

**School of Nursing and Human Sciences**

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**A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry into Homelessness**

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Psychotherapy**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Psychotherapy, is entirely my own work. I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original and does not, to the best of my knowledge, breach any law of copyright and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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## ABSTRACT

Research into homelessness has been predominantly quantitative in design, solution-focused and may have effectively concealed the phenomenon itself. This study utilised a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, based on Martin Heidegger's philosophy, to reveal some essential, constitutive characteristics of homelessness. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with six participants accessed through a service provider for homeless persons. *Passing Time* and *Taking Care* emerged as essential, constitutive characteristics and were examined to deepen our understanding of the meaning and ground of homelessness itself (Heidegger, 1962). *Passing Time* revealed boredom as the mood of homelessness and disclosed the daily challenges faced in filling or wasting time when homeless. It is revealed that through profound boredom, homeless persons exist as an empty self, suspended in an empty world. *Taking Care* disclosed something of the participants' capacity to take care of themselves and to access care from others. It revealed something of their relationships with self and others and the anxiety such relationships evoke. Homeless persons struggle profoundly to access emotional containment either internally or externally. They exist in a state of deep anxiety and internal turmoil in a rejecting, excluding world. It is recommended that government agencies and homeless services adopt more inclusive, creative, caring attitudes and policies underpinned by an understanding of the homeless persons need for containment in order to become a more integrated and cohesive self. Finally, it is recommended that psychotherapists are actively involved in the design and implementation of programmes to collaboratively work with homeless persons towards re-integration into mainstream society.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Introduction**

Homelessness, in the twenty first century, is a critical issue requiring everyone's attention. Levels of homelessness have improved considerably in some EU countries in recent years, but in others they continue to rise. There were 3808 homeless persons in Ireland with 64 sleeping rough and 3744 sleeping in homeless shelters on the night of the 2011 census. According to the Dublin Region Homeless Executive at least 139 people were sleeping rough in Dublin in December 2013 an increase on the previous year's figure of 87. Homelessness is multifaceted and complex affecting persons and households in a variety of ways, for different durations and at different stages. Living on the street is its most extreme and visible form but homelessness also comprises persons staying in temporary, emergency or transitional accommodation. Persons living in sub-standard, insecure conditions, facing eviction or staying with family and friends can also be considered homeless. The traditional stereotype of a homeless person as a single middle-aged man sleeping rough does not reflect the increasing numbers of women, adolescents, victims of family breakdown, asylum seekers and immigrants that constitute today's homeless (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2008).

Whilst there is a growing body of research addressing the enumeration of those who are homeless and determining and investigating pathways in and out of homelessness, there is very little research exploring the everyday experience of being homeless. Very little is known about living on the street, about what it means to be homeless, or what it might



mean to be-at-home on the street. Few studies have placed the everyday experience of the homeless person at their core. In our efforts to understand the ‘problem’ of homelessness and find ‘solutions’ for it, we may have moved away from the actual experience and its underlying phenomenon. This study aims to get closer to the phenomenon of homelessness, to uncover, reveal, and create space for the emergence of the phenomenon. The study places persons who are homeless at its core and seeks to explore and understand, through a hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry, their experience of being homeless. This study aims to deepen understanding of the ontological question of what it is to be a homeless person, to deepen and expand our understanding of that way of being in the world. It is hoped that through revealing and understanding something more of the phenomenon of homelessness, psychotherapy will be better placed and more inclined to address, theoretically and practically, both the phenomenon itself and those who are experiencing it.

## **1.1 Lived Experience**

This study explores the lived experience of homelessness. In ontological terms, *lived experience* signifies the nature of human beings existence within-the-world as selves and suggests that this experience’s essence is to be found in its lived character (Burch, 1990). This lived character consists of what is meaningfully attended to and preserved by a person from his/her passing sentience through time. This study explores the everydayness of being homeless; the things and events that stand out for, are attended to, and remembered by the participants in this study. The self of lived experience is ‘situated’ in the world and hence is both enabled and limited by circumstances and situations not fully self-defined. These situating dimensions or existentials provide the limits within which the self becomes what it can make of itself.

Every lived experience is related to the whole of one’s life ... ‘*Because it [experience] is itself within the whole of life, the whole of life is present within it too*’ (Gadamer, 2004, p.

60). A lived experience cannot be reduced to fleeting transient awareness but rather is a unity of meaning conducive to recollection. Lived experience is the result of the interplay between reflexive immediacy and explicit reflection. For Schutz (1967), within lived experience the lived character originates in immediacy whilst its meaning depends on reflection. Thus, experiences are meaningful not by virtue of being experienced but rather by being grasped reflectively; we constitute the meaning of our lived experiences.

Everything that is experienced is experienced by oneself ... essential to an experience is that it cannot be exhausted in what can be said of it or grasped as its meaning. As determined through autobiographical or biographical reflection, its meaning remains fused with the whole movement of life and constantly accompanies it. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 58).

This study utilises the philosophy of Martin Heidegger to reveal and disclose some of the essential, constitutive characteristics of the phenomenon of homelessness. Through hermeneutic phenomenology, experiences revealed by the participants are investigated as part of their broader experience of Being-in-the-world.

## **1.2 Phenomenology and Lived Experience**

Phenomenology is concerned with the meaning that lies hidden in familiar ‘everydayness’ and goes beyond both what is already given and understood in lived experience and how it is already given and understood. In the words of Burch (1989):

*‘[Phenomenology] seeks a transcending theoretical understanding that goes beyond lived experience to situate it, to judge it, to comprehend it, endowing lived experience with new meaning. Without this transcendence, phenomenology would be superfluous (p.192)’.*

To engage in phenomenology we must already have some understanding of the truth of lived experience. Our understanding rests on the phenomenon being in some way pertinent to our being. We already have some understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness and homelessness or where we live is unquestionably pertinent to our being. For Heidegger (1962) we *are* our lived experience and our being resides in our understanding of the meaning of that lived experience.

The linguisticity inherent in lived experience allows language to assist us in accessing its truth. A phenomenological discourse begins with who we are and where we are situated. For Heidegger (1977), it is paramount to conserve the powerful elemental words we use to convey the experience of being human. Through language, what is already there is brought into the open, is exposed for the first time. For Heidegger (1978) '*Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells*' (p.217). As Gadamer (2004) elucidates '*... the fusion of horizons that takes place in understanding is actually the achievement of language*' (p.370). Thus, to reveal something of the phenomenon of homelessness it is essential to talk to those who are experiencing the phenomenon and to carefully examine and explore what they have to say. This study utilizes semi-structured interviews to access the experiences of the participants and to allow them the freedom to choose what it is they want to say about their experiences of homelessness.

This research seeks not only to include those living on the street in the discourse on homelessness but rather to place them at its very core. It challenges assumptions that we know best how to make one's self at home in the world, that there is a right and a wrong way of being-at-home, that what works for one will work for all. Most psychotherapists would not tell others how to live, would refuse to assume the expert role, would refute uniformity and conformity. It is time to listen to what those who are homeless have to say about homelessness, to listen to the views and feelings of those living on the street, to hear what he or she might have to say about his or her way of being-in-the-world.

### **1.3 Overall Aim of the Study**

The overall aim of this study is to disclose some of the essential, constitutive characteristics of the phenomenon of homelessness. Disclosure of such characteristics is aimed at deepening our understanding of the meaning and ground of homelessness itself. The specific objectives of the study are to explore the everyday experiences of being homeless in a number of persons who are currently living on the street.

### **1.4 Summary of the Chapters in the Study**

There are six chapters in this study. In chapter two the existing literature concerning homelessness is presented. The vast majority of research on homelessness is quantitative in design and is driven by social policy within an overriding theoretical paradigm of social reform. Research has focused on enumerating the homeless, identifying their needs, and devising solutions to assuage their distress. The vast majority of research on homeless persons, in Ireland, views homelessness in structuralist terms and so understanding of homelessness centres on issues concerning poverty, unemployment, social welfare payments and affordable housing. Consequently our understanding of homelessness hinges on assessing statistical and demographic issues. Psychotherapy is notably largely absent from discussion on or research into the experience of being homeless.

The relationship between home and homelessness has seldom been the central focus of academic discussion or research. Contrasting home with homelessness serves to highlight the complex and profound nature of the experience of homelessness but can result in the conceptualisation of homelessness as the antithesis or lack of home. Such juxtaposing of home and homelessness minimizes the complexity of each concept. Viewing homelessness as the complete lack of feeling at home and belonging ignores both tensions inherent in home and the presence of homelessness as a legitimate state of being.

By repeatedly viewing home and homelessness as oppositional states, it is suggested that much of the existing research may have effectively concealed, or covered over other equally valuable interpretations of the experience and meaning of being homeless. Therefore, there is a need to provide an alternative approach to explore the person's experience which would overcome the unhelpful dichotomy retained in much of the existing literature. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach, based on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, is suggested to provide this alternative perspective. Benner (1994) suggests that it was Heidegger's shift from considering problems of epistemology (the study of the nature of knowledge) to considering the problem of ontology (the study of what it means to be a human being) that radically altered modern debates on the nature of science and of knowledge.

A detailed account of the methodological approach utilised in the study is provided in chapter three. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was employed, based on the philosophical perspective of Martin Heidegger. The chapter begins with an in-depth account of the philosophical perspective of the study. Hermeneutic phenomenology is presented with particular focus on such concepts as: Being-with, Being-in-the-world, thrownness, facticity, possibility, meaning and understanding.

Hermeneutic phenomenology permeates all stages of the research process including choosing participants, methods of data collection and analysis, and the interpretation and discussion of the findings. The remainder of this chapter focuses on these elements of the research process. The data were analysed using a systematic thematic analysis incorporating phenomenological and hermeneutic strategies informed by the work of Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) and Edwards and Titchen (2003).

The study's disclosures are presented in chapter four. The phenomenon is illuminated under two essential, constitutive characteristics of homelessness: *Passing Time*; and

*Taking Care.* The characteristic, *Passing Time* reveals boredom as the mood of homelessness. It refers to the challenges participants face in dealing with the stretch of time that needs to be spent each day when living on the street. The participants employ various tactics and strategies to either waste or fill time in more constructive ways. They describe the boredom and despair they feel when awoken each day to yet more time to spend without a home to which to retreat or a space of their own to access some privacy and exercise some control over their time.

The second characteristic, *Taking Care* reveals something of homelessness through exploration of the participants' capacity to care for themselves and to access care from others in their lives. It discloses the deep anxiety evoked by the challenges they encounter in trying to meet their needs such as those relating to personal hygiene, nutrition, personal safety and sleep. It also reveals the extent to which the participants consider being homeless and finding a way out of it as their own responsibility. This characteristic also uncovers something of the participants' relationships with caring or uncaring others, including partners, friends, family and service providers. It gives us some insight into the participants' caring relationships with fellow homeless persons and reveals something of the challenges and anxieties faced when you do not know who to trust. In addition, this characteristic provides some understanding of the very important role homeless services and the caring professions play in the lives of the participants, a role that is often executed with care and compassion but shamefully, on occasion, with derision and contempt.

Something of the phenomenon of homelessness is revealed in chapter five through discussion of the disclosures of this research in relation to Martin Heidegger's philosophy, Existential and Psychodynamic psychotherapy theories, and existing homelessness literature. The mood of boredom as explicated by Heidegger provides a framework for understanding the way in which homeless persons *belong* in the world: their existence as an empty self in an empty world. Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips' (1993) suggestion that

boredom may in fact be the mourning of everyday life provides a useful conceptualisation of the mood of homelessness and its relationship to exclusion from everyday, mainstream society and its routines and rituals.

Heidegger's assertion that care is the formal ontological structural totality of Dasein provides a framework to discuss the homeless person's mattering relationships. Solicitude helps illuminate Dasein's way of *Being-with* as an essential feature of being human.

Homeless persons' anxiety and struggles to take care of self, and to access and receive care from others, are explored using psychotherapists Kohut and Winnicott's important conceptualisations of the formation and maintenance of a cohesive, contained self. Their theories facilitate an understanding of the essential relatedness of human beings and of the barriers and blocks to meaningful, caring and nurturing engagement with self and others. The relationship challenges faced by homeless persons are explored highlighting the difficulties posed by the failure to have basic fundamental developmental needs adequately met both as children and currently as adults. The disclosures of this study fit with those of O'Connor (2003) and Campbell (1994) among others who disclose the pivotal role containment plays in vulnerability to homelessness. Homeless persons have profound difficulty containing their own emotions internally and equally struggle to find any external containment in a hostile, rejecting world. Instead they exist in the only place they can tolerate: they exist on the edge, in the lurch, on the threshold, neither in nor out.

Finally, the strengths, limitations and implications of the study are presented in chapter six. Recommendations for future research and for psychotherapists, service providers, policy makers and government agencies are suggested. Such recommendations include the prioritising of methods and strategies to address the revealed, essential, constitutive characteristics of homelessness. Specifically, it is recommended that homeless persons are facilitated to engage in life meaningfully, purposefully and creatively and that they are supported in forming and maintaining caring, self-enhancing relationships with self and others. Finally, it is recommended that psychotherapists are actively involved in providing

a secure base from which homeless persons can develop and access internal and external containment leading to the development of a cohesive, integrated self and the formation and maintenance of caring, mattering relationships.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter I review the existing literature concerning homelessness and the experience of being homeless. I explore the meaning of both home and homelessness, examine their diametrical relationship and review the various interrelationships between such concepts as home, family, gender, trauma, self and identity. I examine the psychotherapy concept of containment and investigate the relationship between homelessness and non-containment.

I examine the role and place of psychotherapy in the discourse around homelessness and argue that, although psychotherapy as a profession and psychotherapists as practitioners have pledged to extend their theories and services to all persons and not to be restricted or hindered by any bias or prejudice, there is a dearth of psychotherapy theory and psychotherapeutic services dealing with both the phenomenon and the experience of being homeless.

#### **2.1 Prevalence of Homelessness**

The worldwide prevalence of homelessness is very difficult to establish due to varying conceptualisations and definitions of homelessness from country to country. Attempts to enumerate the homeless are further confounded by the occurrence of both civil wars and natural disasters. In 2005, the United Nations estimated that there were 100 million homeless persons worldwide. However, this figure represents only those who had no home of any description. When the definition is expanded to include those living in appalling semi-permanent sites such as crude tents, vehicles and abandoned buildings

coupled with the 'hidden homeless' who move from shelter to shelter or couch to couch the figure doubles to 200 million homeless persons worldwide. In addition, a further 600 million people, mostly women and children living in developing cities, inhabit shelters which are either threatening to their health or their lives. In total, the United Nations estimates that there were 1.6 billion persons inadequately housed worldwide in 2008 (Rolnik, 2009).

In 2011, the Irish census, for the first time, performed a count of persons who were homeless on census night, April 10th. Their findings show that a total of 3808 persons were homeless with 64 sleeping rough and 3744 staying in homeless shelters. In December 2013, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive found that a minimum of 139 people were sleeping rough in Dublin representing nearly a 60% increase on November 2012's figure of 87. Every three years, the Irish Department of Environment, Community and Local Government engages in a process entitled *Assessment of Housing Need* whereby local authorities assess housing needs in their region. The figures for 2011 show that 98318 households were in need of social housing support on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. This is a net figure and represents those that are not currently receiving social housing support that is those households who cannot be accommodated through the existing housing stock. Within that figure, 2348 households were homeless, 1708 households were living in unfit accommodation, 4594 households were overcrowded and 8534 households were involuntarily sharing with a further 65643 households unable to meet the cost of accommodation and therefore at risk of becoming homeless.

## **2.2 Defining Homelessness**

The number of persons considered to be homeless depends on how we define homelessness and there is no universally agreed definition (O'Sullivan, 1997). Section 2 of the Irish Housing Act 1988, defines as homeless persons sleeping rough as well as those accommodated within emergency hostels, shelters, and bed and breakfast establishments but excludes persons involuntarily living with friends or family or those

residing in insecure or inadequate accommodation (Lawless & Corr, 2005). The exclusion of the 'hidden homeless,' that is persons living in below standard accommodation or those at risk of homelessness, from the definition used in many attempts to enumerate the homeless is a serious limitation (Collins & McKeown, 1992). The 'hidden homeless' often do not seek public assistance (Rollinson, 2007) and include many of the rural homeless who constitute nearly half of the homeless population and often include women with children (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2007). O'Sullivan (1996) recommends the categorisation of homelessness into visible, hidden and at risk domains. However, it could be argued that the conceptualisation of hidden or threatened homelessness may cause all housing needs to be viewed as forms of homelessness (Pleace et al. 1997). Furthermore, many people experience homelessness periodically and should not be ignored by the state (Houghton and Hickey, 2001). Such periodic needs are acknowledged in the Irish Government Homelessness Preventative Strategy (2002) and some measures to address the needs of young people leaving care and those on short term prison sentences have been put in place.

The definition of homelessness varies considerably across European Union member states. Furthermore, at EU level there is no shared working definition of homelessness. The problem of accurately determining the number of homeless persons is further compounded by significant variations in the scale and depth of measurement among member countries. Indeed some countries collect very limited or no data at all on homelessness. In 1989, a non-governmental organisation, FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, was established. Its remit is to prevent and alleviate the poverty and social exclusion experienced by persons living in or threatened by homelessness. FEANTSA represents more than 100 organisations, working in approximately 30 countries of which 25 are EU member states. Membership is made up of both national and regional organisations representing groups of service providers for the homeless. In 2005, FEANTSA developed a European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) to aid

understanding and measurement of homelessness and to facilitate discussion across Europe. ETHOS uses physical, social and legal domains to create a broad typology of homelessness and housing exclusion. Homeless persons are classified according to their living arrangements across the following domains: rooflessness; houselessness; living in insecure housing; and living in inadequate housing. ETHOS attempts to include all forms of homelessness present across Europe and to reflect the current realities of homelessness. Its structure allows homelessness to be perceived and addressed differently from country to country. In addition, ETHOS conceives homelessness not as a stagnant condition but rather as a fluid process, affecting vulnerable households periodically throughout their life cycle.

The most widely used definition of homelessness in Australia is that proposed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992). They conceptualise a threefold definition of homelessness with the addition of a fourth dimension in 2003 (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2003). They consider primary homelessness to comprise living without conventional shelter such as sleeping on the streets, in parks, in a vehicle or 'squatting'. Secondary homelessness refers to those persons who move from one temporary dwelling to another such as hostels, refuges, or homes of family or friends. The authors consider tertiary homelessness to denote those persons living in a boarding house on a medium or long-term basis. The fourth tier comprises the 'marginally housed' that is those persons living permanently in caravan parks because they cannot afford alternative accommodation. Thus, the Australian definition, rather than the Irish one, more accurately reflects the experience of being homeless in today's society as it includes those living in inadequate or insecure accommodation along with those involuntarily living with family or friends.

Mary Ellen Hombs, former Deputy Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (2003 to 2009) attempts to understand who the homeless are and provides a broader conceptualisation and understanding of the term. Hombs (2001) believes that homelessness is more encompassing than the lack of a place to sleep. She suggests that

anyone lacking adequate shelter, resources or community ties is, in fact, homeless. She further expands the phenomenon to include the absence of a place to store possessions relating to our past, the loss of connection to family and friends and the movement of children from school to school. She includes the humiliation of subsistence living, of dependence on strangers or charitable agencies for the survival of self and loved ones in her definition of homelessness.

Such conceptualisation goes some way towards addressing the phenomenological and existential aspects of the experience of being homeless. The conservative Irish definition of homelessness appears narrow and constricted when contrasted with the more inclusive and comprehensive definitions used in some other societies. For the purposes of this study, I define homelessness at its most fundamental, living on the street. Living on the street is defined as rough sleeping or sleeping in temporary hostel accommodation which can only be accessed at night, leaving no option but to spend days on the street. By examining homelessness at its most fundamental, I hope to disclose something of the experience of being homeless and in so doing to uncover some of the essential, constitutive characteristics which reveal its meaning and ground. It is hoped that a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness will facilitate increased understanding of homelessness as manifest in all its forms and guises.

Homelessness is viewed in the literature as a complex social problem (Caton, Dominguez, Schanzer, Hasin, Shrout, Felix 2005) to which the solution is considered to be the provision of appropriate long-term housing. In addition to the need for housing, homeless persons are viewed as having multiple needs requiring considerable support to facilitate the maintenance of long-term housing. These needs can be categorised in the realms of physical health, mental health and addiction and may require short-term or long-term support (Fitzpatrick, Kemp & Klinker, 2000; Quilgars, Johnsen & Pleace, 2008).

### **2.3 Research on Homelessness**

The United States and the United Kingdom have between them the most extensive research on homelessness in the English speaking world. Research on homelessness in the 1970s tended to focus on the individual's disaffiliation from society through his personal deficits. For example, Bahr (1973) suggests that men on Skid Row are viewed by others as defective and powerless and their disaffiliation from society keeps them trapped in unredeemable hopelessness. Increases in the numbers of homeless persons in the 1980s challenged such individualistic perspectives and gave rise to structural explanations concerning changes in welfare, employment and housing markets. A number of factors, such as decreased availability of affordable housing, the reduced need for casual labour and changes in admission policies in psychiatric hospitals, were seen as responsible for the rise in homelessness (Burt, 1992). In response, during the 1980s, the United States government launched several grant programmes targeting the food and shelter needs of the homeless. The addition of a structural perspective broadened understanding but it too failed to adequately explain why only some persons faced with unemployment, housing and welfare challenges become homeless. Furthermore, research in the 1980s tended to focus on cross-sectional studies devoid of a contextual framework which medicalised homelessness and often inappropriately utilised psychiatric instruments and measures (Snow et al., 1994). Therefore, many studies provide an inaccurate, decontextualised and over-pathologised account of the experience of being homeless. Such over-pathologised accounts of homelessness do little to further our understanding of what it is like to live on the street. They fail to convey the creativity, resilience and ingenuity demonstrated by many persons who are homeless. At their worst, such accounts may erroneously portray creativity and adaptability in pathological terms (Snow et al. 1994). Homeless persons creatively reuse objects most of us would consider useless, they build shelters and beds from discarded items, they keep their possessions safe and dry using their ingenuity and resourcefulness.

In the United States a considerable body of research began to emerge from the 1980s and since then there has been significant focus on investigating subgroups within the homeless population such as adults (e.g. Lehmann, Kass, Drake & Nichols, 2007), families with children (e.g. Cowan, 2007), unaccompanied adolescents (e.g. Tompsett, Fowler, & Toro, 2009) with perhaps the greatest focus on those who are mentally ill (Bray, 2009). A large body of research exists on the psychosocial factors associated with entering and exiting homeless. Such factors include poverty (e.g. Aratani, 2009), substance abuse (e.g. Lehman & Cordray, 1993), mental illness (e.g. Wenzel, Tucker, Hambarsoomian, & Elliot, 2006), physical illness (e.g. Zlotnick & Zerger, 2008), foster care (e.g. Choca et al., 2004), resilience and support (e.g. Buckner, 2008). Moreover, during the past twenty years, homelessness has been viewed as resulting from the dynamic interplay of personal deficits and structural change (Anderson and Christian 2003). Furthermore, recent longitudinal research points to the dynamic quality of homelessness and shows the relative speed with which the majority of persons both enter and exit homelessness, with homelessness being more likely to be temporary than permanent (Busch-Geertsema, Edgar, O'Sullivan & Pleace, 2010). Homelessness, for many, is a temporary, short-term experience, with multiple cycles of exiting and re-entering being relatively common (Koegel, 2004). Indeed, cross-sectional studies, in over-representing the long-term homeless, may misrepresent the actuality of homelessness. Finally, focusing on the structural factors without due consideration of individual factors has caused some populations such as immigrant workers or those temporarily unemployed to be seen as homeless and marginalized when it may be more accurate to view them as temporarily un-housed in the process of integration into a new society (Tosi, 2004).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, homeless research in the United Kingdom has focused on the role of social enterprise as a step towards employment. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister suggested the provision of space for social enterprise within homeless hostels and day care centres (ODPM, 2005). It was believed that such space would promote self employment and develop self confidence and esteem. Over the past ten years, the British

government has launched several schemes, designed to provide employment for homeless persons, which can be divided into two approaches, those providing training and those encouraging businesses to provide employment for homeless persons (Teasdale, 2009). In addition, research has focused on prevention strategies incorporating advice and mediation services (Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007). Researchers and academics agree that structural change concerning housing supply, employment and social equality is necessary, however, according to Pleace (2000) policy makers have concentrated on facilitating homeless persons to deal with the world as it is rather than implementing structural change.

The Pathways to Housing organization is a non-profit corporation, established in 1992 in New York City, and is considered to be the founder of the Housing First model designed to address homelessness (Tsemberis, 2010). Housing First incorporates and utilizes best practice concerning both research issues and programme delivery (Greenwood, Schaefer-McDaniel, Winkel, & Tsemberis, 2005). It has successfully facilitated many chronically homeless persons to live in ordinary community housing without being 'housing ready'. This is achieved through the provision of choice and the support of mobile support workers who specialize in case management and assertive community treatment. The Housing First programme represents a radical departure from traditional approaches as it places the homeless person at the core of their own treatment, provides choice, utilizes a harm-reduction approach, and provides a right to housing (Greenwood, Stefancic & Tsemberis, 2013). Housing First was shown to be more successful than linear programmes in a New York study of 225 mentally ill homeless persons when, after five years, 88% of Housing First tenants compared to 47% of those on linear programmes were stably housed (Tsemberis & Eisenberg, 2000).

The Housing First Europe project ran between August 2011 and July 2013 in five European test sites: Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow and Lisbon and in a further five peer sites (including Dublin) where elements of the programme were



implemented (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). The project's final report cites positive results for four of the five test sites with Budapest being a special case with very limited personnel and financial resources. The report recommends Housing First as a highly successful way of ending homelessness and securing tenancy for persons with multiple and severe needs. It makes a number of recommendations including the use of ordinary scattered housing within the broad community, the centrality of choice and the demonstration of warmth, compassion and respect to all service users (Busch-Geertsema, 2013).

### **2.3.1 Irish Research on Homelessness**

The limited academic research on homelessness conducted in Ireland emanates from schools of social policy, social work and applied sociology (e.g. Mayock and Carr, 2008, O'Neill, 2013). Other disciplines such as law (Maher 1989), criminology (Seymour & Costello 2005), psychology (Hart 1978, O'Leary et al. 2003) and medicine, particularly psychiatry (e.g. O'Neill et al. 2007), have occasionally contributed to the body of research. However, homelessness has attracted very limited interest from economists, anthropologists or geographers and, rather tellingly, psychotherapists. Although there is very little psychotherapy and mental health research concerning homelessness in Ireland, the research that does exist (e.g. O'Connor, 2005, Lakeman, 2010) is rich and meaningful and this current research endeavours to build upon and add to that developing body.

The dominance of voluntary agencies and social policy academics in Irish research on homelessness has meant that the overriding theoretical paradigm is that of social reform. Thus, research has centred on identifying and counting the homeless, determining their needs, and devising solutions to assuage their distress. The relative absence of both psychotherapy and psychology from the discussion to address the needs of those who are homeless, has led to the dominance of a social reformist agenda and to increased pressure to find practical 'solutions to the problem'. The research findings have been

further confounded by the lack of adequate attention to and consideration of issues concerning definition and methodology.

O'Sullivan (2008) identifies 128 publications between 1970 and 2008 primarily addressing aspects of homelessness in Ireland. The aim of his review is to identify the focus, methodology and theoretical perspectives evident in the research. The majority of this research (55.5%) focuses on Dublin with a small amount focusing on other urban centres and very little addressing homelessness in rural Ireland. The focal point of the majority of the research is homeless adults (68%), with young people (19.5%), families (7.8%) and women (4.7%) receiving considerably less attention. As over 40% of the research was commissioned by the voluntary sector, the view that research conducted by voluntary organisations 'can be more concerned with producing effective campaigning material than with obtaining reliable evidence' (Fitzpatrick & Christian's 2006, p. 324) may be a significant factor in both the research design and subsequent findings. This is a scathing criticism of a broad and extremely important sector, however, all agencies and organizations have agendas which get played out implicitly if not explicitly. Therefore, it is essential that all sectors, including psychotherapy, enter the debate and engage in meaningful research so that all aspects and dimensions of homelessness are represented and explored.

The vast majority of research on homeless persons in Ireland views homelessness in structuralist terms with understanding of homelessness centring on issues concerning poverty, unemployment, social welfare payments and affordable housing. Consequently, our understanding of homelessness hinges on assessing statistical and demographic issues. Moreover, quantitative methodologies dominate the study of homelessness in Ireland with policy analyses also featuring prominently. Qualitative and ethnographic research is rarely conducted accounting for only 13 and 5 respectively of the 128 studies identified by O'Sullivan (2008). Furthermore, when individualistic accounts are put forward they focus on the consequences of personal problems such as mental illness and

addiction. There is a dearth of research addressing the role and impact of psychotherapeutic or psychological factors such as identity, self, containment, gender and emotional safety in the processes of becoming and remaining homeless.

Although small in number, the qualitative research that has been conducted in Ireland helps deepen and enrich our understanding of homelessness. O'Connor's (2005) research posits the importance of a psychotherapeutic frame in working with homeless clients. He discusses the importance of providing emotional safety in order to address the homeless person's need to develop a sense of internal, emotional containment and an ability to access emotional containment from the external world. Pillinger's (2007) study highlights the importance of a speedy exit from homelessness to avoid a second layer of risks such as social exclusion, service exclusion and exclusion from mainstream society, family, friends, and local communities. A study of homeless young people in Dublin by Mayock, Corr and O'Sullivan (2008) presents a key finding that while hostels aim to help young people become more responsible for the structure of their lives, they actually, at least for some young people, do quite the opposite by limiting them to social contact only with other homeless persons. Lakeman's (2010) study concerning death within the homeless sector helps elucidate understanding of the interlinked processes, of how death is encountered and marked and the extent to which the vulnerability of all concerned is recognized and responded to, in framing and coping with death. Mayock and Sheridan's (2012) study on women's journeys to homelessness highlights the diversity, complexity and interconnected roots of homelessness. A study conducted by Focus Ireland (2012) on homeless migrants found that the degree of social exclusion experienced by this group due to such factors as limited eligibility for services, lack of access to training and education, limited social networks, limited English language skills and lack of familiarity with the social welfare system exacerbates their current difficulties. Finally, Mayock and Corr's (2013) six-year longitudinal study of young people's homeless and housing pathways asserts the heterogeneous nature of this group and challenges researchers and policy makers to reconsider our understanding and conceptualisation of 'youth homelessness'.

In line with other Western countries, recent research in Ireland has focused on determining and examining pathways in and out of homelessness in an effort to aid prevention and facilitate re-integration into mainstream society (e.g. Houghton and Hickey, 2001; Mayock and Corr, 2013). The Irish Government's strategy to address adult homelessness from 2008 to 2013 was *The Way Home*. It is particularly focused on measures to prevent homelessness, end long-term homelessness and ensure consistency of implementation countrywide. The strategy implicitly rather than explicitly suggested the development of a housing-led approach (O' Sullivan, 2012). Following on from *The Way Home*, in February 2013, the Minister for Housing and Planning, Jan O'Sullivan, launched a Homelessness Policy Statement which commits to ending homelessness and rough sleeping by implementing a housing-led approach. Prof. Eoin O'Sullivan (2012) advocates the adoption of a housing led strategy and asserts that such strategies have been shown to be effective in a number of Northern European countries and France (Benjaminsen, Dyb & O'Sullivan, 2009; Houard, 2011; Tanio & Fredrikson, 2009). He powerfully contends that the focus of research and policy should be homeless people themselves.

Ultimately, it is about recognizing the abilities that unwell and homeless people acquire and using them to develop new and bottom-up policies that aim to address the needs and demands of homeless people themselves rather than those who speak on their behalf (p. 16).

## **2.4 Limitations of Current Approach to Homelessness**

Martin Seager (2011) argues that the current approach to addressing the plight of those who are homeless or rough sleeping erroneously prioritises physical shelter over psychical shelter. He claims that the focus needs to shift from simply seeking to provide a roof over someone's head to exploring and addressing what is going on inside a person's head. He strongly suggests that those working with the homeless population should not only consider the physical shelter provided by a roof but also the potential psychological shelter or lack thereof provided by others living under that same roof. Seager emphasises

the importance of helping homeless persons access homes rather than houses since it is emotional attachments and love relationships that make us the people we are and provide meaning and value in our lives. He proclaims that our need to belong and to have meaning and purpose in our lives is even more primal to our being than our need for food and shelter.

Even people who end up killing themselves (including prisoners) usually have had a physical roof over their head and enough to eat to survive physically. What they have lacked is a sense of worth, identity, purpose and belonging that is nurtured and maintained ultimately by emotional attachments and love relationships (184).

