

MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

THE STORYTELLING EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER:
HOW NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING CAN HELP ENSURE
THAT EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER STORIES END IN CONNECTION

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Abstract

This paper examines the need for organizations to listen to and learn from the stories of their external stakeholders, especially in the context of supportive housing. To this end, this study builds on research conducted by the Dream Team in 2014, which was compiled to create a bill of rights for supportive housing tenants in the Greater Toronto Area. The literature describes many benefits of storytelling for organizations, but often overlooks the stories of external stakeholders in favour of leadership stories. And yet it is widely understood that it is impossible for one story or storyteller to completely capture the essence of any one organization. Ignoring the stories of external stakeholders creates an atmosphere of disconnection and is tantamount to turning a blind eye to unmet market needs. This paper proposes a framework in which a three-pronged linkage between “stakeholder engagement”, “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1991), and “organizational attention” (Gómez, 2015) informs an organization’s understanding of external stakeholders’ “exit” and “voice” behaviours (Hirschman, 1970)—and ultimately helps to ensure that the stories of external stakeholders end in connection. The findings of this study reveal that the subjunctive mood may typically be used to tell stories of disconnection, but more research is needed to determine this. Also, the data suggest that the biggest barrier to communication between tenants and supportive housing organizations may be the myth that people with mental illness and/or substance use issues are incompetent children who must be taken care of.

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1. Introduction

Throughout 2014, the Dream Team (DT)—a Toronto-based non-profit that has been advocating for more supportive housing for over 15 years—interviewed supportive housing tenants in Toronto, aiming to use the data to create a tenants’ bill of rights (BOR). As a community-based research project, the data were collected by peer interviewers. (As chair of the DT Research Working Group, I conducted about one quarter of the interviews. I also presented the BOR results to various supportive housing boards, as well as at the 2014 Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association [ONPHA] Conference and Trade Show, and at a research colloquium at the 2015 Canadian Housing and Renewal Association [CHRA] National Congress on Housing and Homelessness). We aimed to interview 100 tenants but reached saturation after 46. We also held 6 focus groups in which another 36 tenants participated. Upon completion, the BOR was endorsed by the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario and the Toronto Mental Health and Addiction Network. From the stories we collected, we identified 10 basic tenant rights: independence, empowerment, access to supports and services, living in an inclusive community, safety, secure tenancy, good quality housing, living in a home that facilitates recovery, food security, and engaging in meaningful activity.

The data revealed that although supportive housing provides a valuable and, in some cases, life-saving, service for consumer/survivors¹, the sector is notorious for providing low-quality, unsafe, and unappealing housing (Dream Team, 2014). The BOR narratives suggest that perhaps the biggest barrier to communication between mental health external stakeholders and supportive housing providers is the myth that all adult consumer/survivors are incompetent and must be

¹ This is the preferred term within the community. It acknowledges that people are consumers of psychiatric services, not mere patients. The word “survivor” recognizes the many obstacles and barriers that exist both within the psychiatric system and society as a whole.

cared for like children. This myth may in fact be the point of departure for the business of supportive housing itself. And not only does this myth obscure the outlook of housing providers, some BOR respondents seem to have internalized it as well. In this way, the BOR narratives seem to reflect mad-literature (i.e. literature written about or by people with mental illness) in which the mentally ill are typically depicted as child-like. One recurring theme in such literature is the desire of mentally ill adults to be treated as human adults. This is also the greatest lesson that the BOR narratives teach us. Consumer/survivors want to be treated not as clients, consumers, or customers, not as insane children, but as adult human beings who happen to be mentally ill external stakeholders.

Although the Dream Team researchers were not investigating from a scholarly communication perspective, it became apparent that communication in supportive housing settings typically flows in one direction: from top to bottom, from housing provider or staff member to tenant. Upward communication, from tenants to housing provider is not normally encouraged or heeded. (Such communication, often in the form of stories, from tenants may include problems with service delivery, poor living conditions, and disputes with co-tenants. I will not speculate why such stories are not heeded by service providers; however, Twersky et al. [2013] suggests that in a Non-profit context, feedback—especially negative feedback—from beneficiaries² can make service providers uncomfortable because it suggests they are doing something wrong.) This paper, then, will explore the importance of organizational attention, i.e. mechanisms that ensure that an organization identifies all of its threats and opportunities (Gómez, 2015). By encouraging

² Non-profit literature typically uses the term “beneficiary” to refer to a person who benefits from a charity’s programs or services. Henceforth in this essay, beneficiary will be subsumed under my understanding of “external stakeholder”.

and listening to the stories of stakeholders—in this instance, interface stakeholders³—organizations may build better relationships with those whom they serve. Specifically, this paper aims to add to the growing research about the benefits of using storytelling to optimize organizational performance.

In the context of this paper, “external stakeholder” has rich meaning. Business literature typically uses such labels as “clients”, “customers”, and “consumers” to refer to such people. Sometimes these words are used interchangeably, but technically there are slight distinctions between them. “Client” suggests an existing legal relationship between an individual and an organization. “Customer” suggests an individual who is on an organization’s property (or website) purchasing goods or services. “Consumer” suggests that the individual has bought and is using an organization’s products or services. In fact, the external stakeholders I am most concerned with are clients; however, it could be argued that they are customers and consumers as well. For the sake of consistency, I will use the umbrella term “external stakeholder” to evoke all of these subtle distinctions.

2. Literature Review

External stakeholder stories will only prove useful from a research perspective if placed alongside current organizational storytelling praxis. By identifying typical uses, benefits, and limitations of storytelling, for example, I have the baseline from which instances of external stories can be evaluated in terms of their communication effectiveness.

In general, organizational storytelling refers to particular narrative acts, occurrences, or events which are presented textually, artistically, or verbally (Gill, 2011b). For Czarniawska (1998), organizational narratives are the main mode of knowing and communicating in organizations.

³ An individual who functions internally *and* externally in relation to an organization is recognized in the literature as an interface stakeholder.

Stories provide an interpretation of an organization's historical events, and cast those events in ways that are meaningful for that organization (O'Neill, 2002). Storytelling, in an organizational context, involves framing information in ways that are understandable, meaningful, and memorable (McLelland, 2006). Stories can transcend age-groups, cultures, and genders. As well, they can potentially capture the imagination and attention of all audiences regardless of background (Gill, 2011b). Such stories have a "materiality" manifesting themselves in reports, speeches, training programs, audits, hallway conversations, etc. (Boje, 2005). Boje (2008) even suggests that the physical characteristics of a workplace (its architecture and interior design) also tell a story. Typically, stories are flexible—they evolve and change over time (Browning, 1992). Because well told stories boost an organization's authenticity in external stakeholders' eyes (authenticity here refers to being clear, open, and genuine), Aaker and Smith (2010) recognize stories as a significant asset for organizations. Such stories may not always be accurate, but they often satisfy organizational members' needs and wants (O'Neill, 2002). And most importantly, Mitroff (1983) points out that it is impossible for any one story about an organization to be the only definitive story about it.

This literature review will specifically focus on the benefits and limitations of organizational storytelling, and the storytelling stakeholder. Although non-profits like supportive housing organizations use storytelling in unique ways (see below), there are still some similarities between for-profit and non-profit storytelling. Section one of this literature review will outline a few common for-profit uses and advantages of storytelling, and hint at some points of contact between for-profit and non-profit storytelling, especially in a supportive housing context. Section two briefly discusses the limitations of organizational storytelling. Section three begins by proposing and defining a three-pronged framework in which "stakeholder engagement",

“intersectionality”, and “organizational attention” informs an organization’s understanding of its external stakeholders. This section ends by picking up the discussion of non-profit storytelling by highlighting the fact that external stakeholders’ stories are often ignored by non-profits—but even when they are not ignored, non-profits still face challenges collecting such stories.

2.1 Benefits and Uses of Organizational Storytelling

Points of contact exist between for-profit storytelling and non-profit storytelling. Sometimes the similarities are obvious, as with the subjects of leadership, values, and culture. Sometimes the similarities are harder to detect, as with “The Science of Storytelling”. However, non-profits and for-profits are finding that stories may be just as effective, or in some cases better, in presenting business information than more traditional approaches.

2.1.1 The Science of Storytelling.

Social scientific research associated with storytelling reveals at least three main benefits: scientists are finding that storytelling is linked with our ability to plan, that “narrative transport” can be harnessed to further communication objectives, and that narrative is a legitimate mode of human thought—even in an organizational context. Scientists are making discoveries about how and why we tell stories, and these discoveries have implications for organizational storytelling. For example, there may be a link between our ability to plan and our ability to tell stories. Shaw et al. (1998) suggest that we learn to plan as children by listening to stories; we imagine courses of action and the effects of those actions, and then decide whether or not to act. As well, psychologists speak of “narrative transport,” that is, an immersive psychological state that occurs when an audience is captivated by a story. Apparently, the more empathetic a person is the easier it is for them to be transported by stories (Hsu, 2008). Hsu (2008) also suggests that storytelling is probably linked to social cognition. The stories we tell and hear possibly hone our social skills.

Such research is interesting because traditionally science and storytelling are seen as at odds with each other. Lyotard (1984) addresses this ancient acrimony and suggests that narrative is just as legitimate a mode of thinking as is scientific thought or logic. According to Gill (2011b) stories add a personal dimension to a message that cannot be achieved with statistics alone. Indeed, ideas are more easily accepted when people are in “story mode” rather than in “analytic mode”.

2.1.2 Storytelling and leadership.

This section begins by discussing Freeman et al.’s (2007) concept of “ethical leadership”, and then discusses typical ways leaders are using storytelling to persuade, guide, shape values, resolve conflict, and attract investment.

Freeman et al.’s (2007) concept of “ethical leadership” describes a leader’s ability to articulate how their organization improves the lives of his or her external stakeholders⁴—or, as the author put it, *create value* for stakeholders (see below). For Freeman et al. (2007) leaders cannot be seen apart from their organization’s stakeholder groups. They are inextricably tied to these external stakeholders. A leader’s actions, goals, and interactions must be conducted in ways that benefit the organization as a whole. Leaders must further be open to the ideas, criticisms, and opinions of external stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2007). Freeman et al. (2007) also suggest that leaders must be prepared to take responsibility when their products and/or services are substandard or cause harm.

To differentiate “constructive” communication from the “mundane message overflow” of traditional corporate communication, such leaders are turning to storytelling (Gill, 2011a, p. 25). In fact, for Jameson (2001), narration is a key management ability, allowing leaders to influence

⁴ Freeman et al. (2007) use the term “stakeholder” (rather than my term “external stakeholder”) and specifically refer to customers, suppliers, employees, communities and financiers. My term is, therefore, more narrow; however, I do believe that my arguments are in accord with the authors.

others through stories. Leaders can use stories to persuade, symbolize, guide and to shape values which convey successes and failures. (Peters and Austin, 1985). Leaders can also use narrative to resolve conflict when direct action is inappropriate; for example, Jameson (2001) found that when groups of managers create stories collectively to present problems to head office, such “storybuilding” is more convincing and carries more weight than one isolated story. Gill (2011a) reports that employees often remark that storytelling leaders appear more competent and are better motivators. Leaders themselves report feeling more confident after using storytelling techniques. Indeed, storytelling often reveals the human side of management (Gill, 2011b). Gruber (2007) advises CEOs to use narratives about their company’s mission to attract investment, set goals, and inspire employees. Gruber also likens the modern business leader to the shaman: one who records the “tribe’s” history through stories—thus encoding beliefs, revealing values, and highlighting rules.

The literature also suggests that future leaders are being trained to use storytelling. According to Morgan and Dennehy (1997), one learning outcome for students—at least at the Barney School of Business, University of Hartford—is the effective use of storytelling, as stories can help students better understand organizations, interpret observed behaviours, and understand an organization’s culture. Ready (2002) adds that storytelling is a powerful way to build leadership effectiveness, and that storytelling can be used to develop leaders alongside other methods such as structured coaching, action learning, and university-sponsored programs and benchmarking.

2.1.3 Storytelling and employee engagement.

Organizational storytelling is an ideal way to engage audiences, promote inclusiveness, and ultimately to spur commitment and involvement. Storytelling is recognized as a way to motivate and ignite enthusiasm (Peters & Austin, 1985), and memorable stories can spur employee action,

particularly during times of change (Gill, 2011a). Gill (2011a) writes, “Employee engagement is an individual’s involvement and satisfaction with, as well as enthusiasm for, their work” (p. 24). Stories are, in fact, an ideal form of delivering engaging information because content can be tailored to fit the communication objective and to the comprehension level of the audience (Gill, 2011b). Storytelling is a means to engage employees and foster inclusiveness (Gill, 2011a). According to Gill (2011b) the literature indicates that storytelling engages employees because it is an “appealing” channel that allows individuals to emotionally connect with the text. Gill (2011a) adds that because audiences apply their own interpretation and experiences to the information found in stories, employees feel a sense of ownership for corporate narratives. Stories also inspire. They generate excitement and commitment throughout all levels of an organization. Shaw et al. (1998) suggest that when audiences (i.e. employees) listen to a story in a business environment, they locate themselves within that story; thus it enhances their sense of commitment and involvement.

