the importance of accountability and communicating the work that is done (Informant 3). One staff used the term "tunnel vision" to describe how frontline workers focus so much on the needs of residents that "thinking bigger picture 'why I need to take the time to report stats' is lacking" (Informant 1). They further described the tension that occurs when working frontline and supporting a resident in crisis: "I have to focus on that, and I can't think about the City and I can't think about funding, so stats sort of falls to the background when you're dealing with so much emerging crisis" (Informant 1). As opposed to the

point made in Chapter Two about how there may be a purposeful refusal to complete statistics thoroughly, it may be that the priorities for frontline workers justifiably pushes data collection to the background which increases the risk of human error.

**The Purposes of Collecting Performance Measurements**

As discussed in Chapter Two, the collection of output and outcome measurements have many purposes including improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency, enhancing evaluation internally, ensuring accountability, and establishing a causal relationship between the work done and the impact observed. Through the interviews, I heard about how these informants understood the purpose of collecting performance measurements and how as staff they even took on additional reasons for collecting statistics.

An informant explained that "for the City, we have to meet targets, we do focus a lot on numbers… so there is a big drive to focus on the targets being set" (Informant 4). Targets are set by the City after a preliminary consultation with the program, and are a goal for activities such as referrals made or servicing a specific demographic. The targets are a superficial part of each of the aforementioned purposes. Meeting a target does not speak directly to an organization's effectiveness or efficiency, nor does it necessarily establish a causal relationship between the activity counted and the impact of the overall program. The organization may meet its target for referrals but those referrals may fall through on the other end, for example. Targets, however, are important in establishing accountability in the eyes of City staff as it has a direct relationship with financial inputs. The focus on using targets as a primary threshold for accountability frustrated one

informant who stated "I hate that [the City says] we pay for widgets, so we want to know how many widgets, but we're not working with widgets, we work with people" (Informant 5).

Throughout the interviews, targets were portrayed as a very important reason to ensure accurate and up-to-date statistics. Having the numbers meet or exceed the targets is important to the City and to the organization, but the informants expressed an interest beyond that: "we do want to meet out targets" and so the staff would discuss "how we go about seeking out new [clients] or maybe there's different groups [of people] that we're not reaching out to", and how to "make these communities aware that we have these services, so they're welcome to access them, and what can we do to be more accessible" (Informant 4). Meeting or exceeding the targets set was not only about accountability to funders and the inputs, but it was to ensure that the services were accessible to all, that they were well advertised in the community and that the community felt welcomed to access them.

There were many internal purposes for the strict collection of statistics. A word that came up in the interviews was "curiousity". Many of the informants were curious about trends or patterns they were observing in their practice and developed ways to track them internally. Some of this data became useful for external funding applications and some has been useful in discussing the issue of affordable housing in the City. While reviewing a tool that tracked the price of market rentals, the informant stated "that's something that we've asked the [housing worker] to compile over the last several months because we felt it was important to track the realities of what the housing market is like in [the city]"

(Informant 3). She explained that at this point in time, the data is collected internally because funders have not asked for the data or have not been too interested in receiving these figures. I find it curious myself why this information would not be more sought after, considering the linkages between affordable housing and permanent housing stability. Internally, the management teams would implement more collection tools, than needed to solely collect data for funders, because they sought to have information on trends, patterns, and use of staff hours (i.e. time spent on direct vs indirect), to name a few. This decision added to the workload and paperwork, but had some very important purposes.

One of the benefits of this curiousity and additional collected information, on the part of staff, is that the information may become useful when applying for funding to address the issues behind the trends or patterns. One informant stated that they collect so much more data than is requested because "I'm always fighting for money. Nobody asks us for outcomes. Nobody. We do it because I want to have it so for when I'm fighting for money" (Informant 5). The City and Ministries that provide the base funding for the shelters do not ask for outcomes, but are keen for them when the management teams use them to apply and justify requesting additional funding or expansions. The gravitas of the language is important: fighting for money. For many NPSS, each budget is an episode in a long struggle to maintain sustainable and consistent funding to ensure these services, such as emergency shelter, continue to exist. Along those very lines, an informant asked the rhetorical question: "how are we going to get services for this population if we don't have the story?" (Informant 5).

The curiousity and desire to enhance the program are not only present when creating new performance measurement tools, but also when examining the data produced by those tools. An informant explained how each month the management team will look at the data and use it "to look at what can we be doing differently, what can we be doing better, service trends, we look at how we can get feedback from clients in satisfaction surveys, we particularly pay attention to that feedback" (Informant 2). This showcases the evaluative thinking that seems to be naturally present in the organization and makes use of the rich data that is collected internally.

**Evolution of Form**

> Would it be helpful to review what the City report is? So, basically, the City is asking for the new program participants for the month, and it's all basic demographics… and then they want to know the number of intakes a month, then they want to know where folks go, so during the month, where do they transition from… then they want to know the type of referrals and then they break it into their categories and they want to know the number of participants who began receiving different sources of income… they also want to know who had a change in employment… and they also want to know who started education… that's what the City captures. (Informant 3)

Each of the informants confirmed that the focus of the reports to the City included demographics of service users, number of unique individuals accessing the services, number of nights spent at the program, where they transitioned from and where they went after they left the program. Although where the residents transitioned to (i.e. permanent housing, transitional living arrangements, etc.) is a form of outcome, the most nuanced outcomes like an increased knowledge of tenant rights, increased development of household budgeting skills, or coaching received in navigating rental market, are not

requested by the City. As one informant stated, “they don’t ask for outcomes, we just do them” (Informant 5).

The performance measurements that are collected internally are much wider in breadth and deeper in detail. For example, in the case of the housing worker for one of the sites, they were asked to “track direct service time, advocacy, documentation, apartment viewings, and [social housing] applications... details of market rent statistics… individual family's length of stay… educational housing programs… and then she tracks her own referrals” (Informant 3). Upon review of the tools used by this worker, there were some activities and outcomes missing from this list that they captured (see Appendix D). A few of the informants spoke about the types of reports that the Board of Directors receive and stated that they may be “a more accurate reflection of what we do than the City report, because the Director’s report gives you an overview of what we’re doing” (Informant 3). These reports allow the management teams to “talk about the programming that’s offered, you can talk about the journey to the program, you can talk about the individual programs”, and it’s a more “personalized” report that allows the Board to see the outputs and outcomes and the “challenges” that exist to service delivery (Informant 3).

Some of the outcomes that are not requested by funding bodies include system outcomes. One of the informants discussed a type of quality performance measurement that is collected internally which was how many children, who were in C/CAS’s care, were being returned to their mother’s care. This outcome was often a consequence of

multiple other factors, including increased stability in the household, and represented a larger implication of the work being done by frontline workers. The informant discussed the "larger implications" that this outcome has on other social service systems including "financial considerations of foster care, the emotional considerations of children in foster care, and the attachment pieces for mom" (Informant 4). This was an example of how an outcome in the local setting directly connects to goals in other extra-local settings.

Along with evaluative thinking, most of the informants discussed needing to predict what performance measurements might be requested from them spontaneously from a stakeholder: "we try to predict what we're going to be asked, because we're noticing trends so we're trying to be proactive" (Informant 3). The reasons for this included being able to better articulate the need for the existing program or expansions and to have a more holistic understanding of what the population needs. One of the additional reasons, that was indirectly mentioned, was the time that it saves, because otherwise the management is "manually going back and you're going through [case] files or you're going back into every Director's reports" (Informant 3). Informants clarified that these spontaneous requests have come from their Board of Directors but also the City. Staying on the cusp of new trends and performance measurements may be a way to cut down on the time that might otherwise be spent staying late to finish those requests.

