# Ending or Obscuring Homelessness?
## Applying the White Racial Frame to Homeless Literature in Canada

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**Introduction**

> The global inequality crisis has reached new extremes. In 2015, the 62 richest people on the planet had the same wealth as the poorest half of humanity (3.6 billion people). This figure has fallen from 388 people just five years ago. The richest 1% now has more wealth than the rest of the world combined. The same pattern of growing inequality has been evident in Canada over the past several decades. Today, the top 1% of the population owns a quarter of the country's wealth—an amount greater than the total wealth held by the bottom 70% of the population (more than 24.5 million people). The scope of economic inequality demonstrates how little the majority of society now benefits from economic growth. (Lambert & McInturff, 2016, p. 1)

At the local, national, and international realms, despite never-before-seen levels of wealth, wages have stagnated and wealth disparity has increased to an almost unbelievable level. In combination with austerity measures and the ongoing dismantling of what remains of the welfare state, homelessness has, unsurprisingly, increased across Canada (Gaetz, Dej, Richter, & Redman, 2016). As a result, the literature on homelessness is vast and includes various research methods and demographic surveys (e.g. point-in-time counts/street censuses, national shelter surveys), grey literature (governmental and non-governmental publications), academic literature, encyclopedias devoted to the topic (e.g. The Encyclopedia on Homelessness), as well as entire research institutes (e.g. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and The Homeless Hub). However, reflexive analysis of the homeless literature (as a second order endeavor), is less frequent.

Reflexive analysis of any topic of study is a worthy endeavor because the practice and products of social science are constructed by social actors—i.e. other human beings. This means that social science literature itself is a "reality-creating force" because it in part, constructs its object of study (Delanty and Strydom, 2003, p. 372). As such, I situate my review of the homeless literature as following the work of others who have deconstructed how homelessness is framed and constituted (Dej, 2016; Thistle, 2017). I will contribute to deconstructing what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to as "the production of official problems"—in this case the official problem and framing of homelessness (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 390). I will do this using sociologist Joe R. Feagins' ground-breaking systemic racism theory (2013) to analyse the effects of what he calls the *White Racial Frame (WRF)* on our understanding and framing of homelessness.

In the remainder of this paper, I will first summarize existing literature on homelessness throughout Canada. I will then outline my theoretical approach along with Feagin's concept of the *WRF* and other key terms and concepts to be used throughout this analysis. Finally, I will apply the *WRF* to analyze homeless literature I collected as part of two separate research projects to answer the following two questions: (1) What are the effects of the *WRF* on our understanding of homelessness? (2) What are the implications for future research and action toward reducing homelessness?

**Literature Review**

Homelessness and/or the threat thereof is the reality for increasing numbers of people across the country. However, until recently, much of the literature on homelessness and subsequent service provision universalized its findings, despite primarily studying the homeless experiences

of single men (Bretherton, 2017). As a result, across the country various organizations have raised concerns about the increase in homelessness among several populations including for example, family, youth, and gender-based homelessness. It is argued that such populations' homeless experiences are often 'hidden' in nature and therefore marginalized from existing or potential responses. Resultantly, there are calls for more nuanced understandings of how homelessness occurs across demographic groups in order to broaden our understanding of what it means to be homeless (Gaetz et. al., 2013; Noble, 2015; Van Berkum & Oudshoorn, 2015; Bretherton, 2017; Milaney, Ramage, Yang Fang, & Louis, 2017).

To say that one's homelessness is hidden means that one does not generally utilize social services and thus, will not be included in official homeless counts (e.g. national shelter surveys). Those experiencing hidden homelessness are more likely to seek out provisional accommodations instead of using emergency homeless shelters, often for reasons of safety. Provisional accommodations can include staying with friends, family, or acquaintances (i.e. couch surfing); renting cheap rooms in boarding houses or hotels; being displaced from one's home community (e.g. residents of Lake St. Martin[1] have been displaced in Winnipeg since 2011, many of whom have been housed in hotels. Those staying in hotels and motels do not have tenancy agreements or legal protections); or exchanging services like babysitting, cleaning, selling drugs, or exchanging sex for a place to stay. Provisional accommodations are precarious in nature because, "there is no guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing" (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2018a). The importance of understanding hidden homelessness is a move towards ensuring that nobody's experiences are marginalized or excluded from ameliorative efforts at the policy and service delivery level (Patrick, 2014, p. 67; Thistle, 2017, p. 19).

In light of this, it is now expected that research on and strategies toward ending homelessness are specific as to whom among those experiencing homelessness they are addressing (Gaetz et al., 2016). As a result, the homeless literature is not only vast but is also notably demographically categorized. Studies of, reports with recommendations to end, and encyclopedic entries on homeless populations are increasingly being separated and tailored according to various demographics referred to in the literature as "key populations" (Gaetz et al., 2016, p. 17). For example, on their website, the Homeless Hub has the following categories of homelessness: Indigenous peoples,[2] Youth, LGBTQ2S, Single Women, Families with Children, Hidden Homelessness, Newcomers, People with Disabilities, Racialized Communities, Rural Populations and Northern Communities, Seniors, Sex Workers, and Single Men (Homeless Hub, 2018). These listings provide a general illustration of some of the primary ways in which the homeless literature is organized and presented.

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[1]   Until May 2011, the First Nation was based primarily at Lake St. Martin about 225 kilometres (140 mi) northwest of Winnipeg, Manitoba. When a massive flood hit Manitoba, the provincial government opted to divert water to Lake St. Martin in order to protect cottage and agricultural properties on other bodies of water. Consequently, all community members were evacuated and the infrastructure and housing on the First Nation was destroyed (Thompson, Ballard, and Martin, n.d). As of 2017, there were still approximately 1,900 flood evacuees who remained displaced, often in Winnipeg hotels or other temporary residences (Lambert, 2018). During this time, the community has seen an increase in deaths and illnesses among Lake St. Martin residents due to distress and lifestyle changes (Thompson, Ballard, and Martin, n.d; Grabish, 2017).
[2]   In the UN, "Indigenous" is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others.

