

**Identifying Quality of Life Needs of
Youth Experiencing Homelessness: A Community Needs
Assessment for Planners in the Region of Waterloo**

by

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AUTHORS DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Background: The aim of this study is to capture the most important quality of life (QoL) needs identified by youth experiencing homelessness in the Region of Waterloo. Palepu, Hubble, Russell, Gadermann and Chinni originally conducted a similar study in 2012. Their study identified QoL needs for the broader homeless population. This research study intends to identify age-specific QoL needs specifically for the homeless youth population. Young people who have experienced homelessness are interviewed to identify aspects important to their overall QoL.

Methods: A document analysis was conducted on four local official planning documents, five social planning documents for the Region of Waterloo, and one from the government of Ontario. The document analysis was completed to add empirical substance in order to provide a planning rationale to understand effective engagement processes with homeless youth. Individual interviews were conducted with 15 homeless youths between the ages of 16-25 who identified as homeless or recently homeless. Interviews were conducted at two youth shelters in the Region of Waterloo, OneRoof: Providing a Roof and Lutherwood: SafeHaven. Participants were recruited to participate in 15-20 minute interviews to identify important QoL needs of homeless youth.

Results: The three key findings include the following: QoL is a universal term used across many publications and reports, but is not defined; a general lack of youth engagement and public consultation with homeless youths, and; that the QoL needs of homeless youth are distinct from those of homeless adults. As a result of this study, a clearer understanding exists of the term QoL with respect to the homeless youth population. Six major QoL needs specific to homeless youth were identified through this research. These six QoL needs include: family and friends, basic necessities, education, health, community resources, and self-care/awareness.

Recommendations: The main recommendation to emerge from this study is that social planners consult with homeless youth when creating social planning documents affecting the homeless population. The term QoL must be defined in the context of all populations, including age-specific groups. A multidisciplinary approach is recommended to integrate the helping professions with planners. Planners must work with other professionals in the community to gather more valid and meaningful feedback.

Conclusions: The findings of this study are intended to assist researchers and professionals in understanding differences in age-specific needs within vulnerable population groups. A shift towards collaboration with vulnerable populations redefines the term expert-based model. QoL has become a “trendy” phrase to use in planning documents, however more research is needed to better understand the implications for planners and homeless youths. This research study is exploratory in nature; the results identified in this research study are to be viewed as a stepping-stone toward further research and changes in practice.

Keywords: Age, Homeless Youth, Quality of Life (QoL), Social Planning, Social Work,

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this research to any youth who has lived on the streets. Please know that somewhere out there, someone cares for you and loves you. Sometimes, it just takes just a little bit longer to find them.

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List of Abbreviations

BSW – Bachelors of Social Work
COP – Cambridge Official Plan
CAEH – Canadian Alliance on Ending Homelessness
GTA – Greater Toronto Area
HHSSS – Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy Summaries
KOP – Kitchener Official Plan
LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus
NHS – National Housing Strategy
OHIP – Ontario Health Insurance Plan
OLTAHS – Ontario Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy
P2 – Public Participation
PAR – Providing a Roof
PPP – Promising Principles and Practices in Housing Options for Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Waterloo Region
QoL – Quality of Life
RCM – Rational Comprehensive Model
ROP – Regional Official Plan
ROWHAP – Region of Waterloo: Housing Action Plan
SBA – Strengths Based Approach
SH – Safe Haven
STEP – Support to End Persistent Homelessness
WHO – World Health Organization
WOP – Waterloo Official Plan

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research study investigates issues related to planning and homelessness in the Region of Waterloo, a midsize Canadian regional municipality located in Southern Ontario. The social issue of youth homelessness will be viewed through the primary lens of a planner and the secondary lens of a social worker. I seek to understand which quality of life (QoL) needs are important to the homeless youth population, and their relevance to planners. The first part of my study will consist of a document analysis of local official and social planning documents in the Region of Waterloo. The second part of my study is a re-creation of a previous study conducted by Palepu, Hubley, Russell, Gadermann, & Chinni (2012), with slight modifications: My study includes only youth between the ages of 16-25, while Palepu's study included participants between the ages of 15-75. In contrast, my study will use individual interviews instead of focus groups. The focus of my study is to identify the specific QoL needs of youth experiencing homelessness, assess how these requirements differ from those reported in the previous study, and discuss how planners can incorporate these needs into social planning documents.

The goal of recreating this study is to gain more knowledge about the QoL of youth experiencing homelessness. Planning and social work theory are used to identify the downfalls of prior methods to help solve the larger social issue of homelessness. This research contributes to our understanding that vulnerable populations have different needs according to age and life stages, which affect QoL. A one-size-fits-all approach simply does not work.

The term QoL has many different interpretations and meanings in research literature, academic writings, public reports, policies, and community reports. The World Health Organization (WHO) has the most commonly referred to definition of QoL, defined as an

“Individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationship to salient features of their environment” (WHO 1997 p.1).

This definition was originally published in 1997 as a companion to “The World Health Organization Quality of Life-100 (WHOQOL-100) and The World Health Organization Quality of Life-BRE (WHOQOL-BRE)” tools. These tools were created for the general population and an update is needed to accommodate different sub-populations including different age groups, genders, and ethnicities within at risk population groups. Each and every population has different QoL needs. The homeless youth population has been identified as at risk, and therefore the importance of a youth-specific tool is recommended. The original use of this instrument had a health and medical focus, but the term QoL has since expanded into other fields such as planning, social work, and other helping professions.

The term QoL is often used to express forms of life satisfaction and/or happiness in communities across the world. QoL has become a trendy term to use within planning documents, however it is rarely defined, causing confusion and misinterpretation. The Region of Waterloo's Official Plan 2031 identifies one key goal as "increasing the quality of life of citizens in Waterloo Region” (p.1). No clear explanation or further definition is provided in the plan. A proposed solution to the aforementioned objective is to first define QoL, and then to gain an understanding of the meaning of QoL for a variety of populations.

Various research publications, including the works of Abramovich (2012), Burwick et al. (2014), Gadermann et al. (2014), Gaetz (2014), and Gaetz, Gulliver, & Richter (2014), identified

homelessness as a pressing social issue in Canada. According to State of Homelessness Canada Report 2016, an average of 44,000 youth ages 13-24 experienced homelessness annually and 6500 experienced homelessness on any given night. In 2010, according to the Region of Waterloo, an estimated 10-20 youths experienced persistent homelessness each night and at least 75 youths were at risk of experiencing homelessness (Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy Summary Series 2010). The Region of Waterloo has identified youth homelessness as a pressing social issue through multiple reports and publications over the past ten years (HHSS 2012). As an example, in April 2010, the Region of Waterloo released a comprehensive report on youth homelessness and made recommendations for improvements. These recommendations included providing enhanced resources for youth, creating more youth-specific services, and providing longer term housing options (SPPPA 2010). All of the abovementioned recommendations share the underlying goal of improving the QoL of youth experiencing homelessness. These reports identify the homeless youth population as a vulnerable and hidden population group, making it more challenging to conduct research with them.

1.2 Research Motivation

My research is fueled by my professional work in the social work field with at-risk and vulnerable youth in the community of the Region of Waterloo. I have been employed as a frontline staff member at an open custody and detention centre for male youth for the past two and a half years, and I served as frontline staff at a homeless youth shelter for eight months. As a young professional, I have immersed myself in in frontline work and, through this effort, I have learned a lot about the challenges faced by homeless youth. The rationale may not be a conventional motivation to write a thesis, however as a future planner, understanding issues the youth are facing at an individual level is key to solving any larger-scale social or planning

challenge.

Individual approaches such as those used in the social work field are a great start to better understand the needs of vulnerable population groups. Many non-profit organizations were built using a grassroots approach. According to the National Association of Social Workers, the grassroots approach can be defined as, "beginning with a single individual who is passionate about a cause and feels compelled to act." (Dale 2015 p.1) A great downfall of this approach is the fact that, "for most social workers, there isn't enough time to accomplish everything they want to do" (Dale 2015 p.1). Additionally, there is the notion that "much advocacy work happens outside the scope of regular job requirements" (Dale 2015 p.1). Within the social work profession, a social worker tends to have a small client base and focuses on individual clients for short periods of time. In comparison, the planning field tends to work toward ending social problems on a larger scale over longer periods. The social work field often operates on an individual level relative to planning which often focuses on the community level. The planning and the social work professions have similar end goals in mind; identifying models that apply to both fields may help solve social problems using both individualistic and expert-based approaches.

Ultimately a multi-disciplinary approach to youth homelessness is needed (Harkness 2013). This need has motivated my research to identify approaches from planning, social work and many other disciplines to assist with drawing recommendations at the end of this research study.

1.3 Justification

In October 2015, the Province of Ontario released a report entitled A Place to Call Home. This report consisted of an expert advisory panel on homelessness; one of the four priority areas

identified was youth homelessness (Gaetz & Redman 2016). This report led to the release of a follow-up report in June 2016 proposing a province-wide plan to end youth homelessness by 2026 (Gaetz & Redman 2016). This report identifies five goals including a target to end homelessness in the next 10 years, \$10 million dollars in funding, a definition of homelessness, a goal to gather local data, and to reduce homelessness in specific populations including youth, aboriginals, chronic homelessness and those transitioning from institutions and service systems. The goal of this research is to define the term QoL and identify a meaning in regards to youth homeless and planning documents (Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd & Schwan 2016).

A call for age-specific research has recently surged according to Moos, Walter-Joseph, Williamson, Wilkin, Chen, & Stockmal (2015). In the literature "there is growing recognition that youth homelessness is distinct from adult homelessness regarding its causes and conditions, and it then follows that so must be the solutions" (Gaetz & Redman 2016 p.2). According to the report, *A Place to Call Home* (2015),

“There is no one-size- fits-all solution to homelessness. Initiatives aimed at veterans may not work for youth. Services that assist the chronically homeless may not work for immigrants, whose needs may differ still from those of refugees. When it comes to trauma, women’s experiences, responses to, and recovery from trauma are different from those of men”. (*A Place to Call Home* 2015 p.11)

My research project uses age-specific research as a method to identify the QoL needs of the homeless youth population in order to identify a more informed strategy to end youth homelessness. Gaetz and Scott (2012) also identified a need for individualized research on the homeless youth population.

“The causes of youth homelessness are different from the causes of adult homelessness,

and as such the solutions should be distinct, as well. So in thinking about appropriate models of accommodation and support for young people, we need to understand the challenges associated with the transition to adulthood and how these impact on the experience of homelessness” (Gaetz and Scott 2012 p. 6).

In Canada, no study has ever been completed on the measurement and defining of QoL for homeless youth. However, a study was completed in 2013 by three researchers in the Netherlands, the goal of which was to better understand which evidence based practice was most likely to improve a homeless youth’s QoL (Krabbenborg, Boersma, and Wolf 2013). The closest definition related to the QoL of homeless youth was explained using mental health research.

Only one study has been published on the QoL of homeless and hard to house individuals in Canada, which was conducted in 2012 by Palepu, Hubley, Russell, Gadermann and Chinni. A total of 140 participants ages 15-73 participated in small focus groups (4-8 members) identifying the QoL needs of the homeless population. The recommendations did not differentiate between age-specific demographics, and therefore age-specific needs could not be clearly identified. The research community sometimes categorizes vulnerable population groups (such as the homeless) using a “one-size-fits all” approach. Many sub-groups exist within at risk-populations and ultimately require more age-specific approaches (Moos et al. 2015, A Place to Call Home 2011).

The concept of QoL is used in many social planning documents in cities and regions across Ontario, however the meaning is often not clearly communicated with regard to the scope of the publication. QoL outcomes are used to achieve a planner’s goal of promoting livable, healthy, sustainable and vibrant communities, which we believe is best for the 'public interest' (OPPI 2009). Planning practice often consults the generic public, which often does not include marginalized populations such as homeless youths (Chaterjee et al 2004). In social planning

practices, there is a bigger tendency to engage with more diverse publics due to the scope of information and in depth feedback required (Chaterjee et al 2004).

My research project defines QoL as, “an age-specific measure of an individual or population group aiming to capture the overall needs every human requires to exist and live a good life.” In academic literature, an abundance of information is known about the measurement and understanding of the QoL of the general public, but little is known about the QoL of the homeless population, including the homeless youth sub-population. Many researchers, including Bearsley and Cummins (1999), McKeever (2010), Alena et al. (2010), O'Conner (2011), Abramovich (2012), Palepu et al. (2012), Gadermann et al. (2014), Gaetz (2014) and Gaetz, Gulliver & Richter (2014), have called for further research linking youth homelessness and QoL.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following three questions

1. What are the identified QoL needs for youth experiencing homelessness?
2. How are the identified needs different than what were established in the Palepu et al. 2012 study?
3. How can planners incorporate youth-specific QoL needs into social planning documents to change planning practices to help address youth homelessness?

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The remaining structure of this thesis will include four chapters. Chapter 2 will consist of a literature review identifying frameworks and models, Canada's current state of homelessness, QoL research, and the key findings of the Palepu et al study 2012. Chapter 3 will include the methodologies used in this research study including document analyses, and individual youth interviews. Chapter 4 will consist of the findings of the study including those of the document

analyses, individual interviews directly with homeless youth and overall key findings of the study. Chapter 5 will consist of a discussion section, including recommendations, best practices, significance to planners, and future research topics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

A significant amount of research has recently emerged that is pertinent to youth homelessness; but more research is still required. The subject of QoL needs that are unique to the youth population is almost non-existent in the area of academic research. However, two research studies, which have been conducted on the matter, include the 2012 Palepu et al. study in Canada, and a 2013 study completed by researchers in the Netherlands. The Dutch researchers aimed to evaluate effectiveness of evidence based services on QoL. The purpose of this study was to understand how services affected the QoL of homeless youth, however the term QoL was not defined or explained in terms of the homeless youth population (Krabbenborg et al. 2013). A downfall of this study was the use of the Lehman Quality of Life Interview Tool, which is used to evaluate the QoL of persons with severe mental illness. This remains a limitation, as not all homeless youth suffer from severe mental health challenges. This tool was not designed to measure and capture homeless youths' QoL. The concept of QoL needs to be explained and researched with respect to sub-populations—specifically, homeless youth.

In this literature review, there are four broad goals which include identifying the difference between the planning and social planning professions and practice, gaining a better understanding of the frameworks and models used by these professionals, reviewing the current understanding of homelessness in Canada, and identifying the role of QoL in planning documents. Individual concepts have been synthesized from several studies in similar research areas to identify key areas of QoL. Multiple small studies have been conducted in the past 10-30 years to provide a bigger picture of what QoL may look like for the youth population. This method was used due to the limited amount of research on youth QoL. Only one study has ever measured the overall QoL of individuals experiencing homelessness in Canada, which was

completed by Palepu et al in 2012. The major drawback of this study pertained to the generalization of the QoL needs for the homeless populations, which therefore did not result in the identification of age-specific QoL needs. Recently, research has emerged both in academics (Flores, 2016, Moos et al. 2015, Gaetz and Redman 2012, A Place to Call Home 2015) and in government reports (Gaetz & Redman 2016, Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy 2016) identifying a need for age-specific research.

2.2 Frameworks and Models

2.2.1 A Brief Explanation of Planning

“According to the Canadian Institute of planners, planning can be defined as, The scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities” (CIP 2016 p.1).

Planning has existed since the creation of dense settlements and the formation of cities (Lynch 1981). The idea of cities developed around convenience and simplicity. The Rational Comprehensive Model (RCM) emerged as a prominent planning model in the 1960s (Mantysalo 2004). The RCM was identified as "a common basis for most municipal planning decision making and arguably the closest thing planners have to a planning paradigm" (Seasons 2003). The RCM was noted to produce "the 'best' solution because it has taken into account the widest variety of variables. In practice, the processes it endangers can be overly complicated, redundant, time consuming, and expensive" (Hostovsky 2006). The fall of the RCM coincided with the rise of public participation. The response was an added emphasis on public involvement and collaborative planning resulting in a paradigm shift towards advocacy and communicative planning.

2.2.2 Rational Comprehensive Model (RCM)

The Rational Comprehensive Model (RCM) is defined as,

“A scientific/rational approach to problem solving and, in its purest application, would result in a full analysis of all possible factors affecting a given set of circumstances and of all possible alternatives to resolving the problem under study” (Hostovsky 2006 p. 382).

The RCM is used to evaluate, synthesize, and measure, but a perfect solution is often never reached. (Mantysalo 2004) There are eight standard stages of the RCM, which are “(1) identify the problem or opportunity, (2) establish goals or objectives, (3) collect data and analyze, (4) identify key issues, (5) create and test alternative solutions, (6) select preferred alternatives, (7) implementation, and (8) monitor and evaluation” (Hodge, 2003, p.155).

The RCM is relevant to current planning practices, as it is still a model commonly used by planners (Hostovsky 2006, Mantysalo 2004, Hodge 2003 and Hudson 1979). Social planners do not commonly use the RCM model. According to Hudson (1979), “there is no single tradition of planning that can do everything, and the list of criteria serves as a framework to compare the relative strengths and limitations of different approaches” (Hudson, 1979, p.387). A major theme that emerged from the research was that social planning can be defined in many ways, but that there is no simple model (Westhues 1980, Brilliant 1986, Turok, Kearns and Goodlad 1999). Camhis (1978) provides an example, which states, “Simple does not exist, it is impossible, it violates the principles of scientific method” (Camhis, 1978, p.47). The RCM model is often used in social planning but stages have been taken out, redefined, reorganized and retrofitted to fit different community plans (Telfair 1999, Westhues 1980, Cohen and Phillips 1997). Planners have taken a “à la carte approach” to the RCM, as they pick which stages to include and how they are defined (Westhues 1980, Legacy 2010, Cohen and Phillips 1997, Telfair 1999, and Turok, Kerns, and Goodlad 1999).

According to Westhues (1980), the role of the social planner has become limited during the implementation stage of the RCM. The success or failure of the plan takes place during the implementation stage, which is the key stage for social planners. Planners are known to portray an expert-based approach, but over the past 50-60 years, a movement towards more collaborative approaches has been adopted (Harkness 2013, Legacy 2010, Rothman and Tropman 1979). Lesser-known planning approaches such as advocacy planning and communicative planning have become more prominently used in planning practice but specifically more in social planning practice (Harkness 2013, Mannberg and Whilborg 2008, Clavel 1994, Sager 1994, Peattie, 1968, Davidoff 1965).

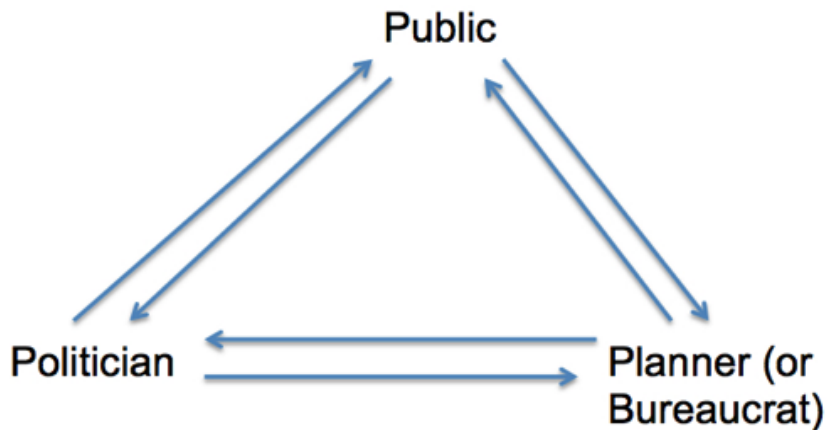
2.2.3 A Movement Towards Public Participation

An alternative method for planning proposed by Webber (1983) and Lynch (1977) was the promotion of all local agencies and sectors to formulate their own plans to help develop better-suited outcomes for their communities' needs. Encouraging debate on proposed solutions ideally generates a more effective solution to the problem. Community consensus is more likely to be reached if everyone has an equal chance for input (Webber 1983). Planners cannot conjure up solutions to problems on their own; they must promote collaboration between the multiple publics, other agencies and the planner (Webber 1983 and Checkoway 1994). This process contributes to the development of a more informed consultation process.

In the 1970s, Harry Lash created the Six-Sided Triangle to promote healthy communication within communities (Figure 1). The process focused on regular interactions occurring between the public, politicians, and the planner. The goal was to promote constant communication between all three stakeholders with the intended result of a more comprehensive view of the problem. Building relationships is a key piece of the triangle and understanding each stakeholder's role and level of involvement is necessary (Hodge & Gordon 2014).

Figure 1. The Six-Sided Triangle of Planning Participation

(Cited in Hodge and Gordon 2014 p.362)



Bargaining was the beginning of the public participation approach in planning. Using an exchange between multiple stakeholders within communities would provide a more comprehensive view on the current challenges. This view focused on the fundamental political nature of planning and the uneven power to bargain by giving the public the power to vote and to stop decisions being made (Lane 2005). Providing the public with responsibility in decision-making can encourage more involvement with the decision-making model (Lane 2005).

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, communicative planning theory emerged within the planning profession. Over the past few decades, expert-driven planning (RCM) has transitioned towards feedback-driven planning (advocacy and communicative planning) (Sager 1994, Healey 1992, Davidoff 1965). The needs of communities vary due to culture, education, social class, age, sex, gender and religious diversity. The main goal of communicative planning theory is to collectively understand a community's needs (Healey 1992, Sager 1994). In contrast to the ideology of RCM, the ideal solution for problem solving in the social planning field is an understanding of what is 'right and good' and what multiple publics desire (Davidoff 1965, Healey 1993, and Sager 1994). Social planners support debate and argumentation because they provided an important step towards ideal solutions; the use of life experiences help to yield a

collective reasoning approach from the multiple publics (Healey 1992, Sager 1994, Checkoway 1994). An example of this rationale is the individual interviews used in this research study, which will be discussed more later on in chapter 4. Building communities around positive communication and mutual understanding is the main goal. There is always a chance for a dominant subgroup or individual to pull ideologies in one direction and consequently need to be handled in an effective manner (Healey 1992, Sager 1994).

The creation of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation has played a key role in explaining how levels of public participation have increased over the past 50 years. A movement away from the RCM towards a more collaborative approach such as advocacy planning and communicative planning is prominent. Planners were formerly viewed as the experts, but now feedback-driven planning is becoming a priority in the social planning field (Davidoff 1965, Sager 1994, Nolin et al. 2006). In the past, an expert-based planner perspective was used, but now a view requiring planners to work within an interdisciplinary team has become standard practice in the planning field (Harkness 2013).

2.2.4 Advocacy Planning

Davidoff (1965) pioneered the term 'advocacy planning' in the article *Advocacy and Pluralism* (1965). Prior to this article, advocacy planning was not identifiable in any mainstream planning literature. Davidoff was known for amending the American Institute of Planners Code of Ethics, successfully adding the following section:

“A planner shall seek to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons, and shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions, which militate against such objectives” (Checkoway 1994, p.139).

Davidoff began with a call for more intelligent planning models, focusing on social goals and

methods to achieve them (Davidoff 1965). Davidoff identified the need to move away from expert-based planning towards feedback-driven-planning such as advocacy and communicative planning. This movement was crucial for planning practice to ensure the multiple publics' voices were heard (Harkness 2013). Prior planning processes were exclusive to the planner's expert knowledge, but Harkness (2013) and Davidoff (1965) both suggested a more inclusive approach of involving groups and the many publics.

The main role of an advocacy planner is to advocate and educate vulnerable populations and other groups in the community (Harkness 2013, Davidoff 1965). It is difficult to use a classic planning model such as RCM to gather feedback when working with vulnerable populations because they often have a hard time understanding planning language, statistics and diagrams (Peattie 1968, Krumholz 1994). Peattie (1968) identified difficulties for planners when trying to build relationships and rapport with vulnerable populations. The social planners usually consult specialized services within the community (e.g. a youth shelters, community centres etc.). These specialized services are used to reach out to specific sub-demographics within the population (Peattie 1968, Krumholz 1994). It is important for social planners to understand the rationale behind a social problem before it can be solved (Chaterjee 2014, Harkness 2013).

Peattie (1968) states, "All sources agree that the people at the bottom of the social structure are very much harder to draw into the planning framework than the other members of the middle class" (Peattie 1968 p.84) This statement is echoed by Chaterjee (2014), Harkness (2013), Davidoff (1965), Krumholz (1994), Clavel (1994), and Mannberg and Whilborg (2008). Individuals in power positions can often intimidate vulnerable populations, making it more difficult to build and establish rapport with the public to gather informative feedback (Peattie 1968). Individual rapport building within reason must be a part of the planner's role, especially when working as a social planner (Peattie 1968 and Krumholz 1994).

