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## Homelessness and Social Inclusion

Editors

Isobel Anderson, Maša Filipovič Hrast and Joe Finnerty

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Editorial

## Researching Homelessness: Challenging Exclusion?

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### Abstract

This themed issue of *Social Inclusion* provides a timely opportunity to reflect on how contemporary research is addressing the multi-dimensional issue of homelessness around the world. The papers presented here provide a wide range of new evidence on homelessness including theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions. They draw on a range of national experiences in Europe and beyond, and addressing the issue of social inclusion and social exclusion of homeless or previously homeless people from a range of perspectives and approaches. It is hoped that the contributions to this themed issue will prove influential in terms of both scholarship and potential to enhance policy making and service delivery to some of our most excluded citizens.

### Keywords

hidden homelessness; homelessness policy-making; homelessness research; policy evaluation; research networks; service user participation; social inclusion

### Issue

This editorial is part of the issue “Homelessness and Social Inclusion”, edited by Isobel Anderson (University of Stirling, UK), Maša Filipovič Hrast (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Joe Finnerty (University College Cork, Ireland).

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As colleagues who are all active in the European Network for Housing Research group on ‘Welfare Policy, Homelessness and Social Exclusion’ (WELPHASE, n.d.) the invitation to edit a themed issue of *Social Inclusion* on our core research topic has provided a timely opportunity to reflect on how contemporary research is addressing the multi-dimensional issue of homelessness around the world. Editing this themed issue has allowed us to consolidate longstanding links with colleagues in Europe, including researchers working with the European Observatory on Homelessness (n.d.) which is based with FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Homelessness Agencies (FEANTSA, n.d.). We have also been privileged to forge new links with researchers in our field from different disciplines and research networks beyond Europe. Such research networks appear to be expanding and to have extensive reach around global regions, testifying to the vibrancy of the sub-discipline of homeless-

ness studies, and also sadly to the continuing and pervasive challenge of this social problem. The resulting collection of papers present a wide range of new evidence on homelessness including theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions which we hope will prove influential in terms of both scholarship and potential to enhance policy making and service delivery to some of our most excluded citizens.

Our initial call for papers for this themed issue noted that homelessness remains an enduring social issue which has been analysed and interpreted from a wide range of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. The analysis of homelessness in relation to social exclusion emerged in the 1990s in parallel with European Union debates on the dynamics of poverty and the multi-dimensional nature of exclusion from social, economic and civic spheres of participation for some groups in society (Berghman, 1995; Cousins, 1998; Levitas, 1996). So-

cial inclusion analysis helped to shed light on the complexity of homelessness as a multifaceted social issue impacting on, and relating to, housing, employment, income and social and family life; with those experiencing homelessness some of the most excluded citizens (Pleace, 1998). More recently, broader issues of inequality became a focus for the analysis of welfare policy and homelessness (O'Sullivan, 2011; Pleace, 2011). An aim of this themed issue was to revisit our understanding of homelessness, through a social inclusion lens, particularly in the period following the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent austerity measures. However, the scope of this themed issue embraces a range of contemporary approaches to understanding homelessness as well as examining policy challenges and innovative interventions to prevent or alleviate homelessness.

The issue brings together articles that encompass diverse social issues linked to homelessness and also examine homelessness in various parts of the world beyond Europe (e.g. Brazil, Canada, and Japan). The articles tackle the issue of social inclusion and social exclusion of homeless or previously homeless people in different ways. As a response to homelessness, the Housing First approach has grown in influence in the USA and Europe in recent years and in our first paper, Quilgars and Pleace (2016) analyse existing research evidence to assess how effective the Housing First approach is, in ultimately ensuring social inclusion as people move out of homelessness. Christian, Abrams, Clapham, Thomas, Nayyar and Cotler (2016) also examine the effectiveness of services for homeless people but focus on the behavioural and psychological precursors that influence decisions of homeless people in their involvement with services and, in the end, their social inclusion. In our third contribution, Macías Balda (2016) also sees social inclusion as a goal of service provision and critically reflects on how local homelessness services are addressing the needs of people with complex needs. Following these three contributions from the UK context, Ursin's (2016) multi-method and ethnographic research on street youth in Brazil uncovers considerable complexity in patterns of inclusion and exclusion of homeless youth, while Okamoto's (2016) contribution reviews the broader debates around the problem of social exclusion and housing exclusion in the Japanese context.

A number of contributions focus on the more hidden or less researched homeless populations, such as sofa surfing among young people in the UK (Clarke, 2016) and rural homeless in Canada (Waagemakers Schiff, Schiff, & Turner, 2016). Abramovich's (2016) paper on the development of policy towards homeless LGBT youth in Alberta, Canada, highlights an under-researched dimension of homelessness and also addresses related policy formation issues while Paradis (2016) (also in the Canadian context) critiques the crucial issue of the extent to which the voices of homeless persons themselves are heard in research and policy development through her case study of participation in homelessness conferences.

Finally, Anderson, Dyb and Finnerty (2016) present a three-country comparison of homelessness policy and outcomes across Scotland, Norway and Ireland, through the lens of institutionalism and path-dependency.

The papers gathered in this themed issue come from a range of disciplines (geography, sociology, psychology, social policy) with some embracing cross-disciplinary approaches (notably Christian et al., 2016). They tackle core conceptual issues such as defining and measuring homelessness (Anderson et al., 2016; Clarke, 2016); as well as the emerging challenges of understanding and responding to a wide and complex range of needs which homeless people may have, beyond a need for housing (Christian et al., 2016; Macías Balda, 2016; Quilgars & Pleace, 2016). Going forward, the monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of differing policy and practice responses to homelessness remains challenging albeit with some methodological progress identified (Christian et al., 2016; Quilgars & Pleace, 2016). There are clearly still challenges in understanding complex needs and responding in an integrated way, as well as a continuing need for better evaluation and measurement of the impact of services and outcomes for homeless people. While homelessness services may still lack an effective institutional framework that would enable them to improve their work (Macías Balda, 2016), Christian et al. (2016) have concluded that services which target and support the whole person can contribute to a virtuous cycle that increases wellbeing, wider social capital, and ultimately social inclusion.

Our collection suggests a continuing need for more research on participation and involvement of homeless people in research and in policy and service development. The benefits of acknowledging the views of homeless people are not yet fully utilised (Paradis, 2016). Exclusionary mechanisms persist (for example in the Brazilian case), including labelling and social stigma, but recognising the capacity/potential for empowerment and inclusion to develop from street homelessness (and a wide range of socio-economic conditions) also remains a theme for further exploration (Ursin, 2016).

A degree of resilience has been identified in the roles of institutions which tackle homelessness in different nations and their capacity to influence policy, even in face of severe economic crisis (Anderson et al., 2016). However, the comparative analysis of homelessness policy and its impacts within and across nation states remains a challenge for homelessness research with considerable scope for further cross-national and longitudinal research on understanding homelessness and evaluating policy responses.

Above all, access to good quality and affordable accommodation is a fundamental dimension of social inclusion, as evidenced across this collection of papers. Finally, as editors we also see important policy-relevant findings and recommendations inherent in all contributions which have potential to continue to improve our understanding of homelessness and the work of home-

lessness services to challenge exclusion, deliver better results and achieve social inclusion for homeless people.

We are extremely grateful to the authors for their contributions, to a large pool of referees who contributed invaluable reviews, and to the *Social Inclusion* editorial team for inviting this thematic issue and supporting the editorial process.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

## Housing First and Social Integration: A Realistic Aim?

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### Abstract

Housing First is now dominating discussions about how best to respond to homelessness among people with high and complex needs throughout the EU and in several countries within the OECD. Whilst recognised internationally as an effective model in addressing homelessness, little attention has been given as to whether Housing First also assists previously homeless people become more socially integrated into their communities. This paper reviews the available research evidence (utilising a Rapid Evidence Assessment methodology) on the extent to which Housing First services are effective in promoting social integration. Existing evidence suggests Housing First is delivering varying results in respect of social integration, despite some evidence suggesting normalising effects of settled housing on ontological security. The paper argues that a lack of clarity around the mechanisms by which Housing First is designed to deliver ‘social integration’, coupled with poor measurement, helps explain the inconsistent and sometimes limited results for Housing First services in this area. It concludes that there is a need to look critically at the extent to which Housing First can deliver social integration, moving the debate beyond the successes in housing sustainment and identifying what is needed to enhance people’s lives in the longer-term.

### Keywords

evaluation; homelessness; Housing First; housing sustainment; social integration

### Issue

This article is part of the issue “Homelessness and Social Inclusion”, edited by Isobel Anderson (University of Stirling, UK), Maša Filipovič Hrast (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Joe Finnerty (University College Cork, Ireland).

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### 1. Introduction

One of the basic prerequisites for social inclusion is having adequate housing from which to live one’s life in the community (Anderson, 1993; Pleace, 1998). However, having a house, or home, alone does not in itself guarantee social inclusion. This article investigates the existing, and potential, role of the Housing First model in facilitating the ‘social integration’ of formerly homeless people. Social integration is a multi-dimensional concept that defies easy definition. Here, a broad focus is adopted, focussing on the extent to which formerly homeless people are able to live, work, learn and participate in their communities to the extent that they wish to, and with as many opportunities as other community members.

The paper begins by charting the rise and significance of Housing First, as well as its limitations, before outlining the present study’s methods and findings. A final section discusses the implications of what is known about social integration in Housing First for the future development of services, and methodologies to capture progress, in this area.

Housing First is increasingly being recognised internationally as the most effective model in helping formerly homeless people into settled accommodation. The model has its origins in the Pathways Housing First service which first began to operate in New York in 1990, which aimed to provide independent housing to chronically homeless people, alongside but not conditional on using, intensive mental health and/or drug and alco-

hol support from specialist teams<sup>1</sup>. An evaluation of the service reported 88% of clients remained stably housed after five years (Tsemberis, 2010). Other Housing First services, supported by the Federal Government in the USA, have exhibited similarly high levels of housing sustainment rates (Pearson, Locke, Montgomery, & Buron, 2007). Research suggests Housing First costs no more, or only a little more, than existing services, but can be markedly more effective at ending homelessness than those existing services (Culhane, 2008; Pleace, 2008).

Towards the turn of the decade, this evidence base on Housing First's success in the USA began to influence European—and global—discussions on homelessness. For example, the Jury of the 2010 European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (Jury Committee, 2011) recommended the use of 'housing-led' approaches<sup>2</sup> to reduce homelessness. Since then, growing numbers of European countries have piloted Housing First (see Pleace, 2016). Two countries, France and Canada, have undertaken experimental evaluations of pilot services, both reporting similar levels of success in housing sustainment as the USA (Goering et al., 2014; Tinland & Psarra, 2015). A European Housing First project—involving five countries—also reported overall success rates of between 80% and over 95% in housing sustainment (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). In addition, there has been evidence of falling 'long term' homelessness among people with high support needs associated with the implementation of the National 'Housing First' strategy in Finland (from 3,600 'long term' homeless people in 2008 to 2,730 in 2011, a fall of 33%) (Kaakinen, 2012).

Homelessness services which provide temporary accommodation, training in independent living and which require behavioural changes and engagement with health, drug and other support with the aim of making homeless people 'housing ready', have tended to achieve lower levels of success. These services, sometimes called 'staircase' or linear residential treatment (LRT) models, typically assist between 30–50% of their service users into stable independent accommodation (Pleace, 2008). Significant operational problems have been reported with staircase services, with people leaving due to strict rules or becoming 'stuck' on particular steps on the 'staircase' to independent living that these services require someone to take to make them 'housing ready' (Pleace, 2008; Sahlin, 2005). In contrast, Housing First provides immediate or near immediate access to housing, alongside support to maintain that housing. Housing First also emphasises respect for individuals, giving them choices about using mental health, drug and alcohol and other services and some choice over where to live, within the resources available. Guidance on Housing First in Europe, closely follows the original US model and states that Housing First has eight core principles (Pleace, 2016, p. 12):

- Housing is a human right
- Choice and control for service users
- Separation of housing and treatment
- Recovery orientation
- Harm reduction
- Active engagement without coercion
- Person-centred planning
- Flexible support that is available for as long as is required

The growing, and strong (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2015), evidence base on the effectiveness of the Housing First model suggests that, resources and political will permitting, it may be possible to achieve lasting reductions in sustained and recurrent homelessness among people with very high support needs, including those with both severe mental illness and problematic use of drugs and alcohol (Pleace, 2016).

However, there are outstanding questions for Housing First services that centre on what happens *after* a chronically homeless person has been successfully rehoused by a Housing First service. Evidence reviews have indicated somewhat mixed results from Housing First in terms of improvements on the mental and physical health for formerly and potentially chronically homeless people, and have argued for additional research to conclusively determine its impact (Johnson, Parkinson, & Parsell, 2012; Pleace & Quilgars, 2013; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2015). In addition, the subject of this paper—the extent to which Housing First services can, and should, promote *social integration* for formerly and potentially chronically homeless people—has received little attention.

Housing First seeks to promote social integration through the delivery and sustainment of settled, independent housing. There is an emphasis on ordinary housing, which is scattered across ordinary neighbourhoods, as the means by which social integration is delivered. This view is expressed strongly by advocates of the idea that any Housing First service model must have very high fidelity with the original Pathways model (Greenwood, Stefancic, Tsemberis, & Busch-Geertsema, 2013). Through facilitating formerly homeless people to live in the same way as everyone else, Housing First seeks to promote social integration by the provision of a 'base' in the *normal* world from which ontological security will result and social integration can start to take place (Padgett, 2007). This overall approach is summarised in the 'Pathways' Housing First manual:

"Pathways Housing First seeks to help clients integrate into their community as fully as possible, and the housing component plays an important role in achieving this goal. The likelihood of stigma associated with being a member of a psychiatric treatment

<sup>1</sup> An ACT (Assertive Community Treatment) team for chronically homeless people with very high support needs and an Intensive Case Management (ICM) team for chronically homeless people with high needs.

<sup>2</sup> Approaches that provide housing but do not necessarily replicate the Housing First model.

programme is reduced, because the programme is not visible on site, and clients live in normal settings. Clients frequently interact with their neighbours at the local market, Laundromat, movie theatre, coffee shop or park. The clients share the same community and socialization opportunities as their non-disabled neighbours.” (Tsemberis, 2010, pp. 53–54)

Whilst the original USA Housing First model did not expect specific support structures, further than the built-in support already in the model, to be put into place to foster social integration, some newer non-USA models have incorporated interventions directed at increasing participation in the local community. For example, in Canada, Housing First is delivering a number of specific Employment, Training and Education (ETE) programmes (Goering et al., 2014).

Some single-site Housing First services have also been developed. These have been criticised on the basis that the absence of normal housing, in a normal community, surrounded by normal people, ‘prevents’ social integration (Tsemberis, 2011). Others have argued that single site models can act as source of social support, creating communities of support, and that, it is possible to socially integrate people into their extended communities (Pleace, Knutagård, Culhane, & Granfelt, 2016). This review, however, focused solely on scattered Housing First models.

To date, two key issues have been raised regarding Housing First and social integration. Firstly, there is the question about what social integration *means* for formerly homeless people with high support needs. Here there are questions around balancing expectations of what a socially integrated citizen should look like, something that is linked to specific expectations about behaviour (Hansen Löfstrand & Juhila, 2012). Second, there are a set of questions around how social integration is delivered, with some criticism centred on the vagueness of the mechanisms by which ordinary housing in ordinary communities delivers social integration (Johnson et al., 2012). This paper critically reviews what is known about the extent to which social integration can be achieved by Housing First.

## 2. Methods

This paper is based on an international Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). The REA method streamlines traditional systematic review methods in order to synthesize evidence within a short timeframe. An REA can be an effective way of identifying social policy lessons where information may be scattered across different research disciplines, in different formats and where resources available are limited (Thomas, Newman, & Oliver, 2013). Unlike a systematic review, the REA uses broader criteria for the assessment of evidence, including research and studies that do not necessarily meet the highest possible standards. This can be useful in an emerging subject such

as Housing First where the number of experimental and quasi-experimental studies is relatively small, but where there is a large body of observational research that can add to the available evidence.

This REA covered service evaluations and research on Housing First and other housing based services for homeless people. The review was international in scope, although in practice, relevant studies originated from Europe (9 countries), USA, Australia and Canada. Papers were included published in English as well as articles in the French language (translated for the research team). The review included studies undertaken since 1990 when the Housing First concept was first introduced. Papers were selected which covered one or more aspects of social integration for homeless people (see definition below). Research was not excluded utilising quality criteria (due to the relative infancy of the topic), rather researchers reported on the robustness of studies.

Search strategies were designed with a trained information specialist in the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) at the University of York. The original search was conducted by the information specialist in January 2013, across 15 social sciences and medical databases, identifying 1,258 references for review. Searches were re-run by the researchers up to May 2016, and a further 100 papers were reviewed. In addition, presentations from five Housing First/homelessness conferences attended by the researchers were also reviewed. Full details on the search strategies, and overall methodology, can be found at Pleace and Quilgars (2013).

Data was synthesised under identified headings (see below). A number of caveats need to be noted about this analysis. Crucially, it was not possible to take account of the different political, institutional and societal country contexts which may explain differences in levels of effectiveness (Doling, 1997). It was also not possible to evaluate the extent to which the interventions maintained fidelity to the original Housing First model (Pleace, 2016). In terms of understanding ‘social integration’ and related terms, there is also a high likelihood that the terms will be understood differently across different cultural contexts (Quilgars et al., 2009).

### 2.1. Defining Social Integration

Social integration is a complex, multi-dimensional concept. There is no one agreed definition and, like social inclusion, definitions are contested (Hedetoft, 2013; Huxley, 2015). This review started with a broad definition of social integration—the extent to which formerly homeless people are able to live, work, learn and participate in their communities as they wish to, and with as many opportunities as other members of the wider community. This is similar to the World Bank definition of social inclusion which refers to the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society (see Huxley, 2015). Reflecting this starting point, the search strategy included the following key terms:

- Social integration/inclusion/participation
- Community integration/integration/participation
- Neighbourhood integration/inclusion/participation
- Economic integration/inclusion/participation

The study undertook a review of definitions of ‘social integration’ within the retrieved literature, and drew on wider debates on social inclusion, to inform the thematic groupings of the research findings. We identified four main areas of interest.

Firstly, most definitions were centred on ‘joining’ or participating in community activities, with much of this debate originating in the mental health field. Wong and Solomon (2002) developed what was acknowledged as a ‘leading model’ (Gulcur, Tsemberis, Stefancic, & Greenwood, 2007) of ‘community integration’ for people with mental health problems. This definition focused on three main types of integration, firstly, physical integration (participation in activities, and use goods and services); secondly, social integration (social interaction with community members and social network); and thirdly, psychological integration (feeling part of the community and exercising influence).

Subsequently, Ware, Hopper, Tugenberg, Dickey and Fisher (2007) argued for a redefinition of community integration to better capture social dimensions, focusing on the ‘capabilities approach’ that looks at what people can do and be in everyday life, and how their competencies and opportunities are shaped by social environments. They argue that this definition requires social change (for example, welfare reform) as well as looking at people’s individual quality of life.

Some discussion has also centred on the meaning of ‘community’. Sociologists have long recognised that communities do not only develop around ‘place’, but also from shared interests and identities (Means & Evans, 2012). Arguments have been made that long term homelessness, while removed from mainstream social and economic life, also provides social support via a homeless ‘community’, to which a sense of ‘belonging’ develops. While, the idea that there is a distinctive homeless ‘culture’ is not well evidenced (O’Sullivan, 2008), the idea that chronic homelessness means a ‘total’ lack of *any* form of social integration needs to be treated with caution.

Communities can also be dispersed. There is evidence that dispersed networks of family, friends and colleagues, maintained using information and communication technologies, are an increasingly commonplace aspect of social integration in economically developed societies (Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2005). Exclusion, for chronically homeless people, might therefore exist in terms of connectedness to other homeless people, the wider community living around them, but also due to limited access to dispersed social networks, and social media technologies.

Secondly, some studies were explicitly or implicitly concerned with formerly homeless people ‘passing’ or being accepted in society, that is not being judged as

different from those around them, counteracting a risk of experiencing stigmatisation and prejudice (Goffman, 1963). One set of barriers to formerly homeless people’s social inclusion are the cultural, political and mass media images of homelessness that emphasise individual pathology—a supposed refusal to accept or abide by the conventions of mainstream society—and combinations of mental ill health and drug/alcohol problems as the ‘causes’ of homelessness (Hansen Löfstrand & Juhila, 2012; O’Sullivan, 2008). For example, landlords may assume that support needs related to mental health problems and/or drug and alcohol problems may result in anti-social behaviour (Pleace, Teller, & Quilgars, 2011).

Thirdly, studies also discussed wider social inclusion issues. The context of most homeless people’s lives is one of social exclusion, which includes problematic access to income and work, alongside community and social relations (Gordon et al., 2000; Pleace, 1998). An existing body of research (Zuvekas & Hill, 2000) suggests that formerly homeless people with high support needs are often very distant from the point of securing and maintaining paid work. Recently, there has been an increasing focus on education, training and economic participation of homeless as a route to social integration (Bretherton & Pleace, 2015).

Finally, a limited amount of discussion (and research) focused on ‘voting’ or ‘political participation’. The concept of ‘citizenship’, that there is a relationship between a citizen and society, that society provides civil and political rights and (to varying degrees) social protection, in return for political and economic participation is near universal in democratic countries. However, a growing ‘disconnection’ between citizens and formal political participation is seen as a social problem in many EU member states (Bouget & Brovelli, 2010).

### 3. Housing First and Social Integration: Findings

#### 3.1. *Joining (Community Participation)*

Studies have varied tremendously in their definitions and measurement of community participation. Below, we review findings under the main foci of study, however categories overlap.

##### 3.1.1. Community and Social Links

In the Housing First Europe observational study (Busch-Geertsema, 2013), in four of the five projects, the projects supported participants to access community resources, such as sports and recreation facilities, libraries, local cafes and restaurants, community events as well as health, drug and alcohol community programmes. However, the extent to which participants engaged in community activities differed considerably within any one project. For example, in Lisbon, almost half of the 45 interviewees reported having met people at a restaurant or cafe in the last month, one in seven had gone to a li-

brary or participated in sports/recreation activities, but less than one out of ten had participated in a community event or attended a movie or concert. The small numbers and lack of comparison/control groups with local population make interpretation of the results difficult.