Current policies and strategies are focused more on concrete, materialistic and medical principles rather than on helping homeless persons meet their universal psychological and spiritual needs. Seager and Manning (2009) list these universal psychological needs as the need: to be loved; to be listened to; to belong; to achieve; and to have meaning and hope. These are the universal psychological needs of each and every human being and are therefore the fundamental needs of homeless persons. It seems reasonable to suggest that we reconsider the current hierarchical conceptualisation of human needs which privileges physical over emotional and spiritual needs and contemplate instead a flattening of the hierarchy to better understand and address the human condition. Psychotherapy and its practitioners are ideally placed to understand and address the psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of homeless persons and to design and provide appropriate and meaningful interventions.

## **2.5 The Meaning of Home**

Since the 1980s, there has been increasing interest in the meaning of home both in terms of empirical investigation and theoretical enquiry (Somerville, 1992). However, there is deep disagreement amongst authors concerning the definition of home, how research should proceed and how data should be analysed and interpreted. Substantial research,

over the past few decades, on the meaning and experience of home has resulted in many researchers now viewing home as a multidimensional concept, however, few have converted this into truly interdisciplinary studies of the meaning of home (Mallett, 2004). In a meta-analysis, Mallett (2004) seeks to explicate the question of how home is understood in the literature. She suggests that this question invokes another central but often implicit question concerning the meaning of home; namely, is home a place, space, feeling, practice, or an active state of being in the world? Furthermore, home is often merged or associated with house, family, haven and journeying. In a metasynthesis of studies on the meaning of home, Molony (2010) found home to be both a place and a process: both a discrete entity and a continuity. Thus home is both a location and a state of mind, an external place where we can feel at ease and an internal state of calm and belonging.

In examining the etymology of the word home, Hollander (1991) notes that it is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *ham* which means town or village and that the Germanic *heim*, *ham*, *heem* originates from the Indo-European *kei* meaning lying down or something beloved. He proposes that the German word for house, or the building wherein we live, is imbued with a sense of home. Western conceptualization of home privileges a building or other physical construction; for example a house, apartment or chalet. Within a home, domestic activities take place and space and time are managed for economic, moral and aesthetic purposes (Rapport and Dawson, 1998; Douglas, 1991). In addition, some governments conflate house and home in an effort to place the onus for the care of its citizens onto the home and nuclear family and away from the state (Madigan *et al.*, 1990; Dupuis and Thorns, 1998). Since the 1950s public housing has decreased whilst the number of people owning their own residence has risen and house ownership has come to be associated with the concept of home. Residence ownership enhances both a sense of identity and a position within society (Madigan *et al.* 1990) whilst increasing a sense of security for ourselves and our families (Depuis and Thorns, 1996). We feel connected to the things we own, they become interwoven with our sense of identity and loss of our possessions, especially our home, can be experienced as a loss of part of the

self, leading to ‘...shrinkage of our personality, a partial conversion of ourselves to nothingness’ (James, 1890, p. 178). Having a place to live may also give us a feeling of belonging in a more and more alienating world. Young (1997) articulates the view that the process through which our physical surroundings become our home, the process whereby we endow objects with living meaning, brings about a materialization of identity. She believes that the process of home-making serves both our need for a settled, bounded identity and our need for a fluid, dynamic context for living. The architect, Rybczynski (1986) highlights concepts such as privacy, intimacy, comfort and domesticity which all feature prominently in any contemporary analysis of the meaning of home. Thus the loss or absence of a place to dwell results in the loss or reduction in opportunities for intimacy, privacy and comfort along with the loss of a significant symbolic expression of the self.

In an attempt to understand the relationship between home and physical shelter, Saunders and Williams (1988) distinguish between house, home and household. They describe home as a locale which is ‘*simultaneously and indivisibly a spatial and a social unit of interaction*’ (p. 82). It is the physical ‘*setting through which basic forms of social relations and social institutions are constituted and reproduced*’ (p. 82). A home is, therefore, conceived of as the fusion between the physical house and the social household: ‘*a socio-spatial system*’. It represents a crucial interface between the person and society. The household is seen as the most ‘*basic economic unit*’ replacing the family which has arguably lost its central position in social life (Saunders & Williams, 1988; Pahl, 1984). Therefore, our understanding of home must incorporate the interaction between place and social relationships (Mallett, 2004). However, Somerville (1989) disagrees that home is always a fusion of house and household and highlights contexts where the term home does not coexist with the notion of household such as in ‘*home for the elderly*’. He further criticises Saunders and Williams on the grounds that they offer no theoretical support for the proposed physical and social units of interaction, their mutually constitutive relationship and their place in dynamic social interactions.

### 2.5.1 Home as Haven

Home is often portrayed as a safe place, a relaxing retreat (Moore, 1984). Central to this conceptualisation lies the notion of a private or inside world contrasted with a public or outside world (Wardhaugh, 1999; Altman and Werner, 1985). Thus home is equated with comfort, privacy, security and safety (Dovey, 1985). The outside, in contrast, is more diffuse, imposing, threatening and even dangerous. Furthermore, home provides an intimate space offering freedom, control (Darke, 1994) and opportunities for creativity and regeneration (Allan and Crow, 1989). Home is a place to which one can always return (Dahlin-Ivanoff, Haak, Fänge, & Iwarsson, 2007) and returning to a familiar welcoming home reinforces the notion of home as a place of belonging and safety. In addition, home provides a context for caring relationships free from external surveillance and expectations (Saunders and Williams, 1988).

There is considerable challenge in the literature to this idealised view of home fuelled by the dichotomous notions of inside/outside, private/public, safe/unsafe etc. (Sibley, 1995; Wardhaugh, 1999). Various researchers contest the conceptualisation of home as haven for a significant number of children, young people and women subjected to physical or sexual abuse within the home (Wardhaugh, 1999, Jones, 2000, Goldsack, 1999). Moreover, the lived experience of home can be filled with fear and isolation, resembling a prison more than a haven of freedom and ontological security (Giddens, 1990; Dupuis and Thorns, 1998). Indeed, for Sibley (1995), home is a locus of unavoidable tensions concerning domesticity. Wardhaugh (1999) goes further in suggesting that equating home with haven is, in fact, deeply flawed since persons abused within the home may consequently feel '*homeless at home*'. In support, Goldsack (1999) powerfully argues, it is at home rather than anywhere else, that a woman is most at risk of rape, assault and even murder. Both Wardhaugh (1999) and Sibley (1995) view home as a space of potential symbolic or objective exclusion for persons experiencing or expressing



unconventional beliefs or ideas concerning sexuality or gender. In response, Wardhaugh (1999) counterposes a more phenomenological understanding of home where privacy, safety, security, comfort and refuge along with danger, fear and insecurity can all be found and experienced both inside and outside the home. Thus home is fluid and changing rather than a fixed, impermeable, purified space of belonging (Ahmed, 1999; hooks, 1991; Massey, 1992).

### **2.5.2 Home, Family and Gender**

There is considerable debate in the literature concerning the nature of the relationship between family and home and the significance of that relationship for the meaning of home. Some authors suggest that the terms family and home are almost interchangeable (Crow, 1989; Bernardes, 1987) with home symbolising the childhood family house. Our childhood house represents family relationships, our primary world (Bachelard, 1969), our source of caring (Swenson, 1998), provides us with a sense of stability, and is permanently physically embedded within us (Jackson, 1995). For Haslam (2009) home, the source of our primary social identity, is our source of belonging, of caring and concern, of our good health and well-being. Criticisms of such views, of the relationship between family and home, centre on their ideological, middle class, white foundations which privilege the heterosexual nuclear family (Passaro, 1996; Bowlby et al., 1997) where home is seen as the domain of the heterosexual couple engaged in particular roles and relationships (Barrett and MacIntosh, 1982). However, the rise of various alternate household compositions in Western societies is rendering the nuclear family increasingly less germane (Saunders & Williams, 1988). Furthermore, research on such issues as migration, exile and leaving home highlights the changing relationships between home and family over time and within varying contexts. Nonetheless, many governments and other institutions continue to promote a triadic relationship comprising family, home and community (Munro & Madigan, 1999).

When contemplating the significance of family to the meaning of home it is important to consider the broader question of the relationship between gender and home. In the 1950s and 60s, men were believed to view home as a signifier of status within society with women seeing home as a sanctuary or haven (Seeley et al. 1956; Rainwater, 1966). Feminist writers in the 1970s and 80s considered home as a location of tyranny, oppression and male dominance where women were restricted to roles characterised by child rearing and domesticity (Oakley 1974; Eisenstein, 1984). Women frequently have limited authority and their needs and desires are often seen as secondary to those of other family members whilst men have ultimate authority within the home with only limited child-rearing and domestic responsibilities. In addition, women's social isolation has been exacerbated by segregated housing estates, limited involvement in the workplace and political sphere and heightened feelings of fear, vulnerability and insecurity (Madigan et al., 1990).

In the 1990s, feminist critiques of home came under close examination. Saunders (1990) argues that there are significant disparities between how women describe what home means to them and prevalent feminist critiques. In particular, he refutes the description of home as a place of oppression. However, Saunders' research has been criticised by other researchers on both theoretical and methodological grounds. Although more recently many women and some men engage in paid work within their own home (e.g. sewing, clerical tasks, child minding) (Oberhauser, 1995, Phizacklea & Wolkowitz, 1995), women remain primarily responsible for the care of the home in addition to any full or part-time paid work (Mallett, 2004). Debate about gender and the meaning of home is further confounded by fixed notions of sex, gender, and sexuality widespread in the literature with many researchers privileging gender over sexuality when exploring understandings of home (see Madigan et al., 1990; Gurney 1997). Furthermore, relationships among gender, sexuality, age and ethnicity are rarely considered with some notable exceptions such as hooks (1991) and Crenshaw (1994) who explore what home means for African-American women.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, home has generally come to be conceptualised along five domains, home as: financial asset; physical structure; territory; identity; and socio-cultural unit (Fox, 2008). Furthermore, all five domains are viewed through a positive lens with home being seen as a site of positive experiences, meanings and attachments. Fox argues that traditionally, men have been associated with the more masculine domains of physical structure and financial asset, while women are reduced to the remaining three domains concerned with the more feminine task of preservation (Fox, 2008). She argues that this conceptualisation is in line with Heidegger's (1971) separation of 'building' into 'construction' and 'preservation' and his implicit prizing of the more masculine 'construction'. Thus men are associated with the more concrete and measurable aspects of home while women are associated with the less tangible aspects which do not add financial value. Division of housework, in the United States, in 2005 still remained unequal, with full-time working mothers doing more than four times the work of their husbands, but the gap has begun to close (Ramey, 2008). Conceptualisation of home has also centred on the part housing plays in the division of the environment into private and public spheres with the public sphere being the domain of men and the private sphere the domain of women. Davidoff (2003) highlights the problems in dividing the world into seemingly opposite and mutually exclusive categories and the inevitable hierarchy that creates. Such bounded categories provide power, opportunities and access to resources for some and exclusion, constraint and disempowerment for others. The situation is compounded by the interrelatedness of such binary categories as private/public, masculine/feminine, inside/outside, and home/homeless. Finally, one of the current key issues around the meaning of home is the concern that home still remains a privilege rather than a right for the more vulnerable in society, including women, the poor and the mentally unwell.

### 2.5.3 Home, Self and Identity

Some authors discuss the relationship between home and identity and/or the self in terms of the home reflecting the occupant's sense of self (Despres, 1991). In '*The House, as Symbol of the Self*', Cooper (1976) postulates that the archetype of the house commonly symbolises the self. Marcus (1995) asserts that home is inextricably connected to identity and views home as a dynamic construct whose meaning changes as its inhabitants' relationships change. Tucker (1994), views the home as a person's expression of his/her subjective experience of being in the world. He also suggests it may simply be a location or place where one feels comfortable expressing one's selves or unique identities. For Tucker, home may be one or a combination of physical, emotional, cultural, environmental, geographical, historical and political time and space. Home can be seen as a series of concentric circles with each circle representing a form of existential experience (Hollander, 1991). Examples of such experiences include, house, family, town, social realm, professional realm, the nation, and the world. Different circles may be more or less important to different persons at different times. Home provides a connection to self-identity and to personal, societal, and cultural norms, values, and beliefs. Home comprises attachment to both people and place (Molony, 2010). Dovey (1985) coined the phrase *place appropriation* to describe processes resulting in place attachment and place identity. When a person invests meaning, cares for, personalises, or exerts control over a place, an attachment develops. These places then become a part of the identity of the person who has 'appropriated' them. Meaning may be invested in both the physical space and in the cherished objects contained therein (Sherman & Dacher, 2005). Havel (1992 cited by Tucker, 1994) comments

All the circles of our home... are an inalienable part of us, and an inseparable element of our human identity. Deprived of all the aspects of his home, man would be deprived of himself, of his humanity (p.31).

Philosopher Kuang-Ming Wu (1993) views home as essential and vital to being human. For him, home is not a space or location; rather it represents the various intersubjective relationships through which an emergent self is disclosed. Inspired by Sartre and Buber, Wu considers home to constitute being-with-other(s). It is through Being-with-others that the self emerges whilst simultaneously a relationship is generating. For Wu, the 'I' emerges in relation to an other and that other may constitute my home and/or my hell. Thus, being at home refers to *being at home in you*, (where you can be singular or plural). We feel at home when we are accepted as we are and we accept that acceptance. We are at home when we accept the other and are accepted by the other; when we emerge as a self in relation to the other. '*Home is where I both was born and am being continually born, within that womb called other people, in their being not me*' (Wu, 1993, p. 195).

Research (Ingold, 1995; Ginsburg, 1999) influenced by the writings of Heidegger (1971) on being and home, focuses on the central role constructing or making plays in our conception of both our existence and our home. Heidegger asserts that material or imaginary forms we build originate from our absorption in the world- the birthplace of our thoughts. Our building activities are inextricably linked to our capacity to dwell. According to Ginsburg (1998), the way we exist as persons, our way of being in the world, is connected to the way in which we make ourselves at home in the world. He distinguishes between our dwelling (the place in which we live) and our home, or how we live.

#### **2.5.4 Being at Home in the World**

There is a significant body of phenomenological research describing the experience of being-at-home in the world. From this perspective home represents a state of being not dependent on a physical location. Rather than exploring how home is thought about, phenomenological researchers focus on the multiple and varied ways persons feel and experience home (Gurney, 1997). They are interested in the transformative processes

involved in making a dwelling into a home (Despres, 1991). In his book, *At Home in the World*, Michael Jackson (1995) asserts '*[h]ome is grounded less in a place and more in the activity that occurs in the place*' (p. 148). Thus home refers to the activities performed by persons, places and things (Mallett, 2004). Home is experienced in the tension between here and there, then and now, given and chosen: in the dialectical tension between shaping and being shaped by the world. Many phenomenological explorations into the meaning of home draw attention to experiences of injustice and inequality therein. Such research notes that whilst home may be located in a particular place it is significantly more than this. Wardhaugh (1999) explains that home is a lived space, a space wherein identities and social meanings can be expressed. Furthermore, home and homelessness are interdependent, dynamic, dialectical concepts relating to elaborate, ever-changing, ever-emerging identities and experiences.

Sociologist, Craig Gurney (1997) believes people use their lived experience to make sense of their socially constructed worlds. He highlights the importance of emotion in the construction of the meaning of home. Similarly, Somerville (1992) suggests that whilst home is an ideological construct its meaning is not merely derived experientially. He postulates a number of important signifiers of home including shelter, hearth, abode, privacy, roots and (possibly) paradise. However, although he emphasises the ideological construction of home, Somerville asserts that what is most important to understand and to explain is what home means to each of us. In his later work, Somerville (1997) tries to integrate constructivist analyses and phenomenological theories of the meaning of home by positing a unitary social phenomenology. He suggests that social relations are socially, culturally and historically dependent and are constructed by free agents through their intentional actions. However, Mallett (2004) argues that such an attempt to generate a singular theory of home, and one that depends on an intentional subject, underestimates the benefits of the creative tension implicit in potentially-contradictory approaches to exploration of the meaning of home.

Thus, the meaning of home is multi-faceted, complex, layered and may be different for different people at different times. It comprises people's relationships with themselves and with others, especially family, and their relationships with places, spaces and things. Home can be a place of dwelling or a place where social interaction with others occurs, or it may be both. Home can be a place of belonging and connection, a place of warmth and caring, a place of inclusion and safety, a place of intimacy and privacy. Conversely, home can also be a place of isolation and alienation, a place of oppression and exclusion, a place of estrangement and loneliness. Home can be an expression of self and of identity. It is a place or space which both expresses something of who we are and simultaneously allows us experience the expression of our selves.

## **2.6 The Relationship between Home and Homelessness**

The relationship between home and homelessness has seldom been the central focus of academic discussion or research (Robinson, 2002). Contrasting home with homelessness serves to highlight the complex and profound nature of the experience of homelessness (Dant and Deacon, 1989; Somerville, 1992). This approach has, however, resulted in the conceptualisation of homelessness as the antithesis or lack of home (May, 2000; Neil and Fopp, 1992). Thus, the experience of being homeless, viewed as synonymous with a lack of belonging, can result in the person being seen as 'out of place' (Cloke, *et al.*, 2000: p. 730). To juxtapose home and homelessness minimizes the complexity of each concept and has led to homelessness being viewed as an encompassing state of lack requiring the positing of solutions (Robinson, 2002). Furthermore, by polarising notions of home and homelessness, commonalities between and tensions within each concept can be missed.

Robinson (2001a) suggests that in discussing homelessness what is pertinent is what is presumed absent. He asserts the importance of understanding homelessness as a way of being in the world (Robinson, 2001b); to explore what it is instead of what it is not. The negative connotations of homelessness can hinder our understanding of both home and

homelessness (Olufemi, 2002). Indeed, both can be conceptualised as states and as sets of processes (Rivlin and Moore, 2001) rather than fixed alternative positions. Homeless persons move in and out of homes and homelessness and an ideological division between the two is contrived and unhelpful (Veness, 1993). Since home is more about emotional engagement and state of mind than locality, one can be simultaneously homeless and at home. Mallet (2004, p.79) notes that “*home is the lived experience of locality. Being at home involves the 'immersion of a self in a locality.'*” Homeless persons are just as involved in this process as they attempt to make meaning and choices in their situation (Veness, 1992).

The absence of a roof does not equate to the complete absence of home. Hummon (1992) uses the term rootedness to represent a broader more symbolic sense of belonging which can be experienced in or out of shelter. Moore (1999) found that young Irish homeless students saw themselves as ‘positioned’ in relation to Ireland and Irish identity rather than rootless. Being homeless does not negate the concept and meaning of home, each is construed, developed and acted upon individually and actively (Moore, 2007). Furthermore, home can be experienced in homeless contexts but this is not always recognized by policy makers who privilege shelter and efficiency (Van der Horst, 2004). When a person is roofless, he or she still remembers, experiences or desires home. May (2000) notes that homeless persons’ understandings of home are similar to housed persons’ sense of home and argues that deeper exploration of broader place relationships will broaden and expand the focus from home as strictly residence. A focus on the multiple qualities important to particular groups at specific times is more valuable than concentration on assumed comforts and securities.



### **2.6.1 Towards an Integrated Relationship**

Masefield (1994) notes the impossibility of removing the differences and tensions allowing us to exist in places at all. Since home is multivariate, ambivalent and contradictory, positioning it oppositionally to homelessness is inviable. Thus polarization of the two concepts restricts analysis, reflection and interpretation. It is equally possible to feel out-of-home whilst living in permanent accommodation or to experience small pockets of home whilst on the street (Moore and Canter, 1993). To understand the homeless experience it is vital to respect the various ways of coping utilised by homeless persons. For some homeless persons, sleeping rough reflects their dignity and ingenuity. Rough sleeping may be the most fitting and appropriate choice for a person at a particular time, a time when other available choices may be more problematic or dangerous. Moore (2007) asserts that it may be the onlooker's discomfort that has caused the focus on absences rather the presence.

In considering homelessness as the absence of home, what is valued by the homeless person is often not recognized or ignored (Moore, 1998). In our haste to return homeless persons to conventional temporary accommodation, we diminish and ignore the homemaking struggle and lose the opportunity to physically and personally help homeless persons where they are. However, by increasing our understanding of the homeless experience we can design and extend more appropriate support (Moore, 2007). Wagner (1994) believes that society heavily penalises homeless persons for avoiding conventional family life. He further asserts the unhelpful nature of forcing such persons into societal moulds. We may need to rethink the models used in favour of those modelled more on qualities of independence and control (Neale, 1997). Rivlin and Moore (2001) note that the process of homemaking may not lead to permanent, independent living for some persons but resettlement support can ameliorate some of the chronic and permanent problems resulting from homelessness.

## 2.7 Psychological Factors Concerning Homelessness

The limited success of governments, health services and social work departments in dealing with issues of homelessness has resulted in some authors rethinking their approach to homelessness and exploring more closely the lives of homeless persons (Song, Bartels, Ratner, Alderton, Hudson & Ahluwalia. 2007). Homelessness can be a traumatic experience fraught with psychological difficulties and mental illness (Hamilton, Poza & Washington, 2011) and greater emphasis is beginning to be placed on the psychological factors involved in homelessness (Goodman, Saxe & Harvey, 1991). In addition, the widespread, common perception of the relationship between homeless persons and mental illness may have contributed to increasing the gap between homeless persons and mainstream society (e.g. Robinson, 2005; Bleasdale, 2007; Chambers et al., 2013).

Lovell (2004) suggests that homelessness needs to be understood within the broader domain of social and material marginality. Of particular significance is the accelerated individualisation process prevalent in Western society (McNaughton, 2006) coupled with the challenges to both personal and societal insecurities throughout the lifespan (Gilbert 2011) which may underpin the ongoing development of such problems as homelessness. Buchanan (2004) identifies a '*wall of exclusion*', resulting from stigma and marginalisation, that often accompanies social problems such as homelessness. McNaughton (2008) argues for the acknowledgement of the very real marginalisation, victimisation and trauma experienced by some people living on the periphery of society. She further calls for social and political change to underpin real change to the reality of life for those on the margins.

For O'Connor (2003), homelessness for the homeless person often represents a highly meaningful status not solely connected with poverty or failed social policies. Homelessness can be an expression of the experience of being an outsider or of moving

or being pushed towards the periphery of one's family. O'Connor (2003) suggests that *'homelessness is a state in becoming and that the physical vestiges of homelessness are realizations of a psychological homelessness that long preceded this'* (p.114). In support, many authors have observed that some homeless people seem, at least partially, motivated to remain homeless. Such persons display ambivalence towards having a home; simultaneously yearning for it and despising it (O'Connor, 2003).

### **2.7.1 Homelessness as Trauma**

Homelessness has been described as psychological trauma by a number of authors (D'Ercole & Struening, 1990; Goodman, Saxe, & Harvey, 1991; Sundin 2011). Psychological trauma can be defined as a matrix of reactions to emotionally overwhelming, personally unmanageable, extraordinary life events (Goodman et al., 1991). Such trauma is characterized by issues concerning loss of home, loss of possessions and disconnection from one's usual surroundings (Tischler, Edwards & Vostanis, 2009). Homeless persons are also often socially excluded and live in poverty outside social networks (Craig & Timms, 2000). Psychological trauma often damages both one's sense of personal control and one's capacity for interpersonal trust. Homelessness is a risk factor for emotional disorders and psychotherapists can provide important support to persons living with the psychological consequences of homelessness.

Goodman et al. (1991) highlight the usefulness of trauma theory in deepening our understanding of the experience of homelessness across three domains. First, they suggest that the experience of suddenly or gradually losing one's home, possessions and social connections may elicit trauma symptoms in some persons. Second, for those not already traumatised by the loss of their home, the ongoing experience of being homeless with all its inherent dangers and stressors may dismantle coping capacity and manifestations of psychological trauma may emerge. Finally, if the experiences of

entering homelessness and being homeless do not evoke psychological trauma, homelessness may significantly inhibit recovery from prior psychological trauma in persons with histories of victimisation.

Psychological trauma has as a central component: the experience, both felt and agreed, of the absence of social cohesion and contact. Throughout the lifespan, we find a sense of safety and emotional security, attachment, existential meaning and self-worth in our relationships with others. Homelessness can result in the disruption of lifelong patterns of relating. Faith in one's ability or the ability of others to care for one's self can be severely damaged resulting in a deep sense of mistrust. Psychological trauma results from our perception that our secure supportive bonds have been ruptured (Van der Kolk, 1987). We experience trauma when we no longer feel we have a safe space, either internally or externally, to which to retreat when we experience frightening or threatening emotions or events.

A large proportion of the homeless population comprises lone parents and this figure continues to rise (up from 21 870 in the U.K in 2011 to 25 620 in 2012) (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2012). Other traumatic events, most commonly male partner precipitated violence, often precede an episode of homelessness for lone mothers with children (Kasting & Artz, 2005). There are associations between such abuse and compromised mental and physical health such as depression, borderline personality disorder, digestive and gynecological issues (Campbell et al. 2002) and post-traumatic stress disorder (Roth, Newman, Pelcovitz, van der Kolk & Mandel 2006). For homeless children the picture is bleak as problems with behaviour and delays in reaching developmental milestones are common experiences (Kasting & Artz, 2005) along with inconsistent school attendance (Downer, 2001). These difficulties are further compounded by the negative effects maternal mental distress places on parenting and child development (Arditti, Burton & Neeves-Botelho, 2010).

### **2.7.2 Homelessness and Containment**

According to Henderson Hospital and Henderson Outreach Service (2001), homelessness may be viewed both as an identity and as a message detailing a state of distress experienced as an internal experience of 'unhousedness'. Therefore, a home cannot simply be provided for a person by a humane agency. Rather, psychotherapeutic ways of engaging with homeless persons need to consider the various meanings comprising home through understanding of the person's history, behaviour and relationships.

Psychotherapists need to pay attention to such defensive strategies as projective identification (the evacuation of denied feelings from the client into the therapist), splitting (or all-or-nothing thinking) and acting out (or giving expression to forbidden desires). Such strategies resonate within the homeless culture itself and within psychotherapists and others working closely with the homeless population (Campbell, 2006).

Henri Rey (1994) likens the infant's symbolic spatial arrangement of objects to the claustro-agoraphobic dilemma experienced by persons experiencing borderline traits which he views as a reenactment of this primary early life situation. The baby tries to secure the sought-after good objects both externally and internally. Rey believes that the more problematic the infant/maternal relationship, the harder it is for the baby to separate from the mother to an external world imbued with the infant's hostile projections (Klein, 1932). Increasingly, this spatial arrangement of objects induces a feeling of entrapment. On the one hand there is uncontained internal anguish and on the other considerable anxiety results from identification with a bad external object incapable of containment. For Campbell (1994), this perfectly describes the position of the homeless person. Such a person is unable to cope alone with distressing internal feelings and finds no means of containment in the often hostile and neglectful response of society. Anxiety-induced hostile projections onto the external world, coupled with identification with evident neglect or hostility, creates a reality where being inside or outside a house are equally

fearful. Such persons feel more at ease on the threshold reminiscent of their early emotional experiences of dealing with their mother's internal world (Campbell, 2006).

In claustro-agoraphobic syndrome, entering or leaving a room is experienced as entering or leaving the mother's body (Rey 1994). Matte-Blanco (1988) draws our attention to the painful inadequacy of the terms 'inner' and 'outer' in psychotherapy. Such simplistic terms deny the multidimensional complexity of mind/body relationships and of unconscious processes. He conceptualizes projective identification not as a process of putting something into an other but rather as '*an unconscious level of highly undifferentiated knowing*' (1988, p. 130), which is relationally experienced as the absence of space on either side. Similarly for homeless persons such relating patterns may manifest as a lack of capacity to inhabit actual buildings which coexists alongside a sense of being inhabited oneself.

Homelessness is experienced as the pervasive failure to be contained either within or outside of residential places. For Rey (1994) occupying a doorway, or threshold, characteristically undertaken by homeless persons symbolizes an absence of ability to make choices concerning identity or spatial location. The threshold is a space devoid of creativity; a place between internal persecution and external hostility. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely on the border or at the threshold where many homeless persons feel at home. Psychotherapy can provide a meeting between two persons' different states of 'being at home'. Such an encounter can help repair the deficit resulting from the absence of holding or containment by caretakers (Ogden, 2004). Bram and Gabbard (2001) assert the important role of mutually generated thinking and space in psychotherapy and propose '*a bi-directional model between the two ... a dialectical relationship, in which reflective functioning and potential space are mutually facilitative*' (p.693).

### **2.7.3 Homelessness and Non-Containment**

Homeless persons' sense of being on the periphery, disowned by society often has its roots in early childhood experiences (O'Connor, 2003). O'Connor believes that for each of us our first home is the mind of our mother. He believes that our understanding of homelessness and its experience can be facilitated by a deeper understanding of the concept of containment. In addition to being without an actual place of home, homelessness is also experienced as a lack of belonging, security and familiarity. O'Connor believes many homeless persons are caught between a wish to literally return home and the painful and difficult memories evoked by thoughts of home. Indeed, for some the acceptance of accommodation equates to the painful acceptance that home can never be retrieved or realised.

Two important predictors of homelessness are family disturbance and the experience of rejection within childhood (Dadds, Braddock, Cuers, Elliott & Kelly, 1993). In working with homeless persons, O'Connor (2003) has been struck by the prominence within this population of issues of rejection, isolation and containment. Many homeless persons actively strive to dwell outside of the normal confines of society; to avoid confinement with its inherent reminders of physical, emotional and sexual abusive experiences. For those persons who have been ejected from their home, homelessness resonates deeply with their experiences of rejection, exclusion and aloneness. For those growing up in care the link between homelessness and containment is perhaps most clearly evident. Living in care can be viewed as a lived homelessness, a loosely contained life. For O'Connor, problems of containment indubitably leave one vulnerable to homelessness.

The lack of a sense of either internal or external containment makes the world seem dangerous and our psychical and material possessions seem vulnerable to attack and destruction. According to Bentley (1997) among others, homeless persons are often understandably protective of both their internal thought processes and their small number

of material possessions. For some, the desolation of homelessness resonates with their deep felt experience. Homelessness may be viewed as a rejection of the uncontainable world, desperation at ever achieving containment, and an attempt to cope with anxieties devoid of containment. The desire for containment does not end with becoming homeless and containment may be sought through the structure of life in prison or the routines and practices associated with substance misuse. Some homeless persons show considerable difficulty in tolerating frustration with this frustration being expressed through violence. Furthermore, without an internalised container to facilitate reflection, unmediated psychological tension may be released through violent actions and hitting out at others (Campbell, 2006).

## **2.8 Homelessness and Psychotherapy**

The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP, ), The Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP) and The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) codes of ethics and practice do not refer to those that are homeless specifically but each includes some guidelines that are especially pertinent to this population. The IACP (2005) code of Ethic and Practice states –

Practitioners shall:

- 1.1.1 Not allow their service to clients to be diminished by factors such as gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, race, ethnicity, age, national origin, party politics, social standing or class.
- 1.1.2 Convey sensible respect for prevailing community mores, social customs and cultural expectations.



The IAHIP code of ethics states:

- 8.4 Psychotherapists shall have regard for clients' moral and cultural values and shall not allow their services to clients to be affected by any bias regarding gender, sexual orientation, race, age, nationality, politics, social status or class.

The BACP *Ethical framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy* states-

The fundamental values of counselling and psychotherapy include a commitment to:

Appreciating the variety of human experience and culture

Striving for the fair and adequate provision of counselling and psychotherapy services

Whilst none of the codes specifically addresses psychotherapy's position relating to homelessness or the role of psychotherapy and psychotherapists regarding those who are homeless, each code pledges a commitment to the fair and unhindered provision of psychotherapy. Each code also commits to respecting and valuing the full realm of human experience and culture. Let us turn now to the human experience of being homeless, let us consider if and how psychotherapy and psychotherapists meet their commitment to this particular population.

Homeless persons occupy a liminal position in relation to society, they live on the threshold; neither in nor out. This borderline position is anti-social, dangerous and threatening to society (Scanlon & Adlam, 2008). Homeless persons live outside the prevailing norms and values of society and in so doing instigate reflection on the meaning and prudence of such norms and values (Declerk, 2006). Persons who are not included in

society are generally deemed to have intentionally opted out, to have deliberately chosen to be both anti-social and excluded (Young, 1999; Jones, 2008). This ascription of intentionality infers an ability to re-engage and become inoffensive at will. This perceived refusal to live by society's mores and values, this seeming rejection of the status quo, this apparent opting out of society and its rules poses important questions for psychotherapy. As psychotherapists do we force homeless persons to reengage and deal with society on our terms? Do we ignore the homeless, exclude them from our services? Do we leave them to their destiny and only consider them in relation to our own needs for safety and repose?

