How have neoliberal shifts from the 1980s to present day in social welfare delivery changed the services provided to street youth in Vancouver?

by

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In this paper, I analyse the history of services for street youth in Vancouver and the policy context in which street youth services in Vancouver operate. The history and development of street youth services in Vancouver over longer periods of time is not well researched and hence my research came from an exploratory perspective. I have pursued my research primarily through semi-structured interviews with key informants. I investigated the development of street youth services through three dimensions. The first dimension of my research project focused on issue recognition and looked at how street youth are configured as a social problem. The second dimension traced the history of the sector serving street-involved youth and is framed through an analysis of policy context. The final dimension of my research is a stakeholder analysis. A stakeholder analysis is commonly done in policy analysis to understand to what extent important stakeholders have influenced policy making in the sector.

Of particular interest is how the policy and service-delivery context for street youth services has been shaped by policies which have been implemented and pursued by British Columbia's provincial government since the 1980s. Implied in the trajectory of my research is a bigger question; how have neoliberal policies translated into a policy environment which is fragmented, hides its politics and is less interactive, responsive and co-operative than one would hope for?

**Keywords:** street youth, Vancouver, non-profit sector, Neoliberalism, privatization
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Many thanks go to all the people who were willing to be interviewed. I felt very honoured that so many people trusted me with recording their experiences. I was also very inspired by the passion and commitment which I have witnessed. Thank you to all my informants for sharing your experiences!
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CHAPTER 1
PROSPECTUS

1.1 STREET YOUTH IN CONTEXT

This project is an exploratory piece of research. I attempted to research and
chronicle the history and development of street youth services in Vancouver
which to my knowledge has not been done before. I have done an extensive
literature review, I researched the work of social work and social policy in­
volved academics in B.C. and I researched relevant journals (Canadian Review
of Social Policy, Canadian Social Work Review, Journal of Sociology and Social
Welfare) as well as provincial and municipal policy documents and grey litera­
ture to learn what is known about street youth in Vancouver and the services
they receive. Research has been done on the impact of neoliberal policies on
certain populations (e.g., welfare recipients) and much research and debate
exists with respect to profiling and understanding street youth, gaps in services
and homelessness in general (see McCreary Centre Society reports (2002), (2007),
(2007), Millar (2009), Eberle: Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study (2007),
City of Vancouver reports: you have heard this before — street involved youth
and the service gaps (1997) and Homeless Street Youth in Downtown (2000),
Kryder-Croe ed. (1991)). However, the service delivery model which serves
street youth does not seem to be discussed much, and the (policy) history of this
sector does not seem to be well documented. The notion that the history of this
sector is not well recorded and might best be served by an oral history approach
was confirmed by informants during the interviewing process.

I came to this study as an insider (I have worked with street involved
youth in the past) as well as an outsider, perhaps this is why this theme was so
interesting to me. I am an outsider to this situation because I did not train in
B.C. or Canada as a social welfare professional. I trained, studied and worked
as a social welfare professional working with disadvantaged and at-risk youth
populations in the U.K. and hence had a clear understanding of the policy and delivery framework through which my work took place in Europe. Most services in the U.K. were delivered through the public sector and a workforce which was professionalized (as characterised by the presence of professional associations, unions, relatively high labour standards, influence on policy-makers, expansion of University courses training these professionals, bargaining power with employers, concepts of national standards, etc.). When moving to B.C. and starting to work with street youth in Vancouver, I realised that the delivery system was very different from what I had been used to and hard to understand. Based on my observations, service delivery was done primarily through the non-profit sector, a lot of agencies seemed to be involved with quite different agendas and the whole sector seemed very fragmented. It was not clear to me how the sector was internally connected or steered or whether indeed anybody was doing any steering. Workers seemed semi-professionalized rather than professionalized: front-line staff seemed to have little/no signs of professional associations, bargaining power or impact on debates and policy, etc. It was unclear to me how policies were developed and by whom, why certain programs had a long life-span and others (often with more of a grass-roots or community development approach) did not. There was no literature to be found which was able to explain the delivery model for street youth services or how services did develop. This triggered my interest in researching the service delivery model which is prevalent in Vancouver B.C. and its history and rationale for development. Whilst not much academic research seemed to have focused on the issue, I have found some research on the social welfare delivery model in B.C. leading up to the 1980s. Callahan and McNiven (1988) argue that historically, B.C. had relied more on the non-profit sector than the public sector to deliver services, but there had also been a major (and ideologically informed) privatisation of social services dating back to the 1980s. There has also been research on the non-profit sector in Canada by Katherine Scott (2003), and Ron Saunders (2004) which highlights the many challenges and strains this sector faces. The book “People, Politics, and Child Welfare in British Columbia” by Foster and Wharf (editors) published in 2007 was also a hugely important source of information as was the work of John Shields (1998, 2002). In the context of the literature mentioned above (and detailed in the literature review), the story of the street youth services in Vancouver seems to emerge as a neoliberal narrative defined by a roll-back and privatization of service provision, obscuring of responsibilities, a fragmentation
of services and a down-loading of responsibilities to lower levels of government or other bodies.

My original research is qualitative in nature. The purpose of my research is to be exploratory, and I believe this research is able to fill a gap in knowledge. I consider an understanding of the history and development of street youth services to be a good foundation for further research. My research also points towards other questions:

- how effective are policies and directives which govern the service delivery framework

and

- whether and to what extent policy development in a neoliberal context diminishes the impact of important stakeholders.

1.2 My Tool Kit and Lens: The Policy Cycle Model

The intent of my data analysis is to chronicle the development of street youth services through a policy cycle model. The policy cycle model is commonly used to explain how policies and service-responses develop over time (see Dye, 2005 and Howlett and Ramesh, 2003). In much simplified terms, the policy cycle refers to an issue being identified in need of policy. This means that an issue crosses the threshold of public awareness and is seen as a social problem. The “seed beds where policies grow on the provincial level are usually the political sphere, the civil service or the community” (Gordon, 2010). It is generally understood that stakeholders impact on and inform the terms of the debate through which a policy is developed and implemented. Policies are usually evaluated based on internal (civil service, administration, politicians) or external concerns (community concerns, successful lobbying groups, interest groups, etc.). If policies are deemed not responsive, suitable or financeable, a policy reform debate emerges. This would bring us back to the beginning of the cycle as the problem might get re-defined and stakeholders will be involved again in shaping the policy reform process. Following that format, three somewhat separate spheres of investigation emerge: a problem recognition analysis, a stakeholder analysis (players who are able to impact policy making and inform the debate) and a policy history/policy analysis perspective. However, although somewhat separate stages can be identified, they are
nevertheless linked in an on-going cycle and somewhat of a dialectical process where one sphere continuously informs the other spheres.

It is also important to mention that a traditional policy analysis stance as outlined above can be much more complicated by neoliberal regimes which have outsourced and contracted out government functions. This brings a multitude of new players and dependencies in the mix, and relationships which are often quite obscure and difficult to trace. Further research questions have emerged from my research, specifically around neoliberal welfare regimes, the effectiveness of the service response model or around the power-knowledge discourse. My project does not fully research and explore these questions, but rather points towards potential directions for further research. Questions around the transparency of the policy-making process, how unvoiced interests shape and influence the policy making process and whether social policy-making has indeed changed in the neoliberal regime (see Peck and Tickell, 2002) will be outlined and might provide the basis for a future research project.

The scope of my project was challenging. I had to continuously work on down-scaling my focus and worked with themes stemming from the research which I could not research in great depth.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, my intent is to outline the role, history, development and contradictions of the welfare state as this provides the context for the work, challenges and contradictions which front-line and policy staff serving street youth face. I also chronicle the impact of neoliberal policies on social service delivery in Canada embodied through the development and re-positioning of the non-profit sector. I will briefly touch on the conflicting roles and conditions which define the work sphere for social workers and other welfare (semi-) professionals as some of these issues showed up in my research interviews and I would like to be able to contextualize these experiences. I will also analyse some literature which pertains to the presentation of how the issue of street youth is understood.

In order to analyse what happened to a specific sector of social welfare delivery (services for street youth) in a certain location (Vancouver) for a certain period of time (1980s to present), it is necessary to first contextualize the
role and function of the welfare state as well as its history and development. The welfare state as developed by most western nations during the 20th century was based on beliefs that societal and social problems (like orphans, disabled, ill, etc.) should be managed and responded to through the state (policy and state agencies) (see O'Connor, 2001, Skocpol, 1985, Shields, 2002).

Keynesianism was the economic model adopted by most western democracies (including Canada) after World War II. This model was characterized by macroeconomic management to ensure stable economic growth combined with the development of public programs of social provision such as health care, social services, income assistance, and so on. These programs provided socialization and education to ensure labour market participation (a healthy, socialized and educated workforce) as well as some level of income support to protect citizens against the worst excesses of the marketplace. In a sense, one could argue that the welfare state was an attempted synthesis of capitalist and socialist values. The 1950s to 1980s are often seen as the golden age of the welfare state, with programs expanding, public expectation growing, public professionals establishing themselves, many citizens experiencing a relatively high standard of living and the state taking on ever more functions. The late 1970s and early 1980s are usually characterized as the crisis of the welfare state; affordability of programs during challenging economic times and the role of the state were questioned.

What is hidden though in this well-known narrative is the contradictory nature of the welfare state. Offe (1984) argues that the capitalist state is caught up in contradictions. Capitalism treats the labour force as a commodity — yet it is not really a commodity — hence the need for capitalist societies to develop non-market or de-commodified institutions to ensure the preservation, motivation and socialization of the workforce. Offe argues that capitalism is a crisis-ridden system and that this limits the capacity of the welfare state “to prevent and compensate for economic crisis” (Offe, 1984, p. 61). The real task of the (welfare) state is hence a superficial crisis management which does not touch upon the real contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. This paper does not allow me to fully elaborate on Offe and there are certain criticisms to be made — a certain notion of economic determinism could be questionable. However, my intent was to utilize his argumentation to contextualize the contradictions inherent to the welfare state project.
I think it is useful to outline some of the tensions inherent to the welfare state project as they were referenced by respondents during my original research (interviews). The welfare state was and continues to be a battlefield—an arena in which working class and other movements won concessions and demands to better their situation (health services, etc.) as well as an arena through which they are and were pacified, co-opted, managed and socialized. Many social control theorists such as Goffman (1961), Cohen (1985) and Foucault (1974, 1977) research the more sinister aspect of the socialization process and cast the new emerging public services and professions such as social workers or psychiatrists as agents of social control. Whilst many of these professions emerged with the beginning of the industrial revolution (before the welfare state was fully established), their function was nevertheless fully embedded in the welfare state. To Foucault, psychiatrists, social workers, teachers, doctors, etc. are judges of normality whose function it is not only to observe, classify, examine, code, label individuals and their behaviour, but ultimately to turn them into a label, to create the dangerous class. I have no intent to elaborate on social control theorists any further but would argue that they do make an important point. There is also a positive re-distributive narrative of the welfare state to be told. I do not fully share the social control theorists' analysis of these professionals as passive and uncritical. Lipsky (1980) for example argues that front-line bureaucrats such as social workers have agency and the ability to influence policy: by virtue of having a big workload and many responsibilities paired with usually insufficient resources, welfare professionals are usually free to set their own priorities and hence shape policy in that way. Nevertheless the functions of these professions which social control theorists highlight are potentially problematic. One could certainly argue that welfare professionals such as social workers perceive the contradictions of support and resource allocation or a client-centred approach versus control, judgement and social engineering which underpin their work (see Gough, 1979).

1. I have labeled Foucault as a 'social control theorist' to stress some of the commonalities he shares with the other theorists mentioned. Foucault considered himself as a specialist in the history of systems of thought and is more commonly described as a philosopher or historian.

2. A client-centered approach is usually understood as a non-judgmental, holistic approach which focuses on the needs of the clients first and foremost and does not undermine the clients' agency when it comes to determining his/her journey and needs. This approach works towards diminishing the power imbalance between a client and a service provider. Social Engineering refers to moral, political, religious and social agendas which agencies have and pursue and which translates in program designs which define clients' needs overshadow his/her agency, turning them effectively into objects to be assembled.
As mentioned above, from the 1970s onwards, the welfare state has increasingly come under attack. This development is usually connected with the advancement of Neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a resurgence and repackaging of some of the components of liberal theory — above all, it is an understanding that individual freedom and property rights trump collective needs. The unregulated marketplace is seen as the best regulator and driving force for social relations. Neoliberalism has been increasingly theorized from the 1990s onwards, but it is also a term which is used retrospectively to describe experimental and initial moves towards privatization and state withdrawal which took place in different countries in the 1970s and 1980s. Neoliberalism is a geographically uneven and lop-sided process. Harvey has argued that “the complex ways in which political forces, historical traditions, and existing institutional arrangements (interact) all shaped why and how the process of neoliberalization actually occurred” (Harvey, 2007, p. 13).

Harvey also argues that in recent decades, “neoliberalism has become a hegemonic discourse with pervasive effects on ways of thought and political-economic practices” and that “it is above all a project to restore class dominance” (Harvey, 2007, p. 22). All of this means that the role of the state has hence been re-shaped: an institutional framework to accommodate these practices needed to be developed. For the welfare state per se, this means that public services and institutions which were set up to promote and deliver more egalitarian distribution measures have been dismantled. Public services were being re-commodified and privatized; market mechanisms were introduced to areas such as education, health care and social services and contracting out became the new order. The specific historical and institutional arrangements of the social service sector in British Columbia will be explored in more detail shortly, but it is worthwhile to mention here that the social service sector professionalized very late and was historically characterized by limited state involvement. The impact of neoliberal policies on the social service sector in British Columbia is hence more characteristic of a roll-out rather than a roll-back of the welfare state.

The theorists outlined above provide us with a good framework through which we can contextualize the history, development and decline of the welfare state project in western democracies. What is of specific interest now is how the neoliberal project has changed social welfare delivery in Canada, British Columbia and Vancouver. Canadian academics Hall and Reed (1998)
argue that neoliberal policies in Canada resulted in governments increasingly utilizing the voluntary sector as a mechanism through which social programs can be delivered less expensively. The voluntary sector became a mechanism through which state withdrawal could be justified.

The non-profit sector can be characterized as being privately controlled, not-for-profit and oriented to working towards the public good; it is deeply connected to concepts of charity, philanthropy or religious connotations (see Shields and Evans 1998). Historically, Canada always had a vibrant voluntary and non-profit/charity sector with a long history of assisting individuals, families and communities often covering gaps in services not covered by public or corporate services. Like the public welfare sector, many charities were also heavily involved in controlling the moral fibre of society and workers in the field had to deal with the same contradictions as their colleagues in the public sector — such as the client-centred approach versus social engineering. The scale, scope, rationale and motivation of this sector were to undergo extensive re-shaping through neoliberal policies.

The advancement of neoliberalism has changed this sector; no longer conceptualized as a marginal oddity not fully fitting within the public or the corporate/private sector, it has grown substantially and is now increasingly described as the “Third Sector” (Shields, 2002) of the economy. Shields (2002) outlines that between the 1960s and 2000, the number of charities has tripled. In 1994, over 70,000 charitable organisations existed in Canada (if non-profits are included in that account, the number of organisations is estimated to sit at 2,000,000). Charities alone share revenues of $90 billion dollars between them. In 1998, sixty per cent of these revenues came from government (data source: Statistics Canada, quoted in Hall and Reed, 1998). The non-profit sector “in 2004 employed 900,000 (paid) employees, about eight per cent of all paid employees in Canada” (Saunders, 2004, p. 7). Shields argues that “the contract relationship that is being developed between the state and non-profit organizations is . . . serving to transform the third sector, moving it away from its core mission, commercializing the sector’s operation and compromising its autonomy” (Shields, 2002, p. 2). Katherine Scott (2003) researched the impact of the current (neoliberal) funding regime on non-profits and argues that Canadian civil society is being eroded by these new funding strategies as they continue to undermine non-profits. Her research demonstrates that the funding shift from long term

3. The voluntary sector is comprised of charities and non-for-profit organizations.
organizational core funding to short-term project based funding has introduced a
level of volatility never seen before. Non-profits are no longer funded to pursue
their mission, but to conduct certain short-term projects defined by the funders
government). Volatility (job insecurity, etc.), a tendency to mission drift, loss of
infrastructure, reporting overload and lack of ability for these non-profits to
advocate on behalf of their clients are all apparent. In a relatively recent study by
Ron Saunders (2004), the working conditions for staff working for non-profits
were analysed. Amongst the issues of concern are the following findings: “there
is more temporary work in the non-profit sector (which is associated with re­
duced job security), concerns about the adequacy of training and fewer advance­
ments than in other sectors. There is also much lower pay, dramatically so for
managers and professionals” (Saunders, 2004, p. 61). What is not explicitly
mentioned in this report but an issue of concern is that the not-for-profit work­
force is rarely unionised and seemingly has little scope to organize in terms of
professional associations or professional bodies. By contrast, the professional
associations and unions representing teachers or doctors, for example, are a force
to be reckoned with and are influential stakeholders when it comes to shaping
policy relevant to their work.

Having briefly analysed and contextualized the role and history of the
welfare state and the non-profit sector as well as the workers working within this
sphere, I think it is time to investigate what has happened on the national and
provincial level. Ismael and Vaillancourt (1988) argue that Canadian provinces
have historically depended on a welfare pluralism model — social services were
provided through a mix of public and not-for-profit agencies. This stands in
contrast to many other Western democracies which primarily favoured a public
service delivery model. Moves towards further privatisation have manifested
since the 1970s in most Canadian provinces. Ismael and Vaillancourt (1988)
recount that one of the factors which likely contributed to the move towards
privatisation were changes in federal fiscal and equalization policies which
diminished the funding that provinces received from the federal government.
 Whilst privatisation as a means of rationalizing social spending was certainly an
appealing strategy for all provinces, different choices were made by different
provinces. British Columbia was one of the few provinces where “privatization
had been pronounced as an explicit objective of public policy . . . British
Columbia represents the most comprehensive and conspicuous privatization
package, where every mechanism to foster downsizing the welfare state has been
employed” (Ismael and Vaillancourt, 1988, p. 220). Callahan and McNiven (in Ismael and Vaillancourt eds., 1988) recount the history of social service delivery in B.C. from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. The authors demonstrate that B.C. had a different delivery model than other provinces between the 1960s and the mid-1980s. For virtually all western welfare states, this period was a time of expansion, professionalization of workers working for the public sector (social workers, etc.), unionisation and growth of services delivered through the public sector. B.C. however, had a mixed economy of non-profit and public sector delivery throughout that period. Social workers as a profession were late to professionalize in British Columbia. Political leadership in the 1970s both by the New Democratic Party (NDP) and subsequent Social Credit (SoCreds) governments saw the public delivery of services as problematic. For the right-leaning SoCreds, welfare dependency and a strong unionised workforce presented a problem, for the left-leaning NDP, a professionalized and centralized workforce was considered unresponsive to local and client needs. For both of these parties, public services were considered too bureaucratic, too professionalized and too centralized. Consequently, both of these leaderships favoured a delivery model through the non-profit sector. The NDP which was in power from the early 70s to the mid-70s favoured a model of locally controlled boards (much like school boards) overseeing these non-profits as a way to increase community control. There was an expansion in services during that time and more money was allocated for the non-profit sector, but one could argue that the notion of public service delivery was neither favoured nor expanded. Callahan and McNiven (1988) argued that this process was the first step towards privatisation. Once the more right-wing oriented Social Credit party got in power in 1975, the model continued to change — funding at the time was still increasing — but the boards overseeing the non-profits were dismantled as it was felt that it gave the community too much control. Power was hence centralized. Furthermore, the scope of legislation was changed and limited — for example, social service intervention into a family on behalf of a child was only deemed necessary once the child was at risk of being removed from families (i.e., early intervention and support to stabilize a family was not on the agenda).

Further waves of privatisation hit this sector in the 1980s and cuts were starting to get implemented, the dismantling of the sector continued. According to Callahan and McNiven (1988), mechanisms employed to facilitate these changes range from cancellation of non-statutory services (e.g., outreach
to street youth), creation of barriers to access services, transferring out services to other jurisdictions (usually downloading to municipal government) to the contracting out of services to non-profits. Another strategy which government engaged with is the re-framing and re-casting of problems so that they sit outside of Ministries jurisdictions.

One of the problems stemming from all of these developments (privatization, down-scaling, fragmentation of services, contracting out, etc.) is that organized professional voices pertaining to professional autonomy, professional presentation and organization (such as professional bodies and associations as well as Unions presenting Social Workers and the other semi-professionals working with street youth) had little scope to develop in British Columbia. The power of the frontline workforce to influence and shape the public debate and influence policy makers, fight for their working conditions or advocate on behalf of their clients is hence limited.

What is perhaps missing from the accounts of the academics quoted above is a more nuanced understanding of what the roll-back of the welfare state really means for front-line delivery work. It can certainly be argued that we have not really witnessed a roll-back of the state, but a roll-out — more agencies (such as non-profits) are taking on state functions and are embedded in the project of social control and social engineering. In comparison to public services, these non-profits and quasi-governmental organisations are however not as accountable and somewhat removed from the democratic process (see: Peck and Tickell, 2002).

Whilst I have spent much time outlining the context through which social services are delivered, not much has been said yet about street youth. I want to outline some contextual literature to shed some light on the understanding and scale of the issue.