**Key Terms and Concepts**

    i.       Situating and Defining Settler Colonialism

Sociologist Kari Marie Norgaard (2018) writes of the history and normalization of colonial perspectives and frameworks within sociology:

> Just as Aldon Morris (2015) brought attention to the racist context within which U.S. sociology developed and Julian Go (2016) underscored the imprint of imperialism in the founding structures of sociological thought, it matters that U.S. sociology continues to be imagined and developed in the wake of unacknowledged Indigenous genocide, from a standpoint of a nearly silent occupation. It matters that nearly all U.S. sociologists craft our theory within a colonial perspective. (p. 1)

While Norgaard is speaking about sociology in the United States, the same can be said of sociology in Canada in that both countries are settler colonies.[3] The fact that Canada and the United States have confederated to be 'independent' from Britain only further entrenches and institutionalizes, rather than takes away from, the reality of settler colonialism in this land. Any sociological work in Canada that does not situate itself within ongoing settler colonialism is perpetuating (whether consciously or not) its normalization and tacit acceptance.

      In his work on present-day settler colonialism across the world and as a global phenomenon, social scientist Lorenzo Veracini (2010; 2015) outlines settler colonialism as a distinct type, whereby settlers come to permanently occupy and assert ownership over lands historically inhabited and protected by Indigenous peoples. Again, this means that settler colonialism not only continues but is reinforced and even naturalized once settler societies declare themselves independent or sovereign from their founding imperial country. In regard to the land which we now call Canada, this means that the confederation of 1867 did not mark the end of colonialism. In summarizing the work of Veracini (2010; 2015), social scientists Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker (n.d) remind us that such assertions of state sovereignty are part of ongoing attempts to "eliminate the challenges posed to settler sovereignty by Indigenous peoples' claims to land by eliminating Indigenous peoples themselves and asserting false narratives and structures of settler belonging" (para. 2).

      Examples of false narratives of settler belonging in Canada include the concepts of *terra nullius* (the idea that lands inhabited and protected by Indigenous peoples over countless generations were empty or unused upon the arrival of Europeans) and subsequent notions of white settler 'developments', 'progress' and 'civilization'. From this perspective, we can see how and for how long Indigenous peoples of this land have had many attempts made to dispossess them of their homes and homelands.

    ii.      Indigenous Homelessness

In 2017, a National Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada was developed (Thistle, 2017, p. 4). Written by Indigenous scholar Jesse Thistle after consultation with other Indigenous

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3  Settler colonialism is a unique form of colonialism which functions through the replacement of Indigenous populations with an invasive settler society. Over time, the "settlers" develop a distinctive identity and sovereignty. In addition to Canada and the United States, settler colonial states include Australia, South Africa, and Israel.

scholars, community members, knowledge keepers, and Elders, this definition challenges the four typologies of homelessness as put forward by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally sheltered, at-risk of homelessness). The definition put forward by Thistle *et al.* illustrates the centrality of settler colonialism in the phenomenon of Indigenous homelessness. The definition reads as follows:

> Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships. (p. 6)

Using the definition of Indigenous homelessness provided above, we can see how Confederation (1867), the Indian Act[4] (1876-present), the Pass System[5] (in place for over 60 years beginning in 1885), Residential Schools[6] (in operation from 1831-1996), Enfranchisement, the '60's Scoop and ongoing child welfare practices,[7] and the ongoing mass incarceration of Indigenous peoples including children,[8] have all contributed to widespread homelessness in Canada. While affordable housing and homelessness prevention efforts rely on the federal disinvestment in housing and other neoliberal reforms in the 1990's, Thistle (2017) writes that:

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4   The Indian Act is the principal statute through which the federal government administers Indian status, local First Nations governments, and the management of reserve land and communal monies.

5   The Pass System was an unlawful, informal Canadian administrative policy, never codified in the Indian Act or enacted as law, which intended to keep First Nations in Canada separated from settlers and confined to Indian reserves, unless they had been issued a special travel permit, called a pass issued by a government Indian Agent. This segregation functioned as a form of social control and Canada's practices of racist segregation in part, inspired the apartheid system in South Africa.

6   In Canada, the Indian Residential School System was a network of boarding schools for Indigenous children who were forcibly taken from their homes. The network was funded by the Canadian government's Department of Indian Affairs and administered largely by Christian churches with the aim of removing or preventing Indigenous identity formation in the children. It was formally concluded by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada in 2015 (TRC) that the Residential School System was a genocidal project (TRC, 2015).

7   The '60s Scoop refers to a practice that occurred in Canada of "scooping up" Indigenous children from their families and communities for placement in predominantly white settler foster homes, often long distances from their birth families. Despite the reference to one decade, the '60s Scoop started in the late 1950s and endures to this day in contemporary child welfare practices. For example, approximately 40,000 Indigenous children are wards of the state under the name of 'Child Welfare' in Canada. That is more than 50% of all children wards of the state across the country, while Indigenous children make up 7.7% of the child population in Canada (Brake, 2018).

8   In 2016/2017, Aboriginal adults accounted for 28% of admissions to provincial/territorial jails and 27% for federal jails, while representing 4.1% of the Canadian adult population according to Statistics Canada. These numbers have increased steadily since 2006/2007, showing how the confinement of Indigenous peoples is increasing (Malakieh, 2018). In Canada, Indigenous people are incarcerated at a rate 10 times higher than the non-Indigenous, settler population (Macdonald, 2016). Even Indigenous children are jailed at similarly disproportionate rates as nearly half of all jailed youth in Canada are Indigenous (Malone, 2018a). In Manitoba the numbers are higher: 81% of jailed boys are Indigenous, 82% of jailed girls are Indigenous (Malone, 2018a)

> In light of the modern focus on the issue of homelessness, we can say that it took the increasing numbers of vulnerable settler women, children and veterans on Canadian city streets to shed light on the largely unexamined and out-of-control issue of Indigenous homelessness—a chronic, largely ignored and out-of-proportion problem that has been existing in Canada for well over 200 years. (p. 16)

The National Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada emphasizes homelessness as an *outcome* of settler colonialism and unfulfilled treaties. In this way, homelessness is understood more profoundly than simply lacking a physical structure, but also involves an assault on one's sense of self and diminished meaningful relationships (Thistle, 2017, p. 15). This definition will be relied on throughout this paper.