2.1.4 Storytelling and the brand.

Storytelling is also important for brand management, contemporary content marketing, and cultivating employees as brand ambassadors. Narrative occupies a central place in branding. Organizations do not just sell products and services, but the stories associated with those products and services (Denning, 2008). Compelling stories can sell anything (Hadden, 2016). According to Hadden (2016), good storytelling is synonymous with good content marketing, and the aim of content marketing should be to blur where the story begins and the product ends. Hadden claims that this will result in consumer engagement and revenue generation. Marketing today also involves community building, often around “brand advocates” and “influencers” who endorse a brand without being asked to (Lee, 2012).

Sometimes the best brand advocates are employees. Stories allow them to take ownership of the brand because they interpret and relate to stories on a personal level. If employees believe in the organization, brand reputation is strengthened and this belief can be articulated through stories (Gill, 2011b).

2.1.5 Storytelling, values and culture.

Values and culture, both easily distilled through storytelling, differentiate organizations. An organization's value system—frequently articulated by senior management—is comprised of its enduring beliefs and guides all activities (McCarthy, 2008). Peters and Waterman (1982) recognize stories as a “soft” means to reveal values, and McCarthy (2008) adds that stories can help establish common values. Gill (2011b) argues that stories carry within them values that endure beyond their initial telling. High congruence between value statements and the actions of all organizational members is ideal (McCarthy, 2008). O'Neill (2002) also notes that organizational leaders do not control all stories about an organization's values—stories told by the rank and file and by leaders may differ, but both should convey the organization's values.

Smircich (1983) likens corporate stories to cultural artifacts. Culture, she argues, is a kind of “glue” that holds organizations together, expressing values or social ideas, and are manifested in such “symbolic devices” as stories. As employees share stories about their experiences with an organization, community is built (Blair, 2006). Mitroff (1983) adds that culture is the “extended history” of an organization, i.e. the interaction of *all* of its stakeholders from the beginning of its existence to its current state. For a story to convey an organization's culture it must be known to all organizational members, and it must guide their actions (Morgan & Dennehy, 1997). Forman (2000) suggests that increasingly organizations are using stories for community building. Apart from using stories to build communities for marketing, as discussed above, stories build internal

communities capturing the shared experience of a firm's core values. Indeed, Lyotard (1984) argues that stories often transmit sets of pragmatic rules that constitute social bonds.

One challenge for organizations is ensuring that its culture works for all of its stakeholders. In this regard, Heffernan (2015) offers a useful concept, the "just culture". Just cultures are open and ensure that conflicting ideas are safely and respectfully explored. Creative and constructive conflict allows the just culture to see what it is ignoring and helps executives to think better. Heffernan suggests that social connectedness⁵ is key to just cultures because if group members are connected they will share ideas and concerns freely. With just cultures, disagreement is not threatening: opinions build upon one another and open discussion follows (Heffernan, 2015).

An essential part of a just culture is what Gómez (2015) would recognize as organizational attention. Just cultures collect all information and intelligence needed to make good business decisions (Heffernan, 2015). This would suggest collecting information from external stakeholders too. In fact, Heffernan (2015) argues that external stakeholders do not see things exactly the way an organization's leadership does—just cultures can therefore facilitate organizational learning.

2.1.6 Storytelling, training, employee socialization, and organizational learning.

Stories can be used to train, socialize, and facilitate organizational learning. In fact, it is argued that stories are the main carriers of knowledge in contemporary society, and often stories reflect a social contract between employees and the organization itself.

For Lyotard (1984), the community in which a narrative is found defines its own criteria of competence and evaluates members based on those criteria, thus establishing what can or cannot

⁵ Heffernan is mostly concerned about the internal connectedness within an organization. However, her argument can be easily extended to the organization as a whole, especially organizations with interface stakeholders like supportive housing providers.

be performed. Stories, then, are models: they can be used to train, facilitate socialization, and to aid organizational learning. In fact, Czarniawska (1998) describes narratives as modern society's main carriers of knowledge. Czarniawska also argues that although learning tools such as lists and tables are favoured over narratives in contemporary learning, the reality is that most organizational learning happens through the "circulation of stories" (p. 8).

Put bluntly, Peters and Waterman (1982) call such narratives "war stories": at IBM these war stories involve customer service; at 3M war stories are about failing but persevering in the spirit of innovation; at Procter & Gamble war stories are about quality; Hewlett Packard features employee success stories in its training book, *The HP Way*. According to O'Neill (2002), storytelling can assist with the socialization process of new organizational members because they tend to readily accept stories told to them as the right way to think regarding organizational reality. Ready (2002) suggests that when such stories are effective, they stimulate learning and can potentially change behaviour by emphasizing those skills and/or behaviours that an organization favours. This involves not only a never ending process for all staff, but also a dialogical process of "(re-)storying" experiences (Abma, 2003). As well, stories reveal a social contract between organizational members that highlights how things are done or not done, conveying organizational norms, rewards, and punishments (Morgan & Dennehy, 1997). When it comes to employee evaluations, stories about employees better capture the nuances and "contextual complexities" of a worker's performance than, say, evaluations based on objective criteria (Jameson, 2001) such as we find in a graphic rating scale. Leaders, too, can learn from their employees' stories—such stories offer leaders a fresh perspective on the organization (Gargiulo, 2006). In sum, stories are generative processes that yield and shape meaning and are therefore fundamental to an organization's existence (Smircich, 1983).

2.1.7 Strategic storytelling and stories of change.

The strategic use of stories can also help facilitate organizational change. Heath and Heath (2010) suggest that when an organization undergoes change it can affect all of its external stakeholders. For Heath and Heath (2010), to bring about change managers must direct the rational side of the psyche of the people they want to change, motivate the emotional side of their psyche, and shape their path so that change can occur—or give them a clear set of choices so that they can choose change. Apparently, stories of change work best when they converge dominant narratives about change and counter-stories that raise concerns about it (Boje, 2005). As well, all organizations must create control mechanisms to ensure optimal productivity and stories are an effective way to do just that (Boyce, 1996). For example, Heath and Heath (2010) tell the story of an executive who discovered that his firm was spending recklessly. Case in point: one department was paying \$5 for each pair of work gloves from one supplier, and another department was paying \$17 for the same gloves from another supplier. Instead of relying on figures to address the problem, the executive used a table full of gloves as props and a story delivered to upper management. The result: centralized purchasing.

Storytelling is action oriented. Stories turn dreams into goals, and goals into results (Guber, 2007). Hence storytelling is also instrumental to strategy (Boje, 2005). For example, internal communication strategies regarding trust and engagement are enhanced through storytelling (Gill, 2011b). An executive's strategic stories allow him or her to convince audiences to accept a particular vision of the future. And those audiences more readily accept strategic stories if they have a part in formulating the narrative and feel listened to (Forman, 2000). Shaw et al. (1998) suggest that strategic storytelling improves a business plan by addressing vagueness and drawing out the intricacies of ideas in the plan in story form. Another benefit of storytelling in this

context is that it builds an executive's strategic competence (Ready, 2002). Mitroff's (1983) understanding of strategy is particularly useful for this paper—he sees strategy as an attempt to achieve certain outcomes in the future and is based, at the very least, on assumptions about stakeholders' behaviour and properties, and the network of relationships that connects external stakeholders to the organization.

2.1.8 Other benefits and uses of for-profit organizational storytelling.

The preceding catalogue of the benefits and uses of storytelling was not exhaustive, nor is the following list exhaustive. Narratives can boost collaboration (Denning, 2011), neutralize gossip and rumour (Denning, 2011), communicate risk and crisis (Lundgren & McMakin, 2013; Ulmer et al., 2015), work as sales tools (Abbott, 2008), facilitate sensemaking (Kelly & Zac, 1999; Bird, 2007), aid networking (Bird, 2007), and function as design tools (McLelland, 2006). Organizations are even using new media for digital storytelling (Ohler, 2013; Alexander, 2011).

2.1.9 Storytelling and non-profit organizations.

Non-profit organizations are also using stories. According to Aaker and Smith (2010) the goals of non-profit organizations are achieved when they translate into powerful stories. Such stories are about transformation (i.e. how the external stakeholders' lives are changed), real life experiences (i.e. what daily life is like for external stakeholders), and impact (i.e. the consequences of the non-profit organization and donors' actions) [Meyer Foundation, 2014]. Although some non-profits do not prioritize storytelling, perhaps because of a lack of resources (for example to do digital storytelling), other charities have adopted a “culture of storytelling” which involves collecting stories that further their missions (Jensen, 2014). Storytelling is one way for a non-profit to differentiate itself and reach target audiences (Vence, 2008). Storytelling can also generate engagement with a non-profit's brand (Singer, 2011). Like their for-profit

counterparts, non-profit executives are realizing the limitations of just communicating data (Singer, 2011; Jensen, 2014) and are using stories in unique ways: telling external stakeholders' stories to strike a chord with potential donors (Singer, 2011). Merchant et al. (2010) argue that non-profit stories invite target audiences to become part of the story by helping the cause, for example, by giving a donation (p. 754)—but also by becoming a volunteer or staff member (Meyer Foundation, 2014). As this quote from the Meyer Foundation (2014) suggests, non-profit stories should capture the full range of an organization's work: "When you demonstrate a range of stories, you show the full continuum of your organization's work—including the less successful efforts and what you learned from them" (p. 28). In fact, non-profit stories should not just be about "beneficiaries" or causes—they can also feature other stakeholders, such as donors, volunteers, or the charity's founder (Meyer Foundation, 2014).

Research on organizations has recognized the importance of employee engagement and provided ways in which stories can help build engagement. Engagement is no less important for non-profit employees. In fact, Lawn (2008) addresses what is perhaps a central non-profit issue when she suggests that some service provider employees may not really care about the issues facing their external stakeholders. It is the organization's responsibility to ensure it hires people who are committed to the cause, and find ongoing ways to keep those employees enthusiastic, engaged and motivated.

Indeed, non-profits are beginning to serve as models for for-profit organizations. Freeman et al. (2007) argue, for example, that "social investing" is growing in the investment industry and involves companies being mindful of their impact on society. And true to the theme of this project, Freeman et al. (2007) argue that non-profits are also learning from for-profit organizations by creating value for their external stakeholders:

Too many non-profits believe that they are different from business. Because they mean well and intend to do good they [think] they should be exempt from the responsibility to create value for their stakeholders. We believe that a stakeholder approach to non-profits brings the discipline of a business approach to the problem together with the good intentions to do good for civil society (p. 162).

2.1.10 Lessons for the supportive housing sector.

There is much that the supportive housing sector can learn from organizational storytelling.

Previously, I argued that stories can hone the social skills of its audiences. The tenant handbooks I will discuss below seem to be predicated on this idea. The handbooks are in part socialization guides that define acceptable behaviour in supportive housing communities.

As indicated above, supportive housing tenants are interface stakeholders. Thus leader-employee relationships are in some ways analogous to leader-tenant relationships. As noted earlier, “storybuilding” can be used by employees to discuss difficult topics. It is common for supportive housing organizations to have tenants on their boards of directors. Thus, one can speculate that storybuilding would be a source of valuable information for housing providers. Tenant storybuilding should be encouraged and listened to in good faith.

If we replace the word “employee” with “interface stakeholder” (i.e. supportive housing tenant) then, just like an employee, when a tenant listens to a story in a supportive housing context, they can be encouraged to locate themselves within that story and their level of engagement with the service provider will be high or low depending upon whether the story rings true for them.

From a storytelling perspective, employees are powerful brand ambassadors and will tell stories about whether or not they endorse an organization’s products and/or services. The same can be argued about tenants in supportive housing. Non-profit executives should be concerned by negative BOR narratives such as the ones my research team collected (Appendix 1).

As noted earlier, storytelling is essential for community-building. This is a potentially important insight for supportive housing organizations because housing providers typically try to create communities for their tenants stories can help train employees, and be used to aid socialization and organizational learning. The BOR narratives are potentially powerful teaching aids to future supportive housing employees. Stories of change are also effective when they help converge dominant narratives and counter-stories. It is difficult to imagine that change for the better would not occur if supportive housing providers truly listened to tenants' counter-stories. For example, with what Davis (2015) calls the "clinicalization" of supportive housing (i.e. cuts to funding and a shift in how supportive housing falls within the funding objectives of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and the Local Health Integrated Network) tenants are required to fill out the Ontario Common Assessment of Need (OCAN) survey⁶. However, tenants find this form invasive (i.e. the survey asks questions that are too personal) and pointless because, according to one BOR respondent I interviewed, the despite the input tenants provide nothing ever changes with their housing. It is important to understand, as Mitroff (1983) suggests, that any change with respect to external stakeholders changes the organization itself—and the corollary would be that organizational change changes, or at least impacts, external stakeholders. This is true because organizations are systems. If one part of the system changes it potentially affects the entire system (Mitroff, 1983).