Tsai, Mares and Rosenheck (2012) tracked 550 chronically homeless adults with mental health problems across an 11-site USA Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness (CICH) for one year after rehousing into permanent housing. They recorded a small but statistically significant increase in community participation (examining activities over the 'last two weeks') over the period, including increases in number of service users who used a bank; visited a grocery store; visited close friends, relatives or neighbours; went to a shopping centre or similar. However, there was no increase in activity in many other areas including use of public transport, libraries, and cultural events. Social support also did not significantly change over time. Importantly, any changes in social integration were not found to be significant following changes in clinical symptoms, suggesting that the degree to which someone experiences social integration may be partly mediated by symptom changes.

An earlier study including 183 Housing First participants in New York examined community integration<sup>3</sup> after four years rehousing, compared to Treatment As Usual (TAU) (Gulcur et al., 2007). This study found the Housing First project was statistically more likely to predict social integration (on two measures: satisfaction with social support and number of social network members) than TAU services. However, other aspects of community integration were not predicted by Housing First (nor by other programme domains like mental health treatment). Nonetheless, the authors concluded:

“Considering that our study found that a normalised residential arrangement was the only significant predictor of social integration, this would suggest that services may need to shift towards the provision of housing that most closely resembles that of the general population, for example independent scatter-site housing in the community. Additionally, housing agencies should encourage consumers to exercise choice regarding their lives, especially since this increased sense of autonomy leads to a greater sense of belonging and well-being. The Housing First model, with its emphasis on independent housing, consumer choice and empowerment, may therefore be particularly well suited for enhancing community integration.” (p. 224)

A four year randomised controlled trial (RCT) for a housing-led Australian Journey to Social Inclusion (J2SI) programme also reported only modest improvements in social inclusion (Johnson, Kuehnle, Parkinson, Sesa, & Tseng, 2014). Using two newly developed measures of self-rated 'social acceptance' and 'social support', they

found a consistent, but modest, improvement on both measures over time, but no significant difference between a housing-led model (similar but not identical to Housing First) and TAU. However, the trend was in a positive direction and the final J2SI participants did record their highest scores at the end of the four years.

A 2015 observational study of Housing First pilots in England reported some positive evidence around social integration with neighbourhoods and with re-establishing links with family. Of a sample of 60 Housing First service users, 21 (25%) reported monthly, weekly or daily contact with family a year prior to using Housing First, rising to 30 (50%) when asked about their current contact (while being supported by a Housing First service). However, rates of contact with family, while improving, remained low overall (Bretherton & Pleace, 2015).

### 3.1.2. Quality of Life

A RCT of the Housing First 'Chez Soi' Project in Canada included an examination of social outcomes, over two years, for 2,148 individuals randomly allocated to Housing First (HF) and TAU facilities (Goering et al., 2014). It utilised two scales: participant reported Quality of Life Index (QOLI 20) and researcher completed Multnomah Community Ability Scale (MCAS). The study documented immediate increases and more gradual continuing improvements for participants in both Housing First and TAU groups, and a small but statistically significant difference in favour of Housing First services. The largest treatment effect in community functioning, which relates to 'passing' below, was in 'behaviour' (including cooperation with providers, substance use and impulse control); and also some effects related to improvements in 'social skills' (ability and willingness to interact with others). On quality of life, the biggest difference between the two groups was for 'living' (home and neighbourhood), with a small difference in perceived safety and finances—with the authors suggesting that these benefits were related to the housing component of HF. However, whilst participant satisfaction with social lives/family relationships improved in both groups, this was about the same for both HF and TAU groups.

The French Housing First randomised controlled trial also included a Quality of Life Index (Index SQoL) and reported a significant difference between Housing First and TAU at the 12-month point—again both groups showed an improvement, but this was statistically higher in the Housing First group (Tinland & Psarra, 2015).

### 3.1.3. Ontological Security

There is some evidence that people using Housing First who are settled into scattered housing, start to exhibit what can be called 'normalised' behaviour as a result of ontological security, arising from having a settled

<sup>3</sup> Using Wong and Solomon's model, with an added domain of 'independence/self-actualisation'.

home. Recent research in London has suggested that even homeless people with a prolonged history of homelessness and high support needs, start to *behave* in a very similar or identical way to 'housed' people once they are resettled into scattered housing (Bretherton & Pleace, 2015). American qualitative research shows how rehoused people (in Housing First and other scatter housing) report increased feelings of privacy, independence and freedom to pursue interests (Yanos, Barrow, & Tsemberis, 2004).

Qualitative work in Canada (Goering et al., 2014) highlighted, that 'the quality of participant's daily lives changed from being survival orientated to being 'more secure', 'peaceful', and 'less stuck' which enabled them to move forward with their lives' (p. 28). In addition, the People with Lived Experience Caucus for the Canadian Chez Soi Project in Toronto undertook a detailed qualitative analysis of community integration at the 18-month follow-up point for both Housing First and TAU clients (Coltman et al., 2015). Housing was seen as offering people more than a place to live—providing security, safety, feelings of self-worth and 'a symbol of them being a functional member of society' (p. 47), including a place to entertain friends and family, and the neighbourhood offers community spaces and social encounters. However, respondents also stressed that poor housing and/or neighbourhoods could make it harder to connect to friends/family and could also make people feel unsafe. It also highlighted how community activities could both be experienced as enriching and/or as unfulfilling and stressful.

Other small scale, qualitative work in Sweden (Knutagard & Kristiansen, 2013) and Norway (Andig & Kare Hummelvoll, 2015) have reported promising results in terms of tenants feeling empowered to move forward in their lives, with some improvements in social networks and a sense of hopefulness.

### 3.2. *Passing (Community Acceptance)*

Existing evidence suggests that Housing First projects may impact positively on rates of anti-social behaviour, but that where rates are high, the model is only likely to partially tackle the issue. The Housing First Europe observational study (Busch-Geertsema, 2013) found that neighbourhood conflicts were rare in three projects, and were usually successfully resolved via the work of the project. For example, in Lisbon, the Housing First project brought together all partners to find a solution in the rare cases that an issue was presented. In Glasgow, staff also acted as intermediaries with relevant parties to avoid evictions in almost all cases (Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2013).

However, in contrast, the Discus Housing First project in Amsterdam encountered high rates of nuisance behaviour, with nuisance being associated with 41 of the 100 Housing First apartments. However, Amsterdam was part of a wider strategy that was partially targeted on

reducing nuisance behaviour among street using homeless people: it is therefore possible that the service was aimed at those with challenging behaviour to a greater extent than the other Housing First Europe projects.

An observational examination of nine Housing First pilot services in England found some evidence of reductions in anti-social behaviour, but like the Netherlands service, rates of anti-social behaviour remained quite high. Among 60 service users, 78% reported involvement in anti-social behaviour a year prior to using Housing First, compared to 53% when asked about current behaviour one year on (Bretherton & Pleace, 2015).

The only study focused on recidivism examined single site Housing First services (Clifasefi, Malone, & Collins, 2012). The number of days that people spent in prison (mean of 41 to 18 days) and bookings (mean of 3.43 to 1.49) fell when they were using Housing First services. The study found that the vast majority of convictions were 'misdemeanours', likely to be associated with sustained and recurrent homelessness. Earlier research has found a positive relationship between entering accommodation with support and reductions in criminality, meaning the positive effect may not be confined to Housing First models (Culhane, Hadley, & Metraux, 2002).

### 3.3. *Working (Economic Participation)*

Available evidence does not suggest that Housing First services generate high levels of employment amongst participants, although some increase in job searching, training or volunteering may be more likely. Results from the Housing First Europe study found that very few participants were in paid work (Busch-Geertsema, 2013), a result similar to the findings of a study of nine pilot Housing First services in England (Bretherton & Pleace, 2015). However, participation levels in training, education and other activities were more mixed. For example, only 13% of Copenhagen participants undertook any form of activity. However, 28% of participants were engaged in voluntary work in Amsterdam, and 32% of Lisbon Housing First participants were involved in job site training, educational courses or other meaningful activities. Qualitative work on the Glasgow project indicates that employment is often seen as a long-term goal by most service users (and staff) (Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2013).

The large study of Housing First outcomes in the USA (550 homeless people across 11 sites) found no significant differences in levels of employment among participants after one year, and a slight decrease in the number of people volunteering (Tsai et al., 2012). However, the study did find that Housing First service users who were participating in the community were also more likely to be working (and have better social supports). This finding may suggest that having a settled home may act as a 'gateway' to social inclusion for some people, however it is also possible that the association is in the other direction, with work facilitating better social supports and social inclusion.

Australian work on the J2SI model, which included an integrated training and skills development programme, reported significant increases in economic participation rates (those either looking for, or in, paid work) during the pilot stage from 30% to 51% at the 18-month stage, a much higher rate than for TAU (Johnson et al., 2014). However, they also reported that this participation rate fell back to lower than the baseline (21%) once the project closed. Moreover, only five people were in paid employment at 36 months (in both the housing-led and control group), and no-one at the 48-month point one year after the main project had closed. They highlighted the casual nature of most work available and how outcomes were shaped by 'exogenous factors beyond the control of individuals or services' (p. 21).

The Canadian At Home/Chez Soi Housing First services are delivering a number of specific Employment, Training and Education (ETE) programmes, for example: the Moncton 'At Home' Services which provides full-time vocational support to help people identify work opportunities, and a community employment project where participants are employed by the project to provide cleaning, packing and moving services. The evaluation did not report on economic outcomes per se, however 'new social roles' were an important factor in positive life courses across sites (along with stable housing, positive social contacts, and reduced substance abuse) (Goering et al., 2014).

### 3.4. Voting (Political Participation)

There is little evidence on which to base a discussion of the role of Housing First services in promoting political participation. The logic of Housing First as a means to enable political participation again centres on the security of a home forming the base from which community participation, economic activity and then political participation can be built. The findings of one study supports this idea—in the recent USA CICH study of 550 Housing First service users—there was an increase over one year from a minority of 21%, to 31%, of service users saying they intended to vote (Tsai et al., 2012).

## 4. Discussion

The evidence base on social integration and Housing First up until 2013 was described as 'limited' (Pleace & Quilgars, 2013, p. 4) and 'inconclusive' (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2015, p. 8). In the last two years, a number of additional studies have been published, providing some further evidence, however overall the body of work in this area remains under-developed. This has both implications for future research and practice on Housing First.

Firstly, in terms of research, the review found that most studies utilised different definitions—and measures—of social integration. It appeared that most researchers 'tacked on' an examination of some aspects of social integration, but it was rarely the main focus

of any study. The review found that most attention has been placed on 'community participation', in particular around engagement with local community resources. However, there was a lack of clarification on the distinction between social networks and access and use of community resources. Quality of Life measures were the most robust methodologically but had least relevance to community participation. 'Ontological security' was also discussed but not clearly measured in studies. A number of studies were concerned with 'community acceptance', indicating some possible impact, but this was difficult to assess due to a lack of comparability with other services. Studies on 'economic participation' were also under-developed, whilst data on voting was virtually missing altogether. Further, some studies were longitudinal (utilising different time periods), others took a snap shot in time. Overall, the nature of the research makes comparing findings across problematic—without taking account of considerable country specific differences (Quilgars et al., 2009). In the mental health field, Gulcur et al. (2007) concluded that the concept of community integration still needed a 'clearly articulated conceptual framework'. A key conclusion from this review is that Housing First researchers, working with other social scientists, need to develop better measures of social integration that can be utilised consistently in future evaluations.

The review highlighted a number of other methodological gaps. Qualitative work in Canada (Coltman et al., 2015) highlighted the importance of the many small interactions by which people establish relationships, feelings of self-worth and hopefulness, and the significance of pets. Some dimensions of social integration such as friendship, feelings of worth and hopefulness remain underexplored due to difficulty in measuring them. Generally, service user perspectives on the meaning of social integration need further development (Gulcur et al., 2007). More work is also needed to explore possible neighbourhood effects (Yanos, Felton, Tsemberis, & Frye, 2007). No studies have examined the role of dispersed networks on social integration. Research has demonstrated that someone can be highly socially networked and not speak to their neighbours or the community around them (Savage et al., 2005). Finally, even with all the above questions answered, we have little idea as to how long it may take for someone to become socially integrated. One study found that mental health consumers were more integrated the longer they lived in the area (Yanos, Stefancic, & Tsemberis, 2012). Finally, there is also a lack of clarity as to what point, or factors need to interact, to conclude that someone is socially integrated.

Whilst methodological challenges limit the strength of any conclusions on Housing First and social integration, the review highlighted a number of possible implications for the development and delivery of Housing First services. The housing component of Housing First is often seen as the key to achieving social integration, in terms of living in normal community settings and sharing the same socialisation and community opportunities as oth-

ers. Whilst this review suggests that Housing First may have some impact on feelings of 'ontological security', the evidence is far from conclusive. Hopper (2012) has questioned this idea that social integration will automatically flow from living in the community in ordinary housing and whether too much burden is being placed on the capacity, will and initiative of formerly homeless individuals to 'make themselves' socially integrated. The same arguments have been made by Johnson et al. (2012) when critically reviewing the suitability of Housing First for Australia.

Perhaps partly in response to the recognition that housing is not enough to support formerly homeless people, some newer models of Housing First have developed more specifically targeted services that focus on aspects of social integration, particularly in the area of learning, training and finding jobs. This review has shown relatively weak effects from these services to date, although some increase in positive activities at the point that people are supported. Broader community integration issues may be addressed by Housing First support workers as part of a holistic response to people's needs, however services rarely have a specific focus on this. Considerable research has indicated that formerly homeless people may often be socially isolated when they have been housed or re-housed (Busch-Geertsema, 2005; Crane, Coward, & Warnes, 2011). A number of low intensity support service models have been used for other client groups to enhance community participation and social networks, such as befriending services (Quilgars, 2000). A few Housing First services are using peer mentors (Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2013). Evidence suggests that such services are not easy to deliver but there is potential for positive impacts on people's lives (Bretherton & Pleace, 2016; Quilgars, Johnsen, Pleace, Beecham, & Bonin, 2011); good practice in this area may be worth investigating in greater detail for Housing First.

A more philosophical and ethical point also arises from the review. When considering the situation of formerly homeless people, it is important to consider the extent to which it is a 'social norm' to be a member of a balanced, cohesive and socially interactive community (Savage et al., 2005). Hansen Löffstrand and Juhila (2012), argue that Housing First services still define the behaviour of homeless people as something that needs 'correcting' (albeit relatively slowly and flexibly), echoing the underlying logic of staircase services seeking to install and reinforce 'self-governing' behaviour that will make people using Housing First 'responsible choice makers'. This raises the idea of one set of standards for poor and marginalised groups with respect to what is regarded as social integration and another, rather more flexible interpretation for more affluent groups, whose *economic* integration is arguably taken as a sufficient representation of 'social integration' (Burrows, 2013; Lupton & Tunstall, 2008).

Finally, the relatively limited impacts of Housing First on social integration, suggest that we may not be analysing the issue through the appropriate lens. In-

creasingly, prominent European homelessness researchers (Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014) are arguing that it is not realistic to expect homelessness services to deliver 'total' solutions to homelessness. The founder of the original Pathways Housing First project in New York has noted the following in relation to what it may be reasonable to expect a Housing First service to deliver:

"It is important here to revisit the mission of HF [Housing First]: it is to end homelessness for people with complex needs. Of course, the ideal outcome would be to end homelessness and solve all problems related to mental health, addiction, and social exclusion, but we are not there yet...beyond a program intervention [a Housing First service], larger shifts in social contexts and policies are needed to achieve greater success in alleviating poverty, facilitating recovery, and promoting social inclusion." (Tsemberis, 2012)

Ultimately, Housing First practitioners may need to consider how they can influence broader local and national policies to tackle problems of social exclusion in the wider society.

## 5. Conclusion

This review suggests that we might only be able to expect current Housing First models to deliver modest impacts in the area of social integration for formerly homeless people. Further conceptual and practical developments in this area may be required to make more progress. As well as developing a stronger conceptual framework, a re-examination of some of the key components of the Housing First model might offer a way forward on social integration issues in the future. Firstly, choice and control, and the person-centred approach, which are at the centre of the philosophy, should put user views on the meaning of social integration and any assistance needed with this to the forefront of debates in this area. Secondly, Housing First support is offered for as long as is required—social integration needs to be viewed within a longer time frame than has so far been the case. Finally, the respect for common humanity that underpins a response to deliver housing immediately to homeless people who have too often been judged and penalised for their situation, could arguably be taken one step further towards a rights based agenda. With the case for housing sustainment via Housing First all but won, much like disability campaigners, advocates of Housing First could usefully now begin to identify and challenge societal barriers and structures that limit the futures of formerly homeless people in their respective communities.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

## Intentions to Move from Homelessness to Social Inclusion: The Role of Participation Beliefs, Attitudes and Prior Behaviour

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### Abstract

A key aim of homelessness services is not only to ensure that homeless people attain a secure home, but that this is a pathway to wider social inclusion. However, relatively little is known about the psychological elements that are essential for homeless people to engage with these pathways, nor whether these elements combine in ways that are predictable from previous research. In the present work, we examined both demographic and behavioural precursors, and contemporaneous psychological predictors, of a set of 49 homeless men's intentions to engage with a programme to move them toward long-term housing and social inclusion. Contrary to predictions based on subjective utility and rational choice theories, we found that normative pressure and did not directly predict the men's intentions. Instead, we found that intentions were predicted by their attitudes towards the services, and their specific beliefs about the benefits of particular courses of action (efficacy beliefs), and to a more restricted extent their experience (sociodemographics); and in those with high prior service use histories, only participatory beliefs guided future service use intentions. These findings suggest that it is important to focus on intentions as a highly relevant outcome of interventions, because beliefs about interventions can break the link between past behaviour or habitual service use and future service use. Such interventions may be particularly effective if they focus on the evaluative and efficacy-related aspects of behaviour over time and better understand the benefits the men evaluated the services as offering them.

### Keywords

attitudes; homelessness; service use; social inclusion

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

One of the recurring themes in the debate on homelessness in Britain has been the difficult and fractured nature of the pathways out of homelessness and, therefore the move from social exclusion to social inclusion through the acquisition and maintenance of permanent housing. There has been concern that many pathways out of homelessness are characterised by recurring episodes of

housing instability and high dropout rates from different forms of intermediary provision, which casts some doubt on the usefulness of existing forms of provision (Anderson, 2010; Clapham, 2005). As background, provision for homeless people in the UK is mainly based on the 'continuum of care' or 'staircase' approach (Johnsen & Teixeira, 2010) in which homeless people progress from one form of provision to another on the basis of their perceived ability (as assessed by professional staff) to move

on to the next stage. To reach the final stage of permanent housing, homeless people have to show to professionals that they are able to cope on their own and are 'tenancy ready'. This system creates many barriers and difficulties for many homeless people to overcome in accessing services and moving through the 'continuum of care' that can test their skills, knowledge and determination. Therefore, within this system it is important to know what factors are important in influencing the chances of success.

The difficulties inherent in the 'continuum of care' approach have led to calls for the adoption of the 'housing first' principles. Under the 'housing first' principles and guidance, the provision of adequate permanent housing is the first priority and cornerstone for further social intervention designed to deal with any ongoing health or social problems, or lack of capabilities to cope in mainstream accommodation. The 'housing first' approach requires less of homeless people before they achieve permanent housing. In explaining the difficulties that homeless people face in achieving successful outcomes of permanent housing in the current situation, the housing literature has tended to attribute the failure rates to housing management practices, or the quality of neighbourhoods or the accommodation provided (Pawson & Munro, 2010; Warnes, Crane, & Coward, 2013). As such, the focus has been on the physical quality of the houses that homeless people move on to, the support offered through housing management services, and the quality of the neighbourhood in both physical and, particularly social terms.

A different perspective focuses on homeless persons' own experiences and understanding of their situations. Much of this work has focused on interactions with services, because it is a social context that allows us an opportunity to explore the daily experiences of homeless people find themselves in. Thus, there has been growing interest in the impact of social and psychological factors of those using the programmes, seeing them as part of a multi-faceted solution. Such research often focuses on the presence or absence of an appropriate social network or on family cohesion, believing norms to be an important determinant of service use and 'future housing success'. However, the individual homeless persons' perception of their own choices and their own psychological situation has remained somewhat neglected. One example of a factor that has been overlooked is that of homeless people's self-efficacy—their sense of their ability to achieve an intended or desired result outcomes (Bandura, 1997)—could reasonably be expected to bear on their service use behaviours. Discussion of the role of self-efficacy, and other psychological enablers or inhibitors has been sparse in the housing crisis literature (compared with that of more obvious material or familial factors). The limited focus on psychological variables is regrettable given that they provide powerful proximal predictors of social participation—which is to say, it is the way people make sense of their situation, not just the ob-

jective situation itself, that helps to explain differences in the way people behave (Schultz & Oskamp, 1999).

In addition to the lacuna in conceptual and empirical focus on psychological components of service use, there also remains a dearth of systematic evaluation evidence on the impact of support services on fostering social inclusion for homeless people. More needs to be known both about the ways that interventions have impact (both positive and negative), and which aspects best encourage homeless people's desire to make use of services that will help them achieve social participation. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to report and consider evidence that illuminates the potential impact and the role of efficacy and other related psychosocial factors on homeless people's intentions to use services that can increase aimed at aiding their resettlement in longer-term accommodation, and thereby also enhancing their social participation and inclusion. We first provide some theoretical background regarding these psychological variables, then introduce the research itself and statistically test hypotheses about the link between demographic and psychological variables on the one hand, and service-use intentions on the other.

### *1.1. Efficacy & Psychosocial Factors Linked to Housing and Services Uptake*

Social inclusion and exclusion is not simply an economic or social structural phenomenon, it is also experienced most powerfully and directly as a psychological phenomenon—in people's daily experiences (see Abrams & Christian, 2007). Homeless people are confronted by multiple forms of exclusion, but it can be argued that the psychological dimension is critical in forming their intentions and subsequent actions, in part because the interpersonal information provides a working understanding for their experiences of the structural-level. To address this, researchers have adopted mainstream psychological approaches to explore homeless people's coping strategies, because motivations to seek housing and employment are thought to be rooted in people's expectations and previous personal experiences. Determination to seek housing is also arguably linked to how people perceive events that unfold in the world, and their ability to tackle adverse circumstances. However, only a handful of studies, focusing on personal outcomes, have looked closely at the role of efficacy and interventions for homeless people (Epel, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 1999; Park & Kim, 2014), which is surprising given that 'efficacy' is often viewed as synonymous with empowerment and/or wellbeing in the housing and homelessness literatures (see Clapham, Christian, & Foye, 2016). Within the domain of homelessness, Epel et al. (1999) found, in a population of US homeless people, that those who had been previously employed and who had a higher level of educational achievement also had a more positive future orientation (a higher ability to plan for the future) despite current personal cir-

cumstances. While it is possible to argue that a number of personal and situation factors may increase or decrease a strong sense of personal efficacy (self-belief), Epel et al. (1999) too suggest that enhanced personal efficacy leads to greater feelings of empowerment over barriers to housing, and ultimately to more sustained house seeking behaviours and, eventually, to social inclusion.