## Methodology/Theoretical Framework

Literature collected for this research was largely completed as part of two separate research projects. The first focused on gender-based homelessness and the second on youth homelessness. Both demographic groups are considered part of the broader category of 'hidden' or 'concealed' homelessness. After completing literature reviews for each project including gathering best practices as well as municipal, provincial, and federal strategies for ending homelessness, I noticed that outside of Thistle's (2017) definition, there is a marked absence of a sustained analysis of ongoing settler colonialism as a primary cause of widespread homelessness in Canada. This is significant given that when one more closely analyzes the literature, it becomes clear that *across demographics* pertaining to age (Thistle, p. 21, 2017), gender (Van Berkum & Oudshoorn, p. 127, 2015), and geographic location (Van Berkam & Oudshoorn, p. 151, 2015; Patrick, p. 15, 2014), Indigenous peoples are consistently over-represented.

Overwhelmingly some of the most authoritative literature on homelessness in Canada failed to highlight how ongoing settler colonialism is sustaining and exacerbating homelessness in this country through what sociologist Joe R. Feagin (2013) describes as "the racially inegalitarian accumulation of many economic, political, and other societal resources" (p. 16). This led me to wonder about the effects of the *WRF* on our understanding and framing of homelessness, especially given the presence of the racial wealth gap in Canada (Wilson & Macdonald, 2010).

The deconstructive approach used in this analysis is based on Foucauldian post-structural conceptions of power. Sociologist Michel Foucault developed a method of inquiry known as the genealogy of power. This involves documenting the history of the present. By this method, Foucault shows how the formation and articulation of something deemed to be a social problem (e.g. criminality, insanity, suicide, aging, homelessness) has both repressive *and productive* effects. In this way, "Science is not simply a description of reality, but has a constitutive role. This means that rather than simply providing knowledge of an external reality in the form of a mirror image of it, science in the first place constructs that reality" (Delanty and Strydom, 2003, p. 366).

Foucault's concept of power is challenging in that he does not present power as something static or linear, as something that one either has or does not have. Instead of being defined as something one can possess, Foucault understands power as something that is exercised. In his work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) Foucault writes:

> In short this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions—an

effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated. (26-7)

This understanding of social location and the productive or constitutive effects of power on individuals, interpersonal relationships, institutional policies and practices, and dominant discourses forms the theoretical background needed to illustrate the more explicit connections between the ways in which events are discursively framed and how this discourse gets reinforced, confirmed, or taken-for-granted over time and repetition both systemically and individually. For example, in the act of categorizing homeless demographics, we purport we are giving language and space to something pre-existing, but the acts of naming and referring to the categories actually constitute or shape the social meaning and perception of homelessness. Given the countless number of descriptions and truth-claims that are made by any number of individuals, those conducting genealogies of power are interested in which truth-claims come to be regarded as authoritative, by whom, and to what effect (Marsh 2010, 22). In this sense, any claims to knowledge are also claims to power in that, "authoritative ways of constituting the topic can act to form objects and subjects they purport only to name" (Marsh, 2010, p. 12). For the remainder of this paper power will be understood in the Foucauldian sense.

### The White Racial Frame

In response to the predominance of social theories which focus on *individual* analyses of race, racialization, and racist inequity, sociologist Joe R. Feagin developed the important concept of the *White Racial Frame (WRF)*. The *WRF* emphasizes the *systemic* nature of racism against racialized peoples (which includes individual acts of racism and bigotry) particularly in North America and the ways in which this racism has persistently and unjustly privileged white people, in this case, white settler Canadians. Rather than the commonly-used "disease" metaphor for understanding racism in North American society (i.e. racism is a disease in an otherwise healthy social body), Feagin advocates for a "structural-foundation metaphor" because it more accurately depicts contemporary U.S and North American society as one that is founded on white supremacy.

Feagin brilliantly defines *Systemic Racism* as including:

1. The complex array of recurring exploitative, discriminatory, and other oppressive white practices targeting persons of color;

2. The institutionalized economic and other social resource inequalities along racial lines (the racial hierarchy);

3. The dominant white racial frame that was generated to rationalize and insure white privilege and dominance over people of color (p. ix-x)

As an analytical concept, the *WRF* is based on interpretive social science. Social theorists Delanty and Strydom (2003) discuss the interpretative tradition as being the result of what they call a "cognitive turn." The cognitive turn refers to social scientists taking into consideration the role of cognition and cognitive processes of those whom they are studying (p. 87). Cognitive processes are social processes, rather than individual or even psychological because they are based on differing social locations, cultural experiences, beliefs, and values, all of which are learned throughout one's life course. Increasingly, the brain is understood to be "not as a rule-governed central information

processing unit, but as a neural network that changes through experience" (Delanty and Strydom, 2003, p. 375). In this way, individuals are regarded as products of social interaction instead of as individuals "whose existence predated society" (Adams and Sydie, 2001, p. 508).

Previous interpretive social science, such as that produced by Erving Goffman (1922-1982), lays some groundwork for understanding the *WRF*. Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974) was one of his later works, an over 500-page book where he is concerned with outlining how we organize or make sense of our experiences, exemplified by the guiding question in any situation (whether conscious or sub-conscious) of "What is it that is going on here?" (p. 8). Frames are understood as background assumptions which function to "enable us to understand what is going on in any encounter or situation. These prior assumptions make sense of the situation and the interaction and enable the individual to respond appropriately" (Adams and Sydie, 2001, p. 510).