**One-Dimensional Tools**

The categories used in the City templated tools feel outdated. Many of them have binary codes like "M" for male or "F" for female, and no room for another option. An informant

explained that they "remind them on a daily basis, or monthly basis" about the need for more inclusive language in the spreadsheets themselves, but also stated that the City was slowly progressing and changing their own forms (Informant 5). The internal tools used did not have these set binaries as frequently, especially when it came to gender, but staff would come against issues when having to input information regarding demographics into City created spreadsheets that did not allow for much flexibility. The informant went on to say that "I would just fill in other things" when the forms would restrict the options for gender (Informant 5).

The majority of the tools, apart from the Discharge Summary which were used by all of the programs internally, captured data in a quantitative fashion. There were tally-charts, and tic-boxes, and spaces to input numbers. There were seldom options for 'other' and if there was, it appeared that the number of 'other' occurrences was captured as oppose to what that occurrence entailed. For example, when "the City is asking for the new program participants for the month", the informant would often internally record details that did not fit into the prescribed categories on the form: "the 'other' tends to be a large number, like we have a large number of 'other languages' aside from English and French but it doesn't break it down, or give you a larger picture" (Informant 4). Whereas some of the informants were actively advocating for binaries to be removed or changed in the spreadsheets and tools, it appears that some advocacy around expanding categories like language may not have been taken up.

When explicating the evolution of how these tools changed over the years, a couple informants stated that the final data spreadsheet reported to the City used to have an

'other' section that was open ended where they could record additional information. One informant clarified that this section had been removed from the documents. The informant used to write in this section the number of individuals who had been turned away from service because the shelter was at its maximum capacity, along with other statistics. When I asked if this was incorporated into another question so that it could still be communicated, she stated it had not been. A vital piece of information regarding the needs of the population was lost because there was no closed or open ended question that allowed for it to be told.

The Discharge Summaries had many tic-boxes and did an adequate job summarizing all of the referrals that would have been made with or on behalf of the resident or family. As described by an informant, "you will hear a little bit of the tone of where the [resident] has come from and where they're at, because it's a human voice writing, instead of numbers dictating number of hours of direct and indirect service" (Informant 4). It is this 'human voice' that appears to be missing in almost all of the other tools used for internal purposes or to report back to stakeholders.

Referrals are a very important part of the frontline work in these programs. This is evident in how many referrals are made on a daily basis and the importance placed on capturing this information. One program captured them on a separate document which was completed by each staff member so that they could tally the referrals they made each month. Another program captured referrals on a tool that aligned with a specific service user on a daily basis, was a collective effort by all staff on one document, and noted if the referral was accessed. Another program captured them on a weekly basis and was

completed by individual staff members to reflect their own work. The referrals are broken down into straightforward categories, including employment, housing, medical, education, etc. The categories list various subcategories, for example under housing one might see market rent, RGI or transitional housing. The number of referrals are tallied and captured as numerical snapshots of the referral being made. For one site, that was as much detail as the document would record. The informant of that site stated that even though the workers "might have made ten referrals getting rec passes, [the tools] don't speak to the larger picture of what the support has provided or expanded for the family" (Informant 3). The impact of the referral is lost in this data collection process. Even the outcome is not truly recorded. One informant stated that their site prioritizes knowing the outcome of the referral and keeping track of that process, however the tool that captures this process was not provided to me to confirm said claim. The amount of time spent building trust and rapport with the resident before the referral was made, the time it took to complete the referral and the follow up are not captured in this singular tool, but rather become amalgamated into the bulk number of 'direct' or 'indirect' service time spent. The disjointed data collection for the referrals is evident.

Three out of the four programs summarized the work of their staff teams, on one tool respectively, into three primary categories: 'direct', 'indirect' and 'documentation'. In the following quote, the informant unpacks the contents of the bulk information condensed into units of time under 'direct' or 'indirect' service:

> In order to be offering effective program you have to have a greater understanding and you have to have your ear to the ground, you have to know what's happening, and through our direct and indirect [stats], it also really

> tells me the great work that staff are doing… it's cleaning a unit to make it hospitable for a new family to come in, it's providing time that one on one, it could be rapport building, it could be some really good support because they're in dire straits, it could be referrals, it could be the advocacy. (Informant 3)

All of those examples; cleaning a unit, rapport building, referrals, advocacy, or one on one discussions, fit either within 'direct' or 'indirect' service. This document takes the most amount of time for staff to complete as it condenses a worker's eight-hour work day to either one of these two categories (or a third called 'documentation' which captures how much time is spent logging in files). At the end of the day, a worker is left with statistic of, for example, 460 minutes spent on 'direct' and 120 minutes spent on 'indirect' service. Those 460 minutes may have been spent doing a plethora of various activities, but one would have to guess what exactly it was compromised of as it does not detail that. Not only are the activities within the categories of 'direct' or 'indirect' service undiscernible, but often important data that cannot be captured anywhere else ends up in these categories: "when you need to fill out the statistical forms, I don't know where this would fit, and then it kind of defaults into direct or indirect service" (Informant 4). When the forms are too rigid and offer no space for additional informant, key activities, outcomes and impacts are swallowed up into the abyss that is titled 'direct' or 'indirect' service. It was not clear as to why these two categories are used.

**Failing to Capture Complexity**

As briefly mentioned in Chapter Four, the very first question I asked each informant was about the types of services their program offers to service users. Each informant spent the majority of their time responding to that question. I was taken aback at the depth of the

responses and the seemingly limitless activities that the workers do on a daily basis. Even as I categorized them after the interviews, I found myself looking at the transcripts in awe. The activities might include calling landlords to arrange an interview, but it also included the work that was necessary to arrive at that phone call and make it successful: the market rent searches, the discussion with service users about how to approach the call, the advocacy that might take place, coaching residents on what to ask landlords, and the transportation to the viewing. It became apparent that each activity was an important link in a long chain that served to hold up the goal of securing safe, affordable and accessible housing. The mandate for each program differed slightly but were along the lines of working to provide temporary emergency shelter to individuals and working with residents toward securing accessible, safe, and affordable housing. The activities aimed specifically toward the goal of housing were only the tip of the complex iceberg of the frontline work occurring at these sites.

There is a passage in Harris, Wathen & Lynch (2014) that describes what it looks like to show care in social services, which includes a wide range of tasks such as;

> "child care, fundraising, answering phones, gardening, property maintenance, sorting donations, fixing kids' toys, arranging crafts activities and recreational outings for shelter residents, staffing computer resource centers, libraries and onsite food banks, organizing homework and tutoring clubs, career mentoring, grocery shopping, kitchen support, and driving [clients] to appointments" (p. 741)

Not one of the activities mentioned above was missing from the collective interviews I conducted. These very short term activities are not unique to these programs, as outputs like child minding or providing meals can be found elsewhere, but what is

unique is the care that envelopes those tasks. As one informant argued, residents could go to other programs for a meal, but what they would not find there is a supportive staff member who knows their name, their strengths, their resiliencies, their goals and their barriers and who would connect with them over that meal (Informant 1). A meal is a standard output that some of these programs recorded, but what was not recorded as aptly was the impact of the care that went into the process of the delivery of that service, the conversations that emerged and the rapport it built between the resident and staff.