In sum, the main lessons that can be learned from this literature review are easily identified if the word "employee" is substituted by the word "interface stakeholder". The impact of

⁶ A standardized assessment tool launched in 2007 for the community mental health sector which, in part, encourages conversations with consumer/survivors about their needs, and informs organizational, regional, and provincial level planning and decision making

storytelling on employees is analogous to the impact storytelling should have on supportive housing tenants.

2.2 Limitations of Organizational Storytelling

Due to the contextual nature of communication processes, storytelling may not always be appropriate in an organizational context. Gill (2011a) outlines at least 9 limitations of organizational storytelling. First, it is but one of many communication methods strategists should use to facilitate shared meaning across diverse audiences. Indeed, often it may be inappropriate to tell a story. Second, public relations departments should use all tools, not just storytelling, to deliver information. Third, narration is not the only tool managers have to build trust and good relationships with staff. Fourth, occasionally storytelling should only be seen as a supplement to decision-making. Fifth, storytelling is typically a less formal approach to information exchange than traditional means of communication. Sixth, time and location may be factors that restrict the practicality of storytelling. Seventh, stories should be positive in nature or they will not spark employee action (also Denning, 2011). Eighth, telling stories face-to-face is a form of uncontrolled media; thus the narrator's interpretation of information could deviate from the intended message. Ninth, good storytellers are not necessarily good leaders.

One apparent limitation of storytelling seems to be a limitation in the literature as well. As indicated above, storytelling from academic journals, popular business publications, and business reviews paint a narrow picture of organizational storytelling. The emphasis tends to be on storytelling and leadership, or storytelling within organizations rather than stories of external stakeholders. Browning and Morris (2012) write, "Managerial narratologists usually link the narrative with the institution of the leader telling a story" (p. 32). Fisher (1989) recognized that storytelling is one thing that defines humans as a species. We *all* understand and articulate our

experiences in story form. So why does the literature tend to overlook storytelling external stakeholders? Indeed, despite the benefits of storytelling, Gill (2009) finds little documented evidence that most organizations are using it to its full potential to engage employees *and* stakeholders. As discussed earlier, external stakeholder stories are, perhaps, only useful when placed alongside current organizational praxis. One overarching theme of this paper is that organizational narrative and counter-narrative should converge.

2.3. The Storytelling External Stakeholder

This section points to the importance of organizations maintaining good relationships with their external stakeholders, and then addresses the importance of organizations recognizing that external stakeholders are first and foremost complex human beings. Next, I argue that external stakeholders and organizations themselves benefit if organizations truly listen to those external stakeholders. Finally, I argue that because stories of disconnection challenge dominant organizational stories they speak to the level of connection, disconnection and conflict within the firm. I end this section by proposing a framework that will help organizations better understand their external stakeholders.

2.3.1 The importance of relationships.

Mitroff (1983) argues that the modern organization is beholden to a large number of forces such as stockholders, customers and the organization itself that have an impact on “internal policies” and “external behaviour”. An organization, for Mitroff (1983), is defined as the complete set of relationships it has with its stakeholders. Freeman et al. (2007) add that a business is a unique set of relationships between itself and its stakeholders, and the authors argue that it is vital to understand how an organization’s relationships work in order to get a clear picture of how that business functions. Executives or entrepreneurs must deftly manage these

relationships (Freeman et al., 2007). A business, then, is an institution for stakeholder interaction (Freeman et al., 2007). Cornelissen (2009) distinguishes between stakeholder management and stakeholder engagement. The former focuses on managing relationships, “buffering” the organization, and achieving short-term goals. The latter is concerned with an integrated management approach that strives to build relationships. It is driven by the firm’s mission, values, and strategies, and is linked to long-term business goals (Cornelissen, 2009). One iteration of stakeholder engagement is “managing for stakeholders” (Freeman et al., 2007). This approach suggests the importance of an organization understanding its stakeholders and listening to them. Specifically, Freeman et al. (2007) argue that stakeholder engagement involves an organization’s ability to create a “strategic posture” in which direct contact, negotiation and communication with external stakeholders occurs. This builds relationships. For Freeman et al. (2007), businesses work well when external stakeholders’ needs and desires are continually met. Businesses must *create value* for external stakeholders in the form of products and/or services that improve those external stakeholders’ lives. And because business is nothing more than value creation for external stakeholders, organizations must be concerned with stakeholder relationships (Freeman et al., 2007). The key to managing these relationships is understanding the behaviour of external stakeholders, and their beliefs about the business (Freeman et al., 2007)—i.e. understanding their stories about whether or not their needs are being met.

2.3.2 The complexity of external stakeholders.

In fact, organizations can elicit positive reactions in external stakeholders by recognizing their complexity. Schneider and Bowen (1999) identify three needs associated with eliciting external stakeholders’ positive or negative reactions: security, or the need to feel physically or economically safe; justice, or the need for fair treatment; and self-esteem, or the need to maintain

and enhance one's self-worth. According to Schneider and Bowen (1999) companies that violate these needs can expect outrage from their external stakeholders, but companies that satisfy these needs can expect appreciation from external stakeholders. Above all, the authors argue that studies in marketing and organizational behaviour literature indicate that organizations should treat customers as *people*, not just customers.

Freeman et al. (2007) argue that although business executives often assume the opposite, external stakeholders are complex human beings who are not to be narrowly defined. The authors argue that a “one size fits all” approach to stakeholder engagement will fail. In fact, managerial psychologist Harry Levinson suggests that external stakeholders are complicated people—complicated physically, emotionally, morally, and spiritually (Freeman et al., 2007). Organizational processes must be designed to reflect this complexity. Looking at external stakeholders through an intersectional lens may help firms to do this—to view external stakeholders as people. The term “intersectionality,” popularized by Crenshaw (1991) acknowledges the fact that individuals are best understood if looked at through as many personality domains as possible. For example, if an organization's main external stakeholders are psychiatric consumer/survivors, workers should get a better picture of them by considering such factors as their age, religion, education level, socio-economic status, sexual orientation etc., rather than just viewing them as psychiatric patients.

2.3.3 The importance of listening.

Research (Denning, 2011; Smith, 2012; Forman, 2013) suggests that firms striving to provide exceptional service to external stakeholders must listen, display empathy, solve customer problems promptly, and must be prepared because external stakeholders will talk about them. Specifically, Forman (2013) argues that a firm's stories should not just reflect leadership's voice,

but also the voice of “significant others” like external stakeholders. Similarly, Boje (2005) argues that often a firm’s official corporate story is challenged by the counter-stories of internal and external stakeholders. Forman (2013) points out that external stakeholders want to be heard in their own voice, and, as a result, organizations should strive to be “listening storytellers” by inviting external stakeholders to tell their stories. According to McLelland (2006), The Coca-Cola Company has been doing this since at least 1990 when it opened its museum, The World of Coca-Cola, which features customers’ true stories in short video vignettes. Denning (2011) also suggests that firms should ensure mechanisms are in place for them to listen to stakeholder stories, and to empathize with the feelings expressed, as this “humanizes” the organization. For DiJulius (2015) one feature of a “world-class customer service company” (see below) is customer empathy, i.e. understanding customers’ experiences and working to fulfill those customers’ needs. DiJulius suggests that if a firm is unable to relate to an external stakeholder’s situation or circumstances, it cannot empathize with them. To this end, it may be useful, as Denning (2011) suggests, for organizations—such as supportive housing providers—to create “user-stories” that allow them to imagine what it is like to be one of their external stakeholders. A Mainstay Housing user-story, for example, might begin, “As a Mainstay tenant, I want a safe, clean, well-maintained unit, and an environment that enhances my personal growth...” Denning (2011) also argues that listening to, and empathizing with, external stakeholders drives continuous innovation. In sum, Peters and Waterman (1982) argue that “excellent companies” listen.

Mitroff (1983) too argues that monitoring stakeholders is instrumental to success. Often external stakeholders are just as committed as the firm to the success of a product or service. Proof of this lies, as Smith (2012) argues, in the fact that external stakeholders will tell good and

bad stories about a firm's products and/or services. According to Schneider (2016) in the 1970s organizations found ways (automated phone systems, rigid policies etc.) to ensure that external stakeholders who complained about substandard products and/or services could not easily be compensated. Social media has changed everything. Li (2010) and DiJulius (2015) argue that social media make it easy for external stakeholders to exercise their voice in this way. The result is a public that is more informed and empowered. Thus, Smith (2012) claims that organizations should make it easy for external stakeholders to tell stories about them, and then these stories should be mined to improve products and/or services. "Organizational attention" is the driver of this ideal because, as suggested above, listening to external stakeholders potentially results in better products and/or services, and ultimately a more successful enterprise.

Gómez (2015) defines organizational attention as the identification of all threats and opportunities found within and outside of a firm. The opposite of this, Gómez adds, is "organizational myopia", or overlooking certain stories and failures. Paying attention to feedback from external stakeholders is the key to organizational success. Hirschman (1970) argues that when the quality of an organization's products and/or services decline, external stakeholders have two options. First, they can "exit", or stop doing business with the organization. Hirschman calls this a market mechanism because these external stakeholders go to the competition. Second, unhappy external stakeholders can use their "voice", that is they can complain through storytelling.⁷ Hirschman calls this a nonmarket mechanism because these external individuals continue to do business with the firm. Perhaps, organizations should be sensitive to the fact that some external stakeholders have limited avenues for response. For example, for various reasons

⁷ Of course "voice" does not automatically equate to storytelling. There may be other ways to exercise voice, but for the purposes of this paper I am precisely examining ways external stakeholders use storytelling to voice customer dissatisfaction in the way that Hirschman describes.

(financial insecurity, health, or complete dependence on the services an organization provides) an external stakeholder who is a consumer/survivor may not feel comfortable using exit or voice. In such cases, voice should be encouraged because Hirschman suggests that listening to voice (and learning from exit) can benefit the firm by resulting in improved products and/or services—or as Peters and Waterman (1983) argue, listening drives innovation. A business with little or no concern for its primary external stakeholders is not sustainable (Freeman et al., 2007). For example, Procter & Gamble was the first consumer goods company to put its toll-free 800 number on its packaging. Procter & Gamble's 1979 annual report indicated that the firm received 200,000 calls on that phone number with complaints and suggestions. According to Peters & Waterman (1983), Procter & Gamble insiders indicated that the 800 number was a valuable source of product improvement ideas. Freeman et al., (2007) argue simply that a critic of an organization's products and/or services represents "unmet market needs" because he or she wants the organization to behave differently. The critic's voice, then, represents opportunity and the potential to create value.

DiJulius (2015) would argue that Procter & Gamble is a world-class customer service company. Along with profit margins, quality products and services, and stable human resources, customer satisfaction is major goal of any organization (Browning, 1992). DiJulius (2015) suggests that during the 2008-2010 recession, the most successful organizations emphasized customer service, resulting in what he calls a "customer service revolution". For DiJulius, world-class customer service companies differentiate themselves by creating meaningful customer experiences, and building strong customer, employee and community relationships. Specifically, he argues that world-class customer service companies *in all industries* have employees with high "service aptitude" (i.e. the ability to seize upon opportunities to exceed customers'

expectations), create a “customer service vision statement” (i.e. a value statement indicating how customers are to be treated), and create a “customer bill of rights” that all members of a firm follow. Aaker and Smith (2010) add that firms are also turning to “design thinking” in an attempt to provide customers with better products and/or services. Design thinking is a human-centric orientation in which initiatives focus on external stakeholders’ needs. Here, feedback and empathy inform the design of products and services (Aaker & Smith, 2010).