In this way, Goffman's work illustrates the social construction or interpretive nature of reality. Goffman's work suggests that "there is no original behind the frame" (Adams and Sydie, 2001, p. 512). Rather, primary frameworks are reinforcing. That is, frameworks are cultural constructions influencing behaviour, producing behaviour that, in turn, reinforces the frame (Goffman, 1974, p. 462-63; Adams and Sydie, 2001, p. 512). Understanding the primary frameworks of a *particular social group* and how these frames come to be dominant and naturalized lays the interpretive foundation for the *WRF*.

In turn, the *WRF* greatly strengthens the political utility of interpretive frame analysis because the *WRF* situates all social phenomena within the pervasive social group frame of white superiority and white entitlement. Thus, while interpretive theorists such as Goffman (1974) have made explicit note that his work is about how *individuals* organize their experiences and *not* about the organization of social life or social structure, Feagin is able to show how the ways in which individuals organize our experiences is a consequence, and therefore directly related to, the way in which contemporary society is structured and constituted (Goffman, p. 13, 1974; Feagin, p. 25, 2013).

Post-structural analyses of social behavior such as that outlined by Feagin (2013) incorporate the productive or constitute effects of power within any social framing or discourse allowing us to understand first, how frames and discourses become reinforcing; and second, how frames and discourses can be undermined or countered. In this way, the *WRF* is a worldview which "operates to assist people in defining, interpreting, conforming to and acting in their everyday social worlds" (Feagin, 2013, p. x).

The *WRF* consists of seven parts: (1) beliefs aspect (racial stereotypes and ideologies), (2) cognitive elements (racial interpretations and narratives), (3) visual and auditory elements (racialized images and language accents), (4) 'feelings' aspect (racialized emotions), (5) inclination to action (to discriminate), (6) strong positive orientation to whites and whiteness (the pro-white subframe), and (7) the strong negative orientation to racial 'others' who are exploited and oppressed (anti-others subframes).

### Evidence

As previously outlined, the *WRF* consists of seven elements of which I will be focusing specifically on the second, fifth, sixth, and seventh. I will first illustrate and analyze the cognitive elements (racial interpretations and narratives) of the *WRF* as manifested in the homeless literature. I will then illustrate and analyze the evidence of inclination to action to discriminate using the Child Welfare System as an example of a settler colonial institution which contributes to mass

homelessness along racial lines. Finally, I will focus on the final two elements of the *WRF*—strong positive orientation to whites and whiteness (pro-white subframe) and strong negative orientation to racial 'others' who are exploited and oppressed (anti-other subframes)—based on an analysis of proposed solutions as put forward in the homeless literature.

i.       Cognitive Elements

As mentioned in the literature review, literature and other works on homelessness are increasingly required to delineate which demographic they are referring to when discussing and looking to manage or end homelessness. Proponents of demographic-specific approaches to understanding and responding to homelessness illustrate the failures of conceptualizing 'the homeless' as a monolithic group. While I agree that research findings should not be universalized when conducted on a relatively homogenous group, I argue that these demographic classifications and the concomitant literature, strategies, and best practices which follow, *obscure* the reality of settler colonialism in Canada and the pervasive homelessness which this has historically caused among the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, *across* demographic variables. I will first provide some more background information on why population-specific approaches came to be emphasized in the homeless literature.

In addition to wanting to ensure that nobody's experiences of homelessness are overlooked or marginalized in developing ameliorative solutions, calls to develop population-specific under-standings of and plans to end homelessness were heightened following the implementation of the federally-funded Housing First Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). In 2014, the federal government announced the HPS in which it would provide federal funds to community-based programs aimed at reducing and preventing homelessness. In the 2014-2019 HPS, 65% of funding is required for Housing First programs toward those experiencing chronic homelessness.

The Housing First philosophy approaches homelessness from the perspective that difficulties people face such as substance-abuse are often a *consequence* rather than a *cause* of homelessness and other difficult life trajectories that often precipitate homelessness. This philosophy understands homelessness from a social perspective rather than from any human-deficit model (characterized by blame-the-victim discourses for socially-produced problems such as poverty and inequitable funding arrangements) (Dej, 2016; Thistle, 2017; Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017). From this perspective, housing approaches that require sobriety in order to be deemed 'housing ready' are ineffective. Housing First approaches to homelessness are lauded for shifting homelessness strategies to a more rights-based approach which is "designed to meet clients where they are at" (Noble, p. 6, 2015).

Despite Housing First as an established best practice toward ending homelessness, after the HPS was rolled out it became clear that the HPS definition of 'chronic homelessness' excluded many people from accessing the federally-funded Housing First programs. For example, the gender-based homelessness literature emphasizes that eligibility criteria for Housing First ought to include gender-based experiences of homelessness which are often hidden in nature, yet no less severe (Mosher, 2013; Drabble & McInnes, 2017). Gender-based experiences of homelessness are often categorized as 'relative' rather than 'absolute' homelessness due to their hidden nature (e.g. couch surfing, remaining in abusive relationships to stay housed, survival sex) and reliance on extended networks to avoid absolute homelessness (Van Berkum & Oudshoorn, p. 151, 2015). As a result, it was found that gender-based experiences of homelessness are generally not considered eligible for Housing First even though one may experience hidden homelessness for extended

periods of time. This definitional exclusion stems from a larger problem of categorizing experiences of homelessness. As one local gender-based report noted: "Categorizing homelessness can also have the effect of creating a false ranking of the severity of people's experiences, with hidden homelessness being treated less seriously than staying in a shelter or on the street" (Drabble & McInnes, 2017, p. 12). In fact, it has been shown that hidden homelessness can often have equally if not more dangerous consequences for girls and young women who are then in a position of vulnerability to sexual assault and sexual exploitation.