Homeless children and youth are not a new phenomenon — it appears to be endemic (though not necessarily well-researched) in many Third World metropolitan centres and was also evident throughout various periods in North American history, such as during the Great Depression of the 1930s. However, it appears that the welfare state project either banished homeless children and youth from sight or offered programs which were successful in terms of preventing child and youth homelessness. I could not find any references to the street youth issue in the post-World War II literature up to the 1970s when the first street youth services appeared. The first service most likely opened in New
York in 1972 (Covenant House New York). Salamon (1991) calls homeless children and youth "a new American dilemma". According to him, concerns about and visibility of homeless children and youth was a phenomenon which manifested in the 1980s throughout North American cities. Evidence during that time seemed to be anecdotal and related to agencies serving the homeless adult population which saw an increase in children and youth. The possibly first magazine report to highlight the issue of child and youth homelessness in the Pacific Northwest is a Life Magazine article from 1983 by Cheryl McCall and Ellen Mark which was called "Streets of the Lost" and reported on street youth in Seattle. The authors refer to street youth no longer being seen as a New York or Los Angeles based phenomena, but one which is spreading to other North American Cities. The authors recount that each year "more than one million American youngsters between 11 and 17 run away" (McCall, 1983). Much of the content of her article is related to a conversation with father John Ritter, the founder of Covenant House New York. She lists the main reasons for running away as youth fleeing turbulent households racked by conflict, violence, neglect and sexual abuse. A policy-professional she interviewed additionally talked about throw away youth which are seen as casualties of the prolonged recession. In her article, McCall mentions that 6,000 runaway children and youth were reported in Seattle in 1983. Mental health issues, addiction, violence, sexual exploitation, involvement in the illegal economy or involvement with the criminal justice system are theorized as issues which street youth face and are dealing with. It is not clear whether these issues contributed to youth ending up on the streets or were indeed a consequence of street life.

It seems to have taken academia a little bit longer to catch on; in 1987, the John Hopkins Institute was commissioned to research the issue of child and youth homelessness in the United States (scope, scale and causes) as policy-makers, community leaders and shelter-based staff felt the need for an academically embedded research-based understanding of the issue, rather than an agency, local or anecdotal one. The John Hopkins research project "Homeless Children and Youth" brought many experts in the field together. An understanding seems to have emerged through this research project which treats homelessness of children and youth not just as a housing problem. Rather, it reflected strains or breakdowns in a variety of other social support systems as well, ranging from welfare to foster care (Salamon, p. vii in Kryder-Croe, Molnar and Salamon eds., 1991). The scope of the problem is hence not primarily focused
on family issues as some of McCall's findings seemed to imply, but also to residential instability and socio-economic pressures. In the John Hopkins research project, participating researchers noted that the late 1970s/early 1980s are seen as the time period when an increasing number of children and youth were reported as being homeless in the United States. Around the 1980s, public concerns about the issue began to emerge. A recession in the 1980s, changes in the labour market as well as the dismantling of welfare and support services starting from the 1970s onwards is seen as the crucial factors which underpin this development in the United States. This research establishes a relationship between socio-economic pressures, recessions, neoliberal cuts to welfare, housing, social and education services and an increasing number of homeless children and youth. I would argue that parallels could likely be drawn to the Canadian situation.

The impact of child and youth homelessness is understood as having health, developmental and educational consequences with life on the streets and violence encountered on the streets often leading to additional trauma for children and youth. Unlike the agency staff interviewed by McCall, the causes for the situation are not primarily seen as being rooted in dysfunctional families, but as the predictable outcome of intentional housing and family support policies (or rather the lack of effective housing and family support policies). The need for a living wage and the lack of social and affordable housing is articulated (Hartman, Zigas, McChesney in Kryder-Croe, Molnar and Salamon eds., 1991). Responses to this crisis are also investigated and rated as insufficient: they are seen as stop-gap emergency measures. Wolf (in Kryder-Croe, Molnar and Salamon eds., 1991) for example argues that the child welfare system is inappropriately asked to respond to a crisis related to low family income and inadequate housing. She also argues that current state welfare policy might compound the problem as welfare rates are not enough to pay for housing and welfare agencies cannot create new housing. The need for comprehensive coordinated actions that cut across all governmental levels and service systems emerges.

The terminology of street youth has been in use since the mid-1980s in Vancouver, as has media presentation and awareness of the issue in Vancouver. Street youth in Vancouver have been subject to many definitions and much research, the most prominent ones are studies commissioned by the Social Planning Department of the City of Vancouver sometimes in partnership with provincial government (Manjit & Thompson 1997, Verdant Research
Group 2000), research commissioned by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) through the McCreary Centre Society (2002, 2007, 2007) and research done by the Youth Funders Committee (Eberle Planning and Research 2007) and BC Housing (Millar 2009) and the research done by non-profits which work with these populations.

The City of Vancouver has also been very active in the 1980s and 1990s, commissioning various studies and reports to council which focused on the street youth issue. According to one informant, the following reports went to council in the 1980s/1990s:

- May 1986, Vancouver Health Department: "report on the service gaps for street youth"
- April 11, 1987: "Health and Social Planning report to council on street youth"
- March 1, 1988: "Social Planning report to council on services on street youth"
- 1997 study: "you have heard this before — street-involved youth and the service gaps".

Additional work and studies were undertaken in partnership with other agencies and the provincial government over the years. The presence of these reports seems to imply that the street youth issue in Vancouver has been recognized as a social problem and an issue of concern since the 1980s.

Based on the grey literature above, estimated numbers of street youth in Vancouver seem to vary greatly ranging from a few hundred (400+) up to a few thousand (1,000–2,000) pending on which definition of street youth is used and by whom.

1.4 TECHNICAL LANGUAGE — DEFINITIONS

Definitions: I will briefly define some of the technical language which I am using in this paper.

Street youth or street-involved youth, whilst being broadly used, is a term which is neither clearly defined nor agreed upon. To some it is out-dated terminology. The meaning of this terminology will be discussed in detail in
Chapter 2. For the purpose of this paper, I will use a working definition of street youth which is akin to the definition used in the Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study (2007). In this project, street youth are considered youth and young people up to 24 years of age who do not have a permanent place of their own and are living on the street or are involved in street life to a significant extent. This term encompasses a continuum of street-involvement — from couch-surfers to curb-siders who circulate between home and street, to street-entrenched youth to runaway youth who voluntarily left home to throwaway youth who have been asked by their family to leave as well as youth with child welfare services designation. Street entrench youth refers to youth having a significant and deep involvement with street life, it implies that all their important relationships are connected to street life and that the potential exploitation and dependencies that can come with it (e.g., to a dealer, addiction, gang or pimp) are hard to overcome. These youth have the hardest time to exit the streets and some of these youth can be seen as service-resistant. Former street youth refers to adults aged 25 years and older who have aged out of the street youth services (i.e., they are no longer eligible for services). They might or might not have exited street life. High-barrier services for street youth refer to services which attach many conditions to their programs (for example: youth must be sober, committed to not using drugs, cannot bring shopping cart/dog/partner/child into shelter, youth cannot detox whilst attending the program, etc.). High barrier services are usually perceived as excluding youth with more complex needs, low-barrier services usually can respond to youth with more complex needs and are seen as more accessible as they attach less conditions to their services. When referring to Vancouver, I am referring to the City of Vancouver as defined by municipal boundaries. Downtown South, the Downtown Eastside, Grandview-Woodlands and Strathcona are neighbourhoods in Vancouver — I am using boundaries as defined by municipal government. Front-line staff refers to professionals or semi-professionals working with street-involved youth. This entails staff working for non-profits/charities, municipal or provincial government or quasi-governmental organisations (social workers, youth workers and other professionals). Street Youth Sector (or Street Youth Services4) refers to organizations in Vancouver which have staff and resources designated to work with street youth — this could be government agencies, charities and non-profits. Funding could come directly

4. SYS — street youth services is also the name of a program working with street-involved youth. In my paper however, it references the whole sector.
from government (municipal, provincial or federal), through government grants, other grants or through fund-raising activities and donors. At the core of the street youth sector are organizations which have designated a significant amount of resources to work with street youth or organisations which work exclusively with street youth. **Stakeholder** is a common term used in planning or social policy literature and refers to individuals and groups impacted by and/or involved in an issue, situation, debate or social problem. Stakeholders are commonly understood as having a stake and interest in defining and shaping policy responses. Policy literature distinguishes between internal stakeholders (politicians, civil service, etc.) and external stakeholders (advocacy groups, professional associations, etc.).

**1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**
**THE CHALLENGES OF DATA ABUNDANCE**

My research methodology has evolved organically. My original expectation was that important informants would not be accessible or would not agree to be interviewed. I presumed that I would need to depend on a document analysis to flesh out my interviews. Upon starting my research, it became quickly obvious that most people I approached were not only willing to be interviewed but they were also significant informants. I had the great honour to speak to many passionate, articulate and politically astute people who were part of this sector for long periods of time, often decades. The data I have been able to collect has surpassed my expectations. Various informants also commented that interviewing people who have been part of this sector and have observed changes over time would be the best source of data collection. The street youth sector in Vancouver was characterized by many of these informers as well as by the grey literature as a fragmentation of services, funders, stakeholders, and a multitude of government agencies involved with no clear leadership. An overlap in ministerial jurisdictions with (partial) responsibility for the issue also added to the notion of this being a fragmented sector. As outlined in the literature review, there is quite a substantial pool of local (grey) literature available on the street youth issue. Interestingly enough, most of this literature is connected to municipal government which does not really have jurisdiction over housing or welfare or child protection matters. Some of this research is connected to provincial government (specifically the
Ministry of Children and Family Development). There is an astounding amount of service fragmentation for street youth with up to seven different provincial government agencies dealing with aspects of street youth’s lives or the services they might access (see also Millar, 2009). The Ministry of Housing and Social Development is in charge of mental health and addiction service coordination, income and employment assistance and tenant and landlord dispute resolution. BC Housing is in charge of subsidized and supportive housing and emergency shelter programs; the Ministry of Health Services is involved as well as the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority which provides clinical, addiction and mental health services. The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is a major player as they have a mandate to provide services to street youth (up to the age of 19) such as safe housing and emergency shelters and foster care. The Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General are the government agencies dealing with street youth who are being processed through the criminal justice system due to their involvement with the illegal economy (Community Courts, etc.). Youth Criminal Justice Law applies to under-age street youth only. Not only are there a multitude of provincial government agencies involved, much work has been contracted out to the non-profit sector.

Since I had such an abundance of data — grey literature and interviews — and an abundance of provincial bodies involved with the street youth issue to analyse, it became apparent that I had to focus my research. I chose to focus my original research on the interviews I conducted and on the major funder of street youth services, the MCFD. That is not to say that interviews are more valid data than grey and policy literature or that the work of other Ministries is not important. Rather my decision was a pragmatic one — the recognition that an oral history approach might best be suited to capture the politics of this sector, include the voices of marginalized groups and the recognition that the scope of my project does not allow me to analyse all provincial bodies involved in funding the street youth sector. The strength of my research is that I have been able to interview a broad array of informants ranging from former street youth and former workers, from policy-involved to advocacy involved staff, staff involved with the non-profit sector as well as staff working for the public sector. These interviews present a broad range of perspectives. This allows for alternative and conflictual readings of the history of this sector which is likely to frame the history of this sector more accurately. As Gusfield (1981) has so
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clearly argued, perceived consensus of an issue often ends up hiding the political choices which have taken place. Speaking to as many knowledgeable and impacted people as possible from as many backgrounds as possible might perhaps then be the best antidote we have to guard ourselves against white-washing our histories.

The drawback of an oral history approach is that reliability and validity of data is usually seen as weak and that generalizability is often seen as problematic. What is true and meaningful for a specific informant is a deeply subjective experience. Additionally, interviewing informants is an interactive process and the interactions between researcher and informants can affect the outcome of the data which is being collected (see also: Babbie and Benaquisto, 2005).

Interviews have been my primary source of data, grey and academic literature has been my secondary/supplementary source of data.

1.6 Sociology of Knowledge Perspective

As argued in the previous chapter, an oral history approach is a socially conscious process and specifically aims to re-insert the voices of marginalized informants and stakeholders into a debate. I have chosen not to rely primarily on grey literature, research/data on street youth or any documents produced on the street youth issue as these documents all too often present the voices of dominant and powerful stakeholders. My decision to use an oral history approach is an attempt to re-insert a multitude of perspectives into the street youth discourse. My research is informed by an awareness of the power differential that exists between different stakeholders, groups and individuals.

I have been specifically interested in interviewing not only policy-involved informants, but also former street youth and frontline staff. An oral history approach hence does also connect with sociology of knowledge perspective.

Gusfield, coming from a sociology of knowledge perspective has argued that "many humans situations and problems have histories; they have not always been construed and recognized as they are today or will be in the future" (Gusfield, 1981, p. 4). This implies that situations are contested and constructed — and not all of them end up being considered a public/social problem. The general argument is that whatever is perceived on a cultural level
as a social problem will end up being addressed at a structural level by virtue of attaching responsibilities to address the issue to specific institutions. What this also implies is that not all stakeholders involved in defining, managing or experiencing a social situation have equal abilities to influence the public or policy-makers. Gusfield uses the terminology ownership of a public problem to recognize that certain stakeholders usually end up dominating a debate or a policy-context and are hence able to define the terms of debate, shape the public understanding of an issue and ultimately, policy-making.

One of the central arguments of my research is that neoliberal policies have placed important stakeholders involved with the street youth issue in a context characterized by fragmentation and dependencies. This translates into some stakeholders not having a strong voice, stakeholders not necessarily having a common way of framing their analysis and not being able to advance a coherent agenda. Changes in the arena of power and how power is organized in neoliberal regimes are hence intrinsically intertwined with how an issue/problem is debated and how knowledge is produced.

1.7 INTERVIEWS

I have been able to conduct a total of 25 interviews for this project. Having worked in and researched the street youth sector in the past, I have been able to identify key informants directly. I used purposive sampling to identify key informants. The informants I interviewed fell into three different categories. Category one consisted of former street youth and former workers in the field—five people from that group were interviewed. I only interviewed former street youth who had exited street youth services for a minimum of five years, were not vulnerable and did not have a dependency relationship with the street youth sector (e.g., some lingering involvement). That voice was specifically important to me, as front-line staff or former street youth seem to get rarely involved in policy solutions. Category 2 consisted of staff involved with the policy context. My target group consisted of public sector staff (municipal/provincial) as well as staff working for the non-profit sector in a (senior) managerial capacity. Fifteen people from that category were interviewed. Category 3 existed of informants who worked with street youth issues primarily in an academic and/or advocacy capacity, five interviews were conducted with Group 3 informants.
Group 2 and 3 informants were originally given the option to identify themselves by name or agency or else remain anonymous. Category 1 informants did not have this option — interviews from Category 1 were anonymous. After some consideration, I have decided to keep all sources confidential as the danger exists that informants can be seen as endorsing the research findings (which is quite different from taking part in an interview). In the text itself, data will only be identified as stemming from a Group 1, Group 2 or Group 3 informant. In some cases I have not referenced which group an informant belongs to in order to guarantee full confidentiality.

Interviewees were given choices — I either took notes during the interview or recorded the interview pending on what interviewees are more comfortable with. In many cases, I only transcribed the pertinent parts of the interviews. Interviews were semi-structured: there was a clear interview framework but I also gave interviewees space to elaborate on issues and themes they identified during the interviewing process.

1.8 DATA ANALYSIS
The majority of the 25 informants I interviewed could be considered key informants having been involved with this sector intensively and/or for long periods of time. A few informants were knowledgeable about the sector, but their involvement was more marginal.

One informant was able to comment back on the 1960s, eight informants entered the field in the 1970s, six informants entered the field in the 1980s, nine informants entered the field in the 1990s and one informant entered the field in the early 2000s. Positioning of some of these informants is not clear cut — many informants have worked for different agencies, moved from front-line to management, from non-profit to the government sector or vice versa, from former street youth to social service sector worker, from the front-line to academia or into the advocacy sector. Some informants have moved within the social welfare/services sector from one specialized field (street youth sector) to other specialized fields. Informants have also moved geographically. Informants positioning is hence often connected to a multitude of vantage points. The categories used are hence somewhat of a simplification but necessary on a functional level. In cases where informants had multiple vantage points, I have
connected informants to a category which either describes their current positioning or to the category in which they collected most of their experiences.

Category 1, 2 and 3 informants had a slightly different set of questions, with category 1 questions focused on a street youth perspective and relating strongly to chapter 2 (problem-recognition), category 2 questions focused on how the sector has developed and evolved over the decades and connects strongly to chapter 3. Category 3 informants were asked questions which would relate more to a stakeholder analysis (see chapter 4). Although there was a variation in the question sets, approximately two-thirds of questions were put to all informants — allowing me to compare findings from the different groups against each other.

1.9 Methodological Challenges and Choices

I have chosen to highlight themes and issues which are either referenced by a significant number of informants (three or more) or by informants with specialist knowledge. I usually do give the number of informants who have referenced a particular point or theme, but I would also like to emphasise that not necessarily all informants would have answered all the questions posed to them in detail (or at all). Some might have cursorily answered a question whereas others might have elaborated at length. Additionally, informants can be close to an issue/experience and able to comment on that specific issue in detail, or they can be further removed from the policy context (e.g., they are front-line) and less able to comment on a specific policy-related question put to them. Informants were involved with the issue over varying periods of time and in some cases in different capacities at different times, so again, their capacity to answer certain questions are time and issue specific. Hence, when I state that three people commented on an issue it should not be interpreted that the other 22 informants did not comment on it, but rather that not all of the 22 other informants were necessarily able to comment on it. It is important to bear in mind that informants entered and exited this sector at different time periods — for example, nine of the informants could reference the 70s and in one case the 60s. If for example five informants referenced a specific theme dating back to that time period, they would effectively present the majority of that group.

I have presented themes referenced to by three people or fewer if there is the notion that these people might have specialist knowledge e.g., they might
have expertise in a certain area, or witnessed a certain time period. When highlighting a theme, I usually do not differentiate between how many group 1, group 2 or group 3 informants specifically commented on that theme. I will however highlight themes which are specifically raised primarily or exclusively by one group of informants (Group 1, Group 2, Group 3) or where significant differences between the groups exist.

Of particular interest to me is whether data on certain themes/issues was converged or diverged. I analysed and presented the collected data in that light. Diverging information on issues/themes should not be read as a conflict between false and true recollection of events, rather they often present experiences which are unique and valid, philosophical differences about what service responses to the street youth issue are effective and debates and conflicts within the sector itself. Competing and conflicting narratives will be given due attention and where possible contextualized.

To summarize, the lens through which I have analysed data was manifold:

- interviews were analysed for common themes/issues
- I analysed whether there was convergence or divergence between informants when talking about an issue
- I analysed whether certain themes were highlighted across the board or primarily by one group of informants
- Specialist knowledge was given attention/outlined.

I have also used an important academic text — Foster and Wharf (editors): Politics, People and Child Welfare in British Columbia, UBC Press 2007 — to frame the policy context through which services were delivered. This book appears to be the only significant academic resource detailing policy changes to the child welfare sector over a lengthy period of time. Twelve primarily B.C. based academics and five professionals with long-standing careers in the social service sectors contributed to that book. Most academics are based in various Schools of Social Work throughout B.C. This academic voice was inserted into Chapter 2 as a way to outline and detail policy changes which informants have referred to. I have treated this source as a voice being inserted into the research with the intent to complement and support data collected from the interviews.
I have chosen not to attach any time- and position-specific data to an informant when quoting a source as this might lead to an identification of the informant which counteracts the notion of confidentiality and anonymity upon which this research is based. I have usually referenced organisations rather than people in the text. In a few instances, informants consistently referenced a person rather than the organization, equating a person with an organization. In these instances, I have used names.

I would also like to state that whilst I have interviewed a fairly significant number of key informants, I have definitely not interviewed all key informants. There are many people who have dedicated their work, career and life to this specific issue and who have been immensely important to the sector and who have not been interviewed. This piece of research stands as an exploratory piece of research—presenting an analysis of the voices of the informants I have interviewed.
CHAPTER 2
FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS — PROBLEM RECOGNITION

2.1 OUTLINE OF FINDINGS
This chapter traces how the problem of street youth is understood and how problem perception has changed over time. The primary sources of analysis are interviews with principal informers. This chapter does not deal with how street youth are perceived in the media and who is speaking to that issue in the media, as this would be beyond the scope of this project. There was no commonly shared definition between informants, but some overlaps and similarities and certain themes have emerged. Data implies that the term street youth is a contested terrain which entails a spectrum of street-involvement. The age spectrum of street youth seems to be defined by funders and according to informants has been narrowed down over the years; some agencies work with youth up to 24, many agencies work with youth 19 and under. The data I collected implies that the term relates to almost a specific subculture for some informants, especially former street youth and former front-line staff seem to share this view. This subculture had a peak in a certain period of time (1980s and 1990s) and has since changed. There are issues around territoriality as well — with street youth in the Downtown South presenting differently from street youth in the Downtown Eastside. Themes of both displacement and entrenchment emerged. The notion that the profile of homeless youth and the issues these youth are dealing with has changed significantly in the last six to eight years has also emerged. Both in the literature and in interviews, varying opinions exist as to why youth end up on the streets. Reasons given can be categorized as perceived to manifest on an individual level (health, developmental reasons), reasons associated with family/community issues (family breakdown and/or rejection by family) or macro/socio-economic
reasons/neoliberal policies as well as theories looking at psycho-social alienation within capitalism. Many informants expressed that these factors are interlinked and can act upon each other. Only one informant talked about numbers of street-involved youth estimated to sit at a few thousand (relates to ages up to and including 24). A significant number of informants from Group 2 stated that the scope of the problem and the number of street-involved/high risk/homeless youth in recent years has increased, that at risk youth are geographically more dispersed, the face of street-involved youth is more diverse, that some of the issues have been driven underground (sex work) and are much more entrenched (e.g., addiction) and that there is less visibility to the issue. With both the housing and the job market considered not to meet the needs of youth and young adults well by these informants, the problem seems to have become compounded in recent years. This data needs to be treated with caution though — with service delivery being very fragmented and no commonly shared definition of street-involved youth in place, concrete numbers are simply not available.