2.2.5 Communicative Planning

Communicative planning is heavily based on communication between the planner and the population. Sager (1994) states “planning problems can be solved in two contrasting yet complementary ways: one can trust the expert judgment based on analytic technique or discuss the matter and reach a group decision” (Sager 1994, p. IX). Advocacy planning fills the role of the advocate and educator, but communicative planning takes it one step further (Sager 1994). Communicative planning relies heavily on public participation and sees it as a win-win situation (Mannberg and Wihlborg 2008). The processes are based mainly on the population’s interests and participation levels; therefore collaboration with the citizens becomes an important part of the planning process (Mannberg and Wihlborg 2008). When the public provides feedback the processes are more likely to be successful. Classic planning approaches such as RCM do not focus heavily on gathering feedback from the public however advocacy and communicative planning do (Sager 1994). The communicative planning model resembles many social work models such as the strengths-based model. Both models look to an individual to seek their needs by having them self-identify. The key to both models is communication and ongoing feedback.

2.2.6 Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation

Arnstein created the ladder of participation to help organize and visualize the different levels of public participation in planning (Figure 2) Arnstein’s ladder will be used to explain how the planning profession has moved from a tier one: manipulation focus, towards a tier eight: citizen control focus. The beginning of the planning profession was based in tier one, the expert-based approach, with its main focus on “educating the community using expert ideas” (Hodge & Gordon 2014 p.368). Tier two is therapy, “by engaging citizens and ensuring an identified solution would “cure” all problems” (Hodge & Gordon 2014 p.368). Tier three is informing, meaning, “citizens are informed of what is going on but not asked for feedback” (Hodge &

Gordon 2014 p.368). Tier four is consultation, in which “some different methods are used to collect basic public feedback such as, online surveys, town hall sessions and public meetings” (Hodge & Gordon 2014 p.368). Tier five is placation, where “citizens are given the power to be heard while sitting on committees or advisory groups but there is no guarantee their feedback will be used” (Hodge & Gordon 2014 p.369). Tier six is partnerships, “using joint efforts to connect and have citizens and planners engage in policy boards and other committees” (Hodge & Gordon 2014 p.369). Tier seven is delegated power, which “gives the public the dominant power for a plan or program” (Hodge & Gordon 2014 p.369). Tier eight is citizen control, “when a group of citizens control a project or program with little to no consultation from a planner” (Hodge & Gordon 2014 p.369). Social planning best practices have been identified as a shift away from expert-based-approaches and more towards feedback-driven approaches.

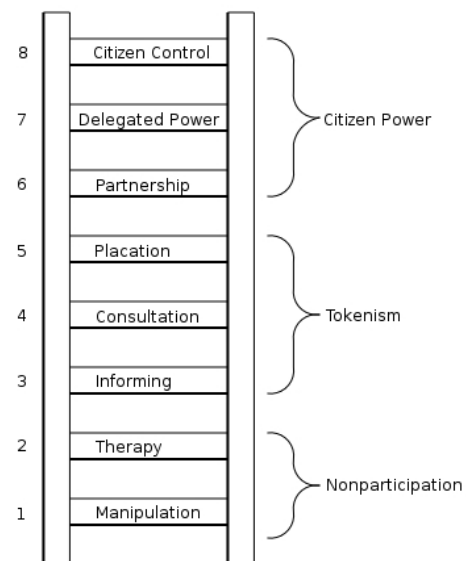


Figure 2. Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation

(Cited by Arnstein 1969)

2.2.7 Modes of Community Intervention

Three modes of community intervention were used over the past 50 years in the social planning field; these modes are identified as locality development, social planning, and social action (Rothman and Tropman 1979). Each mode of community intervention plays a different role in the profession of social planning; the most commonly used intervention is the social planning approach (Rothman and Tropman 1979, Westhues 1980, Berry 1974 and Checkoway 1998). Rothman and Tropman (1979) is key in literature as many articles use the identified three

modes of community intervention as the basis for developing models in social planning. A prominent difficulty noted by Rothman and Tropman (1979) was the “inadequate conceptual development in community organization and planning, and until recent years the social aspect of planning has been neglected as a profession” (p.4). A suggestion of a multidisciplinary approach to social planning emerged from the reading; each approach is not to be seen as individual but a mixture between all three is recommended (Rothman and Tropman 1979).

Rothman and Tropman (1979) identified “social planning” as the most common mode of community intervention. This approach focused on a technical process which emphasized problem solving with regards to large social problems such as housing, mental health and delinquency (Rothman and Tropman 1979). Public participation is identified as a key part of this intervention and it can vary from heavy to light forms of consultation with the public (Rothman and Tropman 1979). This area of planning is heavily grounded in other professions such as social work and public administration (Davidoff 1965). A large overlap of duties among these professional fields requires a multidisciplinary approach to be effective (Harkness 2013, Rothman and Tropman 1979, Davidoff 1965, Checkoway 1994). The movement towards a multidisciplinary collaborative approach is also echoed in Westhues (1980), Berry (1974) and Checkoway (1998).

2.2.8 Social Planning and Youth Homelessness

Social planning is often referred to as a subfield of planning. Social planning tends to deal more with the social aspects of communities, compared to planners who deal more with physical built environments. In many communities, the social issue of homelessness has been identified as a planning issue. According to Smart (1991) in Seattle the human services strategic planning office made an assessment on homeless youth and identified what the city’s role was to address these needs (Smart 1991). According to Smart (1991) the result was the redevelopment

of a policy framework recommending goals and strategies, as well as options for new initiatives the city could pursue. Goals directly related to social issues such as homelessness were identified as a priority at local governmental levels. This shift leads Koebel and Edwards (1999) to identify that “The topic of marginalized populations has been a long-term focus in housing research and policy” (p.1). Smart (1991) identified some goals for the city of Seattle including the commitment to addressing the problem of homelessness on a local, state, and federal level, filling identified gaps in the service system, supporting services of ethnic and cultural concerns, and providing assistance to create the building blocks to improve a continuum of services (Smart 1991). The most important conclusion Smart (1991) identified was “it showed the relationship between the consequences of system failure and local government responsibility, laying the groundwork for a city response” (p.526).

As cities and populations are growing and housing costs across Canada are rising, the importance of access to affordable housing has become more prevalent. A national affordable housing strategy for Canada has been announced in early 2016. Housing costs have been increasing drastically for middle-income families and those who are low income are finding it more challenging to find affordable housing across Canada. A community focus tends to be more on middle-income families as low-income populations lose priority. Koebel and Edwards (1999) state,

“The impact of this ideological shift on marginalization is compounded by the distinctive contemporary disenfranchisement of the poor. Increasingly, the poor are structurally and culturally invisible. This is most apparent in the developed world, where spatial, economic and cultural separation is increasing” (p.2).

A national affordable housing strategy is currently being compiled however the Ontario affordable housing strategy had already been published in early 2016. This publication is part of

the documents analysis of this research project, and will be discussed further in chapter 4.

Communities have been working towards improving QoL through planning processes over the last 50 years according to Greena, Ellisb, and Leeb (2005). In the same research study, Greena, Ellisb, and Leeb (2005) stated, “By listening carefully to what the stakeholders wanted and developing an approach that met their needs, the evaluation team provided timely evaluation feedback for promoting higher quality, after-school services to the youth of Oakland” (p.93). More feedback and consultation with the youth population is crucial to the overall understanding of how to increase overall QoL. A limited amount of academic research has been conducted with the homeless youth population with regard to their specific QoL needs. This study aims to assisting in filling that research gap.

According to Flores (2016), her study identified three issues directly related to QoL of homeless youth, including “access to affordable housing, creating a diverse economy, and access to a quality education...Improving these aspects of San Antonio will not only help improve the overall quality of life, but will help prevent reoccurring homelessness.” (p.48) There is, however, no evidence to the support the credibility of these three aspects related to QoL; it is crucial to point out the importance of an attempt to explain the term QoL in the context of youth homelessness and urban planning. This very recent study has helped open the research potential of social planning, youth homelessness, and QoL.

2.2.9 Connections: Planning and Social Planning

A brief comparison of the planning and social planning literature exists to contrast the differences and similarities between the two subfields within a broader context. Planning literature was originally grounded in expert-based approaches, which ultimately viewed the planner as the expert, as identified in the RCM. The social planning models of advocacy and communicative planning were founded on feedback-based systems and approaches focusing on

solving large social problems being faced by communities. Planning models can often be rigid, rigorous and methodological following clear and concise steps. While social planning focuses on solving social goals with more fluid and a less rigid approach (Davidoff 1965). Planners and social planners have different priorities and roles in communities. Planners focus on issues related to land use, transportation, and infrastructure, which directly affect communities and the greater public good. In comparison, social planners focus on social issues such as housing, homelessness, and community health, which are challenges directly affecting individuals in communities. Both professions were created from one, but as the needs and complexity of communities grow and change, more expertise is required in more select areas.

2.3 Social Work Models

2.3.1 A Strengths Based Approach

A strengths based approach (SBA) is a common model that is used within the social work profession. The basis of this approach is to identify a client's personal strengths or in other words, "identifying their potential" (Hammond and Zimmerman 2012). When assessing strengths, factors such as cognitive resources, affective resources, physical resources, cultural identity, spirituality, and connections to the community are being sought after. Understanding a client's competence, knowledge, and resources to thrive and grow is key to establish (Donnelley 2011). The SBA is based internally within the client and heavily on the individual's potential to grow and thrive on what they know. Hammond and Zimmerman (2012), identifies a five-stage cycle of a strengths based approach. (Figure 3) This five-stage cycle invites clients to ask more questions and be more hopeful and to encourage positive expectations, resulting in more meaningful experiences and opportunities.

Figure 3. The 5 Stage Strengths Based Cycle

(Cited from Hammond and Zimmerman 2012 p. 4)



2.3.2 Ecological Perspective

The Ecological Perspective also commonly referred as the person-in-environment-approach, “offers a comprehensive theoretical base that social practitioners can draw upon for effective social treatment” (Pardeck 2015). Enhancing a client’s understanding by highlighting actions and interaction may help them understand where boundaries between a person and their environment exist. This perspective is used in micro and macro practice; the range of use allows a practitioner to utilize this approach in clinical roles and in policy roles easily (Pardeck 2015).

2.3.3 Connections: Planning vs. Social Work

As previously discussed, advocacy planning and communicative planning are models that have pioneered general social planning theory. The planning profession was previously known to be community focused while the social work profession is known to have an individualistic focus. While prior models such as RCM focused on the expert views, advocacy and communicative planning are focused on feedback from the public. This movement has been seen in the planning profession over the past 10-20 years, during which more planners have become better versed in social issues.

Davidoff (1965) noted some criticisms of the planning profession including that planners were not taught to understand socioeconomic problems and that the Professional Planning Association did not promote interdisciplinary work within educational institutions. Davidoff

(1965) called for the need to “broaden the scope of planning,” and also mentioned the need for graduates studying planning at the master’s level to come from a liberal arts background because it would provide a more holistic approach when solving urban problems. (Davidoff 1965 p.337) Finally Davidoff (1965) states, “The type of knowledge required by the new comprehensive city planner demands that the planning profession be comprised of groups of men well versed in contemporary philosophy, social work, law, the social sciences and civic design” (Davidoff 1965 p.337). Today this view may not be as prominent in planning practice, however traces of this perspective remain. Checkoway (1994) believed, “there are more planners trying to help poor communities today than there were in 1965 and they have fewer illusions about the limits of planning, and they feel freer to propose their own solutions without worrying about their professional status” (Checkoway 1994, p.142). The planning field has evolved and branched out significantly since 1965 into a multidisciplinary profession. However this evolution requires more interdisciplinary research to be done to match the many growing interdisciplinary subfields in planning.

This movement that Davidoff (1965) previously identified was evident when Lynch (1977) interviewed children and adolescents in five cities around the world. The goal was to survey 20 children and adolescents in one place. The study consisted of open-ended questions, which asked participants how they felt about their community surroundings. The importance of the study was the researcher’s goal to use easily modifiable studies to recreate them in cities to better inform local planners. The goal of the study was to understand how children and adolescents perceived their surroundings and how planners can use these findings in their official plans. Observation and research should be a part of the design process. (Lynch 1977) This is a call to build rapport with individuals in communities to better inform planning practice and to use small-scale research to better inform official planning documents.

The social planning field has become distinct within the broader field of the planning profession. Social planners are known to engage more with populations and focus on social challenges. The scope of a social planner compared to social workers can be vastly different at times, but the overall goal in mind for both professions is to help the client and the community. Peattie (1965) urges planners to represent grassroots groups but to also seek fundamental changes in society. In planning it is mainly about the community but Checkoway (1994) identifies the need to work towards helping both individuals and the community.

2.4 Canada's Current State

2.4.1 Housing

The social, political, cultural, and economic challenges over the past three decades have led to rising housing costs, social programming cuts and fewer social housing units being built. These challenges were not felt overnight, but the effects have slowly trickled down from large urban centres to mid-size cities and gradually impacted small towns and rural counties across the country. Homelessness has been a problem in Canada since before the 1960s, but mostly because individuals were housed in unfit places. The main focus in the 1950s, 60s and 70s was on rehousing people after the wars. After the war ended, the economy had become stronger and over 20,000 social housing units were built each year after amendments were made to the National Housing Act of 1973. Homelessness was first identified as a social issue in the 1980s, by a report produced by the City of Toronto Planning Board. Prior to the 1980s the term homelessness was not widely used in developed countries such as Canada. The main reason homelessness has become such a prominent issue in Canada in the past 30 years has been directly related to the lack of affordable and social housing units. Cutbacks began in 1984, all federal spending on social housing units was terminated in 1993, and all responsibility of social housing was transferred to the provincial governments accordingly in 1996 (Hulchanski 2009).

Finding affordable housing across Canada has become a pressing social issue over the past thirty years. Fewer affordable housing units have resulted in higher housing costs for the middle demographic, and very little opportunity for the low and no-income demographics.

2.4.2 Homelessness

Homelessness has been long understudied in Canada. Up until recent years there has not been a reliable method to measure the number of homeless individuals living on the streets, in shelters or in temporary housing (SHC 2016). With the tools available, homelessness has been measured to some extent, however these statistics are an understatement due to the homeless being such a hidden population. There are at least 235,000 Canadians who experience homelessness each year, while 35,000 people are homeless on any a given night, 2,880 are unsheltered, 14,400 rely on emergency shelters and 4,464 rely on temporary accommodations such as motels, hospitals, couch surfing and even jails (SHC 2016). Between 28-34% of shelter users are indigenous while only 4.3% of the Canadian population identifies as indigenous (SHC 2016). According to the Canadian government the federal government has committed \$2.3 billion dollars over two years (2017-2019) to improve affordable housing (SHC 2016). The most important movement by the federal government was the commitment to create a National Housing Strategy (NHS) (SHC 2016).

Communities across Canada have struggled for decades to address the issue of homelessness at a community level. Recently, communities across Canada have increased efforts to prevent and end homelessness (SHC 2016). Many communities are using planning to work towards the larger goal of ending homelessness (SHC 2016). Provinces including Ontario, Alberta, Newfoundland, and Quebec have already launched plans to end homelessness (SHC 2016). Many cities are using a Housing First Approach to end chronic homelessness (SHC 2016). The Housing First Approach “is a recovery-oriented approach to end homelessness that centers

on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2015 p.1). When dealing with the homeless youth population, many factors need to be addressed, not simply immediate housing. This notion supports a one-size-fits all approach. In late 2015, A Way Home Canada – a national coalition to end youth homelessness, suggested the idea to create a housing first approach for youth (SHC 2016). The introduction of a youth-centered approach to housing first is another step in the right direction for Canada and towards ending youth homelessness. This approach has not yet been implemented across Canada—only in select communities.

2.4.3 Youth Homelessness

Young people between the ages of 13-24 make up 18.7% of the total homeless population in Canada (SHC 2016). In Canada, 40,000 youth experience homelessness a year, and, on average, 6000 experience homelessness on any given night (SHC 2016). The causes of youth homelessness are different from the causes of adult homelessness; therefore homeless youth require alternate solutions (SHC 2016). According to Gaetz, O’Grady, Kidd & Schwan (2016), some of the pathways into homelessness include, early experiences of homelessness, housing instability, involvement in child protection, and challenges in school (Gaetz, O’Grady, Kidd & Schwan 2016). Some youth sub-populations are generally over represented within the homeless community such as Indigenous groups, African Canadians, and members of the LGBTQ+ community (Abramovich, 2013, Gaetz 2014). Almost 30% identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, 30% identify as indigenous and 28% identify as members of racialized communities Gaetz, O’Grady, Kidd, & Schwan (2016). The main causes for youth homelessness include but are not limited to family conflict involving, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, school disruptions, neglect, poverty, and sexuality identification (SHC 2016, Abramovich 2013, Gaetz

2014).

The Homeless Hub is an online resource that organizes and stores news, research studies, reports, videos, links and many other resources related to homelessness. Eight recommendations were made in a report titled, *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016*. The first recommendation states, “The Government of Canada should adopt a national goal of ending homelessness with clear and measurable outcomes, milestones and criteria” (SHC 2016 p.8). The other suggestion is to create “targeted strategies to address the needs of priority populations” (SHC 2016 p.9) which identifies youth as a priority along with the veteran and indigenous populations (SHC 2016). The term QoL is not mentioned in this report, however many cities across Canada are aiming to improve QoL and outline this need in their official planning documents. (ROP, KOP) Similar language needs to be adopted and used among research on homelessness in Canada and in social planning documents. By bridging these gaps between researchers, planners and social planners will help move communities to ending large social issues such as homelessness. A recent call in research is prominent in the academic field linking youth homelessness and QoL needs (Palepu et al. 2012, Russell et al. 2005, Patrick 2014, SHC 2013, and Gaetz 2014).

3.4.3.1 National Conference on Ending Homelessness 2016

The National Conference on Ending Homelessness 2016 organized by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) occurred in London, Ontario in November 2016. This conference focused on many homelessness streams including youth homelessness. A message presented in many of the presentation included the push to move away from managing homelessness and towards prevention. Ending youth homelessness is now being seen as a pathway and prevention method to end chronic adult homelessness.

A goal for all emergency shelters across Canada is to have a “zero discharge into

homelessness.” This concept idealizes the goal that once a youth enters into the care of a shelter; they are not to be released unless it is into some form of housing. This is a massive goal especially for smaller communities with fewer resources and access to affordable housing units. Many researchers identified that a one-size-fits all approach is not working and will not work to end homelessness. A common theme identified by many presenters included the mandate for provincial governments to provide stable and long term funding to community services in order to provide effective services to those in need. Instead of local community organizations fighting for funding each year, the shelter system should be considered an essential service such as the Ontario Ministry of Corrections or the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The end objective is to work together with local organizations and all three levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal) to ultimately end homelessness.

2.4.4 Connections: Homelessness and Quality of Life

Social planning shares roots with many helping professions such as social work and public administration (Davidoff 1965). Rothman and Tropman (1979) identify a common model of community intervention, which includes three modes including locality development, social planning, and social action. This social planning intervention is the most commonly used on a community scale, which focuses on technical processes, public participation, and problem solving (Rothman and Tropman 1979). This strategy is often used to address large-scale social problems such as housing, mental health, delinquency and homelessness (Westhues 1980, Berry 1974 and Checkoway 1998). A multidisciplinary approach is required to better understand the QoL needs of the homeless youth population (Davidoff 1965, Rothman and Tropman 1979, Westhues 1980, Berry 1974 and Checkoway 1998). Prominent literature on the topic of youth homelessness and QoL is calling for more research linking these two concepts (Bearsley and Cummins 1999, McKeever 2010, Altena et al. 2010, O’Conner 2011, Abramovich 2012, Palepu

et al. 2012, Gadermann et al. 2014, Gaetz 2014 and Gaetz, Gulliver & Richter 2014.

2.5 Quality of Life

2.5.1 QoL in Planning

The term QoL is often used in research articles and publications across many disciplines including planning (Palepu et al. 2012, Krannenbourg et al. 2013, KOP 2011, ROP 2011, COP 2012, WOP 2014). QoL is very subjective and has taken on many different meanings in varying contexts. In the field of planning, the term is often used as a subjective scale to describe community happiness and satisfaction with parks, trails and other leisure activities (KOP 2011, ROP 2011, COP 2012, WOP 2014). The term QoL is also often used in vision and mission statements of official planning documents which will later be discussed in chapter 4. QoL is a fluid term meaning it is difficult to define, understand and measure; some examples from local planning documents include, “The built environment and its impact on quality of life, social cohesion and well- being” (KOP 2011 p.6-1) and “Identifies a system of natural areas and open spaces, including Major Urban Greenlands, that enhance quality of life and public health” (WOP 2014 p.140). Both of these examples identify how the term QoL is subjectively used in planning documents in the local Region of Waterloo. In order to use the term QoL within the context of improving the life of the public, a clearer understanding needs to exist. This means a clear definition needs to be identified in the context of communities using the term QoL and what measurement tools will be used to ensure communities are increasing the QoL of their citizens.

Very little research has been done on QoL within the planning field. When searching the terms “quality of life” and “urban planning” on the University of Waterloo’s Library portal, only 454 publications were found. Over 60% of the articles were published after 2003 and most of the publications were dissertations. Most research that has been carried out has been exploratory in nature. One notable publication was titled ‘Enhancing quality of life through strategic urban

planning’ written by Heba Allah Essam E. Khalil in 2012. Khalil (2012) first states that defining QoL is the main rationale behind the publication, which closely resembles my research study. The term QoL is constantly reinvented in different capacities in different disciplines and research areas. The term QoL is not new in the planning field, but a more clear definition is needed.

Planners use the term QoL multiple times in official planning documents including, The Kitchener Official Plan (KOP 2011), The Regional Official Plan (ROP 2011), The Waterloo Official Plan (WOP 2014) and The Cambridge Official Plan (COP 2012). The term QoL is used without any definition or explanation. A clear method to understand and measure a community goal requires feedback and a clear explanation of how the community identifies the term QoL. Social planners are working to end youth homelessness using a planning approach. In the next 10 years, as mandated by the province of Ontario, more youth engagement needs to happen in order to better understand how youth identify with the term QoL. According to the Ontario Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (OLTAHS), “Ontario will engage with young people – including youth with lived experience of homelessness – to inform future actions” (OLTAHS 2016 p.40). As previously stated, there is very little research that exists today on the QoL of individuals who are homeless. By drawing upon these vulnerable populations and using them as key informants will help inform professionals and researchers of their individual QoL needs (Harkness 2013).

According to Harkness (2013) “One of the foremost challenges for engaging vulnerable populations in the planning process is finding adequate resources to conduct the outreach processes that are necessary to engage those who are unable or unwilling to participate in traditional engagement processes” (Harkness 2013 p.5). It is often difficult for planners to collect data in the community from vulnerable populations due to time restraints and lack of engagement (Harkness 2013). Harkness (2013) suggests that “extensive engagement processes” are usually not within the planners professional capacities. In order for planners to use a term such as QoL a

better understanding from vulnerable populations needs to be completed when being used in official planning and social planning documents. Harkness (2013) also echoes this need in a statement reading, “equal participation and access, vulnerable populations improve quality of life for vulnerable populations (Harkness 2013 p.5). Impactful engagement practices need to be used to form a clear understanding of the term QoL when referencing vulnerable populations groups such as homeless youth.

2.5.2 Background

Incorporating QoL needs of age-specific populations within a language context is needed in planning documents to improve the QoL of those experiencing homelessness. Official planning documents guide community goals over the next 20-25 years, which essentially identified the targets communities are working towards. Some examples may include ending homelessness and solving access to healthy food.

Providing homeless young people with housing is a common response to homelessness from a social planning view, however social work views identify more individual and environmental supports, not just housing. Simply providing housing is not always the most effective solution. Homeless youth have distinct needs compared to homeless adults and families from stable housing, to finding jobs, to sometimes just wanting to feel accepted (Gaetz and Redman 2012). Individualized services for youth are often more hidden in communities. By providing more age-specific services, focusing on increasing QoL would improve QoL and close the gap many homeless youths face (Gaetz 2014, Abramovich 2012, Hubley et al 2014, Altena et al 2010, Gaetz, O’Grady, Kidd & Schwan 2016). The term QoL has multiple meanings within different academic fields and professions. The most common definition most researchers use within the context of youth homelessness (Hubley et al. 2009, Palepu et al. 2012, and O’Conner 2011) is from the World Health Organization (WHO).

“Individuals’ perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person’s physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs, and their relationship to salient features of their environment” (WHO 1997 p.1).

The WHO identified six measures of overall QoL including, physical health, psychological, level of independence, social relationships, environment, and spiritual/religion/personal beliefs and each measure is broken down using indicators as found in WHO (1997 p.4).