As a result of the exclusion of many from accessing Housing First based on definitional requirements, there have been calls for a more nuanced interpretation of chronic and episodic homelessness "that recognizes women's experiences and the reasons why they do not always feel safe accessing emergency services" (Drabble & McInnes, 2017, p. 31). Similar arguments are made for other populations included among the hidden homeless including youth, Indigenous peoples, and LGBTQ2S.

While it is important to understand the nuance of homelessness as a social experience and therefore one that is significantly shaped by one's social location, literature which breaks down 'the homeless' into demographic categories has the effect of obscuring the reality of ongoing settler colonialism as a fundamental cause of mass homelessness in Canada. Across categories of age (Thistle, p. 21, 2017), gender (Van Berkam & Oudshoorn, p. 127, 2015), and geographic location (Van Berkam & Oudshoorn, p. 151, 2015; Patrick, p. 15, 2014), Indigenous peoples are most often over-represented, however, the positioning of 'Indigenous homelessness' as one among numerous other homeless demographics does not lead one to this very real conclusion.

Additionally, literature which does situate itself in the context of settler colonialism such as that done by Baskin (2007; 2013) as well as Yerichuk, Johnson, Felix-Mah, & Hanson (2016) are then categorized by larger authoritative bodies of homeless research as falling under the particular category of "Indigenous homelessness" or "sub-populations." This obscures the extent to which settler colonialism and its systems of capital accumulation (largely through resource extraction) is a driving force of perverse inequality to the point of homelessness. Thus, the continuous reference and application of various demographic groups based on age, gender, or geographic location for example, gives the appearance that almost any demographic group has the potential to experience homelessness. However, the reality is that 1 in 15 Indigenous peoples in urban centres in Canada experience homelessness compared to 1 in 128 in the settler population. This means that Indigenous peoples are 8 times more likely to experience homelessness than the settler population (Thistle, p. 19, 2017). This is an example of the *WRF* because it shapes the way we conceptualize, imagine, or think about homelessness in a way which distracts or obscures from the racialized nature of this social problem.

In addition to obscuring the extent and proportion of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness in their own homelands, I have identified two major effects of demographically categorizing homelessness in these ways. First, when we divide those experiencing homelessness into population-specific categories based on gender, for example, we are prevented from recognizing the reality of linked lives. Studying women, trans, two-spirit and gender-non conforming peoples' experiences of homelessness runs the risk of drawing boundaries in theoretical models that do not exist in people's everyday lives. For example, an Indigenous woman's housing and financial situation may become seriously strained when her son is released from jail and comes to live with her. He is unable to obtain employment due to his now criminalized identity. Given that Indigenous peoples are more likely to be criminalized, and once they are jailed experience harsher treatment and longer sentences than non-Indigenous people (Baskin, p. 413-14, 2013; Sapers, p.

43, 2014), understanding the mother's experience solely through a gender-based lens will limit our understanding of and response to her housing and financial instability. Thus, the white European/settler worldview which focuses on individuals as the smallest social unit, fails to account for the reality of linked lives (Baskin, 2013).

This leads to a second problem, namely, that researchers are looking at experiences of homelessness statically. When we categorize peoples experience of homelessness based on age, for example, we fail to understand how one can experience homelessness *over the life course* and even, intergenerationally. For example, the most recent Winnipeg Street Census (2018) illustrates that for those surveyed, events leading to their homelessness often began in youth, including for those who have experienced *chronic* homelessness into their adult lives:

> The median age at which people first became homeless was 20 and the most frequent age was 18 years. Of those who experienced homelessness for ten or more years throughout their lives, the majority (62.0 percent) first experienced homelessness when they were 18 years old or younger. The most common reason people experienced homelessness for the first time was family breakdown, abuse, or conflict. 51.5% of people experiencing homelessness had been in the care of Child and Family Services at one point in their lives. 62.4% of them experienced homelessness within one year of leaving care. (Brandon et. al, 2018, p. 5)

The fact that homelessness is experienced by many over the life course and frequently beginning in youth is evidence supporting admissions from leading homelessness researchers who acknowledge that there is a lack of longitudinal research and thus, evidence showing whether interventions during youth prevent or merely delay homelessness (Schwan et. al., 2018, p. 56). This is the case despite the vast array of population-specific approaches and promising practices. The repeated practice of trying to address homelessness through the static category of age even in the absence of evidence that interventions for youth prevent or delay homelessness again obscures the reality of chronic and disproportionate homelessness among Indigenous peoples across demographic categories *and* across the life course.

A final cognitive element of the *WRF* that I would like to illustrate is in discussions of "intergenerational trauma." Intergenerational trauma is frequently noted in the literature as causing Indigenous peoples to be more vulnerable to homelessness, particularly resulting from the systemic abuse practiced at residential schools. Absent in the literature from discussions of the intergenerational aspects of our lives are discussions about wealth and poverty transmission. Specifically, while discussions of poverty as a root cause of homelessness are prevalent in the literature, I have not come across a single reference or acknowledgement of the many forms of capital (e.g. social, cultural, and symbolic capital) to which white people have unearned privilege. Like material capital, these forms of capital can be passed on intergenerationally. Critical race scholarship has illustrated the ways in which white people (even those who experience poverty) benefit from intergenerational racism because they are still able to use their whiteness as a leverage (Mueller, 2011, p. 175).