2.2 STREET YOUTH: OUT-DATED TERMINOLOGY?

Eight of the informants I interviewed articulated that street youth might be a term that is perhaps best attached to a certain time-frame (1980s to approximately early 2000) and four of these informants stated that the term might be in the process of becoming out-dated. Other descriptions and labels were suggested which were seen as less of a negative label and perhaps reflect more on the diversity of street youth and the issues they are dealing with as well as the spectrum of street involvement. The term street youth seemed no longer large enough to contain these experiences. Instead, multiple terms were suggested: homeless youth, at risk youth, high risk youth, disadvantaged youth, and vulnerable youth. There is a notable difference between group 1 and group 2/3 informants. None of the group 1 informants (former street youth and former/retired workers in the field) questioned the term street youth or stated that this term had outlived its purpose. For these informants, the term street youth was not attached to a certain time-frame or questionable.

5. Less visibility in this case means: less public policy/public attention to the issue, youth being less easily identifiable as street-involved youth and perhaps also a reduced notion of belonging to specific community (street youth scene).
Findings from the Interviews – Problem Recognition

One informant stated that the term street youth seems to date back to the 1980s and is reflective of “the need to get away from a deviance model at the time” (Informant, Group 2). It appears that prior to the 1980s, youth who did in some way or form not fit in had other labels attached to them like delinquent. Services for these populations seem to have developed from the early 1970s onwards (see next chapter), but whilst the terminology street worker was used to describe the workers engaging with the youth, the term street youth was not yet in place. Another informant stated that “the term street youth started to get used in the mid to late 80s. I think in the 70s they probably used terms like ‘maladjusted’, these were kids who had developmental difficulties and disabilities (and) would now have been called street youth” (Informant, Group 1). Two informants noted that there were homeless youth in Vancouver in the 1960s and 70s, but they were not called street youth and they were not seen yet as a public problem. According to these informants, these homeless youth were connected to the hippie movement and their hangout area in the 60s was West Fourth Avenue. According to another informant, in the 70s part of that scene had moved to Gastown and first professional service responses began to appear, three informants relate this momentum as being driven by front-line staff in the non-profit and public sector and a few progressive police officers. These informants stated that numbers of homeless youth were not as high in the 60s and 70s and one informant stated that these young people were often taken in by community members which had labelled these youth crashers. This informant also noted that “youth found places to stay (couch-surfing, etc.), so in the 1960s that was almost an invisible scene. I think the reason they were not perceived as a social problem had to do with them not being linked to other issues like the drugs or sex trade (informant, group 2).” Another informant able to comment back to the late 1970s added that sexual exploitation of these youth did not appear to be the main issue of concern till the early 1980s. Another informant argued that much later, the definition and understanding of sexually exploited youth would connect with the bigger notion of youth homelessness and youth housing instability.

I have not been able to find any academic research or policy literature relating to homeless youth in Vancouver to the 1960s and 1970s or anything in writing which speaks as to why the problem suddenly appeared on the public radar in the 1980s. Academic explanations (see literature review – Kryder-Croe eds., 1991) offered (although not specific to the Vancouver) broadly relate
the emergence of street youth in the 1980s as connected to the impact of neoliberal policies on communities, families and individuals — reduction of welfare rates, family support, no investment in social housing/housing policies, de-regulated labour force, and so on. In the light of a lack of accessible research pertaining to homeless youth in Vancouver in the 60s/70s, eyewitness testimonies quoted above appear especially valuable, for they offer a potential explanation as to why the issue appeared all of a sudden on the public radar: the increase in numbers of homeless youth and the perceived increasing involvement of these youth with the drug and sex trade appears to have catapulted the street youth issue in the public arena.

Three informants talked about the debate in the 1980s being partially framed through a public health discourse. Professionals from a public health background were involved in responding to the issue (addiction and HIV positive street populations were a particular focus at the time) and hence also had an impact on how the street youth issue was being framed. It has been noted by one informant in particular that this lens/way of viewing the issue is perhaps now not as apparent as it was 20 years ago. Three informants related public awareness and annoyance towards an increasing numbers of youth begging (squeegee kids) in the 1980s as a factor which catapulted the issue into the spotlight and also put some pressure on police to deal with the issue making them stakeholders in managing or responding to this specific concern.

According to one informant from Group 2, the term street youth reflected/reflects that these youth had one thing in common: they all have some or all of their fundamental needs met on the street (food, housing, support). Another informant stated that the term street youth relates to the support system of youth being connected to the streets. Four informants from Group 2 stressed that the term street youth these days entails a spectrum of street involvement, covering everything from at risk youth to homeless youth. Three informants remarked that public perception of the issue does not usually recognize the continuum of involvement, as one informant put it, "lots of people only recognize the fully street-entrenched youth being characterized as being constantly on the street, outside, begging, living off the streets, and so on. But there are also street youth who are minimally street involved and youth who are in-between — some of their aspects of home life are met on the street (food, shelter, support), but not necessarily all of them" (Informant, Group 2). It was indeed questioned by four informants whether street youth has become a
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redundant term and needed to be replaced with other language. Five informants argued that the face of youth these days are way more diverse than they used to be.

2.3 Geographic Dispersion
Not only have youths’ faces changed, but also the areas and territories they occupy. According to six informants, up to the early 2000s, street youth were far more concentrated in the Downtown South area, now they are far more dispersed geographically. As one informant stated, certain services were meeting and gathering places for youth (to the extent that youth sleeping outside these services at night had become an accepted practice), certain public spaces were meeting places (such as the Art Gallery Steps or Granville Street or certain back alleys), certain squats or car parks were areas where groups of youth gathered. This allowed youth to stay connected to each other and to feel supported as a community. Specifically group one informants made a point noting that these spaces have now disappeared, or they are now policed differently and by different privatized forces (security guards, Downtown Ambassadors).

According to one informant from Group 1, the Art Gallery steps are policed through private security guards who are dispersing the crowds. Alternatively, these spaces are now barricaded or re-developed (in the case of Granville Street) or there is less tolerance of neighbours towards street youth. Three informants related street youth being pushed out of Downtown South to gentrification, one informant related youth being pushed out to the 2010 Olympics. Two informants mentioned that part of that specific street youth scene in the Downtown South area has probably moved into other parts of East Vancouver. One informant mentioned that in recent years, a street youth scene has appeared in Surrey and other parts of the Lower Mainland, whereas in the past the street youth scene was almost exclusively centred in Vancouver.

Four informants speak to quite a different scenario between what has materialized in the Downtown South area and the Downtown Eastside, with the Downtown South area being perceived as the “elementary school of the streets” (Informant, group 1), and the Downtown Eastside being perceived as being an area where street youth seem to be more entrenched and where they often tend to live or have family, implying a deeper involvement with the sex or drugs trade and issues connected to multi-generational poverty and deprivation. Three
of these informants pointed out that aboriginal youth are more likely to live/be connected to the Downtown Eastside whereas Caucasian street youth and travelling youth from out of town were historically more attracted to the Granville Street area in Downtown South. There is also a recognition that the street youth scene in the Downtown South area is less visible now and that youth have become displaced from the area. Visibility was understood by these informants in terms of less youth being seen on the streets in this part of town and the youth that are still there are less recognizable as members of a group/subculture. One informant argued that the spotlight on the issue has been connected to street youth in the Downtown South area, with street youth in the Downtown Eastside not being highlighted to the same extent. As this informant noted, Downtown South tends to have bigger service providers (less grass-roots based groups), street youth had a higher level of visibility due to gathering in public places and there is a higher residential population base in this area which is more middle class and more able to influence politicians — hence there is more of a focus on the issue in the Downtown South area. That informant made the argument that street youth in the Downtown East area are surrounded by other marginalized people, so all in all they are not as visible and the community around them is less able to impact politicians and lever resources. Overall, three informants have elaborated on this issue. As a minority of the informants I interviewed are connected to or work in the Downtown Eastside directly, this theme needs to be outlined as potential specialist knowledge. The three informants comments on these issues are converging — there appears to be a consensus that street youth in the Downtown Eastside have not had the spotlight on them (implying media focus on the issue, resources, public pressure) to the same extent that street youth had been highlighted in the Downtown South area.

2.4 Aboriginal Dimension of the Issue

According to five informants, there is also a noteworthy aboriginal dimension to the street youth issue. Whilst I have not been able to find any data specific to Vancouver to verify these statements, a B.C. wide research project on street youth implied that more than 50% of street-involved youth in B.C. either are aboriginal or self-identified as having aboriginal ancestry (see McCreary Foundation, 2007). According to my informants, many street-involved aboriginal youth are connected to the Downtown Eastside. "There is a
relatively consistent and ... homogeneous set of aboriginal youth who really have not changed much over the decades I have been involved in this sector. There are two types; the kids from up country leaving reservations, poverty, abuse and dysfunctional families behind. They often have extended family in Vancouver and come to stay with aunts and uncles but they get involved in the street youth scene pretty quickly. That scene used to be just into the Downtown Eastside area but has spilled out into other parts of East Vancouver much more. Another set of street youth are the kids coming out of care, 50% of them are aboriginal” (Informant, group 2).

An informant from group 2 stated that “the Downtown South is probably fading in importance for street youth because it is becoming much more gentrified. The Downtown Eastside was always until approximately the last five years ago the place for aboriginal youth, there was not a big Caucasian street youth population scene in the Downtown Eastside. There was a punk scene down there, but it was not that well developed or that many of them, it was mostly aboriginal youth. Now that Downtown South is becoming much more gentrified, I can imagine that the real rough aboriginal street youth crowd in the Downtown Eastside will mix more with the other at risk youth down there who are being pushed off Granville Street. I actually do not know where these youth are going. Perhaps things have moved more underground, there seems to be more places to hide than there used to be” (Informant, group 2).

Another informant mentioned that in recent years, there are many more youth on the streets in the Downtown Eastside, but that they are from the local community (Downtown Eastside) as opposed to earlier decades when many youth were from out of town and detached from their community of origin. This appears to be especially relevant for aboriginal youth.

Five informants from group 2 implied that the aboriginal dimension of the issue does not get the recognition and attention it deserves. Three informants mentioned that there is a funding disadvantage and a funding inequity in the system when it comes to urban native youth organisations. One informant stated that the big funders (Ministry of Children and Family Development, Vancouver Coastal Health) tend to give less funding to aboriginal organisations, the notion being that native organisations would have access to other funding streams. However, other funding streams are described as difficult to access. “The provincial government gives lots of money to the First Nations Leadership Council to distribute to native non-profits. Lots of
funding goes through that organization, they have the ear of the government. However, they are more connected to the band council model and urban natives are hence somewhat cut out of the equation. 60% of Aboriginals live in the city and that kind of funding model has turned out not to benefit urban native people so well” (Informant, group 2). One informant (group 2) stated that the current set-up (aboriginal service providers are specifically tasked to work with urban native youth) has its drawbacks. This informant implied that this absolves mainstream agencies, municipal government and community groups from its duties to offer culturally appropriate services for at risk native youth and involve them in shaping these services.

Aboriginal autonomy and control over aboriginal child welfare issues is indeed one of the biggest policy shifts and changes which has evolved over the decades (see Forster and Wharf, 2007) — and it is also one of the fiercest debates. Whilst this has funding and policy consequences, I will not elaborate on this debate in detail. These policy debates are historically based on a system which has divided aboriginal people into status and non-status Indians, Aboriginals living on reservations or off-reserve and Aboriginals connected to a band/various bands or disconnected from their cultural heritage. The debate around aboriginal youth seems especially complex when it comes to native urban youth who can be disconnected from bands, reservations, their culture or do not have Indian Status.

2.5 STREET YOUTH AS A SUBCULTURE

All five informants from group 1 (former street youth or former front-line staff) as well as two informants from group 2 (policy-involved staff) used terminology to describe street youth between the 1980s to the early 2000s which almost sounds like they are describing a specific subculture sharing common values, habits, belief systems and dress-codes. Street-youth is used as a self-identifying term by these informants. For these informants, street youth appear to be relatively homogeneous. In the words of one informant, “we were a community” (Informant, group 1). This subculture — i.e., the face of the street youth between the 1980s and early 2000s has since changed. Certain terminology is shared by these informants when talking about street youth between the 1980s and early 2000s: street youth in general were connected to a certain punk rock aesthetic, there is a notion of a strong sense of community within
street youth (street family) and a certain amount of independent/travelling youth as well as youth who were not necessarily running away from something but youth who were drawn to the streets (to party, sense of adventure, consume drugs, explore and question). Front-line staff and former street youth all mentioned that certain drugs were prominent at certain times and that this has changed the dynamic on the streets significantly.

I would like to quote two informants at length for their observations are very rich and very detailed. Their account is supported by all the former street youth which I interviewed. However, I would also caution against developing a picture of the street youth scene based on five informants. As mentioned earlier, the street youth scene might not have been as homogeneous as detailed here — it is likely and possible that these informants speak to the scene in the Downtown South area more so than the scene in the Downtown Eastside. I am quoting these informants at length because they seem to imply that in the 1980s and 1990s, (certain) street youth seem to have formed a subculture which offered a sense of community, belonging and some level of peer support (as well as opportunities for exploitation).

One of my informants described street youth in the 80s and 90s in the following terms:

"Youth in the 80s and 90s carried backpacks and had a punk-rock look (mohawks, etc.). That was part of the uniform. Back then regular people did not carry backpacks; people who carried backpacks had an outsider status. I do not see these youth any more. There is no longer a punk rock uniform. The only uniform now is the drug uniform. In the 1980s drugs of choice were heroin, coke, pills, grass and acid. In the middle and later part of the 1990s crack came on the scene, so back then crack and heroin were the main drugs. Later on Crystal Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth) came on the scene (early 2000s). Kids took it to stay awake and to avoid the dangers of the streets (predators, etc.). Crystal Meth was the cheapest drug and it ruins their lives. It can create permanent brain damage and mental health symptoms that present like schizophrenia. Everything changed around 2004 when Crystal Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth) hit the streets. I do not see big groups of youth going around anymore. Or squatting. Youth back in the 80s and 90s were more politicized; they were more of a collective and cared for each other. They were more inclined to join demonstrations or call themselves anarchists. There was also a great deal of prostitution in the 1980s both male and female (Boystown.

6. Scene refers to the people/services/locations to which street youth are connected and through which they identify. Points of connection could include other street youth, peers, family members involved in street life, frontline workers, the criminal justice system, addiction and health services, dealers/pimps, certain street youth agencies, certain meeting points, certain hang-out places and distinct geographic communities. The street youth scene in the Downtown Eastside is seen as distinct from the scene in Downtown South.
in Yaletown). We used to have a lot of kids come up from the States; there were quite a lot of youth travelling on trains. There were youth who travelled all over North America (South to North, East to West). There were gangs of youth who used to move on freight trains. The collapse of services for street youth (refers to restructuring in the early 2000s and budget cuts, see next chapter) meant that the kids had nowhere to go and it run together with Crystal Meth which was the cheapest drug and kept you awake. These two things probably changed the face of street youth. Street youth now are more heavily involved drug users. Now it is more serious, now it is truly drug-related. Youth have moved away from the punk rock imagery. Now it is harder to distinguish between adults and youth. There are fewer travellers now, because street activity is so drug oriented now. When you are really into drugs, you kind of need to be in one place, so you can stay connected to a dealer. Youth these days seem to be much harder, their anger seems to take a different direction” (Informant, group 1).

Another rich description relates to how street families functioned or how community on the streets was experienced and how the impact of drugs has changed the situation for street youth. In the words of this informant,

“... street family refers to how street youth used to organize themselves. When new kids appeared on the streets, the older street youth did a lot to drive them off the streets; they really tried to encourage them to go back to a home. ‘Twinkie bashing’ was going on; stuff which newcomers had was stolen to force them back into a home. The older street youth understood that even a less than ideal home life can be better than the streets; they saw the streets as their last option. If newcomers stuck around for a couple of months and it really looked like they had no place to go back to, older street youth took them under their wings. They took care of them, taught them about resources, shared drugs. So it was good and bad in some ways. There was true bonding, but also scope for manipulation and for pimps or drug dealers to entrench themselves with newcomers. There were ‘street mums’ and ‘street dads’ they were often the same age as the youth they took under their wings. Groups of kids squatted together, or all grouped together under a bridge or they rented a common crappy place. There were common spots where certain groups would hang out. This system is not as strong anymore; everybody is way more out for themselves. I think a lot of that can be contributed to the arrival of Crystal Methamphetamine on the streets. Drugs that came into play 7-8 years ago really changed the street culture. Speed back then used to be made more cleanly, but once one of the ingredients was made illegal, the recipe was changed and more toxic and dangerous ingredients were added to the recipe. Now the drugs are dirty and impacts can be severe. There are mental health like symptoms, higher rates of violence, paranoia, delusion and psychosis. Crystal Methamphetamine in a way is the perfect street drug, it lasts for hours and days, youth get the most bang for their buck. Street kids usually sleep by day; there is less hassle in the daytime, less cops, less security guards. If you add sleep deprivation in the mix with all the other symptoms which could come from Crystal Methamphetamine use, it is not surprising that it can make people temporarily insane. The violence level on the streets has really gone through the roof in the last few years. I know of somebody being hit over the head with a lead pipe for a $5.00 drug debt” (Informant, group 1).
2.6 EARLY 2000 ONWARDS: 
A CHANGING PROFILE OF STREET YOUTH

A commonly shared theme (12 informants, including all the informants belonging to the front-line/former street youth category) is the observation that life on the street in the last six to eight years has become much more violent and that many issues, especially drug issues have become much more entrenched. Informants stated that mental health issues are more prominent and that it is consequently much harder for youth to exit the streets. Three informants were especially worried about sex work and prostitution having gone underground in recent years and they have stated that the whole issue is not being helped by legislation targeting the sex workers and not the Johns. Other informants relate to issues having become much more entrenched: “Prostitution, or drugs and alcohol and the gang involvement in the sex and drug trade can have a devastating impact on the youth, it is very violent and youth can become entrenched in that scene very quickly. It is hard for them to get out of that web. The amount of control which gangs and pimps exercise is extremely difficult to move away from” (Informant, group 2). According to one informant, co-dependent, volatile and violent relationships can be formed and service providers will have to work with that and through that. At the same time, it appears that the profile of youth accessing services is much more varied. Two informants stated that more culture-based conflicts are visible.

I want to quote five different informants in order to flesh out these points:

A group 2 informant argued that

"The profile of street youth has changed in the last five to six years. There are more organized gang activities, more and more dangerous drugs leading to physically more debilitating symptoms. There are more mental health issues. There is more displacement and extreme poverty... There is not enough knowledge about gangs. Sex-exploitation has gone underground (it is less visible on the streets), which means the girls are in more danger now and it has become a bigger problem.”

(Informant, Group 2)

A group 1 informant stressed that

"...up to the early 2000s we saw more street kids at service level, now there are lots more youth who came from the foster care system who had no support to transition out. These youth have... different survival skills. Street youth are more prepared to do things on their own, foster kids often"
learn that manipulation of adults is the way to get something. I think the foster care kids pushed the street youth out (of accessing services)."

_Informant, Group 1_

Another informant stressed not only the increase in violence, but also the changing profile of street youth:

"There is a huge shift in the amount of violence that is on the streets, this is connected to gangs and drug trafficking as well as how prostitution has gone underground. I see the streets as much more violent. The notion of street community has changed quite a bit during the last three to four years due to increased violence, increased gang involvement in the drugs and sex trade. We are also getting a lot more immigrant population, they are coming as refugees from war-torn countries, we had kids that have been involved in war, we had young women escaping forced marriages. I see more culture clashes."

_Informant, Group 2_

Two different Group 1 informants elaborated on how much harder it has become for street youth to exit the streets. One informant stressed that

"Youth are now more drug addicted and therefore less high functioning than they have ever been in my experience ... youth that only used to congregate on South Granville are now on Hastings Street. Some of them might have gotten off the street earlier if they had stayed in South Granville."

_Informant, Group 1_

The same issue is expressed in the words of another informant:

"There are less street youth visible now, I think the more independent youth travel, or youth disappeared or died or they get settled back into normal life. Lots of the older youth have brain damage and they cannot get back into normal life."

_Informant, Group 1_

2.7 CONTESTED TERRAIN — REASONS YOUTH END UP ON THE STREETS

Many informants commented as to why youth end up on the streets. There is no universally shared simple explanation, rather informants elaborated on various issues which act upon each other. Reasons given as to what can put children and youth at risk of ending up on the streets can perhaps most easily be categorized as:

- Reasons perceived/related to individual or personal challenges for example addiction issues, mental health issues, failing or not being

7. Visible here is meant is terms of having a recognizable presence on the streets.
supported through the school system, learning disabilities, FASD, traumatic experiences, falling in with the wrong crowd, etc.