Forman (2013) and Browning and Morris (2012) seem aligned with DiJulius (2015) about the importance of organization-customer relationships with respect to storytelling. Forman (2013), for example, argues that storytelling should be a collaborative, consultative process with external stakeholders invited. Browning and Morris (2012) argue that everyone’s story deserves an audience. As indicated, the literature suggests organization-customer relationships are crucial for firms to provide world-class customer service. Gallicano (2009) outlines some strategies that firms can use to build such relationships including facework, facilitating self-actualization, the use of constitutive rhetoric, and peer linking. For Gallicano, facework occurs when firms help their external stakeholders to look good by protecting their dignity. This may include a preoccupation with human rights, diversity, and intolerance to all types of discrimination. An example of facework might occur after tenant x speaks to tenant y with racially charged language, prompting the housing provider to remind tenant x that racism is unacceptable and assure tenant y that s/he is a valued member of the community. The example shows that facework is a proactive strategy that organizations can use to build trust. For Gallicano (2009) facilitating self-actualization occurs when an organization helps its external stakeholders develop to their fullest potential. Examples include access to health and nutrition, skills building, help with education, and volunteer or job opportunities. For instance, an organization offering a

scholarship for tenants to further their education would be an instance of facilitating self-actualization, as it builds relationships by helping tenants to improve their lives. Constitutive rhetoric is evident when “publics are constituted within communication in a way that displays what they should do to uphold their identity” (p. 323). For example, a supportive housing organization, as is typically the case, refers to tenants as “community members”. The example suggests that tenants have responsibilities, that they must follow certain rules if they are to have a relationship (i.e. be a member) with the organization. Peer linking involves an organization cultivating relationships among and between their external stakeholders. An instance of peer linking may include an organization that arranges for new tenants to have a peer mentor, or a “buddy” who is already a tenant and who is tasked with “showing the new tenant the ropes” of living in the building. The example shows that often an organization is not just concerned about vertical relationships (i.e. between its staff and external stakeholders) but also horizontal relationships (i.e. between its external stakeholders).

2.3.4 Summary of the complexity of external stakeholders living with mental illness.

The nature of stakeholder relationships to organizations, the complexity of external stakeholders, and the importance of listening to external stakeholders have all been widely discussed among scholars. What is often overlooked, however, is how mental health external stakeholders relate to these issues. For organizations like supportive housing that typically attempt to create community for their tenants, good relationships are of vital importance. Relations with external stakeholders who are also psychiatric consumer/survivors are even more complex than the general population especially if myths regarding mental illness are present.

2.3.5 Connection (and conflict).

Stories of disconnection often challenge dominant organizational stories, and thus they speak to conflict in an organization. Smircich (1983) argues it is likely that multiple organizational subcultures exist in any given firm. There may even be what Smircich calls countercultures because different organizational members will experience their relationship to the organization in different ways, some challenging ordinary business practices while others align with those practices. All of these compete to define the organization. As hinted above, the dominant corporate story often clashes with counter-stories (stories of disconnection, or displeasure with an organization's products and/or services) from employees and external stakeholders. Convergence between both types of stories is ideal. Johnson's (2010) theory about connection and disconnection points to a way to do just that. Johnson argues that stories are not just driven by conflict, but also by patterns of connection and disconnection. Aristotle (1997) refers to a story's conflict and resolution as its "knotting" and "unravelling". Stories typically highlight a conflict which is bookended by a beginning and an ending (Singer, 2011). Ohler (2013) describes conflict as the force that defines a story in terms of the transformation of characters and what audiences learn from its telling. In fact, Ohler argues that conflict resolution, between two "binary opposites", is the "heartbeat" of most stories. Browning and Morris (2012) recognize those binary opposites as two actors whose actions intersect. For Abbott (2008), it is through narrative conflict that cultures talk about, and possibly resolve, disputes that undermine it. Abbott lists values, ideas, feelings, and worldviews as possible sources of conflict. In sum, as Freytag (1968) suggests, the essential nature of stories is often recognized as conflict. Johnson (2010), however, claims that often there is more to stories than conflict. She points to *Romeo and Juliet*. The play begins with the Montagues and Capulets disconnected, but then moves to the connection between the lovers. Next, it moves to disconnection when the lovers die. The play

ends with the families connecting by agreeing to end the feud. Many stories are about conflict *and* disconnection/connection that move towards connection/resolution.

Organizations should create an environment that helps ensure that the stories external stakeholders tell about them end in connection. In fact, organizations should think of connection as one way to encourage voice and stop exit. The importance of this for the non-profit world, and in particular supportive housing, is clear. Of vital importance for this paper is what non-profits do with “feedback stories” from their external stakeholders. Feedback from external stakeholders to non-profits could help improve a program’s effectiveness. Twersky et al. (2013) are authoritative on this issue. They suggest a link between external stakeholder perceptions and external stakeholder outcomes exists. Such feedback improves responsiveness, empowers external stakeholders, and helps non-profits identify what is not working with service delivery. Despite all of this, Twersky et al. (2013) argue that external stakeholders’ feedback is typically ignored or underappreciated. The Center for Effective Philanthropy (2014) found that although non-profits do actively collect external stakeholders’ feedback to improve programs and services⁸ (p. 22) their surveys tend to be poorly designed and executed (Twersky et al., 2013). The top three methods that non-profits use to collect feedback are systematic interviews (54%), self-administered surveys (87%), and stories (92%) [Center for Effective Philanthropy, 2014]. Although non-profits constantly seek out advice from experts, and the general public in the form of crowdsourcing, the external stakeholders whose daily lives are impacted by social problems are often ignored (Twersky et al, 2013). Part of the problem is that external stakeholders are often not customers, consumers, or clients in the same way that the general population are: “Beneficiaries are not buying [a Non-profit’s] service; rather a third party is paying [Non-profits]

⁸ Their data are based on self-reporting from various U.S. charities.

to provide it to them. Hence the focus shifts toward the requirements of who is paying versus the unmet needs and aspirations of those meant to benefit [from the services]” (Twersky et al., 2013, n.p.). Typically those third parties are governments, grant providing organizations, and wealthy individuals. External stakeholders put up with this because some help is better than no help at all—they learn to live with subpar service delivery (Twersky et al., 2013). There are also challenges to seeking out external stakeholders’ feedback: it can be expensive; it can be difficult to get responses, especially if, for example, service users do not have internet access to online surveys; external stakeholders may be afraid to talk; and feedback—especially if negative—can make service providers uncomfortable (Twersky et al., 2013).

This paper proposes that establishing linkages between stakeholder engagement, intersectionality, and organizational attention is a useful way for non-profit organizations like supportive housing agencies to understand their external stakeholders. Armed with such a framework, the organization might come to better understand the state of conflict and connection between itself and its external stakeholders, and how and why external stakeholders use exit and voice. I applied this framework to the BOR narratives to see what it implies for organizational storytelling in the context of supportive housing. I did this by performing analysis (see “Method of Analysis” below) on those BOR narratives by paying particular attention to Voice in the BOR narratives.

Voice is a complex subject. For Hirschman (1970) voice means a complaint about substandard service and is related to exit strategies. However, Jacobs (1996) argues that Voice is linked to human subjectivity, and recognizes four salient issues involving voice: presence, agency, control, and text-ownership. *Presence* in discourse involves the authenticity of Voice, which ideally is an expression of a writer’s inner self and facilitates self-discovery. Self-discovery partly involves

conceiving and articulating subject positions. Some composition scholars argue that Voice is the subject positions a writer takes in discourse, positions which are constructed by such social forces as race, gender, class, ethnicity, institution etc. (Jacobs, 1996). Writers submit to, or challenge these forces, and Voice arises as an attempt to negotiate identity and meaning as reflected by these subject positions (Jacobs, 1996). For Jacobs (1996), *agency* is the force or forces that control discourse, and Voice is concerned with issues of power and how an individual expresses his or her agency in discourse amidst cultural, social, and rhetorical constraints. To what extent is a writer able to exert *control* over his or her discourse? Oftentimes, writers unintentionally align with dominant forces that control discourse, and this can manifest itself in the form of a Voice that upholds power relations evident in discursive practices (Jacobs, 1996). Text-ownership is an important issue here because the Voices of others invariably seep into the composition process. Voice, Jacobs (1996) argues, is filled with public language.

For De Fina et al. (2006) a narrator's Voice carries within it a polyphony of other voices that represent other points-of-view. (De Fina, 2006). An individual's identity is comprised of never ending interactional social processes, and the embodiment of other public Voices. Also, narrators can Voice the points-of-view of others and then take a position with respect to those Voices (Wortham & Gadsen, 2006). Thus, Voice is a recognition that any discourse carries within it multiple, prior voices and texts that the speaker/writer has engaged with throughout his or her lifelong social interactions. Analyzing discourse for Voice, then, may pay particular attention to subject positions, and the word choices, shifts in Voice (i.e. when a writer articulates the subject position of someone else), and emotive language that make up those subject positions. The following example explains the different ways that voice/Voice can be defined: "I don't like the customer service at that café. It is a social enterprise that employs crazy people. Everyone knows

that all crazy people are lazy.” The first sentence is an instance of Hirschman’s (1970) understanding of voice—i.e. a complaint about substandard service. However, the next two sentences illustrate a more complex understanding of Voice. Here the speaker Voices a typical myth about the unmotivated nature of *all* mentally ill people. In short, it articulates an explicit subject position because a Voice like this is a reflection of certain social hierarchies. It maintains the marginalized status of consumer/survivors while establishing the speaker’s position of power. Also, perhaps the “everyone knows...” construction indicates that a writer or speaker’s Voice is being backed up by other public Voices, but certainly such constructions are typical of common sense reasoning. While common sense is useful because it amounts to agreed upon interpretations of the world, it does not guarantee against errors in reasoning. The Voice in the above statement is typical of public Voices that ultimately prove to be unreflective and *unsound*—yet are widely believed. Immediately, then, we get a picture of the speaker’s identity. His Voice suggests he may be unreflective, with a proclivity for common sense thinking which in turn reflects and upholds certain power relations in society—thus maintaining his position of privilege over the “crazy” people he is referring to.

I employed techniques with respect to Voice found in De Fina et al (2006) to perform analysis on the BOR narratives. For the sake of consistency, in this paper when I am referring to Hirschman’s (1970) understanding of voice I used a lower case “v”; and when I use Voice that is aligned with Jacobs’ (1996) understanding of Voice and sociolinguistics, I used the upper case “V”. Therefore, “voice” refers to an instance when an external stakeholder articulates his or her displeasure with substandard products and/or services, and “Voice” was used to show how that voice, for example, articulates subject positions and helps to construct identity. Hirschman’s (1970) voice is subsumed by Voice; “voice” as he describes it is synonymous with

“complaint”—he is not concerned with issues such as presence, agency, control, and text-ownership. A deeper understanding of Hirschman’s “voice” is offered by “Voice”. I was particularly interested in how consumer/survivors use Voice to story their self-conception as external stakeholders, how they construct themselves as external stakeholders in everyday organizational interactions, and how their agency is undermined or nurtured in supportive housing settings that range from sanist⁹ to inclusive. I also hoped to reveal some ways consumer/survivor external stakeholders Voice/voice their stories in different relational supportive housing contexts.

3. Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer the following four research questions.

RQ#1: What kind of stories do the BOR respondents tell, and what are their Voice/voice characteristics?

RQ#2: What are some of the barriers to effective organizational communication as evidenced by the BOR narratives, when considered within the context of mental health external stakeholders?

RQ#3: How can external stakeholders’ stories, as evidenced by the BOR narratives, facilitate organizational communication?

RQ#4: Do gaps exist between dominant corporate supportive housing stories—evidenced here by tenant handbooks—and tenant stories, evidenced here by the BOR narratives?

These questions are intended to determine if there are any gaps between the way organizations argue that stakeholder relationships are maintained, and how tenants actually experience those

⁹ “Sanism” is a term popularized by Perlin (1992) and refers to discrimination towards mentally ill people. (**In this paper the adjectival form of the word “sanist” is most commonly used.**) Perlin writes, “Sanism is as insidious as other ‘isms’ and is, in some ways, more troubling, since it is largely invisible and largely socially acceptable” (p. 374).

relationships. I was interested in discovering how we can use their Voice/voice to learn how to improve organization-stakeholder relationships in general, and how dominant organizational narratives can converge with tenant narratives to create an atmosphere of connection in supportive housing communities. (See Method of Analysis for how I determined the dominant narratives.)

It must be noted that I was not only interested in connections between external stakeholders and service providers. Again, Abbott (2008) suggests that through narrative conflict, cultures highlight and possibly resolve their disputes. Thus we can say that narrative conflict can highlight the factors of a culture—in this context, how society views mental illness—and allow us to muse upon their implications. It was my aim that the research questions would also help identify these factors and suggest ways to resolve conflict and facilitate connection.