As such, to only reference intergenerational trauma in the absence of referencing the accumulation of intergenerational advantages or disadvantages has the effect of pathologizing Indigenous peoples, implying their homelessness has to do more with psychological distress or defect than with the accumulating effects of settler colonialism over the centuries. This is surprising given the widespread use of Life Course Theory across disciplines which helps, in part, to illustrate

how both advantages and disadvantages can accumulate over one's life course.

    ii.       Inclination to Action (To Discriminate): Case Study of Child Welfare as Systemic Racism in Action

This case study will serve as a discussion of the role of child welfare in producing mass homelessness, particularly for Indigenous youth across the country. There is a rich evidence base suggesting that both youth who have been wards of the state as well as mothers whose children have been apprehended are more likely to become homeless or be at-risk of homelessness as compared with those who have not had contact with the Child Welfare System. I will discuss each in turn, illustrating how child welfare policies and practices constitute systemic racism by persistently disadvantaging Indigenous families.

      In Winnipeg, it is estimated that 84% of youth experiencing homelessness are Indigenous (Godoy & Maes Nino, 2016, p. 14). This is not only the case in Manitoba, but similar patterns are evident across the country. For example, even in cities such as Ottawa whereby Indigenous youth comprise only 1.5% of the city's total population, 20% of the city's street youth are Indigenous (Thistle, 2017, p. 21). While Indigenous youth are far from a homogenous group, common themes which emerge in their experiences of homelessness can include: poverty and inadequate housing in early years of life, negative experiences in the Child Welfare System, and family histories reflective of Canada's ongoing colonialism including grandparents and parents' involvement with residential schools and/or the Child Welfare System (Baskin, 2013, p. 412; Patrick, 2014, p. 32). In Baskin's (2013) research with Indigenous youth experiencing homelessness in Toronto subsequent to child welfare involvement, it was found that the youth who participated, "clearly believed that the child welfare system was difficult for them, their families and communities because, according to them, it mirrored residential schooling" (p. 413). Indeed, systemic racism in public systems such as child welfare is one of the leading causes of Indigenous youth homelessness and warrants our central concern.

      Manitoba has the highest rates of child apprehension in Canada (Wall-Wieler et. al., 2017) and has been described as "ground zero" for not only rates of apprehension, but also for the rate of deaths of children in care and for the rate of newborn or "birth alert" apprehensions, taking on average, one newborn/day (Pauls, 2018, para. 10; Malone, 2018b, para. 8; Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017, p. 11). However, provincial child and family services (CFS) policies and practices, specifically around apprehension, do not affect all Manitoban families equally.

      Research and a breakdown of current cases consistently shows that Indigenous families are disproportionately under the gaze and intervention of Child Welfare due primarily to their Indigeneity, class position, and prior involvement with CFS, thus securing intergenerational system involvement (Strega & Esquao, 2009; Baskin, 2013). As a result, the most recent numbers released by the Manitoba provincial government show that there are over 11,000 children in CFS and approximately 90% of them are Indigenous children (Brake, 2019, para. 13). Data from Manitoba CFS illustrate that both the number and proportion of Indigenous children apprehended has increased since 2002 (Brownell et. al., 2015, p. 3). Across Canada, not only are there *three times* as many Indigenous youth in the Child Welfare System today than there were in residential schools at their peak in the 1940s (Baskin, 2013, p. 408), but also, in Manitoba, more children on average die while in the 'care' of CFS than died during the residential school era: "According to the AMC [Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs], 546 Manitoba children died in the child welfare system between 2008 and 2016. At an average of 68 each year, that's more than during the residential school era" (Pauls, 2018, para. 12).

Once apprehended, there is demonstrable evidence that these youth generally face negative life trajectories. Even the current federal minister of Crown-Indigenous relations, Carolyn Bennet, publicly noted in Winnipeg in June 2018 that there are "perverse incentives in this system people are calling [the] child welfare industry" whereby more funds are provided for child apprehensions than are made available to support families who are struggling to provide for their own children (Taylor, 2018a, para.11). In this way, child apprehensions become financially incentivized despite overwhelming evidence that children apprehended, particularly those removed from their languages and cultures, do not fare well (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017).

To provide some examples from the local and national level, youth who have been apprehended are more likely than children who have not been apprehended to: experience homelessness (Courtney, Nino, & Peters, 2014; Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council, 2014; DiStasio, Sareen, & Isaak, 2014; Drabble & McInnes, 2017); have pre-mature death (Egilson, 2018); be criminalized (May, 2019); die by suicide (Egilson, 2018; Schwan et al., 2018a); be sexually exploited (Patrick, 2014); have their own children apprehended (Baskin, 2013); and/or be missing or murdered (Taylor, 2018b).

Moreover, the experiences of mothers whose children are apprehended by the Child Welfare System can lead to homelessness with many mothers reporting severe mental, emotional and financial distress after losing their children (Taylor, 2018b). This reported downward spiral has been recorded both qualitatively (Bennett, 2008; Drabble & McInnes, 2017) and quantitatively (Wall-Wieler et al., 2017). For example, a Manitoba-based study titled, "Maternal Health and Social Outcomes after Having a Child Taken into Care: Population Based Longitudinal Cohort Study using Linkable Administrative Data" was released in 2017. This study compared mothers whose children were apprehended by CFS after the age of two with mothers whose children were not taken by CFS. The authors conclude that, "The health and social situation of mothers involved with child protection services deteriorates after their child is taken into care" (Wall-Wieler et al., 2017, p. 1). Specifically, Wall-Wieler et al. study found that mothers whose children were apprehended had high rates of diagnosed mental illness, treatment use, residential mobility, and were recipients of EIA before apprehension. After apprehension these mothers experienced, on average,

- 19% increase in depression

- 36% increase in anxiety

- 97% increase in 'substance-use disorder'

- 6% increase in physician visits

- 51% increase in mental health specific visits to a physician

- 54% increase in hospitalization for mental health reasons

- 42% increase in prescriptions

- 86% increase in psychotropic prescriptions

- 40% increase in different psychotropic prescriptions

- Note that Residential mobility and receiving EIA remained unchanged before and after apprehension.