This point is further acknowledged by another informant who stated that "so much of what these support workers do is not officially acknowledged… it's not officially acknowledged when they're sitting upstairs at 2AM with a [resident] doing skills" (Informant 1). They described how "last night I had staff up there reading a [young person] stories to go to sleep… a lot of that emotional regulation that they're doing, a lot of the skill building that they're doing… isn't being officially acknowledged" (Informant 1). I found that the output and outcome measurement tools did not in fact capture this, unless it was folded into 'direct' contact with a resident which would have failed to capture the impact of the teachable moments that occurred during these examples.

It was clear that there were many small activities that might constitute outputs but would probably not be collected. This is not to say that these small activities are not worthy of being collected, but rather that the sheer volume of activities would be daunting to capture. On the other hand, this is also not to suggest that this work should be discounted. I found that there was a lot of work that was done under this umbrella of 'caring activities' but no real category in the reporting forms under which to capture the

work. This work might fall into either category of 'direct' or 'indirect' work. When it is captured under one of these two bulk categories, the 'caring activities' lose a part of their essence as activities that go beyond the program mandate of looking for and securing housing. These activities show a compassion, hospitality and humanity that is not captured when lumped in with all other outputs like 'printed a market rent search' or 'scheduled an apartment viewing'. One of the informants conceded that the tools "capture [the work] in very dry ways at times", as the amalgamated work under 'indirect services' refers to "all of these paperwork and administrative pieces, behind the scenes work, that account for a lot of the planning of the groups, the researching, the training… but you don't really get a flavour of what's going on" (Informant 4).

Beyond the small activities that make up the day to day experiences of residents and workers, the bulk of the case management was complex work that often involved multiple community partners, countless weeks of work and tireless advocacy. Not only was the work difficult, but each case was unique because the work involves persons or families who are unique. "We have to be able to work with that individual and support them in such a way that's useful to them… and you know, we don't have a script, we can't have a script, because families are unique" (Informant 3). Some of the individuals or families entering an emergency shelter were fleeing domestic violence, which made their journeys even more complex. It became apparent in the interviews that the shelter staff were looking beyond just scheduling market rent viewings, filling in applications and discussing budgets; the staff were looking at the "barriers to maintaining housing" (Informant 4). The staff at various sites worked to ensure that the residents left the

program "well connected" and "well resourced" (Informant 4). In two separate interviews, the informants described that the residents left the programs having a better understanding and knowledge of the issues that were barriers to maintaining safe housing. One explained that "you can't really capture it in the stats… it's more anecdotal and what you observe and see, but we want to be able to capture that information internally, for our quality assurance" (Informant 4).

One of the analogies that an informant used, when asked whether they thought that the tools used to collect performance measurement fully captured the work their staff do on a daily basis, was;

> I picture it more like a skeleton. And the stories, and the actual observations, and the long term pieces are the more fleshy parts… [The statistics] give you some basic information as to how many people are moving to the program, what kind of work they're doing, where they've come from, how they've exited, what languages they speak, who they identify as, some of the basic information as to who we're serving, but the other smaller things, like children being returned to mom… you don't hear the individual stories and the anecdotal pieces, so there seems to be a little bit of a disconnect. (Informant 4)

This analogy is reminiscent of the one expressed by participants in the study by Baines et al. (2014) who stated that they felt their work was being captured in "snapshots" (p. 442). It is precisely these anecdotal pieces, that capture so much of the heart of the work, that are missing in the dry and quantitative methods of collecting performance measurements that seem to impact workers and how shelters communicate their overall impact on the community.

**Missing Puzzle Pieces**

The informants spoke at great length about the different facets that might be missing from having fully adequate performance measurement tools and a system for data collection. The most discussed and flushed out idea was a suggested employment of a worker whose sole responsibility would be to collect statistics, double check the data, and help in the development of tools. The other ideas discussed included addressing the barrier of time, lack of funding for performance measurement collection, and the need for a central database or more effective integration of existing software.

For some informants, the statistics-collection position could be part time, whereas some informants stated it could even be a full time job: the difference of opinion seemed to correlate with the number of reports the informant was responsible for completing each month. The informants described the additional workload of recording statistics as a huge expectation as "they want you to keep gathering these numbers, but yet they're not funding it" (Informant 3). Each informant prefaced the idea with the understanding that the funding for said position would have to come from somewhere and that it would have be something that was applied for, which is generally the process for acquiring a specialized staff at a NPSS. One staff felt that it would be helpful since they felt "we miss a lot because we don't have somebody who is designated to [do stats]" in order to "be able to do it to its fullest potential" (Informant 1). Two of the informants discussed how they have embodied the role of statistician and that was not something that they wanted: "I don't want to be a statistician, but I want to have the stats" (Informant 5). A specific focus was given to the perspective that said worker might bring as it would be "nice to

have someone on staff who came from that mind-frame and that background to sort of guide us" (Informant 5). Most of the staff at NPSS, but specially at homeless shelters, are "social workers… sometimes not even social workers, a lot of us are child and youth workers, or social service workers" and thus may "[not have] a lot of training in stats collection" (Informant 1).

When asked about the biggest barriers to capturing performance measurements, almost unanimously, the informants stated time and money. When asked about how long it takes to collect statistics, two informants laughed throughout my question and chanted 'lots of time'. One informant admitted that "we miss a lot because we don't have the time" (Informant 1). Upon reflecting on the documents and the interviews, it appears that the data that might be missed is the additional measurements collected internally, as the checks-and-balances for the City and Ministry reports were too strict to allow any significant errors. One informant was briefly stumped by the discussion and stated: "I don't even know what to say, I know that I have headaches at the end of the month. I spend hours and hours doing it" (Informant 5). It appeared that the biggest issues were that their "first priority is always the direct service" and that their time was spent addressing residents in crisis, so it is not only "hard to pull yourself away from that really important essential work and focus on the data" but that the workday did not allot time to complete all of the reports (Informant 2). It was difficult to find an amount of time that was consistent among the interviewees.

The second most discussed barrier was money. Some informants could not speak to the topic as they were not sure how the budget was divided up in that regard. For some of

the sites, it was noted that there was money allocated in the budget for administrative or program assistants to work on inputting data and performance measurement collection. However, the informants strongly believed that the time they spent and the time spent by frontline workers, on performance measurement collection or reporting, was not explicitly funded. The salaries or wages of staff covered the entire gamut of work that they complete, but the focus for funders and for workers is and always has been frontline services. It appears that reporting and performance measurement collection is an expected task but one that typically is not direct frontline service delivery.

Although I believe I did not receive all of the tools used internally to collect performance measurements, from the documents I did receive and from the statements made in the interviews, it is very apparent that there are a lot of tools used and some that ask duplicate questions. The different sites were all multifaceted programs and were staffed by "lots of people with different jobs who have sort of different responsibility for reporting" and document under "500 ways of collecting stats" (Informant 1). The use of the number 500 may be slightly hyperbolic, but it genuinely felt that way to them and it appeared that way to me as a researcher. The informant went on the describe how much time and effort they put into reforming the way statistics were collected; all work that was not necessary but was indeed important for them and the effectiveness of the reporting process.