4. Data Collection Method

To answer my research questions, I have collected 10 BOR narratives that, although they did not come out of the original study's data, were used to ground it by providing examples of tenants' experiences—each story corresponding to the 10 rights that emerged from the data. (All of the data used for this paper have been published as a series of blogs and a report at www.thedreamteam.ca. Hardcopies of the report are also available at the Dream Team's Toronto). The average length of these stories is 419 words. I also felt it was important to collect one narrative fragment that emerged directly from the data. This 515 word fragment came from the only respondent who was interviewed for the BOR study and who also submitted a full BOR narrative. The fragment is longer than some of the stories, but I have called it a fragment because it was culled together from the participant's responses to the BOR survey. The storyteller of the fragment, unlike the storytellers of the BOR narratives, was not telling a story with a clear

beginning middle and end. As well, I collected tenant handbooks from 4 supportive housing providers. These handbooks provide a wealth of information: rules that tenants must live by; tips for a successful tenancy; mission and value statements; and in some cases, input from tenants. There are 31 supportive housing service providers in Toronto, serving approximately 5000 tenants—the four I chose were the ones used in the original BOR study. Handbook #1 is 16 pages long. Handbook #2 is 6 pages. Handbook #3 is 43 pages. Handbook #4 is 53 pages.

The narratives were needed to capture the tenants' Voice/voice. I used the handbooks to determine values within the supportive housing sector—an ambitious undertaking to be sure, but I limited this to identifying values as they relate to relationship building between housing providers and tenants. These were then compared to the tenants' Voice/voice to identify any possible gaps. On July 9, 2015 the DT executive committee unanimously voted in favour of me using the BOR data for this paper. (As an executive committee member by virtue of being the chair of research, I abstained from the vote.)

Note, ethics clearance was deemed not necessary by the REB at Ryerson University because, again, all of the data used for this paper have been published at as a series of blogs and a report at www.thedreamteam.ca. Hardcopies of the report are also available at the Dream Team's Toronto office.

5. Method of Analysis

According to McCarthy (2008), interpretive qualitative research is well-suited to provide useful insight into such “configurations” as values and meaning found in stories. Thus, working deductively with the concepts of the Voice/voice of the tenants I performed analyses on the fragment and BOR narratives. As noted earlier “voice” refers to instances of complaint. From a sociolinguistic, constructivist perspective. Wortham and Gadsen (2006) suggests that Voice can

be operationalized by being on the lookout for shifts in Voice, paying attention to how characters are Voiced (i.e. are they recognized social types?), and being mindful of the positions narrators take with respect to the Voice of themselves and others. Ribeiro (2006) further suggests that scholars should be mindful of how narrators make their agency salient through Voice. Again, what interested me is how consumer/survivors use Voice/voice to story their self-conception as external stakeholders, how they construct themselves as external stakeholders in everyday organizational interactions, and how their agency is undermined or nurtured in typical supportive housing settings. I also sought to reveal some ways consumer/survivor external stakeholders Voice their stories in different relational organizational contexts.

For the tenant handbooks, I looked for evidence of strategies service providers use to build good relationships with their tenants. I looked for instances of strategies outlined by Gallicano (2009)—facework, facilitating self-actualization, peer linking, and constitutive rhetoric.¹⁰ These generic values were then compared to how tenants Voice/voice their experience.

6. Results

6.1 Generic Values as Evidenced by Supportive Housing Tenant Handbooks

Seventy-eight passages in the handbooks (HBs) suggest that **constitutive rhetoric** is used as a relationship building strategy by housing providers (HPs). HB #3 had the most references at 40, and HB #2 had the least with zero. Tenants were constituted as “family members” once, by HP #1, “good neighbours” twice, “community members” 28 times, and tenant-members” 47 times. Membership suggests an exclusivity but one, as with any tenancy agreement, in which tenants

¹⁰ Again, facework occurs when firms help their external stakeholders to look good by protecting their dignity; facilitating self-actualization occurs when organizations help their external stakeholders fully develop as human beings; constitutive rhetoric, in this context, refers to how an organization refers to its external stakeholders (family members? community members?) in its official communications; and peer linking refers to seeking to establish bonds between an organizations’ external stakeholders.

are expected to follow certain rules or else membership will be revoked. Also, the extent to which each tenant exercises his or her membership is up to them. HB #4 reads, “As a tenant, you are a member of [HP name]. The extent of your involvement in that membership is entirely up to you and could change over time.” HB #3 reads, “Members play a key role in the organization and [HP name] encourages members to participate as much as they wish.”

For this paper, **facilitating self-actualization** was evident as a relationship building strategy when HBs referenced health and nutrition, help with education and/or skills building, volunteer and/or job opportunities for members, recovery and in general the promise of a better life. For example, HB #2 reads “You’re entitled to three *nutritious* meals daily, an evening snack, and access to a snack table from 9am – 5pm” [emphasis added]. HB #4 writes that all tenants are able to “apply for training programs when they are offered.” HB #4 also reads, “In 1990 [HP name] decided that tenants could also be members of the corporation and play a role in helping [HP name] reach its goals.” HB #3 reads, “[HP name] believes that social conditions influence the overall health of individuals. [HP name] is committed to principles of recovery and providing information and choice to individuals along with the resources required for people to identify and achieve their personal aspirations.” HB #1 reads, “Quality housing is fundamental to recovery, overall good mental health and physical well-being.” The handbooks had 59 references that suggested facilitating self-actualization is a relationship building strategy that HPs use. HB #3 had the most such references at 25, and HB #2 had the least at 3.

Peer linking was evident when HPs referenced “mutual support”, “respect”, “teamwork”, “community meetings”, “social groups”, some iteration of the golden rule, and “cooperation” among tenants. HB #2 reads, “Treat all tenants and staff as you would like to be treated, with respect and consideration.” In total, the HBs displayed 25 references that suggest HPs use peer

linking as a relationship building strategy. HB #3 had the most such references with 8, and HB #1 had the least at 4.

For this paper a HP that made reference to respect, dignity, human rights, embracing diversity, intolerance to discrimination/harassment, and counselling provided by staff was recorded as using **facework** as a relationship building strategy. In total, 14 such references were recorded. HB #4 had the most references at 5, and both HB #2 and HB #1 had the least at 1. HB #1's reference is illustrative and succinct: "All individuals are treated with dignity and mutual respect."

All of these generic values, then, can be seen as the baseline from which stories of disconnection may deviate or which stories of connection may maintain.

6.2 Stories of Disconnection

An analysis of 4 BOR narratives revealed they are stories of disconnection. Brad's¹¹ story—coded under "I have the right to recovery"—is about a tenant who stops taking his medication, becomes unwell, and consequently vandalizes his unit. He is then hospitalized and, as he describes it, is "pushed" out of his housing. Sybil's story and fragment—coded under "I have the right to good quality housing"—are about a tenant whose housemates keep the house in an unsanitary condition. Alice's first story—coded under "I have the right to live in an inclusive community"—is about a tenant who feels isolated and harassed in her home. Tom's story—coded under "I have a right to live in a safe community"—is about a tenant who feels unsafe in

¹¹ Pseudonyms have been used to protect tenants' confidentiality. As well, any information that could be used to identify tenants, or housing providers, has been edited.

his housing because his fellow co-tenants are illicit drug users. Three of these stories (Sybil, Brad and Alice's) were also about conflict in some form.

Only Sybil's fragment clearly states that voice was used to notify the HP of substandard housing. In this fragment, Sybil even laments that typically "tenants don't *voice* their concerns" (emphasis added). Stories by Alice, Brad, and Sybil end, or point to, exit from their housing. Typically, the Voices in these stories are bewildered, angry, and bitter. Brad's Voice is also slightly sarcastic ["looking back to when I 'left' that housing provider"] and superior: he seems to feel that his idea of friendship is better than HP #1's. And yet despite this superiority, Brad also Voices himself as a victim who was unreasonably "pushed" out of his housing (i.e. after his hospitalization, he was not allowed to return to his unit, but was offered a smaller, less attractive unit). Alice's Voice is also superior ["I was on the board of the organization that ran this building, so I thought I was an important person who was experiencing bad things.], but like Brad, she simultaneously positions herself as a victim (i.e. sexual harassment, unfriendly accusatory roommates). Tom's Voice is that of bluntness and matter-of-factness: as a former substance user, he is going to explain to audiences the way things are. He writes in his narrative, "It is a sad reality that addicts involved in [drug-using] activities tend to be intertwined with more serious and dangerous criminal activities than hardcore alcoholics or heavy pot smokers". His Voice is also concerned. He writes, "I would like to express another type of safety concern: the danger to my personal recovery and my goal of complete abstinence...So for a person like me living with others who are still manifesting such behaviours can at times be very unsafe". Sybil's Voice is embarrassed and frustrated. She writes, "All this is too much for me and more than I can bear". She cannot seem to believe that she has found herself in such conditions, and her efforts at cleaning the house seem futile because dirt keeps springing up around her. Sybil

writes, “When I first moved in, I spent most of my waking hours cleaning and trying to keep the house clean. I gave up because the job was too much”. Thus, the Voice is also hopeless: she has given up trying to eat healthily, and to live in a sanitary environment. Sybil’s was also the most inconsistent Voice: in the BOR narrative she suggests that the tenants get along; and she reiterates this in the fragment, but here she also says that there is “animosity” between the tenants.

Brad uses the subjunctive mood¹² (henceforth called the “subjunctive Voice”) to create a particular aspect of his Voice when he writes “I now feel that if the housing provider had known that part of the reason I was sick was because my sister was dying, they might have treated me more fairly.” And in essence Brad’s entire story is predicated on this misunderstanding or lack of communication—this lost opportunity to express voice, and this lost opportunity for HP #1 to seek clarification. Brad also gives Voice to commonsensical thinking. He has strong ideas of what friendship is and that HP #1 has violated it, but Brad does not seem to understand that HP #1 is a business with set rules for appropriate behaviour. Sybil uses the subjunctive Voice 4 times, three of which are particularly relevant: “[HP name] needs to help improve the tenants’ quality of life”; and “[HP name] should stand by its mission statement which is improving the quality of lives of tenants”; and “There shouldn’t be racial slurs”. The Subjunctive Voice is used as a way to summarize and emphasize her points. She outlines some of the problems she has with her housing (unsanitary, unhealthy conditions, racism, etc.) and then uses the subjunctive Voice as a kind of thesis statement or summary of her argument. As well, Sybil Voices the myth that it is a disgrace that people live in supportive housing, a disgrace that people have a mental illness,

¹² The Oxford English dictionary defines the subjunctive as “relating to or denoting a mood of verbs expressing what is imagined or *wished or possible*” (emphasis added).

and a disgrace that people live on social assistance. Sybil's Voice also challenges the myth that consumer/survivors must rely on others to care for them (more on this in the next section); for example, Sybil is clear that her roommates do not feel the need to clean because it is "staff's responsibility".

Shifts in Voice occur when a narrator stops storytelling in his or her own Voice and articulates the Voice of others. Such shifts in the stories are also common. Brad's story has 3 shifts in Voice: one involving his mother (which I will not discuss), and the others involving HP #1. Brad writes in his narrative, "I was told by my housing provider that I couldn't have the same apartment—but a smaller one that didn't even have a stove, just a hotplate." Again, this is why Brad felt "pushed" out of his housing. He comments on this Voice by stating he is "pissed off" and suggests that HP #1 was unreasonable because according to Brad most of the property he had damaged was his own, not HP #1's. Also, when Brad is released from the hospital on a day pass, he visits his apartment to pick up a few things, but is "forced" to hand his key over to HP #1 staff. Brad writes, "the message to me was, 'We don't want you here anymore.'" That was when Brad was resolved to exit HP #1's building. Sybil's narrative features three shifts in Voice: one from housing staff and two from her mother. Sybil writes, "Staff...said the upstairs smells like toe cheese or dirty socks and she had a [surgical] mask in her hand." Curiously, though, Sybil does not comment on this Voice—perhaps a missed opportunity to muse upon the staff member's apparent apathy: why did the staff person comment on the situation, but take no action? The shifts in Voice to Sybil's mother suggest that Sybil has internalized the negative associations that come with being a supportive housing tenant, and being a consumer/survivor in general. Sybil writes, "I can hear my mother telling me that I am an idiot and will never amount to anything good"; and "The double whammy is I can hear my mother saying what a disgrace

I've brought to the family, for none of her children (or anyone in the family) have ever collected money from the government or have lived in supportive housing." Alice's narrative features a shift in Voice from her daughter who "thought the housing was below standards." The Voice is essentially used rhetorically to reinforce how bad Alice's situation is. It adds epistemic validity to Alice's own Voice by corroborating how bad things are, i.e. two agreeing Voices are more convincing than one.

In sum, the stories of disconnection suggest that facilitating self-actualization is used as a relationship strategy. Alice and Brad, for example, were members of their housing providers' boards. But the stories all exhibit a Voice in which facework is denied, especially in Sybil's story in which staff is aware of the unsanitary and unhealthy conditions of the building but does nothing to help preserve the tenants' dignity. Also, although peer linking may be a professed supportive housing value, but the stories—especially Sybil's in which there is "animosity" among tenants suggests that the reality is complicated. HP #1 is the only housing provider in this study that used a family metaphor in its constitutive rhetoric. Brad's story suggests, however, that HP #1 has no idea what fictive kinship is all about. Brad writes, "I thought they were my friends. The way I see it, though, if you see a friend struggling you try to help them—you don't turn your back on them."