According to Declerk (2006), society needs to punish those who live on the threshold, who reject with disdain all that we hold dear. He believes we execute this punishment through the provision of health and welfare structures that are fundamentally inadequate, that we despise the homeless because they are dirty, smelly and anti-social and demean our desires and our narcissism. Scanlon and Adlam (2008) go further when they state:

The social world so constructed is one of institutionalized and reciprocal humiliation and disrespect *between* the have and the have-nots: each fearing the other and in different ways inflicting violence upon the other through violent action or impoverishing omission. (p. 535)

Gilligan (1996) agrees that as a society we require victims of violence, power discrepancies and degrees of disadvantages so that we can feel more secure and safe relative to those on the margins, those who have less. He goes on to say that feelings of envy and shame arising from such relative disadvantage can be emotionally and psychologically paralyzing.

Psychotherapy, too, is guilty of inflicting violence through impoverishing omission on those who are homeless. Homeless persons are among the most marginalised, most victimised, most alienated, most disaffiliated human beings. Yet psychotherapy remains largely silent, provides little in terms of theory or practice, seems not to notice or not to care about these very visible persons that society and our profession have excluded. Psychotherapy and psychotherapists must integrate the split-off parts of ourselves that get played out in the alienation, disaffiliation and isolation experienced by those living on the threshold. As psychotherapists, we need to provide a safe space that can contain the rage, survive the 'violent' attack and facilitate expression of the non-verbalised desires experienced by homeless persons. We need to find a way to transcend the 'us' and 'them' structure we inhabit and extend our psychotherapeutic theories and practices to our most marginalised, victimised and excluded fellow human beings.

### **2.8.1 The Role of Psychotherapy**

Psychotherapy has an important role to play in identifying personal factors that may contribute to becoming homeless, remaining homeless, or successfully negotiating re-entry into mainstream society. Research has distinguished personal factors such as issues affecting mental and physical health, substance abuse, and poor social support (Rossi, 1989), but we have yet to explore mediating factors which may limit episodes of homelessness both in terms of incidence and duration. Greater awareness of protective personal factors concerning homelessness will help improve the situation of those who find themselves homeless and of those at risk of becoming homeless. A study by Epel, Bandura and Zimbardo (1999) looked at self-efficacy and motivation in relation to escaping from homelessness and revealed some unexpected findings. Whilst persons with higher perceived self-efficacy and a future orientation were more proactive, the study found a present-focused orientation to be conducive to acquiring temporary accommodation. Thus, a future-orientation which has consistently shown to be beneficial within the settled community, may be damaging or harmful for those living in an unstable, unpredictable environment where the ability to focus on the here-and-now may be more useful. This has obvious implications for psychotherapy where proactive,

autonomous, internally driven engagement with life is nurtured and prized. As psychotherapists we need a better understanding of homelessness as a way of being in-the-world in order to work effectively and ethically with those who are homeless and to avoid contributing to their further marginalisation and alienation.

## **2.9 Concluding Comments**

This literature review highlights the predominant use of quantitative methodologies to study homelessness. Irish research into homelessness has been dominated by voluntary agencies and social policy academics, thus the overriding theoretical paradigm is that of social reform. Research has focused on enumerating the homeless, identifying their needs, and devising solutions to assuage their distress. The social reformist agenda has led to dramatisation of both the extent and the needs of the homeless and to increased pressure to find ‘solutions to the problem’. Since the vast majority of research on homeless persons, in Ireland, views homelessness in structuralist terms, understanding of homelessness centres on issues concerning poverty, unemployment, social welfare payments and affordable housing. Consequently our understanding of homelessness hinges on assessing statistical and demographic issues. Psychotherapy is notably largely absent from discussion on or research into the experience of being homeless.

The relationship between home and homelessness has seldom been the central focus of academic discussion or research. Contrasting home with homelessness serves to highlight the complex and profound nature of the experience of homelessness but can result in the conceptualisation of homelessness as the antithesis or lack of home. Such juxtaposing of home and homelessness minimizes the complexity of each concept. Viewing homelessness as the complete lack of feeling at home and belonging ignores both tensions inherent in home and the presence of homelessness as a legitimate state of being.

By repeatedly viewing home and homelessness as oppositional states, it is suggested that much of the existing research may have effectively concealed, or covered over, other

equally valuable interpretations of the experience and meaning of being homeless. Therefore, there is a need to provide an alternative approach to explore the person's experience, which would overcome the unhelpful dichotomy retained in the existing literature. This current study utilises a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, based on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, to provide this alternative perspective. Taking into account the shortcomings of the existing literature in revealing the phenomenon of homelessness in itself, this current study aims to reveal some of the essential, constitutive characteristics of homelessness. This review of the literature exposes a dearth of studies which place the everyday lived experience of homeless persons at their core. This current study aims to explore the experience of being homeless as lived by those who are rough sleeping or staying in temporary hostel accommodation in order to disclose and reveal something of the phenomenon of homelessness itself.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the methodology employed within this study. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of all aspects of the research methodology. It explains the objectives of the study, the philosophical perspective of the study, the participants, the methods of data collection and analysis, the strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical issues arising.

#### 3.1 Aim and Objective of the Study

The overarching aim of this study is to uncover or reveal some of the essential, constitutive characteristics of the phenomenon of homelessness. Disclosure of such characteristics is aimed at deepening our understanding of the meaning and ground of homelessness itself. The specific objectives of the study are to explore the everyday experiences of being homeless and living on the street in a number of persons who meet one of the following criteria:

*I. Is currently sleeping rough*

*II. Is currently availing of emergency accommodation in a hostel, shelter, or bed and breakfast*

This study aims to get closer to the phenomenon of homelessness, to uncover, reveal, and create space for the emergence of the phenomenon. The study places persons who are homeless at its core and seeks to explore and understand, through a hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry, their experience of being homeless and, in turn, to disclose

something of homelessness. It is hoped that through revealing and understanding something more of the phenomenon of homelessness, psychotherapy will be better placed and more inclined to address, theoretically and practically, both the phenomenon itself and those who are experiencing it.

### **3.2 Philosophical Perspective of the Study**

The key philosophy utilised in this study is hermeneutic phenomenology, as heavily influenced by the works of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). As evidenced by its name, this philosophy is both a descriptive (phenomenological) and an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology. This is evidenced in the former case by the philosophy's focus on appearance and the desire to let things speak for themselves and in the latter by its assertion that uninterpreted phenomena do not exist. It argues that phenomena, in essence the 'facts' of lived experience, must always be experienced hermeneutically. In addition, it cannot be escaped that the language through which they must be expressed is itself an interpretive process.

A number of philosophers, including Hegel (1770-1831) and Brentano (1838-1917), were instrumental in establishing phenomenology as a philosophical movement, but the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is central to our understanding of phenomenology today (Speigelberg, 1982). Husserl contests the reductionist dualism of Cartesian philosophy which conceptualises subjective experiences within logical, objective parameters. For Husserl, philosophy is a rigorous science specifically concerned with consciousness (Crowell, 2005). Therefore, his approach to phenomenology involves an investigation into consciousness. Husserl purports that we are conscious beings who always inhabit an already existent experiential world or 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*) (Moran, 2005).

Husserl believes our experiences of the life-world are revealed through the 'essences' or ultimate structures of consciousness (Koch, 1995). For Husserl, consciousness is always intentional, that is, consciousness is always consciousness of something. According to Moran (2005), for Husserl intentionality is 'the fundamental characteristic of conscious, mental, or psychic life' (p54). Husserl contends that essential Being and actual existence are separate. The notion of phenomenological reduction or bracketing is central to Husserl's phenomenological position. Phenomenological reduction leads to the discovery of the pure essence of a phenomenon through the 'bracketing' of intentionalities (Sokolowski, 2000). Through successful phenomenological reduction we will discover and be able to describe the essence of consciousness.

However, Heidegger (1962) suggests that rather than overcoming Descartes' dualistic thinking, Husserl's approach to phenomenology is embedded in the Cartesian tradition (Crowell, 2005). This is evidenced by the centrality given to consciousness in Husserl's writings, leading to a misleading inner/outer or subjective/objective dichotomy in his conceptualization of lived experience. In response, Heidegger (1962) presents an account of human life challenging Husserl's predominantly cognitive approach to the experiences of the human being. Heidegger places the necessity for addressing the question of Being at the heart of his philosophy. He is particularly concerned with human being or Dasein (being-there). Dasein does not just exist rather its very Being is an issue for it. "[T]here is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly" (Heidegger, 1962, p.32). Dasein exists in relation to and with reference to other beings and entities, "There is no such thing as the 'side-by-side-ness of an entity called 'Dasein' with another entity called 'world'". (Heidegger, 1962, p. 81).

Heidegger refers to those entities we encounter in concern as equipment and equipment cannot exist in the singular since "To the being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment in which it can be this equipment that it is (1962, p.97). Heidegger (1962) opposes any notion that human beings can somehow stand apart from the world



looking in, rather they must understand the world by virtue of already being in it. Heidegger is concerned with understanding the world by experiencing it rather than by reducing experiences to phenomena and theorizing about such phenomena. To preserve the meaningfulness of the world, the researcher must immerse herself in it before engaging in theoretical reflection.

The philosophical underpinnings of this research draw on Heidegger's view that human life can fundamentally only be viewed from its 'insideness' through the act or performance of its reality. "*[A]n entity within-the-world has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world*" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 82). Further, life is always '*this wordly*', particular to this Being, time and space. No one person's experience of being homeless is ever the 'truth' about homelessness, as it is always unique to that person's situation, context, history and time. Hence, the only way for me to comprehend what it means, to be homeless for the participants in this study, is to listen to them describe their 'lived' experiences of homelessness.

### **3.3 Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

The origin of the term phenomenology lies in the Greek words '*phenomenon*' (derived from the verb 'to show itself') and 'logos' (speech). Its meaning, therefore, is to allow something be seen, become manifest through '*what is talked about*' (Heidegger, 1993). Heidegger warns that a phenomenon may appear as a mere semblance. It may show itself '*as something which in itself it is **not***' it '*looks like something or other*' (Heidegger, 1962 p. 51). In order to understand the concept of phenomenon, we must grasp the structural interconnection between the first signification ('phenomenon' as that which shows itself) and the second signification ('phenomenon' as semblance). "*Only when the meaning of something is such that it makes a pretension of showing itself – that is, of being a*

*phenomenon – can it show itself as something which it is not; only then can it ‘merely look like so-and-so’*” (Heidegger, 1962, p.51).

The goal of phenomenology is therefore to bring a phenomenon into the open, ensuring it ‘*shows itself in itself*’: to reveal ‘*something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground*’ (Heidegger, 1962 p. 59). Heidegger highlights the importance of remaining open to possibilities and not being beguiled by what may appear initially to be the phenomenon, in this case *homelessness*. This research seeks, in Heideggerian tradition, to open up space to allow new possibilities of understanding of homelessness to emerge or be revealed. It further strives to expose the role played by accepted or conventional understandings in covering up the phenomenon under enquiry. Furthermore, as researcher, I strive to remain open to the various ways homelessness may be revealed or covered up by the study participants through their dialogue and preconceptions.

Hermeneutics has its roots in ‘Herme’, a Greek word meaning to bring to comprehension through language. Language functions to reveal what phenomena show. Herein lies a danger; given that language possesses another being from the phenomenon it seeks to describe, language may merely *appear* to tell us what the phenomenon is. Thus the being of language may actually cover up rather than reveal the being of homelessness. The function of hermeneutics is to systematically and reflexively interrogate language in order to expose any hidden truth of a phenomenon that has been obscured by language.

This study aims, through hermeneutics, to articulate the authentic meaning of the phenomenon homelessness. Since Dasein is prioritised above all other beings in figuring out the meaning of Being, it is thus necessarily through Dasein that Being will be revealed. The world, Being and its meaning are revealed through language. Language allows us to reveal to others both what we experience and what we mean (Heidegger, 1982). Dasein is

submerged in language, we are always speaking, interpreting and understanding the world through what is said and must also pay attention to what is not said but remains covered over, as yet, not revealed. *“That which can be Articulated in interpretation, and this even more primordially in discourse, is what we have called ‘meaning’. That which gets articulated as such in discursive Articulation, we call the ‘totality-of-significations’* (Heidegger, 1962 p. 204).

For Gadamer (2004), the basic model of understanding is that of conversation. Conversation always occurs within language and understanding is always mediated through language. Gadamer argues that all understanding involves a common language and therefore all understanding is interpretative. According to Gadamer, language is the very medium through which we engage with the world. We are ‘in’ the world by virtue of being ‘in’ language. Through language we comprehend the intelligible; it is also where we encounter ourselves and others. Thus language is fundamentally dialogue or conversation, a shared activity where the meaning of Being comes into understanding through dialogue. We understand each other through the medium of language, a medium embedded in prior understandings and prejudices.

Coming from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, I am aware that my understanding and prejudices concerning the phenomenon of homelessness will be mediated both through the participants’ use and my own use of language, both expressive and receptive. I, therefore, strive to be aware of and pay attention to what is said, what is not said, and the interplay between my interpretation and the participants’ interpretations of their stories.

### 3.3.1 Understanding Being

The term Dasein is used by Heidegger to express man's essential *situatedness*, his existence within an interrelated whole. For Heidegger, Dasein defines a being that is aware of its own being and its inherent meaning. Heidegger suggests that it is necessary to first make the inquirer consciously aware of his own Being in order to grasp the concept of Being adequately. Dasein's basic *mode of Being* must come from the very asking of the question 'What is being?' Thus Dasein's essential character is acquired from the focus of the inquiry – Being. Dasein is not just an entity among other entities, "*Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it*" (Heidegger, 1962, p.32).

Mulhall (1996) makes clear that any investigation into Being is itself a form of Dasein's own Being. It is therefore necessary to preface any such investigation with an existential analytic, with the aim of achieving full self-transparency. Dasein must deal with its own unusually close relationship with its own Being whilst simultaneously dealing with the Being of other entities. The human being itself, is thus the source of all other ontologies; the base on which all understandings of the world and existence are founded. It follows that there is no objectivity or subjectivity, no mental or physical categorisation since both Dasein and the world are only known through Dasein's own understanding of its Being. Thus human existence and the world are one entity. Heidegger calls this *Being-in-the-world*. Being-in-the-world is a compound phrase reflecting the fact that being-in-the-world is a unitary phenomenon and that being and the world must be comprehended together and not as separate events.

This notion serves to remind me to grasp homelessness as a unitary phenomenon, a way of Being-in-the-world. It highlights the necessity for me, as enquirer, to grapple with participants' experiences in their wholeness and not create erroneous dichotomies

between, for example, subjective experiences and objective ‘truths’, or internal and external experiences.

### 3.3.2 Being-in-the-world through Everydayness

Being connotes *inness* as a dwelling place in the first person conjugation of the verb ‘to be’ – ‘I am’. In German ‘ich bin’ (I am) can read as ‘I reside’, ‘I am familiar with’ or ‘I look after something’. Thus for Heidegger, when expressed as an existentiale, ‘am’ also means ‘reside’ or ‘live together with’. Being-in-the-world means ‘dwelling together with the world’ where I am both familiar with and have concern for that which I dwell together with; “to ‘dwell’ together with the world, as that which is familiar to me in such and such a way” (Heidegger, 1962. p. 80). The Being of Dasein can be formally expressed as *I reside together with myself* or *I myself am*. However, we must be careful not to mistake the ‘I’ for the Cartesian, subjective ‘I’ but rather see it as representing the wholeness of being and, as such, is a general term. Heidegger therefore represents general ontological structures in precise terms of ‘mineness’, given how dependent his philosophy is on the essential wholeness of being.

Being-in-the-world not only means that we find ourselves somewhere, but additionally we are constantly grappling with, or being otherwise concerned with, something. For Heidegger (1962), care is the central core of our earthly involvement, as we cannot exist in the world simply as unengaged bystanders. Our very state of being in the world means we are necessarily engrossed in its day-to-day goings-on (for example, what we eat, where we sleep, how we find shelter). For Heidegger, *to be* is to care. Care, for Heidegger, does not equate to worry; rather it is the structure of a Being that takes a stand on itself. It is a formal structure devoid of experiential content. We comprehend ourselves and our reality through the activities we engage in and the things we deal with. “*Care as a primordial structural totality, lies ‘before’ [‘vor’] every factual ‘attitude’ and ‘situation’ of Dasein, and it does so existentially a priori; this means that it always lies in*

them” (Heidegger, 1962, p.238). Thus both theory and practice are equally possible and prioritised for Dasein whose Being is necessarily defined as ‘care’.

Since we are always already in the world, our connections with other beings and entities are characterized by familiarity or, for Heidegger, as being ready-to-hand. Thus Dasein uses and takes for granted the things encountered in the world. Heidegger refers to ready-to-hand things as equipment and no equipment exists as a singularity but rather as part of an infinite referential whole. In order to be what they are, things, or tools, must recede from visibility. *“No matter how sharply we just look at the ‘outward appearance’ of Things in whatever form this takes, we cannot discover anything ready-to-hand”* (Heidegger, 1962. p. 98). In order for something to be authentically ready-to-hand it must withdraw. In our everydayness it is the work enabled by the tools rather than the tools themselves that concerns us and *“The work bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered”* (Heidegger, 1962. p. 99). Furthermore, Dasein does not infer significance onto encountered entities but rather entities already belong to a public world, a colossal web of infused meaning.

When we are concerned with some equipment in the world, others for whom the equipment is destined are ‘encountered too’. When equipment is put to use, we encounter its producer, supplier or server. *“When, for example, we walk along the edge of a field but ‘outside it’, the field shows itself as belonging to such-and-such a person, and decently kept by him,”* (Heidegger, 1962, p.153). Dasein’s world frees entities which *“as Dasein themselves – are ‘in’ the world in which they are at the same time encountered within-the-world, and are ‘in’ it by way of Being-in-the-world”* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 154). Thus Dasein encounters Others within-the-world, and does so oriented *“by that Dasein which is in each case one’s own”* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 154).

In my research, the meaning of homelessness is to be found in the interests and activities pursued by the homeless person: in what the person is concerned with, their everyday involvements and engagements. It is through these everyday concerns that the phenomenon of homelessness will be revealed.

### **3.3.3 Readiness-to-hand**

For the most part, the world of Dasein is ready-to-hand; a world where things are taken for granted rather than analyzed or viewed theoretically. Dasein simply uses the equipment in the world. Equipment exists in assignment to all other equipment in a referential whole. *“A house refers to bad weather and to Dasein’s need to stay dry; the need to stay dry refers to our medical knowledge; this knowledge refers in turn to our fear of illness and to ambitions that might be derailed by early death”* (Harman, 2007. p. 62). Tools recede from visibility in order to be what they are. Furthermore, the outward appearance of a tool never reveals an understanding of what it is since tools are meant for using rather than observing.

It is usually when equipment malfunctions in some way that our attention is drawn to it. Tools that turn up missing, such as a lost shoe, also become conspicuous. For instance, if a person loses their home, home becomes conspicuous and reflection may begin on all those assumptions we take for granted (circumspection) regarding our ability to be at home, along with all the things made possible by having a home. Heidegger (1962) states that *“When something ready-to-hand is found missing, though its everyday presence [Zugegensein] has been so obvious that we have never taken any notice of it, this makes a break in those referential contexts which circumspection discovers”* (p.105). In this way, the world reveals itself in itself anew. Heidegger (1962) refers to this form of the world showing itself as ‘unready-to-hand’.

For me, readiness-to-hand encourages my awareness of that which may be taken for granted or hidden away concerning homelessness. I must interrogate meanings I may have accepted as self evident. I must strive to allow what is hidden in the everyday to be revealed. I must consider what is 'ready-to-hand' and circumspective. I must explore the manner in which homelessness shows itself in the conspicuous.

### 3.3.4 Thrownness, Facticity and Possibility

Heidegger is clear that philosophy cannot look at reality from the outside through its appearance. In order to understand human activity, we must view it as an event, a performance or execution. Life always exceeds all of the properties we can name about it; life is factual. Its facticity means that it cannot be adequately accounted for in theoretical terms. Human life is always specific to its time and context and is always immersed in its surroundings in a very particular fashion. For Heidegger, the only way to get at the deeper factual reality of a phenomenon is through 'formal indication' or the uncovering of its primordial a priori structure. Rather than listing all the different adjectives that might pertain to homelessness, through formal indication we can move closer to some deeper reality of being homeless without ever claiming to exhaust it. Formal indication allows us to allude to or hint at the being of things that goes deeper than how they appear in our consciousness. In order to understand a phenomenon, we must pay attention to and investigate the apparently *inessential* features of the phenomenon, by any appropriate means, which may be *essential*. In phenomenology we seek to uncover or reveal the phenomenon under investigation and a phenomenon can show itself in itself in a variety of ways depending upon our access to it. We must strive to reveal the phenomenon itself and not some semblance or appearance of the phenomenon. "*Phenomenon the showing-itself-in-itself, signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered*" (Heidegger, 1962, p.54).

For Heidegger (1962), Dasein is thrown into a world of actuality and possibility. "*An entity of the character of Dasein is its 'there' in such a way that, whether explicitly or*



*not, it finds itself [sich befindet] in its thrownness” (p. 174). Being thrown refers to being ‘delivered over’ to human existence, to a complete, enveloping presentness. Furthermore, Dasein is always in some mood or other and we can only conquer a mood with another mood. A mood shows us how we are getting along and indicates to us our thrownness into a situation requiring our attention. As Heidegger (1962) puts it, “In a state of mind Dasein is always brought before itself, not in the sense of coming across itself by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood that it has” (p.174).*

In order to be, it is essential that Dasein assume its presentness, and thus take up its own Being. The possibilities of Dasein’s Being are always constrained by actuality; Dasein overcomes its own existence into which it has already been thrown (Gadamer, 2004). As Heidegger (1962) explains, *“In falling, Dasein itself is factual. Being-in-the-world is something from which it has already fallen away. And it has not fallen into some entity which it comes upon for the first time in the course of its Being, or even one which it has not come upon at all; it has fallen into the world, which itself belongs to its Being” (p. 220).*

Thrownness itself as a kind of being and belongs to an entity which *is* its possibilities and understands itself in terms of these possibilities. Each person’s mode of Being-in-the-world then is one of the potential possibilities but there is a finite amount of possibilities and not all desired possibilities are attainable due to the constraints imposed on us by our situatedness. I, therefore, needed to be mindful of both the actualities and possibilities of the world described by the persons experiencing homelessness to remain aware that homelessness is the possibility into which they are currently thrown.

### 3.3.5 Being Authentic

When Dasein is absorbed in care for the world, Dasein is not authentically itself. Rather Dasein is what Heidegger (1962) calls *the they*, a way of Being that dissolves Dasein completely into others. When we are absorbed in *the they*, we go along with the prevailing view or behaviour with no one taking responsibility, indeed with no possibility of anyone taking responsibility. *The they* concerns itself with averageness, it levels down all the possibilities of Being. By going along with the masses, we no longer have to think or decide for ourselves. Essentially our own Dasein ebbs away through our close engagement with others. Our day-to-day self has been absorbed into *the they* (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger refers to this subsumption or everyday manner of Being-in-the-world as 'fallenness'. From Heidegger's perspective, the they protects the status quo as Dasein monitors everything exceptional to ensure it does not threaten the quietude of *the they*. All original ideas and thoughts are reduced to the familiar and the already known. *The they* always stays with the superficial, never exploring at depth, never risking being wrong. *The they* is always right, always anticipates what will happen, is never surprised: "Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known" (Heidegger, 1962, p.165).

Only by facing his own death and taking responsibility for his own life, can Dasein come back from the fallenness of *the they*. Facing death causes us to think about the various, but limited possibilities of Being and the finitude of existence. Dasein can never be a free self projection nor a self realization of an intellect rather a Being-toward-death.

"Authentic Being-one's-Self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the 'they'; it is rather an existentiell modification of the 'they' - of the 'they' as an essential existentielle." (Heidegger, 1962. p.168).

In terms of this current study, some interesting considerations arise. Being authentic, not being subsumed into *the they* may be revealed through an enquiry into being homeless. Perhaps *the they* is also manifest in the homeless community. Is living a homeless life

more or less authentic for the person concerned? What does the homeless person go along with or not take responsibility for in everyday life? Is the homeless person resisting fallenness and, in so doing, threatening the tranquility of *the they*?

### **3.3.6 Understanding and Meaning**

For Heidegger, Being-in-the-world is already central to comprehension and refers to a capacity, an ability, a know-how, a possibility of our existence. Our existence in the world and our concern for the things that interest us underlies our understanding. Understanding is less indicative of specific knowledge and more an indicator of the capacity to practice a specific skill. An exemplar of a way of being is not so much a good theoretician more someone who ‘knows his trade’. It is with this basic understanding that we negotiate our way through life. Furthermore, the German form of ‘to understand’ (*sich verstehen*) used by Heidegger is reflective in that it implies an element of self understanding and self implication (Philipse, 2001). Thus understanding always involves a playing out of a possibility of my own self. Therefore, understanding homelessness will always be my understanding of homelessness, in the manner that I am capable of understanding it, to the extent that I am up to the task.

To understand (*sich verstehen*) can also mean to concur or to come to agreement, to understand one another. For Heidegger (1962) interpretation is based on the assumptions of collective comprehensions and is built around three fore structures of understanding. These are ‘fore-having’ or the comprehensions we already hold in advance, ‘fore-sight’ or the point of view from which we approach something, and ‘fore-conception’ or how our comprehensions have brought us to enquire coupled with our expectations of what we will find. In relation to this current study, fore-having includes the position that homelessness is problematic, less than desirable, alienating and uncomfortable; fore-sight refers to my encounter with homelessness from the perspective of a researcher and psychotherapist; and fore-conception relates to homelessness as a marginalized, ignored phenomenon within psychotherapy and the expectation that new understanding and

meaning will be revealed. The fore structures provide the formal existential framework “upon which” phenomena become understandable as things. “*Meaning is the ‘upon-which’ of a projection in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something; it gets its structure from a fore-having, a fore-sight and a fore-conception*” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 193).

Additionally, Heidegger contends that the fore structures reveal the temporality of understanding and knowledge. What we already know informs the perspectives and choices we bring to the present along with any future decisions we make. Moran (2005) argues that the answers we expect to find depend on how we pose the question, which in turn rests of our presumptions. Thus, our questions do not arise from simple ignorance, but instead the answers to our queries lead us to revisit our previous assumptions. For Lafont (2005), the concept of fore-structure means that interpretations are always grounded within the particular context, perspective, and conceptualisations of the interpreter and comprise the *hermeneutic circle* from which all interpretation emerges.

It is evident, then, that as researcher I must pay close attention to my assumptions concerning homelessness. I must consider the effects of the fore structures on my interpretations and on those of the other research participants.

The philosophical perspective of Martin Heidegger informs this hermeneutic phenomenological study into the phenomenon of homelessness. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides a means of accessing some of the constitutive characteristics of homelessness. Such essential, constitutive characteristics deepen our understanding of the meaning and ground of homelessness itself. Hermeneutic phenomenology helps uncover something of the phenomenon by investigating the meaning within the everyday descriptions of homelessness as it is experienced by persons who are currently homeless. It permeates all stages of this research process including choosing participants, methods of data collection and analysis, and the interpretation and discussion of the findings. The remainder of this chapter will focus on these elements of the research process.

### **3.4 The Study Participants**

In order to understand what being a person means, we must explore the experiences of the person within the environment and context from which their beliefs and values have arisen (Leonard, 1994). To uncover some characteristics of homelessness, it is essential to understand something of the experience of being homeless and to do so it is necessary to access the experiences of persons who are homeless. To be eligible for inclusion in the study, participants needed to be aged eighteen years or older and to possess conversational English. Six homeless persons were accessed through a service which provides day time services for homeless persons who are rough sleeping or staying in temporary hostels. A core staff member was appointed by the service's research director to act as liaison between the service users and the researcher. The liaison approached service users whom he felt would be open to participating in the research and upon their consent provided contact phone numbers to the researcher. The researcher also frequently visited the service's day centre and approached and chatted with service users to ascertain if they might be interested in taking part in the research. Three participants were successfully recruited by each of the above methods. Each of the participants gave a rich and emotive account of their everyday life on the street. Because Boyd (2001) regards two to 10 participants as sufficient to reach saturation and Creswell (1998) advocates for long interviews with up to 10 research participants for a piece of phenomenological research, six participants' accounts seemed fitting and appropriate for this current study. Qualitative research calls for the close examination and analysis of more than one case in order to address both the principle of variation and the principle of close examination. In order to express and interpret their perspectives adequately and respectfully, I felt that these six participants' accounts were all I could ethically and meaningfully represent. Heidegger's philosophy attempts to reveal the phenomenon through examination of the everyday rather than the exceptional circumstances and events through which it might reveal itself. Therefore I sought to reveal everyday accounts of homelessness and these six interviews provided rich, descriptive data which revealed something of the phenomenon. This emerged as evident and apparent during the interviews which were often evocative, moving and compelling. Throughout this study I endeavoured to balance the tension between paying attention to and valuing each participant's unique, personal

account of homelessness and to the broader phenomenon of homelessness as shared by the participants. Finally, part of the appeal and significance of a phenomenological study is the emphasis on understanding and revealing the phenomenon within the context of both the broader literature and wider philosophy.

### **3.5 Phenomenological Interviewing**

Since hermeneutic phenomenology is fundamentally a linguistic endeavour, the utilization of dialogue to reveal the experiences of those individuals rooted in the life world under examination is crucial. It is through conversational relationship with the participants that the researcher can facilitate the uncovering of rich descriptions of their experience (Benner, 1994). In line with this position, this research seeks to reveal something of the phenomenon of homelessness through conversation with persons currently experiencing homelessness. This study uses both interviews and field notes to explore the person's understanding of homelessness. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the purpose of the interview is to investigate and collect personal accounts conveyed through a person's own words, as well as being a useful way of building a conversational relationship with the interviewee regarding the significance of an occurrence or event. In order to accomplish this, Van Manen (1997) advises joint consideration of the subject between researcher and participant. Given how they permit participants to freely articulate their experiences without rigid guidelines for discussion, this study uses semi-structured interviews (Morse & Field, 1995) which ensure a certain degree of depth and complexity in the data revealed.

At the start of each interview, participants were reminded of their right to pull out of the study whenever they wished, and of their right to choose not to answer any questions should they so desire. I began each interview with a series of demographic questions to determine such issues as the number of times the person had been homeless, the length of time they had spent homeless and their current relationship status (See Appendix A). I continued the interview with a short series of questions designed to access something of their everyday experience of being homeless and in so doing to get closer to revealing

something of the phenomenon itself. I commenced each interview with the invitation ‘*Tell me about yesterday*’ followed by ‘*Tell me about last night*’. Subsequent questions explored the participant’s sense of home and enquired about times, if any, when he or she felt at home or not-at-home. These questions were designed to access the participants’ experiences of being-at-home-in-the-world to whatever extent such experiences existed. They served to illuminate the experience of being homeless by comparing and contrasting it with a sense of being at home. The interview questions (see Appendix D) were designed to uncover the essential everydayness of the experience of being homeless through accessing events or situations that stand out from circumspection. Each initial question was followed up with probing questions such as, ‘Can you tell me more about that?’ ‘Can you say a little more about that?’ ‘What was that like for you?’ ‘What happened then?’ Such questions maintained and fostered the conversational nature of the interview. The participants were encouraged to talk freely about whatever seemed important or relevant to them. They were not constrained by pointed questions serving to limit the contextual nature of their narratives (Benner, 1994).

When questioning, it is important to stay open to any new presenting possibilities in order to move beyond the semblance of the thing (Gadamer, 1989). In uncovering the phenomenon “*We make no advance restriction upon the concept of ‘meaning’ which would confine it to signifying the ‘content of judgment’, but we understand it as the existential phenomenon already characterized, in which the formal framework of what can be disclosed in understanding and Articulated in interpretation becomes visible*” (Heidegger, 1962. p.199). In listening to the participants’ accounts, I endeavoured to stay open to other questions that might help uncover or reveal more about the phenomenon of homelessness. This brings to mind the notion of fore structure and the researcher’s expectations around what she expects to hear and what she expects to be revealed.

The interviews were audio taped and then transcribed, to allow the researcher to remain closer to the experience, focusing on the conversation and any non-verbal communication. The length of interviews varied between forty and seventy minutes, depending on how long it took each individual participant to feel they had fully expressed

themselves. The tape was left running while the interviewer thanked the participants for their involvement in order to catch any last-minute comments.

Three variations of field notes were kept throughout the study, as advised by Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander (1995). These were the transcript, personal, and analytical files. The transcript file held raw information from the interview process. The personal file contains an in-depth account of the interviewees and their backgrounds, as well as holding researcher observations regarding the research experience and any methodological concerns. The personal file also held information that facilitated contextual re-enactment of recorded discussions (Minichiello et al. 1995). The analytical file contained a thorough, critical exploration of any research-related questions or concepts that surfaced throughout the process, as well as holding any insights or considerations by the researcher that may have influenced the progression of the research. This was utilised as a resource to prompt and document the researcher's own reflexive inquiry during the study.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

A number of ethical concerns can emerge whilst conducting research with homeless persons. Traditional ethical constructs such as consent, privacy, harm and bias need to be re-examined due to the unique contexts of the lives of this population (Paradis, 2000). Paradis advocates for awareness throughout all stages of research of the potential contribution to the further stigmatization and marginalization of homeless persons through the research question asked and the biases, assumptions and prejudices therein. She also highlights the danger that research could be damaging to the homeless community as a whole if it promotes negative stereotypes or misinformation. In addition, Paradis highlights the 'captive' status of homeless persons resulting in their dependence on service providers for their subsistence needs and the negative connotations this has in securing genuine informed consent. She contends that it is vital that the researcher is aware of such issues and takes measures to address or minimize their effects. Failure to



do so may contribute to the existing stereotyping, marginalisation, victimisation and stigmatisation faced by homeless persons. Paradis argues that research ethics must actively invest in the well-being of marginalised persons and communities. She proposes the use of research as a strategy for the empowerment of persons who are homeless.