• Reasons connected to a family or community breakdown scenario: for example violence and abuse at home, parents with mental health or drug issues, new step-parent on the scene pushing out a youth, struggling single parent families, rejection of sexual orientation, multi-generational traumatic experiences, impact of colonialism on aboriginal communities, etc.

• Structural issues: social and economic changes, poverty, policy changes, unemployment, impact of neoliberal politics (reduction of safety net), impact of colonialism and theories relating to psycho-social alienation under capitalism were all referenced. Informants in this context talked about poverty wages and unemployment, cutback of services, roll-back of the welfare state, impact of colonialism on aboriginal communities such as multi-generational trauma, lack of national housing policy, lack of affordable housing, increase in poverty, disinvestment by government in youth, psycho-social alienation, changes in the job market and gentrification. One informant stated that working class culture and working class jobs which offered youth an exit route in the past are disappearing in Vancouver.

The vast majority of my informants referenced reasons which can be attached to various categories and that these reasons can act upon each other. Many informants see these issues as an interconnected matter, one matter informing or leading to another issue.

I want to give voice to two informants whose responses were the most comprehensive responses. One informant expressed the issue in the following terms:

"To set a context, one really needs to look at the bigger picture — on one hand you have neoliberal ideology which is all about individuals and choices and less about the collective good, then you have the fiscal crisis of the welfare state/state which translates into a constant cutback to services. And then you have many individuals who are encumbered and burdened with many issues ranging from mental health, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), dysfunctional families, sexual abuse, addictions, developmental disabilities, etc. who are now increasingly left to cope on their own. And then there are issues like two parent working families, poverty, lack of affordable housing, etc."

(Informant, Group 2)

8. Reference to the work of Bruce Alexander (2008)
Another informant framed the issue in the following terms:

"The question really is 'what drives kids to the streets'? . . . abuse, sexual orientation, level of vulnerability, detachment from support networks, learning disabilities, addiction or mental health issues, aboriginal youth are at increased risk and over-represented (residential school and associated impacts for aboriginal youth), single parent families and associated impacts, loss of a family safety net, stresses on families leading to family breakdown, poverty, increased cost of living, and so on. Systemic supports are not in place: cuts to support services had an impact, too: there are less youth in care now, less interference with family issues, youth are on youth agreements instead of being taken into care, school councillors and school nurses have been cut, support services have been stretched thin. Youth in care are over-represented, kids in care do not transition well out of the system — the cut-off is at 16/19 and way too early. Lack of a national housing strategy is an issue. These are the high level issues which present across socio-economic and geographic boundaries."

(Informant, Group 2)

Most group 2 informants quoted reasons from all of these 3 categories or that various reasons are acting upon each other. Only one informant from Group 2 sees the reason youth end up on the streets as primarily connected to family breakdown issues. Another group 2 informant related that youth often end up street involved due to the work of predators who are preying on vulnerable youth.

Group 1 (former street youth/front-line worker) presents a slightly more polarized analysis. Two informants from that group quote poverty as a major factor with additional personal or family factors contributing (depression, mental health, abuse, etc.). Three informants do not elaborate about macro-social/economic or structural inequality issues. Reasons given relate to experiences of trauma, abuse, disconnection from community, parent issues, running away from foster homes, illiteracy, youth being thrown out and youth being drawn to the street (fun, sense of adventure, drugs and drama). One informant from group 1 elaborated on the notion that youth who are already in a disadvantaged position or do not feel part of regular society are more at risk of becoming street involved.

It would be a worthwhile research project to compare the understanding of people directly involved with the public perception of the issue through an analysis of how the issue is presented in the media and by whom. There are indications that individual issues/family breakdown issues might be more prominent explanatory factors presented in media than bigger picture issues. Four informants stated that the issues are often presented in the media in a
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de-politicized way — i.e., instead of educating people, the public is made to feel sorry for a certain street youth. It also appears that neoliberal ideology has had its impact on the general public. According to five informants, whilst street youth in the 1980s and 1990s received more sympathetic coverage, this is no longer the case. Four informants have noted that the recent public focus on homelessness has shifted attention and awareness away from the street youth issue. The street youth issue has been immersed within the bigger homelessness debate and is hence out of the spotlight.

In this chapter, my respondents have highlighted various themes which (tentatively) connect the street youth issue with neoliberal policy changes and neoliberal discourses. In the following summary, I am highlighting themes which were mentioned by a minimum of five informants. In some cases, more research would be necessary to verify the validity of these arguments. As it stands, these statements by informants need to be contextualized as anecdotal evidence and subjective data. Some of these themes are supported by other academic research.

According to a notable number of informants:

- Neoliberal policy changes are seen as contributing to structural inequalities and a reduction of the social safety net and hence are causing more youth to end up on the streets or subjected to housing instability. According to these informants, the number of street-involved youth has increased in recent years and their entrenchment has deepened. Other academic research (Kryder-Croe, Molnar and Salamon (editors), 1991) seems to support the connection between the reduction of a social safety net in recent decades and the increasing number of children and youth on the streets.

- Visibility of the issue seems to have changed: informants argue that street youth appear to be less visible in terms of social policy processes and public awareness, less visible in terms of being less distinct from adults on the streets and in terms of being self-visible (recognisable by their peers as part of a group). This is related by some informants to changes in drug use patterns and a restructuring of the sector along neoliberal ideology as well as cuts to the social service sector (see also next chapter for more details).

- Less public sympathy for the street youth issue in recent years is also noted as a case of concern by five informants. Two informants made
explicit links between neoliberal ideology and the reduction in public sympathy for the poor who are seen as undeserving.

Of particular interest is also that the street youth issue appears to be in the process of being theorized differently. According to some informants, the understanding of the street youth issue in recent years seems to be more nuanced, fragmented and differentiating. Terminology seems to be changing. Informants did not link this development to neoliberal policy changes per se.

I will comment on policy changes over the decades more explicitly in the next chapter. I will also explain the service delivery framework, changes to the service delivery framework and funding changes. I also want to point towards the intended outcome and consequences of neoliberal policies: a fragmentation of stakeholder voice which does not allow stakeholders in this sector to develop and advance a coherent and jointly shared policy agenda.
CHAPTER 3
THE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL FOR STREET-INVOLVED YOUTH IN VANCOUVER, B.C. FROM THE 1980S TO THE PRESENT — POLICY/LEGISLATIVE/FUNDING CONTEXT

3.1 RESEARCH CHALLENGES

At the beginning of this research project, my expectation was that a lot of my findings from this chapter would be informed by research findings relating to policy and legislative changes. However, upon interviewing informants, it became very quickly apparent that many significant changes have manifested themselves in the sector, albeit not necessarily through policy and legislative changes but through various restructuring and contracting out processes, funding changes and centralization and de-centralization movements. Academic research documenting these changes up to the late 1980s (Callahan and McNiven, 1988, see also literature review) as well as up to 2007 (Foster and Wharf (ed.), 2007) exists. I will utilize this research as a supplementary resource allowing me to insert an academic and senior politician perspective into the narrative. The book edited by Foster and Wharf presents research by established academics with a long involvement in this sector, some of whom are connected to Social Work Faculties in B.C. Much of the research in Foster and Wharf is based on interviews with Ministers and Ministry key staff who have shaped the sector over the last few decades. In that sense, utilizing this research can indeed be seen as adding other voices into this discourse, moderated, presented and analysed through the lens of various academics. In that sense, the convergence/divergence of the academic voices and the findings from the interviews I conducted will be of specific interest. When relating findings from the interviews I conducted with the research by academics, a
somewhat shared trajectory has emerged. Overall, these voices appear to complement, support and frame each other, rather than contradict each other.

3.2 The 1970s Service Delivery Model — The Community Resource Board Experience

Political Power: the NDP was in power from 1972 to 1975, the SoCreds from 1975 onwards (till 1991)

Pre-amble

To recapture arguments made in the literature review, academic research stemming from the late 1980s (Callahan and McNiven, 1988) documents that B.C. had a mixed service delivery model in so far as the government and the non-profit sector both delivered social services; onus had however been on more of a charity model with government delivering only a minimum level of social services. Due to that set-up, the whole sector in B.C. was not as professionalized as other welfare state professions which offer their services primarily through government directly (teachers, medical staff, etc.). According to these criteria it would perhaps be more appropriate to label the workers serving and working with street-involved populations as semi-professionals.

Additionally, overall budget cuts and downloading of responsibilities from the federal to provincial to municipal level can be traced back to the 1970s (see Callahan and McNiven, 1988) — this downloading also frames the context for service delivery.

Early beginnings of street youth services are not fully clear. I have not been able to fully verify which the first project was which worked with street youth. According to three informants, services for street-involved youth in Vancouver started 1973 (although the terminology street-involved youth was not used yet). Another informant mentioned a grass roots group from the 1960s called Koolaid which had responded to youth from the hippie movement who were homeless. It appears however that the early 1970s was when the sector really began to develop. According to two informants, the momentum for developing these services was grass-roots and community-based. Based on the account of one Group 2 informant, a progressive police officer originally from the U.K. who was a Board member of the Children's
The Service Delivery Model...

Aid Society wanted to develop programs with the intent to reach out to at risk youth through a social service response, not a criminal justice response. Lobbying and fund-raising were successful: a program for street-involved youth was initiated in 1973. This program had three components — for youth under 16, youth 16-24 and younger adults 24+, it was essentially a social service police intervention aiming at getting youth off the streets and not entrenched in the street life of Vancouver. An office shop-front on 52 Water Street housed these programs, street workers would connect with youth where they were (in court, on the streets — Hastings St. and Granville Street were hubs at the time, in hotels, in Boystown). According to one Group 2 informant, "... these were exciting times, because we could develop something from scratch ... we had legal aid workers, street nurses, we had aboriginal street workers and workers who identified as gay ... we worked our core hours from 8 pm to 4 am so we would be in and out of the clubs and hotels where youth gathered" (Informant, group 2).

The Resource Board was the model under which these initial services for street-involved youth developed and expanded. According to academic research by Wharf (2007), lack of integration of services was seen as the most critical issue by the Human Resources Minister Levi under whose jurisdiction social services sat. Levi and the Premier Barrett introduced the Resource Board Model in 1974. Both of them had a social work background and undertook the most ambitious, visionary and comprehensive social service sector reform which B.C. had seen. In Wharf’s (2007) words, "... fragmentation was widely hailed as the pre-eminent problem facing social services — not the absence of resources, not the quality and training of staff ... but the arrangement or, rather lack of proper arrangement of these services" (Wharf, p. 67, 2007 in Foster and Wharf (eds.)). Resource Boards developed in response to the notion of fragmentation and the principles of decentralization. Integration and citizen participation were to be achieved through that model. The Resource Board for social services was a set-up similar to school and health boards: board members were local and democratically elected. They functioned as a steering mechanism for the sector and were able to respond to local needs, defined what services should be developed locally and which agencies should be awarded contracts.

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9. Boystown is/was the under-age male street prostitution area in what is now on the margins of Yaletown. The area around Granville St. was home to an underground gay nightclub scene at the time; Boystown was adjacent to that.
According to one group 2 informant "shortly after Dave Barrett under the NDP\textsuperscript{10} get in power 1972 they took over all the city social services. His minister of Human Resources, Norm Levi, de-centralized and down-sized. Before the NDP came in power, we had a classic centralized private-public partnership between the Children's Aid Societies who were providing child protection services (there was a Catholic and a Protestant branch) and the city welfare departments and city health departments. Under the new model they were somewhat amalgamated and brought under provincial government control. They set up a model called Resource Boards — control of the budget was de-centralized. They were like schools boards ... locally elected and ... integrated with school board and health. Intent was to have these boards at a municipal and community levels" (Informant, group 2). Academic research (Callahan and McNiven, 1988) points to the reasons which informed the implementation of the Resource Boards as informed by "Mr Levi's, view — government funds were too bureaucratized, centralized and professionalized" (Callahan and McNiven, p. 16, 1988). There is the notion supported by two informants that the new model, the Resource Board, which is a model of decentralized service delivery coupled with a decentralized notion of power and control at local level worked out well for the emerging services for street-involved youth. "That model (Resource Boards) worked fairly well and it does till this day in Toronto" (Informant, group 2). This specific informant expressed that this model was seen as a proliferation of democracy and community development. Callahan and McNiven argue that whilst the notion of community control did receive a lot of buy-in at the time, nevertheless "the era of voluntary sector as public agent had begun in earnest" (Callahan and McNiven, p. 16, 1988).

In 1975, a new government was elected — the Social Credit government\textsuperscript{11}. The new ruling party saw the Resource Board model as problematic and in 1977 it was abandoned, albeit under much public protest. According to Wharf (2007), 27,000 people had signed a petition to protest against the dismantling of the Vancouver Resource Board. Services were centralized under the aegis of the new Ministry (after various name changes it is now called the Ministry for Children and Family Development, the MCFD). The decision to dismantle the Resource Boards was seen as an ideologically driven decision by informants.

\textsuperscript{10} The New Democratic Party is often described as social democratic and seen as center-left on the political spectrum.

\textsuperscript{11} The Social Credit Party (SoCreds) is often seen as fiscal and social conservative.
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One informant expressed this in the following terms: “I think it was an ideologically driven decision: the NDP would call the Resource Board as a model of proliferation of democracy and community development, Vander Zalm\textsuperscript{12} would call it a proliferation of bureaucracy. There were clear costs to having to run Resource Boards and things like that and Vander Zalm saw the centralized role of government as more efficient, he wanted more control. He saw the Resource Board as ways for community activists who were never ever going to be SoCred activists learning politics at a community resource board level. People sitting on a community resource board were likely to be on the left. And the resource boards never ceased to criticize government and that all led him both ideologically and practically to say: to hell with this” (Informant, group 2). In the words of another informant, “when the SoCreds got into power in 1975 and eliminated the Resource Boards, everything became more bureaucratic, more driven from the centre, things were basically taken over by government. Lots of the people involved with the Resource Board left or quit, I think they were seen as left-wingers by the SoCred government, so they were probably glad to get rid of them. It kind of became clear that you had to be careful around your own political beliefs” (Informant, group 2). Bringing everybody back into the fold under the aegis of the Ministry created a centralized service-delivery model in which power and control was exercised on a central level.

With the Resource Board model only having been in place for a few years, not much empirical evidence seems to exist which measures its impact. According to Wharf (p. 79, 2007 in Foster (ed.)), “these principles (decentralization, integration, citizen participation) provided a framework that could have been used by social services and health ministries for further experiments in the search for coherent and effective patterns of service. Unfortunately, no subsequent government, whether Social Credit or NDP, took advantage of the opportunity” (Wharf in Foster (ed.), p. 79, 2007). One could argue that the Resource Board presents a strong vision, perhaps unsurpassed by what has happened since.

Despite the dismantling of the Resource Boards, the period leading up to the late-70s was still seen as an expansion area by one informant as increasing financial resources were being provided to the sector. By the late 1970s, social services were again in-house.

\textsuperscript{12} Vander Zalm was the Human Resource Minister of the SoCred government elected in 1975. He was seen as instrumental in relation to these changes.
3.3 THE 1980S: DE-CENTRALIZATION

Political Leadership: the SoCreds were in power during the 1980s

In the early 1980s, the SoCreds privatized service delivery — apart from child protection work and income assistance which was kept in-house, most of the social service work was contracted out to the non-profit sector. According to Callahan and McNiven, “privatization was declared a major policy direction for government and in social services, several mechanisms were adopted to reduce public provision and subsidy” (Callahan and McNiven, p. 19, 1988). The new model was one of de-centralized service delivery and centralized control.

According to Scarth and Sullivan (p. 84, 2007, in Foster and Wharf, ed.), the era was shaped by three main events; “The 1981 Family and Child Service Act, the 1983 restraint program, and the emergence of the push for Aboriginal communities to control Aboriginal child welfare.” Callahan and McNiven argue that the new Family and Child Services Act was an overhaul of out-dated child protection legislation which fell short of expectation because “... it did not enshrine its new family support services into legislation” (Callahan and McNiven, 1988, p. 17). This limited the legal obligation of government as the basic role of child protection. Family support was only to be authorized once a child was at risk from being removed from a family/community. Child welfare was hence seen as an interventionist enterprise. In the words of Scarth and Sullivan, “this is in contrast to a view of child welfare that frames family support needs as the defining conditions for a right to services provided on a voluntary, preventative basis “ (Scarth and Sullivan, p. 86, 2007 in Foster and Wharf (ed.). Child protection and family/community support are both seen as essential tasks of social work — however, in B.C., more often than not, the focus of social work was on the child protection piece at the expense of the family/community support piece.

In 1983, eight years after coming into power, the SoCreds implemented significant cuts for the social services sector. This was not to last. Scarth and Sullivan stress that “the services of family support workers, who had been laid off following the introduction of the 1983 restraint program, were gradually replaced quietly and in significant volume by contracts with community agencies beginning in 1985, when senior bureaucrats recognized that research supported the efficacy of providing support to vulnerable
families” (Scarth and Sullivan, p. 88, 2007 in Foster, ed.). This seems to imply that these decisions were ideologically driven by the SoCred government. This was not about saving money but an attempt to privatize/contract out. The Korbin commission in 1993 found that “… both personnel numbers and costs associated with providing services through the non-governmental sector had increased significantly between 1983 and 1993” (Korbin quoted in Scarth and Sullivan, p. 88, 2007 in Foster, ed.). According to an informant from group 3, “it is a sham privatization, it is not privatized at all, it is still public money. This was a SoCred strategy to downsize the public service which started in 1983. The Korbin commission found that within a decade we are paying 300% more than what is used to cost to deliver it within a larger public service. What all those people who got downsized out of MCFD and lost their job did was to open agencies providing contract services to the public sector. So it is the same people doing the same work but under contract so as to make the public service look smaller. But in fact it is a very fragmented system, it is highly bureaucratized and it is so fragmented that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing” (Informant, Group 3).

According to three informants, this (new) model was not controlled by the community but by government bureaucrats managing contracts. One informant stated that “… some of it was union-busting. Government employees were unionised under the BCGU, but the non-profits were not. Most of them were fairly small or non-existent at the time” (Informant, group 2). The new model was seen as a challenging time for the non-profit sector by two informants. One informant expressed it in the following terms: “people who started non-profits had to figure out how to build organisations rather than just build services” (Informant, group 2). According to another informant, “lots of non-profits started at that time … The logic was that this model was cheaper, easier to close, it was easier to cancel a contract than to re-organize” (Informant, group 2). It appears that in many cases, employees of the Ministry who had been laid off started these non-profits and bid for contracts to continue the work they had been doing for many years. Another informant noted that this was indeed a time where one could see “an explosion of non-profits” (Informant, group 2). This time is described as fairly chaotic by some informants from the non-profit sector due to the leadership of the non-profits having to develop not only programs but also agencies. However, there is a
notion of an increase in funding being made available and that the sector was expanding. In the words of one informant: “the ministry was setting up a lot of programs for street youth in the mid to late 1980s” (Informant, group 1).

Informants who witnessed the 1980s (14 informants) see the 1980s as a time in which the street youth issue started to receive a lot of publicity and there was an impetus for change. John Turvey who was the Executive Director of a non-profit group based in the Downtown Eastside called Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society (DEYAS) has been credited by five informants as being the major source of advocacy highlighting the exploitation of youth on the streets during that time. Two informants speaking to that matter also stated that John was left to struggle on his own for many years to provide services to street-involved youth in the Downtown Eastside; it took the government many years before they were willing to support his work financially. Apart from sexual exploitation, addiction issues were also increasingly discussed and highlighted — what was later to be called the four pillars drug strategy emerged as a debate in the 1980s. This watershed in drugs awareness was seen by one informant as supporting street youth in being increasingly portrayed in a sympathetic light.

In the 1980s, the MCFD was seen as responding to the street youth issue by continuing to develop a specialized skill set. According to one informant, “the first group home for sexually exploited youth was established around 1980/1981” (Informant, group 1). The Adolescent Services Unit (ASU) was established in 1988; the predecessor to that service was 52 Water Street which later merged with emergency services. The ASU was a group of MCFD social workers “who had a specialised skill-set working with at-risk youth and they were seen as pretty low-barrier (late opening hours, etc.)” (Informant, group 2). The Ministry also started the Reconnect program in the late 1980s — impetus was for various service-providers to meet, information-share, track the most at risk-youth, remove them from predators and re-connect them as much as possible to their home communities/services whilst working collaboratively.

Another group 2 informant referenced an important change which materialized during that time: “The 80s were really when people started to look at things differently; people started to develop community advisory boards and all sorts of community involvement. Peer involvement became a big thing. There was a real shift from adults just delivering services and perhaps adults meeting their own needs to youth becoming involved in designing the services so that they could need the meets of the youth. Watari
was quite a leader in community engagement, DEYAS and Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) also did some good work in that area. Not everybody did get it though, especially at the MCFD level and some other non-profits, they did not really understand that building relationships are the key to this work and that one-to-one services are the most effective way to work with youth” (Informant, Group 2).