Within the literature, an efficacy style framework has also been applied in conjunction with social identity theory (SIT) and the more general self-categorization perspective (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), as well as a model of social attitude formation, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB, Ajzen, 1991) to investigate social perceptions, motives, and sense of 'self'. Here, beliefs about the self were not solely task-based, but the factors were rider reaching such as *perceived benefits of service use* (i.e., attitudes towards service use), the extent to which homeless people perceived they had personal agency over their service interaction (i.e., perceived control), and the 'influence of social and cultural norms' (i.e., identification and normative influence) were explored in populations of homeless people in the UK and the US. In a series of multinational studies, Christian and colleagues (Christian & Abrams, 2004; Christian & Armitage, 2002; Christian, Armitage, & Abrams, 2003; Christian, Clapham, & Abrams, 2011) conclude that homeless people's social engagement is predicted both by the extent to which they perceive they have 'some control over their service participation', and by the extent to which they feel able to 'identify' with the staff at facilities. Across studies with over 700 homeless participants, increases in their 'perceived control' led to a greater sense of empowerment. Moreover, the influence exerted by social norms on participation behaviour appears to be linked to the stability of homeless people's support networks. Friendship groups (friendships with other homeless people) were less stable than those with support worker groups and therefore the latter were easier to identify with. The findings suggest that there may well be a hierarchy of social relationships in which staff could be seen as more stable social referents, but that this might change over time as circumstances fluctuate (also see Christian & Abrams, 2003; Snow & Anderson, 1987). The results suggest that a combination of factors, efficacy as well as normative-based variables, interact with the social context to determine whether people uptake service opportunities (see, Christian & Abrams, 2004). Unclear, however, is the role of prior behaviour (which could be either previous service use and measures of housing instability) in shaping intentions—with some research supporting a direct link from prior behaviour to intentions, and other studies suggesting no direct links but providing evidence for an intentions-behaviour relationship—leaving questions about potential impact of this factor within this domain.

In the present work we extend previous research (Christian & Abrams, 2003, 2004; Christian et al., 2011) by exploring the potentially distinct but additive contribu-

tions of efficacy-based beliefs, attitudes, and normative influences (social influence and social identification with friendship groups) in predicting both current and future housing service use. We are also conscious of the complex nature of the circumstances facing homeless people. Therefore, an important contribution of the present work is to disentangle how contemporaneous psychological variables (attitudes, efficacy and so on) relate to future service use intentions after accounting for the individual's context, defined in terms of differences in the length of time that particular individuals have spent with coping with housing instability, as well as their length of residence at the shelter in which they are currently residing. Arguably, both these indices of past behaviour could be a basis of service use 'habits', which may or may not fully explain continuing and intended active engagement with the housing services and their use (i.e., no relationship between prior behaviour and intentions); or alternatively the findings could demonstrate desire to engage on the part of the men and provide evidence of contextual/structural issues which might present barriers to service use (i.e., no relationship between current behaviour and intentions). As such, the present correlational study seeks to understand to what extent psychosocial variables may play a role in enabling people to break free of their situation and past circumstances in determining future service use intentions, an indicator of their eventual pathway to social participation and inclusion.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Selection and Recruitment

Prior to conducting the study, service facilities were contacted based on information from experts working with the homeless population in Birmingham (also see, Christian & Abrams, 2003; Toro et al., 1999; Snow & Anderson, 1987). The main principles for consideration of these facilities were the location and size of the population served, mainly due to the differences in services offered from different sized facilities. The sample of homeless people was drawn from both large and small facilities, because smaller facilities tended to offer either supported housing or floating support to their homeless clients, whereas larger facilities generally provide both services to their clients. It was considered to be important that both forms were taken into account.

Once facilities agreed to take part in the investigation, two approaches were used to recruit homeless people. First, posters providing information about the study were displayed in common areas; and second, members of staff also approached clients and asked whether they might be willing to take part in the research (see, Christian et al., 2003). Similar procedures have been previously used (Akilu, 1992; Christian & Armitage, 2002; Christian et al., 2011; Toro et al., 1999). Potential participants, asking opting in, were then included in the interview schedule.

## 2.2. Participants

Forty-six homeless men from Birmingham, England, ranging in age from 21 to 62 years ( $M = 38.63$ ,  $SD = 11.54$ ) took part in the study. They were predominantly: White British (59%) and single persons (87%). Additionally, there was almost an equal split for participants between those with employment/academic qualifications (24), versus those without academic/employment qualifications (22). Of these, 27 participants had experience working as labourers or with 'unskilled jobs', while 19 participants reported having skilled employment backgrounds. The profile of the participants reflects the patterns reported in the single homeless literature (Anderson, 1994; Burrows, 1997; Busch-Geertsema, Edgar, O'Sullivan, & Pleace, 2010; Fitzpatrick, Johnsen, & White, 2011; Fitzpatrick, Kemp, & Klinker, 2000). All participants had used services prior to the study, and on average, the participants had spent six months in their current temporary accommodation, residing at the shelter from which they were sampled.

## 2.3. Measures

### 2.3.1. Pilot Study

In accordance with the framework (TPB; Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1997; SIT, Abrams & Hogg, 1987) used to guide the research, a pilot study was conducted prior to main study, pilot interviews were conducted with ten homeless people. The purpose of these was to gather the content for both the interviews, and to determine whether homeless people felt that use of services led to them securing long-term accommodation, thus ensuring the ecological validity. Interviews used open-ended response formats and lasted an average of one hour. The resulting interview measure consisted of the following items:

#### *Behavioural Intentions*

Behavioural intention items were: "I intend to use a housing programme this month", "I am likely to use a housing programme this month", "The chances are that I will use a housing programme this month," (scored 1 = *strongly disagree* through to 5 = *strongly agree*). The mean of the 3 items was taken as a reliable measure of intention to use a housing programme ( $\alpha = 0.67$ ).

#### *Attitude*

Participants were presented with the statement: "Using a housing programme this month would be". Two response options were provided: important/unimportant; positive/negative," on 5-point scales. The mean of the 2 items was taken as a measure of attitude towards the use of a housing programme ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ).

#### *Norms*

Participants were asked if they felt that friends and families influenced their decision to participate in housing

programmes. Only referent beliefs were assessed, because in pilot phases of the work, participants were clear that there was not a relationship between referent beliefs and their motivation to comply. For example, "Those who are important to me think that I should use a housing programme this month" (referent belief) (scored 1 = *disagree completely* through to 5 = *agree completely*). The item was used as a measure of social norms.

#### *Perceived Control*

A single item tapped perceived control: "How much control do you feel you have over your housing and housing searches?" (scored 1 = *disagree completely* through to 5 = *agree completely*).

#### *Efficacy: Participatory Behavioural Beliefs*

Three items were used to measure participants' participatory beliefs. These items clustered around 'attendance', 'meeting with key workers' (support staff), and their role in activities with Local Government to gain housing. The questions focused on assessing whether the participants felt that they had the skills/confidence necessary to engage in these behaviours to meet their housing related goals, or whether they felt that they were unable to do so (i.e., perception of skills needed related to specific tasks required as identified by them). Items were scored 0 (never) to 5 (very often). The mean of the 3 items was used as a measure of efficacy: participatory behavioural beliefs ( $\alpha = 0.61$ ).

#### *Social Identification*

Two items measured social identification. These included statements such as, "In general, the social groups I belong to are an important part of my self-image". Each were scored 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely). The mean of the 2 items was taken as a measure of identification with a social group ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

To help to tease apart the nature of the social relationships that might be important for participants, we also asked about the range and numbers of social contacts, friendships and what they found important features of them, and whether they thought social groups were based on location (i.e., "I have friends in Bournemouth; I have a mate in London." Social groups were not categorical in terms of construal around a 'role' as linked to activities, such as political participation or community network, rather they were linked to geographical locations whether all within one city, Birmingham, or in several locations ranging from London to southern regions of England and Wales). Information was gathered using scoring 1 (low end of scale/no contacts) through to 5 (high end of the scale/several contacts). In addition, open ended questions were also thematically coded and assigned categorical values for analysis.

#### *Sociodemographic Characteristics and Prior Service Use Patterns*

Causes of homelessness, views of people's ability to over-

come housing instability in Britain, length of time spent in the current homeless hostel, level of education/type of employment training, age, ethnicity, and marital status were recorded using open-ended questions. Ethnicity and marital status were binary (0,1) coded for the purpose of statistical analyses. Length of time spent homeless, however, was coded in number of days spent homeless.

### 2.3.2. Procedures and Administration

#### *Administration of Structured Interview*

Consistent with procedures outlined in the literature, homeless people were approached at tables in facilities, or they were randomly selected from daily registers (Toro et al., 1999; also see, Christian et al., 2011). All participants were told that their responses would be kept confidential, and that their assistance would not affect their future opportunities to take part in the services programmes. Prior to taking part in the interviews, homeless people were asked if they would be willing to take part in a series of interactions and told that these meetings would include an interview and intervention classes. If potential participants agreed, then they were provided with more information about the study and a first interview was arranged. Interview schedules were administered verbally and on a one-to-one basis in a quiet area within service facilities. This widely accepted procedure minimizes the effects of literacy on responding (Toro & Wall, 1991). Interviews took approximately 45 minutes to complete.

#### *Measure of Current Behaviour*

To capture an 'objective measure' of current service use behaviour, service providers were contacted eight weeks after the interviews had been completed. They were asked whether each of the men was still residing at the hostel. A binary coding system was employed and participants were assigned '0' if they were not still residing at the hostel (because they had moved into other accommodation (longer term)), and '1' if they were still in residence. (This measure was used in conjunction with prior service use histories and length of time spent without permanent accommodation.)

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Preliminary Findings

It may be surprising given the barriers that homeless people face in the 'continuum of care' approach that, in general, homeless people had positive views of services, and they also felt that most people facing housing issues within British society overcome these difficulties ( $M = 4.36$  overcome housing difficulties on a 5-point scale). Moreover, they indicated that they did not spend 'a lot' of time worrying about their access to housing ( $M = 1.39$  level of worry on a 5-point scale). They men

felt that they had 'average' amounts of control over their lives generally ( $M = 3.5$  on a 5-point scale) in spite of their circumstances. On the whole, they reported fairly positive views towards (their) housing instability and its resolution, with their concerns largely focused on the process and not access to housing. These themes are reflected in the correlations presented (see below).

#### 3.1.1. Are Perceived Benefits of Services Hindering Inclusion?

In this study, we sought to explore perceptions of service utilisation. The overall pattern emerging demonstrates that attitudes, participatory behaviours and norms are interrelated, indicating that the homeless men are primarily motivated by what they perceived the benefits and outcomes of their service utilisation to be (see Tables 1 and 2, which provides correlations amongst the variables). Interestingly, for those still residing at the hostels in which they were interviewed ( $n = 29$ ; still residing after interview), there was a strong relationship between homeless people's attitudes and their intentions to continue participation, such that the more benefits that they saw as coming from taking part in housing services, the more likely they were to intend to take part in them. Also consistent with our expectations, intentions to use housing services were associated with a stronger perceived control over one's circumstances ( $r = .42, p = .004$ ). Participants also felt that they would benefit most from an intervention programme, as tapped by asking them about whether they would find further services to supplement current service to be helpful in their acquisition of permanent accommodation, if they could see the benefits of the service they were using ( $r = .417, p = .008$ ).

As we have pointed out, perceived benefits of their service use (attitudes), future service use intentions, perceived control, and participatory beliefs were all interrelated, supporting the theory approaches informing the work. In Table 2, we used the average length of stay/contact with the current service as a way to divide (median split procedure) the sample into low and high service use categories to explore differences in future service use intentions. (Although the sample sizes are not equal, the distribution of high and low members across services is, which is why there are no mean differences found amongst locations). For those in the low prior service use category (i.e., 90 days maximum), there is a relationship between prior use and future service use intentions, with those having had the shortest histories of contact with services being those people forming the strongest intentions. More robust future use intentions were also associated with shorter lengths of time spent without permanent accommodation. Other factors correlated with higher future use intentions were age and ethnicity—meaning that younger men, of British Caucasian origin, reported having stronger intentions for future use. This is, in contrast, to those who had longer periods of contact with services (excess of 90 days and up

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations ( $n = 46$ ).

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. BI	4.39	0.99											
2. ATT	3.97	1.21	.403**										
3. SN	2.11	1.69	.205	.367*									
4. PBB	3.44	1.62	.420**	.163	.073								
5. Control	3.52	1.56	.170	.054	.007	.037							
6. SI	3.03	1.64	.189	.317*	.017	.117	.067						
7. MI	1.89	0.88	-.78	-.351*	-.007	-.149	-.153	-.122					
8. Current Use	0.83	0.38	-.165	.157	-.084	-.031	-.179	.045	-.124				
9. Prior Behaviour	192.11	284.49	-.260	-.147	-.145	-.058	-.321*	-.196	-.069	.158			
10. Time Homeless	1652.59	2067.07	.053	.029	.054	-.026	.084	.020	-.062	.078	.220		
11. Age	38.63	11.54	-.248	.046	-.120	-.183	.041	-.102	-.242	.106	.211	.355*	
12. Ethnicity	59% white		.358*	.089	-.068	.163	.055	.099	-.054	-.035	-.022	.014	-.310*

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; 1. BI = Behavioural Intentions; 2. ATT = Attitudes; 3. SN = Subjective Norms; 4. PBB = Participatory Behavioural Beliefs; 5. Control = Perceived Control; 6. SI = Social Identity; 7. MI = Number of Social Groups Reporting Being a Member of; 8. Current Use = moved on or still residing in hostel; 9. PB = length of time spent residing at current hostel (in days); 10. Length of time spent as homeless (reported in days).

to 3 years). Within this population of men, attitudes and intentions are almost synonymous ( $r = .849, p = .001$ ), showing the close link between perceived benefits and future intentions. Also, there were negative relationships between attitudes and social norms, as well as between time spent without permanent accommodation and perceived benefits of services (i.e., with their attitudes). In these cases, longer spells of homelessness reduced the number benefits viewed as linked with housing services and fewer benefits were associated with more social pressures to engage in service use.

### 3.1.2. Is Service Use Behaviour a ‘Habit’: The Role of Prior Behaviour?

Turning attention to the absence of a significant correlation between the men’s current behaviour and future service use intentions, while inconsistent with what we might expect (see Armitage & Connor, 2001; Christian et al., 2011), the moderate relationship between prior behaviour and future use intentions means that there is still quite good capacity for predicting what people are likely to do. For this reason, we explore the prediction of intention from a number of variables identified through the correlation analysis, and we test our prognostication using a multiple regression analysis. With future service use intentions as the dependent variable, on Step 1, we entered ethnicity and prior behaviour (length of time spend at without permanent accommodation) to control for the effects of personal experiences amongst the men and the influence this might have on shaping their future use. Then, on Step 2 we entered attitudes and participatory behaviours. In this way, we can test the relative contributions of each of these psychosocial variables, and the extent to which these outweigh the influ-

ence of personal habits, or circumstances (i.e., length of time), or background (ethnicity) in forming future service use intentions.

The regression analysis (see Table 3) showed that prior behaviour (length of time homeless) and ethnicity explained 12.6% of the variance,  $F_{\text{change}}(2, 42) = 3.02, p = .059$ , with a significant effect for ethnicity. (This allows us to control for the impact of any influence from prior behaviours before exploring the contributions of other background variables. Once these are examined we move to examine the impact of psychosocial variables). The addition of attitude and participatory behavioural beliefs accounted for a further 24% of the variance,  $F_{\text{change}}(2, 40) = 7.55, p < .005$ , so that the model as a whole accounted for 36.5%. Overall, the findings suggest that prior and current experiences were much less important in shaping intentions, with emphasis instead given to attitudes, perceived benefits and to a lesser extent to the men’s ethnicities<sup>1</sup>.

Given the relationship between future use intentions and prior use, we also conducted the regression analysis using the responses of those in the lower service use population<sup>2</sup>. Variables were entered in the same ordering as described above.

The regression analysis (see Table 4) showed that prior behaviour (length of time homeless) and ethnicity explained 27.6% of the variance,  $F_{\text{change}}(2, 29) = 5.52, p = .009$ , with a significant effect for both factors. The addition of attitude and participatory behavioural beliefs accounted for a further 14.4% of the variance,  $F_{\text{change}}(2, 27) = 3.363, p < .05$ , so that the model as a whole accounted for 42%. Overall, the findings suggest that the homeless experiences and ethnicity were much less important in shaping future use intentions ( $p = .068$  and  $.062$  respectively), with emphasis on participatory beliefs ( $p = .02$ ).

<sup>1</sup> If we treat ethnicity as a random factor rather than as a measured variable, then  $p = \text{n.s.}$

<sup>2</sup> With an  $n$ -size of 33, we have power at .95 (with the effect size).

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for high and low prior service use populations: High prior use above diagonal ( $n = 13$ ) and low prior use below diagonal ( $n = 33$ ).

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. BI	4.38 (4.40)	1.02 (.98)	—	.849**	-0.457	0.273	.535	0.216	-0.46	-0.18	0.03	0.517	0.086	0.255
2. ATT	3.08 (4.03)	1.12 (1.25)	0.245	—	-.669*	0.092	.548	0.231	-0.443	-0.184	-0.038	.595*	-0.029	0.152
3. SN	2.00 (2.15)	1.07 (1.71)	-0.106	-0.352	—	-0.023	.000	-0.167	0	0.191	0.286	-0.153	0.068	0.371
4. PBB	3.61 (3.36)	1.49 (1.68)	.474**	0.193	-0.393	—	.134	-0.116	-0.149	0.391	0.124	-0.276	0.039	0.045
5. Control	3.60 (3.48)	1.55(1.58)	.031	-.118	.038	-.314	—	.259	-.803*	.312	.045	.420	.162	.008
6. SI	2.00(3.04)	1.75(1.61)	0.178	.351*	0.487	0.204	-.009	—	-0.261	0.342	-0.183	0.117	-0.4	0.469
7. MI	2.00(1.84)	1.00(.83)	0.102	-0.308	0.11	-0.16	.128	-0.053	—	-0.096	0.067	-0.532	-0.378	-0.165
8. Current Use	92%	78.8%	-0.166	0.259	0.004	-0.14	-.314	-0.032	-0.300	—	0.219	-0.343	0.165	-0.228
9. Prior Behaviour	176 days	231 days	-.360*	-0.172	0.065	-0.12	-.445*	-0.201	-0.133	0.131	—	0.058	0.121	0.101
10. Time Homeless	500 days	445 days	-.372*	-0.178	0.183	-0.134	-.440	0.006	0.09	-0.001	.696**	—	0.235	-0.07
11. Age	36 years	43 years	-.384*	0.107	0.135	-0.295	-.015	0.013	-0.236	0.039	0.431	0.281	—	-0.433
12. Ethnicity	61% White-British	54% White-British	.400*	0.074	0.032	0.201	.070	-0.053	-0.009	0.005	-0.407	-0.017	-0.299	—

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; 1. BI = Future Service Use Intentions; 2. ATT = Attitudes; 3. SN = Subjective Norms; 4. PBB = Participatory Behavioural Beliefs; 5. Control = Perceived Control; 6. SI = Social Identity; 7. MI = Number of Social Groups Reporting Being a Member of; 8. Current Use = moved on or still residing in hostel; 9. PB = length of time spent residing at current hostel (in days); 10. Length of time spent as homeless (reported in days).

**Table 3.** Hierarchical multiple regression analysis predicting future service use intentions.

Step/Predictor	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F <sub>Change</sub>	df <sub>a</sub>	B	SE
1. Ethnicity	.355	.126	3.022	2,42	.695*	.287
Length of Time Spent Homeless					-2.464	.000
2. Ethnicity	.605	.365	7.554	2,40	.529*	.254
Length of Time Spent Homeless					-2.525	.000
Attitude					.266*	.105
Participatory Behavioural Beliefs					.198*	.078

Notes: Dependent measure: future service use intention; \*  $p < .05$ .

**Table 4.** Hierarchical multiple regression analysis predicting future service use intentions ( $n = 33$ ; low prior service use included).

Step/Predictor	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F <sub>Change</sub>	df <sub>a</sub>	B	SE
1. Ethnicity	.525	.276	5.52**	2,29	.362*	.313
Length of Time Spent Homeless					-2.22*	.000
2. Ethnicity	.648	.420	3.363	2,27*	.286	.296
Length of Time Spent Homeless					-1.95	.000
Attitude					.675	.089
Participatory Behavioural Beliefs					2.35*	.089

Notes: Dependent measure: future service use intention; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

#### 4. Discussion

The general point emerging from these findings is that effective services need to understand and target the whole person, but that there may be important time periods to understand when and how people are willing to form intentions and to use services aimed at aiding them. In this study, based on an application of theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and efficacy principles (Bandura, 1997), the homeless men suggest that they have identified skills or behaviours that might overcome the perceived barriers to reaching longer-term accommodation (participatory behaviours), but they also identify and deal with the presence of potential structural systems/organizational issues that could be inhibiting satisfactory housing outcomes and perpetuate the cycle of social exclusion (absence of a link between intentions and current behaviour). Here, we note the complexity of service use and homeless people's lives. Additionally, picking up on the latter we examine the prior behaviour-current behaviour-intention relationship. However, we explore possible patterns of those using services versus those who have moved on. The results of this highlight that barriers to housing might not be the same barriers or hurdles that impact decisions whether to take part in services; the barriers might be very different. The perceptions of different barriers have implication for whether the men were able to form intentions and to sense of efficacy over the tasks that might be relevant to them participating in their own rehousing processes. Then, we show that use of housing services is not a habitual act on the part of homeless people, because there a change in the frequency of behaviour (current behaviour is guided

by a cost benefit analysis in which the men actively gauged the benefits of participation (also see Christian & Abrams, 2003).

To better understand this point about engagement and predicting future service use intentions, let's examine the role of participatory behavioural beliefs (Bandura, 1997). First, the evidence suggests that homeless people's understanding of the phases needed to gain permanent accommodation, and their assessment of whether they possess the skills required to successfully complete the tasks/steps, together are key elements in their intentions about whether to try to advance their situation to gain permanent accommodation. Similarly, the perceived benefits (Ajzen, 1991) of the delivery of the service use were important. The more positively they evaluated the service delivery (higher attitude scores), the more likely they were to report positive participatory beliefs, showing the close link between content and delivery in determining future use (service use intentions) (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). While the data are only cross sectional, they map on to other longitudinal data, which also showed that determinants of initial service use were not the same determinants reported after 12 months of engagement (Christian et al., 2003).