The documented and demonstrated evidence of poor trajectories and outcomes of youth who have been apprehended as well as their mothers is overwhelming. Given that Indigenous families are much more likely to be scrutinized and are therefore overrepresented among those whose children have been apprehended (both nationally and locally), Canadian child welfare systems are part of structural, systemic and financially incentivized racism toward Indigenous peoples. These actions are consistent with the criteria for genocide as outlined in the *United Nations Convention on Genocide* (UN General Assembly, 1948). Despite these many research findings, however, the industry of child welfare is still operating business as usual.

The persistent actions of the Canadian colonial state in undermining and separating Indigenous families is demonstrative of the *WRF* inclination to discriminatory action. This also functions to reproduce the racial hierarchy, which Feagin (2013) outlines as "a constant reproducing of major inegalitarian institutions and their discriminatory arrangements and processes" (p. 36).

iii.     Strong Positive Orientation to Whites and Whiteness (Pro-White Subframe) and Strong Negative Orientation to Racial 'Others' (Anti-Others Subframe)

This section will build off the above outline of child welfare practices both locally in Manitoba, as well as nationally, across Canada. I will here apply the *WRF* to examine the lack of direct support in the homeless literature for Indigenous-led struggles for sovereignty over their children and families (a function of the anti-other subframe) despite the overwhelming evidence of child welfare policy and practice constituting genocide. I will examine the preference in the literature for calling for a return or strengthening of the welfare state (pro-white subframe), despite evidence that welfare state support was never fully extended to all peoples in Canada.

Despite national calls for reconciliation and public recognition that child welfare practices are harming Indigenous families (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015), few publications that I came across in my reviews of the homeless literature actually put their weight behind supporting Indigenous sovereignty efforts to regain jurisdiction of their children and families (something which was *never conceded* but rather, violently imposed through colonial legislation). Those publications that did call for Indigenous self-determination and self-governance over matters of child welfare were written by Indigenous scholars (Baskin, 2007; Baskin, 2013; Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017).

While Indigenous peoples in Manitoba have been fighting over sovereignty of their own children and families for over two centuries, with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs[9] taking on this role formally for the past 30 years (Brake, 2019, para. 13), broader support from settler Canadians for these needed changes is seriously lacking. For example, given the above outlined case study of the systemic racist practices of child welfare to the point of constituting genocide, one would presume that Canadian literature on youth homelessness would discuss Indigenous jurisdiction over child welfare in order to ameliorate this ongoing crisis. However, this is not generally the case. Most reports that I came across instead resorted to general calls for reconciliation and various child welfare reforms, such as more extensions of care to a later age. These recommendations are problematic given evidence emerging out of British Columbia (Egilson, 2018) that despite being on independent youth agreements or receiving extensive support services, youth apprehended by

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9   The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) was created in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC represents 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12% of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene and Dakota people and traditions.

the Child Welfare System still died at five times the rate of the general population of young people in British Columbia (p. 3). It was found that Indigenous youth and young adults accounted for 34% of the 200 deaths—a number which is disproportionate to the number of Indigenous young people in the general BC population (p. 14). Clearly, abstract calls for reconciliation and various child welfare reforms such as more extensions of care to a later age do not attend to the issue of systemic racism in child welfare practices and the intergenerational poverty, system involvement, and trauma that this creates.

The general lack of political support in the homeless literature for Indigenous struggles for sovereignty has been noted by other scholars. In a critical review of literature on Indigenous homelessness, one reviewer made the following remarks:

> The vast majority of research studies and reports remain distinctly apolitical, which is alarming considering the politicized nature of this subject. Most fail to address the structural aspects of Canadian society and culture that create and maintain homelessness, and prefer to focus strictly on micro-level (i.e. front-line or 'band-aid') interventions. In the opinion of the reviewer the issues revealed in this review cannot be meaningfully changed without academics and key stakeholders declaring (and acting on) a clear position that also takes into account colonial and neo-colonial relationships between Aboriginal Peoples and governments/society. (Patrick, 2014, p. 62)

The lack of direct support for Indigenous sovereignty can be understood as a function of the anti-other subframe. Contrary to the pro-white subframe whereby white peoples' ideas, institutions, and actions are framed as noble, superior, or somehow more enlightened, the anti-other subframe persistently casts the cultures, ideas, and practices of racialized peoples as backward, undeveloped, animalistic, or otherwise somehow degenerate. The anti-other subframe is present across Canada particularly toward the Indigenous peoples. For example, anti-oppressive child welfare practitioners note that there is a strong link between residential schools and contemporary child welfare practice in that both are based on the anti-other racist framing of Indigenous peoples as somehow deficient or defective. Strega & Esquao (2009) write: "The residential school system institutionalized the idea that Aboriginal families were incommensurable with the national ideal and that the welfare of Aboriginal children was in conflict with that of their families and communities, including that of their mothers" (p. 18). By looking at the current statistics regarding child welfare apprehensions in Manitoba it is clear that this assumption of Indigenous degeneracy still actively informs the policies and practices of colonial institutions. The lack of public outrage, particularly from settler Canadians is an example of how, if left unexamined, the anti-other subframe limits what the public regards as ameliorative possibilities for ending homelessness.

In lieu of supporting Indigenous sovereignty as a means to address widespread homelessness, there are countless calls in the homeless literature for the return or strengthening of the welfare state which emerged in Canada post-World War II but came under fiscal attack in approximately the 1980s (Gaetz et. al., 2016). In addition to formerly homeless Métis scholar Jesse Thistle's (2017) criticisms of the colonial blinders which limited how researchers were framing homelessness, Joe R. Feagin reminds his readers of the role of the welfare state. While it did serve a limited role of distribution, the welfare state was fundamentally based off of land theft, genocide, and enslavement to even produce the wealth to then distribute through the class system (largely benefitting middle class white settlers). Joe R. Feagin writes, "for most historians of the West, modernization is about industrialization, urbanization, education, and wealth, and not centrally about genocide, land theft,

slavery, and unjust enrichment of European countries" (p. 19). Land theft, slavery, and genocide are not relics of the past, but structure our current reality of unjust enrichment and impoverishment along racial lines.