Table 1. WHO QoL Indicators

WHO QoL Indicators Table (WHO 1997 p.4)	
Measure	Indicators
1. Physical Health	Energy and Fatigue Pain and Discomfort Sleep and Rest
2. Psychological	Bodily Image and Appearance Negative Feelings Positive Feelings Self Esteem Thinking, learning, memory and concentration
3. Level of Independence	Mobility Activities of daily living Dependence on medicinal substances and medical aids Work Capacity
4. Social Relationships	Personal Relationships Social Supports Sexual Activity
5. Environment	Financial Resources Freedom, physical safety and security Health and social care: accessibility and quality Home Environment Opportunities for acquiring new information and skills Participation in and Opportunities for recreation/leisure Physical Environment (pollution/noise/traffic/climate) Transport
6. Spirituality, Religion and Personal Beliefs	Religion/Spirituality/Personal Beliefs

These six measures were created to use with the general population, not specifically for individuals experiencing homelessness. This limitation is the greatest downfall when using this tool with any specific population. According to Garcia-Rea, E. and LePage J. (2010),

“The WHOQOL-100 demonstrates adequate reliability and validity when used with a homeless population (Garcia-Rea and LePage 2008). However, due to its length, it may have limited utility in less stable populations. Though shorter, and with numerous other potential advantages for use with homeless populations including broad, relevant domains and the ability to rapidly assess a large number of individuals at one time, no studies have examined the WHOQOL-BREF for appropriateness in use with homeless individuals” (Garcia-Rea, E. and LePage J. 2010 p.334).

The conclusion of this study was that the WHOQOL-BREF study was more suitable to measure QoL needs of the homeless population but was still not designed for the homeless population (Garcia-Rea, E. and LePage J. 2010). The QoL needs of the general population are still different than the homeless population.

QoL needs are commonly missed, skipped, or hard to capture in classic planning models; current research calls for more research on QoL measurement, specifically for young people experiencing homelessness (Gadermann et Al. 2014, Hubley et al 2014). Due to the limited research on youth homelessness and QoL in Canada, studies on particular aspects of QoL have been identified to gather measures and other pertinent information. These studies include topics of life satisfaction, health and wellbeing with homeless youth or other at-risk youth populations.

2.5.3 International Society for QoL Research

The International Society for Quality of Life Research publishes a Journal of Quality of Life research relating to research on health and QoL. This society holds annual conferences discussing the measurement of QoL in clinical trials and other QoL best practices. A health focus

on QoL is prominent, but other voices exist who are advocating for QoL research in other subfields. In time, an expansion into other professional disciplines will come. The importance of QoL research in all fields including the helping professions and planning is crucial to develop in all aspects of community development.

2.6 Prominent QoL Indicators

There is little research literature focusing on youth QoL needs, let alone the QoL needs of homeless youth. Research studies have been gathered to help identify any prominent studies relating to QoL and the youth population. When searching for reliable studies, similar key words were used such as “life satisfaction” and “well-being”. As a result, six primary needs emerged from the literature. These six needs were the most prominent and most repeated themes among the literature. These needs included: physical & mental health, level of independence and satisfaction, environment, education, social relationships, and diverse needs. In the following subsections, each QoL will be explained using four aspects including a brief explanation, the current data being collected, the leading indicators and the identified gaps.

2.6.1 Physical & Mental Health

Many homeless youths are at risk for health problems including physical, mental and emotional health issues, STI's, and substance abuse. Most homeless youth do not have access to running water or bathroom facilities, which contributes to poor personal hygiene and unsanitary living conditions (Brooks, et al. 2004, Byrne et al. 2005). Homeless youth have a higher chance of attracting diseases such as respiratory, skin and eye infections, dental disease, lice, nutritional deficiencies and other health problems (Brooks, et al. 2004). Chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma, and epilepsy are prevalent in 28% of homeless youths. STI's are also very common along with pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis (Byrne et al. 2005).

The prominent collected data on health-related issues from homeless young people are

rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, suicide, and other psychological distress (Evenson 2009). Data collection on substance misuse includes drug and alcohol dependence, and access to needed rehabilitation services (Altena et al. 2010).

The leading indicators associated with high QoL for homeless youth surrounding health/healthcare are mental, physical and sexual health services, substance abuse, intensive case management, and CBT interventions (Altena et al. 2010, Brooks et al. 2004, and Grant & Shapiro 2005). The research states these services are the most practical solutions for issues revolving around health/healthcare for young people who are homeless.

A large gap identified in this research is the lack of easy access to healthcare for homeless youth. This may be as simple as not having a health card or proper identification in order to receive free health care through the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP). The research also identifies personal hygiene as a pressing issue among this population, preventing potential employment, relationships, and healthy community interactions (Byrne et al. 2005, Brooks et al. 2004). The promotion of healthy and clean living for homeless youth is crucial (Evenson 2009).

2.6.2 Level of Independence and Satisfaction

The research on measures of independence and satisfaction cover a broad range of challenges surrounding individual purpose, choice, responsibilities, goal seeking, coherence, acceptance, and decision-making (Bearsley and Cummins 1999: Reker 1992, Lagory, Fitzpatrick and Ritchey 2001). Many homeless youths face these challenges on a daily basis and in turn seek need services to help them. Daily struggles of finding a place to feel accepted as well as being able to eat, sleep and bathe at their own leisure are often cited in the research literature (Bearsley and Cummins 1999). Their lifestyle is heavily influenced by choices, which negatively affect privacy, personal space and safety (Lagory, Fitzpatrick and Ritchey 2000).

Homeless youths are challenged everyday as the need for help grows and offers of support diminish (Lagory, Fitzpatrick and Ritchey 2001). Homeless youths are identified as troublemakers, criminals or drug addicts and are seen as bad or troubled. Studies have shown some choose to be homeless but others become homeless due to parental conflicts or bullying in school, resulting in many youth leaving home in search of new lives (Lagory, Fitzpatrick and Ritchey 2001, Lazarus and Folkman 1984, Lin, Dean and Ensel 1986). Previous situations dictate how independent, accountable and responsible a youth are capable of being (Zullig et al 2005). When a youth lives on the streets, they have little or no accountability and are more likely to get in trouble (Lagory, Fitzpatrick and Ritchey 2001). The feeling of being independent and satisfied with their life greatly revolves around the choices they make in all aspects of life including when they eat, where they live and with whom they can associate (Zullig et al 2005, Proctor Linley and Maltby 2009).

The data being collected from these research studies regarding levels of independence and satisfaction revolves around happiness, achieving a 'good life', exercise, physical health, substance abuse, employment, goals, motivation, hope, relationships, social supports, sexual behavior, mental health challenges, and future directions (Proctor, Linley and Maltby 2009). As Proctor, Linley and Maltby (2009) state,

“Incorporation of life satisfaction reports in the assessment, evaluation and implementation of educational and social programmes is essential in order to provide insight into the different effects and impacts of such services on the quality of life of youths receiving them and to help identify where crucial changes should occur in order to for increases in life satisfaction to ensue” (Proctor, Linley and Maltby p. 605).

It is critical to include this content when measuring the QoL of a youth who is homeless because understanding these factors will ultimately determine their levels of life satisfaction and

independence.

The leading indicators measuring independence and life satisfaction include developing strengths, experiencing positive daily activities, positive parent-child and peer relationships, participation in group sports and leisure activities, and achieving personal standards (Huebner 2004, Proctor, Linley and Maltby 2009 and Zullig et al 2005). These research studies are all based on the youth demographic, however no studies were found using the homeless youth demographic.

The identified gaps in the research includes no studies directly looking at homeless youth and their life satisfaction and levels of independence. There is a lack of information relating to demographic variables including, age, gender, race and socioeconomic status with the studies that have been completed (Proctor, Linley and Maltby 2009). More research is needed to better identify connections across age-specific populations, including homeless youth (Proctor, Linley and Maltby 2009, Zullig et al 2005, Huebner 2004).

2.6.3 Environment

The environmental measures cover large areas that are key to the lives of young people who are homelessness. These measures include aspects of finding safe living conditions, understanding personal finances and finding employment.

One of the first priorities for most young people who are homeless is to find clean, safe and affordable housing (Ryan & Thompson 2012, Gharabaghi & Stuart 2010). Many youths perceptions of shelters are unsafe, overcrowded and to be only used as a last resort (Solomon 2013). Youth prefer to stay with friends, parents of friends, in cars, or on the streets because shelters are unsafe and adequate housing is not available (Gharabaghi and Stuart 2010). Some youth have a room or apartment but that does not mean they are no longer homeless (Gharabaghi and Stuart 2010). Even though some youth have a place to stay, it may be unsafe, dirty or

inaccessible; therefore they still consider themselves to be homeless (Gharabaghi and Stuart 2010). The planning term NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) often describes the unmet need for inexpensive housing in communities making it less common for shelters to be located in specific areas. Services are often forced to be located in less desirable parts of town, which perpetuates the stereotypes and devalues the human potential of the homeless populations. Many agencies are forced to refer youth to other shelters due to unavailable beds and space (Brooks et al., 2004, Ryan & Thompson 2012).

Employment and finances are important issues in the context of homelessness, as many young people who leave home are likely to face financial and employment hardship. Every young person has basic needs and requires income to support these needs (Gaetz & Grady 2009). Homeless young people are sometimes forced to rely on alternative methods such as panhandling, busking and squeegeeing to make money. But often other more illegal methods are used such as drug dealing, sex-work and stripping (Gaetz, Grady & Vaillancourt 1999).

The data collected on housing mainly revolves around housing types such as temporary shelters, transitional housing, or temporary accommodations (SHC 2013). Data was also collected on number of beds available, shelter capacities and lengths of stay (Slesnick et al., 2007). The data gathered on finances and employment for homeless young people are mainly methods of financial support such as, friends, employment, stealing, selling drugs, and panhandling (Busen & Beech 1997). Other identified methods are paid formal work including social assistance, squeegeeing, sex trade, and crime (Gaetz & Grady 2002). Finding meaningful employment is important for homeless young people to begin to create a stable foundation for their future (Baron 2001).

The indicators providing increased QoL for homeless young people surrounding living conditions include access to clean, safe, and affordable living arrangements and access to

services (Gharabaghi & Stuart 2010 and Abramovich 2013). Researchers must understand the reasons why youth are leaving home and past living situations which may include, foster care or group homes (Brooks et al., 2004). The indicators measuring QoL for homeless youth surrounding finances and employment are proper financial planning, meaningful employment and understanding other methods of income (Gaetz, Grady & Vaillancourt 1999). A trend in this demographic is the exchange of sex for food, money, and other goods. Financial planning, organization and responsibility are essential to teach homeless youth because a steady income is crucial to provide basic needs (Busen & Beech 1997, Gaetz & Grady 2002). Job training is necessary in order to help learn and build new skills which helps attain meaningful employment (Baron 2001).

The identified gaps in housing of homeless youth are the need for safe, clean and accessible housing (Ryan & Thompson 2012). A housing first model in Canada is sometimes used to address the issues of homelessness, but finding housing is only part of the problem (SHC 2013). Having a place to stay in does not dictate if a young person identifies as homeless. A caring, nurturing and safe place is needed to encourage growth into independent adulthood (Gharabaghi and Stuart 2010). Young homeless people desire to work; 87% report they would rather have a regular job than panhandle, squeegee or be involved with illegal activities in exchange for compensation (Gaetz & Grady 2009). Most homeless young people do not have a permanent address, clean clothes or a bank account and sometimes have poor hygiene and underdeveloped life skills (Gaetz & Grady 2009).

The identified gaps between the causes of financial hardship for homeless young people are informal money making methods and limited access to resources to gain formal employment. Services are needed to focus on money management, financial planning and employment (Baron 2001, Gaetz & Grady 2009).

2.6.4 Education

The main reason for low education of homeless youth is mainly a lack of permanent housing (Murphy 2011). Homeless young people are at a greater overall risk for not getting an education and failing due to stress when they do not have a permanent home (Stronge and Hudson 1999, Solomon 2013). The high mobility of homeless youth affects attendance rates, educational engagement, academic success and likeliness to fail (Murphy 2011). The majority of homeless youths who attend more than two schools per academic year are 41%, three or more schools are 33% and four or more schools are 13% (Murphy 2011). On average less than 24% of homeless youths graduate high school, and the ones who do, have far below average grades (Solomon 2013). Homeless students who are unemployed are less likely to escape long-term poverty and are more likely to continue the cycle of homelessness into adulthood (Murphy 2011).

The data collected on homeless young people and education includes academic success, failure rates, drop-out rates, and graduation rates (Solomon 2013). Other measures include literacy rates, attendance, level of education attained and number of schools attended in an academic year (Tierney & Hallett 2012, Murphy 2011). Measures surrounding the education of homeless young people from a planning perspective are non-existent in the planning literature.

The leading indicators that may provide higher QoL for homeless young people surrounding education are access to alternative education programs that provide high school diplomas and GED programs (Brooks, Milburn, Rotheram-Borus & Witkin 2004, Soloman 2013). The need for homeless youth to have stable housing is crucial due to the direct relationship with academic success (Soloman 2013).

An identified gap in the education literature is the lack of communication between shelters and transitional housing with schools and other educational institutions (Perlman & Willard 2013). Better connections needs to be created between the school systems and the

thousands of youths who are homeless. Education is a long-term investment and teaching this concept to youths who are homeless is important (Perlman & Willard 2013). An easily transferable credit system is needed to better track progress if a youth becomes transient (Murphy 2011). Providing easier access to complete a high school diploma or GED should be a priority for all organizations working with homeless youths.

2.6.5 Social Relationships

The leading cause of relationship issues with homeless young people and QoL revolves around relationships with peers, family, friends, romantic partners and service provider staff (Karabanow 2009). When a youth leaves home, they often try to leave negative relationships behind due to shame, embarrassment, or fear (Karabanow 2009, HHYP 2008). Building bonds within a new peer group is a challenge most young people face, adding in the factor of homelessness makes it even harder (Karabanow 2009). The fear of being in abusive or dangerous relationships is common among homeless youth; almost 51% of homeless youths report child abuse and 23% report sexual assault (HHYP 2008). Abusive parental relationships are common among parents of homeless youth and 50% of youths report witnessing physical abuse between their parents (HHYP 2008).

The data collected on homeless youths relationships revolves around relationship status, sexual activity, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, rates of domestic violence and parental violence (HHYP 2008). Some other collected data includes, number of friends and number of positive relationships made after leaving home (McCay et al. 2011).

The leading factor that provides higher QoL for homeless young people surrounding relationships involves learning how to build meaningful relationships with friends, families, romantic partners and service provider staff (Heinze, Hernandez-Jozefowicz & Toro 2010). Issues surrounding dating violence, harassment and sexual assault need to be addressed in order

to reduce exposure to these situations (Karabanow 2009). The overall idea of social reintegration is important. By creating acceptance through social norms also promotes family, school, and friendship reintegration (Heinze, Hernandez-Jozefowicz & Toro 2010).

The research states that assisting homeless youth to build healthy relationships promotes stress relief, resilience, and better overall functioning (McCay et al. 2011). Building strong relationships signifies success for homeless young people and promotes emotional and spiritual growth (McCay et al. 2011). Identifying new relationships outside the street culture is important because it encourages exploration into new communities and social groups (Karabanow 2009). New relationships are important when moving to a new location with few or no contacts. Encouraging healthy relationships between service provider staff and young people is important because it builds mutual trust, communication and respect (Heinze, Hernandez-Jozefowicz & Toro 2010).

2.6.6 Diverse Needs

Diverse needs should not be viewed as a stand-alone QoL need. Instead, it should be integrated into the five other needs previously identified. These indicators provide higher QoL for homeless youth surrounding diverse needs, including cultural, religious, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity inclusion in services (Burwick, Oddo, Durso, Friend & Gates 2014, Daalen-Smith & Lamont 2006, Miller et al. 2004, Tyler, Akinyemi & Kort-Butler 2012). Services not necessarily targeting cultural groups or other ethnicities are called to be more inclusive of the Islamic and Muslim cultures (Daalen-Smith & Lamont 2006). Gender and sexuality expression is a growing trend among the youth population and the need for accommodating services is highly needed (Burwick et al. 2014). Gender acceptance by posting ‘permission to be unique’ signs to create a positive space for individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community is important (Daalen-Smith & Lamont 2006, p.11). Shelters need to provide private and safe beds

for youth who identify as transgender, as well as services for an education of same sex, intersex, and transgender couples (Burwick, et al. 2014). LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to use shelter services to escape conflict at home due to their sexual identification (Abramovich 2013, Tyler et al. 2012).

Aboriginal youth are more likely to become homeless in Canada, because they may come from families who are facing “extreme poverty, substandard housing, violence and substance abuse” (Brown et al. 2007, Patrick 2014). Aboriginal youth migrate away from reserves to cities and urban areas in search of a better life; however, a lack of affordable housing often results in homelessness and unemployment (Patrick 2014, Peters, and Robillard 2009). The inclusion of diverse services is important due to higher vulnerability of populations who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. Many young people have diverse needs and it is encouraged for all agencies to offer individualized assistance when possible (Patrick 2014).

2.7 Community Reports and Publications

Many community reports have been released on the topic of homelessness. This subsection will include a review of local, national and international reports on homelessness in comparable cities. A total of eight reports have been chosen based on relevance to this research project. The goal of this section is to understand what is covered in each report including a discussion on the current state of housing and QoL needs of homeless youth. It is necessary to include these publications in the literature review to better understand current research and reporting being done in communities.

2.7.1 The Report Contents

The literature discusses a movement over the past 10 years away from managing homelessness and towards prevention (Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver, and Richter 2014, Segaert 2012). The report, *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016* discusses homelessness as a broad

issue and briefly touches upon the topic of youth homelessness (Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014). The reports state that youth homelessness is a separate issue compared to adult homelessness and unique priorities need to be created (Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014, RAFT 2013, Gaetz, Grady and Vaillancourt 1999). The common theme of low wages is reoccurring among all reports as the gap between minimum wage and living wage grows farther apart (Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014, RAFT 2013, Gaetz, Grady and Vaillancourt 1999, Segaert 2012). The homeless youth population is identified as making up around 20% of the total homeless population in Canada (SHC 2016, Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014, RAFT 2013, Gaetz, Grady and Vaillancourt 1999, Segaert 2012).

The Report titled, “Coming of Age: Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada” highlights some key points. These include the importance and identification of young people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and understanding the importance of properly trained staff to work with these specific young people (Gaetz 2014, Burwick et al 2014). The research literature recommends partnerships at all levels of government as well community agencies and a range of professionals across many disciplines (Gaetz 2014, RAFT 2013, Segaert 2012). Steps to end homelessness are discussed as well as prevention strategies at the individual, community and policy levels (Gaetz 2014). The research states working towards ending youth homelessness will help end chronic adult homelessness. By ending youth homelessness is a prevention strategy to end the many youth continue the cycle of homelessness from a youth to an adult (Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014, RAFT 2013, Gaetz, Grady and Vaillancourt 1999, Segaert 2012).

2.7.2 Housing

The topic of housing was discussed in many capacities across all reports on homelessness; there are mixed suggestions as to the effectiveness of the Housing First Approach

(Gaetz and Redman 2012). The core findings recommend housing first to be used for homeless adults but not specifically for homeless youth (Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014, RAFT 2013, Segaert 2012). The Housing First Approach is suggested as a central focus in the Government of Canada's homelessness partnering strategy (Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014). The Housing First Approach may work for some youths but not all, due to age discrimination, struggles with addiction, mental health and many other issues (Gaetz 2014). The transitional housing model has sometimes proven to be effective, but more research is needed (Gaetz 2014).

A common theme of finding affordable housing and the lack of new social housing being built exists among the literature (Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014, Segaert 2012). Canadian housing costs are increasing, making it harder for people to own homes (Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014). The Housing First Approach became a priority at the end of 2013 when 61 communities across Canada received funding to implement this approach (Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014). The Housing First Approach for homeless youth is suggested as a solution to end homelessness, but recent research identifies the needs for a housing first approach that accommodates youth and their distinct needs.

2.7.3 Discussion of Quality of Life Measures

Across the literature all QoL measures are discussed in some capacity, but they are all seen as independent needs when planning to end youth homelessness. Gaetz (2014) discussed measures of stable housing, income, education, training, necessary supports, physical and mental health, life skills, meaningful engagement and healthy relationship development. Youth engagement is discussed at the community level, but there are no specific references to engaging homeless youth (Gaetz 2014). The common goal of supporting homeless youth is shared among the research literature however a streamlined method using QoL needs and measures has yet to be identified (Gaetz 2014, Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter 2014, Segaert 2012).

2.7.4 Summary: Findings

Using the QoL measures identified in the literature review and comparing them with the findings of this study will help better define the specific QoL needs of the homeless youth population. Housing is a topic that is discussed in many different capacities across all reports. The common theme is the need for affordable housing exists across all reports and publications. The term QoL is not often mentioned in the community reports and publications, this may become challenging when researchers are using different terms than community planners. Many QoL needs are identified through these community reports and publications, however they are identified as independent challenges and not viewed wholly. These measures will help communities and planners better understand what QoL means to homeless young people, which in turn will help refocus efforts towards ultimately ending youth homelessness.

2.8 The Palepu et al. 2012 Study

2.8.1 Palepu et al 2012 Study: Study Description

The Palepu et al. 2012 study is the cornerstone for this research project. In 2012, Palepu, Hubley, Russell, Gadermann and Chinni completed this study. The purpose of this study was to help researchers understand which QoL needs are important to the homeless or hard to house population. This study had 140 participants who identified as homeless or hard to house. The age of the participants ranged from 15-73, which included the youth, adult and elderly population. The study participants were recruited from four major urban centres in Canada including Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver. Small focus groups of 4-8 participants were used to gather the data. The findings of the study are,

“These findings not only aid our understanding of QoL in this group, but may be used to develop measures that capture QoL in this population and help programs and policies become more effective in improving the life situation for persons who are homeless and

hard-to-house” (Palepu et al. 2012 p.1).

2.8.2 Rationale to Repeat Study

This study is being repeated because there has only been one study ever completed on the QoL of homeless or hard to house individuals in Canada. The study is being redone to be more inclusive of age-specific populations to better inform official planning documents. Even though my research study will be completed on a smaller scale it will hopefully open the door for future research to be completed in this area.

2.8.3 Palepu et al 2012 Study: Study Overview

The introduction of this study states, little research has been completed in the area of QoL and homeless individuals tend to have a lower QoL compared to people who are housed (Palepu et al. 2012). The authors quickly state, “No studies appear to have asked individuals who are homeless or hard to house about what is important to, or impacts their QoL” (Palepu et al, 2012 p.2). A large gap was identified in the research, followed by narrative experiences from participants in the study. Three adult narratives were presented but no youth narratives were included. The overview then concluded with a broad statement of needing to build on the limited QoL literature available (Palepu et al. 2012).

2.8.4 Palepu et al 2012 Study: Methods

There were 140 participants selected from four Canadian cities including Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver. This study defined homeless as

“Sleeping in a homeless shelter, outside, in a park, abandoned building, train or bus station, vehicle, or other place not intended for human habitation for at least one night in the last 7 days or having had to sleep at a friend's or relative's place because the person did not have a place of his/her own. Individuals who were "hard to house" were those who had a history of homelessness and were now

residing in low income, supportive housing” (Palepu et al. 2012 p.2).

Participants were recruited from four projects, the Toronto Homeless Health Care Utilization Cohort, Ottawa Inner City Health Project, the Montreal Street Youth Cohort, and the Portland Hotel Society located in downtown Vancouver (Palepu et al. 2012).

Service providers moderated and were included to build a sense of trust and rapport to help the participants feel more comfortable. Focus groups were chosen as the method to interact with the participants because when “compared to individual interviews, the use of focus groups can allow the inclusion of a larger number of participants to reflect a wide variety of personal experiences” (Palepu et al. 2012 P3). The procedure of the study began with 4 to 8 participants lasting 45-90 minutes and was audio recorded (Palepu et al. 2012 p.3). Participants were given oral and written information about the study before participating and each participant received a \$20 Canadian dollar honorarium for participation (Palepu et al. 2012).

All participants were “first asked to write down anything they felt was important to their QoL. Participants were instructed not to censor their thoughts and to write down anything that came to mind” (Palepu et al. 2012 p.4). After this step, a conversation took place between the participants and the moderator. Participants were asked to share their thoughts, then follow up questions were asked. After the follow up questions were asked, participants were allowed to amend their list. The final step was ranking the five most important aspects of their overall QoL.

2.8.5 Palepu et al 2012 Study: Discussion

Six major QoL content themes were identified including, “health/health care, living conditions, financial situation, employment situation, relationships, and recreational and leisure activities.” The authors also noted, “Overall, these themes were common to both youths and adults” (Palepu et al. 2012). A discrepancy in terms of a youth perspective may have been possibly missed during the data collection portion of the study.

Health and health care was identified as an important aspect because all four-study locations had a heavy health focus. Participants also discussed living with HIV and experiencing drug and alcohol addictions. This is not surprising as all four study locations focused on health outcomes, therefore, it was expected a health-orientated theme would be identified. Physical and mental health was discussed throughout the research literature and always tends to play an underlying role in many studies involving homeless youths (Grant & Shapiro 2005, Altena et al. 2010, Brooks et al. 2004).

Living conditions were identified as the second QoL theme. The shelter system was discussed as having both positive and negative effects on QoL (Palepu et al. 2012). One notable concern was a complaint about individuals with mental illnesses living in shelters for long periods of time. The issue of safe and clean living spaces was discussed, however the goal was for many residents to get into their own space (Palepu et al. 2012). Nutrition was also identified as a main concern along with having balanced meals and accommodating different dietary needs. Youth do care a lot about living conditions, as this was also a common theme identified.