Breaking this pattern down in terms of thinking about the process, it is possible that two things could be happening. The first, and most likely, is that perceptions of the use of services and what is needed to overcome barriers to continued participation are not the same, and should not be conceptualized of as such. These barriers could be contextual (and thus the absence of a link with current behaviour) and tie into the local housing environment. But, there might also be a combination of con-

textual factors and personal resource issues that go on here too (and hence the reason why length of time without accommodation is not related but rather length of engagement with service). Therefore, it might be seeing two populations for the following reasons: homeless people with more positive attitudes to services might stay or development other links within the services, and those with more negative attitudes might move-on, because the resources needed might not be gleaned through engagement but by benefits and resources in achieving satisfactory housing outcomes. In other words, if those desiring to 'move on' perceive more benefits as drawn from outside of the service, they could see more opportunities laying elsewhere than those men who are more content with the service. That is, the experience of homeless people not using services, but achieving positive housing outcomes, might need to be captured and incorporated in intervention programmes' design in order to facilitate understanding of this. A second possibility is that the men's 'perceived service requirements/needs' are not static but dynamic and change over time, and indeed the potential benefits may also change over time, and therefore this should be considered by those designing and monitoring service delivery (this might also be why longer contact with services decreases intentions for future use. It is possible that needs are being met through other avenues and resources whether personal network or structural in nature and not the service. The flip side is that if the services are aiming for this, then the decrease in future intentions should be recorded positively as an achieved goal).

In the debate about the relative merits of the 'continuum of care' and 'housing first' models, the findings show the importance of psychological variables in enabling homeless people to overcome the many hurdles placed in their way to achieving permanent housing. The fewer the hurdles, the more likely it is that homeless people will have the necessary skills, knowledge and determination to overcome them. Also, the early reward of permanent housing in the 'housing first' approach is more likely to be reflected in more positive evaluations of service outcomes and so increase the intention to participate in programmes, both factors that proved important in determining outcomes in the present study.

As well as the practical and policy implications, there are a number of important theoretical contributions. Bentler and Speckart (1981) and Bagozzi (1981) have suggested that the best predictor for future behaviour is past behaviour, highlighting the central role that prior behaviour is likely to play in guiding choices, actions, and motives of people. This contrasts strongly with Ajzen's (1991) argument that effects of prior behaviour should be absorbed in the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control components within the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Prior behaviour should therefore not exert an independent influence on behaviour or future behaviour. Here, however, we would argue that current behaviour might be restrained by social structures, so the

reason we are not seeing a direct link is not because the men are not intending to engage, but because there are barriers that are beyond what they perceive. (We indicate that they are beyond their perceptions, because findings suggest that they feel they have knowledge to help in the resettlement process.) What is interesting is that prior behaviour appears to have an optimal window for facilitating task-related efficacy and intentions for future service use. Shorter and more intensive contact seems to be more effective for active engagement, whereas longer sustained periods of contact change the pattern associated with intentions and cost/benefit analysis carried out by the men. Importantly, this does not seem to be connected to the length of time spent without permanent accommodation. Given that these services rely on a co-creation model, it highlights that homeless people see their needs, and contributions, as important in charting the directions in which help might be developed—including the notion that these might not be static but more dynamic in nature.

One unexpected finding in this study was that we did not observe a strong role of norms or identification with intentions or behaviours. This differs from our prior work (Christian & Armitage, 2002; Christian et al., 2011) and that of others (Snow & Anderson, 1987). One factor that maps onto this difference is that the present context is housing whereas previous work focused on outreach services. It is possible that housing intentions have a more individualistic focus—ultimately concerned with the person's own personal situation. The present evidence suggests that if norms and identity have an influence on intentions it may be rather indirect. For example, norms were related to attitudes but not directly to intentions. In contrast, it seems likely that use of outreach services involves a focus on provision that is often shared with others such as food, other material or emotional supports and so forth. Therefore, the role of norms and identity may be more proximal to the behaviour given the immediacy of the context. However, further research, and ideally longitudinal evidence, is needed to understand how and when group identity and shared social norms may be implicated in housing intentions.

This highlights some interesting methodological points and constraints on the application of our findings. The current study provides a concrete step towards understanding more about the relationship between psychosocial variables and future service use, but it does not shed light on when those perceived benefits are likely to change (relationship between attitudes and current and prior behaviour), or why there is a disparity between current behaviour with prior behaviour to that of future use. The complexities of this would likewise have to be unpacked using more qualitative and narrative forms of data collection. Additionally, we realize that this is a restricted sample size and that we have not included women's views. It is likely in another location and with a mixed gender sample we would find some variations in the patterns. But equally such an application would

answer important questions about the influence of the structural context. It is possible that locations such as London, for example, will follow the same emergence of routines between services, either because members of staff move between organizations, or because the framework and participation in professional networks shapes the provision that is offer. Suffice to say that such application would be a welcome—and would be an important contribution.

The present findings suggest that focusing on homeless people's evaluations of their prospects and choices, and their beliefs about the effectiveness of pursuing various options for action can play an important role in their developing effective intentions. This does not, of course, mean that they will be able to overcome the very real material and practical barriers to inclusion and finding housing that undoubtedly exist, but at least it does mean that some of the psychological obstacles may be overcome and homeless people could be enabled to persist more with action that is likely to be effective. In turn, we know that things that increase social inclusion also increase well-being, and feed into a virtuous cycle that helps to build social capital and other important non-financial resources (Abrams & Christian, 2007; Abrams, Hogg, & Marques, 2005). In summary, the present research offers an optimistic prospect for those planning interventions that can support homeless people. The past is not an inevitable portent of the future and the right kind of support does seem to hold the potential for helping homeless people to perceive and aim for better outcomes.

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### Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

## Complex Needs or Simplistic Approaches? Homelessness Services and People with Complex Needs in Edinburgh

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### Abstract

This research addresses how homelessness services from the statutory and voluntary sector are working for people with complex needs in the City of Edinburgh. Using a qualitative approach, it analyses the service providers' perspectives on the concept, challenges and what works when dealing with this group of people. It also explores the opinions of a sample of service users, categorised as having complex needs, regarding the accommodation and support they are receiving. After analysing the data, it is argued that homelessness agencies do not have an appropriate cognitive nor institutional framework that facilitates an effective approach to work with people with complex needs. The lack of a sophisticated understanding that recognises the relational difficulties of individuals and the presence of structural, organisational, professional and interpersonal barriers hinder the development of positive long-term relationships which is considered as the key factor of change. For this reason, it is recommended to address a set of factors that go beyond simplistic and linear approaches and move towards complex responses in order to tackle homelessness from a broader perspective and, ultimately, achieve social inclusion.

### Keywords

complex needs; complexity; homelessness; public policy; Scotland; social exclusion

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

In May 2015, the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG) of the Scottish Government circulated a document stating that:

"there is a renewed interest across the homelessness sector in Scotland about those individuals who are less likely to have benefited from [the establishment of strong legislative rights for homeless households in 2012 and the roll out of housing options in 2010]. This includes those who may have the most complex needs, who may be rough sleeping and have a history of substance misuse or mental ill health. These individuals are likely to be less engaged, for whatever rea-

son, with the services which may connect them to the housing rights and/or prevention activity available in Scotland". (HPSG, 2015, p. 1)

After reviewing different initiatives, policy options and pieces of research related to complex needs, the document concludes that:

"while the challenges raised by this issue are not new, the changed policy landscape...may offer fresh opportunities to address this....Consequently, in its role as the key strategic policy making group in Scotland, the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group may wish to address this issue as a key objective in its work plan in the coming year". (HPSG, 2015, pp. 5–6)

Alongside this, in recent years, voluntary sector organisations around Scotland have been emphasising the need for a refocusing of attention on multiple and complex needs in Scottish homelessness policy (Evans, 2014; Fitzpatrick, Pawson, Bramley, Wilcox, & Watts, 2015; Homeless Action Scotland, 2015). In response to the above factors, this research aims to explore how homelessness services from the statutory and voluntary sector are responding to people with complex needs in the City of Edinburgh. Its purpose is to provide evidence in order to contribute to the ongoing improvement of homelessness policy and services for people with complex needs across Scotland. To do so, this article will begin by reviewing previous research works focused on multiple and complex needs. Then, it will explain the research design selected to conduct it. Thirdly, it will present the findings based on the qualitative data collected from the service providers and users. After that, drawing on complexity, social exclusion and street-level bureaucracy theories, it will present a discussion and reflection of the findings. Finally, after stating the conclusions, it will outline some policy implications and recommendations that emerged from the data analysis.

### 1.1. Background

As mentioned by the HPSG, interest and concern regarding people with multiple and complex needs is not new. There have been various pieces of research that have been carried out since the early 2000's in England (Keene, 2001; Rankin & Regan, 2004; Schneider, 2007). These studies have analysed the understandings and profile of people with complex needs; discussed the barriers and good practice in service provision; and outlined recommendations and models to suit better the needs of service users. In Scotland, concerns regarding people with complex needs became evident during the second half of the last decade after the Evaluation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (Fitzpatrick, Pleace, & Bevan, 2005). Various authors that conducted literature reviews (Rosengard, Laing, Ridley, & Hunter, 2007; Gallimore, Hay, & Mackie, 2008, 2009) echoed the challenges and recommendations outlined in the research works aforementioned.

In recent years, qualitative and quantitative research provided more in-depth data about the nature and patterns of people categorised as having severe and multiple disadvantages or that face multiple exclusion in the UK (Bramley et al., 2015; Brown, Morris, Scullion, & Somerville, 2012; Fitzpatrick, Bramley, & Johnsen, 2012). Also, the evaluations from various pilots to address multiple and complex needs have added valuable insights (Battrick, Crook, Edwards, & Moselle, 2014; Cattell et al., 2011; Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2012; Johnsen & Teixeira, 2010). All this, plus the legislative changes [the abolition of the test of priority need] in 2012, the frontline experiences and the integration process of health and social care led to a re-emergence of the attention for people with complex needs in the public policy agenda in Scotland. In 2014, the

City of Edinburgh Council and the Glasgow Homelessness Network led different projects to improve the services for this group (Health, Social Care & Housing Committee, 2014; Evans, 2014). Both initiatives have contributed to enhance the understanding of the challenges ahead for homelessness services; however, there is still a general gap in knowledge regarding how services are working for people with complex needs in Scottish councils.

## 2. Research Design

This research was conducted taking into account the aforementioned research gap, the policy interest of the HPSG, and what voluntary sector organisations have been advocating in favour of people with complex needs. Its general aim is to explore how homelessness services from the statutory and voluntary sector are responding to people with complex needs in the City of Edinburgh. To attain this, specific research questions were developed. These are:

- How do service providers understand and define people with complex needs?
- What are the challenges that service providers face in their work?
- What do service providers think works well when dealing with people with complex needs?
- What do service providers consider as the key factors that need to be addressed to improve the services?

Additionally, the research examined what reasons are behind the difficulty of engagement between service providers and people with complex needs; what would success look like for people with complex needs; and what would be the most appropriate models to work with this group in the future. Finally, it explored what a sample of people categorised as having complex needs think about the support and accommodation they are receiving from the homelessness services.

### 2.1. Approach, Strategy and Methods

To address the pragmatically-approached questions of this research, a qualitative method and a case study strategy were used (Yin, 2013). First, the City of Edinburgh was selected as the fieldwork location because it has the second largest homeless population in Scotland just after Glasgow (Scottish Government, 2016; Shelter Scotland, 2015). For this reason, it has a variety of well-established service providers from the voluntary sector that are commissioned by the council. Additionally, through 'Inclusive Edinburgh' it has been developing a framework to work with people with complex needs and, at the time this research took place, was actively discussing how services were working and how they can be improved (Health, Social Care and Housing Committee, 2014, 2015). Second, service providers from the public and voluntary sector from the City of Edinburgh were chosen as the subjects

of study due to their direct involvement with people with complex needs and, from an analytical perspective, because they are the street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010) that are implementing the policies and services. Finally, service users categorised as having complex needs were also part of the study as they are directly affected by the service provision and, therefore, can speak about how homelessness services are working for them.

The participants were recruited based on purposive and snowballing sampling (Bryman, 2012). After mapping the homelessness agencies and inviting them to participate in the research project, a total of 35 service providers and 10 service users were recruited. Among the service providers were team leaders, directors of services, housing officers, homelessness prevention and assessment officers, caseworkers, support workers, and hostel managers from 14 public and voluntary organisations. The methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews, focus groups and documentary analysis. The data analysis was done using the thematic coding approach with the assistance of NVivo 10 software.

The research followed the ethical codes and guidelines established in different textbooks (Punch, 2014). Service providers were contacted, explained the purposes, aims and topics of the interview and assured that their participation would be anonymous, confidential and would not be representing the position of their organization. On the other hand, for service users, a Level 2 ethical clearance from the University of Edinburgh was needed, as they are considered a vulnerable population. For both groups, verbal informed consent was attained before the meetings took place.

Finally, regarding the limitations of the study, one was that after conducting an exhaustive literature search, it was noted that most sources on this topic are from 'grey literature', rather than scholarly books and journals. This reflects a limited theoretical approach regarding people with complex needs. Consequently, the main limitation was that as there is no single definition of people with complex needs in the literature, the sample of service users selected by the voluntary sector organisations for the interviews varied widely. In this sense, the participants were in different states of recovery and engagement with services. Therefore, not all of them were, at that moment, "chaotic", "hard to reach", "disengaged" or in a state of crisis. However, this also reflects the reality of how service providers categorise complex needs in their organisations and the state of the art of the topic.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Definitions

It is interesting that, although almost all homelessness service providers from the public and voluntary sector affirmed that they work with people with complex needs, there is no written official definition of "complex needs" in any of their agencies. In general, organi-

sations have their own understanding about what complex needs means, which is correlated with their nature, interests and tasks. For example, for some providers from the public sector, complex needs would be "anybody that doesn't fit or could be excluded from mainstream services" (Statutory sector representative). On the other hand, for voluntary sector services, it would be "the 'standard definition' [because] we are to an extent bounded by the definitions of others because we are commissioned by the Local Authority" (Voluntary sector representative).

However, the most common understanding of complex needs in Edinburgh is having three or more interrelated issues like mental illness, substance misuse, physical disability and homelessness. This is the 'unofficial' definition used generically to describe and categorise people with complex needs. It is how the Council commissions services and refers people to homelessness agencies. In this sense, the commissioning team uses this 'unofficial' definition in order to contract services. This is why a service provider, for instance, stated that "money defines complex needs" (Voluntary sector representative).

Alongside, there are many other different understandings that practitioners have. For example, instead of focusing on the number—breadth—of issues, others consider that the severity—depth—is more important: "one need that is so deep, so entrenched, then to me it would be complex needs" (Statutory sector representative). Additionally, for some there is also an emphasis on the chaotic behaviour involved: "when they say complex needs, we are thinking of people with chaotic lifestyles" (Voluntary sector representative). And although, there is no agreement about the relationship between complex needs and chaos—if they come together or not—there is a tendency of considering challenging behaviour and being 'hard to reach' as central factors of the definition. In this sense, for example, some consider that being 'hard to reach' "is a need in itself" (Voluntary sector representative) or that "if you can turn up twice a week at the same time, at the same place, having done all the agreed tasks then you don't have complex needs" (Voluntary sector representative).

Another interesting perspective that emerged through the interviews is the one that understands complex needs as a problem of people's relational skills. Consequently, complex needs would be "a group of people whose fundamental human needs are probably no different from you and I, but the thing that is complicated is their capacity and ability to get those needs met" (Statutory sector representative). From this angle, the problem is not about the number of issues or their severity; instead, it is about their inability to cope with their issues or deal with the people and organisation that are set up to help them. As put by a practitioner, "[they] just have that general inability to sustain a kind of meaningful relationship. And that in itself is complex, I think". (Statutory sector representative).

As it can be seen, there are many understandings that, in a way, resemble the representation of this topic in academia, where there is not a consensus nor single definition about complex needs (Rosengard et al., 2007). This is why in the scholarly literature and professional reports, terms like “multiple exclusion homelessness”, “severe and multiple disadvantages”, “high support needs”, “dual diagnosis”, “multiple and complex needs” are used interchangeably to refer also to people with complex needs. Authors like Rankin and Regan (2004, p. 7), after stating that “on one level everyone has complex needs”, argued that is better to think of complex needs as a framework for understanding rather than as a specific definition. In the same manner, Stalker et al. (2003) concluded that apart from the lack of consensus, there is a surplus of meaning in use of the term “complex needs”.

### 3.2. Challenges

Apart from the differences in the understanding, there are many other structural, organisational, professional and interpersonal factors that service providers consider as barriers when working for people with complex needs. Among the structural factors, a lack of affordable housing and appropriate supported accommodation was pointed by all the interviewees across the sectors. This shortage generates that people with complex needs stay in Bed and Breakfasts which are largely assessed by research participants as inadequate due to its costs, low quality and absence of support. As a service user describes them: “Some are terrible. Some should be shut down....I wouldn’t send my mouse there, you know what I mean. Yeah, it’s not nice” (Service user, rough-sleeping). However, these are the places that they get because “in terms of complex needs, the biggest gap is challenging behaviour. There isn’t any place in Edinburgh that would be for challenging behaviours”. (Statutory sector representative).

Another structural challenge is funding, its mechanisms and incentives (Anderson, 2011; Evans, 2016; Rankin & Regan, 2004; Rosengard et al., 2007). As regularly happens, all service providers feel constrained by the reduction of human and economic resources in their agencies. However, apart from the cuts, the funding top-down approach and managerial principles generate other challenges for service provision at the street-level. For example, the fact that the budgets from the different social departments are intended to achieve single outcomes related to the purpose of the funding agency, limits a holistic approach to work for people with multiple and complex needs. In words of a provider from the voluntary sector, “we are funded by Services for Communities, so they are interested in housing people. Budgets are in silos, [and] they are interested in having housing outcomes” (Voluntary sector representative).

In the same way, there is a tendency to consider outcomes that are exclusively quantitative and easier to measure, although maybe not the most appropriate towards people with complex needs. As said by a practitioner,

“money and complex needs are notoriously difficult to put together because is so difficult to quantify the work that you are doing with somebody with complex needs and pin it into a box that can be ticked” (Voluntary sector representative). Furthermore, the commissioned agencies get paid by the appointments kept with these clients who, in general, are hard to engage. “Can you imagine being paid hourly to engage with someone who is going through chaos? It doesn’t work” (Voluntary sector representative). This funding mechanism creates disincentives to practitioners and voluntary agencies to work with people with complex needs because their financial interests are at risk and, consequently, a cherry-picking of less vulnerable clients is more prone to take place.

Further, there are other organisational regulations that negatively affect the outcomes for service users. Firstly, for the majority of service providers, a central barrier is that the current timeframe—6 to 12 months—to work with people with complex needs is too short. “Clients find it really difficult to engage consistently and a longer time is essential to get them on board” (Statutory sector representative). In this sense, the time limitations inhibit the development of a relationship between the service providers and the service users. Secondly, an important organisational difficulty is the coordination and integration among agencies from the public sector. This is related to the funding mechanisms and incentives but also touches upon a cultural bureaucratic characteristic known as a ‘silo mentality’. The following case illustrates this situation:

“This was a person [with complex needs] that no one thought that would get into accommodation. He stayed 24 months, so they told him: ‘You have to leave. Not because your behaviour is bad but because it is temporary and you have to go’....And there were some people from the NHS and the Council saying ‘yes, and we funded that housing and you, NHS, made those savings, but you didn’t give us any money’. And there lies the problem”. (Voluntary sector representative)

As it can be noted, this kind of behaviours hinders the necessary coordination and integration that is already difficult due to the different professional backgrounds, understandings and languages that exist among the housing, health and social work agencies.

These cultural and behavioural factors add to the list of other professional challenges that are also encountered by service providers. Among practitioners from the statutory and voluntary sector, there seems to be dissatisfaction regarding their working conditions like, for example, the perceived lack of recognition and appreciation by the organisations with respect to the work that frontline staff do daily with people with complex needs:

“– Just let me be absolutely clear. Staff need to be paid more and respected more by the statutory bodies for

the fact that we essentially subsidise their services”.

“– Yes. We subsidise social work services doing what we do, which is harder, nastier...more traumatic”.

“– Just for the end, because it’s true....It takes quite a lot of knowledge and experience to work with the real chaotic, complex needs people we are talking about....And if you continue to chip away at the pay, at the respect you are given as a practitioner, you will lose those people. An example is probably me. If my pay in real time decreases much more, why would I be here? And that is an issue. You pay peanuts, you get monkeys”. (Voluntary sector representatives)

From another angle, there is also a negative emotion that generally affects service providers across statutory and voluntary sectors: “The frustration’s at the job, that is, not frustration about the client. It’s just sometimes frustrations about...that we can’t, you know, kind of get there with people” (Statutory sector representative). This discontentment is extremely important as it may contribute to the generation of occupational burnout among practitioners. Even more, it may affect the service provision that heavily relies on their abilities, motivation and well-being.

Probably the central interpersonal challenge found among service providers, is the difficulty to engage and establish positive relationships with people with complex needs. There are two elements that help to understand this situation. First, to build trust among practitioners and clients is complicated due to the time limitations described before. Second, “people with complex needs have huge trust issues” (Statutory sector representative). This lack of trust is generally attributed to service users’ traumatic experiences and different types of abuse in the past. The majority of practitioners agree that “most of the problems that we perceive in engagement relates to, broadly speaking, the traumatic psycho-social history of the people we are working [with]” (Statutory sector representative).

Lastly, the ‘challenging behaviour’ presented by people with complex needs is also considered an obstacle to relations with services. A number of practitioners agree that their behaviour is a defence mechanism and a way of coping with their lives. “It might be scary for them to get out the lifestyle they are used to” (Voluntary sector representative). Additionally, some practitioners interpret this way of being and relating as their ‘normality’ because “they don’t know how to be any other way” (Statutory sector representative). This is taken further when it is affirmed that “it’s also like a....I don’t want to use the word career, but it is a career. ‘This is what I do. I am sick’” (Statutory sector representative). However, it is recognised that “they are not trying to stay sick. They just don’t know how to get better. Which is a different thing. I think there is no cynicism...[although] it is a possibility” (Voluntary sector representative).