Among the many 'paper and pen' type of documents used to capture performance measurements, all of the sites used HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System) to some extent. Some used HIFIS more effectively and more closely

than others, whereas some sites were discussing looking toward other database programs that were designed for their specific mandated population. An informant described that they had been using HIFIS for residential numbers but had not been using it for other outputs generated in a specific program-based part of the service. This situation has since changed, in that program, since using HIFIS for all of those outputs: it has "really helped in terms of the amount of time it takes, because you can just pull a report" (Informant 1). The varying degree to which sites used HIFIS differed despite all serving under the umbrella of one organization. Some of the informants stated that they wanted a common database between extra-organizational agencies that serve the same population. They stated that different shelters collect "carrots and oranges… they're about the same colour but it's totally not the same work at all" (Informant 5). Having a common language within the performance measurements (such as outputs and outcomes) might help align the various shelters and better showcase the collective work being done within one city.

An informant conceded that the collective performance measurements;

> …won't be a perfect picture of everything that the staff do, because they do so much. They are working hard every minute that they are here on shift and they are constantly responding to new and unique needs that are being presented… the breadth of the work that the team do is just so diverse, it's so ever-changing, and it's fast pace and it's busy, so I think it would be impossible to capture everything. (Informant 2)

While this may be the case, perhaps it is necessary to strive for the impossible. "[Funders] are only interested in knowing the story through stats" (Informant 5). If that is the case, we must better refine how we tell the story of the hard work being done by frontline and managerial staff.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

The intention of this study was to examine the complex textually-mediated processes that begin with a shelter's outputs, quality assurance measures, and outcomes, and end with stakeholders reading a report about the work being done within the shelter walls. The central research question was aimed at assessing whether or not the current tools used to collect performance measurements were adequately capturing the full contribution of the work done by staff. Now that the study has described some common themes found throughout the interviews, it is important to unpack and analyze the ruling relations and socially organized processes occurring between the local setting of the shelter and the extra-local. IE affords me a few avenues to take, including mapping out the process, explicating how the informants experience the process, or "elaborating on the conceptual schematic of ruling discourses" (Smith, 2006). Chapter Six adequately described some of these tenets but did not flush out the ruling relations observed throughout the research study. This chapter will explicate the ruling relations, discuss the details missing in the tools analyzed, acknowledge the amount of internal development being undertaken, discuss the light pressure needed on financial stakeholders, and suggest ways for NPSS to track mid-point outcomes. This chapter will end by discussing the limitations to the study and considerations for those who will pursue similar studies in the future.

*Social Organization and Ruling Relations*

I want to begin with a thought experiment: imagine an ordinary tally sheet. This tally sheet is used to capture all of the outputs of a program, in a month's time for example. An exhaustive list of activities exists on the left hand column and a, currently, blank column exists on its right where the worker would tally how many times each activity was completed that month. The sheet is seen as having a particular form; it may be seen as rigid, standardized and important, or it may be seen as cumbersome, ineffective and optional. The sheet has a history; it was created for a purpose by someone, it was implemented by that person or someone different, and it interacts with various workers throughout this process. The sheet is activated by the workers who use it. The workers, although may feel powerless because it is a close ended tally sheet, control what they input into this tally sheet, but they cannot control how the completed sheet will be interpreted by an audience.

It is a common assumption that any object inherently 'has' a particular form: IE makes the counter assumption that people constitute this form and impose it upon the object (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). As Campbell and Gregor (2002) emphasize, "texts are nearly always implicated in rulings" and "carry the determinations of many of our actions" (p. 32). This study cannot speak extensively to how extra-local stakeholders coordinate and organize the tools used for performance measurement data collection except to say that they have developed them to focus narrowly on demographics, certain outputs and only on the outcome of securing a housing placement. What this study can speak to is how the staff in the local setting concert and develop the tools, and which of

these relations of rulings can be found across various sites within this expanded local setting (i.e. the entire organization).

The texts, as discussed in Chapter Six (subsection: one dimensional tools), are generally tally-charts or spreadsheets. Outputs or outcomes are captured by number of occurrences. Funding bodies like the City and various Ministries (depending on the program) produce texts and reporting tools that are entirely quantitative and boil down the outputs and outcomes into digestible numbers. The literature and my findings showcase how workers feel as though this does not adequately capture the full contributions of the work they do. However, the tools that are designed internally bear many similarities in form. The tools designed internally predominately used tally-charts or tic-boxes. I found that a relation of ruling that is established, by the influence of the City or Ministry reporting apparatus, is that many of the tools developed internally are in the apparatus' image either for convenient transference of information or by tradition.

The tool that seemed to stand apart was the semi qualitative 'Discharge Summary' which was generally a combination of tic-box questions and an open section where staff would summarize a person or family's stay at the shelter. However, this tool does not seem to be used for evaluative purposes, internal development nor reporting out: this information is archived and used as a point of reference in the event that the person or family returns for support or shelter. If this tool can be created that slightly bends the traditional quantitative design, there may be more opportunities to re-examine the existing internal tools to make them more open ended, capture more descriptive details and work for the staff rather than against them. If staff feel that is it a disservice and

injustice that their work is captured in a skeletal or snapshot-like fashion, then perhaps developing tools that captures the work as they wish to see it represented would incentivize them to complete them more thoroughly (which minimizes human error) and would produce more enriched data for the management staff. This enriched data could be used, for example, to more substantially argue for much needed funding for existing services or expand the program to meet the needs of the population.

*The Devil is in the Details*

Referrals out to community services may not be the bread and butter of the work that staff accomplish, but it is often an important part to accomplishing a successful housing placement. Referrals to social assistance, a utility loan program, a legal aid clinic and many others, often help secure supports needed for a family to be approved for a new home and to maintain it in the long term. Referrals were discussed in each interview and the informants made sure to emphasize their importance. Some sites within the NPSS put an additional emphasis, when tracking these outputs, to follow up with the outcome of the referral (as per the interview, but no document was provided to confirm this occurs). However, when examining the other sites' tools for capturing referral outputs, it did not seem as though they took interest in the outcome of the referral. For some program, the tool used to capture the referrals was a tally sheet with categories like education, income, and health, under which there was an exhaustive example of common local social services working in those fields. Staff would tally how often they referred a resident to said agencies and then find the total sum of referrals made in each overarching category. Some of those agencies might be listed as 'hospital' under the category of 'health'; it

would not specify which hospital, why the referral was made, what the outcome of the referral was (i.e. completed, rescheduled, refused, no show) and whether it was a positive or negative experience for the resident. Even if this additional information is not requested by the City or Ministries (although there is a strong argument for why this would most certainly be in the interest of these stakeholders), it would be very useful for the NPSS referring out. This information could help track whether residents were being positively served by a specific local agency and might comment on the success rate of the out-going referrals. Furthermore, some of the informants had elaborated on the amount of time that would go into a typical referral; discussing it with the resident, providing information and directions, advocating on behalf of the resident, driving the resident or providing transportation, and following up with the resident. All of this work would be amalgamated into the overarching 'direct' or 'indirect' service time data dump. The time spent directly or indirectly working to facilitate the referral might be better captured on the same tool that collects the number and type of referrals made by each staff or on behalf of each individual/family. Having the time spent on referrals captured as a stand-alone statistic, on the tool that captures other information about the referrals made, may reveal how laboursome these outputs truly are.