Financial situation was identified as the third QoL theme. The financial situation was evident in terms of having enough money to survive (Palepu et al. 2012). A common point discussed was having money to bail out their children from jail or other financial hardships. Many youths have similar challenges, however a homeless youth may be saving money to buy clothing or drugs while a homeless father with children may be saving for housing or food.

Employment situation was identified as the fourth QoL theme, which focused on working to live and to find meaning. Many youths do not have a high school diploma or job experience. Education was described, as being a necessity to get a job however no discussion on educational attainment or post-secondary studies was discussed. It was a common theme for youth to express interest in getting an education in the literature (Brooks, Milburn, Rotheram-Borus & Witkin

2004, Soloman 2013).

Relationships were identified as the fifth QoL theme. Almost all participants in the study discussed relationships and the importance to their overall QoL. Participants identified friends are just as important as family relationships especially when their 'real family' was not around anymore. Participants identified their 'real family' as their biological, adoptive or care parents. It is not surprising that young people identify relationships as important to their overall QoL. It is common throughout the research literature that young people want family and friends to support them in their time of need (Karabanow 2009 & Heinze, Hernandez-Jozefowicz & Toro 2010).

Recreational and leisure activities were identified as the sixth QoL theme. These activities were described as taking a break from life on the streets and by helping with loneliness by staying in more social situations. This topic was not discussed in the research literature and seemed to be an interesting aspect of QoL related to this population.

The broader themes were identified as having choice, respect and stability in society (Palepu et al. 2012). Having choice is a privilege many people take for granted, choosing a job, where to live, what to eat and how to live are luxuries most people who are homeless do not have. The youth participants in the study made interesting points about personal growth and how it was important to them (Palepu et al. 2012). The theme of level of independence and life satisfaction was discussed in the research literature and was identified as important and relevant to a youth's overall QoL (Bearsley and Cummins 1999: Reker 1992, Lagory, Fitzpatrick and Ritchey 2001).

2.8.6 Palepu et al 2012 Study: Conclusion

As six key themes were identified in Palepu et al. 2012, the focus mostly related to homeless and hard to house adults, not youths. Even though the youth population was included in this study no examples were provided. Quotations and suggestions noted in the Palepu et al. 2012 study revolved around solutions for the adult population. In the discussion section of the

study, the authors state, “the importance of developing instruments with input from the target population in this case, homeless and hard-to-house individuals to adequately, appropriately, and comprehensively assess their QoL” (Palepu et al. 2012 p.9). The age-demographic can cause many issues not only when collecting feedback but also when developing themes. As stated in the research literature and in this study, input from target populations is required to adequately serve the population especially for age-specific challenges (Bearsley & Cummins 1999, McKeever 2010, Altona et al. 2010, O’Conner 2011, Abramovich 2012, Palepu et al. 2012, Gadermann et al. 2014, Gaetz 2014 and Gaetz et al. 2014). The Government of Ontario has also called for more youth engagement to better understand homelessness (OLTAHS 2016).

2.9 Conclusion

Social planners and social workers are both working to end youth homelessness. Social planners have developed theories such as advocacy and communicative planning to better suit the human needs of urban planning. Many researchers along with the province of Ontario have called for more age-specific research of vulnerable population groups. The main focus of my research is taking an individualistic approach (originally adopted in social work) to understand QoL in planning.

QoL has been minimally defined in academic research and key QoL themes have been identified through youth specific literature in this research project. Davidoff (1965) and the OLTAHS (2016) have recognized the need to include at-risk populations when planning. The goal of this research to determine a clear understanding of the term QoL and its meaning to the homeless youth population. It is evident more research is needed to understand the relationships between QoL, youth homelessness and planning documents. This study is intended to combine research and literature to improve the QoL of youth experiencing homelessness using planning approaches.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this planning document analysis is to demonstrate the need for a better understanding of the term QoL and how it is used in surrounding area official planning documents and social planning documents. This document analysis is used to frame the need for a more in depth understanding of QoL needs for homeless youth. A total of 15 youths were interviewed during this research project; as a result a better understanding of how homeless youths view and define QoL will emerge in chapter 4. Chapter 3 will be broken down into two major sections, the methodology of the document analysis, followed by the methodology of the individual interviews conducted with homeless youths in the Region of Waterloo.

3.2 Document Analysis

According to Bowen (2009), a “document analysis is a low-cost way to obtain empirical data as part of a process that is unobtrusive and nonreactive” (Bowen 2009 p.30). Bowen (2009) explains the approach used in this document analysis, as “a document analysis requires data to be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (Bowen 2009 p. 27). Bowen (2009) identified three key pieces of a document analysis procedure as skimming, reading and interpretation; these methods will be used in this document analysis. A thematic analysis will be used to identify key themes across each planning document. During the analysis process three key themes were searched for including, a definition of QoL, any discussion of QoL needs and any age-specific reference to vulnerable population groups such as youth, seniors and immigrants.

The main purpose of completing a document analysis of official and social planning documents in the Region of Waterloo is to understand the use of the term QoL in these documents. The secondary purpose is to understand if communities are engaging with vulnerable

populations to define QoL needs among vulnerable age-specific groups. Planning documents play a huge role in how communities function. A clearer understanding of what QoL means to specific sub-populations will help planners create more precise goals, targets and outcomes for use in future planning documents. More precise plans will result in improved overall understanding of QoL for homeless youth, if proper measures are implicated. With a more clear understanding of the term QoL it should provide more avenues to measures and understand the term QoL in regards to vulnerable age-specific groups such as homeless youth.

3.2.1 Official Planning Documents Analysis

The Region of Waterloo official planning documents will be analyzed for the first section of the document analysis portion for this research project. Four main documents will be analyzed including The Region of Waterloo's Official Plan, The City of Kitchener Official Plan, The City of Waterloo Official Plan and The Cambridge Official Plan.

3.2.2 Social Planning Documents Analysis

The Region of Waterloo's social planning documents specifically relating to homelessness and housing will be analyzed for the second portion of the document analysis. The following documents will be analyzed: Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy 2016, Region of Waterloo: Housing Action Plan 2014-2024, Region of Waterloo: Homelessness Frameworks, Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy Summaries (2007-2010), Promising Principles and Practices in Housing Options for Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Waterloo Region 2010, and Understanding Homelessness Experienced by Youth in Waterloo Region: A Discussion Document 2007. Overall one social planning document from the Province of Ontario and five from the Region of Waterloo will be discussed and analyzed. The purpose of analyzing one social planning document from the province of Ontario is to provide context for the local

social planning documents. The Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy 2016 provides broader guidance and targets for social planning documents in communities located in Ontario.

3.3 Individual Interviews and Study Design

Individual interviews were conducted due to the lack of explanation provided in the previously analyzed planning documents in regards to QoL and the vulnerability of homeless youth. Harkness (2013) defined the importance of using active engagement strategies with vulnerable populations to better understand their needs (Harkness 2013). These interviews are intended to identify the specific QoL needs of homeless youths in the Region of Waterloo.

This portion of the research study is based on the previously completed Palepu et al. 2012 study. The basic structure and organization is similar however some methods were changed for accuracy due to the smaller scope of my research project. My study uses a one-on-one interview method while the previous used a focus-group method. The one-on-one interview method was implemented due to a smaller sample size (N=15), the need for individual feedback, and previously built rapport between with the participants. The goal of this study was to interview 15-20 youths between the ages of 16-25 who identify as being homeless or having experienced homelessness and currently resides in the Region of Waterloo. The range of 15-20 participants was selected due to the result of theoretical saturation being met. A range of young people participated in this study in regards to how long they have experienced homelessness, which varied from one night to eight plus years. It was important to gather feedback from a variety of youths who have experienced homelessness for different lengths of time to help gain a more comprehensive view of QoL needs at different stages of homelessness. The primary purpose of this research project was to identify the general QoL needs for the homeless youth population

between the ages of 16-25 and integrate the identified QoL needs into official planning documents.

3.4 Study Locations

Three youth shelters in the Region of Waterloo were selected to be a part of this study, with one additional youth organization to be used for the pilot phase. Three youth shelters were chosen as main access points to be used in the primary data collection phase. The selected youth organizations are as followed, OneRoof: Youth Services which houses the OneRoof: Providing a Roof Shelter (PAR), Lutherwood: SafeHaven (SH) and Argus House. Ray of Hope: Open Custody and Detention was chosen as the pilot study site because the researcher was employed there and because of their work with at risk youth. The researcher was also employed at OneRoof: Youth Services, which was used as a one of the main data collection sites for this study. During data collection the researcher was not compensated from either employer therefore research was only completed during unpaid hours. The researcher identified himself as a ‘research student’ during the data collection phase. The researcher was also very clear when explaining the different roles the researcher held before any youths agreed to participate. The researchers employment should be viewed as a strength of this research project due to the prior rapport built with some of the participants; rapport increases honesty and the likelihood of a participant is willing to participate (Harkness 2013).

3.4.1 Descriptions

Argus House (Cambridge, Ontario) – is located in downtown Galt, and is designated by the Region of Waterloo as an emergency shelter for homeless youths between the ages of 16-24. The length of stay at Argus house depends on individual situations and can range from 1 week to 6 months. They operate two 24-hour shelter locations a 10-bed shelter for female youths and a 10-

bed shelter for male youths (Argus Residence for Young People 2015).

Lutherwood: SafeHaven Shelter (Kitchener, Ontario) – is located in the downtown core of Kitchener at Lutherwood's Betty Thompson Youth Centre, serving youths ages 12-18 and offering ten beds on 24/7 basis. No stay limit is enforced at Lutherwood, as each youth is considered on a case-by-case basis. Their goal is to move every youth back in with their parents or guardians as long as it is a safe environment (Lutherwood 2015).

OneRoof: Providing a Roof (PAR) (Kitchener, Ontario) – is located in the downtown core of Kitchener and provides safety support and overall wellbeing for youth ages 12-25 experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. OneRoof offers a shelter commonly referred to as 'Providing a Roof' (PAR), a 17-bed co-ed shelter for youths ages 16-25. Beds are assigned daily on a first come first serve basis. Youth can remain in PAR as long as their individual circumstances dictate. However the goal is not to have a youth in PAR for longer than 30 days. After the youth would be ideally moved into permanent housing (OneROOF Youth Services 2015).

Ray of Hope: Open Custody and Detention (Kitchener, Ontario) – is located in the downtown core of Kitchener; Ray of Hope offers a place of hope where young men ages 12-18 carry out court-appointed sentences ranging from 1 day up to 12 months. Open custody and detention facilitates the integration of criminally involved youth back into society through structured programming and reintegration. (Ray of Hope: Open Custody and Detention 2016).

3.5 Pilot Study

The original plan for this research project was to conduct the pilot study with one pre-selected youth at Ray of Hope: Open Custody and Detention. This research site was chosen for a pilot study due to the researcher's employment within this organization and the researcher's established rapport with the youth currently in the program. During the process of waiting to

receive ethics clearance, the pre-selected youth was transferred to another facility therefore he was no longer able to participate in the study. No other youth at the facility fit the criteria for this study therefore the pilot study was not completed at Ray of Hope: Open Custody and Detention.

The primary purpose of the pilot study was to identify the validity of the chosen questions for one-on-one interviews because these questions were previously used in a focus group setting in the Palepu et al. (2012) study. The secondary purpose of the pilot study was to test interview times, participant responsiveness and flow of the interview process. An altered version of the pilot study was completed during the first interview with participant 1 at OneRoof: PAR. During the first interview a few flaws were identified but were quickly fixed. The researcher realized three prescreen-questions were not added to the questionnaire to validate participation in the research study. The following three questions were added to the pre-screen process and asked before each interview started. These questions were added to ensure each participant had met the study guidelines before proceeding further.

1. Do you identify as being homeless or have you experienced homelessness in the past?
2. Are you between the ages of 16-25?
3. Does the researcher consider you 'mentally fit' to participate? If a youth is in crisis or appears mentally unfit, they may not take part at that time. If they choose to participate again they may do so at a later date when not in crisis.

The researcher concluded if a youth is just hanging out at OneRoof: Youth Services (located on the main floor above the PAR shelter) they may not be homelessness. This conclusion led to the use of the shelter list as a prescreen process therefore the researcher only approached youths who were staying in the PAR shelter. The age question was added as a prescreening process to ensure all potential participants met the age range requirement of this study. At Lutherwood: SH their

age range varies between 12-18, which combines the demographic of youths with children. This research project is ethically bound to only interview youths 16 years of age and older. The final question was added to evaluate if the youth was mentally fit to participate in the study. If the participant was not able to participate the researcher asked the individual to come back later.

3.6 Initial Contact Process

The first contact was made with staff at all three shelters (Lutherwood: SH, OneRoof: PAR and Argus House) through email and phone communications to set up three days to recruit youths to participate in the study. The researcher contacted the Program Director of Lutherwood: SH, the CEO of OneRoof: PAR and the Program Director of Argus House. The CEO of OneRoof quickly responded and provided immediate approval. The researcher also spoke directly with the Program Director of Lutherwood: SH. The process to get approval from Lutherwood: SH was more difficult than getting approval from OneRoof. After a few emails and phone calls with the Program Director, full approval was given. The Program Director stated she would organize a night for the researcher to complete 4-5 interviews consecutively. The final challenge was getting approval from Argus House. After sending multiple emails and leaving several messages, no response was received. The researcher decided due to time constraints and an abundance of access to potential youth participants at OneRoof: PAR and Lutherwood: SH, Argus House would no longer be used for this research project.

3.7 Recruitment

3.7.1 OneRoof: Providing a Shelter

The first phase of recruitment began at OneRoof: PAR consisting of putting up posters with general information about the research study. This process was unsuccessful and no youths came forward to participate. The researcher decided the best approach to recruit youths was to go

in for 1-3 hour periods to hang out with the youths and talk about the research and ask if they would like to participate. This process began and was completed during six days over a 4-week period. It was made clear to each potential participant the choice to participate in the study would not influence services received at OneRoof and it was ultimately their decision to participate.

Other staff at OneRoof also referred youths to participate in the research study. Due to prior conversations with staff members at OneRoof, they were advised of the research background and expectations from potential participants. The researcher was employed at OneRoof: Youth Services while completing this research project. Clear lines were drawn to ensure when the researcher was onsite-collecting data, the researcher was identified as a research student and not as a staff person.

3.7.2 Lutherwood: SafeHaven

The recruitment phase at Lutherwood was straightforward. The Program Director set up one day to conduct five consecutive interviews. The researcher arrived on the preselected date and completed five interviews with youths between the ages of 16-18. The researcher had no previous rapport with any youths at this facility but all youths willingly participated and provided feedback.

3.8 Ethics and Confidentiality

The ethics committee and the research literature identified homeless youths as a vulnerable population, which made the ethics approval process more difficult. Confidentiality and ethical considerations were the largest concern for this research study. Due to the target population and the University of Waterloo's policies surrounding research with youths, some concerns did arise. The primary concern was interviewing youths under the age of 16. Originally it was planned to interview youths ages 15-25 however, the University of Waterloo required a

signed consent from a parent or guardian if under the age of 16. If a youth were over the age of 16 and not being interviewed in a school setting, it would be easier to receive ethics clearance. The age limit was raised to 16 to eliminate the challenge of gathering written consent forms from parents or guardians. The following terms were provided for participation in the research study.

- i. Their feedback may be used in the final thesis document
- ii. No identifying information would be collected such as name or date of birth
- iii. Participant withdrawal at any time is permitted with no penalty and would not influence service delivery at any shelter
- iv. Each participant would be assigned a participant ID number which will later be replaced with an alias name for use with direct quotes if needed.
- v. Participants may walk away at any time with no penalty and responses up to that point will be considered void and will be discarded immediately
- vi. Participants were asked if audio recording was possible; if they decline but still want to proceed with the interview, manual transcription occurred.
- vii. A verbal consent form would be used to mitigate youth participants with writing challenges. The researcher read the consent form out loud and the participant may answer yes or no to each of the questions. No signature would be collected from the youth due to confidentiality.
- viii. The researcher's previous education (RSW, BSW) is beneficial to this research in case a crisis occurred. The researcher has experience working with youths in crisis and understands proper intervention techniques. Navigating crisis is an important skill set in this setting as triggers may set off participants at any time. A strengths-based approach and redirection would be used if a youth goes into crisis. If the researcher decided the

participant was not mentally fit to proceed with the interview, they would be given the remuneration, however the data would be voided. If the researcher deemed the participant needed immediate support, the researcher was ethically bound to talk to them. After de-escalation the researcher would immediately refer the participant to necessary services in the community.

3.9 Consent to Participate

To participate in the study three consent questions required answering; each question is explained below.

3.9.1 Question 1 - Audio Recording

The first question asked was, "I agree to have my interview audio recorded". This question was asked to ensure the potential participant agreed to have the interview audio recorded. The purpose of the audio recording was for the researcher to playback the recording at a later date to validate any missed information collected during the interview process. The youth did not have to agree to the audio recording to participate. The youth was notified if they choose to decline audio recording the interview may taken longer due to physical transcription.

3.9.2 Question 2 - Anonymous Quotations

The second question asked was, "I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes from this research." This consent question was asked to gather and use insightful quotations a regular survey question cannot. The participant did not have to agree to this question to participate in the research study.

3.9.3 Question 3 - Participation

The third research question asked was, "I agree to participate in this study." By agreeing to participate the individual agrees to the general understanding of what will be asked of them

during the interview process. If the youth choose to participate, they verbally agreed to the question to begin the study. If a youth answered, "no" the pre-screen process ended. The researcher thanked the youth for their time and moved onto the next potential participant.

3.10 Storage of Data

All written records are stored in a file in the hands of the researcher and will be kept for seven years; afterwards they will be destroyed. Audio recordings were collected via a smartphone during the interview process. Audio recordings were stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer during the analysis phase. Only the researcher and the research supervisor knew the password. After the analysis phase was completed, all files were transferred to a USB drive and stored at the University of Waterloo in the Department of Planning for seven years and will then be disposed of accordingly. The raw data was intended for this research project only and will never be shared with any other organization, agency or researcher at any given time for any reason.

- i. Paper Records - Confidential shredding after seven year(s).
- ii. Audio Recordings - Erasing of audio recordings after seven year(s).
- iii. Electronic Data - Erasing of electronic data after seven year(s). Location: University of Waterloo Planning Department on a secure USB drive.

3.11 Interview Process

Once the participant agreed to participate, the researcher proceeded to conduct part one of the interview (The interview tool is also located in appendix 1). The researcher advised the participant that part 1 consisted of 10 demographic questions and each question was structured in a multiple-choice format with an option for writable answers. The interview was administered through one of two methods. During the first method the researcher verbally asked the questions,

while the participant responded. For the second interview method the participant read the questions themselves and wrote down their own answers. Both methods were offered to accommodate everyone in case a participant could not read or write. Questions 11,12 and 13 consisted of yes/no questions with a chance for discussion. The researcher asked these questions verbally to promote in depth responses. The main part of the interview process was part two, consisting of the QoL identification questions. Each participant was given a pen and a blank piece of paper with their assigned participant ID number. The researcher then read this statement,

“Here is a blank piece of paper I want you to take a minute or two to write down anything you feel is important to your quality of life and remember it can be anything. You can put down as many items as you want as long as you feel they are important to your quality of life”.

Each youth was given 2-3 minutes to write down their QoL needs. Once part 2 was completed part 3 began, which used pre-identified questions also used in the Palepu et al. (2012) study to assist participants to think about their QoL needs. Next, the researcher read the following statement and asked the following five questions.

“Now I am going to ask you to read out loud the list you just made. Then, I will ask you five follow-up questions. If you want to alter your list at any time, you may do so. If you can use any of your answers you just wrote down, please do so, otherwise, try and answer each question as thoroughly as possible. When you are done answering the question please state, "next question please" and I will proceed”

1. “What do you need to have a good life and feel safe?”
2. “What things in life bring you happiness?”
3. “What areas have a positive or negative impact on your life?”

4. “What is important in your life to go well?”
5. “What is important for your quality of life?”

After this part was completed, part 4 began. The main purpose of part 4 was a ranking exercise, to have the youth rank their responses from 1st to 5th most important from part 3. The researcher then read this statement,

“Now that we have had a discussion around each question, I have one final task for you. I want you to review your list and rank your top five choices according to importance. On the back of your paper, you will find a fill in the blank list with the most important aspects that are important to your overall QoL.”

The purpose of this ranking activity was to understand the top five QoL needs of each individual. Once this part was completed part 5 began, which was the thank you process. If the interview was being audio recorded, the recording was stopped and the researcher thanked the youth for participating. The youth was given a ‘thank you’ package including a \$5 Tim Horton's Card, a copy of "The Little Black Book" and a thank you letter from the researcher including contact information for future questions about the research project. All youths were provided with a copy of “The Little Black Book for Youth” created by the Region of Waterloo for youth in need of any youth-oriented services. All phone numbers, locations, hours, and services are listed in the small pocket size book.

3.11.1 Environment

Interviews took place in a quiet environment such as an office with no distractions. At OneRoof: PAR, an office was used but one interview was held on the back porch as per the youth’s request. While conducting interviews at Lutherwood: SH, the Program Director organized a time for the researcher to be set up in a private office. Quiet spaces were mainly

sought after due to confidentiality and for the best interest of the youth's honesty and participation in the study.

3.11.2 Timing

A 15-20 minute projected completion time for each interview was given. The following is a breakdown of how the time was used.

Part 1: Demographic Questionnaire Time Allocation: 1-2 Minutes

Part 2: Quality of Life Identification Time Allocation: 2-3 Minutes

Part 3: Discussion Time Allocation: 10-12 Minutes

Part 4: Ranking Time Allocation: 2-3 Minutes

Part 5: Completion/Thank You 1-2 minutes

3.12 Remuneration and Thank You Package

As previously stated, a 'thank you' package and a small remuneration was provided to those who participated. The package consisted of a \$5 Tim Horton's Card, a thank you letter from the researcher and a copy of 'The Little Black Book', published by the Region of Waterloo. The thank you letter included the researchers contact information in case a question came up in regards to the research study in the future. The University of Waterloo did not have the youth sign a claimable income form due to the confidentiality and younger age range of the participants

3.13 Follow Up

The main follow-up process will be with the shelters and not the individual participants. If any participant requested a copy of the final results they will be sent via email. A general summative brief, poster and infographic will be provided to the two shelters to supply them with the results of this research study. A link to the completed research thesis will also be emailed to the CEO and Program Directors of OneRoof: Youth Services and Lutherwood: SH.

3.14 Journaling

Throughout the data collection phase, a research journal was kept noting outgoing communications, reflections and any significant issues identified in an interview. This process was helpful when conducting multiple interviews in a row. This process was a less formal way of keeping track of small details during the research process. The journal was used during the data analysis phase to clarify details that may not have been captured with the interview tool.

3.15 A Professional in the Community

The researcher is a young professional in the youth services field in the Region of Waterloo. I believe I had an advantage over other researchers when it came down to my data collection. It is uncommon for researchers to gather data from research participants while also having previous rapport built with them. Homeless youth are transient, untrusting of strangers and generally unreachable. As a staff at OneRoof, I was able to reach out to the young people that I knew would provide feedback. Any youth who participated was not persuaded in any way to participate just because I had a previous rapport with them. Many of these youth are vulnerable and are not able to trust many adults. The youths were more likely to participate in the study because they had prior rapport built with the researcher. The participants knew the researchers role and his intentions from before the interviews began to take place. It is important to understand as a planner it may be difficult to walk into a shelter and facilitate an interview and expect honesty and participation from youth whom they have never met. Being a part of the shelter prior to this interview process was a great strength of this research.

3.16 Potential Risks

Two minimal risks were anticipated and identified. The first risk was the potential for traumatic issues to arise when discussing the past. The second risk was current emotional or

psychological risks participants may be facing. The researcher has worked with this population before so the necessary skills are present to redirect a youth if they go off track from the interview questions. The researcher has resources to refer a youth to counselling services or other services if needed.

3.16.1 Safeguard Procedures

If a participant goes went into crisis during the interview process, a list of contact numbers and names was provided. An immediate referral for counselling was kept on hand for community-counselling services offered at KW Counselling. Walk-in counselling was available Thursday's from 12-6pm and welcomes everyone. The contact number was provided and was also highlighted in 'The Little Black Book.' The other option was to contact emergency withdrawal management services located at Grand River Hospital in Kitchener.

3.17 Potential Benefits

The benefits received for participating in this research study was to have a voice potentially heard by planners and policy writers. Collecting and understanding QoL needs of youth will help planners better understand their needs and what can be done to improve them. Youths will also build communication and interview skills during the interview process.