The City of Vancouver was actively involved in advocacy work with the provincial government, lobbying and educating municipal politicians and supporting agencies serving street youth with grants, etc. Various reports on street involved youth highlighting gaps in services or other concerns were presented to council in 1986, 1987, 1988, and in 1990. This trend was to continue in the 1990s as well. According one informant, “the policy dilemma has always been that there are gaps in services (underfunding), that the mandate for the issue, hence funding, hence policy is all done in Victoria through the provincial government and that it is a centralized policy process. However, the issue is most acutely experienced in Vancouver, so the City was in an informational and advocacy position towards ministry and policy staff in Victoria (for more resources and funding). The managers of the MCFD are aware of the needs and issues but they were not the policy-makers and hence their ability to influence policy and funding is limited. The City could not fund that much, their abilities to address the issue were limited, but they did what they could . . . (e.g., approving zoning for Safe House and other services, etc.”) (Informant, group 2). The City, through their Park Board community centre system started to hire a few youth workers in the 1980s who worked with at risk youth in the community centres. Neighbourhood Houses also worked with at risk youth. However, these youth were often seen as still being connected to community and would likely not have been labelled street youth. The momentum to hire youth workers to work with vulnerable youth was a grass-roots community-driven momentum which manifested through existing infrastructure (community and neighbourhood houses in areas in which street-involved youth lived). According to one informant (Group 2), there seems to have been some informal level of integration of these agencies into a continuum-of-services model13 with some

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13. Continuum-of-service model refers to services ranging from community-based and/or low-barrier services to specialized services allowing youth with various level of needs to be effectively served and to transition from one service to another (e.g., example of such a transition would be from an outreach program to a detox program to a supported housing program).
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community centres and neighbourhood houses working quite closely with some agencies specialized in working with street youth. Joint interventions to get youth off the street were staged. The goal was to divert at risk and high risk youth away from the streets and away from predators working the streets and to re-integrate them back into community. That picture was to change again in the early 2000s — according to three Group 2 informants, funding shifts and cuts were especially detrimental to community-based services.

Early liaison and steering mechanisms for the sector began to emerge, apart from the Reconnect meetings, the inter-ministerial street children committee was also established in the 1980s. One informant explained that “The MCFD created the inter-ministerial street children committee as a kind of steering mechanism in 1986. Co-operation was the onus and how to make the little funding work. Various ministries and agencies were involved: Mental Health Service, Ministry of Health, Alcohol & Drugs, Ministry of the Attorney General, Ministry of Social Services, Ministry of Health Services CDC, VSB, VPD, Social Planning Department (City of Vancouver) and Vancouver Health Department. In the early 1990s it was decided to let the non-profits join that table. The committee added synergies to the studies and some cooperation. However, the ability of middle managers to influence Victoria policy and funding is limited” (Informant, group 2).

It appears that one could indeed now speak of a street youth sector, although it appears to have been a very chaotic time as well. This time is seen as an expansion of services in the context of privatization. Public awareness and sympathy towards street-involved youth was on the rise by the mid/late 1980s. Whilst the model started off being a de-centralized model of service delivery with a centralized level of control, it appears that by the end of the decade, power was becoming somewhat diffused as the service delivery system was becoming ever more complex due to the high number of contracts and agencies involved. Early attempts to liaise between service providers were being created (the Reconnect model got expanded province-wide; the inter-ministerial street children committee was created). From the late 1980s onwards, mid-size, new and established non-profits such as DEY AS (seen as highlighting the issue from the early 1980s onwards), FSGV (established agency, started to provide services for street-involved youth in 1987), Pacific Community Resource Society (PCRS, founded in 1984), WATARI (founded in
1986) and Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA, founded in 1988) were either beginning to make a name for themselves in the non-profit world/getting established and/or developed expertise with at risk youth. Territories began to emerge in which these various agencies operated — DEYAS and WATARI for example operated in the Downtown Eastside, FSGV had a presence in the Downtown South from 1987 onwards, the Broadway Youth Centre (run by the PCRS) established itself in East Vancouver. The Hard Target program (now run by Watari) was also implemented which worked along similar premises as the Reconnect meeting — aim was to pull youth off the streets as early as possible and remove them from pimps and predators before youth became fully street entrenched.

Advocacy positions for children and youth were established by the City of Vancouver in 1989\(^{14}\) as well as the Province of British Columbia in 1996. These were seen as powerful advocacy voices. Some of these Child and Youth Advocates were deeply involved in the street youth issue in the 1990s, able to inject themselves into debates and highlight pertinent issues. It appears that both the City as well as the Province did not always have an easy time with internal advocates critiquing government. These positions were to change significantly in the 2000s.

3.4 THE 1990S: NEW PLAYERS, NEW MODELS — SERVICE EXPANSION


The 1990s are described by one informant as “an expansion (of the sector) but without much of a central vision” (Informant, group 1). An extremely polarizing theme running through the 1990s and especially 2000s are debates around the nature and shape of the non-profit sector, questions around community-based\(^{15}\) versus specialized services (hub model), grass roots versus professionalization. The tendency of the non-profit sector to develop towards a more corporate orientation (i.e. corporate board members) with reduced local

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14. Gordon Campbell was the Mayor at the time the City installed the first Child and Youth Advocate position.

15. Community-based services are usually seen as based in and connected to a geographic community or a community of interest. Community involvement options in steering these agencies exist (local board voice, customer input).
involvement options and the tendency of the MCFD towards managerialism were also duly noted, and for the most part judged as a negative development.

On the provincial level, the MCFD from the mid-1990s was seen as a Ministry which had a revolving doors phenomenon — i.e., ministers changed so frequently that consistency in directions could not materialize. This was referenced by two informants (see also Hughes Report, next chapter). On the political scene, the MCFD under Minister Smallwood (1991-1993) is seen from swinging from an onus on child protection towards supporting families and listening to community input (see Hern and Cossom in Wharf and Foster (eds.), 2007, p. 135). However, Cossom and Hern also relate that leadership was inconsistent and buy-in by a staff majority did not happen, combined with the short tenure of Minister Smallwood, “a significant opportunity to organically reshape child welfare in B.C. was missed” (Hern and Cossom, p. 135, 2007, in Foster and Wharf). The death of Matthew Vaudreuil16 in 1992 and the subsequent inquiry into his death by Judge Thomas Gove came to define and reshape the MCFD for the rest of the decade. Gove investigated the failure of the MCFD in relation to preventing Matthew’s death, and published a report which included 118 recommendations and called for a new child welfare system. Not all of these 118 recommendations were implemented. One of the key features of the Gove report was that the safety and well-being of children became paramount (again), “at the expense of other broader and more structural family and child service objectives” (Hern and Cossom, p. 155, 2007 in Foster and Wharf). The impact of the report translated into more children being brought into care and a focus on risk assessment and managerialism. According to Callahan and Swift (p. 179, 2007 in Wharf and Foster) “managerial discourses have framed the agenda, and to be opposed to their key components — prediction, standardization, and accountability — appears irresponsible. Yet it is clear that there are ways to achieve these goals while retaining the essences of human services: relationships built on mutual respect with attention to needs and self-determination”. According to Callahan and Swift (in Foster and Wharf, 2007), from the mid to late 1990s onwards, there was an increasing momentum by the MCFD to use risk as the governing concept and to equate quality with standardization and documentation as accountability.

16. Matthew was a child who died from abuse by his mother. There had been much medical and social service intervention into the family over the years. However, files were not connected and the extent of the abuse was not properly tracked. His death prompted a public investigation.
Informants' opinions on the Gove report were varied — three informants (Group 3/Group 2) noted that Gove had a major influence on policy in a positive way for the emerging services for street youth. Another informant had a rather different take on the Gove inquiry: “The Gove inquiry in the 1990s made some things worse, because government’s response to a critical incident was that we cannot allow front-line workers to exercise discretion. In a couple of tragic and horrible cases discretion was not exercised well. But you should not build policy around critical incidents; these incidents tend not to be very typical . . . It became highly procedural. It is not adaptive to the unique circumstances of every child, youth and family” (Informant, group 3). A similar notion was expressed by a group 1 informant — not specifically in relation to the Gove report, but to policy-making in general: “policy making seems to be made by somebody who gets to read a lot of unusual occurrence forms and does not seem to have a full grasp on the whole story” (Informant, Group 1). Another informant commented upon the Gove report “being full of dreams of what government should be doing when they clearly do not have the capacity to do that” (Informant, Group 2).

Despite one Group 2 informant expressing the notion of the sector being direction-less, this period was nevertheless also seen as a period of growth. According to a group 2 informant, the first Safe House was opened in 1992; the City supported this development through re-zoning and other political support. According to two informants, due to the political pressure increasing on politicians, there was a committee and an action plan being developed in the mid-1990s and additional funding was made available for services serving street youth. One of my informants detailed this in the following terms: “The plan was to have a number of phases, the first phase was to create low-barrier services and the second phase was to bring in additional services. The second phase never materialized. So after youth had been through the detox or the safe house, they had nowhere to go, they were back on the streets. The Vancouver Action Plan was an infusion of one-off funding in 1994/95. Dusk to Dawn and the Youth Detox were created/funded” (Informant, group 2). These services were managed by FSGV and were located in the Downtown South. One informant mentioned that the cash injection translated into a feeding frenzy for some non-profit groups, which translated into “the end of camaraderie” (Informant, Group 2).
As mentioned earlier, certain agencies were in the process of developing expertise in working with street-involved youth. However, the existing non-profits were confronted by a new arrival which some informants saw as competition. In the early 1990s, Covenant House Vancouver appeared on the scene. A total of 17 informants commented on Covenant House, 10 of these informants displayed a critical stance towards Covenant House, four informants were value neutral and three described Covenant House in positive terms. In that sense, Covenant House Vancouver appears to be one of the most controversial themes amongst respondents. In order to better understand these strong reactions, I think it is relevant to look at the context. Covenant House Vancouver embodies the faith-based and religious history of the non-profit sector, which contrasts with other local agencies working with street youth which do not share that history. Whilst non-profits operated mostly regionally or locally and were locally funded and responded to local issues and needs and often had a grass-roots and community activist background, the Covenant House model is a transnational charity model with operations all over North and Central America and its corporate head-quarter based in New York City. Programs which had been developed in New York were being adjusted and inserted in the sector in Vancouver; start-up money could be received from New York or through corporate and private fund-raising. It is important to mention that the tendency to have powerful and connected people with a corporate background as board members is not an issue specific to one agency, but appears to be manifesting across the non-profit sector from the 1990s onwards. In that sense, Covenant House Vancouver seems to have been perceived as an early manifestation of a new time to come, a time when charities took on a much more corporate character, a decisive move away from the grass-roots and community history of many non-profit sector groups and a possible alignment with a neoliberal agenda.

One informant noted the climate when Covenant House Vancouver first appeared on the scene: “Covenant House appeared in the early 90s. They said at the time that they would not compete for government dollars. There was some local opposition, especially by the aboriginal community as Covenant House was a faith-based catholic charity. The residential schools run by the Church were still fresh in people’s memories. Others might also have perceived them as a threat as they were a big operation. Their original proposal was for a large program when all of Vancouver’s programs were of a small scale. There
were discussions towards a smaller scale and the notion that they should prove themselves through a smaller start-up operation" (Informant, group 2).

Covenant House Vancouver to date runs 54 shelter beds and 25 single room occupancy (SRO) type bachelor suites and is the biggest agency offering shelter beds to youth. It is also worthwhile noting that they have been able to respond to gaps in services more so than other agencies (i.e., they focus on youth aged 19 to 24) as they are less dependent on government due to independent fundraising. It appears that Covenant House has since become much more established, although they continue to appear to be controversial for a relatively high number of informants. Clusters consisting of four to six informants made the following points in relation to Covenant House:

- Covenant House is seen as a high-barrier service which works primarily with high-functioning youth — especially Group 1 informants were critical of this. A total of six informants from Group 1 and Group 2 commented on this.

- Informants alluded to their status as competitors for other agencies in the funding arena. These informants alluded that Covenant House did not stick with its original promise not to take government dollars; some informants are critical of Covenant House taking away funding from other agencies as there are only so many fundraising sources available. It appears that Covenant House received significant MCFD grants in the late 2000s towards infrastructure (but not operational) costs.

- Informants commented on (past) media campaigns of Covenant House critically. Their media presentation of the street youth issue was seen as sensationalizing and de-politicising the issue and/or exploitative towards street youth whose images were used in information published by Covenant House. One informant commented on Covenant House having the biggest media presence of all organizations — implying that their campaigning (which is seen as sensationalised) does little to educate the public about youth homelessness.

Other comments made by smaller clusters of people (one to three) relate to Covenant House not always co-operating exceedingly well with other agencies and Covenant House Vancouver being disconnected from the local

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17. "Nobody liked going there unless you are pretty used to be dealing with a plan. Most people who are there (Covenant House) are like freshly new people or people who go to jail all the time, they can deal with it" (Informant).
community/community they are serving. However, these were not the only voices — three informants referenced Covenant House as a well-run agency or delivering good work and being one of the biggest and most important organizations for street youth in Vancouver. Informants commented on Covenant House’s relative funding independence from government, relating this to their ability to do good advocacy work on behalf of individual youth and to respond to gaps in services. The ability to respond to gaps in services (e.g., provide shelter for youth aged 19 to 24) was seen as a positive.

Covenant House’s relatively de-politicized stance is reflected in their promotional material — the street youth issue does not get connected to structural inequalities and the impact of neoliberal policies on welfare state provisions, but seems to be presented primarily as an issue of dysfunctional families and abuse. The Covenant House web page states that Covenant House is “providing love and hope to Vancouver’s street youth” and the “Covenant House exists for those young people for whom there is often no one else — young people aged 16-24 who have fled physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse, those who have been forced from their homes or those who have aged out of foster care” (http://www.covenanthousebc.org/, accessed October 7, 2011). These comments contrasts starkly with other advocacy voices, such as the Child and Youth Advocate Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, for whom the issue of child and youth poverty is a common denominator amongst the children and youth she and her team serve (see Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond in Fowlie, 2009). One of my informants framed the issue in the following terms: “there is some fund-raising going on there (at Covenant House) which is intended to create sympathy through a real exploitation of the image of the street-involved youth. That kind of fund-raising de-politicizes the issue. This is very different from educating youth and the public about what needs to be done” (Informant). In the context of Covenant House being less dependent on provincial government than other non-profits and having a big media presence, my respondents framed the issue as a missed opportunity for progressive advocacy voice/progressive public education.

Hackworth (2010) has researched the mobilization of religious organizations for neoliberal ends in the United States. He argues that religious-based non-profits whilst pre-dating Neoliberalism, are suitable to be co-opted and modified by neoliberal policy-makers and are being re-made as vehicles of neoliberalism. He argues that the specific rescue missions he researched which
served the homeless tend to “emphasize individual and spiritual failures as the primary cause of one’s plight” (Hackworth, 2010, p. 753) and hence move away from and de-politicize wider and structural explanations. I would argue that perhaps this argument, combined with the perception of providing high-barrier services as well as the competition for a limited amount of fund-raising dollars goes some ways towards explaining the strong responses that Covenant House seems to elicit.

Professionalization and mandatory accreditation of social service sector agencies receiving funding from the MCFD seems to have been on the agenda since the late 1990s/early 2000s (date unclear). Informants’ feedback on this movement does vary. Some informants considered this a good concept and thought the idea of quality of services was the driving force for accreditation, other informants saw this direction as a way to squeeze out smaller advocacy-based non-profits. Opinions on this debate are diverging — the number of informants seeing this as an overall positive development roughly equals the number of informants seeing this development more critically or nuanced. In the words one informant who had a more nuanced/critical stance towards this development: “I do not think that it was as much about quality of services, it was a way to get rid of the smaller organisations. The bigger organisations got their accreditation paid for, but if you were under a certain limit, the MCFD did not pay for you to go through accreditation. Hence the smaller organisations did not get accredited” (Informant, group 2). Five informants from group 2 speak to that issue and the challenges this brings with it. In the words of one informant: “(the) . . . dilemmas for many non-profits were that they were mostly on shoestring budgets, so they often had staff with on the ground experience but not always university degrees (social work) and little (support) infrastructure. The more focus there is on service, the less resources are available for training, and supervision, that was a dilemma which most of them faced” (Informant, group 2). Whilst some informants (four) see this process of accreditation and professionalization as necessary and important, three highlight that this process polarised the sector. One informant stated that “this momentum did not extend to the youth services which were funded through Health, there were never any dollars allocated to accredit these organisations, so in a way this limited agency capacity (for the agencies which worked with at risk youth through health funding)” (Informant, group 2).

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18. This informant also referenced that the MCFD itself is not accredited.
The Downtown Eastside and grass-roots organisations based in the Downtown Eastside were also seen as not necessarily doing well through that process. DEYAS, which had been so instrumental in advocating for street-involved youth in the early days did not fare too well. One informant explained this in the following terms: “...some of the grass-roots organisations in the Downtown Eastside, these groups can do fantastic work in terms of advocacy, but there can also be boundary challenges when the workers are too close to the experiences of the people they are working with. They often start off being the only voice highlighting an issue, so sometimes they can find it hard to build alliances and accept allies. This could be one of the reasons why the groups working in the Downtown Eastside are often smaller. They do tend to be more connected to their community though. There is a lot to be said for professionalism, but one thing that organisations really need to look out for is that they stay connected to the community and that they do not create too many boundaries for the people they are working for” (Informant, group 2). Four informants from group 1 (former street youth/former front-line workers) also made comments relating to that process, with three Group 1 informants noting that low-barrier and peer model based19 services which were a phenomena of the 1990s were moving to more high-barrier services in the 2000s. This was seen as a negative by these informants. One informant from group 1 presented a pro and con view to the professionalization process. The pro view being that “if services are too low-barrier, more older youth are using the services, there is also the risk that kids can create hierarchies or exploit each other, so perhaps services had to re-define their mandate” (Informant, group 1). The contra view being that youth in need of services can be excluded if services become too high-barrier. Two informants from group 2 commented on the need to create services which present a safe working environment for front-line staff. The 90s were seen as a time when services were so low-barrier that in some cases, working conditions for staff were not necessarily safe, leaving frontline staff exposed to risky situations. In the words of one informant, “it is kind of absurd that the lowest paid people were managing the highest level of risk” (Informant, group 2). The quality of some the peer work which was done in the 1990s was also questioned by one informant. In the words of this informant: “There were peer mentorship models, but they did not always lead

19. Peer-based models aim to give youth who are perceived as leaders an opportunity to work or volunteer with a youth serving organisation and to mentor other youth/their peers. The power differential between workers and these youth is reduced.
to greater community involvement/development, the kids were isolated from the broader community. It was a very black and white model of life (us versus them) that most youth carried” (Informant, group 2). Overall, informants expressed diverging opinions — with Group 1 informants primarily seeing the positive in the peer-based grass-roots models of the 90s and Group 2 informants presenting a more multi-faceted reading.20

Overall it appears that organisations which either had been professionalized or were able to professionalize were in a better position to obtain funding.

With the majority of services working with street youth now being delivered through the non-profit sector, the expertise in developing programs and responding to high risk youth, etc. was gradually shifting away from the MCFD to the non-profit sector.

The movement towards a hub system was another big shift which began to materialize in the late 1990s. According to four informants, the hub model was advocated for, initiated and developed by parts of the non-profit sector. One informant stressed that “Pacific Community Resource Society (PCRS) just decided to do it and got some local decision-makers who were willing to take chances with it and off they went. The successful hubs come from co-operative government principles” (Informant, group 2). Hub models present as open-door youth oriented spaces, much like youth centres, with a multitude of specialised services and workers working in a hub. It promises the best of both worlds; a contact point and hang-out place which youth are comfortable with and access to youth by various specialised youth work staff (housing worker, addictions worker, mental health workers, nurses, employment counsellors, and so on. . . ). The hub model began to emerge in the late-90s with Pacific Community Resource Society leading that momentum. According to another informant, the hub concept was initially recommended in the Gove Report (see recommendation #97, Gove Report). Overall, Informants comments on the hub model are divergent making this another theme which appears to be controversial (see next chapter).

20. The group 2 informant quoted did not question the value and importance of peer models, but rather the quality of some of the peer work which was undertaken at the time.
3.5 The 2000s: Funding Cuts and the Corporate Make-Over of the Non-Profit Sector

Political Leadership on a provincial level: Liberal Party of B.C. 2001–date.21

The recent decade was seen as perhaps the most challenging decade for the sector: shortly after the Liberals got into power, budget cuts to social programs were announced which “have been described as the largest budget and public sector cuts in Canadian history” (Caledonian Institute of Social Policy, 2002 as quoted in Foster, p. 185, 2007 in Foster and Wharf (eds.). According to Foster (2007), the MCFD was slated for an overall 23% budget reduction, and a 30% cut to children and family programming. Cuts to other ministries were also proposed, further dismantling the social safety network for vulnerable youth. Restructuring services was also on the agenda (again). Money was to be saved by reducing the number of children being taken into care, focusing instead on cheaper options like youth agreements22 and privatized foster homes. After much posturing (also by the then Minister, Hogg) and public protest and after a few years, some of these cuts were modified and some levels of funding were re-installed. Most informants describe these cuts as devastating and significant. Three informants pointed out that Vancouver still has many more services for street-involved youth than other areas. Two informants mentioned that perhaps a few agencies needed to be taken out of the equation due to not providing high quality services, on-going complaints or over-lapping services. Two informants were of the opinion that there is possibly now more money in the system than there was in the past, but that the money is not being spent in the right places. Overall data from the interviews suggests that services for street-involved youth were being re-shaped and funding for these services was significantly reduced.

Another defining moment for the sector was the Hughes Report which investigated the death of an aboriginal child, Sherry Charlie, in 2002.23 Just like Judge Gove, Judge Hughes came to investigate the inner workings of the MCFD. In 2006, the Hughes Report was published, it included 62 recommendations and noted that the MCFD had reached breaking point and was perceived to be without a clear direction due to frequent restructuring and change of Ministers.