Although I did not spend a significant amount of time at each site, I did observe a few details about how the programs were organized. The programs attempted to be warm and welcoming upon arrival and seemed to feature many social spaces (such as common areas). Loseke (2009) found, in a women's homeless shelter, that "residents assist each other in building self-esteem which results in women learning to take control over their

own lives" (p. 264). An important, and very overlooked, outcome of a residential living situation is residents building connections with one another. This can occur in so many different ways including youth supporting one another ('peer support'), individuals child-minding another resident's child(ren) ('social support') and residents assisting with translating non-confidential information like rules or upcoming programming ('translation support'). Although this is not work that is directly accomplished by staff, it is often facilitated by staff and is a real outcome for the residents and could be useful for internal development when considering how to organize physical spaces or facilitating more unstructured social events between residents.

Each informant worked for a site that had unique services, or 'programs', that catered to their unique population. Some sites had more expansive children's or youth programming, whereas some had more developed programming that focused on adult skill development (i.e. lease negotiations, budgeting skills). These incredible programs were measured to varying degrees in all three categories of performance measurements: outputs, quality assurance, and outcomes. Staff would note how many individuals participated, the type of program (i.e. recreational, therapeutic, etc.) and how many programs were run: these served as the primarily outputs. There did not appear to be a formal method to capture quality assurance across all of the sites running programs, apart from informal feedback provided to staff. Based on both the interviews and the documented provided to me, it appeared that no outcomes were captured about these specific 'in-house' programs. A typical course syllabus has learning objectives so that a student can claim, after successfully passing the course, that they have gained those

skills. Some of the programming, that one particular site ran for their residents, was based on a curriculum, while some were developed internally by staff with expertise on the topics. Nevertheless, each programming did achieve at least one learning objective or outcome that could be determined. The informants spoke at great length about how residents were learning more about themselves and the challenges they overcame or are currently overcoming. This outcome of self reflection and knowledge emerged from somewhere, and if it indeed came from a program, then it is worth while for it to be captured.

*Mid-point Outcomes*

Properly naming the outputs and outcomes that adequately express the complex work that shelter staff do on a daily basis is difficult enough, let alone creating the tools needed to capture said outputs and outcomes. As funders are particularly interested in the outcomes at the end of service, this NPSS appears to adequately capture not only the outcomes of interest for funders but also unrequested outcomes that occur at the end of service. This includes the cost of the unit the residents are moving to and all referrals made for the resident. However, there are many outcomes that occur throughout their stay, which I will call mid-point outcomes. This includes outcomes that are obtained through the attendance and completion of in-house programs like youth recreational activities, adult budgeting programs, or brief counselling around healthy relationships. At the moment, all of the sites within the study captured the number of attendees for the in-house programs and the number of in-house programs run. The tools failed to capture the outcomes these

programs achieved with the attendees (i.e. an increase in one's own understanding of substance use or domestic violence).

In London, U.K., St. Mungo's is a shelter that serves more than 10 000 individuals experiencing homelessness and assists with finding solutions for housing, employment and health issues. St. Mungo's utilized an external tool, created to support and measure change, called the Outcomes Star ™ developed by Triangle © (http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/an-example-st-mungos/). Some of the key findings included that the greatest change that occurred, as a result of the program, was the "clients' ability to manage their accommodation and in substance misuse" and "those clients engaging in activities, outings and life skills are most likely to make progress" (Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Limited, n.d.). The evaluation made recommendations, to the shelter, based on the correlation found between benefit and on site specialist services/activities, and the acknowledgement that outcome targets must reflect the complexity of the work (i.e. pre-contemplative service users). It is therefore recommended that NPSS conduct an evaluation on their in-house programs and activities. If a NPSS were to collect data on the outcomes of their in-house programs and activities, and an evidence-based evaluation correlates these outcomes with benefits, perhaps this information could build a strong case to funders to expand these specialist services.

*Internal Development and Learning*

Outcome measurements, along with targets for output measurements and a satisfactory level for quality assurance performance measurements, have become intertwined with funding requirements, especially when attempting to secure sustainable base funding or

funding expansions. There has been a tendency for NPSS to focus their data collection solely on what is necessary for financial stakeholders rather than what is necessary for internal development and growth (Benjamin, 2012; Christensen & Ebrahim, 2006; Cutt & Murray, 2000; Ebrahim, 2005). I did not find this to be the case with this particular organization. This organization prioritized internal development and learning in a way that did not diminish the significance of reporting to financial stakeholders. Both were equally as important, which seems to have led to late nights for staff. Although the issue of staff staying late to complete the overwhelming number of reports must be addressed, it should not cast a shadow on the real achievement for a NPSS to ensure that it did not sacrifice its own internal development and growth in the process. The informants spoke about a rich culture of being curious for ways to better serve their residents and the community, of being predictive of emerging trends and patterns and capturing the data accordingly, and of being prepared with information and data when fighting for new funding or fighting to maintain existing funding.

However, the curious nature, predictive insight and fighting spirit all exist on a double edged sword. Baines et al. (2014) also found that "most research participants felt that the volume of documentation required from them for outcome databases was formidable and got in the way of providing support to and face-to-face interactions with service users" (p. 442). A couple informants spoke specifically about how overwhelming the paperwork was and the number of tools that existed to capture all of data. The most pressing tension was that it took away from face-to-face time with residents and service users. As appears natural to this group of fast-paced, insightful and willing informants,

many of the informants spoke about their own current efforts to reformate the tools to be more condensed and effective. It is important for the tools to be smarter and more user friendly, especially in the realm of time, but it is important that in this process the tools are not cutting away questions that capture important work that might otherwise be overlooked or uncounted.

*A Push in the Right Direction*

No one wants to bite the hand that feeds. However, I believe it is imperative to urge that stakeholders actively listen and work collaboratively to ensure that NPSS, which do such important work in the community, are supported. The two key ideas that have not been heard by financial stakeholders is that it is important that stakeholders understand the full array of core and supplementary services offered by shelters, and that it costs a considerable amount to collect performance measurements.

Wathen et al. (2015) explained that when definitions limit what is understood as the 'core services' that shelters must and are mandated to offer then this narrow definition can be, and has been by the "Conservative Ontario government in the mid-1990s", used "to substantially cut funding from shelters" (OAITH, 1996; in Wathen et al., 2015, p. 127). Wathen et al. (2015) found that the MCSS had been implementing a wider understanding of the things that shelters do, but that it still did not include the full breadth of work being done daily to support individuals in crisis or recovering from trauma. With the NPSS that was the focus of this study and the City in which it is offered, the interviews revealed tools that seemed to be becoming more inflexible and closed off from additional details. The lack of growth of the tools used by the City needs to be called out

and challenged in a way that highlights the importance of fully acknowledging all of the work being done at these services and the need to work collaboratively with the NPSS to establish the definitions of what that work is and must be for the residents that depend on them during a crisis like homelessness.