3.18 Conclusion

This chapter is breaks down and explains the processes for all methods used in this research project. Overall the document analysis and interview process is intended to provide valuable feedback, which will be evaluated, explained, and broken down in chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction and Data Analysis

This chapter is separated into six sections; document analysis of official planning documents and social planning documents, most important needs identified at OneRoof: PAR and Lutherwood, survey results and a statistical breakdown, group demographics, a comparison to the Palepu et al. 2012 study and overall key findings.

4.2 Document Analysis: Official Planning Document Findings

4.2.1 Region of Waterloo: Official Plan

The Region of Waterloo identifies five key elements in the Regional Official Plan 2031 (ROP). One of the key elements is, “Increasing the quality of life of citizens in Waterloo Region” (ROP 2011 p.1). Increasing the QoL of citizens is vague and no definition is provided in the glossary or definition section of the ROP. The term QoL is mentioned in the following terms in the glossary of the ROP.

- Community infrastructure – lands, buildings and structures that support the **quality of life** for people and communities by providing public services for health, education, recreation, socio-cultural activities, security and safety, and affordable housing.
- Human services – those services that maintain and promote a high **quality of life** and allow residents to develop to their full potential, including, but not limited to, police services, emergency services, social assistance, pre-employment services, child care, health care and cultural services.
- Liveable/liveability – the ability to readily satisfy the majority of one's day-to-day housing, employment, shopping, health, transportation and recreational needs and thereby sustain a high **quality of life**. A liveable region is one that contains integrated,

compact, mixed-use communities with distinct senses of place and character that provide people with choices about where they live, work and play.

With each use, QoL is mentioned but is not clearly defined. The term ‘Community Infrastructure’ mentions QoL in relation to land, buildings, and structures and providing services such as health, education, recreation, socio-cultural activities, security and safety. These QoL needs are geared to the general population suggesting a one-size-fits all approach to a population with clearly different needs. The term ‘Human Services’, suggests specific services needed to improve QoL such as police services, emergency services, social assistance, pre-employment services, child-care, health care and cultural services. The final term, ‘Liveable/Liveability’ is the closest to explaining any form of QoL. Six needs similar to QoL needs are mentioned including housing, employment, shopping, health, transportation, and recreational needs. In chapter 5 of this document, these needs will be discussed and compared to the findings of this research project and of the literature review.

There are two issues within the ROP in regards to QoL measures and outcomes. The first issue is the Region of Waterloo identifies a need to increase QoL, but a lack of definition and explanation makes it difficult to measure an increase. The second issue relates to the suggestion of one-size-fits all approach. As stated in chapter 2, homeless youth have distinct needs compared to homeless adults. Individualized approaches, and needs assessments are strongly suggested for age-specific-population groups (Moos et al. 2015).

4.2.2 City of Kitchener: Official Plan Analysis

The goal of the City of Kitchener’s Official Plan (KOP) is,

“Kitchener tomorrow will continue to be the largest municipality in Waterloo Region with a population of greater than 300,000 by 2031. We will be a healthy and thriving City

and will be more walkable, more transit-supportive and ultimately more ‘urban’ and residents will enjoy a high quality of life (KOP 2011 p.1-5).”

The goal of this plan is to, “provide an environment than can help enhance the quality of life of the residents of Kitchener” (KOP 2011 p.2-4). The KOP’s vision is, “Together we will build an innovative, vibrant, attractive, safe, complete and healthy community contributing to an exceptional quality of life” (KOP 2011 p.2-1). The objectives and policies strive to, “to improve the quality of life for the residents of Kitchener” (KOP 2011 p.3-1). All four of these passages have been pulled directly from the KOP and have used the term QoL, however, no definition or explanation is provided in the entire three hundred-page documents.

The City of Kitchener identified nine goals to enhance the QoL of residents in the city to achieve a complete and healthy community. The nine goals are as follows, (KOP 2011 p.24)

- “Contribute to an enhanced high quality of life”
- “Ensure land use compatibility”
- “Ensure our community will be functional”
- “Ensure an aesthetically pleasing community”
- “Foster a strong and diverse economy”
- “Ensure environmental and viability and sustainability”
- “Encourage culture and diversity”
- “Encourage good planning”
- “Ensure mix of land uses, employment and housing types”

Each one of these goals aims to increase the overall QoL of residents but no youth-specific recommendations were provided. There was also no mention of any public consultation with young people as part of the City of Kitchener’s consultation process.

The KOP identifies aspects of improving QoL in all of the following subsections, housing, public health, source water protection, natural heritage system, parks, open space and community infrastructure, urban forests, arts and culture, urban design, neighbourhood traffic management (traffic calming), industrial employment, agriculture, open space, growth management plan, and community improvement plans. (KOP 2011 p. A-4) The following direct passages have been pulled from the KOP (2011),

- “The policies of this plan will support the provision of suitable, affordable and attractive living accommodations for all its residents as housing is a basic necessity and determinant of **quality of life**” (p.4-1).
- “Strive to foster a vibrant and healthy community and high **quality of life**” (p.5-3).
- “The built environment and its impact on **quality of life**, social cohesion and well- being” (p.6-1).
- “Clean and plentiful drinking-water is essential for maintaining human health, economic prosperity and a high **quality of life** in Kitchener” (p.7-1).
- “This green infrastructure is just as valued and valuable as other municipal assets such as roads and sewers, critical to a high **quality of life**, and deserving of careful planning, management and adequate resourcing” (p.7-3).
- “The City is committed to protecting, conserving, restoring and enhancing its Natural Heritage System which contributes to the character of the city and the **quality of life** of its residents.” (p.7-4).
- “The provision of community infrastructure and facilities is essential for the enhancement of the **quality of life** for residents in Kitchener” (p.8-1).
- “The City recognizes the importance of parks, open space, multi-use pathways and trails

as key elements in providing the Kitchener residents with a healthy physical environment and a high **quality of life**” (p.8-1).

- “The treed urban landscape provides significant ecological, social, and economic benefits including but not limited to: improved air and water quality; reduced erosion and stormwater runoff; energy conservation; habitat and food for wildlife; improved health and **quality of life**; enhanced livability; recreation opportunities, shade; aesthetic and heritage value” (p.8-9).
- “The City recognizes that the pursuit, enhancement and retention of arts and cultural effects and activities are integral to its attractiveness as a place of business and tourism, the **quality of life** of its residents and the overall health of the community” (p.10-1).
- “Kitchener will be a city designed for people. The City is committed to achieving a high standard of urban design, architecture and place-making to positively contribute to **quality of life**, environmental viability and economic vitality.” (p.11-1).
- “To reduce the negative impacts of vehicular traffic on the **quality of life** for residents in existing and planned neighborhoods” (p.13-20).
- “Industrial employment has always been an important component of Kitchener’s economy and has played a vital role in the city. Industrial employment is integral to the development, growth and vitality of the local economy which is closely linked to the **quality of life** of the residents of the city” (p.15-38).
- “Although they only comprise a small area of the city relative to other areas of the city they are important to the local economy with respect to employment and food production and contribute to our **quality of life**” (p.15-49).
- “Open Space is a valuable resource to the community and contributes to the **quality of**

life in Kitchener” (p.15-56).

- “To ensure that growth contributes positively to our **quality of life**, the Kitchener Growth Management Strategy coordinates the provision of infrastructure and services with new development” (p.17-13).
- “Community Improvement Plans identify specific projects that need to be carried out in a particular area to improve the **quality of life** and the built environment in an area, setting out the course of action of for the redevelopment, rehabilitation or improvement of the area” (p.17-19).

The term QoL was mentioned seventeen times throughout the KOP, however no clear definition was provided in the official plan or in the glossary. A definition of QoL is needed to better understand the goals and targets set by the planning documents.

4.2.3 City of Waterloo: Official Plan Analysis

The goal of the City of Waterloo Official Plan (WOP), “Is the primary long-range, comprehensive municipal planning document that outlines a framework for land use decision-making for the City of Waterloo (the City)” (WOP 2014 p.19). A large difference is present between the KOP and the WOP regarding QoL references. QoL is not mentioned in the WOP until the discussion of Chapter 4: Arts, Culture, Heritage, Recreation and Leisure. The chapters introductory paragraph states, “Planning for the appropriate facilities, programs and services will ensure that each component contributes to the future **quality of life** within the City, recognizing that healthy social and cultural systems are, in turn, linked to other aspects of the City’s overall health, including the environment and economy” (WOP 2014 p.70). QoL is minimally mentioned in the following two subsections of the WOP including the cultural heritage policies and transit travel section.

In Chapter 7: Economy the introductory paragraph also mentions the term QoL. The introduction states, “A community’s quality of life, supported by healthy economic, environmental, social and cultural systems, is becoming increasingly important in attracting and retaining a skilled and knowledgeable work force” (WOP 2014 p.105). In a list of objectives, QoL is mentioned only once, “Planning for spaces, services and activities that encourage interaction and creativity, support innovation, and contribute to a high **quality of life**” (WOP 2014 p.105). The following passages mentioning QoL have been pulled from the remaining WOP (2014) document.

- “Identifies a system of natural areas and open spaces, including Major Urban Greenlands, that enhance **quality of life** and public health” (p.140)
- “In addition to hazards, noise, vibration, and light emissions have the potential to adversely impact human health and the overall **quality of life**” (p.144).
- “Our **quality of life** is dependent upon the quality of our air” (p.163)
- “Minimize short and long term impacts of aggregate extraction on the natural environment and the **quality of life** for existing and future residents” (p.109).
- “This Plan recognizes that access to a range of housing contributes to the **quality of life** within a City” (p.176).
- “The City’s Natural System is valued for its contribution to the City’s character and high **quality of life**, the invaluable ecological functions it performs, as well as the scientific, recreational and therapeutic role the Natural System provides” (p.227).

QoL is mentioned only eight times in the WOP, and in every instance the term QoL relates to natural resources, built environments, air quality, or other ecological factors. In comparison more social planning influences are discussed in the KOP than in the WOP.

The term 'youth' is only mentioned once in the entire WOP, which is troubling as the City of Waterloo houses two major Canadian universities and one Ontario college with thousands of young people. The WOP states, "Post-secondary educational institutions are encouraged to create campus master plans in consultation with the City, surrounding neighborhoods, and other stakeholders" (WOP 2014 p.111). The WOP suggests consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders, but students and young people are not mentioned. Public consultation is frequently discussed in the WOP, however the term consultation is usually connected with internal committees, governmental agencies and other organizations. Public consultation is only mentioned once in the entire WOP,

"Notwithstanding any provincial and federal requirements for notice/public consultation regarding energy production facilities, the City encourages proponents to undertake sufficient **public notice and consultation** so as to ensure members of the community and the City have sufficient opportunity to provide comment on proposed facilities to the proponent and/or approval authority" (WOP 2014 p.162).

The terms public involvement, public investment and public interest are often used in replacement of public consultation. Throughout the WOP an abundant lack of detail exists pertaining to broader social issues such as homelessness, and other at risk populations. Overall the WOP is lacking a youth focus and key pieces of public consultation minimally discuss any QoL needs.

4.2.4 The Cambridge Official Plan

The term QoL is not defined in the Cambridge Official Plan (COP) 2012, and the term QoL is only used three times in the entire 345 page document. The term QoL is used once in Chapter 4: Cultural Heritage Resources and twice in Chapter 7: Parks and Open Space. The

following direct have been pulled from the COP (2012) document.

- “Promote built heritage as a key component of the city’s local tourism and quality of life for existing and new residents” (p.83).
- “Parks and open spaces are an indispensable component of a complete community and contribute significantly to the health, economic, environmental, social and quality of life aspects of the city” (p.122).
- “A trail network is an important part of the quality of life in the city” (p.124).

The use of the term QoL in the COP is only related to tourism, parks and cities and it is not used to describe the general population or vulnerable population groups.

After analyzing the COP, it was determined that no youth focus was identified. However there is mention of the senior population in regards to housing which states, “Council may encourage the development of such lands for a range of independent and community housing geared to senior citizens including freehold rowhouse units, apartment units, a retirement home and recreation centre, and a long term care facility” (COP 2012 p.181). This passage identifies that age specific groups are mentioned in this plan but not the youth population.

The term QoL was only mentioned three times in the COP, therefore a focus was not on improving QoL as other official plans have had. A brief focus on youth is recommended to be included in the COP as well as a definition of QoL in regards to the overall goals of the plan.

4.2.5 Discussion

Repeatedly in all four planning documents the term QoL is mentioned however the term is never defined or explained in anyway. In the ROP, WOP, KOP and COP, the term QoL is used multiple times in the context of sustaining, supporting, increasing and enhancing QoL. An abundance of direct passages have been pulled from the KOP, WOP, ROP and COP when each

plan mentions the term QoL. Most times the QoL references relate to the general QoL of living experiences in the city planning documents. The term QoL is mentioned multiple times, but it seems to loose meaning and lead the public to confusion of what the term QoL means. The term QoL can be viewed as a crucial part of planning documents but a clear meaning needs to be identified in order to increase QoL across the community.

The QoL recommendations in the ROP, WOP, KOP and COP do not specifically apply to the homeless youth population. The issues identified through the community consultation for youth had minimal youth involvement. No mentioned of QoL was discussed in the context of homeless youth. Overall there is no evidence that youth were involved in the community consultation process of the official plans. Also no direct measure of QoL has been identified either for the general population or for the homeless youth population.

After an analysis of the ROP, KOP, WOP and COP it has been identified there are varying degrees of discussion around the youth population, public consultation and QoL. In the ROP, a lack of public consultation and engagement exists with young people and a portrayal of a one-size-fits all approach for social issues. The youth population is identified as a population in need and requires specific needs in the ROP and KOP, but not in the WOP or the COP. The largest issue emerging from this document analysis is the lack of definition of the term QoL. In every planning document analyzed, no clear definition, or explanation is identified. It is easy for planners to use the term QoL in planning documents but if there is no clarity behind it, there is little purpose.

Planning literature that has been around since the 1960s identified advocacy planning and communicative planning as key turning points in the planning field. These models laid the groundwork to move towards feedback-driven systems and away from expert-driven systems

previously discussed in chapter 2. The social planning field has grown and evolved around helping people in need using systemic methods. Social planners have moved towards an interdisciplinary approach to solve larger social issues such as homelessness. With this shift in views and perspectives, comes an emerging increased level of care for vulnerable and at-risk populations.

4.3 Document Analysis: Social Planning Document Findings

4.3.1 Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy 2016

The Ontario Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy is a provincial strategy originally created in 2010 and is updated yearly. The most recent update was released in 2016. This is the provincial document aiming to shape the broader movement of local organizations to mobilize and end the housing crisis Canada is currently facing. This strategy supports the provinces goals “of ending chronic homelessness in 10 years, and charts a bold, co-ordinated, and progressive course towards housing policy and programs that are relevant to current realities and reflect new research and best practices” (OLTAHS 2016 p.5). The updated vision states, “Every person has an affordable, suitable and adequate home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family and build strong communities (OLTAHS 2016 p.7). The current goals of this strategy include the following six aspects. (OLTAHS 2016 p.12-13)

- “An appropriate and sustainable supply of housing”
- “An equitable, portable system of financial assistance”
- “People-centered, efficient housing programs”
- “Developing an Indigenous Housing Strategy”
- “Ending homelessness”
- “Achieving an evidence-informed system”

One of the identified goals of this strategy was to end homelessness. A total investment goal of \$324 Million dollars is planned to attain this goal by 2019 (OLTAHS 2016). Many of these goals align with the literature emphasizing individual-based approaches on a larger scale in communities across Ontario (Moos et al 2015, Harkness 2013, Hammond and Zimmerman 2012). This document repeatedly emphasizes the importance of ending homelessness across Ontario and Canada.

In regards to the prevention and ending of youth homelessness in Ontario the OLTAHS (2016) states,

“This will help the government make progress on its long-term goal to end homelessness, prioritizing provincial action to reduce homelessness in four areas: youth, Indigenous people, chronic homelessness, and homelessness following transitions from provincially-funded institutions and service systems” (OLTAHS 2016 p. 20).

The youth population is identified as a key population to focus on when aiming to end homelessness along with indigenous peoples, the chronically homeless and those transitioning from provincial institutions such as jails and hospitals (OLTAHS 2016). The document also identifies seniors as a priority population as needing housing and age-specific services (OLTHAS 2016). The province plans to create more supportive housing for all homeless populations, but the youth population is specifically identified. The OLTAHS (2016), has a small section on youth homelessness prevention where the strategy states, “Ontario will engage with young people – including youth with lived experience of homelessness – to inform future actions” (OLTAHS 2016 p.40). This proves to be important, as homeless youth should also be viewed as experts in homelessness not just expert advisory panels made up of professionals and academics. However no specific mention of youth consultation in the document is discussed. The strategy

stated the province of Ontario, “received feedback and advice at over 30 stakeholder meetings and from 113 formal written submissions that reflect the housing needs of Ontarians across the province.” There is no statement regarding specific age groups that were consulted therefore it is unclear if youth were consulted during this process.

Interestingly enough, the term QoL is only used once throughout this document and when it is used it refers to homeless youth.

- “In May 2015, Ontario provided one-time grant funding of \$390,000 over two years to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Foundation on behalf of the Toronto Homeless Youth Transitions Collaborative for the development of a strategy to support youth leaving homelessness. The research pilot project aims to improve the health and quality of life of 30 previously homeless youth” (OLTHAS 2016 p.42).

The specific research study mentioned was not located for consultation with this research paper as the study may still be ongoing or the results are not yet publically available. Since the term QoL is used in a provincial document aiming to assist with the ending of homelessness a clearer definition is needed to better understand the meaning of QoL from a homeless youth perspective.

4.3.2 Region of Waterloo: Housing Action Plan 2014-2024

The Region of Waterloo published a Housing Action Plan in 2013 to address housing issues from 2014 to 2024. This plan got its name and objectives through the mandate to reflect requirements set out by the Province’s “Ontario Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy” (ROWHAP 2013 p.1). This plan identifies the homeless as a population in need of housing and other services, however this document does not focus specifically on the homeless population. A point discussing federal and provincial barriers includes a lack of funding, and greater spending on interventions for homelessness rather than on preventative measures for ensuring supply of

housing that is affordable (ROWHAP 2013). A statement such as this at the regional level brings into question if the provincial governments goals and municipal goals are on the same page.

The community consultation process of the ROWHAP (2013) is clearly discussed in the plan. Three main consultation methods were used to gather information including, online surveys, community forums and in person meetings. The most interesting consultation method includes the in person meetings because certain population groups are identified. In the plan these meetings are described by explaining,

“These consultations were held with Aboriginal stakeholders, the Employment and Income Services Advisory Committee (comprised of individuals with lived experience of living with low income), domestic violence front-line workers, as well as realtors and the homebuilders associations” (ROWHAP 2013 p.3).

The aboriginal stakeholders were consulted however other ethnic or racial groups were not. It is interesting to see that domestic violence front line workers as well as realtors were consulted, but no key informants from the shelter or homelessness systems or any other vulnerable sector were consulted. In total seven issues were identified including, (ROWHAP 2013 p.5-6)

- “The lack of housing that is affordable within the region, including the availability and range of housing options.”
- “The lack of more responsive funding and strategic investments.”
- “The need for more supports to obtain and maintain housing, particularly for those living with the instability of low income, homelessness, mental health and addiction challenges, or other forms of marginalization.”
- “Challenges with landlords, including perceived discrimination and lack of attention to property maintenance.”

- “The lack of accessible housing for people living with mobility challenges or disabilities.”
- “Transportation, including the anticipated influence of Light Rail Transit (LRT) on affordability and the challenges created by dependency on public transportation for low income households.”
- “Challenges finding safe and secure housing.”

There was no mention of youth homelessness as a prominent community challenge, however other specific groups are mentioned including seniors, aboriginals and immigrants. This may be due to the lack of youth, youth workers or youth organizations consulted during the consultation process. The other specific groups many have been identified in regards to their visibility in the community through media and visibility. It could be helpful if more direct and local research was completed with homeless youths in the Region of Waterloo to better inform planning documents

The term QoL is used only twice in the ROWHAP (2013), once in the vision statement and the other in subsection 5:housing affordability.

- “We envision well-designed, safe, healthy, diversified housing and communities that enhance the quality of life for everyone in the Region of Waterloo” (ROWHAP 2013 p.18).
- “Having a full range of housing options to meet the needs of all residents is a key contributor to maintaining a high quality of life, a vibrant local economy and a healthy community. (ROWHAP 2013 p.48).

There are no other references to the term QoL other than in these two instances. A definition of the term QoL is not provided anywhere in this document. To better understand the meaning of the term QoL a clearer definition or explanation is needed.

4.3.3 Region of Waterloo: Homelessness Frameworks

The Region of Waterloo published, a report titled *All Roads Lead to Home: The Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region in 2012*. Two documents were published simultaneously; one discussing the action framework while the other discussed the policy framework. The primary goal for this strategy is to end homelessness in Waterloo Region. There are also three secondary goals identified, to support a shared approach to ending homelessness, to support people experiencing homelessness or at risk of housing loss due to housing stability and to strengthen the housing stability system. The purpose of the strategy was a response to the collective voice calling for a shift in thinking and doing to end homelessness. (SPPPA 2012)

Four strategic directions related to homelessness are identified in the *Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region*, strategic directions 2,3,5 and 6. “Strategic Direction #2 - Promote a shared approach to ending homelessness with community systems that serve specific population groups” (SPPPA ii 2012 p.15). Under this strategic direction, the youth population is identified in the Region of Waterloo as a population in need. “Strategic Direction #3 – Promotes a shared approach to ending homelessness with community systems that provide key resources related to housing stability” (SPPPA ii 2012 p.21). Six key community systems are identified, education, income assistance, employment support, emergency social services, health care and justice. “Strategic Direction #5 – provides housing stability services to end homelessness, this strategic direction identifies five key resources in the community” (SPPPA ii 2012 p.31). The five resources include emergency shelters, street outreach, housing retention, rehousing, time limited residences and supportive housing. Currently in the Region of Waterloo the first four resources are readily available however there is lack of supportive housing services.

“Strategic Direction #6 – Tailor approaches according to people’s strength of association with homelessness” (SPPPA ii 2012 p.34). This strategic direction calls for a need for individualized approaches to specific populations. It appears these four strategic directions were created with the view of a one-size-fits all approach.

Community consultation is discussed in regards to the provided input on the creation of the strategy. Three open community forums were held; the turnout for the first two was roughly 40 attendees and the third was around 60 attendees. No distinction of age was identified because no information on age was collected during the forums. The youth population has been repeatedly identified as a population ‘in need’ in the Region of Waterloo. The Region of Waterloo reported between 2004-2007, youths age 12-24 were identified as ‘in need’ and between 2008-2011 more housing was identified as a need for homeless youth. There is no doubt the need for youth specific services in the Region of Waterloo have been identified; however age-specific needs have not been.

The STEP (Support to End Persistent Homelessness) program was introduced in 2008. The goal of the STEP program was to address barriers of housing stability at the individual and systems level (SPPPA ii 2012). The STEP program reached 300 individuals ages 16-82 in the Region of Waterloo and one of the highlights the participants identified was, “Increased choice and control as well as an overall increase in quality of life were important outcomes for participants” (SPPPA ii 2012 p.22).

The Region of Waterloo identifies the needs of different life stages and their relation to housing stability in the strategy. Youth are identified as facing ‘unique challenges’ which impacts their housing stability. This strategy identifies the common challenges homeless youth currently face including, “abuse, family breakdown, problems in school, problematic substance

use, mental health issues, and involvement in the judicial system” (SPPPA ii 2012 p.109). Each one of these challenges closely corresponds with QoL themes previously identified.

The youth-specific population needs have been identified through “Action #14 – Support the youth system to invest in housing stability for youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of housing loss” (SPPPA ii 2012 p.14). Five issues were identified through community consultation, (SPPPA ii 2012 p.19).

- “Lack of resources for family reconnection”
- “Lack of resources for youth transitioning from the child welfare systems and who are at risk of housing loss”
- “Lack of employment opportunities”
- “Lack of housing retention”
- “Lack of resources for female youth who are not pregnant, youth who identify as transgendered and youth with mental health issues and or problematic substance abuse”

All five issues relate to QoL and the overall measurement and determination of understanding youths QoL. However they tend to only focus on housing, employment, and family, in turn misses a few key QoL needs.

The Region of Waterloo does not define the term QoL or a method to measure QoL, yet the term QoL is mentioned multiple times throughout the ROP and the Homelessness Strategies. Major concerns with this strategy include lack of youth consultation, lack of a youth focus and an unclear meaning of QoL. Planners often use the term QoL in planning documents however they rarely define the term. Aspects of QoL are almost always mentioned in planning documents, but they are not always organized in a manner that is easily identifiable as a model, framework or approach.

4.3.4 Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy Summaries (2007-2010)

This document is a series of shorter publications made by the Region of Waterloo which summarizes the key findings from the document titled, *All Roads Lead to Home: A Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region*. The overall focus of the strategy is to provide housing stability focusing on housing, income and supports (HHSSS 2010). Homelessness in the Region of Waterloo is the main topic and rationale for this publication; a youth focus is also evident. The main purpose of analyzing this series of documents is to better understand the Region of Waterloo's efforts to end homelessness within other vulnerable population groups. A discussion of eleven total vulnerable population groups exists within this series, which are outlined below (HHSSS 2010 p. 1).