21. This party is usually considered to represent conservative and neoliberal thinking.
22. Youth agreements are based on the notion of youth living on their own/in the community on an enhanced welfare rate.
23. Sherry had been looked after by her aunt on a kith and kin agreement and was murdered by the aunt’s abusive husband.
Both the municipal as well as the provincial Child and Youth Advocate positions were to undergo significant changes in the 2000s, impacting their ability to function as an independent advocacy voice. Under the Liberals, the provincial Child and Youth Advocate position was amalgamated with the Children and Youth Officer in (approx.) 2002. This position reported now to the Attorney General. The Provincial Child and Youth Advocate had previously been an independent Officer of the Legislature and hence considered to be politically independent. This new position sat under the Attorney General and made this office more politically dependent on government. Judge Ted Hughes in his review of B.C.’s child protection system in 2006 was to criticize the political dependency of this office and recommended to turn it in an independent advocacy voice. In 2007, the Provincial Representative for Children and Youth was reinstated as an independent Officer of the Provincial Legislature. The municipal Child and Youth Advocate position was cut in 2006 by an NPA led council under Mayor Sam Sullivan — it appears that this administration had little tolerance for internal advocate voices criticizing local government (see Bula, 2006).

According to two informants, there was further fragmentation of the sector in the early 2000s, with residential/shelter based services and health addiction services for high risk youth no longer being funded by the same Ministry. This could be regarded as a further fragmentation of an already fragmented sector. One informant expressed the impact of this change in the following terms: “Another big change during that time was that Drugs and Alcohol Services which used to be under MCFD jurisdiction now moved to the Health Ministry, so youth serving organisation who had more of a public health or harm reduction focus and health funding got disconnected from the MCFD” (Informant, group 2). According to this informant, the bulk of the work with street-involved youth is financed through the MCFD - the Health Ministry finances approximately 10% of services for street-involved youth, specifically those services with a health focus.

The most controversial debate of the decade is related to the hub model. As explained earlier, the hub model is seen as a one-stop-shop concept where a variety of services are bundled together in one facility allowing youth who are accessing this facility to get connected on a multitude of issues and levels.

24. There is no agreement on the data. One informant dates this back to 1999, other informants date this back to the early 2000s after the Liberals got voted into power.
According to three informants, the hub model concept in Vancouver has a long grass-roots history dating back to the store-front services which emerged in the 1970s and 80s. FSGV and PCRS were described as moving their services in a hub direction by the late 1990s. In the late 1990s this emerging model was one of a variety of models, in 2004, this model had become the dominant model of youth service delivery for at risk youth with four hubs now being located in various parts of Vancouver. Informants expressed a variety of opinions why the re-structuring towards a hub model took place and whether it was a positive or negative development. The issue is further complicated by massive budget cuts to the whole sector (estimated at 20-30%) which were implemented in 2003/2004 making it difficult to distinguish the impact of the restructuring exercises from the impact of the cuts.

Informants had strong opinions, and there was no clear majority voice pointing to a commonly shared interpretation of these changes. On most matters, small clusters of informants (typically around three to five informants) shared similar readings of these changes.

One cluster referred to the hub model being a good model, being lobbied for by PCRS, having a grass-roots history and being researched and supported by the youth funders table. This group saw the restructuring of the sector towards a hub model as necessary in order to simplify, amalgamate and consolidate services for street youth. There was the notion that there was an overlap of services and the sector having become somewhat unmanageable with the MCFD managing between 100-30025 contracts related to agencies working with street youth. Additionally, a few informants mentioned that there had been concerns around the quality of some of these services and hence the move towards using larger more professionalized agencies to provide services to street youth made sense. The hub model also forced different levels of government to work together. A hidden or perhaps implicit agenda was that this was also a cost-saving exercise. One informant expressed that: "... the bureaucratic logic was to save administrative costs by managing fewer contracts and by streamlining and centralizing the process" (Informant, group 2). Informants having an overall positive disposition towards the hub model also nevertheless mentioned that many non-profits working with street youth went under during that time, that is was a difficult time and that there was a net loss

25. These two numbers of contract estimates — 100 and 300 stem from two different informants.
of services. Additionally, hubs were under-funded and were not able to subcontract work out, as had originally been presumed. This in turn made the hubs look bad. One could indeed argue that obscuring responsibility for decision-making is a common neoliberal strategy: it is not government who is seen as being the author of service cuts, but the non-profit sector. Nevertheless, the service delivery model that is now in place is seen as being more cohesive than the previous service delivery model (the 90s model, with a multitude of agencies offering services to street youth). The hub model is also seen as being best placed to operate in times when contracts can be so narrowly defined that layering contract upon contract and being able to attract other youth serving agencies into the hub provides an overall broader variety of services and a more holistic approach towards youth work.

Another cluster of informants has less issues with the hub model per se (outlining positive and negative aspects of the hub model), but takes issue with the hub model becoming the dominant model and reads the emergence of the hub model differently: the hub model was seen as a hidden service cut presented as restructuring exercise. Issues around the MCFD wanting to exert more control over the sector and pushing more advocacy based groups out were articulated within that cluster.

A third but smaller cluster had another reading: the MCFD was seen as playing dirty politics through a divide and rule strategy (playing non-profits against each other), deliberately creating a cut-throat environment and pursuing a move away from community-based service responses. Community-based agencies were not able to bid on the contracts, as the contracts now requested for example to take on outreach for three-quarters of the city. One of these informants argued that by-passing the community-based infrastructure which was already in place and building a new one was not cost-effective. That informant also argued that rather than connecting youth back to their communities, the hub model has the potential to suck low risk youth into services and lead to an outsider identity formation for these youth, who are now increasingly connecting to other high risk youth who feel like they do not belong. This argument connects of course with the argument outlined in the literature review (see Cohen 1985 or Gough, 1979, Foucault, 1977) and is a quintessential challenge that the social service sector faces in general: the debate around exclusion or inclusion of special needs groups into mainstream services and the impact this has on identity formation. Specialized services can
do excellent work but they also tend come along with a label and exposure to other clients with similar issues — which can act as source of strength, but also contribute to an outsider identity formation and a further disconnect from the mainstream. However, if the onus is on inclusion of these youth into mainstream services and agencies, the specialised skill-set or resources needed to work with these youth is not always in place. Additionally, the mainstream’s acceptance of difference cannot always be taken for granted.

Group 1 informants were the only sub-group of informants who had a relatively congruent reading of the situation, stating that services have since become more high-barrier, that the 90s model worked best for them and that there are concerns about losing so many important projects. There were also concerns around accessibility and the location of these hubs. One Group 2 informant expressed this in the following terms: “In a hub model, everybody knows your business and there is less anonymity. I think the 90s model (lots of smaller agencies) was better in that perspective, kids would affiliate where they felt comfortable and they could bounce around which can be quite therapeutic. And if they mess up somewhere, they still can access other services” (Informant, group 2). A Group 1 informant expressed concerns around access in the following terms: “if a youth got banned from a hub project, they basically lose access to a ton of services” (Informant, group 1). A group 1 informant who had been connected to an agency which went under during these days stated that when they took out this service, “it was like a nerve centre that got blown out” (Informant, Group 1). Three informants from group 1 speak to the notion that street youth were a community and that agencies supported youth by supporting them through their community. They also speak to the notion that this kind of work has been much reduced since the cuts. In the word of another informant, “up to the changes, services for street-involved youth were a lot more community-based, now it appears that workers are allocated less time for youth, that is probably due to less funding. Relationships with workers are immensely important for the youth, workers are people who have their feet planted in the world of the normal people and often they are the only bridge for street youth between the street world and the normal world. If you break that connection, the youth are only left with the street” (Informant, group 1).

Group 1 informants primarily saw the move towards hub models and the impact of cuts as one change, rather than two different trajectories coming together.
DEYAS, which was located in the Downtown Eastside and which had been so instrumental in the past, did not manage to get a contract to run a hub and eventually went under. This was mentioned by quite a few informants. Five informants talked about the importance of the work that DEYAS had done. Three informants elaborated in detail on why DEYAS went under. These opinions do not converge; an informant from group 2 relates to the agency not transitioning well from a grass-roots group into a more professionalized organization and hence not doing well in the new funding regime. Another informant (group 2) relates DEYAS going under to philosophical differences between DEYAS and the MCFD. According to this informant, harm reduction (accepting where people are at and giving them services where they are at) was now the philosophical mainstay, with notions of early interventions and removing youth from predators taking a back-seat. It was also implied that the MCFD had an uneasy time handling the advocacy stance which DEYAS took, preferring to take a thorn out of their side by not giving them a contract. A third informant (Group 2) related DEYAS going under to the illness and the subsequent death of John Turvey.

The hubs are located in the Downtown South area (Directions), East Vancouver (UNYA and BYRC) and South Vancouver has some services (Connexus). No hub was created in the Downtown Eastside despite street youth having a strong presence in this area. This was commented upon by a variety of informants. Another group, the NCISS has taken on a liaison role for the smaller non-profits operating in the Downtown Eastside, Grandview-Woodlands and Strathcona. A fourth agency called Connexus also won a contract for a hub; this created quite a stir in the sector, as Connexus was a for-profit organisation. According to three informants, Connexus has not developed into a functional hub. Two informants see a for-profit organisation being brought into the equation as ideologically driven. One of my informants who had witnessed this change stated that: “Connexus (South Vancouver Youth Centre) is a for-profit company and nobody could understand why the MCFD wanted to fund a for-profit company to run a social service. The MCFD decided that this was part of their contract restructuring. Philosophically, the youth service community took issue with the decision (Informant, group 2)”.

Another informant stressed that “... from what I can tell, this hub (Connexus) did not fully develop to the extent that the other hubs did and it is not well known and not integrated with other services. Only MCFD gated programs are
offered out of that office. All the other hubs have an open door policy (provided you fit with the age remit, etc.), but Connexus (South Vancouver Youth Centre) is hard to access. It also took the city and other funders out of the equation; they cannot financially support a for-profit business, so it took out a whole whack of other funds” (Informant, group 2).

Most informants saw a positive and negative aspect of the new service model (the hub system) and that two different developments acted upon each other (restructuring and cuts), making it hard to distinguish cause and effect. However, there is marked difference between Group 1 and Group 2 informants, with most group 1 informants expressing an overall critical stance towards the hub model. In the eyes of these group 1 informants, the cuts and the restructuring into the hub model seems to be perceived as one change, rather than two different movements converging. Not all group 3 informants commented on the hubs, but the few who did mostly had on overall positive stance towards the new hub model. Group 2 informants were usually sitting somewhere in the middle, some saw the hub model as a good model, some were value neutral (they expressed pros and cons to the hub model), some expressed concerns about the loss of other models, a few were opposed to the hub model. Obviously informant positioning was also dependent on their experiences: being part of the losing fraction (non-profits which went under, community-based agencies which were side-lined) or being part of the winning fraction (agencies which won a hub contract and expanded) makes for a different reading of the hub model.

Most informants acknowledged that the sector underwent big changes and that the impact of these changes was significant. One informant detailed the impact of these changes in the following terms: “many agencies went under in 2004 and it became a pretty toxic environment, the big stakeholders came out as winners in the process. It really was a cut throat time” (Informant, Group 2).

Three informants elaborated on how services to high risk youth were further undermined by a change in practice and a move away from the foster care system to the much cheaper youth agreement system. During the time of the 2003/04 cuts, there was also a shift away from bringing youth aged 16 to 18 into care. According to one informant from group 2, that probably stemmed from a notion to bring the number of kids in care in British Columbia closer to the national average. Legislation was not changed, rather practice changed. A group 2 informant stated that “in 2003/2004, the youth agreement program
came into place which is an independent living program and it also means the MCFD is no longer the guardian of the youth who is on a youth agreement. Keeping kids in care was seen as more expensive than a youth agreement, plus the liability is removed if they are on youth agreement" (Informant, group 2). Another informant (group 2) explained this process in detail: "there was another big sea change in 2004; the MCFD closed a big portion of the group homes. I think they had difficulties recruiting foster parents. So they put street youth on youth agreements and put them into often sub-standard apartments and kind of left them to their own devices. The issues from 2004 to now (current day) are more entrenched, the MCFD is not housing youth any more, or they are housing them in different ways. It appears that they defined the age down to 16, so there is this very vulnerable group of youth aged 16 to 19 who are out there on their own and not ready to be independent and they are very vulnerable to exploitation (by landlords, partners, others, etc.) . . . I think that was a financial decision. They (MCFD) pulled a lot of their contracts in 2004, like 80% of facilities which were housing youth. Youth were put onto youth agreements. I think Social Workers were told not to house youth 16+ any more. Things got truly worse for the youth" (Informant, group 2). Whilst a majority of informants see the youth agreements in a negative light and as a cost-saving measure, two other informants (Group 3/Group 2) allude to youth agreements as good concepts in principle mentioning this as a good way to reach out to service resistant youth and as a good bridging service to adulthood. One of these informants (Group 3) stressed that youth agreements do fall short of their potential due to underfunding and due to youth agreements having a fixed budget line. Youth agreements, like so many other services are hence not allocated based on need.

The City continued to be active on all fronts, often helping with rezoning, community tables, mediating conflict between various neighbours and users of new services/programs for street-involved youth in the Downtown South area of the city (Directions hub). According to three informants the City also purchased two or three (data divergent) sites which had been ear-marked for social housing. Hubs currently operate out of these sites. It appears that the City responded to provincial downloading by providing as much support as possible. It appears also that the inter-ministerial street children committee had become defunct by 2001 and that a new steering group called Youth Funders Table took over. That table was described by an informant as an "effort by the
MCFD and Social Planning to bring various funders together to co-ordinate better, there was not much coordinated planning going on by all three levels of government, very fragmented funding. There was the idea that a common data base could be created for all contracted services, the data could be used for planning and at the very least the different groups could alert each other to changes to minimize the impact on the street youth services" (Informant, group 2). This steering mechanisms was seen as important by groups who had a presence on that table (funders), the feedback from the non-profit sector was somewhat less positive, non-profits not being at the table was seen as a major drawback. The current state of the Funders Table is unclear, with one informant stating that this group is either currently inactive or that the Youth Funders table had become defunct.

By all accounts, whichever reading one seems to identify with, the new funding regime implemented in the early 2000s has fundamentally changed the whole sector. The notion that the contracting out system called request for proposals system (RFP) now presents with a narrowly defined mandate and outcome measurement and that it is detrimental towards good youth work practice was implied or elaborated upon by four Group 2 informants. As mentioned earlier, it is not only small specialised non-profits which went under, the new business model really attacked the community based social service model — community centres/neighbourhood houses lost out, and there was an overall reduction of the social safety net in the community. As one group 2 informant stated, "the new contract model has created a corporate non-profit sector which is similar in structure to government" (Informant, Group 2). The new system seems to be closely connected with the notion of the non-profit sector changing into a more corporate direction, becoming very competitive and moving away from local accountability and local input. Four group 2 informants commented on this issue, two in detail. This movement also destroyed linkages between the different groups working with street involved youth. In the words of one informant: "... we watched the players try to take each other out, it was quite an ugly process. One of the things that the contract process has done is it has severed linkages and very creative and effective relationships that were to the benefit of vulnerable kids, they severed them forever due to the very competitive nature of the contracting process" (Informant, Group 2).
Further themes have emerged focusing around privacy and data collection concerns, concerns around public (un)accountability, a focus on a certain culture of managerialism within the MCFD, gag orders and international competition.

Three group 2 informants mentioned concerns around data collection and client privacy issues which are related to the current funding regime — data collection was seen as too intrusive. Alternatively, statistics required from the non-profit sector by the MCFD were seen as missing the mark. An informant stated that “the MCFD does not use an outcome model, for example, they do not track youth in care. The contracts are built around activities, people provide this many units of activities, etc., they do not look for example at how many youth in care finish high school and whether that number can be improved” (Informant). According to two informants, this system of measuring rather irrelevant data was also imposed on the non-profit sector. Lack of public accountability was highlighted as a serious issue. One group 2 informant stated, “...some of the new RFP’s have now a gag order — so the agencies providing the service cannot let the public know what is in the contract and they cannot criticize the MCFD” (Informant). Another group 2 informant expressed that “the liberal provincial government has also brought in new procurement processes, so now international based organisations (not just B.C. based companies) can bid for contracts...you can now import people and pay them less to do the job. That changes the whole framework. We now have people from Texas competing with us for contracts. There are more and more corporate people who are infiltrating the boards of the non-profits, they come from a business solution approach and do not understand community development. This is another way of how neoliberal agendas and policies are pushed” (Informant).

The starkest themes from the interviews may be summarized here as:

- A loss of important stakeholder voice (non-profit sector, front-line social workers within the MCFD, client groups, community-based groups) when it comes to shaping and developing services and impacting policy. Centralization of policy-making.

- Drift towards a corporate non-profit model which removes many non-profits from their roots in the social justice movement, reduces community input and potentially favours de-politicized non-profits.
• With non-profits forced into a competitive environment, cohesive and joint advocacy work seems very difficult.
• On-going drift towards managerialism and a move away from client-centred social work values.
• Reduction in public accountability.

Overall, the sector in the late 2000s presents as being in a very difficult position, with both the non-profit sector and the MCFD being seen by some informants and academic researchers (see literature review — Saunders, 2004, Scott 2003 and Hughes 2006) as having reached breaking point for different reasons.

Findings from Chapter 2 seem to imply that there is a (tentative) link between neoliberal welfare politics and an increase of youth on the streets. Reduced public support for the street youth issue, increased number of at risk youth, deepened entrenchment and different ways of framing the issue in recent years were also theorized.

In Chapter 3, informants argued that service responses over the decades have been organized primarily around neoliberal ideological lines and not necessarily around effective social work practices. A deep fragmentation of the sector and a corporate orientation of the sector emerge as issues of concern.

The ability of the sector to exercise advocacy will be examined in more detail the next chapter, which is a stakeholder analysis. Findings in the next chapter imply that the ability of important stakeholders to inject themselves effectively into the street youth policy debate is severely limited.
A stakeholder analysis is commonly done to frame the power, impact and ability of various stakeholders to influence the policy context, funding and public support for an issue. The intent of this chapter is to outline what is commonly known in policy studies: powerful advocates, advocacy or interest groups, civil service voice, public opinion and politicians are all able to influence policy-making, for better or for worse. Research outlined in the literature review and findings from research in chapter 3 all imply that neoliberal policies have re-shaped the sector working with street youth in a way which makes advocacy, open debate, public education, policy involvement and co-operation between stakeholders less feasible or possibly less effective. This chapter will look at this thesis in more detail.

In this chapter, I will analyse data from 20 group 2 and group 3 informants as it relates to informant’s assessments of important stakeholders in this sector and the challenges these stakeholders are facing. Methodological challenges remain — whilst I have interviewed five informants from an academic/advocacy level, not all important advocacy groups agreed to an interview. The interview framework was semi-structured and interviews hence often took a turn and direction which was unique — consequentially, not all informants were asked exactly the same questions. I would also like to stress again that this is qualitative data. Of particular interest was whether informants had converging or diverging experiences/impressions/observations of various stakeholders and their ability to influence policy.

I would also like to stress that solutions to the street youth issue will need to be pursued on a macro-economic level as systemic inequalities are produced and re-produced on this level. Wolf (in Kryder-Croe, Molnar and Salamon eds., 1991) has argued that the child welfare system is inappropriately
asked to respond to a crisis related to low family income, inadequate housing and unemployment. She also argues that current state welfare policy might compound the problem as welfare rates are not enough to pay for housing and welfare agencies cannot create new housing. I believe her statement accurately reflects the dilemma for many welfare/social/youth workers — they do not command the resources to effectively respond to their client’s needs. Another big concern is the situation for aboriginal youth and the impact of colonialism which native youth are subjected to. One of my respondents framed the issue in the following terms: “... some resolution to aboriginal land claims and extensive support for responsible aboriginal self-governance” (Informant) is of paramount importance when tackling the street youth issue.

These arguments alone frame the power/ability of stakeholders to influence policy-making — much of what shows up in the social service sector as an issue (street youth) needs to be responded to in other arenas. Many relevant issues (lack of social housing, need for living wages, support for health challenges, adequate child care, high unemployment rates, low welfare rates, de-regulated housing market, high child/youth poverty rates, etc.) are regulated through other levels of government (e.g., federal government) and various provincial ministries. These issues are macro-economic issues — and certainly beyond the scope of any stakeholder (like the MCFD) to respond to effectively on their own. Fragmentation of services was mentioned by six informants from the non-profit sector as a major issue as many provincial ministries and agencies are involved with delivering services and programs for street-involved youth — MCFD, corrections/probations officers, Ministry of Health (Addiction/Mental Health), Education, etc. are all seen as stakeholders. According to one informant, this silo situation is further compounded by different levels of government (federal, provincial, municipal) not always being able to agree on who is doing what when it comes to cross-jurisdictional work. One informant stated that: “the provincial government has many Departments and Ministries who would get involved with street youth, so it is very fragmented. There would be the MCFD, Health/Mental Health, the School Board, Probation/Corrections, and so on. Kids are usually bounced between these departments; it is not well co-ordinated. So that is a specific dynamic. Then you also have a dynamic whereby the three layers of government (City, Federal and Provincial) are fighting around who has which mandate and what is the flavour of the month. They should be forced to sit at the table for cross
mandates and co-ordinate and collaborate better. The services cannot cross-pollinate due to the silo system that is in place” (Informant, Group 2). Once the multitude of non-profits is added in the mix, the fragmentation of the system is rather obvious.