The informants had spoken about funding contracts and whether or not they covered the costs of data collection. It appears, although it could not be confirmed as I did not have access nor explore the budgets of these programs, that the budgets cover a small number of hours for the administrative staff to input the collected information into the spreadsheets and reporting apparatuses required by funding stakeholders. However, the hours it takes all staff to collect the performance measurements and the hours it takes the management staff to then compile, summarize and report on the measurements is not funded. When I am discussing the collection of performance measurements, I am referring strictly to the information necessary for the funding stakeholders, as negotiating additional funding for internal data collection is a separate issue. At the very least, the information requested by the funding stakeholders should be covered by the funding they allot as opposed to being taken from the wider pocket of funding needed and meant for direct service work with service users and residents. The consequences of this reallocation of funding includes "shortfalls for the agency, cutbacks in direct service to clients and the near elimination of community activism and social change work" (Baines et al., 2014, p. 442). Funding stakeholders need a light push in the right direction so that they can come to the table and constructively discuss the real impacts of not funding the collection of data and the narrow definitions of core services.

**Limitations of the Standpoint and Study**

The standpoint in the study that I occupied was one of an emic perspective (the viewpoint of the members of the group being studied), as opposed to an etic perspective. Although I am not a part of a management team, nor am I involved in the creation or reporting of collected performance measurements, I am a member of the same field of work. I understand the complexity of frontline shelter work and I understand the issues that are persistent across organizations in the field of temporary housing accommodations. Conducting the research with an emic perspective allows me certain benefits such as knowing how and where to begin recruitment, having better self-awareness in the study, better ensuring confidentiality, and having opportunities to more easy clarify outstanding queries (LaSala, 2003). However, it also has its disadvantages including sometimes not noticing the familiar or more easily expressing reactions as a researcher (LaSala, 2003).

Researchers who utilize qualitative methods, who are also "members of the groups of communities they study may have a unique ability not only to elicit emic perspectives, but also to understand their importance" (LaSala, 2003, p. 17). I felt that I had established a decent level of trust and rapport with the informants due to my disclosure that I was and am a frontline worker in the same field. I felt that the informants felt more comfortable expressing their own emic perspectives on the topics discussed. A couple informants had used phrases like "you know what it's like" or "as a frontline worker, you know" before continuing with their thought. While this allowed for some more candid comments and an easier exchange, it may have allowed the informant to spare me some details that, as an institutional ethnographer, I would have wanted to hear to either clarify or confirm a facet

of the ruling relations. I attempted to address this by putting aside my insider knowledge while conducting the interviews and would frequently ask for clarification on the terms and acronyms used so that the informant was reminded to be thorough in their accounts.

Research should incorporate "an integration of both etic and emic perspectives (Lett, 1990; in LaSala, 2003). A way this could have been accomplished, but was not done due to the timeframe of the study, would be to have interviewed other stakeholders such as the contract analysts of the City or Ministry, or other individuals who would provide an emic perspective on performance measurements and an etic perspective outside of NPSS staff. Some informants had provided me with leads regarding who might be appropriate supplemental informants, from both etic and emic perspectives. This is something that is sought after in IE as an interview also serves to help readjust the line of questioning of the next interview and to help recruit additional interviewees. However, as I was recruiting interviewees indirectly and not by a snowball method, I was restricted from going down that route. I was also restricted by the timeframe of the study.

The timeframe of the study limited how many informants I spoke to, the scope of the study, and how much I would observe the 'local'. Some IE researchers will immerse themselves in the local setting, to better observe and document the ruling relations and processes that occur. This allows for the interview to not be the only source of information. Although I also used documents to observe the textual-ruling processes, I did not observe staff activate the tools, complete them, or complete the entire process of data collection or data reporting. An additional benefit, to being present in the local setting, would be to ensure all of the tools used to capture statistics would be gathered. I

found that some of the programs may not have provided me with some of the preliminary tools used to collect data on performance measurements. I found that I was receiving the tail-end of the textually-mediated process (i.e. the internal spreadsheets that would be used to feed the stakeholder reporting tools). I would advise further studies of a similar structure to ensure that there is enough time to be physically present in the local setting to observe these aspects of the process.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study, and the journey it took me on, begun with a spark of frustration and irritability. I was unsatisfied by the way that the collective work of my team at my workplace was being captured by tools that sifted, simplified and summarized the plethora of goals we accomplish into output numbers that felt incomplete. What I did not know, before beginning this process, was that there was already a burning passion for this topic being covered by academics and being discussed by social workers across the globe. Reading research by Benjamin (2012), Baines et al., (2014), and Wathen et al. (2015), to name a few, inspired me to add to the literature and attempt to explicate some ruling relations from the textually mediated processes that constrain how the work is communicated out to stakeholders.

One of the most powerful ideas within IE is the aim to explore ruling relations that span across time and space. I found that I was able to identify common trends among varying programs within a larger organization, but I wondered if that would transcend beyond the relatively local setting. I believe that the trends I found, since they appeared to be consistent with the findings of Baines et al. (2014) and Wathen et al. (2015), are present in other organizations and agencies within the city in which my research took place. I am also confident that this issue persists in various municipalities. It is often true that "texts such as policy statements and memos mediate this organization across geography and time and coordinate practices among multiple people" (Smith, 2005). For those reasons, I argue for the organizations to be vigilant around the impact of textual-

practices like narrow, quantitative reporting tools and data collection practices that are being encouraged by larger extra-local settings and permeating funding-dependant agencies like the ones I studied. This research may be helpful for organizations when examining their own tools and practices. Evaluative thinking is a catalyst for improvements, but the real action lies in progressive enhancements of the tools we use to collect information about our work.

We all want to have our work recognized. A professor once told me that those who feel a calling to the profession of social work are in it 'not for the income, but for the outcome'. Social workers, social service workers, child and youth workers and any other type of worker who comes to work at an emergency homeless shelter is part of some powerful outcomes, including families reuniting with their children, families securing affordable, safe and desired housing in the community, youth gaining skills and confidence, and individuals developing a secure net of social services in the event of a future emergency. The list of what work we do is not exhaustive, although the work sure feels exhausting some days. We want our work to be recognized. This goal can only be realized with constructive collaboration with stakeholders, some deep reflection about the current processes that rule over data collection, and the continued desire to tell the story of the great work we do and the awe-inspiring residents we serve. It is the hope of this researcher that this study will serve useful for other emergency shelters who are also struggling to fully communicate the work they do.

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# APPENDIX A

**McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB)**

c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support, MREB Secretariat, GH-305, e-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

**CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS CLEARANCE TO INVOLVE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH**

**Application Status: New** ☑ **Addendum** ☐ **Project Number:** 2016 014

**TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:**

The Stories Statistics Tell: An Ethnographic Exploration of Homeless Shelters' Statistics

| Faculty Investigator(s)/ Supervisor(s) | Dept./Address | Phone | E-Mail |
|---|---|---|---|
| S. Baker-Collins | Social Work | 23779 | sbcollins@mcmaster.ca |
| **Student Investigator(s)** | **Dept./Address** | **Phone** | **E-Mail** |
| V. Nikolskaya | Social Work | 905-902-677 | nikolsvk@mcmaster.ca |

The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the MREB to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the McMaster University Policies and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants. The following ethics certification is provided by the MREB:

☐ The application protocol is cleared as presented without questions or requests for modification.

☑ The application protocol is cleared as revised without questions or requests for modification.

☐ The application protocol is cleared subject to clarification and/or modification as appended or identified below.

**COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS: Ongoing clearance is contingent on completing the annual completed/status report. A "Change Request" or amendment must be made and cleared before any alterations are made to the research.**

| Reporting Frequency: | Annual: Feb-28-2017 | Other: |
|---|---|---|

**Date:** Feb-29-2016 **Chair, Dr. D. Young**

**APPENDIX B**
**LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT**

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stephanie Baker Collins
School of Social Work
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(905) 525-9140 ext. 23779
E-mail: sbcollins@mcmaster.ca

Student Investigator: Violetta Nikolskaya
School of Social Work
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: nikolsvk@mcmaster.ca

**Title of Research Study:**
The Stories Statistics Tell: An Ethnographic Exploration of Homeless Shelters' Statistics

**Purpose of the Study:**
I am conducting this study to better understand the capacity for statistical measurements, such as output and outcome measures, to capture and articulate the services offered by homeless shelters. Using short interviews, I hope to learn how the statistics are collected, any historical accounts of how measurement tools and processes have changed, and the breadth of services offered by various agencies to compare this with the tools used by agencies. I hope that this information and the analysis will help social services, especially those that focus on addressing homelessness, improve the tools used to collect statistics on service and articulate the breadth of work done by these services.
The sites of the study are familiar to me, as I am a current employee. If you know me, please do not feel obligated to participate because of this professional connection.
The research is a requirement of my Master's Degree of Social Work program. While it may be of interest to your organization, this research is NOT being conducted for your employer. The research will be used in my Thesis, and may be used in possible journal publications or conferences if proposed abstracts are accepted. All efforts to ensure privacy and confidentiality will be made for all manifestations of the research. No identifying information including your name, position or workplace, will ever be published.

**What is involved in taking part of the study?**
You will be asked to participate in a short one-on-one interview with the Student Investigator where she will ask questions about the services offered by your agency, the statistics collected, and the evolution of the measurement tools. The qualitative semi-structured interviews will be roughly 30 minutes and will be held in the setting of your convenience. Interviews may be held in your office if it is private. If you would prefer, however, other arrangements can be made including a private room at McMaster University. With your permission, interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed by the Student Investigator; the audio recording would thereafter be. If you would prefer not to be recorded, the Student Investigator will take notes (pen/paper).

You can skip any question that you don't want to answer and can take a break during the interview if needed. You may also stop the survey entirely at any time and not continue your participation. Please see sample questions below:

*Sample Questions:*
What services does your program offer?
What measurements (i.e. output, outcome, quality) does your program measure?
What measurements (i.e. outcomes, outputs, quality) does your agency focus most on?
What additional services or work do your employees undertake, in order to fulfill the spirit of the mandate, that is not officially acknowledged in the tools used to measure the program
What measurements (i.e. outcomes, outputs, quality) does your agency focus least on?

**Are there any risks to taking part in the study?**
It is not likely that there will be any harms or discomforts from your interview as the questions are aimed at understanding the tools and process used to measure services. There are potential psychological risks as you may know me, the interviewer, in a professional capacity and feel obligated to participate. You are NOT obligated to participate in the study, as it is entirely voluntary. You do not need to disclose why you are withdrawing your participation if you choose to cease your involvement. The study is neither a requirement of your employment nor being conducted for your employer. There are potential social risks as someone reading the Thesis may presume the city in which your program is located. The reader may also presume an association to your organization of employment due to the limited number of social services addressing homelessness. The paper will acknowledge your program as operating in Southern Ontario. Your responses will not be identified in the thesis by name, role or program site. Your participation will be noted in the Thesis as "a staff person". Any quotes will be presented in a manner that ensures that your site of employment cannot be identified.

If for any reason you feel uncomfortable during the research study you may opt not to answer the question, take a break, or stop the survey entirely and cease your participation. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no consequence to you.

**Are there any benefits to taking part in the study?**
The research may benefit you by offering you an opportunity to discuss your experiences and work in this field. The information collected through the interviews will be used to inform the Student Investigator's Master's Thesis, to enhance the body of social work research, and potentially aid in the development of future measurement tools used internally or externally.

**Confidentiality: Who will know about my participation or what I said in the study?**
We are often identifiable through the stories we tell. Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. The study will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified, including your position or place of employment.

The recruitment was conducted through your employer; however, they will never be notified of your participation. Similarly, your participation is not known to anyone except for the research team (the Student Investigator and her Faculty Supervisor). The research team will keep your participation private and confidential. I ask that you do not reveal your participation to your colleagues, including your supervisor.

The interviews will be audio recorded, if permitted, and the Student Investigator will be taking notes (pen/paper). If applicable, the audio records will be transcribed and the original audio file deleted thereafter. The transcription will not be titled nor contain information about the participant (i.e. place of employment or position). All data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, in addition, electronic data (recording, typed transcriptions) will be kept on a password protected external hard-drive – only the Student Investigator will have access to the locked filing cabinet and the password protected external hard-drive. Once the study is complete, an archive of the data, without identifying information, will be maintained until September of 2016 (the duration of the Master's Degree), at which point it will be destroyed.

**Participation and Withdrawal: What if I change my mind about being a part of this study?**
Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw from) the interview for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form or part
way through the study. You may withdraw your participation until the completion of the recruitment and interviewing stage which will be May 29th, 2016. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions, you may choose to skip them, but you can still participate in the study.

To withdraw please be in touch with the Student Investigator in person, over the phone, or by email. This information will be provided during the interview.

**How do I find out about the results of this study?**
The thesis is expected to be completed and approved for dissemination by approximately September 2016. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please indicate this at the end of the document.

**I still have some more questions about the study; who may I speak to?**
If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact the Student Investigator:
Violetta Nikolskaya, B.S.W., B.A.
nikolsvk@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:
McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

**CONSENT – PARTICIPANT'S COPY**

I have read the information presented in the Letter of Information about a study being conducted by Violetta Nikolskaya of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study up until approximately the end of May 2016. I have been given a copy of this form. I understand that the information from my interview may be kept up until September 2016. I agree to participate in the study.

Please initial answers below:

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

___ Yes.

___ No.

2. I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

___ Yes, please send them to me at this email address
_____

Or to this mailing address:
_____

___ No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Name of Participant (Printed)
_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Person Who Obtained Consent (Student Investigator)
_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**CONSENT - INTERVIEWER'S COPY**

I have read the information presented in the Letter of Information about a study being conducted by Violetta Nikolskaya of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study up until approximately the end of May 2016. I have been given a copy of this form. I understand that the information from my interview may be kept up until September 2016. I agree to participate in the study.

Please initial answers below:

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

___ Yes.

___ No.

2. I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

___ Yes, please send them to me at this email address
_____

Or to this mailing address:
_____

___ No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Name of Participant (Printed)
_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Person Who Obtained Consent (Student Investigator)
_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

# APPENDIX C

## QUESTIONS

Program is meant to refer to your site within the organization

1. Being as thorough as possible, what services does your program offer?

2. What measurements (i.e. output, outcome, quality) does your program use?

3. What measurements (i.e. outcomes, outputs, quality) does your program focus most on?

4. What is the mandate of your program?

5. What additional services or work do your employees undertake, in order to fulfill the spirit of the mandate, that is not officially acknowledged in the tools used to measure the program?

6. Which aspects of program success does your program not measure?

7. What measurements (i.e. outcomes, outputs, quality) does your program focus least on?

8. To whom does your program report the collected measurements?

9. Who creates the tools used?

10. Who has influence on the tools used?

11. How are the measurements used once they are collected?

12. How long does it take to collect statistics for your program?

13. What barriers exist, if any, to collecting statistics?

14. How well do the measurements collected by your program capture the full contribution of the services offered?

15. Anything else?

## APPENDIX D

**Notes about the Charts**

1. The site number does not in anyway correlate to a specific informant. Informant 2 may or may not work at Site 2, for example.
2. As discussed in Chapter Seven, not all of the tools used for data collection were provided to me during the course of the study. This chart is not to be viewed as an exhaustive list or description of the tools used, but rather a point of reference regarding the make up of some tools used.