As it has been described, there are a number of challenges of different nature when working with people

with complex needs. Some of them are common with the ones that have been identified in previous research works (Anderson, 2011). Overall, they represent the complexity of the interactional reality between service providers and people with complex needs, as well as the different structural, institutional, organisational, cultural and behavioural elements that shape this relationship.

### 3.3. What Works

“What has worked well when working with people with complex needs?

- Long-term relationship.
- Time.
- Trust.
- Long-term relationship...Our team used to work long-term with people...and we were able to be very creative...” (Voluntary sector representatives)

These ideas were echoed in all the interviews with the service providers from the public and voluntary sector. Although, nowadays practitioners state that they do not have enough time to develop long-term relationships, the absolute majority of them agreed that building relationships and trust with the people with complex needs is a key factor:

“The number one, most important thing is always the relationship between you and another person. So, if you can develop a relationship or if the resident develops a relationship with a support worker, that can change things enormously for them in any direction. So, if you don’t have that relationship, I think it is more a ticking boxes exercise. But if you establish a relationship, I just think it gives you a good basis for addressing other needs”. (Statutory sector representative)

Hence, relationships are considered a transformational tool that allows service providers to identify and work on the other issues that are affecting the individuals. But, what do these relationships entail? Practitioners think that having a balance between strong boundaries and flexibility is the key: “We always say that you are not a friend, you are supporter...you are a helper. You are not a friend....There has to be boundaries. However, it’s got to be done...and in a manner...the same skills that you use with your friends, possibly, are used to work” (Voluntary sector representative). This perspective is generally shared among service providers, adding that it is important to be empathetic, tolerant to some behaviours, flexible with missing appointments and show that you are genuinely committed to help.

Likewise, when people with complex needs are asked what they appreciate the most from the support they tend to mention similar qualities: “Like I said, they are really friendly. They take their time to listen to you...how you’re feeling. Always take your needs into consideration. They always put you first” (Service user, supported ac-

commodation). In this manner, having a constant trusted worker that deals with the particular client along the process—case-ownership—is deemed as a very positive factor to develop a better relationship. Similarly, the proactive outreach model, in which the caseworkers go wherever the clients are without expecting them to approach the services offices, is seen as effective by service providers. Although, this approach generates certain cautions among practitioners because it blurs the boundaries between them and the clients.

These practices require considerable discretion due to the unpredictability of service users with complex needs and chaotic lifestyles. Interestingly, based on the data collected, this is more likely to happen with services that are not commissioned by the Council and, therefore, are not bounded to achieve specific outcomes asked by the funders. This frees providers to work more creatively and focus on the “small things” that have a positive impact on the relationship and in the recovery of people with complex needs. In this line, service providers generally agree that it is really useful to “to do little things that make them feel they can do well or be successful at some things” (Voluntary sector representative). These small things could include going to cultural activities, sport events or basically any other activity that helps them to become more confident and increase their self-esteem.

Further, these approaches generally match with the best practices identified previously by different authors. For example, Schneider (2007, p. 35) identified that the most effective services would include “individualised case management; assertive outreach; integrated, multi-disciplinary team working; crisis resolution; day hospital care; engagement with therapeutic communities/residential rehabilitation”. At a strategic level, authors like Rankin and Regan (2004, p. 26) proposed a service based on the recognition of whole needs; single point of entry to health and social care services; creative whole systems services; and user empowerment. From a more operational perspective, Rosengard et al. (2007) and Gallimore et al. (2009), who conducted literature reviews on this topic, pointed to proactive outreach, link workers, locally pooled and personalised budgets and initiatives to overcome access difficulties.

After reviewing what service providers and different researchers identify as best practices, it becomes evident that what has worked well when dealing with people with complex needs is a relational approach. This is in itself complicated, due to the uncertainties and difficulties in ‘assessing’ how good, bad, helpful or unhelpful relationships can be. In this way, “nobody wants to pay you to build a relationship with somebody ‘cause it seems the wishy-washy bit of it. But it’s not. It’s the crucial part. It doesn’t work...it wouldn’t work if we wouldn’t have the relationship” (Voluntary sector representative). This is, maybe, why a change of paradigm in how we understand reality and homelessness is necessary to successfully address these cases.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1. Complexity and Simplicity

Complexity is a term that can be used too lightly. It is intended to elucidate, but “usually means confusion and uncertainty” (Morin, 2005, p. 1). When we refer to people with complex needs it seems that this is particularly the case. It is a problematic concept among service providers that aims to characterise people that are too complicated. Complexity is polysemic and its meanings depend on the field of knowledge in which it is being used; this is why Holland (2014, p. 3) states that it does not have a rigorous definition. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines ‘complex’ as a “whole made up of complicated or interrelated parts” and ‘complicated’ as “hard to understand, explain or deal with”. In this sense, when we label someone as having complex needs, maybe what we are meaning is people we don’t understand, can’t explain and don’t know how to deal with.

However, in our search for clear answers, we try to simplify the complex reality. This could be understood because historically our scientific approach to knowledge has been based on a paradigm of simplification (Morin, 2005). In this way, based on the principles of reduction and disjunction, we try to reduce and divide the complexity of a whole to try to understand it but without recognising the relationship and unicity of the parts and the whole. Consequently, when we approach people with complex needs, we are trying to determine and address the different elements but losing the connection with the whole. Also, we look for definitions that suit our—or the services’—abilities and our capabilities to measure them. For this reason, in the policy sphere there is a dominant quantitative understanding of what complex needs is and who people with complex needs are.

To really understand and serve this group of people, a new paradigm is needed. As a practitioner stated during the fieldwork for this research, “we are all complex and we all have needs”. People are complex, services and organisations are complex, their interactions are complex. There is a need to embrace that complexity instead of trying to simplify it and, perhaps because of that, misunderstand it:

“Complexity requires that one tries to comprehend the relations between the whole and the parts. The knowledge of the parts is not enough, the knowledge of the whole as a whole is not enough, if one ignores its parts; one is thus brought to make a come and go in loop to gather the knowledge of the whole and its parts”. (Morin, 2005, p. 6)

Complexity is not just multiplicity. In this sense, having a number of symptoms is not what defines the complexity of people. As one service provider put it “we have met multiple needs clients that may have addiction issues

and challenging behaviour issues and things like that but I don't think that necessarily makes a person complex" (Statutory sector representative).

So, how can we understand complex needs? Firstly, by acknowledging that human beings are complex and that complexity does not equal a multiplicity of needs. Therefore, we must seek another form of understanding that helps to illuminate, not to obscure the reality. For this, a turn to a paradigm of complexity (Morin, 2005) that is non-linear and based on the principles of distinction and conjunction seems more adequate. When applying complex thinking, we would aim to analyse the single issues that the individual presents, but also their relations with the whole. As stated by Pycroft and Bartollas (2015, p. 23), "this is the basis of a whole-systems approach: that it is the behaviour of the overall system rather than the individual parts of the system that needs to be the focus of inquiry".

For this, it is important to look beyond the symptoms and holistically assess individuals in relation to their selves and their communities. Also, it implies that we need to move away from "the confident assumption...that a simple relationship exists between cause and effect in a system that can be understood by reducing it into its component parts" (Kernick, 2006, p. 385). Perhaps a common language that emerges from the wider concept of homelessness and social exclusion is needed to develop this framework of understanding.

#### 4.2. Homelessness and Social Exclusion

What is the difficulty for service providers working with people with complex needs? Apart from understanding them, what makes it more challenging is the difficulty in dealing with them. From the service providers' perspective, this group of people are sometimes 'hard to reach' and chaotic. This lack of engagement is mostly seen as an additional problem that they have and that is explained by different personal and interpersonal factors attributed to the individuals. However, perhaps, it is the central issue that must be understood and addressed when working with them. In a way, people with complex needs may have, at the core, relational difficulties. This problem is manifested in how they relate with public services and front-line staff: "the problem is in how he engages with the services. He was engaging in a way that you find problematic" (Statutory sector representative).

But, at a deeper level, the issue is how people with complex needs relate with themselves, their families, their friends, the law, the authority and how they relate with substances such as alcohol and drugs. In this manner, when we refer to people with complex needs, we may have to understand them as *disengaged*: disengaged from themselves, from their social networks, from their communities. In other terms, as *homeless* understood as "a condition of detachment from society characterised by the absence or attenuation of the affiliative bonds that link settled persons to a network of inter-

connected social structures" (Caplow, Bahr, & Sternberg, 1968, p. 494) and socially excluded. It is not only about that they are houseless, substance misusers, mentally ill and don't engage. It is about "the rupture of relationships between people and the society in which they live" (Mathieson et al., 2008, p. 13); it is about the relational difficulties that are affecting different layers of their lives and the way that they deal with them. In this sense, and still relying on complexity theory, it is on the emergent behaviour (Holland, 2014)—*the emergence of disengagement*—that we have to focus on. And that is going beyond the sum of the parts—the specific and evident needs—and trying to understand the emergent property—disengagement—of the complex whole—the individual.

As said by a service provider, "for the majority of our clients, the biggest issue that they face on life, is that inability to be in relation to other people. That is the single biggest issue...and homelessness is just a symptom of something far deeper" (Statutory sector representative). Hence, any approach to work with them must primarily address the reasons behind their disengagement that is preventing them getting their needs met by existing universal services. The objective would be to re-engage them with the multiple dimensions that make up their lives, with the services that can help them on their single issues, and ultimately with society; that is, to socially include them. This implies working with a broader vision of what the problem is and avoiding narrow conceptions that lead to 'silos' among providers.

#### 4.3. Managerialism and Street-Level Bureaucracy

In Scotland, the complexity of homelessness has been recognised (Scottish Executive, 2002), but the services addressing this issue have been constrained by the current institutional framework of the public sector. In this sense, service providers, following a housing provision and medical model, are addressing more the symptoms than the roots of the problem. They have tried to simplify the complexity of homelessness, instead of embrace it. This is the reason why, for people with complex needs who are disengaged and socially excluded, services usually don't offer what they need. Generally, services are not designed for the disengaged, for the socially excluded or for people with relational difficulties. There are good traditional single-issue services for the substance misusers, the mentally ill and the houseless. But the services are not designed to relate with people that escape those categories.

In this way, service providers also have relational difficulties. It is not that people with complex needs are the problem because they don't engage. It is that the institutional environment restricts the way services can work and relate effectively. Firstly, there is an administrative model, the 'new public management', which emphasises the command and control of frontline staff and an outcomes-focused service. This managerial model,

inspired from a business culture (Evans, 2010), generates different incentives that affect negatively the quality of services offered. Namely, the focus of achieving outcomes that may not be suited for people with complex needs, and the restriction of the necessary professional discretion that front-line staff need to work more creatively and respond to the uncertain nature of the client group.

In addition, based on the data collected, the lack of a sophisticated understanding of the problem—what complex needs is—leads to linear approaches that are simplistic. Therefore, they are not the most appropriate nor often realistic for the service users. Numerical and traditional ‘hard’ outcomes are asked of service providers as measures of success. For this reason, ‘soft’ outcomes that are difficult to measure—such as building relationships or increasing resilience—are disregarded. This generates two perverse dynamics. The first is that the commissioned organisations and their frontline staff are forced to choose between their financial interests and their clients’ well-being. The second is that service providers are incentivised to work with the clients that are more prone to achieve these outcomes; and people with complex needs may be excluded once again. Regarding this situation a practitioner stated that “it happens all the time. All the time” (Statutory sector representative).

The other problem that the managerial model generates is the reduction of professional discretion. Unlike Lipsky’s (2010) analysis of street-level bureaucracy where workers retain discretion despite managerial efforts to control it, funding mechanisms exercise effective constraints towards the freedom of practitioners that work with people with complex needs. This is particularly important in complex needs cases due to the flexibility and creativity needed to counter disengagement and mistrust that characterise this group. Although practitioners still have considerable discretion to select who is considered as having complex needs—maybe because there is not a clear definition—, they are bounded by the appointments system, the duty to achieve outcomes and by the time regulations in their role as supporters.

However, it is important to make clear that, following Evans’ analysis (2010), the reduction of professional discretion is not linked to the relationship between frontline managers and staff. In this sense, it is not about a conflict between the frontline managers and practitioners as it has been argued in previous studies about street-level bureaucracy. As Evans (2010) suggests in his research, there has to be a differentiation between management levels. In the case of the City of Edinburgh, as frontline managers and staff share a professional background, the reduction of discretion is more linked to the funding mechanisms and the way services are commissioned. That is, the reduction of professional discretion is not generated by direct line management controls, but due to the higher management levels of the bureaucratic structure.

## 5. Conclusions

This research has presented data on how homelessness services from the statutory and voluntary sector work for people with complex needs in the City of Edinburgh. As it has been demonstrated throughout the article, there are different factors that affect the way services work in these areas. On one side, the lack of an official definition and sophisticated understanding of complex needs, creates a climate in which the services being offered do not respond to the complexity of this group of service users. On the other side, there is a set of factors that constrain the development and implementation of an appropriately complex approach for people with complex needs. At the moment, the simplistic, linear approach was found to dominate service provision.

Having said that, it is important to make clear that the issue is not that service providers don’t know how to deal with people with complex needs. They know that relationships work and that service users have psychosocial problems linked to a past of complex trauma that must be addressed first. The problem is that there isn’t an institutional framework that allows services to work effectively with people with complex needs. The way services are set up constrains the relationship building process that is needed. At the moment, people with complex needs are being processed mainly as houseless, substance misusers or mentally-ill. There is not a place or service for people with relational difficulties, for the disengaged, for the homeless -in the broad sense- or for the socially excluded.

For these reasons, it is not the people with complex needs that we should focus on, rather the services and the institutional framework that shapes them. It is not only the disengagement of people with complex needs that we need to worry about, but the barriers and difficulties that services face to engage properly with this group of service users. It will be necessary to go beyond simplistic and linear approaches and move towards complex responses. Ultimately, the design of the institutional framework needs to change in order to enable long-term relationships between caseworkers and people with complex needs and tackle their social exclusion.

## 6. Policy Implications and Recommendations

For successful policy design and implementation, there has to be a well-defined policy issue. The way policy-makers and practitioners understand a problem, shapes the way it will be addressed and the institutional framework that will support it. Through the interviews conducted in this research, factors of change have been identified. There is a need to address these factors in order to enable a relationship-based approach, serve effectively people with complex needs and tackle homelessness from a broader perspective.

## 6.1. Key Factors of Change

### 6.1.1. Common Definition and Understanding

It is important to develop a common understanding of what complex needs means among service providers from the public and voluntary sector. Based on the findings and analysis, it is recommended that a definition that goes beyond the number of issues and that focuses on the relational skills of the individuals should be adopted. One interesting method to identify potentially service users with complex needs is the 'Chaos Index' used by, amongst others, the New Directions Team Assessment in the London Borough of Merton (Rinaldi, Linnell, & Clenaghan, 2008).

Although the label is secondary to the real understanding, 'complex needs' is a term that may not be clear enough, stigmatizes the individuals and doesn't facilitate the construction of a common language. Therefore, the replacement of this term by another such as "multiple exclusion homeless" should be discussed and considered.

### 6.1.2. Joined-Up Approach and Coordination

At a strategic local level, it would be desirable to establish a single manager that can coordinate the different statutory and voluntary agencies involved with people with complex needs. This would be more effective in terms of overcoming the silos existing in the funding and in organisational culture.

At an operational level, the model of the link worker that helps the clients to navigate the social services and homelessness system has proven to be successful. This approach is recommended as it is based on building positive relationships with the clients and overcome the different institutional barriers that can exist among services.

### 6.1.3. Appropriate Support and Accommodation

Based on the interviews conducted in this research, the majority of service providers thought that long-term supported accommodation is probably the best option for people that show difficulties in engaging and lack housing. At the moment, there isn't an adequate supply of this type of accommodation and the options available tend to have time limits on occupancy that are not sufficient to form relationships and work with people with complex needs.

In addition, it is suggested that the homelessness agencies from the voluntary sector that offer different types of accommodation and support consider the model of the psychologically-informed environments (Keats, Maguire, Johnson, & Cockersell, 2012) as a new approach to working with people with complex needs.

On the other hand, it is important to consider the Housing First model as another alternative for people with complex needs. This is a model that currently is regarded by academics and researchers (Busch-Geertsema, 2014; Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2012; Johnsen & Teixeira,

2010) as the best option to address homelessness. Overall, it has had positive results in various cities with groups of homeless people of different levels and types of needs. However, it is important to recall that if an alternative understanding of complex needs is adopted, as the proposed in this article, it remains to be seen whether the Housing First model is the most appropriate option. Especially, taking into account the generalized shortage of affordable housing and accommodation (Shelter Scotland, 2015), the eligibility criteria, and the incentives it could generate.

### 6.1.4. Time and Flexibility

Building a trustful relationship takes time. For this reason, it is necessary that timeframes to work with people with complex needs be extended. According to practitioners interviewed for this research, a period of at least two years is a required to work towards the recovery of people with complex needs. Accordingly, it is suggested that any approach with this client group should consider this length of time.

As people with complex needs struggle with engagement, there is the need to consider that their way of relating with services may be irregular. In this sense, being flexible towards missing appointments, challenging behaviours and unaccomplished tasks is essential.

### 6.1.5. Softer Outcomes

It is recommended that the commissioning team from the councils and other funders redefine the outcomes according to the conditions and capabilities of people with complex needs. The objective is to eliminate the current conflict between the outcomes that organisations have to achieve in order to get funded, and the ones that the service users consider helpful to work towards.

### 6.1.6. Training and Support for Staff

Front-line workers should be introduced or further trained in the management and sustaining of therapeutic and transformational relationships. The training package developed by St. Mungo's Broadway in London (Keats et al., 2012) could serve as a reference to be considered.

Due to the level of emotional stress that relationships with people with complex needs can bring to practitioners, reflective practice sessions should be introduced to support front-line staff and try to prevent or reduce occupation burnout.

## 6.2. Prevention and Early Intervention

Previous research (Bramley et al., 2015; Fitzpatrick et al., 2012) has shown that people with complex needs had frequently experienced child abuse, domestic violence and poor experiences at school, such as truancy and bullying. In the same line, in Scotland, one of the main fac-

tors that trigger homelessness is relationship breakdown (Tabner, 2013; Shelter Scotland, 2015). Therefore, it is fundamental to work more closely with the educational system and those that support families and youth. In this sense, there are some actions that are recommended to contribute to the prevention of complex needs:

- Enhance coordination between homelessness agencies and schools in order to identify and support students that have a history of truancy and exclusion.
- Put in practice support services as mentoring, mediation and befriending in order to strengthen the social networks (Tabner, 2013) among young people at risk or presenting in the homelessness agencies of the City of Edinburgh.

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### Conflict of Interest

This article is adapted from the report of a larger piece of research elaborated for Shelter Scotland's policy team. Apart from that, the author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

## Contradictory and Intersecting Patterns of Inclusion and Exclusion of Street Youth in Salvador, Brazil

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### Abstract

Drawing on longitudinal qualitative research in Brazil involving participant observation and narrative interviews with young homeless persons, and semi-structured interviews with middle class residents, local businesses, and patrolling police officers, three overlapping yet contradictory dimensions of inclusion and exclusion are developed. First the hegemonic exclusionary discourse that tends to produce stigmatizing labels on poor people in general, and boys and young men on the street in particular, is mapped out. Second, socio-spatial exclusionary mechanisms involving architectural measures, surveillance cameras and violent policing, guarding the neighbourhood from stigmatised ‘others’ are examined. Third, the less recognised but equally important inclusionary mechanisms, facilitating street life and enabling a sense of belonging among young homeless people are explored. A simplistic and unidimensional conceptualisation of social exclusion is critiqued while demonstrating the multifaceted, intertwined, and contradictory character of homeless people’s social relationships with middle class residents, businesses, and police. Furthermore, the exclusion/inclusion dualism that is vivid in the existing literature is questioned. It is suggested that a nuanced picture is vital to increasing our understanding of the everyday lives of homeless populations and that further investigation and theorization of their exclusion as well as inclusion is needed.

### Keywords

Brazil; homelessness; social exclusion; social inclusion; street youth

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

Homeless populations, particularly in the global North, have increasingly been studied and theorised through the lens of social exclusion (e.g. Horsell, 2006; Pleace, 1998; Somerville, 1998), focusing on structural exclusionary mechanisms such as unequal material distribution and discriminatory job and housing markets. Within the burgeoning literature, street dwellers are also described in terms of socio-spatial exclusion, demonstrating how they are perceived as ‘unwelcome elements’ in metropolitan areas in all corners of the world (e.g. Beazley, 2003; Caldeira, 2000; Scheper-Hughes, 2005; Swanson, 2007; Young, 2003). The mapping of exclusionary

processes is of vital importance to unravel the dynamic as well as relational character of social exclusion of vulnerable populations. However, the unilateral focus on exclusion has rendered us incapable of recognising parallel processes of social inclusion (Cameron, 2006). In order to grasp the complexity of social exclusion, it is important to look for experiences of social inclusion among people who appear to be marginalized (Fangen, 2010), bearing in mind that the distinction between inclusion and exclusion is not sharp-cut but ambiguous (Samers, 1998).

This article is inspired by Parr’s (2000) claim that ethnographic research can disrupt understandings of ‘others’ as homogenous individuals who are straightforwardly excluded from ‘the mainstream’ and moved

into marginal spaces. Furthermore, it supports Hall's (2005) conceptualisation of social inclusion and exclusion as not absolute positions, but rather as relational and entangled in particular ways and in particular contexts. I explore the social relations between young street dwellers and middle class residents, businesses, and police in one specific neighbourhood in urban Brazil with the aim to: (1) examine the hegemonic exclusionary discourses that 'other' poor people in general and boys and young men on the street in particular; (2) map out exclusionary mechanisms that guard the socio-spatial boundaries of an elite neighbourhood; and (3) explore less known but equally important inclusionary mechanisms, facilitating street life and enabling a sense of belonging among the young homeless. Drawing on longitudinal, ethnographic research among boys and young men on the street, I document patterns of prejudice across both inclusionary and exclusionary practices. Each of the above objectives is pursued consecutively following the sections on literature review on street youth and urban space, the socio-historical contextualisation of homelessness in Brazil, and the study's methodology, to which I now turn.