The MCFD is seen as an important stakeholder and many informants have pointed out weaknesses inherent to this system which could be improved upon. I would like to reiterate though that even a differently organized/better funded MCFD alone would not be able to make all the difference.

4.1 THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT (MCFD)

The MCFD was the stakeholder which was most frequently commented upon — which is no surprise in the light of the fact that the MCFD is presumed to be the biggest funder of street youth services. The MCFD also appears to be a relatively politicized Ministry which has been heavily reviewed over the decades — most recently under Ted Hughes. Ted Hughes 2006 “Children and Youth Review” argues for more stability noting that the child protection system has seen a “degree of unmanageable change with nine ministers and eight deputy ministers and seven directors of child protection being in place during the last decade and that . . . budget cuts have gone too far undermining the system’s ability to function” (Hughes as quoted in CBC website article, April 7, 2009). Both of these reports questioned the MCFD’s ability to fulfil its mandate due to budget cuts/leadership instability. As mentioned in previous chapters, much of the workload of the MCFD has been contracted out — one informant estimated that approximately 70% of the work had been contracted out, another informant put this figure closer to 80%. That makes for a relatively small civil service with in-house expertise on vulnerable youth and child protection issues. And whilst MCFD Social Workers are unionised and have a professional interest group representing them (the BCASW — B.C. Association of Social Workers), the biggest segment of the workforce working with street involved youth appears to be semi-professionalized and not organized, not unionised and not represented by a professional association. The MCFD is a Ministry which has centralized control and a de-centralized service delivery model which presents a certain amount of challenges. The Korbin Commission (Korbin Commission, 1993) looked at the re-structuring and contracting-out which the public sector in B.C. had been subjected to since the 1980s and has
found that “successive provincial governments have held an ideological preference for the use of private contracting over provision of services by employees” (Korbin, part I, p. 43, 1993). The commission also found that cost/benefit analyses were rarely performed and that contracting out overall is a more expensive model of service delivery. Korbin (1993) stressed that it creates a system which is difficult to navigate — both for people working in the sector as well as the public receiving services. I would argue that this history, structure and positioning weakens the ability of MCFD civil servants to do advocacy work on behalf of youth. This is the context one needs to bear in mind when analysing the comments made by informants.

4.1.1 Context of the MCFD — Frequent Re-Structuring and Change of Leadership

One group 3 informant elaborated in length on the positioning of the MCFD when compared to other government mandates. The respondent framed the issue in the following terms: “the thing you have to understand about the MCFD, anybody who has any aspiration to be in Cabinet does not want the MCFD portfolio. That is the kiss of death. All the other ministries get to deliver something to the constituents like roads or hospitals. What does the MCFD minister deliver? The best thing they can hope for is no bad press. Since when is no press good for a politician? It is the bottom of the pecking order within cabinet and they do not tend to stay . . . you earn your wings in cabinet by having that portfolio, but it is not one that anybody really wants (. . .). Besides, if you come into this Ministry and take any interest in it at all, you come into an absolutely heart-breaking ministry. So the issue is whether they (the Ministers) listen to their Deputy and whether the Deputy has any credibility with the rank and file which they may or may not have. So that also depends on whether the Deputy was parachuted into the MCFD or not. Sometimes people in those roles are treated as interchangeable — if you can manage in forestry for example, you can manage anywhere else. It is just bureaucratic management and therefore they move them around. When that has happened, those folks do not have credibility with the line staff or when they try to initiate changes these changes are sometimes off the mark. Or they are just basically ignored”

26. “The result, between 1985 and 1993, shows that total government expenditure (all Ministries) on consultant contracting plus employee compensation in the period increased by more than 70% even though the salary proportion of that total shrank (L. Korbin, Part I, p. 43)”.
(Informant, group 3). The quote outlined above indicates why the MCFD is prone to be a stepping stone for any ambitious Minister rather than a long-lasting commitment. Given this context, the leadership positions in this part of the civic sector are hence perhaps relatively politicized and not necessarily long-lasting. One could speculate that this undermines the ability of this part of the civic sector to engage with other parts of the sector, front-line staff (MCFD social workers) and to positively influence and shape the policy-making context. A second informant also echoes this perspective: “The Ministry is too politicized . . . there is too much political involvement in how social workers practice” (Informant).

4.1.2 Research Findings — Challenges for the MCFD

Five informants made positive comments about the MCFD, in one case referring to a good youth policy wing being in place in the MCFD back in the 1990s. Three informants refer to the services for street-involved youth in Vancouver being much better than in other places and one informant praises the MCFD interest in setting up steering groups in relation to the street youth issue.

Criticism of the MCFD was focused on two themes: under-funding and the service-delivery model/policy framework.

Fourteen informants saw under-funding or insufficient funding of the sector/the MCFD as one of the biggest challenges the MCFD and their ‘sub-contractors’ are facing. Two informants did not share this notion. One informant stated that there is perhaps now even more money in the system, the problem being that it is spent ineffectively and at the wrong places (e.g., for consultant fees, not front-line services).

Twelve informants expressed concerns which were connected to the internal MCFD service delivery model which has been developed in British Columbia over the decades, which also informs how the non-profit sector operates. The culture of the MCFD was seen as being characterized by managerialism, privatization strategies and centralization of policy-making. Whilst all of these informants took issue with the MCFD delivery framework, specific sub-themes applicable to the MCFD and by implication the non-profit sector emerged around:
• Centralization of power/de-centralization of responsibilities: centralized policy making translating into loss of local input and voice and a disconnect from the front-line. Decision-makers which are removed from the issue was seen as a negative momentum (seven informants)
• non-profit sector forced into competitiveness (five informants)
• culture of managerialism (four informants)
• functional model: a system designed for volume not effectiveness /lack of an understanding of one-to-one work and effective youth and social work practices (four informants)
• focus on crisis and not on prevention and after-care (three informants)
• a lack of a cohesive social policy framework pertaining to children and youth (two informants)
• no institutionalization of programs for vulnerable youth (two informants)
• services are not being planned as a continuum (two informants)
• contracting out (one informant) 27
• loss of expertise within the MCFD due to contracting out (one informant).

The following sections will reference and flesh out these themes and sub-themes.

4.1.3 (Under)Funding?

Overall funding data for the sector over the decades could not be analysed, as there is no clear agreement on the definition of what a street youth is and as MCFD data is not categorized in a way which would allow me to trace funding for the sector working with street-involved youth. According to a group 3 informant, funding cuts would not be realized evenly across services — services which the MCFD is under a legal obligation to provide (Child Protection under the Act) are likely to be protected in times of cuts or might even increase as more kids might be apprehended in economically bad times, whilst services seen as enhancing the MCFD mandate (family and community support) likely will face bigger cuts. Whilst the MCFD might be the biggest

27. Another informant noted that contracting out wasn’t necessarily a bad model, but centralization of policy-making was.
funder, many other (smaller) funders and donors as well as other Ministries are also an important piece of the sector. According to two informants from Group 2, the amounts of contracts big agencies finance their work with (often stemming from different funders) can easily exceed dozens of contracts. Whilst there were certain times when some cuts were clearly implemented (in 1983 and 2002/03 for example) and whilst the overall effect is that especially the last round of cuts has been very hurtful to the sector, there seems nevertheless no black and white story to be told around political leadership, structuring of services and funding. One informant, when comparing the 1980s to the 1990s stated that “the NDP (MCFD ministers) were no more competent than the SoCreds on this stuff and the good ones did not stay”. The same informant stated: “I would caution you to stay clear of broad generalizations to say (the funding) has been diminishing since the 1980s, I do not think that this is true. I think it has just altered year by year, it has moved in both directions. If there are cuts, they are more often on soft money than on hard money. Another issue is that there is not necessarily a continuous institutionalization of programs for vulnerable youth”. Academic research (see Callahan and McNiven, 1988) does point to the SoCred government in the 1980s pursuing a privatization agenda, but it also appears that this went hand in hand with an increase in spending (see also Korbin Commission, 1993). There were times when privatization strategies were pursued and funding to the sector overall has increased (late 1980s for example). On the other hand, there is also extensive academic research available (see Scott, 2003 and Saunders, 2004) outlining that non-profits are notoriously under-funded and that this trend is only getting worse. Ted Hughes in his review also noted that underfunding of the MCFD is an issue. Whilst it is relatively clear that the last decade has seen significant cuts, the overall funding picture for the sector from the 1980s to the present day remains somewhat obscure and perhaps near impossible to research. It has often been argued that obscuring data/finances/dependencies is an intended feature of neoliberal politics, perhaps the findings need to be seen in that light as well.

The general trajectory depicted by group 2 and 3 informants seems to be that government funding specifically for street-involved youth services has been on a steady increase from the mid-80s to late 1990s and on a decline ever since the early 2000s, with 2002/03 marking a significant decline.
4.1.4 The Functional Model of Service Delivery

Another point mentioned by four informants as being problematic makes direct or indirect reference to the functional model of service delivery which was initially developed by MCFD bureaucrats, but is now also the framework through which the performance of the non-profit sector is assessed. This is how one of my respondents framed the issue:

“I think that the person who designed this system in the 1980s did not believe in social services and social work and did not understand the relationship aspects of it and why it is important to have a continuity of care for vulnerable people. And nowhere does it show up more than in the child welfare and child and youth services. What has derailed these youth frequently is the absence of continuity in any kind of a caring relationship. That person, who brought in what is referred to as the functional model of service delivery, which is basically just a bureaucratic specialization with a very prescriptive set of policies and procedures, did not really understand social work . . . the system we have in place was designed for numbers, not quality of care . . . This fragmented system has been entrenched for more than a quarter of a century. Resistance to undoing it will come from even unexpected, inappropriate places” (Informant, Group 3).

Whilst the other informants comments were not as specific as the informant quoted above, the notion that the relationship-based aspect of youth work is central to a successful practice (but not necessarily well understood by senior MCFD bureaucrats) was commonly shared. As another informant noted “the only way to really change behaviour for street kids is to build a relationship and work with trust. To make this change you have to use your own social capital to bring them to other things and that is an active process and not a referral process” (Informant, Group 2).

4.1.5 Contracting Out/Centralized Policy-Making/ Loss of Expertise within the MCFD

The notion that the MCFD restructuring 25 years ago had a detrimental impact on social service delivery was stressed by two informants who had detailed knowledge of the sector dating back to the 1970s. In short, the MCFD of today does not seem to be in the driving seat or a powerful Ministry through which civil servants and social workers can articulate the need for policy reform. It is notable that the knowledge and the power of the civic service to advocate and lobby on behalf of street involved youth or in terms of improving their working conditions has been much undermined by reducing the scale of the public sector workers working with street-entrenched youth and by centralizing policy-making. As one group 3 informant noted, “social workers have
advocated for decades around these issues (referring to issues relating to disadvantaged children and youth) and have not felt heard in a way that would make a difference” (Informant, group 3).

4.1.6 Crisis Driven Work Versus Prevention/Early Intervention

As mentioned in a previous chapter, classical social work does have two mandates — child protection and family/community support. Whilst the MCFD does attempt to do both, a decade by decade analysis seems to point towards child protection work being seen as the priority with family/community support work losing out. This has translated into a service delivery model which does not do enough to support at risk youth through their communities and families — this work has not been institutionalized. Informants from Group 2 and 3 noted that crisis driven work is now the priority for the non-profit sector and that there are hardly any resources to work on the other end of the spectre — early intervention/prevention/community integration, and so on. Crisis-driven work objectives tend to be reactive, not pro-active and speak of a context in which short-term planning gets prioritized over long-term strategic planning. Informants made it clear that the kids who would later end up street-involved are usually identified early on in life and often channelled through the alternate school system. One informant also argued that responses to support them are not sophisticated enough yet (especially in the case of FASD) and that current responses are inadequate. Two informants alluded that a middle-ground between including at risk youth in mainstream services (so that they feel a sense of belonging and integration with the mainstream) or somewhat excluding them from the mainstream by designing specialised services (so that they can receive specialised interventions and support) has not been found yet. A total of five informants referenced these inter-related issues.

4.2 THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR

The position of the non-profit sector in relation to advocacy work was also frequently referenced. As detailed in the literature review, recent research (Saunders 2004, Shields 1998, Scott 2003) strongly implies that the ability of the non-profit sector in Canada to advocate for the needs of the people they serve as well as the needs of their staff28 has been much reduced over recent

28. For job security, good wages, acceptable workloads, benefits, etc.
years/decades and that there is a dependency relationship which has been detrimental towards involvement in the policy process. The previous chapters have already outlined the change of the local non-profit sector towards a more corporate model and a notion that smaller more community-based agencies have been pushed out. Front-line staff seems to be non-unionised and not likely to be part of a professional association, so their ability to influence policy through such organisations is hence non-existent. This was expressed in detail by one informant. As quoted earlier, notions of gag orders now being in place for some contracts and international competition being brought into the equation was also referenced by informants.

Not all informants saw the context of non-profits as bleak though — two informants referenced that some agencies in Vancouver have a history of excellent and progressive services as well as good advocacy work on behalf of street youth. These informants implied that this advocacy voice was not lost. One of these informants expressed that the MCFD has lost the expertise on developing successful programs and hence the non-profit sector is now in the driving seat when it comes to initiating progressive programs.

The notion of the non-profit sector having agency and a strong or collective advocacy voice was expressed by a minority of informants (two informants). The most frequently expressed notion was that the sector had become so competitive and cut-throat that non-profits no longer have time to come together and join forces to work on an issue or to do advocacy work. Six informants expressed this notion. Based on this data, it appears that the scope for collective advocacy is hence seen as quite limited. Informants are clear that the government created a structure which sets up agencies against each other. According to one informant, the result is not only a dialogue gap, but a disconnection from the policy field: “people do not have time to come together, it is too competitive, we are losing our history... there is next to no research and no gathering of knowledge in a meaningful way... there is a disconnect with social policy” (Informant). Two informants stated that the dependency relationship on funders has made them unequal partners in the policy context. A group 3 informant stated that “agencies are fearful of the consequences of being out there on their own... I would say that it is sometimes hard for agencies to speak honestly... because there are implications if funders get distressed” (Informant, Group 3). Two informants expressed that the move towards larger and more corporate non-profit agencies has led to a disconnect
from community voice and community involvement and has also been 
detrimental towards preventative and neighbourhood based services. One 
informant stated that “if the non-profit sector is fragmented, so is the 
government — after all, they created us in their image” (Informant, Group 2). 
Faith-based non-profits with less of a dependency on government funding (and 
hence more scope for advocacy work) were seen by some informants as 
presenting a de-politicized reading of the street youth issue which is not a 
challenge to the neoliberal world-view, but tends to reproduce it. Whilst 
experiences expressed by informants varied, it can nevertheless be argued that 
informants who were critical of the sectors ability to conduct progressive 
avidacy work and to be a partner in policy development outnumbered 
informants who had a more optimistic outlook by a ratio of 3 to 1. I would 
hence argue that findings from the interviews do lend some support to the 

The non-profit sector does have a few mechanisms/advocacy groups 
through which concerns can be expressed — this will be the focus of the next 
sub-chapter.

4.3 THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

As mentioned in previous chapters, both the City and the Province have had 
advocate positions for children and youth. These advocates, whilst at times 
being critical of political leadership were not independent of political 
leadership — as a consequence, some of these advocates did last shorter than 
expected or these positions were re-structured to increase political 
dependencies. The Provincial Representative for Children and Youth has been 
re-instated as an Officer of the Legislature in 2007, the Child and Youth 
Advocate position of the City of Vancouver has been terminated in 2006.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond is the current Representative for Children and 
Youth in British Columbia and has been highly praised by six informants as 
being a strong, gutsy and an outstanding advocate for children and youth. The 
notion that Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and her staff team do outstanding work 
was unanimously supported. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond’s term is up for 
renewal in late 2011. The mandate of her office covers advocacy, monitoring, 
reviewing and investigating critical injuries and death of children and research, 
data collection/analysis.
4.4 OTHER ADVOCACY GROUPS/VOICES

Other groups were mentioned as doing good and effective advocacy work: an advocacy organisation called First Call which is run by a former child/youth advocate was mentioned by five informants. The Federation of Community Social Services (FCSS) which advocates on behalf of non-profits and charities was mentioned by five informants as doing good work. The Youth Funders table and its predecessor, the inter-ministerial street children’s committee were seen by four informants as a useful steering mechanism. The BC Association of Social Workers was mentioned by two informants as being vocal, two other informants however stressed that they are not relevant/powerful when compared to other professional associations. NCISS was mentioned twice as a good community based advocate as were specific staff that had been in the position of the City’s Child and Youth Advocate in the past. Two informants referenced the advocacy work coming from some segments of academia. One of these informants however stressed that currently, academia is not an outstanding source of advocacy, and that the academics known for doing advocacy work either had retired or are not too far off from retiring.

I would like to stress that there are other important groups and voices out there that do important advocacy work — their names not being mentioned is not necessarily a reflection of their work not being important, but rather a reflection of the small number of people I interviewed from an academic and advocacy background. I would also like to note that groups and people who were mentioned by only one informant were not included in this list.

Due to most of the work with street-involved youth being contracted out to the non-profit sector (non-unionised staff working on the street youth issue), unions do not appear to have a significant presence as a stakeholder in the policy environment.

Despite informants praising the work of various advocacy groups, the notion that there is no singular place for non-profits where they could hash out issues and no strong level of advocacy co-ordination was expressed by five informants. I would argue that this is indeed the intended outcome of neoliberal strategies, which not only tend to fragment service delivery, but also seems to limit democratic input options in the political process.
4.5 THE CITY OF VANCOUVER

Local/municipal government was seen by two informants as good/effective government due to being closer to and more responsive to social and local issues. However, one informant stressed that municipal government is unfortunately a weak system. Municipal government does not seem to fare well in terms of having political power, jurisdiction over issues and having an adequate tax/income base to respond to issues. Many issues that are connected to the street youth issue — e.g., social housing, health services, child protection, etc. sit under provincial jurisdiction and not under municipal jurisdiction. Despite this context, the City is seen by many informants as an important stakeholder — nine informants referenced the work that the City did on the street youth issue as important and positive. Two informants stated explicitly that the City’s Social Planning Department was very active in the 1980s and 1990s on the street youth issue and has been progressive and a good advocate. The work that the City did in relation to street youth was referenced as research and advocacy work, reports, initiating and partaking in steering mechanisms, providing grants and seed money as well as office space to non-profits, purchasing land for social housing and renting this land out to youth serving organisations, mediating conflict between neighbours and youth serving agencies (community tables) and taking a pro-active stance towards finding youth serving agencies suitable locations and being involved in the (social) housing scene. Two informants stated that the City did take on the street youth issue in response to provincial downloading. Out of these nine informants who commented on the City being an important stakeholder on the issue, five informants implied that the City in recent years appears to be less of an advocate for the street youth issue than in the past. Informants related the diminished support role of the City to the following changes:

- The City having shifted its focus away from youth and onto other social issues like homelessness.29
- The City cut the youth advocate position in the 2006 under a NPA leadership.30

29. Some (older) street youth have definitely benefited from the recent focus on homelessness as more low-barrier shelter options have been made available for them in recent years. A group 1 informant saw this in a different light. This informant expressed that youth were not really moving on, they were being “warehoused” (Informant, Group 1).

30. This position has not been re-instated under the current Vision leadership.
Stakeholder Analysis

- The City administration having become more centralized in recent years.
- The majority of reports to council relating to the street youth issue were submitted to council in the 1980s and 1990s.

One informant stressed that the City should re-focus the impact of their social planning department on their own municipal resources — easy and cheap access to municipal resources (community centres, libraries, pools, etc.) is seen as an effective way to support struggling and low-income families and youth. There are also some indications (reports and grey literature) which imply that the street youth debate is perhaps now theorized differently at municipal level, that terminology has become out-dated and/or that problem-recognition has shifted. Different aspects previously inherent to the street youth debate (youth homelessness/housing, youth addiction, sexual exploitation, youth & mental health) appear more likely to be framed through their own discourses.

4.6 PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE STREET YOUTH ISSUE/ADVOCACY VOICE OF AFFECTED YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Whilst my interview framework did not specifically lend itself to ask informants about their understanding of the public perception of the street youth issue, eight informants chose nevertheless to comment on that theme directly or indirectly. I have chosen to highlight their comments since there is an obvious relationship between public perception and policy making (if an issue is in the public spotlight, the more likely are politicians to respond). I recognize that much more thorough research needs to be done and can be done to investigate this theme, specifically a media content analysis. I do recognize the limitations of this project whose scope does not allow me to research this theme in detail or apply triangulation to increase reliability of data. Hence a cursory glance at the understanding of informants will have to do at this point. Out of the eight informants who commented on this theme, one stated that there is now more public awareness about street youth. Five informants expressed the opposite notion — stating that the public seems to be de-sensitized towards the issue, less aware and that structural issues (poverty, lack of affordable housing, roll-back of support and welfare services, poverty wages, etc.) have become thoroughly de-politicized in recent years. Two
informants referenced that the ability of families and youth advocating for themselves or successfully applying pressure is often limited, due to their challenging circumstances (poverty, learning disabilities, addictions, etc.). People with big challenges tend to be in survival mode and hence are in a disadvantaged position when it comes to injecting themselves into political debates. There was also a notion expressed by some group 1 informants that (some) street-involved youth in the 1980s and 1990s saw themselves as a community and that they had much input into certain services at the time. However, it appears that this notion of community did not translate into a collective voice in the policy arena.