6.3 Stories of Connection

Analysis of six BOR narratives suggest that they end in connection. Bob's story—coded under "I have the right to secure tenancy"—is about a tenant who feels he needs to hire a subsidized cleaning service to keep his unit clean—a requirement of HP #1. In Amy's story—coded under "I have the right to independence—she discusses the positive effect housing has had on her life, including learning to read, sleeping better, and eating healthier. Betty's story—coded under "I

have the right to access supports and services—suggests that housing providers must be mindful that as tenants age (Betty is a senior citizen), their needs change. Tamara’s story—coded under “I have the right to meaningful activity—is about a tenant whose gardening hobby is made unenjoyable because of an unpleasant co-tenant, until staff intervenes. Alice’s second story—coded under “I have the right to food security—discusses her role as kitchen facilitator and how community kitchens can result in bonds of friendship between tenants. Tyreese’s story—coded under “I have the right to empowerment in my environment”—is about a former homeless man whose life is changed for the better when he gets housing.

Two stories, Amy and Betty’s, are about tenants who previously used exit in unsatisfactory housing before happily settling into their current living arrangements. At first glance, none of the stories indicate voice. However, as previously indicated, DiJulius (2015), Peters and Waterman (1982), Smith (2012) and others suggest that voice can be used to articulate satisfaction (i.e. along with dissatisfaction) with a company’s products and/or services. Furthermore, it is suggested that these stories are not only told to the businesses offering these products and/or services, but to people in the storytellers’ networks as well. So while the BOR stories (connection *and* disconnection stories) may not have been voiced to their housing provider directly, the important thing is that they are voiced at all.

Bob’s Voice, in an indirect way, is that of commonsensical thinking. Specifically, that of the sanist myth that consumer/survivors must be looked after and checked up on—in short, that they are incompetent children. What is interesting here is what is not Voiced. Bob’s intersectional identity is as follows: white, Roman Catholic, *senior citizen*, and *very highly educated* (an MBA

from an Ontario university)¹³. Yes, Bob is a senior, but he is able bodied and was competent enough to obtain an advanced degree. Amy also Voices the myth that all consumer/survivors must be taken care of, that they are “allowed” to do such and such only if a paternal authority deems it so. Amy writes, “You are allowed to have visitors—they can stay for a weekend.” Betty, too, also Voices the same sanist myth that consumer/survivors must be taken care of, but it is clear that she *does* need the help. She is a senior with balance and mobility issues. She Voices this with skillful use of litotes, or understatement: “I now see a psychiatrist once a month and am much better psychologically, but the side effects are not very nice. I have memory and balance problems, lack of energy, and sleep too much.” The common sense belief that seems to be Voiced in Tamara’s story is that meaningful activity is something given to consumer/survivors as if from a parent to the child, not something Tamara chooses to do and pursue by virtue of her own agency. She writes, “[Staff] also acknowledged that I had a special interest in the garden, and even though I had a limited budget, when she noticed I needed a particular supply, she went ahead and purchased it.” Also, in this story, the staff member is the parent who fixes the problem. The underlying sanist myth reflected here is the consumer/survivor as child.

Two stories, Bob and Amy’s, feature shifts in Voice. Interestingly, in Bob’s story the shift in Voice is in the subjunctive mood: “The building asks residents to do two things: respect our living spaces and participate in programs.” Here the Voice that is expressing a wish belongs to HP #1 as articulated by Bob. The shift in Voice in Amy’s story articulates some of the joy she has experienced after obtaining good housing and learning to read. “I now understand when people say, ‘The movie was good, but the book was better.’” What is suggested here is that Amy

¹³ We know this information because all of the respondents except for Sybil were very well known to the BOR research team, and part of the BOR survey involved demographic questions inquiring about such things as ethnic background, gender etc.

now feels included in a kind of life that had been previously denied to her. In fact, the entire story is an amplification of this implied sentiment.

Although these are stories of connection, not all of the relationship strategies evidenced in the handbooks are evident in these stories. This does not necessarily mean that the housing providers are not successful in employing the strategies. It only suggests that facework, constitutive rhetoric, facilitating self-actualization, and peer linking were not always on the minds of the storytellers in these snapshots of their storyworlds. Bob suggests the success of peer linking at HP #1: “There’s a lot of camaraderie in the building and people get along well.” Amy’s story is most notably an amplification of successful self-actualization: “When I got my first apartment, it changed my life.” She learned to read, started eating healthier, and in her story she discusses the possibility of joining the housing provider’s board or getting part time employment. Betty’s story is also about peer linking—she “enjoyed being with others” in her housing. In Tamara’s story self-actualization is in the forefront. Her housing worker encourages her to pursue her gardening hobby. “She helped boost my confidence at a time when I was feeling low.” This last quote also suggests the success of facework as a relationship building strategy. The only other story about facework is Tyreese’s. It is clear his housing has given him dignity after living on the streets. Tyreese actually uses the subjunctive Voice to set up his belief that no one should ever experience homelessness, and that housing can change a person’s life. The second sentence in his story reads, “I began to realize that no human should ever have to live this way [i.e. homeless].” The rest of the story is an amplification of this sentiment. Tyreese’s story is also about self-actualization. He talks about joining his housing provider’s Social Recreation Committee and how he became president of his housing provider’s board. Finally, Alice’s story is about self-

actualization and peer linking. She has been kitchen facilitator for over 16 years; and “Our kitchens have a social atmosphere which allows people to chat and catch up with friends.”

7. Discussion

In many ways the BOR narratives are a rejoinder to so-called mad literature, i.e. fiction and nonfiction written by or about mad people or characters. In my survey of mad literature (including, for example, Sophocles’ *Ajax*, Büchner’s *Lenz*, Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, Plath’s *The Bell Jar*, Renee’s *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*, Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Winkler’s *The Lunatic*, Davidson’s *The Gargoyle*, Kaysen’s *Girl, Interrupted*, Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, and many others) I have found that the *semes*¹⁴ (Barthes, 1974) typically assigned to the mentally ill include childishness, dangerousness, incompetence, animal-like behaviour etc. Like all mad literature, the narrative *Voices of the BOR* narratives either challenge or internalize the long standing linkages between mental illness and sanist myths. Why isn’t an MBA like Bob encouraged to be more self-reliant? And I can think of no good reason—except the exercising of arbitrary paternal authority—why Brad was offered a smaller unit rather than being allowed to return to his own unit after his hospitalization. If Brad was deemed acceptable to live in a smaller apartment, why wasn’t he fit enough for his original unit?

No one would deny that supportive housing provides an admirable service. The social return on investment is high. Housing someone in supportive housing costs the health care and justice systems less than, for example, the shelter system. However, at the foundation of supportive housing may be the sanist myth that consumer/survivors are incompetent children. Consider

¹⁴ *Semes*, for Barthes, are signifieds of connotation. As he suggests, *semes* are predicates and indicators of truth (p. 191).

these two passages from HB#2: “There has to be at least one staff member in the home 24 hours a day, and enough trained house staff on duty at all times to ensure safety, security and stability of the home”¹⁵; and “**You need to ensure there’s no food, dirty dishes or garbage in the room,** anything that will attract pests. For the sake of other tenants please shower and wash your clothes regularly” (bold typeface in original). It is hard to imagine that such passages would appear in the tenant handbooks of “regular” housing. Consider this similar passage from HB#1: “You agree to keep the Unit clean; so that it meets a standard which we believe is proper and healthy for you. You shall not allow refuse, garbage or other objectionable material to accumulate in your Unit or in areas shared in common by other residents”. HP#1 mainly provides housing for people with schizophrenia. Interestingly, Sass (1992) argues that people with schizophrenia consistently outperform the general population in certain cognitive tests. (Recall that Bob has an MBA and it should be added that Brad studied journalism at a post-secondary institution. Again, Bob and Brad are HP#1 tenants.) And yet the myth of the incompetent mentally ill adult seems to dominate supportive housing. Even in stories of connection where this myth is evident, such housing providers will perhaps have even happier tenants if they treat them like adults. This would be true facework and self-actualization. Perhaps we can rewrite Schneider and Bowen’s (1999) dictum that organizations should treat their customers like people, not just customers. Organizations with mental health external stakeholders should treat their external stakeholders like people, and like adults, not sick children. The biggest barrier to communication between mental health organizations and their primary stakeholders, then, is this sanist myth. As Tyreese writes, “the volunteer work that I do

¹⁵ This passage reflects another myth about mentally ill people—that they are violent. In fact, mental illness is “neither a sufficient nor necessary cause of violence”, and people with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators (Stuart, 2003).

allows me to have a say in how my housing and its programs are run. This is crucial if tenants are going to maintain their housing and improve their quality of life. Only tenants know what programs and services work for them and what programs and services don't.”

The literature makes clear that there are demonstrated benefits and uses of organizational storytelling, and thus offer a lesson for supportive housing organizations. As indicated, though, Gill (2009) finds little evidence that organizations in general are using storytelling to its fullest potential. The most obvious example for supportive housing is community-building. As noted above, community-building is a preoccupation of supportive housing organizations. My data suggest that storytelling that rings true for tenants will help in this regard—and may further enhance tenant engagement. Regarding peer linking, the literature suggest that stories can hone the social skills of audiences. The trick is for supportive housing organizations to tell stories that are not patronizing. The BOR narratives also serve to demonstrate that tenants can be powerful brand advocates...or the opposite. I believe that the most important lesson that the literature provides supportive housing concerns leadership. Ultimately it is leaders who are responsible for substandard products and/or services. The stories these leaders tell must be apologetic when necessary and action-oriented. In general, a leader's stories must steer the organization away from conflict and guide it toward a state of connection. As my data suggest one way to do this is by truly listening to the stories of their external stakeholders.

Perhaps no discussion of supportive housing would be complete without addressing the social determinants of health. According to Lawn (2008) economic, environmental, political, and cultural factors all impact an individual's overall health. Apart from behavioural, biological, and genetic factors, one's health is undermined if s/he does not have access to resources like secure income, employment, education, transportation, food, water, and *housing*. Supportive housing,

then, *attempts* to erect itself upon a foundation of the social determinants of health. Lawn (2008) suggests that mental health service providers must understand the social determinants of health and must do some soul searching to recognize how their values and behaviours impact the consumer/survivors they work with. Above all, Lawn suggests that service providers must be true to the values they espouse, but as my data suggest there are often gaps between housing providers' expressed values and how tenants feel they are being treated.

Unfortunately, the data were not rich enough for me to thoroughly discuss how recognizing consumer/survivors' intersectional identities could help organizations better understand their external stakeholders. The BOR narratives do, however, provide some insight into how consumers/survivors construct their identity through storytelling and as external stakeholders. As suggested earlier narrative is central to the expression of group and individual identity. The self is discursively constructed in ongoing interactional encounters (De Fina et al, 2006), and, in this context, typical encounters that tenants of supportive housing find themselves include conflicts with co-tenants, conflicts with housing staff, and maintaining their units etc. The narrators in the BOR stories are both superior and victims (Brad and Alice). They have internalized sanist myths that are widely accepted by the public at large (Bob, Amy, Tamara, and Betty). In general, there is shame of being mentally ill (Sybil), but they are also proud and given the chance they will thrive and prove to be more than competent (Alice and Tyreese). They are full of wonderful contradictions, hope, fragility and dogged determination. The BOR narratives, then, reveal a tension between local displays of identity and global conceptualizations of what it means to be a consumer/survivor, who also happens to be an external stakeholder. There is no doubt that the alterity of consumer/survivors is real, but sanist myths are often exaggerated and magnified (and internalized) resulting in social inequity and alienation within the consumer/survivor community.

These are the external stakeholders mental health organizations must work with. Lawn (2008) suggests that it is incumbent on service providers to provide psychosocial rehabilitation that addresses the social stigma that cripples many consumer/survivors. Here we return to our dictum. Lawn (2008) argues that recovery-based practices recognize that consumer/survivors are capable of making their own choices. This suggests that recovery-based practices recognizes adult consumer/survivors as adults. The right type of psychosocial supports, Lawn says, are key to addressing the social determinants that undermine mental illness.