This research will be disseminated in ways that seek to empower the homeless community through publication of the findings, presentation at conferences and other appropriate forums. The use of hermeneutic phenomenology explicitly addresses issues of bias through the documentation and re-visiting of biases and presumptions. This research adopts Serrano-Garcia's (1990) six-step framework for addressing the oppression and inequality inherent in research: (1) inform the community about the research and the research plan; (2) obtain ongoing, informed consent from the community via its representatives; (3) maintain confidentiality; (4) involve community members in the collection of data which was achieved by joining service users as a community (for coffee in a homeless drop-in centre) and inviting them to take part in the research, to suggest likely participants and to suggest possible interview topics; (5) seek community authorization for publication of research, this was achieved by asking service users at the drop-in centre (including those who did not choose to participate in the research) if they felt I should publish my findings; and (6) disseminate the data to the community, this will be achieved through presenting the findings on the internet both on the homeless services website and on various other internet forums as service users both have and avail of internet access at the drop-in centre.

It is widely accepted that there are three basic ethical principles which must underlie the carrying out of research involving human participants: respect, beneficence, and justice (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden 2000). Respect for persons indicates an understanding of the right of humans to self-determination, and thus an acceptance of their right to either participate in the research, or not. Beneficence is the principle within research to do no harm and indeed make the most possible of any potential benefits available to

participants. Justice refers to the fair treatment researchers are obligated to provide throughout their studies in accordance with principles of human rights. As researcher, I endeavoured to maintain the standards demanded by these principles at all points of this hermeneutical study on the person's experience of homelessness.

Formal written approval to conduct the study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at Dublin City University (see Appendix B). The rationale behind and reason for the study were made clear to all participants, along with the key characteristics of the design. Participants were given time to express any queries they may have had, and then asked to read a plain language statement (see Appendix C) fill out an informed consent form, of which they received a copy (see Appendix D). This was accompanied by contact information, as well as a brief overview of the background, operational particulars and intentions of the study. Throughout the interview stage it was made clear to participants that they could halt, postpone or put an end to their involvement at any time or deem not to answer any individual questions at their absolute discretion. In line with the model of process consent advocated by Usher and Arthur (1998), the researcher re-negotiated consent at several points throughout the interview. The researcher was also watchful throughout for indications of emotional distress, and discontinued investigation into any subject found excessively emotive. In order to protect privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout and all data gathered were coded and sealed in a locked cabinet kept at different premises from the homeless service. The post-interview debriefing was used to allow participants to voice any concerns they had (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008), while the researcher ensured that any psychologically necessary follow-up requirements were met. A reproduction of the final thesis will be made available to any participants who wish for it.

In conducting the interviews, I felt uncomfortable at the level of distress exhibited by some of the interviewees. One participant came to the interview straight from a night spent in a doorway. He was exhausted and yawned many times during the interview.

Another participant was obviously grieving the death of her mother and was also very concerned about where she would spend the night having just, that morning, been suspended from her hostel for two nights. On completion of her interview, with the interviewee's permission, I contacted the service manager and the three of us discussed how and where she might spend the night and considered resources she could access. With both of these participants I was very uncomfortable that I, as researcher, was benefiting from their appalling life circumstances. Both interviews struck me as accessing something of the core of the hardship and anguish of living on the street. The participants' anguish and my satisfaction at the depth of experience and emotion portrayed in each interview sat very uncomfortably together.

### **3.7 Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis**

Hermeneutic Phenomenology, as proposed by Martin Heidegger, was chosen as an appropriate methodology for this study as it strives to uncover the hidden phenomena of our lives and to reveal their meaning. Phenomenology seeks a deeper understanding of the meaning of an experience through identification of the experience followed by deepening layers of reflection by means of rich, descriptive language (Smith et al., 1997). Such descriptions should resonate with others who have experienced the phenomenon evoking what van Manen (1997) refers to as the *phenomenological nod*. Furthermore, phenomenological research should yield simple and straightforward results allowing others who have experienced the phenomenon to deepen their own understanding of their experience through the identified themes (Swanson-Kauffman & Schonwald, 1988). Van Manen describes such themes as *structures of experience* and sees them as providing a thick description of the phenomenon.

Hermeneutics propounds that things are interpreted as they become revealed from the shadow. Thus, that which remains in the shadow can neither be seen nor understood. Two central hermeneutic strategies are utilised in the analysis method as put forward by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007): the hermeneutic circle and the dialogue of question and answer.

According to Spinoza (1632-1677) the hermeneutic circle refers to the process of understanding parts in relation to the whole and the whole in relation to its constituent parts: neither the whole nor any part can be understood without reference to the other (Goetschel, 2004). Heidegger refers to all being as belonging to a referential whole, and therefore understanding always concerns the whole of Being-in-the-world. For Heidegger (1962), the hermeneutic circle refers to the interplay between our self-understanding and our understanding of the world and has hidden within it *‘a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing’* (p. 153). To fail to recognise the centrality of the hermeneutic circle is to fail to understand the act of understanding. *‘But if we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it, even if we just ‘sense’ it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up’* (p. 153).

The use of question and answer lies at the heart of Gadamer’s (1975, 1981) hermeneutic approach: meaning emerges through hermeneutic dialogue between the text and the researcher. *‘The most important thing is the question that the text puts to us, our being perplexed by the traditional word, so that understanding it must already include the task of the historical self-mediation between the present and tradition. Thus the relation of question and answer is, in fact, reversed’* (Gadamer, 1975. p. 366). Gadamer continues that *‘we must attempt to reconstruct the question to which the traditional text is the answer’*. (p. 367)

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The analysis aims to reveal or disclose essential, constitutive characteristics of the phenomenon of homelessness, characteristics that uncover something of its meaning and ground. To this end, the study utilises a systematic thematic analysis incorporating phenomenological and hermeneutic strategies informed by the work of Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) and Edwards and Titchen (2003). This method identifies research participants’ interpretations and constructs, referred to as *“first order constructs”*, which are then

combined with “*second order constructs*” comprising the researcher’s interpretations, understandings and constructs (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). For an example of the data analysis see Appendix E.

The stages used in the analysis and to access hermeneutic understanding are based on those presented by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007):

1. Immersion in the data – Organising the text
2. Understanding – Identifying first order constructs
3. Abstraction – Identifying second order constructs
4. Synthesis and characteristic disclosure
5. Illuminating and illustrating the phenomenon
6. Integration – Testing and refining the characteristics

### **3.8.1 Stage one: Immersion-Organizing the texts**

Immersion in the data began upon meeting each participant and engaging with them in dialogue about the phenomenon. The interview process involves actively listening for meaning and on occasion this became very emotionally evocative, for example when one participant stated “*it’s not a day, it’s like... it’s literally like a lifetime*”. Thus during the interviews tentative characteristics began to emerge. Once the interviews were transcribed, I read and re-read each interview several times, listened and re-listened to interview tapes and read and re-read field notes to become very familiar with each text set. Each of these activities was undertaken alone and also in combination with others. This process can be referred to as ‘*immersion in the data*’ and requires the researcher to keep an open mind allowing meaning and structures to emerge (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Dialogue with my research supervisors and colleagues facilitated deepening reflection on emerging and alternate ideas. This stage served to provide a general sense of the information gathered and to reflect on its overall meaning.

### **3.8.2 Stage two: Understanding- Identifying first order constructs**

Schutz (1962) makes an important distinction between first and second order constructs. First order constructs refer to the research participants' constructs of their everyday reality. Such constructs are the constructs of an agent rather than a theoretical observer; one who has practical interests guided by common-sense (Overgaard et al. 2008). First order constructs are expressed in the participants' own words and encapsulate the core substance of the communication. First order constructs were identified for each participant with awareness that all identifications were influenced by those identified in the first interview, with subsequent interviews being influenced by an increasing number of previous interviews. This is an inevitable consequence of the process as the researcher is immersed in the data from the first meeting with a participant and thus all subsequent interviews and analyses are influenced by what came before. Two strategies were employed to monitor and mediate such influences: checking and clarifying with participants during interviews and obtaining feedback and guidance from research supervisors and colleagues concerning the relevance and discreteness of those constructs identified and the possible omission of others.

### **3.8.3 Stage three: Abstraction- Identifying second order constructs**

Second order constructs, according to Schutz (1962), are necessarily applied by the researcher since she is motivated and guided by more theoretical interests than those of the participants. Such constructs are thus theoretically informed abstractions from the participants' first order constructs. A file was created for each second order construct and all relevant sentences and phrases from the transcripts were placed in the appropriate file. During this process, I went back and forth between the individual extracts and the transcript as a whole to facilitate deeper understanding of what the participant was saying and ensure extracts were placed in the most appropriate second order construct file. Stage three was complete when all relevant data had been placed in the most appropriate second order file in order to reveal something of the phenomenon of homelessness.

#### **3.8.4 Stage four: Synthesis and characteristic disclosure**

As a culmination of stages one to three, essential characteristics were identified from the data groupings. This stage was very time-consuming with several re-workings and re-conceptualisations of characteristics in collaboration with my supervisors. Data and characteristics were revisited numerous times to achieve what seemed to be the most appropriate fit. This was ultimately achieved by grouping the second order constructs into two broad characteristics: *Passing Time* and *Taking Care* with each characteristic comprising a number of sub-divisions. The relationship between characteristics and sub-divisions and the placing of extracts were continuously assessed and modified through reading and re-reading of the data sets. This part of the process was greatly influenced by both Spinoza's (Goetschel, 2004) and Heidegger's (1962) notions of the hermeneutic circle. In line with Spinoza, there was deep consideration of the mutual relationship between each text set as a whole and its individual parts. This was achieved through a constant to-ing and fro-ing between the extracts, the transcripts and the characteristics to ensure a deeper understanding of the meaning of each extract and the relevance of each characteristic to the phenomenon. In keeping with Heidegger's account of the hermeneutic circle, I paid considerable attention to my self-understanding and my understanding of the world. This was achieved through engagement with Heidegger's assertion that Dasein's understanding of its world is at the same time an interpretation of itself. Therefore, I tried to remain aware that any interpretation I might make was inevitably embedded in my own understanding and expectations. Once again, consultations with and challenges from my supervisors helped clarify and illuminate my role in the analysis process.

Through this process, meanings that the participants could not fully articulate began to emerge. This was facilitated by asking of the text - What is missing? Bogdan and Taylor (1975) highlight the importance of noticing topics which participants, either intentionally or unintentionally, avoid. Furthermore, Spradley (1979) points out that since we leave out information that is commonly known when we tell stories, lacunae in the transcripts may indicate important cultural assumptions. There were many examples of this in this study as participants often used colloquial expressions to describe services and practices associated with being homeless which were not familiar to me. Ryan's (1999) suggestion to identify

missing data through examining any extracts which were not associated with a characteristic to help identify less obvious sub-divisions was utilised.

### **3.8.5 Stage five: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomenon**

This stage of the analysis focused on scrutinizing the literature to establish links to the characteristics presented. Martin Heidegger's philosophy, Existential Psychotherapy, Psychodynamic Psychotherapy and existing homelessness literature were all explored to help conceptualise and illuminate the meaning disclosed within each characteristic. During this phase, I also sought to determine any links between the two characteristics to facilitate theoretical understanding and proposition. Spinoza's and Heidegger's hermeneutic circles were again utilised to explicate connections and synergies among sub-divisions and between characteristics. The aim was to disclose something of the phenomenon in a meaningful, holistic and integrated manner. Here again, the input of my supervisors was invaluable as, at times, I was so immersed in the detail I found it hard to see the bigger picture. This stage was complete when the essential, constitutive characteristics, *Passing Time* and *Taking Care* along with their sub-divisions, *Dawning Time*, *Filling Time*, *Wasting Time* and *Caring-for-Self*, *Being-Cared-for* had been disclosed and could be understood and embedded within Heidegger's philosophy, psychotherapy theories and the existing homelessness literature.

### **3.8.6 Stage six: Integration – Testing and refining characteristics and sub-divisions**

The final stage of data analysis involved presenting the study findings and analysis to supervisors, colleagues and peers and utilising any input received concerning the essential characteristics of homelessness presented and their relationships to the literature. Feedback and suggestions were considered, reflected upon and as appropriate incorporated into the analysis. The analysis culminated with a final review of the literature for any additions or advancements that might help further disclosure of the essential characteristics and illumination of the phenomenon of homelessness.



### **3.9 Trustworthiness of the Study**

The issue of how best to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative studies is a contentious one within the literature (e.g. Darbyshire, Diekelmann & Diekelmann, 1999; Emden & Sandelowski; 1999). However, most authors agree that the schema for trustworthiness should reflect and express the foundational procedure employed (deWitt & Ploeg, 2006; Koch, 1996). To reflect the hermeneutic phenomenological underpinnings of this study, trustworthiness will be framed within the criteria suggested by Koch (1996): credibility, dependability, reflexivity and transferability.

When the interpretations of the experience put forward resonate with the participants or reader, (Koch, 1996); when the interpretations resonate with reader's understanding of an embedded 'lived world' (Van Manen, 1997) credibility is achieved. Trustworthiness is achieved when the researcher, participant and reader see the phenomenon more closely to how it is. The challenge for this current study is to capture some aspects of homelessness which resonate with others involved and, in so doing, to move us closer to seeing homelessness as it is.

Transparency of choices made throughout the research study, whether theoretical, methodological or analytic, is essential to its dependability (Koch, 1996). In previous sections, I have described choices concerning the approach and suitability to the research question; underpinning methodology; and decisions concerning ethics, accessing participants, interviewing, data analysis and phenomenological writing. I also retained a collection of field notes containing perceptions, contextual factors, problems that developed, choices I made throughout and developments in my thinking. I have also endeavoured to remain open and attuned to the phenomenon as suggested by De Witt and Ploeg (2006).

Reflexivity refers to the researcher's critical self examination and declaration of her research ideas and experiences (Davies and Dodd, 2002). It is also important that any interpretations made serve to deepen our understanding of the original question (Koch, 1998). For Leonard (1994), interpretations should go beyond the descriptive account to open up the possibility of understanding.

Transferability, in phenomenological research, refers to transferability of understanding to other contexts and to a resonance with the interpretations (Koch, 1998). The reader may recognize certain aspects of the experience and become more alert to encountering the experience as a result. There is no attempt to generalize the findings to other contexts or persons: it is always this person's experience, in this context, at this time. However if the proposed interpretations lead to resonance or recognition, there may well be some degree of transferability concerning the phenomenon of homelessness rather than the context in which it arises.

### **3.10 Concluding Comments**

This chapter discussed the methodological aspects of the study. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was employed, based on the philosophical perspective of Martin Heidegger. The specific approach employed is a systematic thematic analysis incorporating phenomenological and hermeneutic strategies informed by the work of Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) and Edwards and Titchen (2003). The use of this approach allowed for the exploration, understanding and interpretation of the participants' experiences of being homeless. This understanding and interpretation facilitated the disclosure and revelation of some core, constitutive characteristics of the phenomenon of homelessness. Throughout the chapter I have attempted to display the correspondence between the underlying philosophy I have employed and the processes used to attempt to find an answer to the question of 'what is homelessness'. Notions of trustworthiness are embedded all through the chapter and in the 'thinking and doing' behind the research

study. The findings revealed from this hermeneutic analysis of the data will be discussed in detail in the upcoming chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Disclosures**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter lays out the disclosures from six interviews with homeless persons. Heidegger (1962) uses the term disclosure to mean a fundamental understanding of truth. Thus it is hoped that something of the ‘truth’ of homelessness is revealed by letting homelessness be seen in itself. The chapter attempts to elucidate something of the phenomenon of homelessness, in its own right with its own implicit structure and meaning, through illuminating and understanding some of its essential, constitutive characteristics. The aim is to reveal something of the meaning and ground of the phenomenon through the presentation of two essential and constitutive characteristics of homelessness as uncovered through the analysis.

The chapter begins by presenting an impressionistic portrait of each participant. These portraits comprise the researcher’s sense of each participant and include thoughts and feelings aroused in the researcher upon engaging with each participant. The purpose of these portraits is to present each participant to the reader in a holistic, humanistic and meaningful way. It is hoped that the reader will experience a felt sense of each participant and an understanding of his or her perspective, situation and position. It is further hoped that this sense of ‘knowing’ the participants will help contextualise and understand their experiences of being homeless which will, in turn, illuminate something of the phenomenon of homelessness.

The chapter then attempts to elucidate the uncovered essential characteristics concerning the phenomenon of homelessness. It will endeavour to do this through revealing something of the deep simplicity and everyday lived experience inherent therein. The characteristics presented are: *Passing Time*; and *Taking Care*.

#### **4.1 A Sense of Each Participant**

##### **Sarah**

Sarah is a 19 year old, Dublin, young woman. She has been homeless for two years. The day before we met she and her partner were housed in an apartment as a pathway out of homelessness. She is impeccably groomed with a fragile, delicate beauty. Behind her delicate beauty lies a curious mix of steely determination and vulnerable innocence. She is articulate and reflective and her presence portrays a depth of feeling and experience. There is a sadness in Sarah's eyes that indicates she has seen and experienced things way beyond her years. She evokes a deep sense of nurturing and caring in me. Meeting with Sarah has left a lasting impression on me, a sense that I am part of a society that has let her down badly, a deep sense of shame that someone so delicate has been treated with such brutality and disregard.

##### **Kareem**

Kareem is a 24 year old Irish man, born to an Irish mother and an Arab father. He has been homeless for 18 months. He is strikingly handsome and has a charming and engaging presence. Kareem comes from a middle class, professional family which is not something I had expected. I find myself somewhat confused during the interview wondering if he 'really needs to be homeless'. I find myself judging both his level of homelessness and his parents' apparent willingness to tolerate his life on the street. At times, I find it difficult to get Kareem to talk about himself and his experiences rather than the plight or experiences of other homeless persons. At other times, I feel a real sense of admiration for Kareem for sticking to his principles, for his bravery and his

generosity in the interview. Of the six interviewees, I believe Kareem is the most likely to successfully exit homelessness. He has the best education and seems to have the greatest self-belief and strongest sense of determination to attain what he wants.

## **Tara**

Tara is a 19 year old young woman. She is dressed in the latest fashion with all the accompanying accessories – fake tan, gel nails and trendy hair-style. She is warm and engaging with an edge that reveals a streetwise sense beyond her years. When she was just ten years old, Tara tragically found her mother dead probably as the result of a methadone overdose. During the interview, I am very moved by Tara's very limited sense of home. She has spent her life being moved on from one place to another. For me, Tara epitomises resilience and a strong fighting spirit. Although, everyday she feels like giving up and has made attempts to end her life some of which have had serious consequences for her, she has not given up. During the interview she receives three phone calls and arranges meetings with various support workers. I admire Tara's resilience and ability to get her needs met in a hostile, cruel world. On leaving Tara, I am filled with a sense that I have just encountered a remarkable young woman who we, as a society, have yet again failed miserably.

## **Dave**

Dave is a 24 year old Dublin man who has been homeless for seven years. He is currently sleeping rough as he feels he cannot stay away from heroin if he sleeps in a 'heroin-riddled' hostel. Dave arrived at the interview tired and dishevelled from being violently awoken from a night spent in a doorway. He is noticeably exhausted during the interview and yawns regularly. I feel humbled to talk with him. I also feel a deep sense of unease at my excitement and sense of satisfaction at getting to interview someone at the extreme end of homelessness; my sense of pleasure at the expense of a fellow human being's well-being, dignity and basic human rights. I feel a deep sense of gratitude towards him

for sharing his thoughts and feelings with me. I feel deeply privileged to have met him and find myself wondering about him since and hoping, against all the odds, he has managed somehow to turn his life around.

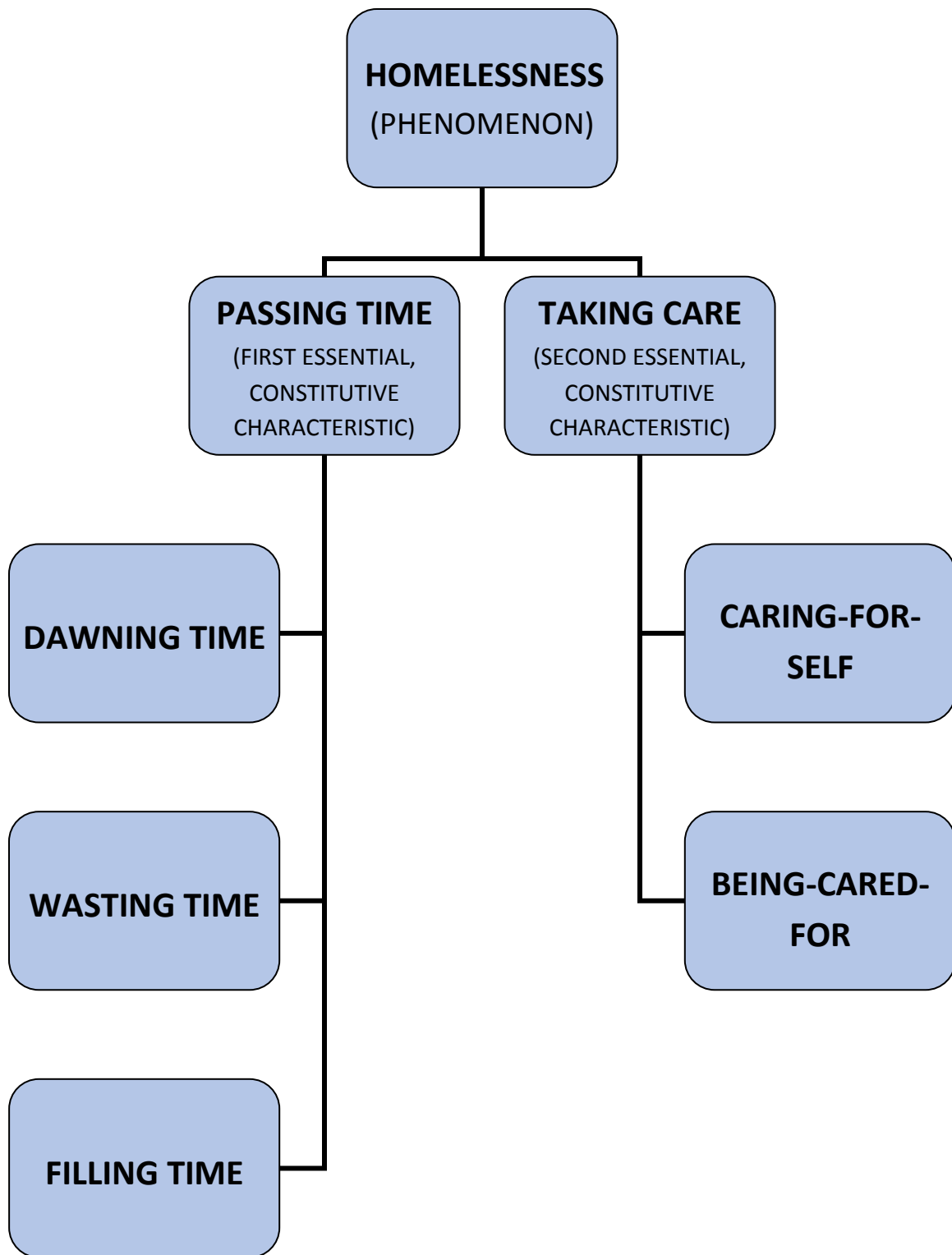
## **Jenny**

Jenny is a 20 year old Dublin woman who has been homeless for the past two years. She is obviously upset and anxious throughout the interview. Jenny is grieving the death of her mother which took place two years previously and resulted in the family home being boarded up and Jenny being made homeless. On the morning of the interview, she was suspended, for two nights, from the hostel where she had been staying and she is deeply concerned as to where she will sleep that night. During the interview, it is difficult to keep Jenny focused on her experience of being homeless. She found it difficult to talk about anything other than her mother. Everything reminds her of her mother and the unbearable loss she feels. Jenny believes that when she lost her mother she lost any possibility of ever feeling at home again and so the interview evokes great sadness in her. During the interview, I become concerned about Jenny, her level of grief and her lack of somewhere to stay that night. At the end of the interview, with her agreement, I contacted the service manager and the three of us discussed Jenny's options for the night and the coming days. I was very relieved when, two days later, I was back at the service to conduct another interview and found out from Jenny that she had secured her bed in the hostel after the two day suspension. Once again, I am left with the feeling that, as a society, we have failed to meet even the most basic needs of someone so young. Talking to Jenny has left me with a lasting sadness and a deep anger towards the injustice in our society.

## **Amish**

Amish, a 24 year old man, arrived in Ireland from an island in the Indian Ocean five years ago. He is a gentle, polite, softly spoken man. Amish lost his job three years ago due to the recession and consequently was unable to renew his visa. He has been homeless for three years, mostly rough sleeping, and finds himself trapped with no legal right to work, no income to house himself, no money to return home and no legal entitlement to social welfare. Amish portrays a sense of innocence and naivety that evokes feelings of protection and caring in me. I feel a deep sense of shame, as an Irish person, that we have subjected Amish to racial abuse and attacks. I feel privileged to hear his views and beliefs which are, at times, both culturally and spiritually very different from my own. I feel a deep desire to show him respect and understanding and to apologise for the way we, as a nation, have treated him.





**Table 1. Data Analysis Map.**

## 4.2 First Essential Characteristic: Passing Time

The experience of passing time was identified, in this study, as the first essential, constitutive characteristic of homelessness. For Heidegger (1962), human beings and time are indistinguishably intertwined. Time is not an external structure within which we exist, rather we exist *as* time: man is his temporality. Heidegger uses the term temporality to explicate the human experience of lived time; a non-linear, experiential time, a self-generating time comprising past, present and future in any given moment. The findings of this study suggest that one of the biggest challenges facing the participants each day is dealing with the long stretch of time that needs to be spent. The participants speak of their experiences of vast expanses of time stretching out in front of them and the need to waste or fill that time. They discuss how the day begins and how they experience the challenge of filling time anew each day. They also discuss the associated feelings of boredom and frustration. For Heidegger (1962), Dasein is inescapably always in one mood or another. We can only escape a mood by entering into another one. A mood reveals to us how things are going and discloses our *thrownness* into a situation to which we must respond in some way or another. Mood provides our most basic access to the world and discloses our Being as a whole. Furthermore, a mood is a feature of being-in-the-world; it is neither internally nor externally generated. Dasein is thrown into a mood that already exists. The participants in this study find themselves thrown into a mood of profound boredom. When we are bored time appears to stall, we exist in limbo, a state of suspension. Homeless persons are denied access to society and its rituals, occupations, connections and sense of belonging. Instead they relentlessly walk the streets immersed in the deep emptiness of profound boredom: an empty self in an empty world. Here the participants reveal something of the various strategies they employ to deal with their boredom and use the time that stretches out ahead of them. The characteristic comprises three sub-divisions: *Dawning Time*; *Wasting Time* and *Filling Time*.

#### 4.2.1 Dawning Time

Waking up to another long, boring day spent roaming the streets aimlessly is the fate that greets the research participants each and every day. The dawning of each day brings yet another stretch of empty time to be endured. They are awoken, sometimes rudely, early in the morning by hostel workers if they have a bed or by Gardaí or security guards when they are rough sleeping. They express how deeply frustrating it is to be woken from an often disturbed sleep only to be put out on the streets with nothing to do and nowhere to go. Often their sleep has been disturbed by shouting and other aggressive behaviours but often, too, by simply being too cold or too frightened to sleep. Those who have slept in a hostel are woken as early as 7am and face into another long, boring day on the street.

As Kareem describes:

*You wake up and... at like ten past seven, twenty past seven, and you can't go back to sleep when they wake you up. So you're waking up and then you're getting out and you have to be outta there by half eight in the morning.*

And Sarah explains what it feels like to be woken up when you feel like you have only just gone to sleep:

*I think the worst thing was, like, we'd go to bed and it'd feel like you'd just closed your eyes and they're waking you up, and knowing that you had nothing to do for the rest of the day, knowing you were sitting around for twelve hours. It's all in your head like. [...] I felt so sick every day knowing that.*

For those who have been sleeping rough, the situation is even worse. Participants who sleep on the streets are often woken, sometimes violently, by security guards or Gardaí. Dave describes how Gardaí have kicked him awake simply for being homeless. Some participants find a night on the street to be too frightening to sleep and instead choose to walk the streets all night. For others, they remain on alert throughout the night dozing rather than sleeping for fear of being attacked. The cold is also a big factor in prohibiting participants from sleeping. So even at night, the participants find little relief from the relentless demands of pregnant time.

Dave expresses some of the varying experiences he has had of being awoken when rough sleeping.

*We got woken up this morning by a security guard. And it must be a new security guard because I always sleep here. And we never get complaints, he must be new. He started screaming at us when I was asleep. I snapped at him. I don't leave a mess or nothing. I'm not using; I'm not going to leave needles, you know what I mean, I'm not into that. I just sleep... the same way you would. Usually the security guards are grand. You get woken up... it's always getting woken up in the same manner. No, getting woken up by the police is worse. They just give you a boot. Know what I mean, steel-capped boots and just, boom, straight in the stomach... just cuz you haven't got a home.*

In sharp contrast, Sarah talks about waking up on the morning of the interview. It was her first morning to wake up, with her partner, in the flat they had been given by the homeless agency. She talks about the simple everyday pleasures of waking up in her own home and being free to walk around in a towel. She expresses her appreciation for not having to walk the streets from early in the morning.

Sarah:

*Basically we woke up, it was our first day moving into our new flat, like it was our first night together in nearly two months. It was brilliant waking up not knowing, knowing that I didn't have to be woken at a particular time, knowing that I could do whatever I want, I could wander round the kitchen. It was so silly because it was such a big thing to go and have a shower and walk around the house in a towel. Such a big thing and we were laughing at it.*

#### **4.2.2 Wasting Time**

Here the participants talk about the challenges they face in spending day after day living on the street. As Jenny powerfully states, life on the street “*gets worse and worse and worse.*” They talk about starting each day with the prospect of dealing with a vast expanse of time. They highlight the struggles encountered in coping with a seemingly endless stretch of time without a home of your own to which to retreat. For the participants, time appears to drag and no matter how they try to fill it, time seems to go by so slowly. Therefore, the participants spend a lot of time waiting for the day to pass, watching the clock until it is time to phone the homeless service in an effort to secure a bed for the night.

They talk about aimlessly walking the streets without a sense of destination, about walking to “*fill in every second of time*”, about having a sense of “*being on a time line.*” They also talk about the extra challenges a poor night's sleep brings to an already demanding day. They talk about feeling tired during the day, as a result of violence or disturbance during the night, but without the possibility of resting or sleeping during the day. Therefore, the only option is to continue walking from street to street hoping time will pass.

Sarah gives an account of the struggles she faces in dealing with what feels is a lifetime contained within a day:

*I can tell you, and I'll say everyone else will say it, that it's not a day, it's like...it's literally like a lifetime. It (time) just drags and drags on, and when you have a bad night's sleep, because maybe there was people roaring or something, and you go out there and you are wrecked...like, what can you do like, you can't sleep, you can't sleep during the day when there's people walking around. You look at your watch and it might be only four o'clock. It just is... it's awfully heart-breaking how time went by so slow... and it just, like no matter what you did, what you tried to fill your day with it just... was never-ending like.*

Participants talk about the challenges of walking for up to twelve hours a day and the relief they experience when they encounter something, such as a small queue for food, which helps waste some more time. They talk about the almost addictive nature of endlessly walking and of the despair in finding themselves back in the same place over and over again within a very short space of time.

Here is Kareem's account:

*I've walked, like, I've walked, Jesus Christ I have walked. Thousands of kilometres, I'd say [...] you're addicted to the streets, you're addicted to walking round, so, it's just you're doing it, there's nothing else to do, you're filling your day in [...] specially when you're walking around during the day and you're in the same spot over and over again, like, you could be in the same spot nine times, like in half an hour. And time drags on and...it's just horrible. Horrible. Like I would not put anybody in that situation where you're just checking the time all the time.*

It was very noticeable the number of times the phrase ‘wasting time’ appears in the transcripts. Participants talk about various strategies and tactics they employ to help them waste time. Such strategies include just walking around, sitting on the street, listening to street musicians and going to places not because of a desire or need to be there but rather to waste some time through the process of getting there. All of these strategies and tactics are used in an attempt to address the deep underlying boredom that living on the street entails.