## 2. The Street as Site for Empowerment and Exclusion

The geographical order of urban space is imposed mainly from 'above' by the adult dominant class, police, politicians, and city planners. Yet, young people establish parallel modes of belonging to the streets (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001; Young, 2003). The street allows youth to contest social conventions and assert independence (Matthews, Limb, & Taylor, 2000), and for many poor boys and young men from the deprived *favelas* in Brazil, the street is a site of agency and empowerment (Gough & Franch, 2005). A growing body of research shows how young homeless populations often use 'tactics' of spatial resistance (De Certeau, 1984), encroaching upon the space of the dominating power in a language of protest, defiance, and refusal (Naterer & Godina, 2011; Ruddick, 1998; Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman, 1998; Young, 2003). Street youth appropriate public (as well as private) space opportunistically, using marginal spaces at marginal times (Ruddick, 1998), including spaces normally perceived as impossible, impractical, or impure by mainstream society (Young, 2003). However, studies also reveal their ambiguous position as socially marginalized yet partly accepted and incorporated in particular socio-spatial settings involving leisure or livelihood activities (Moyer, 2004; Naterer & Godina, 2011; Ursin, 2011, 2012; Ursin & Abebe, 2016; Young, 2003).

Young men on the street have been seen as disorderly and deviant by authorities throughout history (Pearson in Robinson, 2009), and are commonly met with 'moral panic' (Matthews et al., 2000). In the context of urban Brazil, poor young men are being scapegoated for criminal activity (Caldeira, 2000; Soares, Bill, & Athayde, 2005). The most controversial category of young people

who occupy public space is the category of 'street youth', who are positioned as an abject and dangerous underclass that poses a serious threat to the social fabric. They are commonly ignored as rights-bearing citizens in terms of public policy (Scheper-Hughes, 2005) and instead referred to in terms of culpability: 'They' cause problems for ordinary citizens, scare away tourists, and make the streets unsafe (Gaetz, 2004). Moreover, they are often described in negative and stereotypical ways in the media, public opinion, and policymaking, labelled as threatening as opposed to threatened, offenders rather than victims, and fearless instead of fearful (Pain, 2003).

As Koskela (1997) argues, fear can reflect power relations in society as a product of systematic structural violence. This fear should not be primarily interpreted as a result of factual crime but as an indicator of the power relations in which young street dwellers are embedded. Discursive exclusion is intrinsically linked with spatial exclusion, justifying and reinforcing each other (Sibley, 1995). By being constructed as a threat, marginalised young men regularly experience exclusion from both social life and urban space (Pain, 2001). Social inclusion and exclusion can therefore be understood in terms of (im)mobility, as social inclusion is a matter of overcoming spatial constraints to gain access to desired places, related to work, leisure, and social life (Cass, Shove, & Urry, 2005). For homeless populations—who rely on public spaces to conduct essential aspects of their private lives—this access is even more crucial.

In response to the fear of crime and as a process of 'othering', society seeks to regulate public space (Koskela, 2009) through criminal justice and community safety policies, such as legal prohibitions of 'loitering', discriminatory policing, and the privatisation of public space with private security forces and close circuit television (Caldeira, 2000; Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998). Young people who domesticate public space are often met with extreme forms of sanctioning, ranging from arrests and deportation to torture and extermination (Pain & Francis, 2004; Ruddick, 1998; Ursin, 2012; van Blerk, 2013). Although such sanctions aim to improve the safety of some groups at the expense of others, they more often generate cumulative fear, distrust, isolation, social exclusion, and further marginalisation (Davis in Pain, 2001; Koskela, 2009; Ursin, 2012).

## 3. Longitudinal Research in a Street Ambience

Reviewing literature from the global North, Pain (2000) found that young homeless men are commonly defined as 'hard-to-reach' and regularly excluded from research on social relations in urban space, thus we know little about their experiences. To redress this, I draw on a longitudinal and ethnographic study, stretching over a decade, following the same group of boys originally inhabiting one specific neighbourhood in their transitions into adulthood. The study has a multi-method design, including participant observation, narrative interviews

with young street dwellers, and semi-structured interviews with middle class residents, businesses, and police officers. Repetitive participant observation was employed, including participation in everyday life and in-depth informal social interaction with the young people on the street, pursuing “an intimate familiarity with the ‘world of the other’, through getting close to the dilemmas, frustrations, routines, relationships, and risks that are a part of everyday life” (Grills, 1998, p. 4). This meant earning the young men’s trust and experiencing their everyday routines of eating, sleeping, ‘chasing money’ (corneristas), using drugs, and hanging out. In so doing, I also managed to map interactional patterns between the street population and other users of public space.

Jackson (2002) claims that the voices of marginal groups tend to be silenced—denied public recognition—despite their potential to enlighten new perspectives. In order to explore dimensions of social inclusion and exclusion from the ‘bottom-up’, I conducted narrative interviews with 14 key participants, whereof 10 engaged in two to three rounds of interviews, depending of their accessibility. The key participants were between 12 and 24 years old at the start of the study. All interviews were carried out in private at hours and in places the participants recommended, and they were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

I also conducted interviews with middle class residents, businesses, and the police living and/or working in the chosen neighbourhood. This includes structured and open-ended interviews with 20 residents, both male and female, ranging from youth to elderly, including both users and non-users of public space; eight owners of shops, restaurants, and hotels in the neighbourhood; and the head of the neighbourhood association. In addition, I used the local newspaper as a source to increase my understanding of residents’ and businesspersons’ relation to public space, since letters to the editor frequently addressed neighbourhood concerns. I also carried out eight interviews with patrolling police officers (see Ursin, 2013, for a more detailed explanation on methodological and ethical issues related to the study).

#### 4. Social Inequality and Street Populations in Brazil

In order to understand street populations in urban Brazil, it is necessary to trace the historical roots of contemporary social relations and the spatial segregation of Portuguese colonial rule and slavery in which the situation of homeless people is embedded. Slavery was abolished in 1888, but Brazil failed to integrate the freed into educational and labour institutions (Risério, 2004). This resulted in an escalation of young vagrants surviving on intermittent odd jobs in the growing urban centres in the late 19th century and onwards (Fraga Filho, 1994). Post-colonial and post-slavery politics preserved social inequalities, and Brazil continued to be highly divided into hierarchical groups, situating poor, dark-skinned manual labours at the bottom of the social strata (Borges, 1992).

The European-descendent elite perceived the social mixture in the growing metropolitan areas as threatening, bringing together “an unknown and frightening demographic mixture...Amid the ostentatious display of wealth could be found all manner of people loitering about: impoverished workers, vagabonds, beggars, ruffians, prostitutes, and street urchins” (Rizzini, 2002, p. 167). Worrying about decline of urban centres, poor people’s access to city centres was increasingly restricted, including through arrest orders of vagrants (Caldeira, 2000; Sangodeyi-Dabrowski, 2003). This criminalisation of the poor has marked the state’s response to social problems throughout history (Fernandes, 2013). Fuelled by gentrification processes (Vaz, 1994) but also post-industrialization, rural migration, and rapid urbanization (Kenny, 2007), deprived neighbourhoods expanded in urban peripheries throughout the last century.

These neighbourhoods—today renowned as favelas—continue to expand. Wooden shacks and muddy paths have been replaced by brick houses, asphalted streets, and cemented alleys, and water, sewage, electricity, and public transportation have become easier accessible. In addition to poverty, drug cartels have a strong foothold in many of these communities, which has resulted in an alarming rate of crime, drug trafficking, and violence (Lyra, 2013; Fernandes, 2013). The country experienced a decrease in the number of families living below the poverty line during the leftist government of President Lula da Silva (2003–2011), but is currently struggling with an economic crisis and corruption scandals. School enrolment among poor children and youth has drastically increased (Bush & Rizzini, 2011), but the public educational system is characterized by overcrowded classes, lack of resources, poorly remunerated teachers, and frequent strikes (Kenny, 2007).

The formal labour market has increased expectations in regards to educational qualifications, often demanding a minimum of completed high school (Menezes-Filho & Scorzafave, 2009). This has led to extreme competition for job positions that require low educational levels (Barker, 2005) and an increased unemployment rate among poor youth. A quantitative study in a favela in Northeast Brazil revealed that by the age of 18, nearly half of the residents were neither in school nor at work (Cardoso & Verner, 2006). Livelihood possibilities are not neutral, but engender processes of inclusion and exclusion, and bureaucracy, corruption, and nepotism are common obstacles for poor young Brazilians who seek formal employment (Hecht, 1998). Many *favelado* youth depend on self-employment and livelihood opportunities in the informal sector (Menezes-Filho & Scorzafave, 2009). As competition is high and purchasing power is low in their communities, many descend to wealthier areas in the city in search of income-generating opportunities (Kenny, 2007). One such area is the neighbourhood in which this study took place, where the material wealth of its middle class residents, businesses, and tourists gen-

erates legal as well as illegal livelihood opportunities for the homeless population (Ursin & Abebe, 2016). However, as Gough and Franch (2005) suggest, understanding the movements of young people is important to comprehend the meanings young people ascribe to urban space, the possibilities these spaces open up, and the multiple layers of social inclusion and exclusion, which will be further explored in the following sections.

### 5. Creating Social Boundaries Through Processes of 'Othering'

The site of this study—the neighbourhood of Barra—is a reference place (Jakle, Brunn, & Roseman, 1976, p. 51), with strong symbolic value for both its middle class residents and the tourism industry. It is presented as a homogenous, clean, safe, and modern space. As places are stereotyped not only by the characteristics ascribed to them but also by the kinds of people found in them (Jakle et al., 1976), the presence of poor boys and young men working and living on the streets threatens the social status of the residents and contributes to an impression of 'social decay' (Caldeira, 2000, p. 32). One male resident (31-year-old) argued that the street population causes discomfort as it makes "the social difference visible. When you go out with your car, you don't want to see horrible things". This reveals an 'out-of-sight, out-of-mind' mentality (see Swanson, 2007), emphasising the 'out-of-place-ness' as problematic instead of focusing on the root causes of homelessness—deep-seated poverty and socio-economic inequality. Entrepreneurs in tourism were often preoccupied with the foreigners' reactions, as one male hotel owner (33-year-old) explained:

"I felt embarrassed the other day when a tourist left the hotel and saw all the kids sleeping [on the pavement outside]. I called and complained to Bahiaturisa [tourist department]. How can they let this happen?"

The presence of street workers was perceived as destructive to tourism, as a letter to the editor of the local newspaper demonstrates:

"It's incredible what the government allows to happen at one of the postcard images of Salvador: The lighthouse of Barra. We only see street vendors with their cool boxes...A great filth is spread throughout Barra, without anyone to inspect it or a minimum of civilization. It is impossible for Salvador to continue to be so messy, filthy, causing an awful impression on the tourists who fill the city" (A *Tarde*, 1 January 2009).

The letter reduces poor people's livelihoods into 'filth' and labels street vendors as dirty and uncivilised, and eliminates poor people from the status of the neighbourhood as a global tourist destination. It also shows an argumentation for state regulation and a displacement of the poor from their means of survival. This resembles

the ways in which revanchist urban policies not only legitimised but also exacerbated existing socio-spatial divides in Ecuador, erasing spaces for the poor and working class while creating spaces for tourists (Swanson, 2007). As Swanson argues, while focusing on urban revitalisation to exhibit success as modern metropolises, these policies reframe persistent social problems as an issue of socio-spatial characteristics of a particular place. The street dwellers were aware of the desire to homogenise the neighbourhood, as a young man (20-year-old) said:

"There are residents who want to preserve Porto da Barra. They think about removing the street youth, making it into a world for themselves and the tourists".

Residents' and businesses' perception of the young and poor as 'out of place' buttresses on processes of 'othering', defining who belongs and who doesn't. As exclusion is "not about gradations of inequality, but about mechanisms that act to detach groups of people from the social mainstream" (Giddens, 1998, p. 104), residents and business owners continuously define and re-define the street population. This process of discursive social exclusion involves a "projection of one's own values and expectations onto the environing world" (Rapport & Overing, 2000, p. 343). Rather than to describe and understand reality, they elaborate prejudices and eliminate ambiguities (Caldeira, 2000), attributing undesirable characteristics to the poor—boys and young men in particular—to emphasise distance and difference between 'us' and 'them'. This process of 'othering' is embedded in two not mutually exclusive discourses of *hygiene* and *urban danger* as captured in the words of the president of the Residents Association when defending actions to reduce the presence of street dwellers and vendors: "We have to defend our rights to the politicians, in terms of security and sanitation".

As seen above, hygienist semantics were used to argue for the purification and beautification of urban space for the sake of tourism, describing street vendors as 'filth'. This perception was not restricted to vendors but extended to poor people in general. Many people from surrounding favelas visit this neighbourhood during weekends, enjoying the beach, play areas, and increasingly also the shopping centres. The president of the Residents Association complained about this; "On Sundays at the lighthouse, when children are playing, even the poor ones come, all dirty", continuing; "They pollute the beach. They do the necessary in the water". Thus people from the lower social strata were perceived as a polluting presence in the cityscape. The homeless population was described in even more negative terms by a male resident (25-years-old): "They incommode the tourists. They are dirty, stinking, begging, robbing". A female resident (31-year-old) complained: "the aesthetics of the neighbourhood as well, it gets ugly. [The homeless] dirty the street, litter, faeces, urine". The problem is not de-

fined as the lack of public facilities for street dwellers and other visitors but rather how the poor contaminate the neighbourhood. The majority of the young homeless men were highly aware of the hygienist discourse, disclosing that others perceived them as germs—invading, infectious, causing diseases. This resembles the hygienist discourse that had great symbolic and political significance during the gentrification process of urban space in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Fraga Filho, 1994; Rizzini, 2002; Vaz, 1994) where poor housing complexes in downtown areas in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were perceived as “cooking pots for the germs of yellow fever” (Chalhoub, 1993, p. 456). The rhetorics of modernisation and urban planning echoed quests of order, sanitation, and discipline, purifying urban space. As Sibley (1995) argues, disease metaphors are common to exclusionary mechanisms since the ‘diseased other’ defines normality and stability. The hygienist discourse reveals a preoccupation with aesthetics based on a narrow and elitist ideal of urban space. Moreover, it also appeals to and further incites sentiments of fear with references to bacteria, disease, and pollution.

Patrolling police in Barra also drew on hygienist semantics, referring to their occasional sweeping of homeless of the street (further explained below) as ‘*Barra limpa*’, a clean Barra. By labelling someone as unclean, as imperfect members of a group, they are rendered discrepant and polluting (Douglas, 2002), not only in a literal sense but also in a symbolic sense, urging for social as well as spatial replacement. As Douglas asserts: “Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment” (p. 2). As one young street dweller (20-year-old) explained:

“The residents want to chase us out of here because they’ve got education, right? Many have an education, it’s easier to earn money, and they will have more if we aren’t around. That’s why they say they want a clean Barra with Pit Bull hearts”.

The sanitation of space is thus perceived as encouraging spatial order—avoiding pollution and littering—as well as social order, preserving social homogeneity. Yet there is also a dimension of morality entwined in the hygienist discourse, where middle class residents and businesspeople often described the poor as lacking educação (education)—a male resident (65-year-old) explained; “On Saturdays and Sundays less educated people come here and litter”. ‘Educated’ is used as synonymous with the middle and upper class who are morally superior as they do not litter but take care of the environment. The Brazilian term—*educação*—is broader than the English understanding of the word education, meaning not only to be knowledgeable and have graduated but also to be well-mannered and civilized, which reveals colonial rhetorics of certain groups as ignorant and uncivilized (Sibley, 1995).

Fear and morality are also vital components in the urban danger discourse that ‘other’ the poor, especially adolescent boys and young men as non-conforming and malignant. A police officer described the vital differences between rich and poor boys as following:

“A child on the street is completely different. He has a profile marked by evil, a bad person, do you understand? We know that at whatever moment he may have reactions, even of a crime of death. It’s different with...the son of a rich person because we know he has education”.

Likewise, a female resident (27-year-old) explained: “I would like to help them [street kids], let them live in my home, but I can’t because they might kill you afterwards”. This shows how young homeless men are seen as irrational, unpredictable, anti-social, and dangerous. Once again, the issue of education—or more precisely of being civilised—is accentuated. As Caldeira (2000) notes in her urban ethnography of São Paulo, poor ‘others’ are believed to be more vulnerable to crime and evil as they are closer to nature and irrationality. Hegemonic perceptions of poverty and crime amalgamate in Brazil as urban elites criminalize poverty by associating it with street crime and violence (Reis, 2005). Illustratively, the expression *marginal*—marginalized—signifies both being ‘poorest of the poor’ and an ‘outlaw’ (Perlman, 2009, p. 157). The criminalization of homelessness was reported by several young street dwellers, describing false accusations of theft and police punishment. The president of the Residents Association complained that the neighbourhood “has turned into hell. Even the car minders are thieves, they threaten to earn money, saying that they will slash your wheel”. In criminalising the livelihoods of the poor, assimilating *marginais*, workers, and criminals, the enforcement of the class order and public order are merged (Da Matta, 1991).

Residents and business owners use their socio-political and economic superiority to establish young men as the society’s ‘other’ and to ensure that stereotypes are generally accepted. In this way they legitimise the expulsion of the poor and the homeless and assert their ‘rightful’ belonging to the neighbourhood. Besides frequent meetings with local politicians, they talk to editors of local newspapers, expressing their concern of the presence of homeless. The president of the Residents Association was regularly in touch with the media, sometimes resulting in front-page stories such as ‘The heavy Barra’ (*Tribunal da Bahia*, 31 May 2005), accompanied by an illustration of two dark-skinned hands pointing guns towards the local light house, with the heading: “Prostitution, drugs and robberies are constant partners in a neighbourhood that used to belong to the bourgeoisie”. On a discursive level, talks of urban danger and ‘risk management’ function as a primary mechanism of social control, excluding unwelcome people and behaviours (Fischer & Poland, 1998).

While discussing society's perception of young street dwellers, it became obvious that they are not only aware of their marginal status but also link it to distant social relations. One of the older men (27-year-old) living on the street reasoned: "The part of society which doesn't know me, perceive me as a marginal. I only stop being a marginal when they get to know me and see that I'm nothing like what they imagined". His street companion (27-year-old) expressed a similar view:

"Because they [the residents] don't want to know how street youth feel; what the reason behind this is, being like this; why they are going through this; what kind of difficulties they encounter. No, they don't want to know, they only want to know what they see with their eyes...They only stay at home, that's why they get this 'trauma'".

By trauma, he is referring to the misconception of the street population as dangerous and the fear it causes. Another young man (20-year-old) described how the police sometimes would warn passers-by, saying that he was dangerous, lamenting: "The residents hear this from the police hence many draw their conclusions about me, totally different from who I am". When their life stories are reduced into 'a societal risk', exclusionary and discriminatory actions are stimulated and justified (Barker, 2005).

The social and spatial distance and distancing reduce possibilities of public encounters of heterogeneous groups, facilitating a lack of knowledge about 'the other'. Goldsmith's (2000) description of North American white middle class citizens is transferable to urban Brazil—they grow up in isolation, separated from others, and develop attitudes and behaviours towards African Americans that are based on simplified myths of difference, danger, and hostility rather than positive interaction. Todorov's (1992) description of the colonizer's relation to the 'other' along three axes—value judgement, rapprochement, and knowledge—helps understand middle class residents' and entrepreneurs' relation to the young street population. The moral condemnation (embedded in discourses of hygiene and danger) is allowed and sustained by distancing, which again creates and maintains ignorance, and which permits the continuance of the discourses of hygiene and urban danger. The three axes are interconnected, enabling and reinforcing each other, and maintaining a status quo of social relations in public space.

## 6. Creating, Maintaining, and Reinforcing Spatial Boundaries

Despite their superior position and their successful processes of 'othering', arguing for the expulsion of the poor and homeless in the neighbourhood, a strong sense of anxiety was observed among many residents and business owners. The president of the Residents Association was particularly explicit. She emphasized the preoccupa-

tion of vanishing boundaries between the worlds of the elite and the masses, stating that "Barra has turned into the periphery". When elaborating, she explained: "Today poor people buy clothes in cheap shops that sell clothes similar to ours. They enter [into shopping centres] with tennis shoes, caps, and everything, looking like a resident, and steal everything". This reveals the apprehension and insecurity generated by social encounters between diverse groups (Wilton, 1998). Residents and businesspeople feel a continuous need to create, maintain, and reinforce social as well as spatial boundaries between them and the 'others'. In excluding the poor and the homeless from the neighbourhood, they draw on their economic resources and socio-political influence. They were fighting a losing battle in restricting the access of the poor to the neighbourhood through trying to persuade politicians to stop direct bus routes from the suburban favelas, as the president of the Residents Association explained:

"The city council said that they would only have buses from the suburbs to Lapa [the central bus station], not directly to Barra, but after the carnival he said that Lapa was nearly falling apart. They lied to gain votes. And then put up busses from far away to here".

If they had succeeded, *favelado* commuters would have had to pay two bus fares, which is a prohibitive cost for people with minimum wages.

A more successful approach is a costly investment in architectural measures to demarcate spatial boundaries, such as speared iron fences, broken glass cemented in the walls, electric gates and video cameras to create private and semi-private enclaves. As Caldeira (2000; see also Fischer & Poland, 1998) writes about insular upper class spaces in São Paulo:

"These are privatized, enclosed, and monitored spaces of residence, consumption, leisure, and work. Their central justification is the fear of violent crime. They appeal to those who are abandoning the traditional public sphere of the streets to the poor, the marginalized, and the homeless" (p. 213).

Street dwellers often appropriate the interfaces between private and public spheres for sleeping, such as verandas, staircases, backyards, and garages, but such spaces are increasingly being fenced off. This not only reinforces boundaries but also makes urban space uninviting and less habitable for the homeless.

The city council also tried to make Barra less attractive for the street population. The decision to remove public benches some years ago was triggered by the presence of street youth. One street dweller (20-year-old) said:

"They removed them because there were many homeless, many street dwellers there, sleeping...And that square had to be conserved to not disrespect the

people who wanted to stroll there and couldn't because there were many homeless there, a lot of filth".

The municipality renovated great parts of the neighbourhood in recent years, including the main boulevard and many of the squares. When discussing these changes with one of the street dwellers (27-year-old) during the last fieldwork, some of the negative consequences became evident, including a reduced sense of belonging in the neighbourhood:

"You know how we used to say that Barra was of the street people, do you remember? Today it isn't for the street people anymore. Today Barra is for the citizen, for those who have a business, a house, a home..."

He continued, elaborating on how they had lost public space to 'citizens', having fewer places to hang out due to restaurants' furnishing of the pavements, covering pavements with chairs, tables, and paying customers. As part of the revitalising of the neighbourhood, surveillance cameras were installed on street corners. This was particularly dreaded among the homeless population, as explained by a street dweller (27-year-old):

"They took away the privacy of the homeless. There isn't any privacy anymore...because they put up more security for the population, it has become more transparent. It has become more difficult for the street kids".