For Abma (2003), an organization's learning process is aided when dominant stories (in this context stories suggesting the existence of strong relationships as a result of facework, constitutive rhetoric, peer linking, and facilitating self-actualization) are placed alongside counter-stories which may offer different but just as relevant points-of-view. Tyreese's previous quote ("the volunteer work that I do allows me to have a say in how my housing and its programs are run. This is crucial if tenants are going to maintain their housing and improve their quality of life. Only tenants know what programs and services work for them and what programs and services don't.") suggests that the convergence of counter-stories and dominant stories will improve service delivery in the supportive housing sector. What is needed is open, honest, and respectful two-way dialogue in which external stakeholders' stories are encouraged and heeded. Otherwise the result may be exit caused by misunderstanding, as was the case with Brad. And when voice is articulated, organizations must act quickly and in good faith to rectify the situation or else tenants will find themselves lingering in the kind of unpleasant situation that Sybil finds herself in. As well, Tamara's story suggests that when conflicts among peers arise, staff would do well to be supportive and accommodating. Tamara writes, "Rather than talking about complaints or unpleasant stuff, [the staff member] focused on the positive—and [she] could tell

how meaningful the experience was for me.” Still, it is unclear from Tamara’s story if or how the conflict was actually resolved, but we can turn to our dictum for guidance: treat mental health external stakeholders like adult people.

Stories told to my research team for the BOR study are precisely the kind of stories that need to be told to housing providers in this sector. Although Lawn (2008) recognizes a current trend of “peer input” into service delivery, policy, and decision-making processes within agencies, this input must be encouraged to flourish in free spaces—and it must be listened to and used. Housing providers must ensure mechanisms are in place for tenants to voice/Voice their experiences as tenants. Strong peer communities are also needed. Davis (2015), executive director of Houselink, says this housing provider has higher than average tenant retention rates for two reasons. First, its members have a lot of control at Houselink and are involved in decision making. Second, Houselink has a tradition of strong peer communities.

This paper suggests that we can further rework Hirschman’s (1970) understanding of voice. Stories of connection are positive voice, and stories of disconnection are negative voice. External stakeholders do not just tell negative stories about an organization’s products and/or services—they will also voice their appreciation and fondness for what they feel are good products and/or services.

8. Conclusion

As indicated in the literature review, points of contact exist between non-profit and for-profit storytelling. I would suggest that there is the potential for even more points of contact. In the wake of such recent financial scandals as at Enron, WorldCom, and Lehman Brothers, Freeman et al., (2007) propose a new narrative for business, in which business is no longer about making

money at all costs, but about creating value for stakeholders. An organization's basic proposition should be to create value for its external stakeholders—to improve their lives. There is room in this narrative for non-profits like supportive housing organizations to follow suit. What is the secret of organizations that excel at creating value for external stakeholders? They are actively engaged with and practice two-way communication with their external stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2007).

Housing providers in the supportive housing sector value such relationship building strategies as peer linking, facework, and especially facilitating self-actualization and constitutive rhetoric. However, there is often a disconnect when these ideals are placed alongside actual stories from tenants. In stories of disconnection voice/Voice is typically bewildered, angry, and bitter—a far cry from the “community” atmosphere that the constitutive rhetoric of the housing providers articulate. (Also, the voice/Voice of the tenants sometimes feature commonsensical reasoning that suggest the internalization of sanist myths.) The result is the desire of many tenants to exercise exit. Two stories of connection only end well after the narrators have exited poor housing for better housing. Further studies should explore why consumer/survivors may be reluctant to exercise voice and/or exit behaviours. (Many of the interviewees for the BOR study were nervous about sharing information about their housing providers and had to be reassured that their responses would remain anonymous.) Heath and Heath (2010) suggest that civil rights leaders used “free spaces” (typically churches) to discuss issues. Similarly, the BOR study gave tenants a free space for them to use voice to challenge dominant narratives without fear of reprisal. Considering the fact that the consumer/survivor movement emerging in the 1970s is a direct offspring of the civil rights movement, an interesting study might be to hypothesize how, or if, organizations can systematize the adaptation of tenant free spaces in supportive housing in

ways that are similar to the way racialized communities have. As the literature review suggests, the result of such free spaces is product and/or service innovation. Returning to Heffernan's (2015) understanding of "just cultures" we recognize the importance of connection, as it creates an atmosphere of open discussion in which members trust one another enough to share ideas and concerns. A just culture, as suggested above, also heeds and learns from external stories. Social justice is at the heart of supportive housing, but do housing providers encourage just cultures? Freeman et al., (2007) would add that there is always room for improving the relationship between an organization and its external stakeholders; therefore organizations must "overspend" on understanding external stakeholders and their needs with rigorous marketing research. By "overspending" the authors essentially mean paying close attention to external stakeholders needs. This is a source of innovation and growth.

Another area for exploration would be to determine if the "subjunctive Voice" is typical of stories of disconnection. I received the BOR narratives for this paper after they were edited for length for my presentation at the 2014 ONPHA Conference and Trade Show. I was unable, therefore, to determine with certainty the frequency with which the subjunctive mood was used by, for example, identifying such modals as "should", "could", and "might". Nevertheless, the BOR narratives suggest that the subjunctive Voice can be used like a thesis statement or summarizing sentence to present a desired outcome or position, with the rest of the story being an amplification of this Voice.

Finally, I believe that if the framework proposed in this study—in which a three pronged linkage between stakeholder engagement, intersectionality, and organizational attention informs an organization's understanding of external stakeholders' exit and voice behaviours—or

something like it, is used by supportive housing organizations the result will be an improvement on a sector that has a bad reputation.

One limitation of this study arises from the fact that I was only able to compare two BOR narratives, Bob and Brad's, to the appropriate housing provider, HP #1. It was not possible for me to determine where the other tenants lived, or I knew where they lived but was unable to obtain the corresponding handbook. A stronger study would match all tenants' stories to the correct housing providers' handbooks. And that study would do better if it were a longitudinal endeavour in which the stories were collected in situ as they unfolded in time.

Appendix

BOR Narrative #1: “I have the right to secure tenancy”, by Bob

I’m a senior citizen and have been living in an apartment in a [central Toronto community] supportive housing building for 23 years. The building asks residents to do two things: respect our living spaces, and participate in programs. They do regular unit inspections because that helps them assess whether or not people are having psychological issues. If it’s tidy, you’re probably doing okay; and if it’s messy, you might need some support. Housekeeping keeps us honest.

There’s a lot of camaraderie in the building and people get along quite well. Maybe having tidy apartments contributes to the amicable environment because we’re happy to come home. A few years ago I asked my sister to come in two or three times to help clean my apartment, but I decided that I was taking advantage of her. So I decided to hire a cleaning person. I’ve had a cleaning lady who works for a Non-profit cleaning service for about seven or eight years, and I’m very pleased. She greatly improves my quality of life. Her visits are subsidized so they’re very economical. They charge \$10 an hour. Several other residents in my building also use similar services.

It’s important to have a good environment. I get it messed up a bit. The cleaning lady comes once a month and I prepare for her by getting rid of a few things, cleaning, and throwing out some of the clutter. I have a lot of bins and I’m working on getting rid of them. My housing provider does inspections once a month. While they’re there they check to make sure the carbon monoxide detector, the air conditioner, and the heating are working properly. We have the carpet cleaned once a year and there’s a fumigation of the whole building in November. One of the

conditions of living in this building is that you have to maintain your apartment. My cleaning person helps me to do this with dignity.

BOR Narrative #2: “I have the right to independence”, by Amy

When I got my first apartment it changed my life. I had my own key, my own bedroom, and my own bathroom—things that people take for granted. Having your own place is peaceful and quiet. When you live in a shelter, you have to wear all of your clothes because they will get stolen. It’s also loud: there are children crying and you cannot sleep. They would feed you, but the food was not good—you might get rice and a hotdog. I now have my own kitchen. I can make the food I like to eat and have fresh milk in the fridge. I have a stove so that I can make soup, eggs, and potatoes.

I have a sense of safety. I can learn. I have not read a book in my life. I now understand when people say, “the movie was good, but the book was better.” Where I live you can have pets. Pets are important to me because you have someone to wake up to in the morning. It gives me a sense of myself. I learned that I can do things that I thought I would never be able to do before.

You are allowed to have visitors—they can stay for a weekend. It’s nice to have company. Sometimes you get lonely. To have someone to share a meal with or watch a movie with is great. You become a normal person like everyone else. We all have the same needs and wants. You can sleep when you want to. To have your own bathroom is so wonderful. You can eat better food and take care of yourself. You cannot improve your mental health if you have bad physical health. You can give back by volunteering, be on the board of directors, or get a part time job. Getting your own place make you feel so good about yourself. I never owned a pillow in my life. My first pillow was a remarkable thing. My neck stopped hurting.

You feel needed, wanted, and accepted. We all want a job, a friend and a safe place to live. I didn't know where the garbage went in my new place. Staff had to show me. Living independently gave me a sense of security. It helped me take classes so that I could learn to read, write, and count.

BOR Narrative #3: I have the right to access supports and services”, by Betty

I'm 74 years old. For the last 40 years I have been living in supportive housing. In the 1980s and early 90s, I lived in either group homes or bachelor apartments. I was very ill mentally and spent a lot of time in hospitals, both in [three different Ontario psychiatric hospitals]. I was a very sick person. In 1994 I was prescribed clozapine and since then I have been much better and haven't been hospitalized since. I now see a psychiatrist once a month and am much better psychologically, but the side effects are not very nice. I have memory and balance problems, lack of energy, and sleep too much.

Over the decades my needs have changed, but I have always required some form of subsidized housing. At first I lived in group homes and at a housing co-op, which were all shared accommodations. I was not able to care for myself and enjoyed being with others. Then I spent 15 years in bachelor apartments after I started taking clozapine and my mental health was more stable. I still had the help of doctors, nurses, social workers, cleaning staff, and later on personal support workers. I was happy with my living arrangements for a long time. But as I got older I just could not care for myself. I have developed Parkinson's disease, chronic pulmonary disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and bladder incontinence. What's more, I can only walk short distances and have to rest a lot when using my walker.

I now live in a group home for senior women. I have my own room and share the bathrooms and living area. Cleaning, laundry, and cooking is all done for me. I find I am happier. My needs

are all cared for. Life is much easier. This illustrates that a person's needs for housing change as we age; thus, the kinds of supports we need also change. I would not be able to afford a senior's residence. The group home is affordable and not an institution.

BOR Narrative #4 “I have the right to meaningful activity”, by Tamara

I live on the second floor of a house operated by [Toronto housing provider]. Every year in the spring, they give us a budget to care for our gardens. I like to gardening because it helps me keep grounded. I grow pretty big flowers and ornamental plants, sometimes strawberries and other things. But each year I get concerned about participating because of continuous issues we've had with a particular tenant who also lives there. She does things to make me feel not welcome. To handle the situation I've tried to ignore her, but in certain circumstances, given the opportunity, she can make a pleasant gardening experience into a negative one. I never know what to expect when it comes to her.

Things are up in the air, so when this positive opportunity comes up to talk about getting plants and working out there, because of problems with her I'm not as excited about it. Because things aren't perfect the worker could add to the situation and make it worse...or she could be kind. This year it was a really enjoyable experience. We were shopping for plants. I was worried she might bring up past incidents and complications but she never did. Instead, her calm demeanour made the situation as pleasant as possible. We talked as equals. This worker treated me like a friend, shared her knowledge of herbs and plants, and did her best to make me feel comfortable and relaxed so I could get the most out of the experience.

She could tell I had an interest in gardening and appreciated the opportunity to buy plants and other things I needed, like soil. She really made me feel appreciated and gave me a sense of belonging. The interactions were soothing and welcoming. She helped to boost my confidence at

a time when I was feeling low. She also acknowledged that I had a special interest in the garden, and even though I had a limited budget, when she noticed I needed a particular supply she went ahead and purchased it. We went a little over budget, but she made sure my needs were met and that I'd be prepared for the gardening. Rather than talking about complaints or unpleasant stuff, she focused on the positive—and could tell how meaningful the experience was for me. She made sure that I could get all the plants and flowers I wanted, and ignored the neighbour who is difficult.

BOR Narrative #5 “I have the right to food security”, by Alice

My journey to becoming a kitchen facilitator began when I was able to join a particular supportive housing provider as a non-resident member. I was receiving their monthly activity calendar and they advertised the start of a community kitchen program. By this point I had been cooking with [international Non-profit organization] for 5 years, so I thought I would apply. I got the job right away. It has now been sixteen years and I have been promoted to the position of community kitchen facilitator. My responsibilities include sticking to the budget, coordinating timely meal service, as well as ensuring that the food is nutritious and delicious. I oversee the cook, who is a tenant in supportive housing. We host 9kitchens a week throughout the city, allowing supportive housing tenants both access to food and a sense of community.

Member tenants only pay \$1 for each meal and can eat at any community kitchen—not just the one at their building. Even though all members who live with this provider have cooking facilities in their independent units or shared houses, many still choose to eat at our community kitchens. Why is that? Our kitchens have a social atmosphere which allows people to chat and catch up with friends. Middle class people can afford to go out for a coffee with a friend or to have a meal in a restaurant, but those living on ODSP don't have that luxury. Our meals are also

very affordable and nutritious. We follow the Canada Food Guide and 50% of each meal consists of vegetables.