- “Focus on Aboriginal Populations”
- “Focus on Economic Homelessness”
- “Focus on LGBTQ Populations”
- “Focus on Mental Health”
- “Focus on Newcomers to Canada”
- “Focus on Older Adults”
- “Focus on Persistent Homelessness”
- “Focus on People with Disabilities”
- “Focus on Rural Populations”
- “Focus on Substance Use”
- “Focus on Youth”

Each of these eleven vulnerable populations exists in the Region of Waterloo and social planners are working towards goals revolving around ending homelessness in each population group.

There is no mention of community consultation with any realm of the public as this is a summary of a larger document, which was discussed in the previous sub-section 4.3.3 Region of Waterloo: Homelessness Frameworks.

The term QoL is mentioned in this document five times which is not surprising, as this term is used often in the longer version of the document. The first and second use of the term QoL fall under the introduction section of the homelessness strategies which state,

- “Homelessness has high human and social costs. Homelessness severely reduces **quality of life** and people experiencing homelessness have a death rate that is two to ten times higher than the rest of the population” (HHSSS 2010 p.1).
- “Recognize that housing stability protects and increases our community’s economic vitality and **quality of life**” (HHSSS 2010 p.2).

It is interesting how fewer than three of the vulnerable population groups include a subcategory of QoL factors. These factors are briefly discussed in the subsections of aboriginals, individuals with mental health issues, and newcomers to Canada. The following are direct passages pulled from the HHSSS (2010) document.

- “**Quality of life** factors. Research has shown that Aboriginal people experience higher levels of poverty, poorer physical and mental health, lower educational attainment and higher unemployment than non-Aboriginal Canadians (Wente 2000)” (p.3).
- “**Quality of life** factors. Individuals with serious mental health issues experience higher levels of unemployment and poverty compared to other Canadians (CAMH, 2009)” (p.9).
- “**Quality of life** factors. Newcomers experience higher levels of unemployment, poverty

and substandard housing compared to other Canadian residents. Despite being more highly educated than the Canadian-born population, newcomers are more likely to have lower incomes than the general population (Region of Waterloo, 2006)” (p.11).

These three passages signify and identify a need that different populations have unique QoL needs. However there is no discussion of the term QoL under the category of youth. This research study aims to help better understand what QoL means to the homeless youth population.

4.3.5 Promising Principles and Practices in Housing Options for Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Waterloo Region 2010

The document titled, Promising Principles and Practices in Housing Options for Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Waterloo Region (PPP) was first published in 2010 by the Region of Waterloo’s Social Planning, Policy and Program Administration. The purpose of this report is "to investigate current youth-specific services and housing options in order to identify areas for improving housing stability for youth 12 to 24 years of age experiencing homelessness in Waterloo Region” (PPP 2010 p.1) As a result of this report, six principles were identified from the PPP (2010 p.1) document.

- “Provide continuum of accessible supports”
- “Establish trusting relationships”
- “Adopt a low demand approach to housing stability programs”
- “Link education, income, and housing supports”
- “Provide opportunities for youth engagement”
- “Promote collaboration between agencies”

These six principles make up outcomes similar to those QoL needs previously identified in the research literature. There is no question if there is a homelessness focus in this document because

the entire plan is based on homelessness. Therefore there is no focus on the other vulnerable population groups such as seniors, immigrants or refugees.

The youth consultation process was evident in this document. Overall 30 youth and 11 service providers were consulted during this process. All youth interviews were however conducted in a focus group setting and the interviews with the service providers were facilitated over the phone. This challenge was also identified in the Palepu et al. 2012 study with the possibility of groupthink and the lack of personalized needs being communicated. The PPP (2010) research is very similar to my research study as the demographic is identical. A large difference includes the non-discussion of the term QoL in the PPP (2010) document. No use of the term QoL existed therefore no definition was provided. This document provides insight into the needs of homeless youth and services serving homeless youth in the Region of Waterloo. More studies need to be completed to help better understand the specific needs of the homeless youth populations and how to ultimately improve their QoL.

4.3.6 Understanding Homelessness Experienced by Youth in Waterloo Region: A Discussion Document 2007

This document was written in 2007 and was part of a seven document series, which provided background for the Region of Waterloo: Homelessness Frameworks previously discussed. The purpose of this document is to “examine the trends and issues of homelessness which are specific to youth in Waterloo Region” (Understanding Homelessness 2007 p.i). This document includes key local findings, including a definition of youth homelessness, prevalence rates, service capacities in the Region of Waterloo, gender and age trends, and youth issues and insights (Understanding Homelessness 2007). Youth homelessness is the general topic of this document and is discussed in many different capacities. In the first few pages of this document a

breakdown of age-specific population groups is provided that the Region of Waterloo: Homelessness Frameworks identifies. These age specific groups include youth 12-24, urban adults and older adults 50+.

The term QoL is not mentioned in the entire document however aspects of QoL are indirectly discussed. In one subsection titled “Youth Issues” eleven challenges are identified that youth are facing. These eleven challenges include the following pulled from the Understanding Homelessness (2007 p.30-44) document.

- “Abuse and other issues in the home”
- “Meeting immediate needs”
- “Involvement in criminal activities”
- “Substance use and mental health issues”
- “Sexual identity”
- “Risky sexual behavior”
- “Youth stages of development”
- “Transitioning from residential systems”
- “Education and employment”
- “Government Assistance”
- “Street Economy”

Many of these identified challenges youth are facing fall under the broader umbrella of QoL needs previously identified in the literature review section of this research paper. As a conclusion to the Understanding Homelessness (2007) document, eight insights were identified in the Understanding Homelessness (2007 p.45-52) document.

- “Prevention and Early Intervention”

- “Street Outreach”
- “Drop Ins”
- “Supporting youth in their transition”
- “Increasing attachment to the education system”
- “Addressing complex issues”
- “Enhancing services for 16 and 17 year olds”
- “Training staff on youth-specific issues”

Many of these insights closely align with the aspects of QoL needs identified in the research literature. Most of these insights were identified through key informants and other reports. Interviewing youth may provide a different perspective and a better understanding of how the homeless youth populations view QoL needs and measures.

4.3.7 Discussion

The identification of more youth engagement was first identified in the OLTAHS (2016), for this document no youth consultation practices were evident at the provincial level. The term QoL was first mentioned in the ROWHAP (2013) but no explanation or context was provided. In the Region of Waterloo: Homelessness Frameworks, youth consultation is discussed and completed but no youth-specific age group was consulted. The needs identified in this planning document closely began to align with the QoL needs identified in the literature review. In the HHSSS (2010) other specific age groups and vulnerable population groups were identified and some QoL factors were identified in those groups but not for the homeless youth population. In the PPP (2010) and Understanding Homelessness (2016) documents both had a homeless youth focus however no mention of the term QoL existed. A large number of needs were identified for homeless youth that fall under the broader umbrella of QoL needs according to other research

such as Palepu et al. (2012) and WHO (1997). Overall consistency is required between the goals set by official planning documents and by the local social planning documents. At the provincial level there is a call for more youth engagement but on a local level this is not being implemented. This research study aims to fill that gap by using youth engagement practices to better inform local planning documents.

Overall inconsistent language is used across provincial and local social planning documents in regards to the term QoL and youth homelessness. A better connection is needed between the provincial and local level of social planning and official planning documents. It was often found that key informants were used to consult with the needs of the homeless youth population. The idea of viewing the homeless as an expert-based population is still not widely used or accepted. The idea of planners spending time in their communities gathering feedback from at risk populations often sounds time consuming and difficult. Sometimes planners may not be the right professionals to be gathering this information (Harkness 2013). More professionals from frontline working roles are needed, as they are the individuals who have prior built rapport and first hand experience with these vulnerable populations (Harkness 2013). Planners should seek out the assistance from other professionals in the community that have more rapport built with at risk and vulnerable population groups (Harkness 2013).

4.4 Most Important Needs Identified: OneRoof: Providing a Roof

The five most important needs identified by participants at OneRoof: PAR from this research study are family and friends, basic necessities, health, community resources, and self-care/awareness. Each of the QoL needs will be explained in more detail in the following subsections.

4.4.1 Family and Friends

At OneRoof: PAR, eight out of ten participants identified family and friends as their first most important aspect to their overall QoL. The general term family and friends includes children, friends, parents, siblings, grandparents and significant others. Many participants stated their family and friends are accepting and easy to talk too. Many youths at OneRoof: PAR are new and young parents, as a result obtaining custody of their child has become very important.

When the Interviewer asked Participant #1 - Jen, "What brings you happiness?"

Participant #1 – Jen, responded with, "My Daughter."

Many homeless youths who do not have permanent housing often lose custody of their child/children and are subsequently removed from the parent's care by the local Children's Aid Society.

Some participants identified the importance of significant others and their relationships. These youths often identify significant others as their only support systems as they may have been kicked out of their parents home. The OneRoof: PAR participants often seek, emotional support and guidance from anyone willing to provide it. Participant #16 – David, identified his marriage as important to his overall QoL. This particular participant identified his wife as an ongoing support, even though she is also facing homelessness. Family and friends are comprised of any individual who is at minimum emotionally supporting a homeless young person.

4.4.2 Basic Necessities

Every participant from OneRoof identified basic necessities as a key part of to their overall QoL. The term basic necessity usually includes access to food, water, shelter and income. Only one participant used the term basic necessity, however, remaining participants identified more specific terms directly related to basic necessities. Some of the QoL needs identified are

grouped together into this category as followed. Finding safe and affordable housing was mentioned by all nine of the OneRoof: PAR participants. Security was mentioned because in the shelter system especially at OneRoof items are sometimes stolen. Participant 12 - Kevin stated,

“When I was living at House of Friendship (another local shelter), the first thing I did was go out and by myself a lock. Having a sense of security helps you release some of the stress...not even just stress but being anxious as well” (Participant #12 - Kevin).

Many homeless youths have experienced traumatic past living experiences so finding safety and security in their living space is important. Finding a source of income was mentioned by nine of the OneRoof: PAR participants and six reported they wanted income to come from a job. Some youths did report social assistance as a form income, but no participants saw that as a long-term solution. Basic needs are crucial in supporting homeless youth to take the first steps away from homelessness.

4.4.3 Health

The relationship between health and QoL goes far back into the research literature as discussed in chapter 2. QoL is frequently motivated by health-related research; ten OneRoof participants mentioned something related to health and QoL. Participants identified medical supports in the form of doctors, dentists, and specialists. Participants also mentioned access to medication to stay sober from illegal drugs and to manage ongoing medical conditions.

“Access to medication is important because I need it, and thankfully ODSP covers it” (Participant #9 - Matthew).

Many homeless youths have been diagnosed with mental health issues and require medication, which can be a large barrier to someone with no income. One participant identified four key parts to health in relation to QoL.

“Having good physical, mental and spiritual health is very important as well as good emotional health” (Participant #12 – Kevin).

Mental health has become a growing issue in the past 10-15 years across all populations not just the homeless. Mental health awareness has pushed into social media, jobs, and education. The mental health of individuals experiencing homelessness has become a growing challenge in many communities. At OneRoof: PAR, once a week a mental health nurse goes in to talk with youths in one-on-one sessions. Many youths take advantage of this free service however there is never enough time for the nurse to see everyone. One participant identifies the need for a better overall healthcare system,

“The mental health system really needs an overhaul as well as the health care system” (Participant #9 - Matthew).

A few participants discussed access to healthy food options and not having enough money to buy fresh produce and meats. When the Interviewer asked Participant 3 - Brittany “what is important to your QoL” she responded,

“Access to healthy foods and dietary needs” (Participant #3 - Brittany).

Many food hampers consist of foods packed with preservatives and large amounts of sugar. It is an ongoing struggle to provide healthy foods in a sustainable capacity for homeless youths.

4.4.4 Community Resources

Many participants from OneRoof: PAR identified the importance of having access to different types of community resources. A reoccurring theme among many participants was access to the Internet. Not many youths have smartphones, however, they all have access to the Internet at shelters. Many youths use social media platforms and email as their primary communication methods with family, friends, and other youth services in the community.

Access to transit is a big challenge within the shelter community. Many youths have appointments across the Region of Waterloo for apartment viewings, medical appointments etc. Many youths often use the free bus tickets provided by shelters to visit friends and family but free tickets are very limited. Transit is an integral part of living an independent lifestyle. When youths have access to transit they are able to go to work, school, buy groceries and transport them home. Living a socially active lifestyle is now an option. More opportunities are needed to visit family or friends without fear of losing their bed or making a curfew.

4.4.5 Self-Care/Awareness

Many youths identified maintaining a positive outlook on life was important to get them through the tough times. Participant # 10 – Robert stated,

“It’s important to try to make others happy and try to keep myself happy at the same time”

(Participant #10 - Robert).

These youths are often facing the most difficult times in their life and are not only thinking about themselves but others as well. Some activities mentioned included playing and listening to music and writing poetry as outlets for their emotions. One participant identified the importance of surrounding himself with people who have a positive attitude and outlook on life.

“If you hang out with the wrong crowd, you're going to do the wrong things”

(Participant 9 - Matthew).

By surrounding himself with positive people it helps him be more positive and not think about his mental health issues. Many participants mentioned the power of forgiveness and the importance of forgiving and being understanding with friends and family. A positive attitude can go a long way so taking care of one's self is the first step to becoming independent.

4.5 Most Important Needs Identified: Lutherwood: Safe Haven

The five most common needs identified by participants at Lutherwood: SH from this research study are as followed family and friends, basic necessities, education, community resources, and self-care/awareness. Each QoL need is explained in the following subsections.

4.5.1 Family and Friends

At Lutherwood, four out of five participants identified friends or family as one of their top five QoL needs. Participants reported having supportive friends and parents are key to a positive social support system. A reoccurring theme identified was reconnecting and rebuilding relationships with their parents. Participant #5 - Jon identified a need for support from family and friends and to build a relationship with his parents,

“...I need support from family and friends” (Participant #5 – Jon).

“...Building a good relationship with my parents” (Participant #5 – Jon).

All participants from Lutherwood reported varied connections with their parents. The five participants reported the main reason they left home were due to arguments with their parents. Sometimes if a youth living is with their parents it may put them in danger. Participant #4 – Maria stated,

“Living with my mother is not safe or a stable environment” (Participant #4 – Maria).

This quote identifies the need for homeless youth to have a safe place to go if abuse or neglect is occurring at home. When taking into consideration the age of the Lutherwood: SH participants, they have been homeless for shorter periods of time and have experienced shorter periods of homelessness.

4.5.2 Basic Necessities

All participants from Lutherwood: SH identified some form of basic necessity in their top five QoL needs. Basic necessities were often referred to as having access to housing, food, and

water. Participants discussed wanting housing but also having a home. One participant identified the desire to have just one place to live and to not live a transient lifestyle.

“Not having a primary place to live and come home too” (Participant #5 - Jon).

Participant #6 – Derek, identified having access to enough food was important. Many shelters run on food donations, when meals are served they are by staff with what’s available on-site. Many study participants identified a desire for their own personal space and access to a safe place to sleep at night. The shelter system is often portrayed as unsafe and unstable, as a result some youths couch surf or sleep on the streets. Having access to a safe place to sleep at night, healthy food and clean water are the beginning steps that should be taken to move youths out of homelessness.

4.5.3 Education

All five participants at Lutherwood: SH identified education, as an important part of their QoL needs. Each participant was either currently enrolled in high school or had completed some high school while this research study was being completed. Participants identified the importance of staying focused in school even if they were homeless. Some participants identified education as their pathway out of homelessness. One participant, in particular, stated his goal was to go to law school and become a lawyer.

“I want to go to law school but get my bachelor's degree first, then become a lawyer”
(Participant #8 - Jacob).

At Lutherwood: SH three out of five participants identified a goal of attending post-secondary school by either going to college or university after high school.

Participant #6 – Derek, reported “to be successful in school he needs to have basic needs and a safe place to sleep” (Participant #6 Derek).

Generally a positive attitude towards school and education was shared among all participants from Lutherwood: SH. Getting a high school education helps young people in the job market to increase future employability. Education is generally not a priority for youths in the shelter system, as many are surviving day-to-day and not focusing on the future. Shelters should be providing an educational focus and providing ongoing supports for youths in shelters to complete their high school education or GED.

4.5.4 Community Resources

The QoL need identified, as ‘community resources’ are broad and varies between aspects depending on each participant. The reported community resources include access to transportation, mental health supports, entertainment, and leisure activities. At Lutherwood: SH, transportation was discussed by two of five participants; they reported the importance of transportation to access appointments and to hang out with friends and family. Homeless youth shelters are often located in the downtown core of a city; if a youth’s neighborhood were far away, it would be hard to maintain positive support systems.

One participant discussed government assistance in particular. Participant 8 - Jacob stated,

“I moved out of my parent’s home in order to get Ontario Works and then I want to get my own place” (Participant #8 - Jacob).

Social assistance such as Ontario Works is available to youths over the age of 16, however they must be working or attending school full-time to receive funding.

Some participants mentioned the importance of staff at the homeless shelters and youth facilities in the Region of Waterloo.

Participant 7# - Carine, stated she “was happy that the staff at Lutherwood: SH are supportive and caring”.

Sometimes it is forgotten how young these youth are and all they are searching for is more guidance and support. The staff members at the shelters usually take on the role of the responsible adult role model for the youths in need.

Resident #8 – Jacob, reported mental health as his number one need affecting his QoL. As discussed in the literature review, mental health has become a pressing issue within the entire community but specifically among the homeless community. Every day more individuals are facing mental health struggles. As a result, more services are provided for individuals with mental health struggles, but there are still not enough.

Access to entertainment and leisure activities are important to youth experiencing homelessness. Sometimes it is forgotten these youth are kids and need access to safe, fun and age-appropriate outlets and activities. Participants have identified, long boarding, working out, music, art, and poetry as important to their happiness and overall QoL.

4.5.5 Self-Care/Awareness

Self-care and awareness are often referred to as “me time.” Most participants identified the importance of finding self-worth and life meaning as important to their overall QoL.

Participant #6 - Derek stated, having access to exercise as important to his overall QoL. Many individuals forget to care for themselves especially when dealing with a crisis such as homelessness. A common goal identified by all participants at Lutherwood: SH was the need for independence. All participants had the desire to do better for themselves and to get themselves into better situations. Even though some participants were still aware of their situation and still had the determination to improve their QoL.

4.5.6 Combined Findings

The findings from participants at Lutherwood: SH and OneRoof: PAR participants are

very similar with only notable difference. Participants at Lutherwood: SH identified getting an education as an essential part of their QoL while participants at OneRoof: PAR did not. In comparison, most participants at OneRoof: PAR identified health and access to health services as an important part of their QoL while participants from Lutherwood: SH did not. As a result, four common needs were identified between the participant cohorts, family and friends, basic necessities, community resources, and self-care/awareness. Health and education were added to the overall list to include both groups respectively. The combined QoL needs of both OneRoof: PAR and Lutherwood: SH are as followed:

- Family and Friends
- Basic Necessities
- Community Resources
- Self-Care/Awareness
- Health
- Education

4.6 Survey Results and Statistical Breakdown

The total number of survey participants in total is sixteen; five from Lutherwood: SH and eleven from OneRoof: PAR One participant's results from OneRoof: PAR was not used due to the participant dropping out (N=15). Thirteen interviews were audio recorded and two were not. The questions, responses, statistics and interpretations is broken down in the following subsections by each shelter separately and then combined.

4.6.1 Question 1 – Age

The average age of all participants was 19.5 years old, while the average age of OneRoof: PAR participants was 20.9, and Lutherwood: SH was 16.8 years old. The age range at OneRoof was 19-24 and Lutherwood 16-18. The median age of all participants was 19 years old; OneRoof: PAR 20 years old, and Lutherwood: SH 17. The modal age for all participants is 20

years old, OneRoof: PAR is 20 years old, and at Lutherwood is 17 years old.

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
Average	20.9	16.8	19.5 years old
Median	20	17	19 years old
Mode	20	17	20 years old

4.6.2 Question 2 – Gender

The overall gender variation between OneRoof: PAR and Lutherwood: SH participants are 9 males and 6 females.

4.6.3 Question 3 – Ethnic Background

The ethnic background of all participants is 10 participants identify as Canadian, 3 identifies as other, 1 identifies as Aboriginal and 1 identifies as of European Descent. Most participants identified as Canadian even though they were part of a visual minority group.

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
Canadian	5	5	10
European Descent	1	0	1
Aboriginal	1	0	1
Other	3	0	3

4.6.4 Question 4 – Highest Educational Attainment Level

The majority of participants identified their education attainment level as having "some high school". Only one participant reported having an elementary education as their highest level of achievement. Only one participant had completed high school and had a high school diploma, and only one participant reported having some post-secondary education.

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
Elementary	1	0	1
Some High School	7	5	12
Some Post Secondary	1	0	1
Other (Completed Post Secondary Diploma)	1	0	1

4.6.5 Question 5 – Current Living Situation

Most participants reported ‘a homeless shelter’ as their current living situation, which is not surprising as both data collection sites were youth shelters. It is important to note even these youths may have been accessing services at a shelter, they may be in the process of moving back in with their family or finding their own place to live. One youth used the term ‘couch surfing’ to explain his current living situation, which is very common among the homeless and street youth community. Many homeless youths hop between friend’s couches on different nights to avoid using the shelter system or finding a permanent residence. The number of youth who couch surf is unknown as it is very difficult to track. Youth under the age of 16 are more likely to couch surf because fewer services are available for the younger sub-population (Evenson 2009).

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
Housing designated for homeless	0	0	0
Homeless Shelter	8	4	12
Street (No Shelter)	0	0	0
Market housing	1	1	2
Couch Surfing (Response Added)	1	0	1

4.6.6 Question 6 - Employment Status

Across both shelter groups 11 youths identified as unemployed. Two youths identified with working casual or part-time while two other youth identified with volunteer or unpaid work. The youth who identified as a volunteer, volunteered at the shelter he resided at.

4.6.7 Question 7 - Home Address Status

In total 11 youths reported not having a home address while 4 did. Most youths who reside in shelters are seeking a home environment. As a result the shelters address may be used for a primary living address or their emergency contact. Most youths also use the shelter’s address as an address for sending and receiving mail. (SHC 2016)

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
Yes	1	3	4
No	9	2	11

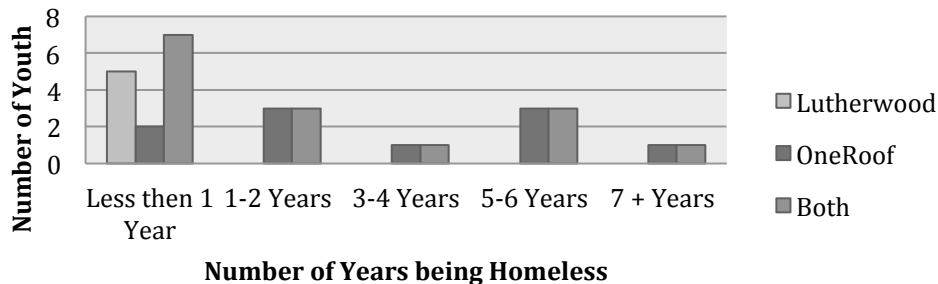
4.6.8 Question 8 – Length of Homelessness

The majority of participants in this study identified as being homeless for less than one year; the range varied from 1 day to 12 months. One participant reported during his interview, it was his first morning waking up in the shelter and the first day he was homeless. All participants surveyed from Lutherwood: SH reported being homeless for less than one year. This coincides with Lutherwood's age range of 12-18 in comparison to OneRoof's age range of 16-25. The data reports the older the age, the longer a youth is likely to be homeless.

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
Less than 1 Year	2	5	7
1-2 Years	3	0	3
3-4 Years	1	0	1
5-6 Years	3	0	3
7 + Years	1	0	1

Figure 4. Length of Homelessness (Chart)

Length of Homelessness



4.6.9 Question 9 – Involvement with the Justice System

9 youths reported that they had been involved in the justice system in the past and 6 did not. No youths at Lutherwood: SH reported ever being involved in the justice system while more

than half of the youths at OneRoof: PAR reported they did.

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
No	4	5	9
Yes	6	0	6

4.6.10 Question 10 – Crown Ward Rates

Only one youth reported being a crown ward while the other 13 did not. One youth stated he was not sure if he was a crown ward and he was in the process of finding out.

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
No	8	5	13
Yes	1	0	1
Unknown	1	0	1

4.6.11 Question 11 – Contact with Parents/Legal Guardians

Most youths expressed not having contact with their parents or legal guardians. All participants at Lutherwood: SH stated they had contact with their parents, while only 2 participants at OneRoof: PAR did not. In total 13 youth stated they did not have frequent contact with their parents.