As Tara states:

*You’re waiting, it’s like, I dunno, you’re waiting and waiting and waiting for the hostels to open. Like it can’t come quick enough for you. That’s, like, that’s not a life. So you have to sit and- I think most of the time when you’re walking around there you don’t know where you’re going. It’s like, when you’re outside the door you decide, well we’ll go down there, and then we’ll go somewhere else...*

Here Dave describes some of the ways he tries to waste time:

*Yesterday was the same as everyday. Just wasting hours, wasting time. Just walking around with her. Em... we usually just sit on Grafton Street and listen to music. Just listen to music to waste time.....going down to places just to waste time... literally just to waste time. From one end of town to the other end of town, just walk around [...] a huge amount of time to be wasted. Yeah, to be wasted and to be wasted; nothing to do...boring. Yeah...makes...makes nothing seem like, em...what’s it called, em, I don’t know how to explain it. Yeah, it’s boring...*

Jenny expresses her contempt for walking the streets and for the lack of any form of security in her life:

*Everyday I just walk around, and... wait 'til half six, that's what I do every day. Walk around town, sit on the bridge or whatever just... 'til half six, and I can get into the hostel. The same shit every day. I'm sick of it now. I'm only twenty years of age and I'm sick of walking the streets, to see if I have a fucking bed like. It's ridiculous. It really is like. I haven't even got a bed...*

Participants describe the struggle to pass each day when faced with nowhere to go, no place of their own, no imposed routine or schedule to occupy time. They talk about endlessly, aimlessly walking and about the role alcohol and drugs play in dealing with redundant time. Most participants are tempted to take drugs to help waste time, some manage to resist and remain strong while for others the prospect of killing some time is just too great as Dave describes:

*(After taking heroin) you feel better for a while, yeah. Em....[long pause] it's not that good. It's not all that good. What people make it out to be, like, it's not all that good. It's kinda boring. [...] Ah yeah, it [the day] flies in, yeah. You could be sitting, sitting there, doing nothing, just sitting there and thinking, then just, a few hours are gone passed, you know what I mean?*

For Tara, alcohol helps her deal with the boredom and the emptiness of life on the street. She expresses, a number of times, how she cannot cope with life on the street unless she has some alcohol or drugs in her body.



Tara:

*When I leave here, straight away, it's just drinking, because I've nothing better to be doing. When I'm walking around in the rain I feel a bit better when I have a few drinks in me, cuz it just... it's not that de-, like it's depressing but it kinda just, lifts, lifts me up a little bit. Yesterday I took two trays and drink and the night before I was smoking gear cuz I couldn't get anything else. Couldn't get any tablets, couldn't get anything, like, I can't, my head, so it has to be in my head. I have to have some sort of drug in my system.*

#### **4.2.3 Filling Time**

This sub-division comprises the more productive activities and strategies the participants employ to try to fill their time in more meaningful or positive ways and to stave off the profound boredom that lurks beneath. These activities tend to be more goal-oriented and purposeful. Some participants talk about being more focused or actively engaged when they first became homeless mainly as a result of having various tasks to fulfil in order to become officially registered as homeless and receive the accompanying State benefit. However, once all documents have been gathered and forms completed it can be difficult to find other productive activities with which to fill their time. Participants discuss trying to make a plan to deal with having nothing to do and the resulting feelings of loneliness and isolation that ensue when the plan falls short.

Here Sarah talks about being so fed up and withdrawn that you no longer even want to engage with or talk to anyone else:

*We didn't know what to do. I had nothing, d'y'know what I mean, we'd go cinema, sit in the library. We tried to make a plan, we'd go cinema and*

*than we'd see how long we could sneak around the cinema after. We'd look in shops, you'd literally have nothing. Like nobody wants to sit with you all day, like... y'know, we just, you sit there literally talking to yourselves basically. You don't want to talk to each other, yiz don't want to be friends, you just want to sit tight, you just have nothing.*

The participants talk about occasionally finding somewhere they feel comfortable to pass some time. One participant talks about regularly visiting the library, using the library card he has from before he became homeless, to read and use the internet to contact his family on the other side of the world. Another discusses how he taught himself to play a number of musical instruments in a city centre music shop where the staff did not seem to object to him spending considerable amounts of time on the premises.

Here Amish describes how he uses the library and casinos to fill his time:

*I love to read, I read everything. I have a library card from before so I can still use it. I can use the internet there to talk to my family. It's very hard as they don't know about my situation. Only my father knows that I don't have a job but no one knows that I am homeless. [...] I have a friend who goes to casinos so I used to go with him while he was playing because it is something to do and it's very warm in there.*

And Dave talks about how he relieved his boredom by teaching himself to play music:

*Taught meself, yeah, taught meself (to play musical instruments). Just literally bored, sitting in the shop, and the instruments would be there, the chord books and all the learning books, so... just pick them up and just sit there in the shop. Hours, hours. And people wouldn't mind, they'd get used*

*to you, get used to you, and then you'd start talking and...grand. See you every morning...good.*

Finally, Kareem talks about the importance of filling time constructively. He warns about the risks of falling into the dark side if you stop actively pushing yourself to keep learning and being proactive.

Kareem:

*It (filling time) slowly drives you insane. Because at the end of the day you just have to put it behind you, to put it behind me, it's...with friends, talking, chatting, walking, looking...like, you know, having a look around, at, like, being active, you know, getting around there, just filling your time in with something, whatever it be, like, you know,...productive, or just, get out there, just like, learning about something, finding out about something [...] just fill your time for the sake of filling time. [...] because there's always a dark side, and I always say, stay away from the dark side, like that's it. Cuz it's a bad place for people to end up.*

#### **4.3 Second Essential Characteristic: Taking Care**

The second essential, constitutive characteristic uncovered in this research concerning the phenomenon of homelessness is *Taking Care*. The capacity to build and sustain caring, supportive relationships is key to living effectively and meaningfully in the world.

Central to the capacity to be in relationship is the ability to both care **for** oneself and take care **from** others. For Heidegger (1962) solicitude is what we feel for others and he identifies two kinds of solicitude, unhelpful and helpful. Solicitude is unhelpful when the other *leaps in* to relieve us of our responsibility and thereby to covertly dominate us.

Conversely, solicitude is helpful when the other *leaps ahead* and facilitates us to authentically care for ourselves perhaps for the first time ever. Homelessness results from

the breakdown of caring relationships and the ensuing challenges faced in caring for oneself when isolated and alone. This breakdown of relationship can manifest in the destruction and disintegration of relationship with one's self and/or with others resulting in intense feelings of anxiety, isolation and alienation. For Heidegger (1962) Dasein is always and inescapably in relationship with others, we do not exist alone but rather we co-exist with our co-Dasein. Like us, our co-Dasein are absorbed in the world and are encountered, not in isolation, but in the specific environment with which they are intertwined. Thus, Dasein exists in a world he necessarily shares with others who are equally inextricably interwoven with that world. Although Dasein and the world must, in some sense, be distinguishable, they exist as a unified whole. By this, Heidegger means that Dasein is always intertwined with others in the world, inextricably involved with them, concerned with them, even when feeling isolated and alienated. Dasein finds himself thrown into a shared world that necessarily matters to him. It is the site of his existence. Dasein '*cares*' about the world complete with its inhabitants meaning he is occupied with it; it comprises his worries, toils and anguish.

For Heidegger, Dasein has the characteristic of *disclosedness*, an openness and accessibility to self, others and the world. Dasein's existence is "*its disclosive relationship towards its Being- its mooded, understanding and languaged relationship to its world*" (Churchill, 2012 p.5). This essential characteristic, *Taking Care*, reveals something of how the participants relate to themselves and to others, of how they care for themselves and are cared for by others with whom they share their world. It discloses something of the participants' physical and psychological relationship with self and reveals something of the everyday tasks of taking care of physical, human needs whilst living without a home. The participants' struggle to remain sober, their sense of responsibility for and agency in their own lives are disclosed. The participants express their thoughts around their own part in becoming homeless and their belief that it is up to them to find a way out of homelessness. They talk about accepting consequences and refusing help from family in order to take responsibility for their own lives.

For Heidegger, to be Dasein means to *Be-with*. “*So far as Dasein is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being*” (1962 p.163). Being-with is one of Dasein’s essential modes of Being and is, as such, the a priori transcendental condition for loneliness and alienation, experiences which are very familiar to those living on the street. Here the participants disclose something of their relationships with those they care for and those they need to care for them, namely their partners, friends and family. They discuss both supportive and unsupportive aspects of these relationships. The participants reveal something of their experiences of being a member of the homeless community and of their relationships with fellow members. Finally, the participants reveal something of their relationships with those in the caring professions; others who can help or hinder them in their daily lives on the street. The characteristic comprises two sub-divisions: *Caring-for-Self*; and *Being-Cared-for*.

#### **4.3.1 Caring-for-Self**

In this sub-division, the participants disclose something of the challenges and struggles they face in caring for themselves, something of what it is like to live or exist as a particular self thrown into a particular world. For Heidegger (1962), Dasein is characterised by being a particular sort of entity, that is an entity for whom “*in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being, and to some degree it does so explicitly*” (p. 32). It is through Dasein’s Being that his Being is revealed to him. In this sub-division, the participants disclose something of themselves through their anxious struggles to take care of themselves. They talk about the demands they face in looking after their basic human needs whilst being homeless. They express the struggles they confront regarding personal hygiene, nutrition, minding their possessions, finding somewhere safe to sleep, and staying away from drugs and alcohol. In addition, the participants disclose some of their thoughts and feelings around, what they see as, their own responsibility for becoming homeless. They reveal something of what it is like to be homeless as a consequence, as they see it, of their own actions and behaviours. Finally, they reveal their resilience and determination to carry on, to continue to take care of themselves in a hostile and uncaring world, a world characterised by exclusion and alienation.

The participants talk about the demands life on the street places on them in terms of taking care of basic personal hygiene. They talk about a sense of ‘*letting myself go*’, of not being bothered to wash or change clothes. Jenny conveys some of the unmanageable demands placed upon her to look after herself when, at just eighteen years of age, she was thrown into the world of homelessness. Whilst struggling to come to terms with her mother’s death, her father’s cancer and her own ignorance around how the homeless system works, she found herself needing to look after herself without the necessary knowledge and understanding to do so effectively.

Jenny:

*I was in transitional accommodation for a year and my time was up they said that I had two weeks to find a place and I found out my dad was going in for an operation. My dad was in intensive care unit... I had... seven days to find a place... and my ma was a year dead. I hadn’t got the head for it. I couldn’t find nowhere. Tried. There was nothing available, there was no gaffs. There was nothing I could get like. I was only eighteen. I didn’t know, like, what, how the system worked never had a key worker or nothing like that.*

Jenny feels that at age eighteen she was expected to deal with issues beyond her capability. She feels her situation is hopeless and feels ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of being homeless and, in addition, past experience has shown her that there is little point in trying. Jenny also describes her current situation and the extra challenges being ill or recovering from illness place on her when she cannot stay in bed or rest during the day. Life on the street is very taxing at the best of times but when a homeless person is ill or more compromised than usual, taking care of themselves is especially arduous and onerous.

Jenny:

*I'm trying to get back on my feet and I can't even do that. The hospital told me to have plenty of bedrest. How can I have plenty of bedrest when I haven't even got a fucking bed? Do you know what I mean like? It's stupid like. Plenty of bedrest when I haven't even got a bed. How can I lie in bed and keep warm?*

Living on the street can quickly and dramatically engulf a person in a sense of despair and hopelessness. When filled with anguish and suffering, personal everyday needs, such as showering and changing clothes, can present as pointless and irrelevant. This can be especially evident when a person first enters homelessness. When consumed by the misery and dejection of being homeless, many of the participants struggle to stay motivated to care for their personal hygiene. The shock of being thrown into a world where you are excluded from the rituals and practices of everyday life can take some time to abate.

Kareem conveys an experience shared by many:

*I let myself go at the very start, as in wearing the same clothes over and over again. Not looking a- you would realise, oh Jesus I have- I've –that's been gone two, three days since I washed meself like, you know.[..]and I could honestly say, you could be the most hygienic person, and end up in that situation, and you forget about washing your hands, you forget about looking after – you forget about what it is like to fold your clothes and put them away in, like, a drawer, dressers, you know, look after that book you're reading and pick it up at night and read it like.*

Holding on to self respect and valuing oneself as a human being are essential prerequisites for healthy functioning in the world, prerequisites many homeless persons struggle to realise. Here Sarah describes how, at times, she lost her self respect and took such poor care of herself that people thought she was a heroin addict:

*I didn't care who was looking at me, just didn't care anymore. You lose, you lose a bit of, like self-respect or something, you just lose completely, you don't care, you don't care what you look like, you don't care who's looking at you.[...] We used to have people coming up to us saying, are you looking? Like basically we looked so bad that they thought we were like heroin addicts or something, and I found that pretty horrible.*

Empathic and accommodating services for homeless persons play a pivotal role in clearing the way for homeless persons to care for themselves. The participants talk about their appreciation of the homeless service they attend and the facilities it provides. They particularly value the showers and the locker they are each assigned. Having a locker is life-changing for a homeless person. It means you have somewhere to store your possessions, you no longer have to carry your entire world around with you everywhere you go, you can place important and valuable documents in a safe place without fear they will be stolen when you are at your most vulnerable. Without somewhere, however small, of their own, without a safe space to store and protect any prized or vital possessions, the homeless person is at the mercy of both nature and their fellow human beings. Without a locker the participants' possessions are exposed to the intractable force of nature as exemplified in torrential rain, howling winds and searing sun and equally exposed to the loss and destruction caused by human greed and violence.



Here is Dave's account:

*Using the services. Just using the services, yeah. Em... down here's very good. Down here's very good. Very good. Getting your clothes washed, having a locker room and all like. If it wasn't for that locker, I wouldn't have anywhere to put my clothes like. Nowhere to put my clothes. I'd have to walk around with a bag all day, which I had to do in the past, before I got a locker here... all your clothes, all your documents and all in a gym bag. And then you sleep in the wrong place... anyone is robbing you. Know what I mean?*

Getting enough to eat can be anxiety-inducing and a real challenge, especially when you are first homeless. Homeless persons often do not get enough to eat and the food they do get is not sufficiently nutritious. In addition, the food available to those living on the street does not generate sufficient energy to carry out their everyday tasks, especially when we consider the amount of energy required to walk relentlessly throughout the day. The participants in this study get most of their food from charitable food services. Such services are under-funded and often lack the necessary resources to provide nutritiously balanced, complete meals on a regular basis. When Amish found himself homeless, he had little or no understanding of how the system works and how to access services. Consequently, he was very hungry and *'lived, for a couple of months, on water and biscuits. I lost a lot of weight then, I got very skinny'*. For Sarah, what she eats has significant physical consequences. She describes how she was vegetarian but had to revert to eating meat as she could not satisfy her nutritional needs. She also appears to have an intolerance to wheat, if not something more debilitating. She explains how all she can do on any given day is hope that the services are serving something she likes to eat.

Sarah describes the consequences, for her, of not eating properly:

*Just, hungry, and sick from eating things that I didn't like or that I shouldn't have been eating because, like, I'm not supposed to eat bread. Just because my stomach, I'm, like it makes me feel really unwell. I'm not supposed to eat it but that was all that was being provided so we just had to eat bread. I have, like, a few medical problems, like, just general medical problems and they get worse outside like, like my hay fever and asthma and just, low blood pressure and stuff and I had no idea how much this would affect you but, I wasn't, I'm not eating properly and obviously that's gonna start soon like, but wasn't eating properly, feeling really, really faint. Just, head dizzy, like, you look, I feel like I was out of it, like I was on some kind of drugs, but just being so drained of energy, having nothing.*

Understandably, securing somewhere safe to sleep is a major consideration in terms of caring for one's self for everyone in the study. Fear of being attacked is prominent and visceral in their accounts. Many have experience of being beaten and having their possessions stolen, others have experienced sexual attacks. So finding a safe place to sleep is probably the biggest daily task for the participants. For some, the fear induced by a night on the street is so intense it prevents them from sleeping at all and instead they opt to walk the streets all night. In addition, the cold is a big factor for each participant so trying to find a spot sheltered from the elements is also extremely important. As Amish recounts, *'It is very cold sometimes. Your bones freeze, you feel like your legs are not belonging to you'*. For Jenny, spending a very cold night on the streets had serious consequences for her health, causing her to be hospitalised.

Here is her account:

*I couldn't sleep, I just walked around for the whole night. Couldn't sleep, it was that cold that I just wanted to keep walking to keep my... fucking... I'd a load of jackets on but I was still freezing. Next day then, when I got back into the service they called the ambulance for me, I had to go to hospital cos like they had the heating on full blast and...I'd four jackets on, I was still freezing. And I went to the hospital and they said, 'the cold's gone through your bones'. She said something about pneumonia as well, or something, a touch of that. So, then, they kept me in and all, I had swine flu ...no one cares I suppose. I'm just sick of this.*

For Tara the prospect of spending a night alone on the street fills her with intense fear. Here she describes her terror when her sister was given a hostel bed but Tara was not:

*My sister got booked into a hostel and I had to go get a sleeping bag and go down to sleep in the park on my own. It was horrible cuz I wouldn't walk the streets, cuz I'm terrified of foreigners, and not even foreigners- terrified you'd be out, like- it's-it's different like, if you ha- if you have somewhere to go, like, it's grand, if you, if you felt someone was following you, you could run to that place, but like I wouldn't walk around the streets like. When they were saying to get the sleeping bag, I was like, I have to go somewhere that I can see from any angle in case anyone was approaching you or... but no, it was fu- it was horrible. I didn't sleep.*

The threat of any act of sexual violence can affect someone's life deeply. The threat of sexual assault when, as a human being, you are at your most vulnerable, asleep out in the open, unprotected and exposed, without a safe haven to which to retreat and nurture yourself can be catastrophic. Being homeless dramatically affects a person's risk of being

sexually assaulted and additionally homeless persons have little power to negotiate their safety.

Here Dave describes how he was sexually assaulted one night:

*I've woken up from mad stuff, like...I woke up and didn't think nothing of it. The first time I didn't, I must have been too tired. I felt it again kinda brushing past my ear like that. And I opened my eyes and there's some old man sitting there – just staring at me, [...] He was a pervert, he was a pervert, you know. Funny thing was there was two girls and two boys, you know what I mean? And the two girls were closer to him, they were on the outside, the way you walk in. So I was on the very inside, so he had to walk right around, dropped his bag, left his –took his backpack off, sat down beside me. Started fucking feeling me. Weirdo. Wouldn't want to do that again.*

Sleeping on the street can be a terrifying experience. When we sleep we are most vulnerable and in order to allow ourselves become so vulnerable we need to trust the world in which we find ourselves. The dark, abandoned and threatening world of a city centre relinquished by most of its inhabitants for the safety of their beds is a terrifying and lonely world for a homeless person. The participants are scared and vulnerable when they find themselves cast out from society and the safety it provides. Discarded onto the hostile streets, isolated and alone, rough-sleeping, homeless persons find various ways of making themselves feel safe. For some feeling safe entails sleeping close to other homeless persons, for some it means sleeping in view of a surveillance camera and for others still it involves ensuring they have some means of self protection.

For Amish, there is warmth and safety in numbers:

*Sometimes I sleep in a place it's sort of like a school. Lots of other homeless people sleep there and it's not so cold and it feels safer. But it is thirty minutes walk, you know Heuston Station well north of there and it's not safe, I might be attacked. I have to go through a forest and someone could jump out of anywhere and attack me so I can only go if I have someone to go with.*

Whilst for Dave, safety involves a weapon of self-protection:

*Every time I sleep I have to...I lost that, I lost it the other night, I don't know where I was, I had a screwdriver, but last night I just had to break a bottle and take a shard of it and put it under my head like that, so you know where it is. So if anyone comes just grab it and jump up. It's happened a few times.*

Another major aspect of caring for yourself when living on the street is the ability to stay away from drugs. Drugs provide one of the very few means of escape from the daily trials of life on the street and are, therefore, understandably a strong temptation. Drugs and alcohol provide a mechanism for blocking out or numbing the self from the existential pain and anguish living on the street evokes. Relief from the torment experienced when existing as an empty self in an empty world, accessed through the anaesthesia provided by drugs and alcohol is powerfully alluring. For Amish, thoughts of his father and how he taught him 'to do the right thing' have kept him away from drugs. In contrast, some participants find the challenges posed by *drug-riddled hostels* to be insurmountable, as Dave describes:

*I started using heroin the second time I was homeless, in the hostel. Yeah, in the hostel. Just literally cuz...three people in a room, and there's four to a room, and there's three of them strung out like, and eh... they just kept on saying, ah go on, offering us gear...I said no for ages, and then one day just said, yeah fuck it, yeah.*

When discussing their experience of being homeless, the participants disclose a sense of responsibility for, and agency in, their own lives. Most express their belief that they are homeless through mistakes they have made and profess that it is up to them to look after themselves and to get themselves out of their current situation. Dave talks about taking responsibility for his drug use. He describes his sense of *letting himself down* when he succumbs to temptation. He makes himself feel guilty, thinks of himself as weak and generally berates himself in an effort to remain drug free.

Here is Dave's account:

*If I had a slip-up (took drugs). I just feel constantly bad, do you know what I mean, constantly in your head. You're weak. Do you know what I mean? You slipped, you're weak. Because if you say to yourself, ah it's grand, it's only a slip-up...the next day is only gonna be a slip-up. If you say to yourself, ah, you let yourself down, I didn't-yeah, let yourself down, there's no-one else to let down, you let yourself down. You're weak. You're gonna - this is gonna happen to you all over again, and then just keep thinking about it and thinking it over. You feel, you make yourself feel guilty and you won't do it. You won't do it. If you just say ah, it's grand, you get nowhere. You actually have to think of the consequences of things. Know what I mean? Can't just...do whatever you want. Everything has consequences.*

Tara explains her desire to make something of her life and her belief that doing so is her own responsibility, *‘I want to do something with my life. Nobody else is going to do that for me’*. Similarly, Kareem reflects on the poor choices he has made which have led him into homelessness and expresses his resolve to find his way out of his situation. Both Tara and Kareem are very proud that they have never begged for money and see it as their own responsibility to meet their financial needs.

Kareem:

*I’m gonna just do this. It’s my own fault I’m here cuz of me own choices that I’ve made so...you know, live with them, move on.[...] it’s just sort of a series of bad choices and just...you know, directing myself here into this kind of situation and that’s just what I put it down as, put it down to, and that’s... I’m just living my own mistake, and move forward. I have never, I’ve never, I’ve never tapped for money, never begged for money. I’ve never been sitting with a box beside the road.*

Tara:

*I wouldn’t be caught dead begging. I wouldn’t even, like, even one day I was stuck in town, I was on the phone to my key worker and I had no way of getting out of town cuz I didn’t get paid, and eh, “Just go up and ask them for a euro”, and I said I wouldn’t. No fucking way, there’s no way, no way, no.*

Finally, the participants talk about their resilience. Resilience is a dynamic process which encompasses a person’s ability to effectively adapt when faced with adversity. It encapsulates all the processes and strategies we use to help us make it through a difficult

day. Life on the street is comprised of a series of very difficult days. Therefore, homeless persons need to be resilient to take care of themselves and to survive the vulnerabilities inherent in being homeless. Some participants describe how keeping a positive attitude and finding a deep inner strength and self-belief have helped them take care of themselves whilst living on the street. Some participants have a clear idea of how they manage to do this while for others it remains something of a mystery.

Sarah lives each day at a time:

*I couldn't tell someone how I done it, but everyday I was just like, its just one more day, just one more day. And I didn't manage to touch drink at all during that whole thing, not even like, one bottle. Not a drink. Not a drug. Nothing. I think – I think that it did take some strength cos it was hurtful, like, it did. I don't know like, I knew I'd be damaging myself but still, at this stage it was a reckless, just inside me I just wanted to destroy myself.*

And Kareem keeps a positive outlook:

*I've kept a positive look on things. If you keep going around depressed and in the dumps, looking down on yourself and looking... how things, are so bad and you know the way people do...if you keep living like that...like, my mam is funny like, cuz she kinda put that in me, y'know, things can always get better. You're gonna have a bad day but just keep a happy head and that's what happens, just, you end up...doing grand.*



#### 4.3.2 Being-Cared-for

This second sub-division concerning *Taking Care* is revealed through something of the participants' capacity to take care from others, their experiences of *Being-Cared-for* by others in their lives. Their relationships with others tell us something about the experience of being homeless since homelessness is a consequence of the absence or breakdown of supportive, caring relationships. Amish displays his primal awareness of how the breakdown of relationships directly led to him becoming homeless when he states, "*I trusted people too much. That is the mistake I made*". The participants disclose their experiences of being cared for by partners, friends and family members and discuss both supportive and unsupportive dimensions of such relationships. In addition, they reveal some of their thoughts and feelings concerning other homeless persons and the challenges faced in establishing and maintaining caring relationships within the homeless community. Crucially, building and sustaining caring, supportive relationships is a vital component of moving out of homelessness and successfully re-engaging in mainstream society. Finally, the participants reveal some of their experiences and views on dealing with service providers and others positioned to meet their needs.

Supportive relationships are cornerstones of mental health and well-being (Murphey et al., 2013), with providing support to others being even more beneficial than receiving it (Schwartz & Sendor, 2000). The participants in this study are especially aware of the benefits of and necessity for nurturing, supportive relationships with the seemingly more resilient participants also being providers of such support. The participants disclose some of the benefits of having a supportive other when going through such difficult times. They also reveal something of the challenges of feeling alone and isolated even from within a partnership. They talk about the importance of gaining strength from and providing strength for each other. For many of the participants, life on the street without the support of a caring partner would be unthinkable. For Sarah, she and her partner keep each other strong and sometimes her partner is the only thing that gets her through the day. And for Kareem, supporting his girlfriend is a very important part of his life.

Dave talks about how his girlfriend has helped him to stay away from drugs; for him, just seeing her lifts his mood. Dave sees this relationship as his first supportive one and views his previous relationships as “*drug-fuelled romances*”. He sees his girlfriend’s positive attitude and way of Being-in-the-world as something to aspire towards. He also accepts that when she is not around his resolve to stay away from drugs often falters.

Here is Dave’s description of his understanding girlfriend:

*[I’m in recovery] all in all a few months, since I met her [girlfriend]. Since I met her, she’s trying to keep me clean. But she’s not always around, and when she doesn’t be around, it’d be a different story, I’d kinda slip up. Yeah. But she understands. [...] She makes me days good. I think I get depressed sometimes. Very depressed sometimes. Em... sometimes to the point I don’t care anymore and just seeing her, she’s gonna make it good. She’s always smiling, know what I mean? Always smiling. I’d like to be like that, know what I mean? She doesn’t look like she’s got a bother in the world. Not a care in the world. That’s the way it’s supposed to be.*

For Amish, being so far away from his home and family can be extremely isolating and lonely. Consequently, his friends, both Irish and from his home country, are very important. He really values having someone to care about him:

*I have a friend from my country living here and he and his wife are very good to me. He treats me like a little brother or something, always making sure that I am okay and have everything I need. [...] I have some Irish friends who protect me. They tell me not to listen to what others say. They ask me if I am okay and if I have eaten.*

Inevitably, there are times when those we are closest to let us down. This can be especially problematic and anxiety provoking for a homeless person who is already isolated, marginalized and excluded. Having just one person to rely on for all our needs concerning belonging and connection as well as emotional care and support can leave us vulnerable and exposed. Sarah expresses some of the feelings she experiences when her partner is less than understanding and when she is isolated and excluded through his drug use. However, despite any shortcomings, she still appreciates the benefits of having someone to fall back on.

Sarah:

*Even though he [partner] made me feel worse sometimes, but it was still someone that I could fall back on and take some of my anger or, just my upset on. He made me feel worse just because, maybe he wasn't as understanding. He couldn't understand why I was so upset like. But, I can understand cos if he – if it was the other way round I wouldn't be able to understand.*

Supportive relationships with parents and siblings are associated with positive development, health and well-being across the lifespan (Herrick & Piccus, 2005). The relationships we form in early life affect our subsequent relationships, our outlook and our perceptions of others (Bandy & Moore, 2011). Understanding something of the participants in this study's current relationships with members of their family will help deepen our understanding of being homeless. For some participants, familial relationships feel caring and supportive whilst for others they are damaging and problematic. For Jenny, she is the one providing support to her family and this takes quite a toll on her. Here she describes some of the demands she experienced when her father underwent an operation for advanced cancer.

Jenny:

*Like, I lost like, so much weight like. Went down seven stone, I was in bits. Going back to the hospital, trying to get me a place, back to the hospital and... I was trying to do everything all at once and I couldn't like. My sister got sick in hospital so I was running from her down in casualty, up to my da and then... [Sigh] I was only out of hospital, I was on medication myself and... I'm sick of it.*

Both Amish and Kareem feel supported by their families, however, for each of them this has complications. Amish has to be careful about accessing support from family members in Ireland lest they find out that he is homeless and tell his family back home.

Amish:

*I have some family here. My uncle's son is married to an Irishwoman. I like her but I have some problems with him. I used to visit them a lot when I first came to Ireland – they are family. But now I have to be careful. I don't want them to find out that I am homeless so I have to lie and be very careful what I say. If they find out they will tell my father and I don't want that.*

And Kareem feels supported by his mother and step-father, believing that his upbringing and their on-going willingness to provide support has made him strong. However, he feels abandoned and unsupported by his biological father whom he has not seen for about ten years.

Kareem:

*I've a father who could have helped me but the fecker's always on holiday like, he's always on holiday so it's very hard to get in contact with him.*

Some participants feel that in order to get on with their lives, they must distance themselves from some members of their family. For Sarah, it is her mother whom she feels is uncaring and unsupportive. Her mother elicits such anger in Sarah that she feels it is necessary to end all contact with her:

*My mam tries to call and talk but I find when she talks to me it's just... it's like a lot of questions, just like an interview basically [...] it's not like how are you doing, how's your day. It's just... I dunno, I'm just trying to... get her completely cut out of my life to be honest. I feel she makes me feel really angry.*

Grandparents sometimes provide the love and support that parents are unable to give. Grandparents want to love and give, and children want to idealise and be loved resulting in synergic relationships. For Dave and Sarah, it is their grandparents who provided them with their only real sense of caring and belonging and it is their grandparents towards whom they now feel protective. Sarah visits her grandparents weekly and has never let them know that she is homeless as she does not want to burden them. She is now looking forward to inviting them to her new home.

Sarah:

*I see my nana and granddad all the time, every week I go and see them. And I'd never let them know what's going on, really. Like the whole homeless thing. It's not their fault and I don't want them to feel like it is, I don't want them to feel like a bur- like I'm being a burden or anything [...]  
Like I used to lie to them, oh yeah, I'm down here, have a lovely house and all, but now I don't have to like. I can have them up at home if I want to.*

Here Dave describes meeting his grandmother on the street a few months ago when he was carrying his sleeping bag and describes how she wanted to help him:

*I saw her (grandmother) a few times after that (living with her as a child). Christmas, every now and again. Em... I saw her on the streets there, em... about four months ago. She was getting on a bus in town [...] I was carrying sleeping bags. She doesn't understand. She walked past me and turned around. It was hard. Hard. Cuz, em, she just didn't understand. I told her that things aren't working out at home. She knew what I meant. Cuz things, things aren't really working out at home at all. And eh... she was still there talking to us for ages. Em...[long pause]. She was saying to come back to hers, just come back. But it's different when you're a young kid like. All day long, I don't want to be a burden to anyone.*

Family trauma and disruption can reduce family members' emotional and physical capacity to care for each other and are significant contributing factors in becoming homeless. Jenny's family has been blown apart by her mother's death and the resulting homelessness when the family home was boarded up. Living without a home makes maintaining family ties and connections very difficult. Jenny's older sister has recently been housed after five years spent in homelessness, her two brothers are housed in a

sheltered apartment and her father has life-threatening cancer all of which reduce the family's capacity to provide the care Jenny needs. Jenny feels she cannot see her younger brother, for whom she cares deeply, as she has nowhere to bring him and does not want to expose him to life on the street.

Here Jenny describes her despair:

*It's horrible being homeless, like. I've nothing. What have I? Like the person that I lived for... isn't here. I mean I have my little brother left but I'm not getting to see him because of where I am. I'm not going to drag him into town and... show him what? All the hostels? I don't know anymore.*

Tara talks about her very poor relationships with all but one of her family members. When she was ten years old she found her mother dead from an overdose, her father provides no support and she lost the support of her older sister and her partner after an argument over five euro. She movingly describes the hurt she felt when her sister's partner put her out on the street, at half-past ten at night, knowing she had nowhere to go and no one to care for her.