We shop for the meals the day of service which ensures the freshness of the produce. We have other guidelines for our meals. We don't use salt. We cater to diabetics. We have vegetarian options. We can even accommodate people who require gluten-free meals, or those who are lactose intolerant. Sometimes people don't have the skills to cook a meal—whether it is planning, preparing, food safety, or throwing a meal together without a recipe.

We mostly cook comfort food. Our cooks have diverse backgrounds and this influences their menus. In any given week members can sample food from Jamaica, Latin America, Scandinavia, India, Canada and other. Over time I have witnessed the positive changes that a healthy diet can make in a person's life. I saw people who were clearly undernourished become strong and healthy. I have seen cooks become more confident and skilled in their trade. I have even seen hard core “meatlovers” venturing out and actually eating vegetables at every meal.

BOR Narrative #6 “I have the right to empowerment”, by Tyreese

Living on the street changed my entire outlook on life. I began to realize that no human being should ever have to live this way. It wasn't enough for me to think that I had to find a place to live. I had to find a way to change the system because it was broken. After living on the street for one year, and in a single room in a house for two years, my hostel outreach worker helped me get into supportive housing. That's when my life began to turn around.

Not only has my housing provider given me decent, affordable housing and support services, it has also given me the opportunity to get involved with volunteer work. The volunteer work that I do allows me to have a say in how my housing and its programs are run. This is crucial if tenants

are going to maintain their housing and improve their quality of life. Only tenants know what programs and services work for them and what programs and services don't.

At first I did volunteer work on the Board and the Social Recreation Committee. It made me realize that I had an interest in solving social programs. It also helped me to develop skills that I never had a chance to use before and it helped me to develop more confidence in myself. I even became President of the Board.

The year that I spent on the street was the worst year of my life, but it was the best thing that ever happened to me because it gave my life meaning.

BOR Narrative #7: "I have the right to safety", by Tom

I am an addict and, as such, I have a somewhat different perspective about what constitutes a safe environment for people living in supportive housing. My concerns go beyond the standards that should be given in this type of housing: locks on doors, zero tolerance for violence, including verbal violence, and so on. As one of the peer interviewers for this project, I got to hear the tenants' concerns about their safety. On more than a few occasions, people indicated that they felt unsafe or uncomfortable living with others who were using crack and/or intravenous drugs.

As a former crack smoker and IV drug user, I would like to assert that these concerns are not unfounded. It's a sad reality that addicts involved in the aforementioned activities tend to also be intertwined with more serious and dangerous criminal activities than hardcore alcoholics or heavy pot smokers. So in my opinion, it is quite logical to fear being exposed to such behaviours in their living environment.

Above and beyond that though, as a recovering addict I would like to express another type of safety concern: the danger to my personal recovery and my goal of complete abstinence. For an

addict like myself, each day is a challenge—sometimes beyond measure—to accomplish a full day of staying completely clean n’ sober. So for a person like me living with others who are still manifesting such behaviours can at times be very unsafe. It is unsafe to my goal of complete abstinence, and, by extension, it is unsafe to my life—period.

BOR narrative #8: “I have a right to live in a home that facilitates recovery”, by Brad

For me personally, I felt that one housing provider I lived in didn’t provide an environment that helped me recover because when I got sick, they were more concerned about pushing me out of my apartment than trying to help or find out what was wrong with me. In fact, looking back to when I “left” that housing provider, I feel I was treated unfairly; and, when I needed it, I wasn’t provided with an atmosphere that benefited my recovery. This surprises me. I had never been in trouble in the building. I was never rude to staff. I was never late with rent. I was a model tenant. I had thought that I was well liked by staff and the other tenants. I was even employed as the editor of the housing provider’s newsletter. I can assure you that I did my job well as I had a background in journalism. I also ran for the housing provider’s board where several of my fellow tenants voted for me. I only did lose the election by a narrow margin, but was named a board member anyway when the other person decided to step down. Generally speaking, people find me likeable and easy to get along with.

I was evicted because I became sick, trashed my apartment and was subsequently hospitalized. I accept full responsibility for this breakdown because I had stopped taking my meds. But other things contributed to my breakdown. My sister was dying and, after I was hospitalized, I was worried about my mom. I told her not to let my breakdown and my sister’s illness get to her. My mom said, “It’s kind of hard not to let it get to me.” One day my mom came to visit my sister and

I at two separate hospitals. (My mom lives north of the city.) After the visits, she realized she had gotten a parking ticket. It was too much for her: she broke down and cried on the sidewalk.

What I think was unfair and detrimental to my recovery was that during my hospitalization, I was told by my housing provider that I couldn't have the same apartment—but a smaller one that didn't even have a stove, just a hotplate. This really pissed me off because although I said I trashed my apartment, most of the damage was done to my own personal items—not the actual apartment. Once, during that hospitalization, I was granted a day pass so I visited my apartment to pick up a few things. When I got there, staff at the building found out and I was forced to hand over my key—the message to me was, “we don't want you here anymore.” So I decided that I didn't want anything to do with them. I told them to keep their smaller apartment.

I now feel that if the housing provider had known that part of the reason I was sick was because my sister was dying, they might have treated me more fairly. But they didn't really try to understand. That is what hurts me the most about the situation: I thought I had a good rapport with staff. I thought they were my friends. The way I see it, though, if you see a friend struggling you try to help them—you don't turn your back on them. Recovery is damn near impossible if the people you love walk over you on the street without a second look.

BOR narrative #9: “I have a right to live in an inclusive community”, by Alice

I've moved a lot. At one point, I was moving every two years. Within a ten-year period, I moved seven times. This means that I have lived in many different kinds of housing—some good, some bad, and some in between. After leaving a relationship with my daughter's father, who abused me in every way you could think of—financially, emotionally, physically, mentally, and sexually—I went to live in a two-level apartment that was shared supportive housing. I brought two cats with me and wanted to live with other people because of what I was going

through. I thought I would make five new friends I could talk to. Little did I know that I was going from the frying pan to the broiler.

MY daughter refused to come visit me there because she thought the housing was below standards. It smelled, and all of the people were strangers. I didn't have a single conversation while I was making meals and eating alone. I would lie on the couch in the living room occasionally, but nobody came to chat. One guy sexually harassed me and accused me of taking his food from the fridge. I had to share the bathroom with two strange guys which was embarrassing and made me feel very vulnerable. I was on the board of the organization that ran this housing, so I thought I was an important person who was experiencing bad things. Nobody cared whether I was there or not. I had to hide the board information packages and read them alone.

Before moving there, I had lived in a home for two years and had it built up nicely. I brought everything that was mine—a van full of stuff—and had to fit it all into one room. I had a bed and a dresser, and the rest of the room was filled with boxes and bags that I never unpacked for the entire four months because there was nowhere to put it. In the end, I was able to cobble together enough money to move into a market-rent apartment. I paid \$800 for a bachelor apartment where I had room for my stuff. I felt safe and found peace, and was able to bring my loving cat.

BOR narrative #10: “I have the right to live in good quality housing”, by Sybil

Right now I live in a condition that I never, ever thought I would find myself in. The double whammy is that I can hear my mother saying what a disgrace I've brought to the family, for none of her children (or anyone in the family) have ever collected money from the government or have lived in supportive housing. You see, in my family it is a disgrace to collect welfare, and mental

illness means you are a fool and an idiot and will never amount to anything good. The dirty condition of where I am living makes things even worse.

I am a homebody and the cleanliness of my living space is always at the top of my priority list. That is the way life has always been for me. Right now, in the bathroom there is toilet paper or paper towels with feces on it sitting in the garbage. Some of my tenants are throwing the paper they use to wipe their bum into the garbage. Sometimes they don't flush the toilet. One of the tenants uses a portal toilet at night and she throws the waste in the toilet then washes the bowl in the bathroom sink; this stinks up the upper floor.

One of the other tenants keeps a large garbage bin in his room which contains the empties from his milk-based liquid supplement. Because he keeps his room extremely hot, the containers in the garbage bin grows maggots and the bin seems to have a fly farm somewhere inside. For the past few weeks, there has been a large amount of flies in the kitchen, the bathroom, and the upstairs hallway. Flies disgust me because they sit on everything unclean and they come from maggots. Because of this, I rarely leave my room.

I saw the year-old—yes, year old!—dirty mop that is used to clean the bathroom floors and the hallway floors; a mop that when used to wipe the floor, stinks up the entire house. I once saw this mop in the kitchen sink! The person who had the mop in the sink did not, afterward, clean the sink with bleach. Everyone just continued to use the germ infected sink.

Both the numerous different people who come in and out of the house and the tenants don't seem to think there is something wrong with all of this. No one seems to notice the maggots in the garbage, the maggots on the porch. No one seems to notice the stink from the portal toilets being washed in the bathroom sink. No one seems to notice the mold farm in the bathroom, kitchen, and basement. The large amount of toilet paper in the garbage with feces and flies are all

“normal”. One [housing provider A] staff who came here about three weeks ago said the upstairs smells like toe cheese or dirty socks and she had a mask in her hand. Now, think of your hallway smelling like toe cheese/dirty socks, and mix that smell with the cigarette smoke from three tenants.

When I first moved in, I spent most of my waking hours cleaning and trying to keep the house clean. I gave up because the job was too much. I don’t use the kitchen, so I am not eating properly and I use the bathroom at the gym. I feel degraded and pissed off when, during the little times I am at home, there are people walking in the house—people who don’t knock, ring the doorbell, or give notice that they are entering the house. All of this is too much for me to bear. I can’t deal with this. It is even worse knowing that all three of my younger sisters have their own house with plenty of spare rooms. My parents have a four bedroom house in [north-western Ontario community]. They only use one room. My uncle has a five bedroom house in [eastern Ontario city]. He is divorced and lives by himself. Ninety-five percent of my family works for the government and have their own house. My family is not rich, but they are not poor. I am ashamed and embarrassed when I look at where I now live. I can hear my mother telling me that I am an idiot and will never amount to anything good. Now look where I live.

Around five years ago, I was diagnosed with chronic PTSD, depression, OCD, bipolar and I think there was anxiety. I made my diagnoses privy to my siblings and parents. It’s been almost five years and I haven’t seen or spoken to my family. I could contact, but I don’t want to be compared to my younger sisters and hear what a disgrace I am.

I was offered a form to fill out so that I could be transferred to another [housing provider A] property, but I would rather wait and get my own place.

BOR narrative fragment by Sybil

When I filled out the OCAN assessment I did not know why it had to be filled out. Now that I know, I will never fill it out again. The questions were inappropriate and degrading and insulting. People shouldn't be forced by the government to fill it out. How does filling it out help people with mental illness issues? Where does the information go? How do I know that the worker I give this report to has my best interest at heart?

I am very unsatisfied with my housing. There is animosity among tenants. There is, for example, a storage area in the basement. One tenant moved my stuff from this storage area to the curb for garbage collection, and someone took it! I'm also very upset about people touching my mail. They move it from the mailbox and shove it under my door. One tenant plays nice one day, and the next day she makes racial comments, and then threatens to sue you! Another tenant constantly slips hostile notes under my door. I am constantly walking on eggshells because of this person who constantly threatens me. Also, there are smokers and non-smokers. I hate second-hand smoke. Also, the bathroom is filthy: people urinate and defecate in bowls and dump it in the bathroom sink. There are also used bandages strewn throughout the bathroom. Tenants don't clean because they think that it's [housing provider A's] responsibility. Because of the smoking and the unsanitary conditions, some tenants are committing slow suicide. [Housing provider A] needs to help improve the tenants' quality of life. Also, repairs are not handled in a timely manner. There is mold in the house. You can smell it, but tenants don't voice their concerns.

[Housing provider A] should stand by its mission statement which is improving the quality of lives of tenants. [Housing provider A] has to walk the walk. They are just paying lip service. I had thought that [housing provider A] was a great organization, but I am now disillusioned. They don't care. It's just a business for them. Also, I am not getting enough support from staff. I have

called the support worker on a few occasions and she never called me back. As well, workers don't get back to you when you bring up concerns about conflicts—even the racial issue are not addressed. Staff hopes the situations will fix themselves. For staff's work to be improved, they need to be available more. When they visit, they don't even use the bathroom in the house—they know it's bad and they don't do anything about it. Personally, I think [housing provider A] is afraid of getting sued; for example, telling tenants not to smoke.

My relations with my fellow tenants are good. We hang out. We do things together and chitchat. We get along fine. Shared accommodation is fine, but there needs to be guidelines. People need to respect each other and don't jeopardize the health of others. There shouldn't be racial slurs. Sharing is fine. People need to be around people. There just has to be guidelines.

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