4.6.12 Question 12 – Relationship with Parents/Legal Guardians

This question asked youth about their relationship with their parents. Less youth reported having relationships with their parents or legal guardians compared to having contact with them. Even though their parents may communicate with their child, they may not report having a relationship. In total four youth reported not having a relationship with their parents/legal guardians while eleven did.

Participant # 4 – Maria stated, "I don't really talk to my mom and dad, I haven't seen my real dad and I only talk to my mom." Participant # 9 – Matthew stated, "My mother supports me with bus tickets and money for energy drinks... just to get by." Some parents are trying to be

supportive of their child’s choices or situation of homeless, which is the larger percentile. This is expected, as most parents do not like to see their children living on the streets, resulting in continued support for their child.

4.6.13 Question 13 – Reasons for Homelessness

When participants were asked, "In one word, please describe why you identify as homeless" the most reoccurring response was ‘being kicked out’. The second most reoccurring response was ‘other parent and drug related issues’. Many youths reported being kicked out due to parent related issues. Participant # 7 Carine stated her reason for being homeless was, "Cause my parents moved." She explained she wanted to stay in the Region of Waterloo to remain in school. Participant #8 Jacob indicated that, “I moved out by choice, umm... home just isn't enjoyable... I guess I’m not completely homeless, but I consider home to be inhabitable, I'm here to get Ontario Works and move out independently”. Participant # 10 – Robert and Participant # 11 – Amy, reported being kicked out of their houses. Robert said, "I got kicked out of my parent's house" while Amy stated, "I was kicked out when I was 16." The primary reasons for leaving their family homes were parent-child conflicts. Participant #3, Brittany, provided the most alarming response. Brittany reported her parents told her, "It's your turn because both of my parents went through homelessness and its pretty much we went through it so it’s your turn to go through it.” Teenagers are expected to have arguments with their parents, but being put on the street because of arguments needs to stop.

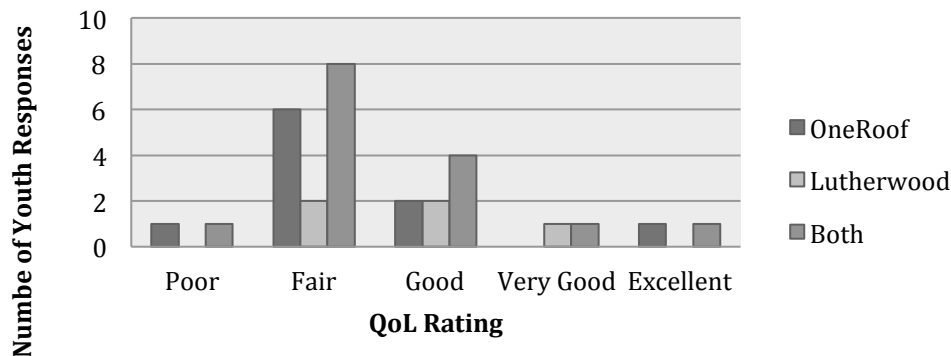
Table 10. Reasons for Homelessness			
	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
Drugs	3	0	3
Kicked Out	4	2	6
Parent Related	1	2	3
Moved out by Choice	0	1	1
Mental Health	1	0	1
Not Answered	1	0	1

4.6.14 Question 14 – QoL Rating

The final question was pulled from the WHOQOL-BREF Tool (Garcia-Rea, E. and LePage J. 2010). Most participants described their QoL as "fair." Only one youth answered, "excellent" however, this participant appeared noticeably intoxicated. As a result, this may have temporarily altered his state of mind and skewed his ability to respond.

	OneRoof: PAR	Lutherwood: SH	Both
Excellent	1	0	1
Very Good	0	1	1
Good	2	2	4
Fair	6	2	8
Poor	1	0	1

Figure 5. Reported Quality of Life Rating (Chart)
Reported Quality of Life Rating



4.7 Group Demographics

4.7.1 Lutherwood: SafeHaven

Overall the group demographics from participants at Lutherwood: SH appeared to be experiencing shorter lengths of homelessness and a more average distribution of QoL. When interviewing the youths, they appeared in good spirits with positive attitudes. Most participants believed their situation was only temporary and would only be at the shelter for a short period of time. All participants reported, some high school as their highest educational attainment level.

This was an expected result as all participants fell into the age-range of the high school demographic (Age 14-18). No youths at Lutherwood: SH reported involvement in the justice system or being a crown ward. All Lutherwood: SH participants reported homelessness for less than one year. The average length of homelessness reported by Lutherwood participants was 2-4 months. 4 out of 5 participants reported having contact with their parents while all Lutherwood: SH participants reported having relationships with their parents. The most common reason participants attributed their homelessness to was getting kicked out and or having a disagreement with their parents. Both reasons revolve around parent-child conflict, which is anticipated by parents throughout the teenage years.

4.7.2 OneRoof: Providing a Roof

Overall the group demographics of OneRoof: PAR participants appeared to be experiencing more chronic homelessness compared to participants from Lutherwood: SH. OneRoof: PAR participants reported an overall lower QoL compared to Lutherwood: SH. The educational attainment level was broader at OneRoof: PAR, and most participants reported having, "some high school" education. One participant reported having an elementary education, one reported having completed secondary school and one participant reported having some post-secondary education. Most youths reported a homeless shelter as their primary living situation with the exception of one participant. This participant lives in market housing, but previously experienced chronic homelessness. Another participant identified, "couch surfing as his current living arrangement." This research identified the average length of youths who experience homelessness at OneRoof: PAR was about three years. Six out of ten participants reported being involved in the justice system and only one out of ten reported being a crown ward. Twelve participants reported having contact with their parents or guardians while four reported having a

relationship with their parents or guardians. The most common reason participants stated why they were homeless was drug related and being kicked out by their parents. When participants were asked to rank their overall current QoL, the most common response was 'fair'

4.7.3 Similarities

The main questions with identified similarities are Q2 – Gender, Q5 – Current Living Situation, Q6 - Employment Status, and Q13 – Reasons for Homelessness. The responses from Q2 for gender identification reported that 60% identified as male and 40% as female from both shelters. Twelve participants stated they lived in a homeless shelter, not surprising due to the interview setting. The response from Q3 across both participant groups reported 11 youth are were unemployed. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Ontario, the youth unemployment rate (April 2016) is 14.9% (CCPA 2016). The reported unemployment rate according to these findings is 73.3%. Source of income has become a challenge for many of the participants in this study. This is one reason that may contribute to their lack of stable housing. Finally the response from Q13 supports previous research and findings (CCPA 2016), which identifies parental conflict as one of the leading causes of youth to become homeless. The main reason for homelessness according to this study was parental conflict, which 9 participants reported. Overall the similarities support the general causes and effects of youths experiencing homelessness according to previous research.

4.7.4 Differences

Differences have been identified in Q1 – Age, Q7 – Home Address, and Q8 – Duration of Homelessness. The responses from Q1 were expected to be different due to the different age ranges of each shelter. As previously stated in chapter 3, the age range for OneRoof: PAR is 16-25 and Lutherwood: SH is 12-18. The average age of participants from OneRoof: PAR is 20.9

years old while the average age from Lutherwood: SH is 16.8 years old. With age comes more responsibility and more expectations from family, friends, and society. The youths at Lutherwood: SH are younger and have had less time to make poor choices compared to the youths at OneRoof. As one gets older more responsibilities and expectations are piled on, the result of some may be in the form of homelessness. Homeless youths may have feelings of hopelessness when they have been homeless for longer periods of time. The responses from Q7 may differ due to disconnection from the family home as mentioned in the previous subsection. When youths become homeless they may begin to disconnect from family by choice or not by choice (Gaetz 2014). Some parents continue to support their children if they fall into homelessness but they might also completely shut them out.

The response from Q8 identifies a significant gap between the age of participants accessing Lutherwood: SH and those who access OneRoof: PAR. According to this study the average length of homelessness experienced by a youth at OneRoof: PAR is roughly 3 years and at Lutherwood: SH is 2-4 months. In comparison OneRoof: PAR youths have experienced homelessness 9 times longer than those at Lutherwood: SH.

4.7.5 Prominent Correlations

The participants from Lutherwood: SH appear to be at a different stage of homelessness than those participants from OneRoof. The participants from Lutherwood are younger, have better connections with their parents and family, are less likely to be doing drugs and are less likely to leave home. Youths from Lutherwood: SH have been homeless for significantly shorter periods of time compared to youths at OneRoof: PAR. At OneRoof: PAR the age-range is wider, opening shelter services to ages 18-25. OneRoof participants have been homeless longer, have fewer supports and are more likely to have experimented with drugs. The 18-25 age-range of

OneRoof: PAR falls into both the ‘youth’ and the ‘adult’ societal categories. Many young people accessing OneRoof may not be seen as adult contributing members of society. They are more likely to commit crimes, less likely to have a home address and more likely to have less supports. The QoL rating of youth at both shelters reported generally below average QoL.

4.8 Study Comparison: Palepu et al. 2012 Vs. Turner 2016 (Current Study)

4.8.1 Similarities

These two studies share the same end goal, which is to identify the QoL needs of those experiencing homelessness. Overall both research studies involve individuals who have experienced being homeless. Both studies seek feedback from the specific population to better understand their QoL needs. The results of both studies are similar in regards to identified QoL needs however the dynamic of QoL needs for youths are distinct.

4.8.2 Differences

The differences between the two studies are more prominent and specific than the similarities. Four key differences are noted, age range, location, data collection method and results.

The age range for the Palepu et al. 2012 study was 15-73, while the age range for this study was 16-25. To collect age-specific data, the use of participant restricted age cohorts are suggested (Moos et al. 2015). The Palepu et al. 2012 study consisted of four study locations across Canada, while this research study only used one midsize city with two data collection sites. Homelessness is often prominent in larger cities because it is easier to survive and more services are available. (SHC 2016) This should not discredit the needs of those youths experiencing homelessness in mid-size cities and other smaller locations.

The Palepu et al. 2012 study and this study both used qualitative data collection methods.

Focus groups were used as the main data collection method in the Palepu et al. 2012 study while individual interviews were used in this study. The researcher had prior rapport built with most of the youths from OneRoof: PAR, it was easy to recruit participants and to conduct one-on-one interviews to gather my findings. One proposed flaw in the Palepu et al. 2012 study was the use of focus groups. The overall idea and concept of groupthink may have possibly occurred.

Groupthink can occur when one or more person in a group emerges as the leader, and other member's voices are not fully heard. In the Palepu et al. 2012 study youths were included in the same focus groups as adults. The research states the QoL needs of homeless youth and adults are the same however there was no process to ensure groupthink would not occur. As a response to the findings from the Palepu et al. 2012 study, an individual-interview approach was selected due to previous rapport built between the youth and the researcher for this study. Participants viewed the researcher as a safe and trusted person to share open discussion.

4.8.3 Themes

Palepu et al. 2012 and this study identified six QoL needs, identified below.

Palepu et. AI Study 2012	Turner 2016 (This Study)
Health/Health Care	Family and Friends
Living Conditions	Basic Necessities
Financial Situation	Education
Employment Situation	Health
Relationships	Community Resources
Recreational and Leisure Activities	Self-care/Awareness

Both this study and Palepu et al. 2012 identified six QoL needs however the overarching priorities for youth are different compared to adults. Almost every single youth identified family and friends as imperative to their overall QoL. Basic needs include items such as finding stable and safe housing, finding a stable employment and having access to food and water every day. Education is the most different QoL need of youth compared to the adult homeless population.

Youths are often more exposed and normalized the adults to the idea of attending and completing school. The idea of getting an education to pursue a future career and being accomplished is still a fresh conscious thought. During the interviews many youths voiced education as their way out homelessness.

Most youths identified health as a key QoL need, which closely aligns with the Palepu et al. 2012 study. The difference between youth and adult participants are youths identified health related QoL needs such as physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, access to medications, sobriety, and access to healthy food. Participants from the Palepu et al. 2012 study identified a lack of relationships with healthcare professionals as an ongoing issue. During this study the youth participants did not note this as an issue, this may be due to easy access to medical personnel at OneRoof: Youth Services. A doctor, nurse and mental health nurse are on-site once a week to see patients aiming to make it easier for youths to access medical services.

Community resources include transportation, leisure and access to the Internet. Transportation is an enormous barrier in cities where youth require access to transit systems. Accessing services in the community such as probation offices, school, substance abuse meetings, are required daily from youth in shelters. One of the most common requests at OneRoof: Youth Services is for bus tickets. Leisure activities in the community are few and far between that are free and readily accessible to youth. Police are often called to move homeless youths along because they are loitering and identified as a nuisance in local parks and other public spaces. Access to the Internet is low cost, the cost of having Facebook or other social media is free compared to the expense of a smartphone. Many youths use Facebook as a means of communicating with each other and staff at other shelters and services in the community.

The final theme that has emerged from this study can be identified as "Self-

Care/Awareness." Many youths identified the need to help themselves be better people. The reasons ranged from being a good role model for their child to having a positive outlook on life and keeping others happy. Homeless youth are often portrayed as criminals and delinquents, but they have feelings just like everybody else. Identifying ways to promote self-growth through individual development and the teaching of essential life skills to youths may help them move out of homelessness and into independence.

4.9 Key Findings

There are three key findings that have emerged from this research project. They are as followed,

- QoL is a universal term used across many planning publications and reports in the Region of Waterloo, but is never defined or explained
- A general lack of youth engagement and public consultation exists with homeless youths for multiple reasons within the domain of planning
- QoL needs of homeless youth are distinct from homeless adults; An emphasis must be put on the importance of age-specific needs for vulnerable populations within planning

The first key finding revolves around the term QoL; it is a common term used across many publications and reports in planning in the Region of Waterloo. QoL was never clearly defined or explained in the local social planning or official planning documents analyzed in the document analysis. A clear definition of QoL needs to be defined in the planning context in regards to vulnerable age-specific population groups.

The second key finding is the general lack of youth engagement and public consultation with the homeless youth population. There was no clear engagement with youth in official planning documents however youth are identified as populations “in need” according to the KOP and ROP. A large push exists by the OLTAHS for more youth engagement throughout the

province of Ontario. Planners are not the professionals that should be engaging with vulnerable population groups to better understand the meaning of QoL. It is important to note that any public can be viewed as the experts depending on the situation (Harkness 2013). An individualistic approach can work to help solve systematic challenges such as youth homelessness. Overall it is beneficial for all players including planners and other professionals to engage with the vulnerable populations to increase the QoL of homeless youth in communities.

The third and final key finding is the QoL needs of homeless youths are distinct from homeless adults. Each QoL need identified may be similar to those of the adults but the overall concepts are different. The purpose of completing individual interviews for this research project was to provide empirical evidence to provide individual opinions and views from homeless youth for planners and to emphasize the need to consult with homeless youth because there needs are inherently different than homeless adults. During the interviews many youth voiced education as a way out of homelessness. This finding is important to planners because understanding how to aggregate data found in individualistic research to a planning level is important. Even though education is not commonly in a planner's domain, planners can take this information and use it to create goals and targets in planning documents to specifically measure domains within education. Pushing outside of boundary's constructed by the planning profession into other disciplines will advocate for more interdisciplinary work and findings. By implementing specific education targets for communities with high rates of youth homelessness will put pressure on other community systems to create new programs, receive more funding and hopefully positively affect future policy and plan making.

Professionals in the homelessness field have recently been pushing to end youth homelessness as a prevention method for ending chronic homelessness. By ending the cycle of

homelessness and working towards ending youth homelessness will simultaneously towards ending homelessness all together. The resiliency of youth and the willingness to change is exponentially higher compared to homeless adults. Youth are very self-aware, while working with this population it is evident, most do not want to be homeless but have no choice. But they still wake up each morning and get through the day.

4.10 Conclusion

A general conclusion drawn from the analysis of the planning documents is the overuse of the term QoL and therefore echoing a lack of understanding of the term QoL within the context of the homeless youth literature and planning documents. The term QoL is used many times in the official planning documents however the social planning documents use the term less. QoL often has many different attributing factors unique to specific populations such as homeless youths. Due an unclear understanding and definition from the research literature and from the local planning documents more primary research on QoL is needed. In order to better understand the term QoL, exploratory individual interviews were completed to clarify the specific QoL needs of homeless youth in the Region of Waterloo. According to Harkness (2013) “In order to conduct an effective community engagement process, let alone ensure the involvement of vulnerable populations, practitioners must first identify the different stakeholder groups which could be affected by the proposal under review” (Harkness 2013 p.22). The vulnerable population group is a crucial piece of solving the larger social challenge being presented. As a result the importance of consulting with vulnerable populations is becoming more important for planners (Harkness 2013, Chaterjee et al. 2004 and Winthrop 1975).

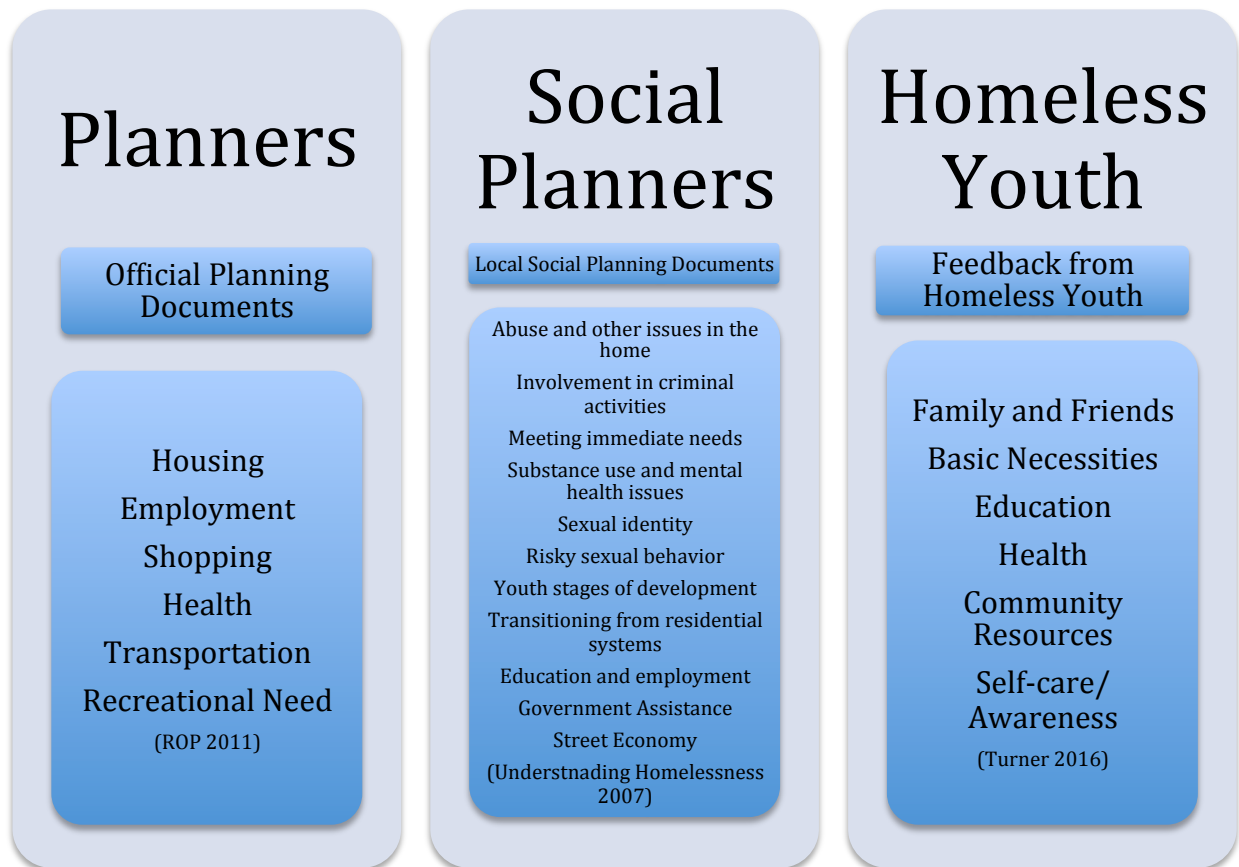
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter will first review the limitations of this research project along with the recommendations. Secondly, an overview of current services in the Region of Waterloo will be discussed in comparison with the study findings. Thirdly, a brief look at best practices in other communities will be discussed as well as the importance of this research to planners. Finally an overview of future research will be identified and briefly explored.

The overall QoL needs of the homeless youth that emerged from this study are similar to those identified in official planning documents, and in the local social planning documents, however slight differences were identified. The findings are listed in a Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Comparing QoL Findings



Planners identify the QoL needs of the Region of Waterloo as identified in Figure 6. When planners explain QoL needs they are broad and identified as a one-size-fits all solution. Social planners identify QoL needs as more population specific as explained through individualized social planning documents. Finally homeless youth explain the importance of their overall QoL from the findings of this research project. Through an analysis of the official planning and social planning documents in the Region of Waterloo, the QoL term was mentioned multiple times, however no clear definition was provided. Some of the results are the same or similar, but each QoL need has a completely unique meaning for each age-specific population. Understanding different age-groups and population groups have different QoL needs is crucial to properly understand the QoL of any individual or group.

It is important to restate the importance of individualized approaches when solving complex social issues in communities such as homelessness. In the official documents six needs were stated including housing, employment, shopping, health, transportation and recreational needs (ROP 2011). In the document Understanding Homelessness (2007) eleven challenges are identified which are also identified in Figure 6. These were not specifically identified as QoL needs but as challenges. When these challenges are contrasted with the six QoL needs identified from this study, a youth focused list is identified. The official planning documents identify common QoL themes similar to those identified in this study. However the context in which those needs are desired are completely different. For example the meaning of the term “housing” for the general population may be many options such as houses, condos or apartments. While housing would be classified under basic necessities in this study may be shelters, transitional housing or maybe apartments. Each QoL need has different meanings for different age groups and in the community.

5.2 Limitations

The first limitation occurred before the study began, due to ethical reasons of interviewing youths under the age of 16. The University of Waterloo's ethical guidelines state, if a participant is under the age of 16 parental consent must be given for participation in the study. This age restriction immediately left out youths under the age of 16 who were experiencing homelessness. The research stated that there is a large gap in research on youth homelessness and QoL. Youths under the age of 16 do experience homelessness, but it is more hidden, as there are fewer services available for those youth. A possible appeal may have been requested to include youth under the age of 16 due to their high vulnerability and low accessibility. However due to time constraints to receive approval for this research study it was deemed to move forward with the research without appeal.

The other major limitation of this study was using the same demographic questions used in the Palepu et al. (2012) study. Limited questions revolved around ethnic and cultural diversity as well as sexuality and sexual preferences. The representation of LGBTQ+ individuals is increasing, and communities need more services that are inclusive of everyone. It was decided to keep the statistical as close to the Palepu et al (2012) study as possible and due to the focus of the study on understanding QoL, the gather of more statistical information was not required.

The final limitation of this study was the chosen sites and their locations. The Palepu et al. (2012) study used four sites located in four different Canadian cities, while this research was limited to one city with two data collection sites. The results gathered from this study are exploratory in nature and room for error is possible. However, methods similar to this study are recommended for planners to consult when planning for vulnerable and at risk populations with larger social issues need to be solved.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Youth

The recommendations for youth include asking them what they need and how service providers can help. Public consultation has become a key piece of planning practice when it comes to today's professional planning field. Planners are not the only experts in homelessness, the individuals who experience it are too and getting feedback from them is key. The ultimate goal is to talk with youth and have them identify what resources they need in the community to increase their QoL. It is recommended to involve youth or any at-risk population when searching for solutions to solve broader community problems such as homelessness. Requiring feedback from not only youth but also front line service providers is crucial. The individuals working on the frontline have day-to-day experience working with specific populations. A practice identified in this research is to gather feedback from all parties before trying to improve overall QoL.

5.3.2 Shelters

In chapter 2 of this paper, the Housing First Approach was briefly explained. This approach has been widely adopted as a mainstream solution to end homelessness across Canada. Little research has been done around how well this model works for youth experiencing homelessness (Gaetz and Scott 2012). The Foyer Model has recently emerged as a new housing solution in Australia and in the UK. The Foyer model aims to not only provide basic emergency services to youth who are homeless but to provide, “a broader and more strategic emphasis on prevention, and models of accommodation that lead to a life of independence and fulfillment” (Gaetz and Scott 2012 p.4). This report also identifies three prominent issues in Canada today, which include “Structural barriers that limit access to housing; supply, income, education and discrimination”, “The lack of institutional support for young people leaving care” and

“challenges associated with the transition to adulthood” (Gaetz and Scott 2012 P 7-8). The Foyer model is based on what is commonly referred to as transitional housing. Transitional housing aims to provide more comprehensive and longer-term services compared to an emergency shelter. The Foyer model has been used across Europe, Australia, in some parts of the US and in a few cities in Canada. The Foyer model aligns with the findings of this study. It is advised that by identifying QoL needs and implementing the Foyer model will help ensure all needs are met in a longer-term living environments for youths who are experiencing homelessness.