Here is Tara's account:

*Just, like, there's nothing to live for, like I have nothing, the only thing I have is my sister. Like, but I have other sisters, but me and (name of sister) is the closest, like. My mam is dead, my da doesn't want anything to do with us, like.[...]. I had a fight with my other sister's fella over a fiver. And he goes "ah, well, you're not staying here anymore". Took all my things*

*out of my room. I said “you’ll never threaten me like that again. You knew the only place I had to go to was hostels and you, you did that to me, you told me, like, you hurt me”. He hurt me when he did it. And I still don’t talk to him to this day even, he said sorry to me and all and I said, “No, you knew what you were doing. You knew that I – the only place I had to go was hostels and you did that to me at half ten at night you fucked all my stuff out”.*

For the participants in this study, being homeless involves being part of the homeless community. Being thrown into life on the street and excluded from mainstream society brings homeless persons into close contact with each other. They use the same services, walk the same streets and sleep in the same hostels or door ways. They look out for each other, are concerned about and care for each other. Homeless persons can feel very close to each other very quickly simply by virtue of spending so much time together. They feel supportive towards each other as they know exactly how lonely and isolated you can feel when living on the street. Here Tara and Kareem show some of the care and compassion they feel for others who are homeless.

Tara:

*If I see someone that’s new in here I say “do you want to come with us for the day if you have nowhere to go?” Cuz it’s not nice. I’ve never looked down on someone, like, if I had my own house and walked past, I know what it feels like, I’m not gonna be like, “Ah well...”. What I wouldn’t, like, I’m not gonna... I don’t look down on them, you know what I mean, I don’t, how could I? I am one myself.*



Kareem:

*There's an awful lot of people there who...[...] They're homeless, and they want to help themselves, you know, they really are trying but... and I've seen people who are awfully sick on the streets who want to help themselves but it's...not easy for them. And there's nothing out there to help them, there's no-one to facilitate them because they look at them and go: no, they've been helped before, why would we waste it on them again. [...] There's a lot of people I won't talk to, there's an awful lot of people out there I wouldn't give the time of day to, but there's an awful lot out there who wouldn't try to peer pressure me into doing things [...] you can have an alright conversation with them [...] they're not stupid people, they're actually smart it's just ... the situation that they're in at the moment.*

In contrast, Amish experienced the antithesis of being-cared-for when he encountered racism and prejudice from some fellow homeless persons. It is well documented that homeless persons are among the most marginalised and experience the greatest prejudice in society. They are seen to be incompetent, untrustworthy and devoid of redeeming qualities. Amish, just like his fellow homeless persons, lives with such prejudice on a daily basis and, in addition, he endures on-going racial discrimination from society at large and from within the homeless community itself.

Amish:

*Some homeless people are racist too. They say go back to your own country, stop going out with our girls! I feel sorry for them because they are junkies. They don't know what they are saying. I feel pity for them but some of them do know what they are saying. They chose to do drugs and do bad things.*

Some homeless persons find it difficult to be happy for others, to care for their well-being and progression when they are being left behind. Seeing someone who kept you company, who shared experiences with you, who cared about you, who provided a sense of connection and belonging, however tenuous, move on and leave you behind can be hard to embrace. Losing a friend or companion when you are isolated and afraid is understandably distressing. It can be hard to care about another's well-being when it negatively affects your own. Homeless persons can be reluctant to help each other to move out of homelessness due to feelings of envy and jealousy. Here Sarah conveys how threatening it can feel when one of the homeless community manages to move out of homelessness. She powerfully articulates the feelings of envy that can be evoked when a friend no longer has to spend day after day walking the streets.

Sarah:

*I didn't want to show anyone how bad I was feeling or if I was happy because, in this kind of thing if you feel happy, everyone wants to bring you down. No-one likes...in the homeless no-one likes anyone to be happy, no-one wants anyone doing any better. Other homeless people don't want you, they don't want you to leave, like. We're all a bit of a... it's a community in itself. Like, we all see each other, we all share stuff and everything. When you find out one person, even myself when my good mate, he got into another hostel and I was so annoyed that he got something, and he didn't have to come out and he didn't have to stand in the street anymore. That, I was like, aw, like I'd love for him, for it to be taken away from him, for him to be back here. But obviously I understand that, like, it's very, it's very cruel of me to say.*

The participants also discuss the dangerous, uncaring side of life within the homeless community and the ensuing lack of trust that exists specifically regarding the drug-related

dangers of getting too close to others. They express something of their palpable fear of getting sucked into a destructive lifestyle. Such dangers include being attacked and having your money and possessions stolen and also the very real danger of succumbing to the drugs being offered. The pervasive dangers of being drawn into a drug-fuelled lifestyle are ever present and the participants feel they have to be constantly alert to the dangers and aware that the relentless pressure can eventually wear you down. The high prevalence of drug use and the difficulties of trusting those who are drug dependent render friendships impossible. For Sarah, *“Just the knowing that you can’t trust anyone, I think was very horrible.”* For Jenny, too, not knowing who to trust is a big issue. This is compounded by not having a shared history, not growing up together, rather being thrown together through homelessness.

Jenny:

*Yeah, [friends] that I met like in here, I knew a few that was, like, homeless I knew from town but... I didn’t grow up with them or nothing like that, they were homeless like myself... That’s it, yeah. Yeah, there are some that I do, [consider friends] yeah. But I don’t know what to trust or who to trust really, like.*

The constant movement and the transient nature of life on the street make caring friendships, when they are forged, unlikely to last. As Kareem discloses:

*But when you’re full out blown and thrown into that lifestyle [homelessness], it’s just... it tears you apart [...] you’re fucked like because one day you have a friend and the next day it’s a different person. You know, that’s it. You’re constantly like... there’s no friends in this life. There’s no friends [...] you don’t meet any friends in this life.*

In addition, some participants are worried about the physical threat posed by some homeless persons when they have taken drugs or alcohol. Such dangers range from an inadvertent needle prick, to physical assault, to being stabbed. The participants disclose something of the fear that living under threat induces and the consequences that can follow. Here Jenny describes how, on the morning of her interview, she was suspended from her hostel for two nights because she hit a fellow resident who had been harassing her:

*Lost my bed in the hostel. Suspended for two days. Over some fella. He was drunk, but he was getting smart so I, em, so- I- I hit him, I don't know if he's gone for good or... My bed's gone for two days. He was drunk and he was getting smart and- He wouldn't stop being- he wouldn't get away from me. I walked away until I calmed down, walked out to calm down and all. He came out and followed me. He kept it up the whole night, just annoying me, and then the Gards and all had to be called last night. But, he ended up getting taken out. Now, fuck like, my bed's gone for like two nights.*

As stated earlier, most participants feel being homeless is their own responsibility and accordingly are very angry with other homeless persons who do not help themselves. They feel it is unfair and morally wrong to use up services that others may need: they care about other homeless persons who may have even greater needs than they do. In addition, many participants feel that it is wrong to beg, to be greedy, or to expect others to give you money to buy drugs.

Sarah:

*I think I'm angry because there's people who don't deserve anything, don't deserve anything in this, like, in this place, and they get a lot. And then there's people who just go by and like try there best and get nothing and, it does, it annoys me a bit. [...] I was the youngest (in the hostel), but there were people who've been there since they were, whatever, twenty and*

*they're still there when they're forty. But they don't help themselves. And it annoys me that they're taking up spaces and they're... taking up opportunities that other people really need.*

Finally, the participants reveal something of their relationships with and attitudes towards those who are charged with caring for their needs and well-being, those whose job it is to care. Living as a homeless person is living on the very edge of society. It is a very disempowered and vulnerable position whereby you are dependent on others to help meet your basic needs: dependent on the care of others. Here the participants disclose some of the discrimination, prejudice and racism they face when dealing with some agency personnel and others in the caring professions. They reveal something of what it feels like to be dependent on others for your basic human necessities. As stated previously, securing a bed for the night is the participants' main priority each day. Some participants find their dealings with the service afforded responsibility for allocating hostel beds to be very troublesome and deeply frustrating. Some participants have experienced racism and verbal abuse whilst for others the allocation of beds is treated, by those with the power, as a game.

Here is Amish's account of the racism he endures:

*Every day I ring the free phone number to get a bed but most of the time I don't get one. The guy on the phone is crazy, my Irish friends think so as well. Sometimes he says bad words to me and to my friends also. He says go back home, go back to your own country. These beds are for Irish people, not for you. I feel very bad when he says that because he is educated like me, he should know better. We are all the same, God just gave us different skin colours.*

And Sarah's view of the lack of care she has experienced:

*You might have to wait 'til about half ten at night, which I had to do on so many occasions, and they'd have put my partner in a different hostel, so I'd sit on the street by myself for about two hours. I had to ring the Freephone and they'd make you – it's like it was a game, basically, it's like, aw, you're in luck, you got a bed tonight. They were like, aw, you're so lucky, c'mon. like everything is a game to these people.*

Some participants feel they are treated as though they have chosen to be homeless and are making no efforts to get back into mainstream society; accusations which they feel are unwarranted and fundamentally unfair. Tara also has grave concerns about the people allocating beds and feels that most people who work with the homeless should not be allowed to do so. However, she is full of praise for the caring staff working at the homeless service she attends and equally those who work at her hostel.

Tara:

*Most of the people who work with the homeless, like, I swear to God they should not have that job. They shouldn't have the, they don't, they shouldn't have the job. The way they treat people! And I'm sitting there saying, like, "I'm looking for houses every day" and they treat me like I'm sitting on my hole. I don't want to be homeless, I want to be independent, I want to have my own house, I want to do all this, but they throw it back in your face! Throw it back in your face like. The two people I deal with when you ring the Freephone... the people here and at my hostel are the nicest people ever and I don't include them... but the others, they just... ah, the way they speak to you. It's just, I just think it's unbelievable. They*

*shouldn't have that job if they don't like it, if they're going to be, like, taking it out on people.*

Many participants feel that those in authority such as An Garda Síochána and homeless service managers should care more and do more about the availability and use of drugs in hostels and amongst the homeless population. Dave chooses to sleep rough as he knows that if he sleeps in a hostel he will not be able to stay away from the drugs that he will inevitably be offered. For Dave, all hostels are drug-ridden and he strongly feels that those with the power should ensure drug-free hostels are made available for those who do not use drugs or are trying to stay clean. Kareem has equally strong views concerning the Gardaí's lack of action to address the drug situation on the streets.

Dave:

*It's ...the hostels... some of them needs to be looked into. Em, the hostels is the main reason why people are going round, you know what I mean?  
It's... every hostel, riddled, riddled with heroin. Riddled. Um...em...I don't see why they were never divided up into addicted, alcoholic, and clean hostels. It's... simple. Don't put someone who's clean into a room full of people who are injecting heroin. Simple as.*

For some participants, the fear of being forgotten by those in authority, those with the power to help, is very evident. There is a very strong fear, for some, that the system will forget about them; that no one will care. As Kareem puts it, *"I've seen like, there were people just left to their own devices... system pure forgets about them you know."*

Here Sarah discloses her biggest fear:

*I was scared, I didn't know what was gonna happen. I was afraid that I was gonna be left and forgotten about, to be honest. Like within the homeless service like, we were always told, like, aw, it's just next week you'll be gone, next week, it was always next week. And I mean I just honestly felt like, I was gonna be forgotten about, like so many people in the hostels... it was just...like, the worst thing is thinking you're going to be forgotten about. [...] I don't want people to forget me, I don't want people to forget me but...when you're going to be like left on the street, or like you're going to have anything, it is really important that they don't forget you.*

Jenny feels very let down by those in authority and especially by a particular social worker who promised Jenny's dying mother that she would ensure Jenny did not become homeless.

Jenny:

*Our house got boarded up three weeks before Christmas. She was taken into a hospice, and... they boarded the house up, they said they wouldn't leave it to my brother, who was 21, and I'd just turned 18. They said they wouldn't leave it to a 21 year old and an 18 year old to look after a 13 year old. After just losing our mother. So they boarded the house. But they told my ma on her deathbed that they'd get us all somewhere to live. And I have that on paper as well. She told my ma on my ma's deathbed that she would not send me into town. And she'd make sure I have rented accommodation and she got me nothing only sent me straight into town, into Transitional.*



In contrast, the participants express their gratitude for and appreciation of some of the services and service providers who care, respect and meet their needs. Some participants are very aware that without the homeless services they access, their already deeply challenging daily life would be even worse. For Sarah, someone to listen, to care and to help her deal with her isolation has been invaluable. She reflects on what might have been the negative consequences of not accessing such services and worries what life would be like for those on the street should such services and service workers no longer exist.

Sarah:

*I didn't feel like there was someone I could talk to [...] The way that I was brought up I was told not to bother people and that by talking to people I was bothering. So... I mean it got to the stage where I got really, really, really upset like and then I did talk to the people in (name of service) and now...I feel better, like they told me it's not for me to worry if it bothered people, that if I feel like that I should just tell people. I think the only thing that actually makes it so much better is actually the homeless, some of, like, some of the homeless organisations [...] I don't know what would have happened if I didn't know about (name of homeless service) or some of the services weren't there.*

Finally, Tara extols the virtues of the hostel where she stays, referring to it as somewhere she cherishes and as being *more like a home*; high praise indeed.

Tara:

*... best hostel, best hostel for young people, like, my age, it's cuz it's like, it's more like home, it's like, have the chairs, and they have the telly, it's*

*just real cushy and it's like, there's only five or six of us in here, so... your own room is like, just a bed but that's all you need. [...] You cherish the time this place is opened.*

#### **4.4 Concluding Comments**

This chapter presented the findings of this study into the phenomenon of homelessness through exploration of the experience of *Being Homeless*. The phenomenon was illuminated under two essential, constitutive characteristics: *Passing Time*; and *Taking Care*.

The characteristic *Passing Time* refers to the challenges participants face in dealing with the stretch of time that needs to be spent each day when living on the street. The participants employ various tactics and strategies to either waste or fill time in more constructive ways. They describe the boredom and despair they feel when awoken each day to yet more time to spend without a home to which to retreat or a space of their own to access some privacy and exercise some control over their time.

The second characteristic, *Taking Care*, reveals something about homelessness through exploration of the participants' capacity to care for themselves and to access care from others in their lives. It discloses the challenges they encounter in trying to meet their needs such as those relating to personal hygiene, nutrition, personal safety and sleep. It also reveals the extent to which the participants consider being homeless and finding a way out of it as their own responsibility. This characteristic also uncovers something of the participants' relationships with caring or uncaring others, including partners, friends, family and service providers. It also gives us some insight into the participants' caring relationships with fellow homeless persons and reveals something of the challenges faced when you do not know who to trust. In addition, this characteristic provides some understanding of the very important role homeless services and the caring professions

play in the lives of the participants, a role that is often executed with care and compassion but shamefully, on occasion, with derision and contempt.

The following chapter will attempt to understand these findings by discussing them in relation to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, psychotherapy theory and the existing homelessness literature.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Revealing Homelessness

#### Introduction

This chapter attempts to reveal, understand, find meaning for, and provide a discussion of the findings of this research on the phenomenon of homelessness. The two essential, constitutive characteristics disclosed, *Passing Time* and *Taking Care*, together reveal something of the phenomenon of homelessness through an uncovering of boredom as the mood of homelessness and of the centrality of everyday, existential anxiety in caring for oneself and accessing care from others in the world of homelessness. These two revealed characteristics of homelessness ‘*belong to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and ground*’ (Heidegger, 1962 p. 59).

Heidegger’s seminal work, *Being and Time* (1962), is important philosophically for two main reasons. First, it re-engaged with the central question of Greek philosophy: what is the meaning of being? And second, it brought the actual, everyday lives of human beings into the heart of philosophy (Harman, 2007). Both of these attributes make it a key resource in terms of understanding the everydayness of being homeless. Heidegger’s (1998) 1929-1930 Freiburg lecture course entitled *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* wherein he discloses the threefold structure of boredom and its interconnection with temporality provides a useful framework to understand the profound boredom that life on the street evokes.

Homelessness can be viewed as a profoundly boring, anxious existence resulting from the breakdown of caring, supportive relationships with self or others. Furthermore, the

formation and maintenance of supportive and nurturing relationships is a key factor in surviving life on the street and in re-entering and sustaining life in mainstream society. Emmy van Deurzen's (2002) existential psychotherapy and, in particular, its focus on everyday anxiety and on personal, social and spiritual dimensions of existence helps us understand something of the complexities and challenges homeless persons face in caring for Self, in accessing care from others, and in identifying and realising values, hopes and ideals. Psychodynamic theory, and especially the writings of Winnicott (1941) and Kohut (1984), provides a framework within which to discuss the formation of Self and the conditions and requirements necessary for the development of a cohesive, contained Self. These theories also highlight our essential relatedness and the significance and importance of early relationships in the formation and maintenance of caring relationships across the lifespan.

The uncovered characteristics are discussed below in relation to Heidegger's philosophy, to psychotherapy theory, and also to the existing literature concerning homelessness. Throughout the chapter, references to the existing homelessness literature are interspersed, as appropriate, within the philosophy and psychotherapy sections.

## **5.1 Passing Time**

For Heidegger (1962), human beings and time are inextricably linked. Time is not an external framework within which we exist, rather we exist *as* time: human existence is its temporality (Mulhall, 1996). Heidegger uses the term temporality to distinguish the human experience of lived time from a distorted, external, measured time; the time of clocks and calendars. Furthermore, temporality does not comprise three separate linear elements; past, present and future but rather is a self-generating process. Temporality includes the exclusively human ability to exist in all three dimensions simultaneously; to exist behind, ahead of, and beside oneself in the same moment. It also contains the unique human capacity to stand outside of ourselves in order to take a stand on our own Being. This capacity allows us to reflect on ourselves and is key to our understanding of both

ourselves and our lives and allows us to communicate that understanding to ourselves and others.

The participants in this study are very much *in* their experience of time. From the moment they wake up they are concerned with time and faced with the task of how to pass the time stretching out ahead of them. Spending twenty four hours a day with no home to which to retreat or no private space of one's own is both daunting and extremely challenging. Belonging to a marginalised group, living on the edge of society, having very little money, and being unwelcome in most places renders the task close to impossible. Walking the streets endlessly, as time goes by very slowly, is boring, and facing into another boring day fills the participants in this study with a sense of dread.

### **5.1.1 Being Bored**

According to Heidegger, 'mood' is a central component of our sense of belonging to the world. We are always in some kind of mood and although the mood may change it can only change to another mood; what might feel like an absence of mood is actually an inconspicuous mood. Mood is fundamental to the uniquely human way of having a world: it is through a mood that we belong to a world. Since moods are an aspect of Dasein's existence and therefore an aspect of Being-in-the-world, they reveal something of Dasein, of Being-in, and of the world. However, Dasein does not exist in a subjective state called mood and encounter an objective world through that mood. Rather, Dasein is practically immersed in a world, a world that already has a mood. Furthermore, a mood is a feature of Being-in-the-world; it is neither internally nor externally generated. Moods primordially disclose Being in its thrownness:

A mood makes manifest 'how one is, and how one is faring'. In this 'how one is,' having a mood brings Being to its 'there'. (Heidegger, 1962 p.173).

In this way, Dasein finds himself “*in the mood that it has*” (p.174). The participants in this study are bored; bored with the relentless waiting that life on the street entails; bored with having so little to do and so much time to fill. Bored with walking, walking, walking endlessly over the same ground. When we are bored, significance of both self and world fade, motivation disappears and time appears to grind to a halt, thus becoming pronounced and inescapable (Slaby, 2010). Heidegger (1998), distinguishes three levels of boredom: ‘becoming bored by something’, ‘being bored with something’, and ‘profound boredom’. These three forms of boredom explicate a complex interweave of connections between human temporality and the meaning of life. As Slaby (2010) explains:

The temporality of human existence, the temporal constitution of our very being, and existential meaning – the significance that intrinsically orients a human life – hang together inextricably: The draining away of existential significance is *identical* to the strange slowing of or even halting of time in boredom (p.2).

### **5.1.2 Filling Time**

As human beings, we actively seek out ways not to be bored (Heidegger, 1998). When we approach boredom we occupy ourselves with tasks and activities directed towards ‘passing time’. If we were to strip away the activities of our everyday lives we would find boredom lying in wait. The participants in this study are only too familiar with this lurking boredom and the emptiness and existential pain it brings. Therefore, they busily try to fill their time with tasks and activities that keep it at bay, at least for now. As Kareem knowingly states:

just fill your time for the sake of filling time. [...] because there's always a dark side, and I always say, stay away from the dark side, like that's it. Cuz it's a bad place for people to end up.

Heidegger's second form of boredom, *being bored with something*, will help us deepen our understanding of what is happening when the participants in this study 'fill their time'. When we find ourselves in a boring situation such as living on the street, boredom and passing time become enmeshed and entangled. This level of boredom is deeper than being bored with one specific thing (Heidegger's first level) rather it is the whole situation that is boring. Thus, the totality of living on the street is imbued with boredom. And this boredom becomes increasingly about ourselves and less so about our situation. Boredom is characterised by two features: being left empty and being held in limbo. In this second form of boredom we slip away from ourselves in some way:

In this casualness of leaving ourselves behind in abandoning ourselves to whatever there is going on, *an emptiness can form*. Becoming bored or being bored is determined by this emptiness forming itself in our apparently satisfied going along with whatever there is going on. [...] This emptiness is a being left behind of our proper self. (Heidegger, 2001, p.119).

For the participants in this study, engagement in their lives is shallow since life on the street necessitates a leaving behind of their true self; they have been forced to abandon their *authentic self*. To bring their authentic self to the horrors of life on the street would be unbearably painful since to be authentic means being true to oneself, something which the deprivation and impoverishment of life on the street renders extraordinarily difficult and painful. For Heidegger, to live authentically is to be curious about, engaged with, excited by and fascinated with the world in which we live and share with others. "*Proximally and for the most part Dasein is fascinated with its world*" (1962 p. 149).



The profound boredom characteristic of life on the street makes fascination with or excitement about the world extremely unlikely.

What about the second characteristic of boredom, 'being held in limbo'? The imagined or expected lives of the participants in this study are on hold. Time has stalled. Heidegger (1995) refers to this halting of time as *a standing Now* (p.123). This *standing Now* causes us to be fully absorbed in the present and that present is removed or disconnected from what has gone before and what has yet to come. This stand alone present is devoid of meaningful connection to the rest of our temporality. The participants in this study are absorbed in filling the present moment without reference to the past or connection to the future. Everything about living on the street is isolating, even our own temporality. As Slaby (2010. p.12) eloquently states: "*The seamless and natural transition from a past via a mattering present to anticipated futures (possibilities) has come to a halt.*" The participants in this study are living in a state of *existential abandonment* where the self, cut-off from past and future, exists in a meaningless vacuum. This is a bored self, a self left hanging in a meaningless, empty, isolated state.

In this second form of boredom, we are out of touch with the rest of the world and removed from our potentialities for Being in the world. Being homeless inevitably threw the participants in this study into this state of boredom. They are not welcome in society and have few, if any, potentialities or possibilities for engaging in worldly activities. They are stuck in an isolated now, abandoned to an empty self. For Heidegger, this level of boredom is particularly pertinent to modern society where everyone is busy involving themselves in everything. Everyone keeps themselves so busy that they have no time for anything essential. For the participants in this study, this level of boredom is also especially related to the modern world and modern living. However, for them, such boredom results from their exclusion from modern society and being forced to busy themselves in any way they can in order to stave off the profound boredom that lies beneath, as we will see in the next section.

### 5.1.3 Wasting Time

Heidegger's third and most profound level of boredom helps us understand the boredom experienced by the participants in this study when they refer to *wasting time*. He encapsulates this form of boredom in the phrase "*one is bored*". The participants in this study walk the streets endlessly with no destination in mind, everywhere is unwelcoming, if they stop to rest they are moved on, there are no opportunities for engagement or distraction; just relentless walking. Living on the streets confronts the participants with deep emptiness, for in profound boredom it is the self that is left empty: "*We become an undifferentiated no one*" (Heidegger, 1995 p.135). Homeless persons are situated in the midst of the indifference of the world, disconnected from society and its events and routines. As highlighted in the literature review, homeless persons are often socially excluded and live in poverty outside social networks (Aratani, 2009; Craig & Timms, 2000). Homeless persons exist *in limbo*, denied access to society, refused possibilities to act or take part. They exist at the edge, on the periphery, in the lurch.

Profound boredom reveals the totality of being as it removes our focus from dealing with the everyday. Instead, all beings become undifferentiated and merge into an undistinguished unity. Our daily, mundane activities are replaced by deep boredom characterised by "*drifting hither and thither in the abysses of existence like a mute fog*" (Heidegger, 1995 p.364). Understandably, this experience of profound boredom is accompanied by dread and fear for the participants as they experience a sense of themselves also becoming undifferentiated, a sense of losing their unique Being. This sense of losing one's identity, of becoming a vague dissipated self is deeply distressing. Home provides a connection to self-identity and to personal, societal, and cultural norms, values, and beliefs. In line with Molony's (2010) findings as cited in the literature review, when we lose our home, we lose something of our attachment to our self and to others. The relentless boredom of life on the street brings a sense of dread for the participants. Waking up each day to the same emptiness puts the participants in this study "*in suspense*" (Heidegger, 1995). Homeless persons are held in a state of suspension as they lose touch with the *totality of what is* and, in addition, since they are part of that totality,

lose touch with themselves. Thus, Heidegger refers to this state as ‘one’, not ‘you’ or ‘I’, is bored.

## **5.2 Psychotherapy and Being Bored**

It is widely accepted among psychotherapists and psychologists that boredom is a complex phenomenon. Moreover, the mood of boredom can reveal important facets of existence. So what does psychotherapy have to say about being bored? The answer is surprisingly little. There is some literature concerning the therapist’s boredom and a small amount dealing with the bored client but almost nothing referring to the mood of boredom itself. In his 1993 book, *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*, psychoanalyst Adam Phillips devotes a chapter to being bored. Phillips refers to boredom as:

*that state of suspended anticipation in which things are started and nothing begins, the mood of diffuse restlessness which contains that most absurd and paradoxical wish, the wish for a desire (p.71).*

When we are bored we are waiting, unconsciously, for an experience of anticipation. The participants in this study experience boredom to varying degrees with those in the throes of profound boredom displaying little or no anticipation that things might be different. They speak of a sensation of going round and round, of waiting and waiting, of sitting around, of going from place to place with no desire to get there. For Phillips, the bored child reaches into his recurring state of emptiness from which his desire can emerge. In order to negotiate this precarious process, the child needs a parent to contain and hold him, to be present for and attentive towards him. A number of the participants in this study did not have a nurturing and caring home environment within which to learn to identify and manage their desire. For these participants, boredom, dread and the accompanying senses of helplessness and hopelessness seem to be stronger than for those who had experience of

more nurturing parenting. Such participants may not have successfully attained the developmental capacity to move through boredom to desire.

Phillips (1993) believes that the child is dependent on both his mother and his desire and that both can be lost and also refound. He suggests that “*Perhaps boredom is merely the mourning of everyday life?*” (p.75). Consequently, the homeless persons in this study may, in fact, be grieving for a life they have lost or indeed one they may only have fleetingly glimpsed. Being homeless has stripped them of access to the most mundane, everyday preoccupations most of us take for granted. The banal tasks and activities that provide our day with structure and meaning are denied to the homeless person. Belgian feminist, philosopher and psychoanalyst, Luce Irigaray’s (1985) view on the consequences for women of their exclusion from social power can equally be applied to homeless persons. In her view woman is always bored as manifest in the pure passivity of her being; her absence of effort to master the external world, her inability to love herself or other women, her lack of libidinal activity, her exclusion from positions of power. Indeed, exclusion from social power leads to withdrawal into boredom, for how can a homeless person engage in society when they have neither the required currency nor any possessions of their own to contribute? Instead, they live in public, on the threshold in what Seager (2011) refers to as a self imposed ‘exclusion zone’ (p.184): a place where they can simultaneously express their conflicting desires to be both visible and left alone, to be seen and not seen, to be neither in nor out.

### **5.2.1 Being Bored and Melancholia**

According to Phillips (1993), Freud (1917) in “*Mourning and Melancholia*” describes melancholia in ways that might be applied to boredom. For Freud, melancholia results from the occurrence of a loss but what that loss might be is often unknown to the person. Again, this seems to fit very well for a number of the participants in this study, in particular, those with a very limited sense of home. When talking to them there is a very palpable sense of loss and sadness, a loss and sadness which they struggle to identify or

articulate. In this sense, the participants are waiting for something that is largely unknown. Something that, as yet, remains covered over or hidden in the shadow. For Freud, in melancholia the ego is empty and impoverished whilst in mourning it is the world that is so. Phillips powerfully suggests that in boredom it is both. Therefore, the participants in this study experience a deep sense of depletion; the homeless person exists as an empty, limited self in a vacuous, barren world. This fits with Heidegger's notion of the totality of *Being-in-the-world* as discussed above and the homeless person's sense of both the self and the world being undifferentiated.

The psychotherapist, D.W. Winnicott (1941), describes the bored child as one who has nothing available to him to enable self-expression. For him, calm expectancy is replaced with gloomy agitation and self-confidence with confined irritation and annoyance. As stated in the literature review, according to Allan and Crow (1989), home provides an intimate space offering opportunities for creativity and regeneration. The participants in this study have very little available to them for self-expression or creativity, being limited to what they can carry or fit in a small locker and being restricted to living out their lives in public. Joan Smith, in her 2008 report for the U.K. homeless agency, Crisis, states that opportunities for creativity and learning are very important in terms of homeless persons' health and well-being and for finding a way out of homelessness. For Winnicott, in order for a child to be able to access a complete experience he needs a supportive and accommodating environment, one which will present opportunities to him without forcing them on him or withholding them from him. Many of the research participants grew up in situations that were impoverished, either lacking in stimulation or providing too much stimulation through violence and aggression. In addition, life on the street withholds or denies choices and opportunities with, for example, participants having to accept food and beds as and how they are made available. Living on the street is the very antithesis of a supportive, nurturing environment replete with opportunities and engaging stimulation. Winnicott describes how, in order to risk taking an interest in something that appeals to us, we must be brave enough to let our feelings develop. Rollo May (1999) agrees that we need courage to live healthily since '*fear creates great havoc in human relationships*' (p.33).

Allowing ourselves experience our desire entails trusting the environment to hold us and risking damage to the self if we are not held. The participants in this study have numerous experiences of failure to be held, with some having very few experiences of actually being held either emotionally or physically. It is no wonder then that the risk to an already fragile and damaged self, posed by experiencing one's desire, may simply be too great.

For Viktor Frankl (2004) melancholia represents a physiological vital low which is accompanied by a feeling of insufficiency. When this insufficiency is experienced as inadequacy in relation to a task, and in particular, an obligation arising "*out of the responsibility of his being*", the person experiences anxiety and guilt (p.190). This feeling of inadequacy highlights the gap between what is and what ought to be with what ought to be appearing unattainable. For those experiencing melancholia, this gap widens into an abyss. The participants in this study are confronted with obligations arising from responsibility for their Being every moment of every day. They live life in a raw and exposed manner where they are continuously confronted with their responsibility for their own Being, unprotected by and excluded from the safety and the opportunities for denial society can provide. Paul Tillich's (2000) famous quote: "*Boredom is rage spread thin*" resonates with the findings of this study. Here the participants are in a constant state of waiting, waiting to see if they can get a bed for the night, waiting for the hostel to open, waiting for time to pass, waiting for something to change. They wait and wait and they try to do something other than wait and they get bored. This boredom is the boredom of protest and behind it invariably lies rage (Phillips, 1993). The participants are angry, angry with society, their families, other homeless persons, homeless services and workers, and ultimately with themselves.

Thus the participants in this study are deeply bored. They exist as an empty self in an empty world. They mourn the loss of everyday life as they live a life characterised by exclusion, rejection and isolation. They live on the edge of mainstream society, on the periphery, excluded from everyday routines and rituals.

### 5.3 Taking Care

Just as boredom illuminates the characteristic *Passing Time*, everyday, existential anxiety illuminates the characteristic *Taking Care*. For Heidegger (1962) we exist in the world, into which we have been thrown, in a state of anxiety and it is this very Being-in-the-world that we are anxious about. In anxiety neither the world nor others within the world has anything to offer us. Instead we are faced with the very thing we are anxious about – our authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world. *‘Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-Being – that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself’* ( p. 232). The participants in this study live in a state of anxiety where neither the world nor its occupants have anything to offer them. They are anxious about themselves, where they will sleep, what they will eat, whether they will manage to stay sober. They are anxious about their families, their friends, and other homeless persons. They are anxious about services and service providers. They are anxious about their future and anxious that the system will forget all about them. For Heidegger (1962) in this state of anxiety we feel ‘uncanny’ where ‘uncanniness’ also means ‘not-being-at-home’ (p. 233). We flee this not-at-home state by absorbing ourselves with our everyday worldly concerns, we flee to the public ‘at-homeness’, the ‘tranquillized familiarity’ of the masses (p.234). The participants in this study have nowhere to flee to, they are stuck facing their anxiety as they have few opportunities to become absorbed in everyday activities. This is in keeping with what Buchannon (2004) refers to as a ‘wall of exclusion’ comprised of stigmatisation and marginalisation which often accompanies homelessness. Uncanniness lurks as an ever present threat to our inauthentic living as one of the masses: *‘From an existential-ontological point of view, the “not-at-home” must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon’* (p. 234). Thus homeless persons struggle to escape the primordial anxiety of Being ‘not-at-home’. Anxiety confronts us with our individualised Being, our own potential to understand ourselves and project ourselves towards possibilities. It makes manifest our possibilities for knowing ourselves, for living both authentically and inauthentically.