The transparency and the feeling of being 'watched' invaded their 'private' sphere, as the homeless tend to privatise and domesticate public space by sleeping, eating, and bathing. Furthermore, he explained that it also impeded doing drugs, having sex, and committing petty theft. Another vital change was the privatization of car parking. To mind parked cars is one of the most lucrative legal livelihoods in the city centre for street dwellers, as it does not require any equipment and has a steady flux of clients. However, during the renovation some of the streets were turned into pedestrian precincts while parking was prohibited in others, encouraging drivers to park their cars in designated, private parking lots. As a result, several young men who had worked in Barra since childhood lost their main source of income.

Surveillance cameras are not the only security measure comforting the middle class residents and local business owners. They also invest large sums on private security forces to watch entrances and patrol streets. Rigid rules are instituted, for instance making the wearing of shoes obligatory and forbidding street vendors or street people from entering. One of the older street dwellers (35-year-old), interviewed in the last fieldwork, said that:

"It has gone from bad to worse. Everyone discriminates those who live on the street, thinking that every-

one who lives on the street is a thief. One cannot enter a super market because everyone is looking. The guards call the police to beat us. Often the guards, when we enter the super market to beg for something, like milk or something like that, the security guard hits us, pushes us, kicks us, pushing us out like we're dogs".

This reveals how transgressing visible and invisible boundaries is met with harsh sanctions. Many apartment buildings and business enterprises also pay the local police patrols regularly, establishing strong loyalty commitments. A male street dweller (27-year-old) reasoned:

"If you own an apartment, an apartment building, you don't want anyone to bother your clients so they leave, right? If it's the homeless who are disturbing them, what you do is pay the police to remove them, right?"

Another street dweller (24-year-old) explained that the police leave them alone if the residents approve but shoo them away if there are complaints. This reveals that even though the harshest exclusionary mechanism is often executed by the police, it is incited by the attitudes of residents and business owners.

The police do not only defend the boundaries of semi-private and private space, but also seek to regulate and homogenize public space, pushing 'others' back to the geographical as well as social periphery. They decide who will have access to the neighbourhood through a "succession of little rituals of identification and humiliation" (Caldeira, 2000, p. 314). A police officer described how they decide who to approach; "Those who wear Mormaii, Cyclone, and Kenner [brands of clothes and sandals]. Bermuda shorts, big t-shirt, caps are characteristics of those who don't want to work, so we body search them". The style described, however, is one of the most common styles for poor youth in general, legitimizing everyday practices of discrimination and degradation of both street and *favelado* youth. The police draw on both the hygienist and urban danger discourse when explaining why certain groups need to be removed from the neighbourhood:

"When we appear, the *neguinhos* [small negros] all tremble. This place is for the tourists, right? And for the residents as well, the majority middle class. We act to guarantee the security of these people. Street youth and prostitutes need to feel fear...Hence our work is to clean this area, removing these people".

The police frequently carried out operations to deport poor young people to the outskirts of the city (see also Ursin, 2012), as one of the more seasoned street dwellers (35-year-old) described:

"You can't sleep on the street at night anymore because there are cars patrolling. If they catch you sleep-

ing...they put you in the trunk of the car, take you to a deserted place and beat you”.

Violence is also employed as a preventive strategy, as a police officer related: “[W]e beat the children and the adolescents to see if they give up hanging around here and return to the periphery”. According to Wacquant (2003), Brazilian police employ a ‘zero tolerance’ approach, which has proved beneficial in furthering politicians’ and police forces’ commitment to the elimination of street crime yet is inefficient in combating actual crime. Yet, brutal—and sometimes lethal—police violence targets poor, young men as they are perceived to be the main source of deviance and violence (Caldeira, 2000; Ursin, 2012). Given the hostility of the discursive as well as the spatial exclusionary mechanisms the young people on the street encounter, it may be difficult to understand why many of them chose to remain in the neighbourhood. In the last part of the article, the subtler acts of inclusion will be explored.

### 7. Subtle Acts of Social Inclusion in Everyday Encounters

Despite many exclusionary mechanisms, there are also parallel interactional patterns, which Young (2003) defined as socio-spatial acceptance of street youth, namely ‘coexistence’ and ‘incorporation’. As Hall (2005, p. 18) suggests, “far from being absolute positions, social inclusion and exclusion are fragmentary and relational, ‘entangled’ within each other in particular ways and in particular contexts”. Basically, these acts facilitate survival on the street, making it easier to stay. Most importantly, as mentioned above, city centres provide livelihood opportunities that are not available in the favelas. This is often enabled by supportive social networks of mainstream citizens, also called *fregueses*, as a young street dweller (24-year-old) stated; “I have a lot of friendships there [on the street], who always wanted my best, gave me an opportunity” (see also Conticini, 2005; Hecht, 1998). The majority of the homeless in this study engaged in intermittent informal jobs, such as minding cars and running errands, depending on trusting social bonds—although atypical—with residents and business-people (Ursin, 2012). Some were also offered more stable work at hotdog stands, beach barracks, and kiosks. Thus despite experiencing social exclusion, their jobs were often more profitable than those available in the *favelas*, emphasizing how spatiality shapes livelihood possibilities and homeless experiences of the young men (Ursin & Abebe, 2016).

As argued elsewhere, many of the street dwellers have lived in Barra since childhood and developed strong feelings of belonging, partly connected to their social relations with residents and business owners (Ursin, 2011). One young man described his relationship with residents as follows: “The majority is people who like me and don’t speak badly about me, most of them. When I stay here

[at my fixed spot] I feel at ease”. A street dweller (27-year-old) who had injured his foot described how he survived on the street:

“I get by due to my friendships....‘I’m hungry, can you get some food for me?’ Business owners, the local residents who know me since childhood. ‘Damn, you know I don’t like to bother people, but I need medicine’. One refuses, another gives. One refuses today but gives tomorrow”.

Although there was never a guarantee of receiving help from anyone, having *fregueses* conquered through years of living on the street increases the chances of getting by. When poverty or indifference might encumber the help of family and friends, their extended socio-economic networks often work as much needed safety nets (Ursin & Abebe, 2016).

Some of the interviewed residents and business owners admitted to giving food to street dwellers, either regularly or occasionally. One of the restaurant owners (49-year-old) explained; “If they ask for food, I give. I do it out of pity, do you understand? Being hungry is awful”. The discourse of pity is rooted in an idea of inferiority, rendering the young street dwellers as vulnerable and helpless. However, there were other reasons to donate food as well, as a female resident (38-year-old) illustrated; “When they approach me, I give [food]. But I give more out of fear than out of pity”. This reveals the multifaceted and context-specific meaning of inclusionary and exclusionary processes, where even though the acts remain the same, the reasoning and rationale behind them differ. As Samers (1998) underscored, the distinction between social inclusion and exclusion is ambiguous. Although some acts increase opportunities of material inclusion (that is, access to food), they still buttress on imagined hierarchies of ‘us’ and ‘them’, regardless of whether the other is pitied or feared.

That said, inclusionary acts seem to extend beyond fear in many cases. Some residents and business owners develop individual and personal relationships with street dwellers based on mutually trust (see Ursin, 2012). These relationships facilitate the practicalities of street life in many ways besides food and money—for example, young men may use outdoor taps and store their clothes and valuables in their premises. A young man (22-year-old) who minded cars described how he used to wash the car of one of the residents and received a salary and other benefits:

“I started to keep my belongings in the apartment building of this guy, in the garage. I even had his key, ‘If you need, you enter, whatever occurs you just enter into the garage’. I took baths there, changed clothes”.

The motivation behind letting him use the garage might be of both altruism and self-interest as the street dweller washed his car weekly, but either way it contains a di-

mention of social inclusion. A female resident (25-year-old) explained that she purposefully said ‘good evening’ to street youth hanging out in a small square close to her apartment building when she moved into the neighbourhood, hoping to ensure protection from street crime. Once again, inclusionary acts might be triggered by self-interest, such as cheap labour and safety, rather than based on ideas of equity, equality, and dignity.

From the point of view of the street dwellers, their social networks with members of the middle class signified more than a means of survival. Being amongst ‘educated’ people was appreciated, as a young man (27-year-old) explained: “Here I have my best family; residents, employees who work here in Barra, several workers such as port men, security guards, taxi drivers, hotel owners, beach workers”. Many of the street dwellers expressed a sense of ‘being seen’ by mainstream society in ways that everyday life in the *favelas* did not allow. This suggests that the subtler forms of inclusion occurring on the street do not only have a material dimension but also a social one.

As argued elsewhere, this feeling of ‘being seen’ often enabled a strengthened notion of safety on the street (Ursin, 2011). In fact, safety was one of the main reasons stated for migrating to that particular neighbourhood—an escape from domestic as well as community violence. Several argued that because of the high density of security guards and police patrols, it was difficult to commit homicide in the neighbourhood (Ursin, 2012). Many street dwellers had become acquainted with security guards working in residential or business premises, and told stories of how they keep guard over them while they sleep (Ursin, 2016) or call for help when they are injured. Others explained that the presence of the police was comforting as this reduced the chances of being attacked (Ursin, 2011). This seems odd, considering the brutal police strategies to push them back to the periphery. However, the relationship between the homeless population and the police is riddled with ambiguity, switching between protection and danger. When street dwellers befriend security guards and sleep in vicinity of the police, they capitalize on security measures financed by the middle class. This is not an inclusionary act as exclusionary discourses cause these measures in the first place. However, it demonstrates the ambiguous and complex character of social relations in terms of inclusion and exclusion.

Last but not least, these subtle acts of inclusion do not necessarily embrace all street dwellers. Through honest work, relations of inclusion and trust with the surroundings emerge (Ursin, 2014). To maintain this trust and their networks, it is crucial to avoid (visible) illegal activities, especially violence and property crime (Ursin, 2012; Ursin & Abebe, 2016). However, as demonstrated elsewhere (Ursin, 2014), it is important to emphasize that there is no causal link between crime involvement and social exclusion. Rather, as explored in this article, social exclusion reinforces—and is reinforced by—derogatory images of public discourse, reduced le-

gal livelihood possibilities, and aggressive policing, contributing to further marginalization of the homeless.

## 8. Conclusions: Is There Such Thing as Social Inclusion on the Street?

This study was based on a multi-method approach to explore the social relations between middle class residents, business owners and the police on the one hand, and poor, young men inhabiting the streets on the other. This exploration of the ways in which discursive and spatial boundaries are created and reinforced reveals a socio-cultural time-lag when it comes to the processes of ‘othering’ the urban poor in Brazil that is rooted in colonial and post-colonial mind-sets. This othering is embedded in an enduring desire to impose a social as well as a geographical distance for the elite to be able to remain in their insular worlds. The result (and perhaps a precondition) of these ‘not-in-my-backyard’ practices of exclusion is that underlying social, economic, and political conditions are ignored (Fischer & Poland, 1998) and that attempts are made to displace ‘problematic’ groups such as street vendors and homeless people.

The exclusionary discourses dominant among middle class residents, business owners, and police render the boys and young men on the street as dirty and dangerous. By drawing on hygienist and urban danger semantics they appeal to sentiments of fear of contamination and street crime, and ideas of superiority in terms of morality, rationality, and civility. Hegemonic discourse constructs different identities as either valued or devalued, yet it is naive to treat life as just a social construction. These discourses greatly influence the ways in which the homeless population is encountered, defined, and debated, and impacts their everyday lives and livelihoods. As Ward (2009, p. 239) reminds us; “lives are lived, experienced and enacted; people feel and respond to social constructions, whether negative or positive”. The production and reproduction of difference occurs through the imposition of boundaries, which are not only social constructs of dichotomous and hierarchical relations (‘us’ and ‘them’) but also inherently spatial, directing issues of mobility, access, and expulsion. Spatial exclusion is thus both the outcome of, and integral to the production of, social difference (Wilton, 1998). Moreover, the prejudice in which exclusionary discourses is embedded is allowed and sustained by ignorance, which again is nurtured by the very same social and spatial distance and distancing it creates.

Patterns that encourage inclusion of street populations are often ignored in academic literature (Young, 2003) and the dimension of social inclusion is undertheorised in the literature on homelessness. The empirical material presented in this article reveals that despite harsh exclusionary mechanisms, such as stigmatization, hostility, and physical abuse, there are also subtle acts of acceptance and inclusion at the street level. This includes, amongst other things, greetings, food, liveli-

hood possibilities, and protection. Although hostility towards homeless population deserves great attention, there are several implications of discounting more inclusionary dimensions of urban life. First, it reduces the so-called 'mainstream' society into homogenous populations. Second, it misrepresents social encounters across 'us' and 'them' as one-dimensional and static patterns of interaction. Third, it creates an understanding of the 'other' as homogenous social groupings who are straightforwardly excluded from 'the mainstream' to marginal spaces. Fourth, it increases incomprehension of street youth by masking reasons and rationales for remaining on the street.

An ethnographic approach is beneficial in the study of homeless people as it allows a more nuanced picture of exclusion and inclusion. The empirical material presented above reveals ambiguous patterns of social interaction and challenges the inclusion/exclusion dualism that is so present in the existing body of literature. To further unravel the complex character of these patterns, three points will be made. First, although the processes of 'othering' are fundamentally hierarchical, they may be rooted in opposing sentiments of pity and fear, which again are interlinked through the notion of inferiority. Second, both inclusionary acts—such as hand-outs and greetings—and exclusionary acts—such as beatings and physical removal—can be driven by exclusionary discourses based on the inferiority of the 'other'. This suggests that even though acts are inclusionary they are not necessarily based on ideas of equity, equality, and dignity but might be inherently instrumental. Many of these acts are vital in order to survive on the street thus highly valued by street youth. Yet, as they are embedded in diverging discourses of pity, fear, and pragmatism—not necessarily that different from the discourses that support their exclusion—it raises questions on whether all inclusion is positive, especially if the character of it and reason behind it might be exploitative and unequal. Third, inclusionary and exclusionary acts are not only imposed on street youth, but youth also actively enact and interpret them. For example, street youth capitalise on security measures financed by the middle class and businesses to exclude them to be able to feel safer and more 'at home' in the street (see also Ursin, 2011). This not only reveals the ambiguous and complex character of social relations in terms of inclusion and exclusion but also suggests limitations of the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion for being unidirectional and objectifying of the persons involved, reducing them into mere victims. In sum, this article demonstrates the multifaceted, intertwined, and contradictory character of social relations, encouraging further investigation and theorization of exclusionary as well as inclusionary mechanisms involving street dwellers.

### Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

## Japanese Social Exclusion and Inclusion from a Housing Perspective

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### Abstract

This paper examines conditions of social exclusion and attempts at social inclusion in Japan from a housing perspective. Companies, households and the government have previously supported housing in Japan. However, corporate welfare was withdrawn following the globalization of the economy from the 1990s onwards, support from families and communities declined due to a reduction in household size, and governmental housing support has shifted away from direct support. A reduction in income and unstable work left many people with unstable housing. Certain workers, such as foreigners performing dispatched labour, could not maintain continuous work under the influence of the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy in 2008. Household size has shrunk according to changes in the industrial structure, and the number of households that cannot sustain housing is increasing. Such vulnerable households—elderly people, the handicapped, low-income earners and single parents—can become excluded from the rental housing market. On the other hand, governmental measures are promoting local dwellings and maintaining the condition for a dwelling service. Activities, such as local community support of the homeless have been initiated by various Non-profit Organisations (NPOs) and NPO activities are increasingly exemplifying measures to achieve social inclusion.

### Keywords

corporate welfare; economic poverty; housing perspective; informal mutual aid; Non-profit Organisations

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

The number of low income and vulnerable people in Japan has increased greatly because of the extended economic problems resulting from a sluggish economy from the 1990s onwards (Sugimura, 2004, p. 63) and recent publications have illustrated how precarious economic circumstances and homelessness persist (Allison, 2013; Marr, 2015). However, Japanese economic and social policy has been based on a market approach, with some policies affected by globalization and others not. Experience of inappropriate dwelling circumstances in Japan was affected not only by globalization but also by local factors, illustrating the broader conditions relating to social exclusion and inclusion.

The emergence of economic poverty after the 1990s forced Japan to accept the ‘social exclusion’ concept

from Europe. According to Iwata (2005, p. 8), this concept not only reflects increasing poverty but also attempts to introduce social inclusion in order to remedy such poverty. Social inclusion is a particularly important process; according to Abe (2007, p. 131), social exclusion hinders people from participating in society due to a lack of prerequisites for full participation; such as employment, a dwelling, and access to cultural capital and a social network. The social exclusion concept has been debated by Iwata and Nishizawa (2005), Fukuhara (2007) and Iwata (2008) who have tried to clarify the interpretation of poverty and its processes in Japan. According to Fukuhara (2007, p. 263), the ambiguity and diversity of social exclusion has hindered the discussion.

Thus, to aid understanding, this paper explains social exclusion in Japan since the 1990s and explores possibilities for social inclusion—from the perspective of housing.

Although ‘social exclusion’ means separation from mainstream society, it has also come to be defined as the inability to access essential ‘housing’, acknowledging that housing is essential for our basic well-being throughout life. To achieve a person’s basic needs, the dwelling must be habitable; providing the necessary space and function, it must be barrier-free, have sufficient space for a wheelchair and other aids, and it must possess adequate utilities, such as a bathtub. Furthermore, a dwelling’s location and social relationship must support its inhabitants’ pre-requisite needs for social inclusion such as access to markets, to a transportation system, to communications and various other agencies. A secure lifestyle is based on appropriate accommodation, a suitable location and a social and economic mechanism which supports the right to housing. Moreover, we need ‘living capital’ to fully realize our life (Okamoto, 2007). At times we may need social assistance from external sources, which requires the maintenance of connections to the wider society, in other words: social inclusion.

Social exclusion can be studied from the view point of the dwelling. Although social exclusion does exert effects upon the homeless, it also includes the process of losing essential housing and so any discussion of exclusion must discuss both the state of exclusion and the process which leads to exclusion. So, far, housing and homelessness have been discussed through the theory of social exclusion. For example, Bando (2007, pp. 177–199) has described the state of homelessness, the routes into homelessness and access to a dwelling or housing support for homeless people. Izuhara (2005, pp. 95–117) also analysed the dwelling history of elderly women to clarify the relationship between poverty and housing.

Another approach to social exclusion studies draws on the influence of welfare systems on household experiences (e.g. Esping-Andersen’s 1990 analysis of *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*). In Japan life was supported by informal mutual aid such as that provided by the family and/or company welfare. However, the power of the informal connection in Japan has been weakening (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2000), resulting in an increase in the number of households who need assistance from the society.

However, no study has yet comprehensively captured and analysed correlations across housing poverty, its process, its space and mutual aid in Japan. When households lose their connection with society, they can be excluded by society even if they are not homeless. However, once households lose accommodation and become homeless, accessing new accommodation can be very difficult without some mutual aid (e.g. such as a guarantor for rent or deposit). This process is one reason why social exclusion has been spreading in Japanese society, and why changes in informal mutual aid within the housing sector is a focus of this paper.

The paper presents a framework that considers the possible movement from social exclusion to social inclusion in Japan while focusing on the ‘state’, ‘process’ and

‘space’ of housing poverty, and also informal mutual aid to support paths to social inclusion. The aim of this paper is to examine: i) the decline in availability of housing; ii) the condition of social exclusion; iii) new innovations to support social inclusion. The condition of social exclusion is understood as comprising economic poverty, housing poverty, household change and the relationship between residents and living environment.

Data used for this research for the paper were collected by national statistics of Japan and the research by the national government offices. The information about the activities of NPOs for social inclusion were collected from meetings, personal contacts and reports. The author conducted this research between 2007 and 2015. These NPO activities are based in Aichi Prefecture because this is the area in which the author resides and hence is most easy for the author to observe. However, the results this research could be expanded to other regions in Japan.

## 2. The Decline in Housing of Japan

Until the 1990s, Japanese society evolved with three main factors influencing life chances and outcomes—an employer, the family, and the government. Fundamentally, a dwelling was assumed to be the ‘fruit of one’s labour’. To support their employees, most companies guaranteed ‘lifetime employment’ and adopted a ‘seniority wage system’, which provided employees with ‘company welfare’ such as a company residence, shared accommodation or a housing-expenses allowance. Large companies were more easily able to provide housing support for their employees, while small or medium sized companies found it more difficult to do so (but still generally aimed to provide as much assistance as possible). They also sought to complement direct housing provision through informal mechanisms. In difficult times, families, relatives and communities coped through informal mutual aid. For those who could obtain neither company welfare, nor informal mutual aid, the government provided social security. Although not all companies had these tendencies, larger companies did so. However, economic growth gave the expectation that things would become better for the people. So people tended to work harder in Japan during that time.

Since the 1990s, however, it has been recognized that the three actors (company, family and government) are no longer functioning as well as they did. The global economy caused companies to cut costs by reducing workers’ wages and company welfare. During the period of rapid economic growth, from the 1960s, population mobility reduced the size of households (discussed further below) and weakened local communities’ capacity for informal support. Furthermore, the combination of increased health care expenditure (especially for the ageing population) and increased public works’ debt during the economic depression effectively ended both central and local governments’ budget flexibility for housing and social support.

‘Economic poverty’ and a ‘decline of informal mutual aid’ made the acquisition of dwellings and the realization of well-being through the course of life much more difficult. Consequently, Japan has experienced increasing levels of rough sleeping, ‘internet cafe refugees’ and people who can only find free or low-fee lodgings. Furthermore, economic pressures resulting in difficulties in maintaining mortgage repayments or rent have reduced the number of households able to acquire and remain in a suitable dwelling, such that in present-day Japan, many people are now excluded from living in a formal residence.

### 3. Conditions of Social Exclusion in Japan

The two main conditions leading to social exclusion are economic poverty and the decline of informal mutual aid, as discussed below.

#### 3.1. Economic Poverty

In recent years, conditions of economic poverty have emerged in Japan. Economic poverty is identified by household income, unemployment rate, and job status. First, regarding changes in household income; according to the Comprehensive Survey of Living Condition, the average household income peaked in 1994 at 6,642,000 yen; and by 2013, it had decreased to 5,289,000 yen. In 2013, the household income distribution was ‘2 million yen or more and less than 3 million yen’ (14.3%); ‘1 million yen or more and less than 2 million yen’ (13.9%); and ‘3 million yen or more and less than 4 million yen’ (13.4%). The median for household income is 4,150,000 yen and the proportion of households below the average income was 61.2%. In short, there are many low-income households in Japan and reduced household income weakens the ability to acquire and maintain a place of residence.