According to informants, the most pertinent theme of the stakeholder analysis is a fragmentation of stakeholder voice. Informants expressed that the fragmentation of stakeholder voice is connected to a restructuring of the sector along neoliberal lines. There are also concerns voiced around the ideological orientation of the sector, especially around the culture of managerialism, the increasing corporate orientation of the sector and centralized policy-making. Other research findings such as the Hughes Report (Hughes, 2006), the Gove Report (Gove, 1995), Scott (2003) and Saunders (2004) seem to support the arguments made by many of my informants. The social service sector is in crisis.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Table 1 outlines the policy arena for street involved youth services. The intent is to showcase how policy changes have reshaped the sector, all stakeholders involved and the public’s understanding of the issue.

TABLE 1:
Overview of the Service Delivery Model for Street-Involved Youth Services over the Decades

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Service Provider</td>
<td>Non-profit sector</td>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
<td>Non-profit sector</td>
<td>Non-profit sector</td>
<td>Non-profit sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-Delivery Model</td>
<td>De-centralized service delivery, citizen participation through Resource Board Model</td>
<td>Centralized service delivery through government agencies, centralized policy making</td>
<td>De-centralized and managerial: service delivery through non-profits, non-profits develop services within MCFD policy framework</td>
<td>De-centralized and fragmented: services delivered through dozens/hundreds of non-profits, lack of central vision</td>
<td>Fragmented and Managerial: consolidation of resources into bigger non-profits. Corporate make-over of social service sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Control</td>
<td>De-centralized</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Youth Sector Growth/Decline</td>
<td>First street youth services begin to emerge</td>
<td>Sector in its infancy, some cuts. Growth from mid-80s</td>
<td>Sector Expansion increase of resources</td>
<td>Sector Expansion increase of resources</td>
<td>Cuts to the Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy voice, input options from various stakeholders</td>
<td>Exist through Resource Board Model and non-profits</td>
<td>Diminished</td>
<td>Strong advocacy voice, “explosion” of agencies</td>
<td>Strong Advocacy voice</td>
<td>Limited Dependency relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Awareness of the street youth issue</td>
<td>Emerging social issue, no broad public awareness yet</td>
<td>Emerging social issue, move away from deviance model</td>
<td>Increasing/High public sympathy</td>
<td>High public sympathy</td>
<td>Decline in public awareness and sympathy new terminology</td>
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Overall, I would argue that my data analysis has led to findings which support the argument that neoliberal regimes and politics are undermining public accountability and obscure power relations and dependencies. Neoliberal politics have created a social service delivery system which is not as effective as it could be, is fragmented, has reduced stakeholder input and is near impossible to steer and co-ordinate effectively. I would like to stress that a lot of my data is qualitative in nature and that my research is explorative. Hence more research would be required to strengthen these findings.

Certain other themes which some of my informants have highlighted are however supported by other research. For example, some of my informants have argued that neoliberal politics have amplified the street youth issue. These informants have argued that a reduction of the social safety net and an increase in structural inequalities during past decades has led to more youth on the streets. This argument is supported by other academic research (see Kryder-Croe, Molnar and Salamon (editors), 1991).

Some of my informants have noted that processes of on-going privatization are not cheaper options (as so often argued by the Right) but ideological in nature. These arguments are supported by findings from the Korbin Commission (Korbin, 1993).

A few of my informants have argued that neoliberal politics are re-shaping the realm of the discursive. The re-shaping of the sector along neoliberal lines has allowed for certain presentations of the street youth issue — i.e., de-politicized versions — to hold a more prominent place in the realm of the discursive. According to some informants, it appears that the social problem called street youth seems to be in the process of being understood differently by the general public and treated less sympathetically.31

Whilst much more research is needed to support this argument, there are academic sources which argue along similar lines. Alice O’Connor (2001) for example demonstrates that during the last decades, the study of poverty in the U.S. has shifted from addressing structural inequalities towards changing individual behaviour. Hackworth (2010) argues that when it comes to the homelessness issue, neoliberal regimes prefer to support religious non-profits working with the homeless as a lot of the religious non-profits adhere to a non-politicized view of the social problem at stake.

31. A media discourse analysis would likely support this argument more fully (or discount it) — as it stands, I have only used data obtained during interviews to make this point.
The original part of my research which looks at the (policy) history of the social service sector which works specifically with street youth is perhaps the least substantiated by other research. The re-shaping of the street youth service sector along neoliberal lines (dis-empowerment of front-line social workers, the corporate make-over of the non-profit sector, continuous privatization, important stakeholders unequal partners in the policy process) has fragmented stakeholder voice which undermines debate and necessary changes towards effective policy and service responses. Foucault (1974, 1977) is often credited with stating that “where there is power, there is resistance”. This idiom is reflected in the various attempts by stakeholders to organize coordinated advocacy responses and mediating mechanisms. However, despite the excellent advocacy which is being done, I would argue that the chances of influencing policy and pursuing advocacy work by the stakeholders outlined seems to be not as strong or effective as it could be and should be. Coordinated advocacy appears to be also relatively limited.

As a concluding remark, I would like to state that working in a context which has been shaped by a neoliberal agenda has above all been very divisive for all stakeholders. It also calls into question whether a classic policy circle model with its onus on external/ internal stakeholder voice being able to reform ineffective policy responses is still applicable in a neoliberal context. There is a democracy deficit detectable in this narrative which to my mind undermines the sector’s ability to work on effective policy reforms jointly and cohesively. The need to inject some democracy back into the system remains paramount.

On a personal level, I was very impacted and touched by the people who I have interviewed — speaking with so many extremely bright, committed and passionate people was a deeply touching experience for me. My biggest sorrow really is that these people are operating in a system and a policy context which I believe makes it difficult for them to come together and to support each other’s strengths, experiences, analysis and have constructive dialogue, as well as constructive disagreements.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW FRAMEWORKS

INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK 1

Applicable to former workers in the field and former street youth.

My intent is to learn about the different services provided to street youth in Vancouver and the history of these services. I would also like to understand your experiences with these services and your opinion on these services. You don’t have to answer all the questions and if a question is not clear to you, I can explain it.

• When did you first get exposed to street youth services (by accessing them or working for them?)
• What do you think are the main reasons why youth end up on the streets (based on what you or your peers experienced or what you have witnessed)? Were there big changes over time?
• Please tell me about your experiences with street youth services — which programs did you use or know about or work for, what do you know about the history or mandate of these programs?
• How did these programs develop and change over time?
• For former street youth: What programs worked for you and why?
• For workers: what gave you job satisfaction and what do you think were the best service delivery models out there?
• Do you think that you were able to influence and shape these services and have a say? How?
• Are there any gaps in services — needs not being met?
• Anything else?

Thank you for participating!
INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK 2

Applicable to public officials, advocacy, policy-involved, academic or managerial staff or knowledgeable about the sector.

Note to interviewees: this interview will be give to a broad array of professionals so you might not be able to answer all of these questions. Research indicates that a multi-agency and mixed-service delivery model for street youth exists (government and non-profits). My intent is to learn how various parts of the sector (i.e., your agency if applicable) have developed, how the sector as a whole has developed and what you know about the sector as a whole.

• Background characteristics — how long have you been familiar with/involved with street youth issues and in what capacity (policy, managerial non-profit, planning/social planning/planning, front-line, advocacy, etc.)?

• How is the issue of street youth understood or defined by you and by others (other organisations, peers, funders, etc.)?

• Has this changed over time and how?

• Thinking about the 1980s to present day what do you think were the most important policy/legislation/infrastructure changes? What do you think informed these shifts?

• Which groups and stakeholders are involved in the service delivery to street youth? What do you think is their mandate and has this changed over time?

• Do you know how the different groups involved in the street youth sector connect or liaise?

• Financing of the sector — has funding for this sector (or your agency) changed over time and if so, how and when and for what reason?

• Any other relevant information?

Thank you for participating!
INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK 3

Applicable to advocacy, policy-involved or academic informants knowledgeable about the sector.

Note to interviewees: this interview will be given to a broad array of professionals so you might not be able to answer all of these questions. Research indicates that a multi-agency and mixed-service delivery model for street youth exists (government and non-profits). My intent is to learn how various parts of the sector have developed, how the sector as a whole has developed and what avenues exist to influence policy-makers and the public and/or other key stakeholders.

• Background characteristics — how long have you been familiar with/involved with street youth issues and in what capacity (e.g., policy, research or advocacy work, etc.)?

• Which groups/stakeholders in the street youth sector are you involved with or representing (e.g., youth, families, professionals working in the field)?

• How is the issue of street youth understood or defined by you and by others (other organisations, peers, funders, etc.)?

• Has this changed over time and how?

• In what capacity do you represent these groups, what information do you gather and who do you relate this information to (e.g., are you trying to influence public opinion or politicians or other stakeholders)?

• If you are doing advocacy work, would you mind sharing your approach, goal and strategy you/your organization are pursuing with your work?

• Thinking about the 1980s to present day what do you think were the most important policy/legislation/infrastructure changes? What do you think informed these shifts?

• Do you know how the different stakeholders involved in the street youth sector connect or liaise?

• Any other relevant information?

Thank you for participating!
APPENDIX II

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

For former workers and former street youth

Goal of the Study: is to understand how services for street youth in Vancouver have developed and changed during the last 3 decades. The dimensions through which I am investigating the developments of street youth services are the following:

- The policy (legislative/funding) context
- A stakeholder analysis (who is involved in lobbying for resources and providing services) and
- A focus on ‘issue recognition’ (how is the problem of ‘street youth’ understood and how this has changed over time).

You have been invited to participate in that study because I am interested in hearing about your experiences.

Title of Study/ Researcher/Organization: This research is done under the auspices of SFU. Diana Guenther is the researcher/principal investigator and the title of the project is: How have neoliberal shifts from the 1980s to present day in social welfare delivery changed the services provided to street youth in Vancouver? This study is being conducted as part of research conducted at Simon Fraser University.

Study Methods and Confidentiality: You will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approx. 45 minutes to one hour. The purpose of this study is to give you an opportunity to discuss your experiences and opinions about the street youth services in Vancouver. I want to learn about the services you received/provided/accessed and how the services have changed over time and why you think they have changed. I also want to know what you think the issues and challenges are that street youth face and whether that has changed over time. Interviews will either be recorded by tape or notes will be taken during the interview — you decide what you prefer. Identity of all participants is kept confidential. Audio-tapes and written notes will be transcribed and identified by a code (not your name) and will be stored securely for 3 years.
before being destroyed. Tapes will be erased after they are transcribed. People's names or other unique identifiers will not be included in the transcripts or used in any published report. For the purpose of this study, you will be referred to as a former street youth/former worker/volunteer or general member of the public who has personal experiences of the street youth service sector. The principal investigator is the only person with access to the tapes and transcripts. All data is anonymous and confidential to the full extent permitted by law. A small gift/honorarium will be provided at the end of the interview.

**Risks and benefits — anonymity:** risks to participants are minimal. Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed to the full extent permitted by law. In this case, an interviewee will be given the option to be identified by name and/or agency or agency category (see below). The study is focus on a matter of public interest and social policy and is interested in exploring how social policy is formed. Research and information about street youth and agencies serving them is in the public realm already, this study is unique in so far as it aims to chronicle the development of street youth services in Vancouver over a lengthy period of time. Benefits of this study are that it allows us to understand the historical development of street youth services and hence provide a long-term perspective.

**Voluntary Participation, Withdrawal or Complaints:** Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw any time during the interview process without any consequences or adverse effects.

If you have any questions about this study at anytime, please contact Diana Guenther at dga25@sfu.ca.

Complaints about the interview process are to be directed to:

Hal Weinberg, Director — Office of Ethics Research, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby B.C., Canada, V5A 1S6, Tel. 778 782 6593

**Results:** Study results may be obtained approx. 12–14 months after the interview. Please tick a box below if you are interested in receiving a copy of the study results and the principal investigator will be in touch.
Future contact: is not expected once the interview is finished, unless you explicitly want to be contacted to review your transcript (please note; only relevant parts of the interview will be transcribed). Please tick a box below if you are interested in reviewing your transcript (=relevant part of the interview).

I ________________, hereby agree to be interviewed under the terms and conditions outlined above. I understand that I can withdraw during the interview process at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequence. I have received a copy of the consent form.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Please tick relevant boxes and initial:
☐ I agree to be taped during the interview Initials: ______
☐ I prefer for written notes to be taken during the interview Initials: ______

☐ I am interested in obtaining study results and can be contacted under:
  Name: ___________________________
  E-mail: ___________________________
  Phone Number: ___________________________

☐ I do wish to be contacted to review my transcript:
  Name: ___________________________
  E-mail: ___________________________
  Phone Number: ___________________________

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in research!

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Appendix II

Page 1 of 2

Ethics Approval: Informed Consent Forms
For public officials, public sector staff, policy/advocacy/management involved officials and staff, researcher or academics only

Goal of the Study: is to understand how services for street youth in Vancouver have developed and changed during the last 3 decades. The dimensions through which I am investigating the developments of street youth services are the following:

- The policy (legislative/funding) context
- A stakeholder analysis (who is involved in lobbying for resources and providing services) and
- A focus on 'issue recognition' (how is the problem of 'street youth' understood and how this has changed over time).

You have been invited to participate in that study because I am interested in hearing about your experiences.

Title of Study/Researcher/Organization: This research is done under the auspices of SFU. Diana Guenther is the researcher/principal investigator and the title of the project is: How have neoliberal shifts from the 1980s to present day in social welfare delivery changed the services provided to street youth in Vancouver? This study is being conducted as part of research conducted at Simon Fraser University.

Study Methods and Confidentiality: You will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approx. 30–45 minutes. Interview questions will be submitted to you by e-mail before the interview takes place. I am primarily interested in learning how social policy is shaped and the history of street youth services. I want to know how the problem/issue of street youth is understood (and how this has changed over time) in Vancouver, how funding for the sector has changed and is identified and which stakeholders are involved in the service delivery to street youth (what is their mandate and how has it changed over time). Interviews will either be recorded by tape or notes will be taken during the interview — you decide what you prefer. Public officials and managerial/policy/advocacy/research staff that are willing and able to speak on behalf of an agency have the option to being identified by name, agency name or agency sector. Alternatively,
you have the option for your identity to remain anonymous (data might be associated with 'stemming from policy-involved staff or staff connected to the policy context'). Please tick relevant box(es) below. Permission has not been obtained from your employer/agency prior to conducting this study. Audio-tapes and written notes will be transcribed and identified by a code (not your name) and will be stored securely for 3 years before being destroyed. Tapes will be erased after they are transcribed. Please not those only pertinent parts of an interview will be transcribed. Transcripts and tapes will be securely locked and stored. People's names or other unique identifiers will not be included in the transcripts or used in any published report. The principal investigator is the only person with access to the tapes and transcripts. I will maintain confidentiality to the full extent permitted by law.

Risks and benefits — anonymity: risks to participants are minimal. Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed, unless an interviewee speaks in his/her capacity as public official or in a capacity to present an agency. In this case, an interviewee will be given the option to be identified by name and/or agency or agency category (see below). The study is focus on a matter of public interest and social policy and is interested in exploring how social policy is formed. Research and information about street youth and agencies serving them is in the public realm already, this study is unique in so far as it aims to chronicle the development of street youth services in Vancouver over a lengthy period of time.

Benefits of this study are that it allows us to understand the historical development of street youth services and hence provide a long-term perspective.

Voluntary Participation, Withdrawal or Complaints: Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw any time during the interview process without any consequences or adverse effects.

If you have any questions about this study at anytime, please contact Diana Guenther at dga25@sfu.ca.

Complaints about the interview process are to be directed to:

Hal Weinberg, Director — Office of Ethics Research, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby B.C., Canada, V5A 1S6, Tel. 778 782 6593
Appendix II

Results: Study results may be obtained approx. 12–14 months after the interview. Please tick a box below if you are interested in receiving a copy of the study results and the principal investigator will be in touch.

Future contact: is not expected once the interview is finished, unless you explicitly want to be contacted to review your transcript (please note; only relevant parts of the interview will be transcribed). Please tick a box below if you are interested in reviewing your transcript (=relevant part of the interview).

Please tick relevant box(es) and initialize:

☐ I agree to be identified by name
  Initials: ______

☐ I agree to be identified by the agency I work for
  Initials: ______

☐ I agree to be identified by the sector I work for (public sector – local/provincial, non-profit sector, advocacy group, research/further education establishment etc.)
  Initials: ______

☐ I do wish to remain anonymous (in the final report, data might be associated with ‘stemming from policy-involved staff or staff connected to the policy context’)
  Initials: ______

I ____________________________, hereby agree to be interviewed under the terms and conditions outlined above. I understand that I can withdraw during the interview process at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequence. I have received a copy of the consent form.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Please tick relevant boxes and initial:

☐ I agree to be taped during the interview
  Initials: ______

☐ I prefer for written notes to be taken during the interview
  Initials: ______

☐ I am interested in obtaining study results and can be contacted under:
  Name:
  E-mail:
  Phone Number:

☐ I do wish to be contacted to review my transcript:
  Name:
  E-mail:
  Phone Number:

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in research!
Informed Consent Forms for a Telephone Interview

For policy/advocacy/management involved officials and staff, researchers or academics

**Goal of the Study:** is to understand how services for street youth in Vancouver have developed and changed during the last 3 decades. The dimensions through which I am investigating the developments of street youth services are the following:

- The policy (legislative/funding) context
- A stakeholder analysis (who is involved in lobbying for resources and providing services) and
- A focus on 'issue recognition' (how is the problem of 'street youth' understood and how this has changed over time).

You have been invited to participate in that study because I am interested in hearing about your experiences.

**Title of Study/ Researcher/Organization:** This research is done under the auspices of SFU. Diana Guenther is the researcher/principal investigator and the title of the project is: How have neoliberal shifts from the 1980s to present day in social welfare delivery changed the services provided to street youth in Vancouver? This study is being conducted as part of research conducted at Simon Fraser University.

**Study Methods and Confidentiality:** You will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approx. 45 minutes. Interview questions and the informed consent form will be submitted to you by e-mail before the interview takes place. The telephone interview will take place once the informed consent form has been e-mailed to the principal investigator (dag25@sfu.ca). Please note: whilst I aim to provide confidentiality of identities, the phone is not considered a fully confidential medium, so there is an inherent risk to a phone interview. As with all electronic media, confidentiality cannot be assured. Signing the consent form does mean that you are willing to accept that risk. I am primarily interested in learning how social policy is shaped and the history of street youth services. I want to know how the problem/issue of street youth is understood (and how this has changed over time) in Vancouver, how funding for the sector has changed and is identified and which stakeholders are involved in the service
delivery to street youth (what is their mandate and how has it changed over time) and how advocacy is exercised. Interviews will either be recorded by tape or notes will be taken during the interview - you decide what you prefer (see p. 2). Managerial/policy/advocacy/research staff that are willing and able to speak on behalf of an agency have the option to being identified by name, agency name or agency sector (see p. 2). Audio-tapes and written notes will be transcribed and identified by a code (not your name) and will be stored securely for 3 years before being destroyed. Tapes will be erased after they are transcribed. Only pertinent parts of an interview will be transcribed. Transcripts and tapes will be securely locked and stored. People's names or other unique identifiers will not be included in the transcripts or used in any published report. The principal investigator is the only person with access to the tapes and transcripts.

**Risks and benefits — anonymity:** risks to participants are minimal. Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed if that is the option chosen by the participant. Some level of risk regarding confidentiality is associated with a phone interview process as the phone is not considered a fully confidential medium. The interviewee would need to be willing to accept this risk in order to take part in the interview. If an interviewee speaks in his/her capacity as public official or in a capacity to present an agency, the interviewee will be given the option to be identified by name and/or agency or agency category (see below). The study is focus on a matter of public interest and social policy and is interested in exploring how social policy is formed. Research and information about street youth and agencies serving them is in the public realm already, this study is unique in so far as it aims to chronicle the development of street youth services in Vancouver over a lengthy period of time.

**Voluntary Participation, Withdrawal or Complaints:** Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw any time during the interview process without any consequences or adverse effects. If you have any questions about this study at any time, please contact Diana Guenther at dga25@sfu.ca. Complaints about the interview process are to be directed to: Hal Weinberg, Director — Office of Ethics Research, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby B.C., Canada, V5A 1S6, Tel. 778 782 6593.
Appendix II

Results: Study results may be obtained approx. 12-14 months after the interview. Please tick a box below if you are interested in receiving a copy of the study results and the principal investigator will be in touch.

Future contact: is not expected once the interview is finished, unless you explicitly want to be contacted to review your transcript (please note; only relevant parts of the interview will be transcribed).

Please tick relevant box(es) and initialize:

☐ I agree to be identified by name
  Initials: ______

☐ I agree to be identified by the agency I work for
  Initials: ______

☐ I agree to be identified by the sector I work for ('advocacy involved' or 'policy-involved' interviewee.). My name will remain anonymous in the final report.
  Initials: ______

I ________________________, hereby agree to be interviewed under the terms and conditions outlined above. I understand that I can withdraw during the interview process at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequence. I have received a copy of the consent form.

Signature: ______________________ Date: ______________________

Please initial as relevant:

☐ I agree to be taped during the interview
  Initials: ______

☐ I prefer for written notes to be taken during the interview
  Initials: ______

☐ I am interested in obtaining study results.

I can be contacted under:
Name:
E-mail:
Phone Number:

☐ I do wish to be contacted to review my transcript
  (the transcript will be e-mailed to you):
  Initials: ______
Name:
E-mail:
Phone Number:

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in research!

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