Dasein's ontological structure is presented by Heidegger (1962) as: Being-in-the-world as a Being for whom its Being is an issue and as Being-with those entities in-the-world with which it concerns itself. And this Being-in-the-world is essentially 'care' (p.227). Care comprises concern and solicitude, where concern refers to occupation and engagement with entities we encounter in the world, and solicitude refers to our Dasein-with or Being-with Others we encounter in the world. For Heidegger, solicitude **is** our way of Being with Others and comprises a continuum between two extremes: *leaping in* and *leaping ahead*. *Leaping in* takes away the Other's care by limiting, restricting or even destroying the totality of their Being since, for Heidegger, care **is** the structural whole of Being-in-the-world. By *leaping in* for Others we dominate, take away their freedom and make the Other dependent. Thus, the participants in this study are dependent upon the solicitude of service providers and care-workers to meet their needs. Service providers often *leap in*, rendering the participants dependent, powerless and lacking agency in their own lives. In contrast, by *leaping ahead* of the Other we prize the Other's particular potentiality-for-Being and strive to give it back so that they can live authentically, perhaps for the first time. Such solicitude helps the Other to understand and care for itself and to become free to live as he or she chooses (Gordon, 2001). The participants in this study experience certain service providers *leaping ahead* of them when they are facilitated and supported to take responsibility for their own care and to plan for their own future.

Homelessness, both in terms of its origins and continuance, can be viewed as a consequence of the breakdown of relationship with self and others. In order to maintain a healthy relationship with self we must understand our needs and be capable of fulfilling those needs at least to some degree. In addition, since we live in a referential totality as part of a co-constituted world we need to be able to access and utilise the care of others. We are relational, interdependent beings and as such rely on others as well as our self for our existence and well-being. The characteristic of *Taking Care* comprises two sub-divisions which speak to this interdependence: *Caring-for-Self* and *Being-Cared-for*.



### 5.3.1 Caring-for-Self

In order to care for ourselves we must know and understand ourselves, at least to some degree, recognise our needs and desires, and devise ways and means to address them. For Heidegger, it is through its own existence that Dasein understands itself. So what is the Self in Heideggerian terms? And how does Dasein come to know itself? Heidegger (1962) distinguishes between the self of everyday Dasein, the *they-Self* and the *authentic Self*, by which he means *the Self that has been taken hold of in its own way* (p. 167). When we exist as *they-self*, we are absorbed in the world, we exist *dispersed* amidst the “they” and must find ourselves. Everyday Dasein encounters entities in a totality with which “they” is familiar and within the limits and constraints of “they’s” averageness. Thus, it is not “I” that am but rather Others (those among whom I am one too) who exist as the “they”. Thus Dasein is, for the most part, “they” rather than “I” in the sense of an own self. The participants in this study exist outside *the they* of everyday society. They are excluded and marginalised and as such stand out or are conspicuous. They occupy a place on the edge or periphery of society, a place where they live out their lives very visibly and in public. At the same time they are part of *the they* of the homeless world. Like all marginalised populations, homeless persons are talked about in the plural, they are considered to have a single identity, to lack a unique and personal self. As seen in previous chapters, having a home is essential to being human (Wu, 1993) and is inextricably linked to our sense of identity (Marcus, 1995). Indeed, for Haslam (2009) home provides the source of our primary social identity. It is through this everyday way of Being, Being amidst *the they*, that the self gets covered over or concealed. Dasein can, however, disclose the world and its authentic self to itself by discovering or revealing the world and bringing it closer to itself. It does this through an uncovering of what is by removing the barriers it uses to conceal itself and the world from itself. However, authentic Being is not determined by some extraordinary condition and does not exist as something separate from *the they*, rather authentic Being is an essential feature of Being. Thus it is through Being in *the they*, taking a stand on itself, and clearing away self imposed barriers which conceal the self that the self can be revealed to the self. Therefore, the participants in this study exist as authentic or inauthentic selves in *the they*. They exist as part of the collective world of homeless persons excluded from their everyday world of mainstream society and it is here on the

periphery that they come to know the self and to recognise and meet their own needs and desires.

*Authentic Being-one's-Self* does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the "they"; *it is rather an existentiell modification of the "they" – of the "they" as an essential existentielle* (p.168).

Yagi (2009) identifies two important questions concerning self-understanding: *"How can we better understand ourselves if we are profoundly opened to and shaped by that which is not ourselves?"* and *"Is our self-understanding unattainable because we are wholly exposed to the other?"* (p.70). Dasein exists as a Being-towards-a-possibility and as such wittingly or otherwise projects itself towards a possibility or possibilities. It is through these projections that Dasein relates to and understands itself. Thus, Dasein's existence comprises projections towards possibilities and this very existence raises, for Dasein, the possibility of non-existence. Dasein, for Heidegger, projects itself towards a possibility of non-existence or death with death representing the absence of any capacity for Dasein to project its possibility (Yagi, 2009). The participants in this study live with very few and very limited capacities or capabilities to project themselves towards possibilities and thus are in close contact with their own mortality and finitude. Death is not a fate awaiting Dasein at the termination of biological existence rather it is an on-going, lived-in possibility facing Dasein. Living with this awareness of our unavoidable movement towards nothingness and our uncertainty as to how and when this will unfold lies at the heart of our existential angst (Spinelli, 2003). It is through facing the possibility that all possibilities will become impossible that Dasein authentically encounters itself. *"When it stands before itself in this way, [towards death] all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost non-relational possibility is at the same time the uttermost one"* (Heidegger, 1962 p. 294). For the participants in this study, living in the anxiety imbued world of homelessness confronts them with their existential angst, their acute

awareness that their possibilities are very limited and thus they experience the possibility to encounter themselves authentically.

The sub-division *Caring-for-Self* reveals something of the participants' capacity to recognise and meet their own needs through exploration of their everyday *facticity* or engagement in the world into which they have been *thrown*. In line with Veness' (1992) view as documented in the literature review, homeless persons are very involved in the process of immersion in a locality whereby they attempt to make both meaning and choices in their given situation. The participants disclose the challenges and trials of meeting everyday human needs whilst living on the street. Dasein is always occupied with the world and the entities and beings therein. As stated by Hamilton et al. (2011), homelessness can be a fraught and traumatic experience laden with psychological challenges. Furthermore, Dasein exists in a state of anxiety which forces it to face the true structure of its existence. We experience anxiety in the face of a world which we encounter as threatening, daunting or distressing. The participants in this study live in a hostile and frightening world, a world which evokes deep anxiety. Anxiety, unlike fear, is a response to a global sense of unease. It is objectless and therefore cannot be dealt with by addressing a discrete source rather it is the world itself that makes us anxious. For Heidegger, Being-in-the-world is itself oppressive. Indeed, life on the street is often characterised by fear and/or anxiety (Baron, 2011; Huey, 2012) with many homeless persons fearing the general public's hateful and anti-social behaviour (Newburn & Rock, 2005). Additionally, some younger homeless persons fear older homeless persons who are experienced as intimidating causing some young people to choose rough sleeping over a hostel bed (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). Conversely, Crane & Warnes (2005) found the reverse with some older homeless persons being fearful of taking up services in case of violence and intimidation from younger service users. Anxiety confronts the participants in this study with their *thrownness* into the world of homelessness. They are constantly faced with choices and possibilities that necessarily matter to them but which they did not choose and do not want. They find themselves concerned with and occupied by a world and existence devoid of possibilities

and opportunities they desire. As Mulhall (1996) explains “*It [anxiety] confronts Dasein with the determining yet sheerly contingent fact of its own worldly existence*” (p.110).

Dasein is anxious about itself, about projecting itself towards a possibility or possibilities. The participants in this study are anxious about themselves: they worry about their safety and their health. Hagan and McCarthy (1997) found that young homeless persons often seek safety in numbers by aligning themselves with others in mutual trust. The participants in this study are concerned about where they will sleep and if they will be warm enough and secure enough to sleep. They devise ways and means of keeping safe such as sleeping close to others or in view of a security camera. Indeed, being homeless evokes constant stress concerning the ability to find a safe place to sleep or a decent meal to eat (Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet, 2010). The participants in this study worry about their ability to stay away from drugs and about the damage drugs and alcohol are causing to their minds and bodies. Indeed, many homeless persons turn to drugs and alcohol to reduce their feelings of fear and anxiety (Dashora, Erdem & Slesnick, 2011). The participants in this study are anxious about their future, both their immediate future and the rest of their lives. They anxiously wonder if they will ever find a way out of the homeless world. They hope that they will somehow find themselves thrown into a safer, less anxiety-provoking world, a world where they can feel safe and engage with more meaningful and fulfilling possibilities. The participants in this study are submerged in anxiety about themselves in the face of themselves. In this state of anxiety specific features of the world and its inhabitants recede and it is the world itself that is prominent therefore “*the specific structures of the they-world must also fade away*” (Mulhall, 1996 p.110). In this way, anxiety can save the participants in this study from the inauthentic existence of *the-they* or living as one of the masses. Instead they experience increased awareness of their own Being and of their stand on their Being and as such encounter their capacity for individuality.

## 5.4 The Self in Existential Psychotherapy

Existential psychotherapy pays considerable attention to the fundamental centrality of anxiety. Anxiety is the basic unease a person feels once they become aware of themselves. Thus, anxiety is a basic fundamental characteristic of the being human: it is an essential component of existence. For van Deurzen (2002) *'It is therefore the sine qua non of facing life and finding oneself'* (p. 34). She believes that, as human beings, we experience the world on four different dimensions, namely; physical, social, personal and spiritual. Whilst understanding the self is constitutive of each dimension, it is the personal dimension which refers explicitly to our relationship with ourselves through the process of self-reflection. The spiritual dimension is that of our relationship to the beliefs, values and principles by which we live. It refers to our overall worldview and ideological perspective through which we exist within the world and make sense of the world. Thus it is the personal and spiritual dimensions that will help illuminate the sub-division *Caring-for-Self*. Our personal world is our intimate world, the world wherein we feel at home: the world that is most familiar to us. It is the world of 'I', the world that feels part of my self. Our spiritual world encompasses our traits, characteristics, ideals, hopes and dreams. It can be a rich and abundant inner world or it can be barren and depleted, feeling more like a void or an abyss. Existential psychotherapy seeks to help the person achieve a more harmonious inner world, a sense of internal unity, an ease with our inner dynamic paradox.

The participants in this study struggle to feel at home within the world and equally within themselves. In line with Fox's (2008) view as presented in the literature review, in the absence of a home they live without the contribution a home makes to each of the following five domains: financial asset; physical structure; territory; identity; and socio-cultural unit. Thus, a home helps keep us grounded in the world, gives us status, helps us know who we are and keeps us safe. A sense of inner peace or harmony evades the participants in this study. Instead they live with deep anxiety in a sense of inner turmoil where internal conflicts battle for dominance. They consistently fight with themselves to stay engaged in their own lives, to look after their own basic needs, to pay attention to the signals and messages their bodies emit concerning hygiene and nutrition. They live with an

on-going battle between the part of them that wants to stay alert, engaged and present and the part of them that desires disconnection, numbing and withdrawal. This battle is made more difficult by the ready availability of a variety of drugs and mind-numbing substances. The participants in this study realise that they need to rely on their own inner resources to cope with life on the street but often they feel empty and depleted without a solid internal strength on which to depend. Indeed, persons experiencing homelessness have a diverse range of capabilities and resilience with some having lived lives characterised by considerable resilience prior to becoming homeless (Smith, 2010). Mancini (2009) notes that positive memories of childhood, current connections with family, active friendships and good support systems are all important markers of resilience among those who are homeless. Without a home, the primary social environment, the participants in this study are deprived of their source of belonging, of caring and concern, of good wishes for their health and well-being (Haslam et al., 2009). Home helps us to get to know ourselves by providing a connection to our identity and to personal, societal, and cultural norms, values, and beliefs. It comprises and provides attachment to both people and to places (Molony, 2010).

Developing and nurturing an intimate and secure relationship with one's self is achieved through facing the challenges of life, the inevitability of death and the resulting anxiety. Getting to know oneself and coming to rely on oneself are achieved through experiencing the bare, stripped down reality of existence without the comfort and reassurance of the social world (van Deurzen, 2002). For Frankl (2004) getting to know oneself involves discovering and deciphering the one true meaning of our existence, a unique meaning which only we have the ability and responsibility to realise. Exposure to the harsh, uncompromising reality of life on the streets is a daily occurrence for the participants in this study so encountering themselves at a deep and fundamental level, caring for themselves, alleviating their anxiety, learning to rely and depend on themselves is very much their reality providing they can manage to stay present and sober.

In Existential psychotherapy the spiritual dimension refers to our hopes, beliefs, ideals and values. It is the realm wherein we make sense of or find meaning in the world. When we

live a life consumed by everyday banal tasks we can be very out of touch with this dimension replacing it with a very pragmatic, everyday worldview (van Deurzen, 2002). The participants in this study may have covered over or buried their own desires and ideals as they live a life defined by powerlessness and coping with the present in order to survive. Absorption in the everyday averageness of life on the street leaves little room for higher order aspirations and dreams. Alternatively, Frankl (2004) believes we have choices, specifically we have three types of values which we can utilise to deal with any situation: creative, attitudinal and experiential. Accordingly, the participants in this study have, at times, creatively worked towards realising their ideals and values as exemplified by Dave's creative success in teaching himself to play various musical instruments whilst living on the street. Kareem employed attitudinal change when he chose to 'put things behind him' and be productive. And Sarah displayed experiential values (which are realised through receptivity towards one's world, especially through love) through her loving, supportive relationship with her partner and their plans for the future. However, some of the participants in this study have all but given up on hoping and wishing as they have lived a life characterised by disappointment and abandonment. Some have a vision of a future and cling tightly to their beliefs and values as they endeavour to find a way back into mainstream society. This fits with the existing literature which shows that for some homeless persons the isolation and marginalization of life on the street undermines hope (Lindgren, Wilstrand, et al., 2004) often leading to hopelessness (Clarke, 2003) while, in contrast, Kidd (2003) found the persistence of hope in some homeless persons despite their situation. Existential psychotherapy encourages us to live a life determined by our values and ideals. Whilst this may be admirable and worthwhile it poses significant challenges for homeless persons. Seeing beyond and rising above the everyday to connect with our core values and ideals is extremely challenging when survival is dependent upon coping and dealing with those everyday, banal tasks and chores. In addition, as cited in the literature review, living in a homeless hostel restricts social contact to other homeless persons (Mayock, Corr & O'Sullivan 2008), thus limiting opportunities to encounter or engage with others who may be better placed to engage with their own ideals and values. Without a quiet, private place – a place to reflect and contemplate, a place to feel less anxious – connecting with higher order values and beliefs is particularly difficult.

## 5.5 The Self in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

Heinz Kohut (1975) believes that within each of us there exists a core of spontaneity which strives for self-expression. When our self-expression is thwarted we experience a block to building a tension arc between our ambitions and the realisation of our ideals and goals. In order for the self to develop we need selfobjects, meaning persons or actions of persons which awaken, promote and/or maintain the self-feeling. The child's self develops as a result of her carer engaging with the child as if she already had an integrated, cohesive self. Kohut places great import on the mother's ability to care empathically for the child's entire self through acceptance and attunement. The parents idealise the child and allow themselves to be idealised by the child resulting in a fused yet differentiated relationship. Through empathy, the mother provides a safe and nurturing environment for the child to experience anxiety by sharing the child's anxiety in a reduced way, helping the child to understand it and see how it might fade away. However, if the mother lacks empathy or responds by heightening the affect then the child does not develop an adequate ability to manage her emotions. Furthermore, we continue to need empathic, nurturing relationships throughout our lives in order to experience ourselves as cohesive and harmonious.

A person experiences himself as a cohesive, harmonious unit in space and time which is connected with its past and directed toward a creative and productive future, only if he has the experience at every stage of his life that certain representatives of his human environment react enthusiastically to him, are available as sources of idealized strength and calm... (Kohut 1984 p. 84)

Accordingly, many of the participants in this study exist in the world as anxious, fragmented selves lacking cohesion and inner harmony. Most of the participants in this study experienced childhoods dominated by neglect, exclusion and chaos. Some were moved from home to home, some grew up with addiction, violence and aggression. Experiences characterised by empathic attunement and appropriate reactions were rare if



they occurred at all. Having a childhood dominated by neglect may leave a person more vulnerable to becoming and remaining homeless. There is indeed a multiplicity of factors that make one vulnerable to a life on the street and it is imperative that the consequences of a severely compromised childhood are both acknowledged and addressed in order to effectively and meaningfully deal with the complex and multifarious phenomenon of homelessness. Life on the street perpetuates these deficits through the continuance of relationships lacking in both empathy and attunement. Indeed, entrenched homeless persons remain on the street because of self-alienation and distrust of (Seager, 2011). Adlam and Scanlon (2005) concur that rough sleeping can be viewed as the most extreme expression of psychological homelessness referred to as the 'un-housed mind'. Being deprived of empathy, having their emotions ignored or treated with ambivalence, both as children and as adults, has led many homeless persons to doubt the significance and ownership of their own internal world and to lack the adequate structure to tolerate and express their emotional reactions.

Donald Winnicott (1962) sees the infant as a person who is constantly on the threshold of unthinkable anxiety or annihilation. The *good-enough* mother, through emotional attunement, holds the baby together and contains her inner turbulent world. The baby experiences the mother as a safe, holding environment rather than as a separate presence. Indeed, Winnicott suggests there is no such thing as a baby without a mother to care for it. The mother protects the baby from extreme anxiety and annihilation, from falling forever, from disintegration, from total isolation. And she does this through 'holding', 'handling' and 'object-presenting'. Holding refers to both physical and emotional processes. Through empathy, the mother contains and manages the baby's feelings and emotions and shields the baby from overly-stimulating experiences, allowing the baby to exist as an *unintegrated* self while her true self develops coherently and cohesively. Through 'handling' the mother uses sensitive touch to respond and react appropriately, thus helping the baby to integrate her emotional and physical experiences, leading to a harmonious mind and body oneness; a less anxious existence. 'Object-presenting' refers to the process by which the mother brings the external world to the baby. The attuned mother allows baby to gradually seek out her needs without overly frustrating her or without forcing the world onto her. This way the baby develops a sense of trust both in the world and in herself to both meet her own needs

and have them met. Crucially, failures in holding, handling or object-presenting are experienced by the baby not as external failures but as overwhelming internal and external unmanageable stimuli and her calm state of being is disrupted (Gomez, 1997).

Many of the participants in this study were not emotionally contained as children and so did not learn to contain and regulate their emotions. They did not, as children, experience adequate and appropriate levels of holding, handling and object presenting. Accordingly, they live on the street filled with anxiety resulting from their limited capacity to contain and regulate their emotions. Participants in this study report childhoods where they felt unwanted or burdensome, upbringings characterised by anxiety, isolation and disconnection. Many experienced parents who struggled at a fundamental level to deal with their own emotions leaving little or no capacity to contain those of their children. Many experienced neglect, alcohol and drug abuse, violence and aggression - none of which provides a safe holding environment where an infant can learn to regulate and integrate her own emotional and physical experiences. Many homeless persons cite violence within the home, including sexual abuse, as reasons for becoming homeless in the first place (Alvi, Scott & Stanyon, 2010) with many young people choosing the risks of rough sleeping over the risks of remaining or returning home (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). Furthermore, the resulting psychological exclusion of being socially excluded leads to the lack of a secure sense of self, identity or belonging (Seager, 2011). Fostering a sense of identity is further confounded for the homeless person by society's insistence on constructing an identity for her (Seal, 2007), an identity that is characterised by just one factor – her homelessness (Parsell, 2008). Greenwood's (2012) contention that the legacy of research into single strands of identity has led to the eradication of context from the consideration of gender as a social identity could equally be applied to the conceptualisation of homelessness as an identity determined by the single characteristic of 'rooflessness'.

Trust is another big issue which evokes considerable anxiety for the participants in this study. Knowing when, who and if to trust is a complex matrix made extraordinarily

difficult when living within a community where everyone is immersed in that same struggle. In their study of long-term homeless persons, Flato and Johannessen (2010) found trust to be lacking across all of their relationships, from close relationships to those in their wider network. Appropriately meeting one's needs in the homeless world is extremely challenging when the world is either forced upon you (such as allocation and timing of beds and food) or frustratingly withheld (such as rituals and practices surrounding the allocation of beds). Thus, the participants in this study struggle to manage their own internal conflicts within an external world characterised by rejection, exclusion and neglect. They live on the border of society, a place they can tolerate, a place somewhat removed from their uncontainable internal and external worlds.

As presented in the literature review, Campbell (1994) sees the homeless person as struggling to cope with painful internal conflicts and finding little or no containment in the external world. The external world is hostile and neglectful to the homeless person both in terms of its own inherent abandonment and rejection and also because of the anxiety induced projections of the homeless person. This leaves the homeless person on the threshold, neither in nor out. She finds little comfort or containment either internally or externally. This is in keeping with Bion's (1959), conception of containment as reflecting the person's early experience of her mother's struggles to deal with her own internal world and her resulting lack of capacity to contain her child's emotions. This view compliments that of Rey (1994) who believes that the homeless persons live on the edge, on the periphery – a space totally lacking in creativity. It is a place where the homeless person straddles unbearable internal anguish and external aggression and hostility. This also fits with O'Connor (2003) who states that problems of containment unquestionably leave a person vulnerable to becoming homeless. He believes that many homeless persons feel most at home outside of mainstream society replete with constant reminders of the neglect, isolation, abandonment and abuse with which they are only too familiar.

Thus each participant in this study attempts to recognise and fulfil his or her needs and desires against a backdrop of anxiety, as a self lacking in containment and cohesion, excluded from the everyday world of mainstream society.

## 5.6 Being-Cared-for

This study's participants' relationships are characterised by anxiety. Their relationships are often transient, fleeting, disempowering and threatening. They lack balance, they are often characterised by rejection and abandonment or by control and disempowerment but rarely by mutual respect, caring and collaboration. The participants are anxious they will be abandoned and forgotten once again. They are reluctant to engage in relationship with others for fear that they will, yet again, be rejected. They struggle to maintain family ties as, for most, such ties are angst-ridden and involve on-going rejection, isolation and abandonment.

For Heidegger (1962), we do not exist as an isolated subject or 'I', who then needs to find some way to reach or get over to others. Rather we exist amidst the *Others*, by whom he means those of whom I am one or those from whom, for the most part, I do not distinguish myself. We exist among Others who care or have solicitude for us and, likewise, we have solicitude for them. We exist among those who necessarily matter to us. Thus, the world that I find myself in is always the world that I share with Others.

The world of Dasein is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is *Being-with* Others. Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is *Dasein-with* [*Mit-dasein*] (p. 155).

Dasein encounters others *environmentally* as part of the shared world. And it is through encountering Others within the shared world that Dasein can also encounter itself. Dasein

encounters itself in that with which it is concerned: *‘what it does, uses, expects, avoids’* (p.155), in how it relates to Others. We encounter Others primarily in their Being-in-the-world, that is to say occupied with whatever it is that concerns them, in their own *Dasein-with*. Being-with is an essential characteristic of Dasein and so Dasein is always Being-with even when he is alone and isolated: *‘Even Dasein’s Being-alone is Being-with in the world’* (p. 156). Indeed, Dasein can still be alone even if there are other Dasein present-at-hand. When we feel alone and isolated it is because we experience the Being-with of other Dasein *‘in a mode where they are indifferent and alien’* (p.157). The participants in this study encounter other Beings with whom they share the world as both indifferent and alien, leading to feelings of anxiety, isolation, rejection and abandonment. Indeed, different forms of social exclusion such as poverty, income, race and health often combine to lead to homelessness (Shinn, 2010). *Being missing* and *Being away* are both modes of Being-with and as such are very familiar ways the participants in this study encounter others on a daily basis. Many of the participants in this study are in families where they feel their parents are and always have been either physically or emotionally missing. Families they were removed from for periods of time, families from which they were taken away. They exist in the world today *missing* supportive relationships from family and the broader society; they exist *away* from family and mainstream society.

Being-with is a constitutive characteristic of Dasein and is characterised by the mode of ‘care’ or solicitude. Solicitude refers to our comporting ourselves towards others in a manner of concern, mindfulness, thoughtfulness and attentiveness. However, solicitude can also exist in a deficit mode whereby *‘Being for, against, or without one another, passing one another by, not “mattering” to one another – these are possible ways of solicitude’* (Heidegger, 1962 p. 158). The participants in this study exist in a world where they do not matter to most other Beings, a world where they are passed by, overlooked and ignored at best or more likely treated with outright contempt and disdain. Indeed, homelessness has been shown to be associated with victimization, with repeated episodes of homelessness leading to long-lasting and significant problems such as Complex Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Hopper et al., 2010). The participants in this study have a

number of their everyday concerns taken care of for them by services and agencies which *leap in* for them causing them to step back and leaving them the option of either taking the concern back as a completed, resolved matter or disburdening themselves of it completely. Food and beds are provided within strict conditions and parameters. Homeless persons receive a weekly government allowance and find it extremely difficult to gain employment due to the constraints of living without an address and being subjected to the trials and requirements of securing a bed for the night. Thus the participants are dependent and disempowered with few opportunities to manage and determine their own lives, all of which evoke anxiety. In contrast, the participants experience *leaping ahead* from some of the care workers and agencies they encounter. Others who treat them with respect and warmth, who encourage, support and facilitate them to take responsibility for their own existence and those issues and concerns that matter to them.

## **5.7 Existential Psychotherapy and Others**

Existential psychotherapy holds that human existence is unique and fluid and is also never fully sharable with others (Spinelli, 2003). We can move closer to a shared sense of our experience but never fully attain it thus each of us is alone in our experience of the world: ‘*And yet, paradoxically, this “aloneness” emerges precisely because we are in relation to one another*’ (Spinelli, 1994 p. 294). It falls to each of us alone to create or find our own unique meaning in life and this responsibility evokes deep anxiety or existential angst. The participants in this study are particularly alone, they struggle to share their inner experiences with anyone and so they live with a sense of deep, prevailing anxiety. From an existential-phenomenological perspective, a person becomes a Self through delineation from others. According to Martin Buber (1958) “*I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou. All real living is meeting*” (p.11). Within Existential psychotherapy, the social and personal realms wherein we experience the world help shed light on our relationships with others. The social dimension incorporates our relationships with our family, social class, religious group, race, culture and any other reference group such as the homeless community. It refers to our everyday encounters with others in the public sphere. Our experiences are immersed and intertwined within a social, cultural and

political context and this context determines our thoughts, feelings and behaviours to a considerable degree. Existential psychotherapy is concerned with the polarities, complete with any distortions or ambiguities, existing for the person within the social dimension. Such polarities include dominance and submission, love and hate, acceptance and rejection, sameness and difference (van Deurzen, 2002). The personal dimension comprises our intimate relationships, our intimate relationship with self (as discussed previously) and also our intimate relationships with others. It includes those relationships whereby we experience a sense of 'we'; relationships where we feel we belong, where we feel cared-for, where we feel at home, where our anxiety abates. As with the other dimensions, the personal dimension can be filled with contradictions; feelings of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and isolation, love and hate, acceptance and abandonment.

Homelessness can be viewed as resulting from the breakdown of relationship. In a study by Smith (2008) involving 87 single homeless people, relationship breakdown and substance misuse (both 44%) were cited as the two most common triggers into homelessness. Furthermore, it could be argued that substance misuse is itself triggered by the breakdown of relationship with self. In order to manage and sustain a meaningful and purposeful existence, we need cohesive, supportive, caring relationships both with our self and with others. The participants in this study struggle to achieve and maintain a cohesive sense of self, as discussed previously, and also struggle to form and sustain supportive, nurturing relationships with others in their lives. Many of the participants in this study have anxiety-evoking, problematic and depleting relationships with their families. In support, Smith (2008) found that most homeless persons report currently having no contact with their families. Some of the participants in this study feel obliged and required to provide support and care for other family members when they are already struggling, at a profound level, to care for themselves. Some feel that, in order to survive and look after themselves, they have to break all ties with family members who treat them with debilitating judgment and harsh criticism. Maintaining family ties is a predictor of successfully exiting homelessness (Keane, 2009), however, this may be complicated by whether such ties are supportive or disempowering and more research is needed to tease out the complexity of such

relationships. Some of the participants in this study experience support from some family members but this is always compromised by the lack of support or abandonment they experience from others. Many participants feel supported and loved by grandparents but this too is anxiety-evoking as they have been made feel burdensome by other family members and so feel very protective towards their grandparents. With service providers, relationships are split between those who are supportive and caring and those who belittle and humiliate. Participants are very appreciative of and grateful for those services and care workers who treat them with respect and caring and realise just how life-saving such care can be. Equally, they have strong feelings about the suitability and morality of some service providers who treat the allocation of services as a power game and treat them with disrespect and prejudice. Again, this is in keeping with the Smith's (2008) study which found that homeless persons experienced certain service providers as patronising and undermining of their dignity.

Relationships within the homeless community are compromised by the lack of trust that permeates therein and the anxiety this evokes. The participants in this study also have strong feelings around other homeless persons using up limited resources and the ethical and moral questions this arouses. But some of the participants in this study also very much feel part of the homeless community. They feel great empathy and compassion for each other. This is in keeping with the findings of a Canadian study (Hwang et al., 2009) which found that homeless persons perceive moderately high levels of emotional and social support within their social networks. The participants in this study react to each other inclusively and supportively with many expressing a desire to work with the homeless population if and when they manage to find a way back into mainstream society.

Van Deurzen's (2002) personal dimension encompasses our intimate relationships with others, the world of 'we', everything we consider to be part of ourselves. It is the realm of our intimate relationships with a romantic partner. Three of the participants in this study currently have intimate romantic relationships. All three highly value the support and companionship these relationships provide. They get strength and encouragement from their partners, a sense of belonging, a sharing of thoughts and feelings which reduces



anxiety and they find it hard to imagine how they would survive the challenges of life on the street without such support. According to Hwang et al. (2009) social support can mediate the effects of a stressful life, effects that would otherwise lead to physical and mental health problems. In addition, Kawachi & Berkman (2001) assert that research on social ties needs to place greater import on the '*embeddedness of personal networks in the broader social structure*' (p. 465). Participants in this study report that partners help each other stay away from drugs, remind each other to shower and change clothes, and provide a shoulder to cry on. They can be collaborators in planning a future, a way out of homelessness, a way back into mainstream society. But they also report that partners can also let you down, evoke feelings of anxiety, isolation and abandonment, feelings that are particularly hard to manage when you have no other supportive relationships to which to turn, no home or safe haven to which to retreat. Similarly, Rayburn & Corzine (2010) found that having an intimate partner is an important goal for many homeless persons who seek the emotional support, physical intimacy and opportunity to share hopes and dreams such relationships provide. However, some participants in this study find the intimacy of a romantic relationship hard to tolerate or impossible to attain. It is very difficult to find a nurturing level of intimacy, one which is engaged but not enmeshed, separate but not aloof, when you have yet to experience such intimacy or witness healthy role models. Attaining and sustaining healthy intimate relationships with others is dependent upon having a clear sense of self. Many of the participants in this study, as discussed previously, struggle to negotiate the boundaries between self and other, to find containment either internally or externally, making intimate relationships difficult to achieve and maintain and leaving them to battle their anxiety alone.

## **5.8 Psychodynamic Psychotherapy and Others**

There are two distinct ways in which the Self can be related to the Other: functionally and ontically. Functional relationships are based on instrumental interactions where the other person involved in the interaction could be replaced by another equally competent person without evoking a sense of loss, for example, replacement of one administrative person with another. In contrast, ontical relationships are based on dependence, rather than

function or specific interactions, whereby an Other is a constitutive part of one's Selfhood and cannot be replaced in the event of loss (Boszormenyi-Nagy 1986). We are ontically related to others whose very existence is what makes them significant for us. Thus, loss of an ontical relationship through death or estrangement, induces in us a sense of deep anxiety, mourning and grief. Our early relationships with significant Others, especially parents, become internalised and are enacted within us as internal relational conflicts concerning love, approval, indifference, acceptance, rejection etc. Unlike other relationships, our relationships with our parents cannot be replaced with other parental relationships and furthermore these early relationships, regardless of their current status or level of engagement, have global significance and consequences concerning all other relationships.