5.3.3 Planning/Policy Level

It is recommended to consult youths who are homeless or have experienced homeless in the past when creating planning documents to solve broader social issues such as homelessness. Youth engagement is crucial at the policy level to close gaps between the individuals identified as the expert and those identified as the experienced, as previously stated in the OLTAHS (2016). Planners often do not have time to sit in a shelter and build rapport with homeless youth on a daily basis. Going into this research plan with the dual lens of a planner and a social worker, it was hard to distinguish the different roles the professionals have in the community. It is important to note that planners should be working with multidisciplinary teams and include members of other helping professions to gather feedback when creating social planning documents (Harkness 2013, Chaterjee et al. 2004 and Winthrop 1975)

Updated public participation methods need to be used when seeking feedback from younger generations. Using a conventional town hall style meeting to get feedback may not appeal to youth, but using modernized feedback styles such as technological and social-media-driven feedback methods are more likely to gather feedback from young people. However having one to one conversations with and member of any population is the best way to understand,

empathize and listen to a person's story and their struggles.

Breaking down barriers of terms and phrases being used in planning documents such as QoL. Explaining and maintaining accountability for use of the term QoL will provide measurable and attainable goals for communities to work towards. The term QoL is used in many different capacities across academic articles, planning documents and public reports, which is evident in the literature previously analyzed. If the term QoL is going to be used a clear definition and understanding needs to be provided especially when referring to age-specific vulnerable population groups such as homeless youth.

5.4 Services in the Community

In the Region of Waterloo, there are many agencies, organizations, and services specifically created and designed for youths. The Region of Waterloo publishes a resource called "The Little Black Book" each year for young people to have contact information about all youth, services available in the region. This resource was used as the main source for youth-oriented services when conducting an audit of services to identify services working to improve the QoL of young people. This is not a resource designed for youth experiencing homelessness however this is a comprehensive resource of all available youth services in the Region of Waterloo. Services have been identified to fit under each QoL need identified by this research however there is a lack of services in a few areas.

5.4.1 Family and Friends

There are three services that focus on building relationships with family; however, there are no services that focus on building friendships. The three services that assist with building relationships with family are Mosaic Counselling and Family Services, K-W Counselling and OneRoof: Youth Services. Both services offer counselling sessions for individuals or family,

while OneRoof: Youth Services has family reconnection workers to help reestablish conflicted parent-youth relationships.

A bigger focus is recommended on rebuilding relationships with family and friends. The most discussed QoL need by youths was family and friends. All participants from Lutherwood: SH and many from OneRoof: PAR identified their reasons for homelessness was a broken relationships with their parents. I have often heard from homeless youths, there are no safe spaces to hang out in the community. There is a need for more youth-oriented hangouts or community spaces in the downtown core to provide safe spaces for these youths to utilize. Grassroots peer-support-groups may be a non-threatening way to help develop friendships in safe spaces. Many services are connected to problems, but there are very limited spaces connected to building friendships.

5.4.2 Basic Necessities

The three subcategories of basic necessities are identified as shelter/housing, jobs, and food; each one will be discussed in detail below.

5.4.2.1 Shelter/Housing

There are about a dozen services in the Region of Waterloo designated to provide basic necessity services to youths. The services available to provide shelter for youth are, OneRoof: Youth Services, Lutherwood: SH, YWCA Mary's Place, Argus Residence for Young People of Cambridge, The Housing Desk, Marillac Place, Charles Street Men's Hostel and Saint Monica House. Each one of these shelters operates 24/7/365 and never closes their doors. The Housing Desk is a service available at the Working Centre located in downtown Kitchener, to help young people find affordable and subsidized housing.

All of the services related to housing are either shelters or provide assistance to help find

independent living. In chapter 2, the research identified a need for transitional housing in communities. The current model and the recommended models are identified below.

Figure 7. Current Housing Stages for Homeless Youths

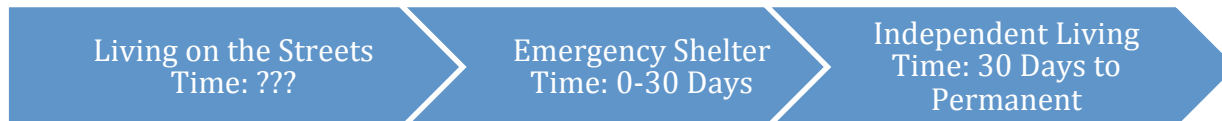


Figure 8. Recommended Housing Stages for Homeless Youths



A need for transitional housing aiming to improve QoL is recommended to teach independent living skills to youths who have experienced or is experiencing homelessness. Many youths who are homeless have left their parents with few life skills. By taking a youth from a shelter and moving them into an apartment, is often counterproductive. These youth need guidance and support from mentors and peers in order to grow and develop into independent and intelligent young people. Many youths who are moved from a shelter into independent living tend to leave their new place of living due to loneliness and lack of immediate supports. By incorporating a stage of transitional housing, will assist with teaching and guiding these young people into independence and adulthood.

5.4.2.2 Jobs

There are seven local services available for helping youth find jobs. These services are as followed, Lutherwood Youth Employment Centre, The Working Centre, Human Resource Centre of Canada for Students, Kitchener Service Canada Centre, Employment Resource Centres, Employment Ontario – Offices in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge and Tools and Techniques for Job Search. All of these services are available for youths in the community

however limited resources are available for youths experiencing homelessness.

Youths facing homelessness have at least one extra barrier when facing the challenge of finding gainful employment. Many youths struggle with not having proper identification or a home address. Many people take these things for granted but these are challenges a youth experiencing homelessness may face. A focus on helping youth find employment should be emphasized in services that work with homeless youth. Resume building and interview skills could be taught at youth shelters, community centers or in their transitional housing spaces. Creating planning documents and training manuals at the regional level will provide resources for service providers that work with youth experiencing homelessness. A standardized engagement process should be created throughout the Region of Waterloo to provide consistent assistance across the entire city.

5.4.2.3 Food

There are only three services available in the Region of Waterloo designated to provide food specifically for youths experiencing homelessness. The services are located at St. Johns Kitchen, Emergency Food Hampers and at OneRoof: Youth Services. The hours of St. Johns Kitchen are very limited (Mon-Fri 9am-130 pm) as well as Emergency Food Hampers (Mon-Fri 11am-415pm). OneRoof: Youth Services is open seven days a week serving, breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day and offering food hampers Wednesdays from 12pm-4pm. Lineups for food hampers at OneRoof: Youth Services often stretch out the door. OneRoof: Youth Services is the main hub for accessing hot meals three times a day in the Region of Waterloo for youths under the age of 25.

With limited resources in the community for youth to access food outside of regular business hours, the only option is OneRoof: Youth Services. It is recommended that more

services be mandated to serve more meals during the day. Another recommendation is to design a better system for providing food to those in need including those living in shelters, transitional housing and independently. If the Region of Waterloo built relationships with local grocery stores, they could help provide easier access to healthy foods. By creating a food network between local grocery stores, discounts could be provided for those on a fixed income budget. This network could also provide more healthy and fresh food to shelters that run on donations. Other ideas include cooking classes, safe food handling, and healthy eating habits could be provided and taught to help youth become more independent and proactive. Having access to fresh and healthy food is important for everyone in the community.

5.4.3 Education

Education was identified as an important QoL need by participants from all participants at Lutherwood: SH and a few from OneRoof: PAR. In the Region of Waterloo, there are 23 high schools, one college, and two major Canadian universities. There are endless educational opportunities, but there is a large lack of community resources geared to assist youths with educational needs. Two services are available including The Homework Centre and the Tri-City Multicultural Community Centre. The Homework Centre offers quiet spaces and helps with research in the Kitchener Public Library and Tri-City offers some tutoring and homework assistance. There is a large lack of resources available for homeless youths in need of educational support.

Educational assistance programs should be implemented at shelters, schools and community centers. There is more pressure than ever suggesting education is the key to success. The region could include educational frameworks and goals into social planning documents to ensure educational goals are met across the region. Few resources are available to today's youths

who are homeless and who need educational support. By providing more resources to homeless youths should help them get back in school and continue to learn.

5.4.4 Health

Health services in the Region of Waterloo are quite extensive, services include drug rehabilitation, helplines, addiction treatment programs, needle exchange programs and even gambling helplines. The Region of Waterloo has prominent drug use that is publically know and recognized. Each one of the previously mentioned services exists to assist those in need. One of the largest barriers for homeless youth is access to general health services such as doctors, dentists, and other specialists. Health Care in Ontario is for the most part subsidized and free, however, prescriptions medications are not. The previously discussed health services often have lengthy wait lists and added additional costs.

Many health services are available in the community but the demand far outweighs availability. Wait lists are often long and by the time a youth reaches the top of the list they may not be available that day or they might miss the call. This is not just a problem for youth experiencing homelessness this has been identified as a problem in many communities across Canada (PHHPCS 2014, SMPHH 2013). A lack of doctors in the area has proven it difficult to secure a family physician. One concern brought up by a participant from OneRoof: PAR was the need for medication, he was happy ODSP is paying for his medication otherwise he could not afford it. Many homeless youths often go without their medication, which has proven to be counterproductive. If an individual abruptly stops taking prescribed psychotropic drugs this can cause further mental health problems. Access to medications can be life or death for some individuals. One solution could be for the region to provide a program subsidizing medications and daily dispensing for homeless youths.

Mental health has proven to be a rising social issue and is constantly being fought across Canada and in local communities. There are many homeless youths who identify with having mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, bipolar, and other manic disorders. At OneRoof: Youth Services a mental health nurse visits once a week and there is always a waitlist. Many mental illnesses often go undiagnosed and untreated leading to further challenges and complications. A pharmacological approach is often used to help solve mental illness but support groups, peer mentors, and counselling should also be an integral part of the healing process. The mental health services currently available in the region are The Youth Crisis Line designated specifically for youth and the Grand River Hospital Crisis Team, offering 24/7 emergency psychiatric services in the emergency room at Grand River Hospital. More services are recommended because only two youth focused mental health services are available in the Region of Waterloo.

5.4.5 Community Resources

Community resources were identified as needing easier access to transit and active recreational activities. The identified community resources are the Betty Thompson Youth Centre, The Youth Help Line, OneRoof: Youth Services, and Lutherwood: SH. These services are spaces geared to youth who are homeless and want to access services and sometimes just hang out. However services are limited due to building and staffing capacities and agency guidelines restricting services to those staying in the respective shelters.

5.5.5.1 Transit

Access to transit services is a challenge for homeless youths, as bus passes come at a high cost. The Region of Waterloo provides shelters with bus tickets for youth to use to find housing. Tickets are only sometimes provided to those who wish to connect with family or friends. This

has proven to be a roadblock for many youth because limiting their accessibility in the community also limits their chances to succeed and better their QoL.

5.5.5.2 Recreational, Physical and Leisure Activities

There are many activities available for young people in the community, such as public pools, skate and bike parks, the KW Youth Theater, libraries and community centers. All of these activities are geared to youth but not specifically homeless youth. As previously discussed, more community spaces need to be created for young people who are homeless. Many youths between the ages of 15 to 19 hang out at home, but that “home space” is not available for youth who are homeless. Improving opportunities to gain social support systems is key. Many participants identified the need to have fun and be able to just be a kid. Just because a youth may be homeless does not mean they cannot have fun, which is also echoed in the research. A well-balanced life including aspects of fun is needed to have a good QoL.

5.4.6 Self-Care/Awareness

There are a few services in the Region of Waterloo that focus on self-care and awareness. Many participants identified ideas surrounding self-care and awareness as important to their QoL. The services currently available as helplines are, Kids Help Phone Line, Youth Help Line, Ability Online, Lesbian/Gay/Bi Youth Line and the Distress Line. Services in the community that have physical spaces are Tri-City Multicultural Community Centre Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre, White Owl Native Ancestry Association, Anishnabeg Outreach, Hope Spring Cancer Support, OK2BME, ACCKWA, GLOW- Centre for Sexual & Gender and the Rainbow Centre. Each one of these services offers support for a wide range of challenges a youth may be facing.

Large downfalls of many of these services are their individualized focus on specific

population groups; none of these services are for youths experiencing homelessness. Many of the youth participants identified a need for independence, self-worth, and self-meaning. Finding a way to encourage these skills and capacities is recommended.

5.4.7 Summary

Many of these problems are identified through a lack of services available in the Region of Waterloo. More comprehensive services need to be created to increase the QoL of youths experiencing homelessness. More services are not the only solution to this growing social problem. The first step in moving towards ending homelessness is engaging with youth to identify the services and assistance homeless youth need to improve their QoL and move them out of homelessness. The gaps in service have been identified and recommendations have been made. Social planners can help fill these gaps by using social research such as this study to understand and incorporate their QoL needs into social planning documents.

5.5 Best Planning Practices in Other Communities

The following two community plans have been identified as partial best practices for the area of age-specific research on homeless youth and QoL.

5.6.1 Surrey Master Plan for Housing the Homeless 2013

This master plan was created by the city of Surrey, British Columbia. The main purpose of the Surrey Master Plan for Housing the Homeless 2013 was to “identify and respond to the needs for long-term housing and support services for people who are homeless, or at-risk of becoming homeless. Additionally, this initiative focused on the need for emergency shelters and related services” (SMPHH 2013, p.1). The plan identifies four main subgroups of the homeless population, which include individuals with mental health, women and women with children, youth and aboriginal people (SMPHH 2013). Four main priorities were also identified: creating

more transitional housing units, replacing current select shelters, enhance overall services and to strengthen collaborations (SMPHH 2013). Housing gaps are identified with the need to include at risk youth, specifically aboriginal and immigrant youth; however service gaps do not highlight a focus for youth services (SMPHH 2013). Overall youth are identified to be a focus in this plan, but a recommendation is also included for more resources for homeless youth, as many agencies are not mandated to work with individuals under the age of 19 (SMPHH 2013). There are some QoL influences included in the purpose, goals and outcomes of this plan, which includes improving overall services.

5.6.2 Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan: A Community Strategy 2014–2024

The Region of Peel located just outside the GTA created a community strategy. The primary purpose for Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan: A Community Strategy is "providing stable housing solutions to individuals and families as the first step to improve their quality of life and achieve social and economic outcomes" (PHHP 2014, p.2). Public participation was used to gather over 700 responses from the community to build content and priorities of the plan (PHHP 2014). Some of the plan's key objectives include; more housing, financial, employment and life skills support, physical and mental health supports and overall increased support services (PHHP 2014). These plan objectives closely align and overlap with the QoL influences identified in the research, but a youth focus is not identified. In the plan young people are identified and education of housing needs as a vulnerable population and who need supportive long-term housing (PHHP 2014). QoL influences are present in this plan under increasing awareness but a key focus on the youth population is not evident.

5.6.3 Summary

These two planning documents were found to include aspects of age-specific-population

planning and QoL needs and influences. The Surrey Master Plan identified the importance of the youth population however they did not identify the needs of the homeless youth population. The Surrey Master Plan also did not include public participation, feedback or consultation in their document. The Peel Community Strategy identified a focus on the homeless population and on QoL needs. The downfall of this plan is the lack of focus on the youth homeless population. As a result, no best practice was found for this specific area of research. However the trend is moving in the right direction. More research such as this study will hopefully help close of the gap in the research area incorporate age-specific QoL needs into future planning documents.

5.6 Significance to Planners

5.6.1 Planning Theory Relevance

In chapter 2, advocacy planning was identified as a progressive social planning approach to solving large-scale social issues. Davidoff (1965) identified a need for more intelligent planning models, which focused on social goal setting. Advocacy planning was based on the Planner becoming an advocate for vulnerable populations and moving towards feedback-driven planning approaches. Advocacy planning closely aligns with the previously identified social work models including a Strengths Based Approach and the Ecological Perspective. All three of these methods are based on identifying the needs of vulnerable individuals or groups within a community and using their feedback to help solve the problem. Interdisciplinary practice is highly recommended when facing large social issues such as youth homelessness. Advocacy planning is still an emerging practice in the planning field, by taking strides to include lesser known planning theories will help planners become more engaged and in tune with their communities and the problems they are facing.

Advocacy planning was used as the main planning theory in this research, as a method to

reach out to homeless youths to seek their feedback on QoL needs. As a result using their feedback to better identify social planning targets based on age-specific research will help ensure the needs of homeless youth are being met in the Region of Waterloo. Advocacy planners need to understand the individual challenges sub-populations are facing in the community to provide informed recommendations when creating planning documents.

5.6.2 Inclusion in Social Planning Documents

As social planning documents are becoming more widely used in cities and towns in Ontario, an in depth knowledge of specialized fields are required in order to effectively understand a social problem. The term QoL is often used in social planning document in cities across Ontario, but a lack of definition always seems to be the case. It is recommended to use research studies such as this one to bridge the gap between professionals in the community to provide a multidisciplinary approach to large-scale social problems. Social planners should not be afraid to use social work, psychology, or urban studies research studies as a basis to inform research areas in planning. All of these professions have the same goal in mind, which is to help people. Planners are essentially the puppeteers behind long-term growth opportunities and they must consult with the multiple publics to provide comprehensive recommendations for communities (Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd & Schwan 2016).

In the book "The Just City" written by Fainstein (2010), she identifies three key principles to use when planning cities including diversity, democracy and equity. A connection between QoL and competitive cities is drawn; concluding just because a city is more competitive does not mean it has a higher QoL for its residents (Fainstein 2010). Fainstein (2010) identifies a paradox of community participation and equitable income. General public participation methods tend to favor the dominant, articulate and educated, which results in exclusion or corruption.

Public participation has a purpose even though it does not always produce more equitable results. This statement closely aligns with my research, as this issue was also identified in the analysis of the local planning documents of the Region of Waterloo. To conclude, Fainstein (2010) states planners must play a key role in pressing for more equitable outcomes for all publics including those homeless and hard to house.

Incorporating age-specific outcomes and goals into planning documents will assist local organizations to secure funding for newly proposed projects and programs. A documented need is key for community agencies to cite on funding proposals and grant applications to receive necessary funds to get pilot programs off the ground. It is strongly encouraged for planners to reach out to organizations and agencies that planning documents will affect to gain key feedback. An expert-based-approach is no longer the norm. Solving a social problem such as youth homelessness requires feedback and input from multiple publics including the youths experiencing homelessness, academic researchers, and the professionals.

5.6.3 Planning Education

I am a planning grad student focused on social planning in a master's program and as my future profession. It is evident that most urban planning schools in Canada focus more on classic urban planning theory and practice. This master's thesis is intended to provide a multidisciplinary approach to social planning from both social work and planning perspectives. Multiple perspectives are needed in the planning field, as planners are the creators of future communities across Canada. It is crucial to include mandatory social planning courses into master's level programs in Canada. Including a course on QoL is suggested due to the overabundance of use in many planning documents across Canada and the World. QoL can be a measurable and attainable indicator to measure needs of a community, but a clear understanding

needs to first be identified. QoL affects all forms of planning including transportation, infrastructure, urban design and the many other subfields of planning. At the end of the day planning documents affect people and all people have a measurable QoL.

5.7 Future Research

One of the original goals for this research was to create a measurement tool specifically to measure the QoL of youths experiencing homelessness. Due to the scope and time allotted for a masters thesis this could unfortunately not be completed.

More research on this topic is needed; this study only scratches the surface on the topic of QoL and youth homelessness. Similar studies with larger samples should be completed in other cities working to end youth homelessness. By recreating this study on a larger scale could help communities better understand age-specific QoL needs of homeless youth. Similar tools are in the process of being created for the general homeless population by Palepu and other researchers within the homelessness research niche of Canadian research. A need for an individual assessment tool for measuring QoL of youth experiencing homelessness will be more precise and helpful when assessing, identifying and measuring the overall QoL of a youth experiencing homelessness.

5.8 Conclusion

The overall conclusions for this research project include three key findings. The first key finding is that QoL is a universal term used across many publications and reports but is never defined or explained. The recommendation from this research suggests a clear definition needs to be provided especially when being used in the context planning involving vulnerable age-specific population groups. More analysis needs to be completed to ensure the QoL needs of specific populations are being met when setting targets and goals in planning documents. The

second key finding is a general lack of youth engagement and public consultation exists with homeless youths today in planning documents. The recommendation for this finding is for more active engagement to be completed with all vulnerable age-specific population groups.

Professionals with previously built rapport provide an excellent gateway into gathering data on vulnerable population groups. It is important to note the vulnerable populations should also be identified as experts. Finally the third key finding is QoL needs of homeless youths are distinct from homeless adults. The larger portion of this study focused on identifying the specific QoL needs of homeless youth. Literature has been reviewed, data has been collected and findings have been made supporting the need for more age-specific research on QoL needs. Homeless youth have inherently distinct needs when compared to homeless adults. Even if some QoL needs overlap, the meaning and interpretation of youths QoL needs are significantly different. Including the QoL needs identified in this study in social planning documents is beneficial for both planners and homeless youth because it promotes effective community engagement. Therefore planners will have a better grasp on what youth identify as important to their overall QoL.

The main purpose of this research is to shine light on current practices being used in social planning on the topic of youth homelessness and QoL. It has been identified that an intermingling of these two topics rarely exists in the literature. This research has explored and identified the different QoL needs homeless youths have and has foraged a path through planning literature using dual lenses of a social worker and a planner. Advocacy has been a main driving factor for this research project, working towards closing a gap in this research field; even the smallest gap will be a win for thousands of homeless youths. As previously stated, Davidoff (1965) called for the need to “broaden the scope of planning,” and also mentioned the need for

graduates studying planning at the master's level to come from a liberal arts background because it would provide a more holistic approach when solving urban problems (Davidoff 1965 p.337). If one thing is taken from this research project, planners need to use different lenses to solve macro-planning problems being faced in communities today and the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Youth Participant Questionnaire

Youth Participant Questionnaire

Identifying Quality of Life Needs for Youth Experiencing Homelessness:
A Community Needs Assessment for Planners in Waterloo Region

ID # _____

Date: _____

PART 1: Demographic Questions

Time Allocation: 1-2 Minutes

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Ethnic Background:
 - a. Canadian
 - b. European descent
 - c. Aboriginal
 - d. Other
4. Education:
 - a. Elementary
 - b. Some high school
 - c. Some post secondary
5. Current Living Situation:
 - a. Housing designated for homeless
 - b. Homeless Shelter
 - c. Street (No Shelter)
 - d. Market housing
6. Employment:
 - a. Unemployed,
 - b. Working Casual or Part Time
 - c. Volunteer or Unpaid Word
7. Do you have a home address?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

8. How long have you been homeless? (In months and years):

9. Have you ever been arrested?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. Are you a crown ward?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. Do you have contact with your legal parents or guardians? (Please state Yes or No and please explain)

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please Explain:

12. Do you have relationship with your parents or guardians? (Please state Yes or No and please explain)

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please Explain:

13. In one word please describe why you identify as “homeless”?

14. In general, would you say your quality of life is?

- 1. Excellent
- 2. Very Good
- 3. Good
- 4. Fair
- 5. Poor

PART 2: Quality of Life Identification

Time Allocation: 2-3 Minutes

Here is a blank piece of paper I want you to take a minute or two to write down anything you feel is important to your quality of life and remember it can be anything. You can put down as many items as you want as long as you feel they are important to your quality of life.

PART 3: Discussion

Time Allocation: 10-12 Minutes

Researcher will now ask you some questions about what you just wrote down

PART 4: Ranking

Time Allocation: 2-3 Minutes

Now that we have had a structured discussion around each question I have one final task for you. I want you to review your list and rank your top five choices according to importance. On the back of your paper you will find a fill in the blank list with the most important aspects that are important to your overall quality of life.

Ranking

1st Important quality of life need is...

2nd Important quality of life need is...

3rd Important quality of life need is...

4th Important quality of life need is...

5th Important quality of life need is...

Part 5: Completion/Thank You

That completes the survey today; I want to thank you again for participating and answering all my questions to the best of your ability.

Glossary

Terms

Crown Ward - “A ward is someone, in this case a child, placed under protection of a legal guardian and are the legal responsibility of the government” (Tweddle 2005).

The Foyer Model – an approach to end homelessness that focuses on providing intensive supports in a transitional housing style living environment

Groupthink - “occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of “mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment” (Groupthink Overview 2016).

Hard to House – an individual or group of people a part of a specific population group facing ongoing social issues which makes it difficult to find and maintain permanent housing.

Homeless Youth - a young person between the ages of 16-25 who identifies as not having a permanent address and/or a place to call home.

Housing First Model - “is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and providing additional supports and services as needed” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2015).

Homeless Hub - the Homeless Hub is an online resource that organizes and stores news, research studies, reports, videos, links and many other resources related to homelessness across the world.

Micro Social Work Practice - a social work practice focusing on the individual approach (Ex. Counselling)

Macro Social Work Practice - a social work practice that focuses on solving large-scale social problems at the community level.

Quality of Life – an age-specific measure of an individual or population group aiming to capture the overall needs every human requires to exist and live a good life.

The Little Black Book - a small book/publication published by the City of Kitchener and intended for youth that includes general information, and contact/location information for different youth services in Waterloo Region.