Site One

| Tool | What it captures | Internal or external use |
|---|---|---|
| Daily Tracking of Residents<br>• Quantitative<br>• No set responses<br>• Tic boxes | • Accessed meals<br>• Instrumental services accessed (i.e. case management, phone, laundry)<br>• Accessed transportation<br>• Referrals made (i.e. housing worker, legal clinic, mental health, financial trustee, other external) and outcome<br>• Accessed programming | I & E<br><br>Minimally for external |
| Intake Form<br>• Quantitative<br>• Tic boxes<br>• Circle response | • Demographic<br>• First time or re-admit<br>• Previous residence | I & E<br>Minimally for external |
| Client Satisfaction Survey<br>• Quantitative<br>• Likert scale<br>• Four open ended qualitative Qs | • Opinion of safety, communication, staff, accommodations and program<br>• Inquiring about suggestions for improvement<br>• Open ended 'any other comments' section | I |
| Discharge<br>• Quantitative<br>• Tic boxes<br>• Open ended 'notes' section | • Instrumental services accessed (i.e. receiving ID, health supports REFERRED and health supports ACCESSED and additional referrals)<br>• Programs accessed<br>• Where the resident was housed/departed to | I & E<br><br>Minimally for external |

Site Two and Three

| Tool | What it captures | Internal or external use |
|---|---|---|
| Stats Forms (Data Collection)<br>• Quantitative<br>• Weekly<br>• Tally/Sum | • First time or re-admit<br>• Counsellor hours (direct) for adults and children<br>• Indirect time spent (2 categories: advocacy or administrative)<br>• Safety planning<br>• Service in English, service in French<br>• Turn away, turn away full, waitlist<br>• One-time caller – crisis<br>• Calls for support<br>• Programming attendance and hours spent<br>• Demographics<br>• Interpretation sessions (and who paid for it)<br>• Who referred the service user to the program | I & E<br><br>Minimally for external |
| Stats Forms (Data Collection) – Public Education<br>• Quantitative and qualitative<br>• Tic boxes<br>• Open ended sections x 3 | • Length of presentation given<br>• Topic of presentation<br>• Audience demographics (gender binary, age ranges)<br>• Type of group that received the presentation<br>• Presenter observations<br>• Audience feedback as interpreted by presenter | I & E |
| Stats Form (Data Collection)<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Tic boxes | • Program involvement (short term or long term)<br>• Type of service user (specific program involvement)<br>• File closed | I & E |
| Executive Summary of Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical | • First time or re-admit<br>• Counsellor hours (direct) for adults and children<br>• Indirect time spent (2 categories: advocacy or administrative)<br>• Safety planning<br>• Service in English, service in French<br>• Turn away, turn away full, waitlist<br>• One-time caller – crisis<br>• Calls for support<br>• Programming attendance and hours spent<br>• Demographics<br>• Interpretation sessions (and who paid for it)<br>• Who referred the service user to the program | E |

Site Four

| Tool | What it captures | Internal or external use |
|---|---|---|
| Program Participants<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical | • Demographics of service users (gender – more inclusive options, age ranges, racial background)<br>• Status of service user (resident/homeless or housed)<br>• # of participants discharged from institutional care (i.e. criminal justice, health facility, child welfare) | E |
| Intakes<br>• Quantitative<br>• Annual<br>• Sum/Numerical | • Citizenship status of residents | E |
| Housing Worker Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical | • Direct Service (minutes)<br>• Advocacy (minutes)<br>• Documentation (minutes)<br>• Viewings (# of outputs)<br>• Mileages<br>• Social Housing Referrals/Applications (# of outputs) | I & E<br><br>Minimally for external |
| Market Rent Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical | • # of members in a family<br>• Rent the family will be paying<br>• Utilities for said unit<br>• Size of said unit<br>• Length of resident's stay in shelter program | I |
| Housing Worker Program Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical<br>• Tic box for type | • Type of program (i.e. life skills, educational, recreational)<br>• # of adults and # of children who attended | I |
| Move Out Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical | • Departed to (i.e. market rent, RGI, temporary placement, transitional housing, other) | I & E |
| Case Manager Referral Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical | • Referral type<br>• # of referrals made | I & E |

Site Four Continued

| Tool | What it captures | Internal or external use |
|---|---|---|
| Client Satisfaction Survey<br>• Quantitative<br>• Likert scale<br>• Four open ended qualitative Qs | • Opinion of safety, communication, staff, accommodations and program<br>• Inquiring about suggestions for improvement<br>• Open ended 'any other comments' section | I |
| Weekly Supply Package<br>• Quantitative | • Amount $ - Basic Needs (Food Vouchers) provided<br>• Toiletries provided (yes, no) | I |
| Transportation (bus tickets, taxi vouchers)<br>• Quantitative | • How many provided to whom | I |
| Child and Youth Worker Program Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical<br>• Tic box for type | • Type of program (i.e. life skills, educational, recreational)<br>• # of adults and # of children who attended | I |
| Child and Youth Worker Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical | • Direct Service (minutes)<br>• Indirect Service (minutes) | I & E<br><br>Minimally for external |
| Case Manager Referral Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Tally/Sum | • Referral type<br>• # of referrals made<br>• # of resources provided (backpacks, birthday gifts)<br>• # of advocacy letters written for the library<br>• # of confirmation of school enrollment letters sent to OW | I & E<br><br>Minimally for external |
| Intake Summary<br>• Quantitative<br>• Tic boxes<br>• 'Notes' section | • Reason for service<br>• Income prior to entering shelter<br>• Type of previous housing | I |
| Discharge<br>• Quantitative<br>• Tic boxes<br>• 'Notes' section | • Instrumental services accessed and referrals made<br>• Where the resident was housed/departed to<br>• Length of stay | I |

Site Four Continued

| Tool | What it captures | Internal or external use |
|---|---|---|
| Income, Employment and Education Changes<br>• Quantitative<br>• Predominately Y or N | • Changes in income, employment and education (Y/N)<br>• Change of income to what type | E |
| Case Managers Service Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Unit of time (minutes)<br>• Sum | • Residential services (amount of time spent – Direct, Indirect, Documentation)<br>• Referral services (amount of time spent – Direct, Indirect, Documentation)<br>• Community outreach services (amount of time spent – Direct, Indirect, Documentation) | I |
| Program Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Annual<br>• Sum | • Occupancy (based on units)<br>• Number of intakes<br>• Number of turn away, turn away full<br>• Changes in income, education, employment<br>• Housing viewings<br>• Number of RGI applications completed<br>• Number of move outs in four various types of housing | I & E |
| Occupancy Stats<br>• Quantitative<br>• Annual<br>• Sum | • Occupancy (based on families, children, adults, bed nights, intakes) | E |
| Occupancy Report<br>• Quantitative<br>• Monthly<br>• Sum/Numerical | • Length of stay<br>• Demographics (gender binary, age ranges)<br>• Income<br>• Citizenship status<br>• Number of family members | E |