In this way, the welfare state was never one based on equity, but on appeasing a small portion of the population in order to avoid widespread dissent. As Jesse Thistle reminds us, it is only when this population was hit with the effects of neo-liberal reforms in the 1990s in Canada that there was an increased focus on homelessness. The overall preference in the homeless literature for a return to a welfare state is a function of white settlers occupying positions of authority and producing knowledge/power. Moreover, even in instances where there is more robust state funding to reduce or minimize poverty through housing investments, for example, it is crucial to remember that even where housing is made available, the practice of systemic racism toward racialized and Indigenous peoples remains. Systemic racism in the housing market, also referred to as "Canada's housing apartheid" (Thistle, 2017, p. 15), effectively screens out many people in need of housing based on their racialization. In Winnipeg, there has been documented evidence of housing discrimination as studied by Cohen and Corrado (2004). The authors noted that:

> Typically, this discrimination involves the restriction of choices in renting or owning accommodations. There is a consensus among Canadian researchers that Aboriginal people have experienced sustained and widespread housing discrimination even though there are federal, provincial, and constitutional laws and provisions that protect equal access for all ethnic racial groups. (p. 113)

The study found that 54.8% of the Winnipeg sample and 67% of the Thompson[10] sample reported that they have been discriminated against regarding housing in the past five years. Landlords and property managers were the most prevalent source of housing discrimination reported. Other frequent sources included community and government housing agencies. Common forms of housing discrimination which emerged in the research included: given a shorter list of available suites; denied a rental application; denied a place to live because of being Indigenous; denied a place to live because of primary source of income; told the suite was 'just rented'; and/or received unequal or lack of maintenance services. The effects of housing discrimination on those looking to be housed were found to include: fewer choices of available vacancies; fewer choices among locations or neighbourhoods; higher rent; longer searches for a place to live; more frequent moves; overcrowding; negative effects on mobility, education, employment, and health; and/or people forced to live in low standard housing characterized by poor construction, substandard conditions, and a generally lower quality home. In total, at least 80% of all respondents felt there was "moderate" 'to "quite a lot" of housing discrimination against Indigenous people in Winnipeg and Thompson (p. 122).

This study serves as an illustration that calling for more state investments in affordable housing without any measures to address systemic racism is seeking to reproduce an inequitable system along racial lines. Despite evidence illustrating how Indigenous peoples are systematically discriminated against by various housing "gatekeepers", including governmental and non-profit housing organizations, professionals who are producing homeless literature with calls for the welfare state often participate in what Feagin refers to as "believing what is demonstrably untrue" (Feagin, 2013, p. 3). This is the power of the *WRF.*

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10  Thompson is the largest city in the Northern Region of Manitoba.

Furthermore, simply calling for more social housing fails to acknowledge and distinguish what one means by 'housing' and 'home', given that Western notions of home "prioritize built forms over socially necessary connections" (Thistle, 2017, p. 15). Western white settler worldviews understand home as physical structure and private property. In the context of settler colonialism, private property and dispossession are two sides of the same coin. Since private property is an imposition and outcome of settler colonialism, what is 'home' for settlers has resulted in 'homelessness' for Indigenous peoples. This is once again illustrative of the pervasiveness of the *WRF*, as it is present and acted on even by those who are well educated and well versed in the work of social justice. Joe R. Feagin notes this when he writes, "Even white scholars, researchers, and others with much education frequently think and write, consciously or unreflectively, out of a strong and unexamined version of the white frame" (p. 118). Thus, further education of the *WRF* is badly needed across Canada, perhaps most significantly among those doing work which is largely regarded as pertaining to social justice.

## Conclusion

This paper set out to address two questions. First, what are the effects of the *WRF* on homeless literature in Canada? Second, what are the implications for future research and action toward reducing homelessness? After outlining the scope and theoretical framework of this paper and summarizing some of the predominant themes in the research, I provided examples and analysis of the *WRF* in the homeless literature. These included cognitive elements as well as the pro-white and the anti-other subframes. Using the case study of child welfare practices in Canada, I illustrated that despite the genocidal actions of the state and the complicity of child welfare in producing mass homelessness, the homeless literature generally failed to put its weight behind ongoing Indigenous efforts to regain jurisdiction over their own families, preferring instead to call for child welfare reforms. The frequency of calls for the welfare state reveals the pro-white subframe because despite evidence showing how systemic racism prevents racialized peoples from accessing such needed services, the welfare state is presented as a solution to poverty and homelessness. These aspects of the *WRF* in the homeless literature function to both rationalize and obscure white privilege and dominance in perpetuating widespread homelessness, particularly among Indigenous peoples of this land.

Given (1) the white racial framing of homelessness and proposed solutions in the literature, (2) the predominance of white people in positions of authority including in the production of research, and (3) the overwhelming overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples among those experiencing homelessness, it is imperative that future research and actions toward reducing or ending homelessness be radically altered. Future research on homelessness in Canada needs to embrace more comprehensive frameworks such as that outlined by Jesse Thistle (2017) and begin from the premise that homelessness is a social process and a social outcome and not merely resulting from the lack of a physical structure (although it also includes this). There also needs to be increased representation of Indigenous peoples in positions of authority and increased respect, acknowledgement, and use of their work in research and actions toward ending homelessness. White settler Canadians doing research in this field need to follow the lead of Indigenous communities and grassroots efforts and take advantage of the 'white speaker effect' to support efforts for Indigenous sovereignty, particularly regarding jurisdiction of children and families, as well as calling for the return of lands (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 2017). Finally, there needs to be widespread dissemination of and education pertaining to the *WRF* in order that those doing work in the name of social justice do not (intentionally or otherwise) reproduce racial hierarchies.

Joe R. Feagin has passed the baton of systemic racism analysis and activism on to us. It is time to take up the call.

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