Thus, for the participants in this study, relationships with their parents and other family members, both historically and currently, are deeply significant. This is supported by a number of studies presented in the literature review and discussed below. Our family of origin provides our source of caring (Swenson, 1998), gives us a sense of stability, and is permanently physically embedded within us (Jackson, 1995). Our family home is the birthplace of belonging, of caring and concern (Haslam et al., 2009), however, for some, the lived experience of home can be more reminiscent of a prison filled with anxiety, fear, isolation and exclusion (Giddens, 1990; Dupuis and Thorns, 1998). For some, home is steeped in anxiety, in unavoidable domestic tensions (Sibley, 1995), with those who suffer abuse therein feeling '*homeless at home*' (Wardhaugh, 1999). Both Wardhaugh (1999) and Sibley (1995) highlight the symbolic or objective exclusion experienced within families by those who experience or express unconventional beliefs or ideas concerning sexuality or gender. Seager and Manning (2009) list our five universal psychological needs: to be loved; to be listened to; to belong; to achieve; and to have meaning and hope. It is through our relationships that we meet these fundamental, universal needs and our anxiety is reduced. Indeed, Seager (2011) points out that inclusion by definition is relational and furthermore it is the very people who did not experience inclusive family life who become the most entrenched rough sleepers. He goes on to say that it is psychological exclusion

rather than social or physical exclusion that is the biggest issue for rough sleepers. The participants in this study became who they are within their early familial relationships: relationships characterised for many by anxiety, rejection, abandonment, isolation, indifference, aggression and chaos. Some of the participants in this study were moved from home to home whereby parents were regularly ‘replaced’ with ‘new’ parents resulting in ontical relationships being replaced by functional relationships. These participants grew up with an emphasis on relationships that met their instrumental needs rather than recognition and support concerning their need for connection and deep engagement with those who hold ontical significance for them, those who matter by virtue of their very existence, those who can alleviate their existential angst. Many of the participants in this study are in deep mourning, mourning for the loss of parental relationships they needed but never had, loss for what was and what might have been, loss for the future that will never be. Furthermore, many of the participants in this study have internalised external relational struggles dominated by feelings of worthlessness, rejection, abandonment, isolation, aggression and hopelessness. Thus, their relationships with others exist against the backdrop of deep internal turmoil, angst and strife.

Child and family psychiatrist, John Bowlby (1998), states that our health, happiness and self-reliance depend on being reared in a stable home where we experience considerable attention from our parents. Furthermore, the person (usually the mother) providing such attention and focus, herself needs considerable support and assistance. Bowlby embraced Mary Ainsworth’s concept of a secure base as a place *‘from which a child or an adolescent can make sorties into the outside world and to which he can return knowing for sure that he will be welcomed when he gets there, nourished physically and emotionally, comforted if distressed, reassured if frightened’* (p. 11). Having a parent who is both attentive and responsive is essential in facilitating healthy emotional development. Most of the participants in this study grew up without such a secure base. Instead they experienced parents who were often unavailable or absent physically or emotionally through depression or the misuse of drugs and alcohol; parents who were unresponsive through overwhelm and chaos resulting from violent and aggressive lifestyles. Many of the participants in this

study grew up within relationships that did not provide a secure base for them, a base that would have reduced their anxiety, allowed them to venture into the world taking risks and exploring whilst all the time knowing the safety and security of home awaits their return. The participants in this study continue to live a life characterised by anxiety and devoid of a secure base; a life dominated by feelings of being unwanted and rejected. When they venture into the world they do so alone and unsupported, when they are frightened there is no-one to provide reassurance, when they risk engagement with the broader external world they do so without the safety of a secure space to which to retreat and be cared-for should they need it.

The quality of our relationships with significant others, specifically concerning their availability and responsiveness, determines the extent to which we develop a cohesive self (Banai, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2005). Significant others, or *selfobjects*, are tasked with meeting our three fundamental developmental needs, needs which persist throughout the lifespan (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). These three needs are: mirroring, idealization and twinship. Mirroring refers to our need to be appreciated, celebrated and valued and having this need met promotes our sense of self-esteem along with our ability to commit to and sustain tasks and projects. Many of the participants in this study were not valued and prized as children, many felt burdensome and rejected, often times they experienced deep anxiety, isolation and abandonment. Idealization refers to our need to look up to and admire another person and through this admiration to feel a sense of identification and merging. Normal development along this axis leads to a healthy ability to form and realise goals and ideals. Many of the participants in this study had poor or inadequate role models; parents who were absent or engaged in daily struggles to meet their own emotional and psychological needs with little capacity to meet the idealization needs of their children. The third developmental need, twinship, refers to the need to belong or feel connected. It encompasses our need to communicate our feelings to significant others and form and maintain intimate relationships. It also comprises our capacity to belong to organizations and communities with shared values, ideals and goals, or capacity to share our inner thoughts and feelings and in so doing reduce our anxiety. Here too, the participants in this

study struggled to have this developmental need adequately met. Often they felt different and disconnected as children. They lived on the edge of their family and community and continue to live on the edge of society. They struggle to find intimacy without losing themselves, to be a part of a community dominated by trust issues, and to belong to a society that rejects and disowns them. For Kohut, having these three fundamental needs adequately met is essential to the formation and maintenance of a cohesive self, a self that holds consistent values, ideals and goals, a self that feels connected to and part of society, a self that possesses a strong sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Many of the participants in this study struggle to realise a cohesive sense of self and thus experience considerable difficulty in relating to others and to society in ways that are nourishing and fulfilling for them, ways that would allow them access and receive care, ways that would alleviate their anxiety, ways that would promote and support a healthy and rewarding way of being in the world.

## **5.9 Concluding Comments**

This chapter discussed the findings of this research in relation to Martin Heidegger's philosophy, Existential and Psychodynamic psychotherapy theories, and existing homelessness literature. The mood of boredom as explicated by Heidegger was discussed and utilised as a framework for understanding the way in which homeless persons *belong* in the world: their existence as an empty self in an empty world. Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips' (1993) suggestion that boredom may in fact be the mourning of everyday life provided a fitting conceptualisation of the mood of homelessness and its relationship to exclusion from everyday, mainstream society and its routines and rituals.

Existential angst illuminated the characteristic of *Taking Care*. Life on the street evokes deep anxiety, anxiety for oneself and anxiety about rejection and abandonment by others. Heidegger's assertion that care is the formal ontological structural totality of Dasein provided a framework to discuss the homeless person's mattering relationships. Solicitude helped illuminate Dasein's way of *Being-with* as an essential feature of being human.

Homeless persons' struggles to take care of self and to access and receive care from others were explored. Psychotherapists Kohut and Winnicott provided important conceptualisations of the formation and maintenance of a cohesive, contained self. Their theories facilitated an understanding of the essential relatedness of human beings and of the barriers and blocks to meaningful, caring and nurturing engagement with self and others. The relationship challenges faced by homeless persons were discussed highlighting the difficulties posed by the failure to have basic fundamental developmental needs adequately met both as children and currently as adults. The findings of this study fit with those of O'Connor (2003) and Campbell (1994) among others who disclose the pivotal role containment plays in vulnerability to homelessness. Homeless persons live in a state of deep anxiety. They have profound difficulty containing their own emotions internally and equally struggle to find any external containment in a hostile, rejecting world. Instead they exist in the only place they can tolerate; they exist on the edge, in the lurch, on the threshold, neither in nor out.

In conclusion, homelessness can be viewed as a profoundly boring, deeply anxious existence characterised by the breakdown of caring relationships with self or others. The next chapter will present the implications of this conceptualisation.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Implications

This chapter sets out the implications of the findings of this research. *Passing time* and *Taking Care* have been disclosed as two essential, constitutive characteristics of the phenomenon of homelessness which reveal something of its meaning and ground.

Government agencies, policy makers, service providers and psychotherapists need to understand these characteristics and incorporate methods and strategies to address them into the care and solicitude of homeless persons. Some suggestions as to how this might be achieved by addressing such issues as profound boredom, existential anxiety, the need for the formation and maintenance of ontical and caring relationships, and the lack of internal and external containment experienced by many homeless persons are laid out below. These suggestions are designed to invite discussion, debate and further research as to how they might benefit those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Finally, some strengths and limitations of this current research are highlighted.

#### 6.1 Relieving Boredom

Life for the participants in this study is deeply boring at best and all too often profoundly so. Living without a home, a place of refuge, somewhere to store your personal and prized possessions makes it extraordinarily difficult to engage in life in any meaningful way. Homeless persons' sense of belonging in the world is one of boredom; boredom with the world and boredom with the self. Some homeless persons exist as an empty self suspended in an empty world. For some, their sense of identity has dissipated, merging with the undifferentiated world to combine into an angst-ridden, murky, existential soup.

The participants in this study are deeply anxious: they live in fear for their safety and their well-being. They walk the streets relentlessly without a sense of destination or purpose. They wait and they walk. They wait for a bed, for morning, for night, for warmth, for safety, for hope, for a future. They lack opportunities to express their innate creativity; a core human spontaneity that is thwarted and denied. They have nothing to do, nowhere to do it, and nothing to do it with. They carry their world around with them or store it in a small locker, if they are lucky. They exist in an isolated, disconnected present; a present cut-off from a mattering past and unrelated to a meaningful future. They live as an isolated self in a halted or suspended *now*. That definitive human way of being, that capacity to simultaneously experience our past, present and future evades them. Life and time have stood still.

The mood of homelessness is boredom and homeless persons are thrown into an already existing, mooded world of boredom. So what should be done to address the profound boredom inherent in homelessness? Psychotherapy theory gives us some insight into the bravery and containment required to reach into the emptiness boredom evokes to find our desire. It highlights the necessity for caring, nurturing, supportive, containing relationships in facilitating this precarious process. There is considerable risk to a fragile, unintegrated self if we risk experiencing our desire only to be let down and bitterly disappointed yet again. Since boredom is neither internally nor externally derived but rather is an interplay of the empty self in an empty world, each of these manifestations of boredom needs to be considered together and separately. They must be viewed in terms of a hermeneutic circle whereby focus is placed on the whole bored world of homelessness and equally focus is placed on the individual boredom of the homeless person. Thus, homeless boredom must be addressed on two fronts; the already existing mood of the homeless world and the boredom experienced by the homeless person.

In terms of boredom as the prevailing mood of homelessness, government agencies and service providers need to address the lack of meaningful, fulfilling and creative pursuits and activities for homeless persons to engage with, both on a daily basis and also in the medium-



term future. Sending homeless persons out onto the street with nowhere to go and nothing to do is inhuman and intolerable. Existing in an unwelcoming, rejecting world, a world devoid of meaningful engagement, enterprise and creativity is profoundly boring and damaging to a person's sense of self. Homeless persons need services to *leap ahead* rather than *leap in* for them, services that encourage and facilitate them to take responsibility for their own care and well-being, perhaps for the first time. But homeless persons cannot take such responsibility in a world where they are excluded and alienated, a world wherein they are treated with disdain and contempt. Homeless services and government agencies need to provide a bridge between the marginalisation and isolation of the homeless world and mainstream society by helping homeless persons access and utilise meaningful, purposeful, creative activities and pursuits which help them engage with life both now and in an anticipated future.

With regard to the homeless person's sense of boredom, psychotherapy needs to take a more active stance, both in terms of educating service providers and government agencies and in helping homeless persons understand and work through their debilitating boredom. Homeless persons need to be supported and contained so that they can feel safe enough psychologically to reach into their deep emptiness to allow their desire to emerge. In order to negotiate this terrifying but potentially liberating process, homeless persons need to experience a *re-parenting* by someone who has the capacity to emotionally hold them in a safe and contained environment. Many homeless persons are very vulnerable and afraid and need someone who can and will be present for and attentive towards them, someone to provide a secure base. They need to be supported both practically and emotionally while they undertake responsibility for their present and future by engaging in rewarding, purposeful, self-enhancing activities and pursuits. Psychotherapists are well equipped to play an active part in providing the emotional and psychological safety necessary to enable homeless persons to trust both themselves and the world; the safety to allow their desire emerge from the emptiness of profound boredom.

## 6.2 Fostering Caring Relationships

Taking Care **of** self and **from** others is an essential, constitutive characteristic of homelessness. To live a meaningful, connected life we need to be able to access care both internally and externally. Furthermore, homelessness can be viewed as the consequence of the breakdown or absence of such caring relationships. As human beings we do not exist in isolation, rather we co-exist with others with whom we share the world: our fundamental way of Being is *Being-with*. And as such, even when we are isolated and alienated we are still concerned with our relationships or, more precisely, our lack relationships. Our relationship with our self and our relationships with others are so inextricably interlinked that it is impossible and futile to attempt to understand one without understanding the other. Thus, to understand myself I must understand my relationships with others and vice versa. As human beings, we anticipate our future, we project ourselves towards possibilities and it is through these projections that we encounter and get to know ourselves. Homeless persons have very limited and restricted capacities for meaningfully anticipating their future since they are rejected and excluded from most of the possibilities embedded in society. Homeless persons struggle to feel at home within the world and equally within themselves. They live with a sense of inner turmoil where internal conflicts battle for dominance. Their hopes, dreams and aspirations have been covered over and are largely hidden from themselves. Many have lost hope and belief in the future and remain trapped in a disconnected *now*. They exist in the world as fragmented selves lacking internal cohesion and integration.

In order to form a cohesive self, we have three fundamental needs which persist across the lifespan. These needs are: the need to be loved and prized; the need to look up to or idealise someone; and the need to belong or feel connected (Kohut, 1975). Many homeless persons did not have these fundamental needs adequately met as children and do not have them adequately met today as adults. Service providers, government agencies and psychotherapists need to understand these core human needs and design and deliver services accordingly. Homeless person need to be treated with dignity and respect, to be treated as if they matter. They need caring, kind mentors or role-models to provide a sense of safety and hope in the future. They need a sense of belonging, a connection to both community and society at large.

Homeless persons need to be treated as though they already have a cohesive and integrated self in order to become cohesive and integrated. The prevailing attitude towards homeless persons of exclusion and contempt, which dominates throughout society, needs to be replaced by one characterised by inclusion and caring. To achieve this it is essential that service providers adopt a psychologically-minded approach as outlined by Seager (2011). Such an approach involves building up sufficiently trusting relationships with homeless persons who find it difficult to sustain life off the street before collaborating with them to find viable options. Alternatively, engaging in the Housing First approach which provides on-going support to persons who are not 'housing-ready' but who are willing and able to move off the street is a meaningful option. There is no one universal solution and devising and planning a strategy, based on an understanding of psychological development, to help someone engage with society in a meaningful and individually tailored way is essential.

### **6.3 Supporting Ontical Relationships**

Our relationships with our parents and other family members, both historically and currently, are deeply significant. Our early formative relationships are the birthplace of our sense of safety and security in the world, both physically and emotionally. Our early relationships show us how to be cared for and how to care for ourselves. However, for many homeless persons, those crucial early relationships can be lacking dramatically in warmth and caring. Many of the participants in this study did not receive an adequate level of caring and nurturing and so were forced to care for themselves, and often for other family members, long before they were mature enough or developmentally ready to do so. These formative, ontical relationships with parents and other care-givers are based on dependence with the other person being a constitutive part of our selfhood. Such ontical relationships are the relationships we form with others who matter to us by virtue of their very existence and as such cannot be replaced following death or estrangement (Boszorenyi-Nagy 1986). The loss of such ontical relationships results in experiences of deep anxiety, grief and mourning. Some of the participants in this study grew up in situations where ontical relationships were replaced with functional relationships (relationships based on practical and instrumental interactions rather than dependence) and are therefore in mourning. Those persons we relate

to functionally are replaceable for us by someone else who can fulfil the same role. Some of the participants were cared for by multiple care-givers or persons who did not matter to them ontically. As adults too, many homeless persons are cared for by multiple key workers and service providers in services with high turnover rates for staff. Government agencies, policy makers and service providers need to be made aware of and address the basic human need for ontical relationships, that is, relationships with others who simply, because of their very existence, matter deeply to us. Many homeless persons live without the support of parents and extended family, many have difficulty forming and maintaining intimate relationships, and consequently many homeless persons live without crucial ontical relationships. Families at risk of homelessness, families ravaged by drugs and alcohol, families battling unemployment and poverty need instrumental and psychological support to maintain and negotiate relationships that are, in fact, irreplaceable by their very nature. Homeless persons need support in accessing and maintaining ontical relationships if they are to achieve a fundamental sense of belonging and connection in the world. Psychotherapists are best placed to understand and provide the type of secure relationships necessary to foster the sense of belonging necessary to successfully engage in society.

#### **6.4 Towards Containment**

Homeless persons live on the edge, at the margins, on the periphery of society. They live in the only space they can tolerate, neither in nor out. They live their lives, very visibly, in public where they simultaneously express their conflicting need to be both noticed and left alone (Seager, 2011). They live in a world of both internal and external turmoil. Homeless persons are unable to find sufficient emotional containment either within themselves or within their world. Government agencies and service providers need to prioritise and address the homeless persons' depleted capacity for containment in order to enhance their capacity to tolerate both the internal and external emotional turmoil they experience. This could be achieved by placing psychotherapists at the heart of the design and implementation of programmes to address homelessness. Such programmes should be based on the principles contained in leaping ahead rather than leaping in for homeless persons. Furthermore, psychotherapists could provide the *good-enough* parenting that many homeless persons did

not receive as infants and children. Winnicott (1962) sees the infant as a person who is constantly on the threshold of unthinkable anxiety or annihilation. This description could equally be applied to many homeless persons who live in a state of fear and anxiety without the internal or external resources necessary to cope. Homeless persons need *good-enough* psychotherapists to hold them together and contain their inner turmoil through emotional attunement and the provision of a safe, holding environment. Psychotherapists can protect the homeless person from annihilation, from falling forever, from disintegration, from total isolation. This can be achieved through therapeutic and nurturing ‘holding’, ‘handling’ and ‘object-presenting’. The psychotherapist, through empathy, contains and manages the homeless person’s feelings and emotions while their true self develops coherently and cohesively. Through sensitive, emotional ‘handling’ the psychotherapist responds and reacts appropriately thus, helping the person to integrate their emotional and physical experiences into an integrated, cohesive mind and body unity. Finally, through ‘object-presenting’ the psychotherapist facilitates the homeless person to gradually seek out their needs without overly frustrating them or without forcing the world onto them. This is similar to the concept of *leaping ahead* discussed earlier and helps the homeless person develop a sense of trust both in the world and in the self to both meet their own needs and have them met by the external world. In this way, psychotherapy can help homeless persons contain their internal emotional experiences and also help them to trust more in their own and in the world’s capacity to contain them.

Psychotherapists are trained to emotionally hold and contain clients at their most vulnerable and fragile and homeless persons are among the most vulnerable and fragile of all. Seager (2011) lays out important guidelines in forming a therapeutic community to facilitate the re-parenting or re-homing of homeless persons. He contends that homeless persons need to belong to a therapeutic family where they can form and maintain secure attachments; relationships characterised by empathy, caring and containment. Seager’s vision is consistent with the recommendations of this study which strongly contends that homeless persons need to be part of a *therapeutic family* where they learn to contain their own internal emotional experiences and equally learn to trust in the external world to contain their emotions.

## 6.5 Transferability of Findings

Qualitative research does not permit the generalisation of the findings of this study, however, some transferability may be possible. Although transferability must be applied by the reader of the research, it is hoped that the findings will resonate with others who are or have been a member of a marginalised group, or have an interest in or have studied such populations. The essential, constitutive characteristic of *Passing Time* and its mood of boredom seem likely to resonate with some asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, and those who are disabled or otherwise unwelcome in society. Being excluded from mainstream society and its routines and rituals, being denied access to services and facilities, being refused opportunities for creativity and expression are all factors which leave a person very vulnerable to profound boredom. Furthermore, persons who find themselves excluded and isolated through sexual orientation or gender identity, such as Trans\* people, or ethnicity, such as Travellers or Roma, may well experience states of profound boredom. *Taking Care* of oneself and accessing care from others and the deep anxiety this can evoke may also be an essential characteristic of other phenomena such as those experienced by asylum seekers experiencing direct provision, Travellers unwelcome in the community, disabled persons without adequate support and facilities, immigrants struggling to understand the welfare system and Trans\* people marginalised and alienated by family and society.

## 6.6 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions of the Study

Utilising a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to uncover something of the phenomenon of homelessness is a strength of this study as it allowed homelessness to reveal itself in itself with the minimum influence of preconceptions and assumptions. The use of in-depth interviews with just six participants is a particular strength of this study. Concentrating on a relatively small number of participants provided deep, rich and meaningful accounts and analysis of life on the street. Exploration of these accounts revealed two essential, constitutive characteristics of the phenomenon of homelessness. Uncovering boredom as the mood of homelessness represents a unique and important contribution to the existing homelessness literature. Elucidating the mood using Heidegger's philosophy to reveal the

profound boredom experienced by the most entrenched rough sleepers makes a useful and worthwhile contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon. Understanding something of the experience of existing as an empty self in an empty world gets us closer to the lived experience of homelessness. Such understanding can be used to engage in a more meaningful and helpful way with those living on the streets and to design and implement interventions to address profound boredom. Revealing the deep anxiety evoked by limited capacity to take care of self and to access and accept care from others adds to the literature concerning the pivotal role of the breakdown of relationship in becoming homeless. A further strength of this study is the illumination of the relationship with and capacity to care for self, as well as being cared for by others, in becoming and remaining homeless.

The qualitative methodology and the small number of participants accessed in this study do not allow broad generalisation of the findings to the wider homeless population. However, some transferability of understanding facilitated through a resonance with the interpretations or a *phenomenological nod* may well have been achieved. In this way, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness has been elucidated. Some participants were noticeably tired, distraught and distracted during their interviews. This may have detracted from the content and focus of the interview and may have, at times, interrupted the flow. However, being tired, lacking in engagement, and lacking emotional containment are intrinsic characteristics of life without a home and as such brought a very real sense of being homeless into the study. Interviews were conducted in the homeless centre attended by the participants. This may have influenced who took part in the study and who declined. Participants' disclosures may have been affected by their relationships with service providers and their deep-felt appreciation for the services and care they receive. Being one of a small number of participants being interviewed may have influenced or determined some of what they disclosed or withheld. In addition, follow up interviews with participants may have provided other rich and important insights and disclosures which would help further illuminate the phenomenon of homelessness.

It is recommended that future research places the two disclosed characteristics, *Passing Time* and *Taking Care* at its core. Further exploration of the mood of boredom within the world of homelessness itself and as experienced by the homeless person would yield important insights into what it is like to belong to the homeless world and would further reveal the phenomenon of homelessness. Deeper consideration of the place of solicitude and the pivotal role of both caring and ontical relationships in becoming and remaining homeless would be very valuable. In addition, research involving a broader range of homeless persons, specifically those over 25 years of age, homeless families and homeless persons living outside of Dublin city would be very meaningful. Finally, research exploring the place and contribution of psychotherapy and psychotherapists in designed and implementing approaches and strategies to collaboratively work with homeless persons to help them re-integrate into mainstream society is strongly recommended.

## **6.7 Conclusion of the Study**

This study provided an in-depth exploration of the everyday experiences of six homeless persons living in Dublin. The phenomenon of homelessness was illuminated through the disclosure of *Passing Time* and *Taking Care* as essential, constitutive characteristics which reveal something of its meaning and ground. Boredom was revealed as the prevalent and pervasive mood of homelessness, both in terms of the homeless person and the homeless world. The ability to take care of oneself and to access care from others and the deep anxiety this evokes was uncovered as a core constituent of homelessness. The homeless person was revealed as an empty self in an empty world and homelessness was conceptualised as a profoundly boring, deeply anxious existence characterised by the breakdown of relationship, particularly caring and ontical relationship, with self or others.

It is strongly recommended that government agencies, policy makers, service providers and psychotherapists prioritise the incorporation of methods and strategies to address the essential, constitutive characteristics of homelessness. Specifically, it is recommended that homeless persons are facilitated to engage in life meaningfully, purposefully and creatively



and that they are supported in forming and maintaining caring, self-enhancing relationships with self and others. Finally, it is recommended that psychotherapists are actively involved in providing a secure base from which homeless persons can develop and access internal and external containment leading to the development of a cohesive, integrated self and the formation and maintenance of caring and ontical relationships.

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# **Appendix A**

## **Interview Questions**

### **Demographic Questions**

1. Date of birth
2. Place of birth
3. Current living arrangements
4. Number of homeless episodes
5. Age at first homeless episode
6. Overall duration of homelessness
7. Length of this period of homelessness
8. Relationship status
9. Number of children/dependents

### **Interview Questions**

1. Please tell me about yesterday.
2. Can you tell me about last night?
3. What is home to you?
4. Can you tell me about a time, if there is one, that you felt at home?
5. How does your experience of feeling at home relate to your current situation?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about being homeless?

## APPENDIX B

### Ethics Committee Approval

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University



Ms. Susan Eustace  
School of Nursing and Human Sciences

16<sup>th</sup> November 2012

**REC Reference:** DCUREC/2012/183

**Proposal Title:** **Being Homeless: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry**

**Applicants:** Dr. Mark Philbin, Prof. Pamela Gallagher, Ms. Susan Eustace

Dear Susan

Further to expedited review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal. Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee. Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Donal O'Mathuna'.

Dr. Donal O'Mathuna  
Chairperson  
DCU Research Ethics Committee



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## APPENDIX C

### Plain Language Statement

*Office of the Vice-President for Research*

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#### **DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY** **Plain Language Statement**

The title of this research study is *Being Homeless*. My name is Susan Eustace and I am a counselling psychologist who is doing this piece of research as part of my Doctorate in Psychotherapy at the School of Nursing and Human Sciences at Dublin City University. My contact details are [eustacsm@tcd.ie](mailto:eustacsm@tcd.ie) or 087 755 0020.

The purpose of this research is to explore, during an interview, your experience of being homeless. It is hoped that the information from this study will help psychotherapists and policy makers to understand more about the experience of being homeless. The interview will resemble a normal conversation and you will be asked to tell a story or stories about your experience of being homeless. You are free to talk about any experiences you choose and to withhold any information you prefer not to discuss.

You will be interviewed in a place that feels comfortable and safe for you. The interview will be audiotaped and will last approximately one hour ending when you feel satisfied that you have told your story. You can choose not to answer any question, end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time and this will not affect your rights as a person in any way.

The information you provide during the interview will be confidential unless there are serious legal reasons to discuss the information with someone else. The interview will be typed and no information that identifies you will be included in the typed copy of the interview. Your name and the names of others you mention will be replaced by pseudonyms (false names). Once the interview has been typed, I will arrange to meet with you again to check if you are happy with your story. At this point you can remove any part of your story or, indeed, the whole story if you are not happy. You can also add in any pieces that you would now like to include.

The taped interview will be securely stored, by me, until the end of the study when it will be erased. The typed interview will be carefully disposed of after 10 years.



Many people benefit from telling their story and expressing how they feel and I hope that you will gain some benefit from talking to me. I hope to present the final report at conferences and to publish it. Your confidentiality, in this study, will remain secure concerning any presentations or publications. Copies of the study will be presented to any agency that provides participants and will be offered to you and all other participants.

**If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person,  
Please contact:**

*The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, Dublin City University, Dublin  
9. Tel 01-7008000*

## APPENDIX D

### Informed Consent Form

*Office of the Vice-President for Research*

**DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY**



#### **Informed Consent Form**

The title of this research study is *Being Homeless*. My name is Susan Eustace and I am a counselling psychologist who is doing this piece of research as part of my Doctorate in Psychotherapy at the School of Nursing and Human Sciences at Dublin City University.

The purpose of this research is to explore, through interview, your experience of being homeless. The interview, which will last for approximately an hour, will be recorded using a tape recorder to ensure that the researcher remembers everything that is discussed during the interview. If you decide at any time during the study that you do not want to participate, you can withdraw at any time. This decision will not affect your rights as a homeless person in any way.

The information you provide during the interview will be confidential unless there are serious legal reasons to share information. No information that identifies you will be included in the typed copy of your interview and every effort will be made to ensure you cannot be identified from your story. Your name, and the names of others you mention, will be removed and replaced by pseudonyms (false names). The taped interviews and the typed transcripts will be securely stored by the researcher. The tapes will be erased at the end of the study and the transcripts will be carefully destroyed after 10 years.

#### **AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY**

##### **Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)**

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	Yes/No
I understand the information provided	Yes/No
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	Yes/No
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	Yes/No
I am aware that my interview will be audiotaped	Yes/No

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

**Participants Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name in Block Capitals:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### Transcript Extract & Data Analysis Example

Transcript	First Order Construct	Second Order Construct
<p>(Long pause) ... felt at home in my grandmother's house.</p> <p><b>Did you?</b></p> <p>(Affirmative noise) Lived in there for a while. Lost the house, em...</p> <p><b>You lost-?</b></p> <p>My house. My mother and father lost the house, lost jobs and lost house and we went to live in my grandmother's house for a while.</p> <p><b>How old were you roughly then?</b></p> <p>Nine.</p> <p><b>Nine?</b></p> <p>Eight, nine, yeah.</p> <p><b>Eight, nine. So you went to live in your grandmother's house.</b></p> <p><b>And you've got even a little smile when you're thinking about that, yeah?</b></p> <p>Yeah, good, it was good. It was good.</p> <p><b>Can you tell me what it felt like in your grandmother's house?</b></p> <p>It was quiet. It was quiet and peaceful. My mother and father weren't there. I think they were staying with me aunties. I stayed there, my little brother stayed up in my auntie's. My other brothers stayed up in the other aunties. We were split up for a while. Good, it was grand. Cuz they went to the houses with other cousins. I just went to the house with my grandmother [unclear] my grandmother.</p> <p><b>Just you and your grandmother, was it?</b></p> <p>Yeah, yeah. There's always be something going, like there wouldn't be a day where we'd be sat there alone, but... there'd still</p>	<p>felt at home in my grandmother's house</p> <p>My mother and father lost the house, lost jobs and lost house</p> <p>Yeah, good, it was good. It was good.</p> <p>It was quiet. It was quiet and peaceful. My mother and father weren't there.</p>	<p>Feeling of belonging</p> <p>Feeling of loss</p> <p>Sense of belonging</p> <p>Peace and quiet in absence of parents' fighting</p>

Transcript	First Order Construct	Second Order Construct
<p>be, still be them moments, you know, still be there at night time, where it was just quiet like. No-one arguing. No-one roaring at each other, you know.</p> <p><b>Yeah. So that's a really lovely memory you have, isn't it?</b></p> <p>(Affirmative noise)</p> <p><b>How long, do you know how long you were there for?</b></p> <p>... a year or two, maybe two? Two years I think.</p> <p><b>And if you think about those two years where you felt at home in your granny's... is there any image that comes to mind or any...</b></p> <p>The floral designs. The floral designs on everything. Carpets, couch, curtains, chairs... floral design.</p> <p><b>Okay. (Long pause) That's a really nice... kinda... Yeah, I haven't thought about that in ages, you know that? I haven't thought about that in years. Mmh. What's the point in thinking about it [unclear] don't talk about it, so... don't really have any chance to think about it.</b></p> <p><b>And I suppose it's, it's what you – well this is me saying this, you mightn't agree with this, but it's what you'll hopefully get back one day, is it?</b></p> <p>(Affirmative noise)</p> <p><b>That, that feeling that... Because when you're talking about it you had such a lovely smile on your face and sort of... you know... a nice kinda...</b></p>	<p>still be there at night time, where it was just quiet like. No-one arguing. No-one roaring at each other, you know.</p> <p>The floral designs. The floral designs on everything. Carpets, couch, curtains, chairs... floral design.</p> <p>I haven't thought about that in years. Mmh. What's the point in thinking about it [unclear] don't talk about it, so... don't really have any chance to think about it.</p>	<p>Feeling at home. Sense of safety and calm</p> <p>Sensory experience of home.</p> <p>Forgotten memories of home. Contrast with current experience. Lack of opportunity for expression.</p>

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Transcript	First Order Construct	Second Order Construct
<p>Ok, ok. Em... I won't keep you too much longer, cuz I know you're tired and I really appreciate what you're saying, it's just so good for me the- the way you describe things, and I'm wondering if you could tell me about... maybe... a good day that you had on the street, if there's such a thing or...</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>Yeah?</p> <p>Yeah. Em... she does make me days good.</p> <p>Say that again?</p> <p>She does make me days good.</p> <p>She does?</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>Ok. Ok.</p> <p>I think I get depressed sometimes. Very depressed sometimes. Em... sometimes to the point I don't care anymore and just [unclear] she's gonna make it [unclear].</p> <p>And can you say a little bit about how she does that? Just checking that I'm getting you.</p> <p>She's just always happy, I don't know how she does it.</p> <p>She's always happy?</p> <p>Yeah, I don't know how she does it.</p> <p>You don't know how she does it.</p>	<p>Yeah. Em... she does make me days good</p> <p>I think I get depressed sometimes. Very depressed sometimes.</p>	<p>Sense of belonging. Importance of relationship/connection.</p> <p>Loneliness and isolation of living on the street. Breakdown of relationships with self and others.</p>