Second, regarding unemployment rates; increased unemployment and changes of employment structure have resulted in reduced income. According to a labour force survey’s longitudinal data (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, n.d.-c), the lowest recent unemployment rate was 2.0%, decreasing from 2.1% between 1991 and 1992, and the highest was 5.9% in July 2009. Recent high unemployment rates reflect the deterioration of the employment situation following the mid-1990s. Influenced by the Lehman Brothers’ bankruptcy, the unemployment rate for 15–19 year olds (individuals attending school are excluded from labour force data) was especially high, having reached 9.5% in 2008 and 2009. As a result, securing suitable housing was particularly difficult for younger people. Indeed, previous higher housing standards in Japan were based on conditions of guaranteed lifetime employment and the seniority wage system.

The third factor to be considered is changes in job status. Percentage changes in job status reflected changes in the entire employment system. The categories ‘part-time job’, ‘temporary employee’, ‘contracted employee’,

‘part-time engagement’ and ‘others’ in the Employment Structure Datum Survey (2012) indicated an increasing number of non-regular workers. The percentage of non-regular workers rose consistently from 11.6% in 1982, to 31.7% in 2012. This indicated, of course, that the deterioration of employment positions and instability of job contracts also contributed to a decline in household income and economic instability in Japan.

#### 3.2. Housing Poverty

Economic poverty has an influence on housing poverty. Unstable working conditions and lower incomes shackle young people; over three quarters of them (77.4%) live under their parents’ roof (Housing Policy Proposal and Examination Committee, 2014, p. 5). Decreased income and reduced numbers of low-rent houses have caused difficulties accessing housing not only for young people but also for low-income earners. A reduction of the number of low-rent houses, dormitories, company residences and public-housing rentals have all served to make obtaining adequate dwelling more difficult (Table 1).

First, the quantity of low-rent houses has decreased. Examination of the Housing and Land Survey shows that the number of houses with a monthly rent of 40,000 yen or less, which is about the amount of housing allowance for public assistance, has fallen. In 1993, there were 7,787,000 houses for rent in this category, which accounted for 49.6% of all rented houses, but by 2013, these figures had decreased to 5,524,700 or 29.8%.

Second, dormitories and company residences decreased in number against the background of economic globalization following the 1990s. In spite of the ILO Workers’ Housing Recommendation, 1961 (No. 115), the reduction of company residences has not had a significant influence on residential structures. If Central government in Japan had followed this recommendation and revised housing policy, it is likely that fewer of those who lost jobs after the “Lehman Shock” of 2008 would have also lost their accommodation. According to Trends of Numbers of Dwellings by Tenure of Dwellings (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, n.d.), the ratio of issued (company) houses was 7.0% (1,433,000) in 1963. Then, although the number of company houses increased, the ratio fell to 4.1% (1,550,000 houses) in the bubble economy of 1988. Companies offered their houses to compensate workers in the Tokyo region because their ability to acquire a house declined during the bubble economy. This caused the ratio of issued houses to increase to 5.0% by 1993. Then, since the number of issued houses was reduced as a cost-cutting measure in order to compete in the global economy, the ratio fell to 2.2% (1,102,400 houses) by 2013. Both the proportion, and role, of issued houses (which helped improve housing standards for young employees with relatively low income) had reduced.

Third, social dwellings, such as public housing and cooperative housing, decreased in number due to public

**Table 1.** Trends of numbers of dwellings by tenure of dwellings.

Investigation year	Dwellings	Occupied	Owner occupied dwelling	Rented houses					Ratio of social housing (%)	Ratio of Issued houses (%)
				Total Rented dwellings	Rented houses owned by local government	Rented houses owned by urban renaissance agency	Rented houses owned privately	Issued houses		
1963	21,090	20,372	13,093	7,281	944		4,904	1,433	4.6%	7.0%
1968	25,591	24,198	14,594	9,604	1,403		6,527	1,674	5.8%	6.9%
1973	31,059	28,731	17,007	11,723	1,995		7,889	1,839	6.9%	6.4%
1978	35,451	32,189	19,428	12,689	1,719	723	8,408	1,839	7.6%	5.7%
1983	38,607	34,705	21,650	12,951	1,868	777	8,487	1,819	7.6%	5.2%
1988	42,007	37,413	22,948	14,015	1,990	809	9,666	1,550	7.5%	4.1%
1993	45,879	40,773	24,376	15,691	2,033	845	10,762	2,051	7.1%	5.0%
1998	50,246	43,922	26,468	16,730	2,087	864	12,050	1,729	6.7%	3.9%
2003	53,891	46,863	28,666	17,166	2,183	936	12,561	1,486	6.7%	3.2%
2008	57,586	49,598	30,316	17,770	2,089	918	13,366	1,398	6.1%	2.8%
2013	60,629	52,102	32,166	18,519	1,959	856	14,583	1,122	5.4%	2.2%

Notes: The total number for housing includes a person's dwelling, dwellings under construction, vacant dwellings and dwellings with temporary occupants only. Number includes Okinawa Prefecture since 1973. Dwellings with Occupying Households including tenure of dwelling "Not reported". Data: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Housing and Land Survey. Source: created from Housing Economy Related Data in fiscal year 2014, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (n.d.).

**Table 2.** Trends of number of occupied buildings other than dwellings.

Year	Occupied buildings other than dwellings						Ratio of others (%)
	Total	Workers' dormitories	School dormitories	Boarding houses	Hotels or inns	Others	
2013	69,700	12,000	5,300	—	8,400	44,000	63.1%
2008	74,600	18,300	6,100	—	10,700	39,600	53.1%
2003	81,400	25,500	7,400	1,400	12,400	34,800	42.8%
1998	133,100	51,500	9,800	4,500	24,200	43,000	32.3%

Data: Created from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Housing and Land Survey.

debt and the extent of the repairs that were required. In 1963, social dwellings accounted for only 4.6% of the total housing (944,000) in contrast with issued houses which accounted for 7.0%. By 1973, the number of social dwellings exceeded that of issued houses, and by 1983, the number of public housing dwellings (7.6%) exceeded that of issued houses. Although by 2003, public housing peaked in terms of the number of dwellings (2,181,200), it decreased to 1,957,800 by 2013. When first established, public housing made up almost 80% of the entire nation's households (Yagi, 2006, p. 41). Reductions in public housing construction and limitations on which types of households could apply for public housing occurred as a result of the fact that there is less money to be made from people who live in public housing, as opposed to those who live in private housing. Households eligible for public housing were limited to the bottom 25% of the quantile ranking, so that access to public housing was concentrated on low-income households and households that needed to be supported. As a result, management of council estates became increasingly dif-

ficult. As the number of households on low incomes increased, these groups were more likely to be excluded from society, and excluded from public housing.

In addition, the statistical data illustrates spatial social exclusion. The Housing and Land Survey identifies 'occupied buildings other than dwellings' and the number of these buildings decreased from 133,100 in 1998 to 69,700 in 2013. The number of company dormitories, school dormitories, lodging houses and hotels and lodgings was reduced by half. The number of 'other buildings' has seldom changed, but it rose from 32.3% in 1998 to 63.1% in 2013. Since 'other buildings' refers to social institutions, hospitals, factories, workplaces or offices, and dwellings within institutions that have not been established by law, this category reflects extremely marginalized housing situations (Table 2).

'Economic poverty' might give rise to homelessness; without employment or accommodation, the people in this situation experience the most severe form of social exclusion. Japanese 'rough sleepers' can be divided into two groups: day-labourers, based on the blue-sky labour

market called ‘Yoseba’, provided in some large cities, and middle, elderly or young labourers who were let go or not employed, in order that companies might survive in the global economy after the bubble-economy burst. Day labourers have been resorting to sleeping rough in order to get high paying jobs at Yoseba. The second group are unemployed workers who ‘burdened’ companies under the lifetime employment and the seniority wage system. Until the Lehman Brothers’ bankruptcy, young people did not sleep rough because they could find low-wage employment, but the rapid economic recession after the Lehman Brothers’ bankruptcy made it difficult for the youth to find any work at all. Many impoverished young people avoid sleeping rough by finding refuge in internet cafes, comic book stores, stores open for 24 hours and so on (‘internet café refugees’) and so we cannot see the overall picture of youth homelessness.

Table 3 shows the trend in the number of rough sleepers in Japan. The number of rough sleepers has been decreasing due to the narrow formal definition of homelessness in Japan; the figures include those who are living in parks, on streets or in stations (Special Measures Law on Support for Independence of the Homeless). Although the number of homeless people has been consistently decreasing, reaching a low point in 2003, this reduction did not continue during 2008 and 2009 because of the negative economic influence of the Lehman Brothers’ bankruptcy. Suddenly and rapidly, large numbers of temporary workers were fired; when they lost their jobs, they lost their dwellings and were left destitute. To support the laid-off employees, the ‘New-Year’s-Eve dispatch village’ (toshikoshi haken mura) was established in front of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; the villagers appealed for support for workers who had lost their residences. As a result, the barrier of livelihood protection application was lowered, and the livelihood protection for rough sleepers’ was increased instead. Some of them might stay at dwellings within institutions that have not been established by law (as previously men-

tioned), paid for with livelihood protection. In sum, this is demonstrated by the above facts, some of the narrow rough sleepers have been moved out from the definition of the law and that there are a lot of people who are homeless in broad sense.

### 3.3. Change of Residential Attributes

Change in residence can influence the mutual aid element of Japanese housing. Although the economic barrier of living in a rented house may be removed by receipt of livelihood protection, barriers such as the need for a ‘guarantor’ and ‘everyday life support’ remain. Landlords have questions for former rough sleepers’ daily living ability. Landlords may have concerns about possible problems with neighbours and so even if rough sleepers receive livelihood protection, the private sector rental housing market can easily exclude them. Although a guarantor problem is solved by the intervention of a guarantee company with a rental-housing contract, a guarantee company cannot completely erase a landlord’s uneasiness. This non-economic barrier means that in many cases, people continue to sleep rough. Consequently, the ‘poverty business’ that counts on welfare allowances, such as a free or low-fee lodging or a ‘slip-from-the-grip-of-the-law house’, was born. Housing allowances and welfare allowances may therefore be consumed by inferior living environments and inferior dwelling support services. Since many local authorities do not have dwelling resources for the poor and needy, they must depend on unsuitable institutions such as these residences run by the poverty business.

Second, through changes in the typical family structure and changes in residential areas, informal mutual aid has declined. In 1960, the average household was 4.14 people, but this number has consistently decreased, and by 2010, it was 2.42 people (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, n.d.-d). From 1960 until 1985, the most frequent household size was four people, but

**Table 3.** Change of number of rough sleepers.

Investigation year	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Number and % increase /decrease	
2015	6,040	206	295	6,541	-967	(-12.9%)
2014	6,929	266	313	7,508	-757	(- 9.2%)
2013	7,671	254	340	8,265	-1,311	(-13.7%)
2012	8,933	304	339	9,576	-1,314	(-12.1%)
2011	10,209	315	366	10,890	-2,234	(-17.0%)
2010	12,253	384	487	13,124	-2,635	(-16.7%)
2009	14,554	495	710	15,759	-259	(-1.6%)
2008	14,707	531	780	16,018	-2,546	(-13.7%)
2007	16,828	616	1,120	18,564	-6,732	(-26.6%)
2003	20,661	749	3,886	25,296	-1,206	
Sept. 2001				24,090		
Oct. 1999				20,451		
Mar. 1999				16,247		

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c), ‘National Investigation on a Rough Sleeper’s Actual Condition’.

by 1990 and later, it was one-person household. The total of one-person and two-person households became the majority in 2000, and by 2010, these constituted 59.6% of all households. It is very difficult for small household to cope with troubling changes of circumstances.

In changes to family type, husband-wife-child households decreased from 41.2% in 1970 to 27.9% in 2010 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, n.d.-d). On the other hand, single-parent households increased from 5.7% to 8.8%; married couple households, from 9.8% to 19.8%; and one-person households, from 20.5% to 32.4%. The increase in small-scale households—married couple and one-person—is conspicuous and smaller households may be more vulnerable to changes in economic circumstances. A one-person household may have a high possibility of destitution due to illness or injury. A household comprising a married couple might also suffer a burden of illness or injury fatal to the household. A wage earner's illness or injury could also have serious consequences for the single-parent household. In other words, changes in household sizes and family types have given rise to household vulnerability. Yamada (2016) argued that one-person households do not easily fit in Japanese society, and so one-person household may experience social exclusion. With husband-wife-and-child households in the minority, other households are increasing: elderly people, single woman and disabled people. Such conditions might cause such households to be excluded from real-estate-brokerage entrepreneur's housing introductions. To better ensure housing security, and recognising these changes in household patterns, the Act on the Promotion of Offering of Rental Housing to Persons Requiring Special Assistance in Securing Housing (2007) was enacted.

### 3.4. The Gap between Changing Households and Dwellings

Not only changes in households, but also changes in people's attributes have greatly influenced housing in Japan. In particular, burgeoning population of elderly people has greatly influenced Japanese society. The ratio of people aged 65 and above has increased from 7.1% in 1970 to 23.0% in 2010 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, n.d.-d). As the number of elderly

people increases, particularly those over 75, there is an increase in the number of residents who have mental and physical disorders. If this trend continues, the need for assisted living may emerge as another dimension of social exclusion.

The number of disabled people (including both mental and physical impairments) increased from 2,506,000 in 1987 to 3,864,000 in 2011 (Investigation on the Difficulty of Carrying Out Living', National Surveys for Handicapped Children and Persons Staying Home). However, incorporating barrier-free dwelling designs has hit a road-block. Dwellings with 'a handrail in two or more places', 'without a level difference indoors', and all 'passages width of a wheelchair' constitute only 4.2% of rented houses and 8.7% of all houses (Table 4, Housing and Land Survey, 2013). Dwellings in Japan do not offer a living environment in which disabled people can live independently but instead have physically excluded them. Considering that the number of disabled people is likely to increase, many more people are likely to experience social exclusion as a result of such conditions.

However, in newer constructions, dwelling functions have been improving because public housing has clarified the requirements of a dwelling unit. Previously, in the 1970s, for example, many multiple-family dwellings were built up to five stories—without elevators (85% of owner houses in non-wooden apartments with elevators, less than 40% of rented houses in non-wooden apartments with elevators, Housing and Land Survey, 2013). Older dwelling units are smaller (the most common floor size is 30m<sup>2</sup>s in public houses built before 1970, Housing and Land Survey, 2013) and have no bathtubs. Such dwellings do not support elderly residents who are likely to suffer from ill health or disabilities. For instance, those whose lower bodies are disabled cannot live on the fifth floor without an elevator and a bathtub. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has been implementing 'community living', which, since 2010, has been relocating people with learning disabilities/cognitive impairments from hospitals to the community. However, if a disabled person is excluded from a community or a rental housing market, as previously mentioned, exclusion from dwelling is still likely. The policy to try to keep handicapped people living in their own communities cannot work if there is a lack of suitable dwellings.

**Table 4.** Diffusion rate of barrier-free dwellings.

	Total	Owner occupied dwelling	Rented houses
A: handrail (over two places)	23.6%	32.9%	9.3%
B: with no steps at all throughout the house	21.4%	27.1%	13.3%
C: the width of a wheelchair-passable corridor	16.2%	21.4%	8.5%
Matching for any A, B or C	37.0%	48.6%	19.8%
Matching for A or B (matching for certain)	34.0%	45.0%	17.6%
Matching for A, B and C (three-piece set)	8.7%	11.7%	4.2%

Data: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2013 Housing and Land Survey. Source: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (n.d.).

The location of houses has also affected social exclusion. 'Shopping refugees' indicate a percentage of people who feel inconvenienced in their everyday shopping (17.1% in an opinion poll result, fiscal year 2010, Elderly People's Dwelling and Living Environment, Cabinet Office). Multiply this by a population aged 60 and over of 41,980,000 (1 October 2014), and shopping refugees are estimated at about seven million people. Commercial establishments tend to exit residential areas where the population is ageing and decreasing because of reduced business and profit. People are increasingly feeling inconvenienced by commercial establishments' relocation (16.6% felt inconvenienced by this in 2005, opinion poll on Elderly People's Dwelling and Living Environment). Residents in housing estates and residential areas built during the period of rapid economic growth, and in inner-city areas, are faced with the potential to become shopping refugees. Because city areas are developed through market mechanisms, declining population and decreased local consumption spurs the withdrawal of commercial establishments, further exacerbating the remaining residents' social exclusion.

#### 4. NPO Actions to Achieve Social Inclusion

In this section, Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs)' activities which reconstruct informal mutual aid to support marginalized groups are discussed through illustrative examples. Social inclusion which realizes well-being needs four factors or functions: a dwelling, its location, social and economic institutions for housing rights, and mutual aid to fully achieve well-being. While the first three factors are difficult to change, informal mutual aid is easier to address and so NPOs' activities are illustrated below.

Causes of social exclusion have been divided into economic poverty and the decline of informal mutual aid. The following discussion focuses on innovative approaches to achieve social inclusion, easing social exclusion from the housing perspective, which are exemplified by, and are drawn from, Aichi Prefecture in Japan. Public job placement and vocational training are acknowledged as measures against economic poverty and provision of livelihood protection is indispensable to housing security and the maintenance of wellbeing.

Many private sector activities complement informal mutual aid. For a rough sleeper to access accommodation, the receipt of livelihood protection is essential. Furthermore, a relationship with a local community can be indispensable to the realization of an appropriate dwelling. The NPO Sasashima Support Centre bases in Nagoya. Sasashima clinic was established in 1985, to support rough sleepers. Later, NPO Sasashima Support Centre, based on Sasashima clinic was established in 2013, gave support to people who had accessed apartments, including former rough sleepers' living in the community. NPO Nowami (based in Ichinomiya City) has been active since 1995, with the NPO Nowami Support Center established in 2011 which supported rough sleepers and

foreign migrants. Its local activity base fosters relationships between former rough sleepers and the community. NPO Sasashima Support Centre forms relationships with a shopping street in which its base is located, and former rough sleepers contribute to cleaning the shrine and to the community festival. Nowami is developing relationships with, and contributions to, the community by supporting self-help construction of a shelter, building a former rough sleepers' support network, and creating a meal service. In Kamagasaki, Osaka, managers of a day-labourers' lodging provide supported accommodation for former rough sleepers who perform volunteer activities such as cleaning the nursery school and maintaining playground equipment in the community. Seven managers of a day-labourers' lodging established the NPO in 2000 (The Academy of Housing for Welfare and Wellbeing Society, 2008, p. 41). The activities of these three NPOs show how stable housing and support through mutual aid can contribute to achieving a home and individual wellbeing.

Members of Minami Medical Livelihood Cooperative Association (established in 1961 for reconstruction from the typhoon Isewan damage) looks for residences for elderly people who cannot live alone, or who cannot easily form relationships with the community. The cooperative's members ride bicycles to explore the community, seeking appropriate dwelling units. This activity attracts the attention of local residents and raises their awareness in order that local residents with extra space will accept elderly people; the elderly people's dwelling is then supported by the community. The Aichi Apartment House Association's (a public cooperation established in 1977) 'Watching Landlords' program has been active since 2012 and appeals for Watching Landlords who keep an eye on and help their residents. The effect of this activity is to make rental housing available for single elderly people, single women, child-raising households, disabled people, foreigners, minorities and low-income earners who might otherwise be excluded from the rental housing market. This activity also has an effect on cooperation with dwelling support for these residents. Furthermore, local government welfare staff are aware of the toll-free call consultation of the Watching Landlords' activity; thus, the administration uses this as a window into the dwelling, making it an important safety net for vulnerable residents. These two activities show the possibility to match available dwelling units in a community to people who are looking for such dwellings. Further, the mutual aid support is also likely to help sustain life in the community.

In another example, mutual-aid activities for dwelling support are strengthened through a local-government initiative. The Dwelling Support Conference, based on the Act on Promotion of Offering of Rental Housing to People Requiring Special Assistance in Securing Housing enacted in 2007, consists of a local authority, a real estate dealer, a rental housing management contractor, a house rent guarantee-of-liabilities contractor and an

organization that offers housing support all working together. The Dwelling Support Conference shares information, and the Conference discusses and implements a package to help people considered for housing move smoothly into the private rental-housing sector. Since organizations providing dwelling support services vary between geographic areas, each Dwelling Support Conference is attempting to adopt a local identity.

## 5. Conclusions

In the housing field, the realization of decent housing promotes wellbeing. Achieving decent housing depends on the quality of the dwelling and its location, as well as the existence of social institutions to promote the right to housing. Finally, a mutual connection with society helps realize well-being (beyond simply access to housing). However, if any element is lost, those affected become at risk of social exclusion.

This paper has argued that in Japan, social exclusion has resulted from economic poverty and the decline of informal mutual aid. Poverty is driven by reduced household income, linked to increased unemployment and job instability. The reduction in supply of low-rent houses, company residences and social housing is the driving force behind the problem of lack of access to suitable dwellings for low income households. Furthermore, reduction in the size of households contributes to increased vulnerability. Changes in the social economy concern changes in the 'family', which has been the foundation of informal mutual aid. These factors are inter-related. Although the number of rough sleepers has been decreasing due to the narrow definition of homelessness in Japan, the economic, social and demographic environment severely constrains the ability of rough sleepers to access accommodation.

Moreover, although dwelling construction and design should respond to the ageing population and changes in family structure, most dwellings do not have all the necessary characteristics to be considered adequate. Indeed, many which have barriers for disabled people serve to worsen the residents' social exclusion. Furthermore, residential-areas tend to be influenced by the market or the economy; as shopping facilities fled residential-areas due to falls in sales, such residential-areas become increasingly isolated and the remaining residents easily become socially excluded'.

The weakness of social connection related to shrinking household composition, ageing and depopulation of local communities drives social exclusion. On the other hand, to improve social inclusion, various private activities that reconstruct informal mutual aid are being created. Some NPOs' activities take place at family and local community levels. They have the potential to help former rough sleepers to live in apartments and connect (or reconnect) with local communities. Older people can also be supported to stay in settled local communities through NPO activities and NPO activity can also create

new social networks for support in the community. Thus, there have been successes in moving from social exclusion into social inclusion in some fields. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of NPO activities is highly constrained by limitations in the supply, quality, design and location of affordable housing in Japan. Housing policy needs to better address the construction of adequately designed dwellings in locations which match need, by joining up housing and city planning more effectively. Japan would also benefit from a strengthening of the principle that housing is a human right and from the setting up social institutions to secure housing rights as an essential component of social inclusion.

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## Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

## The Prevalence of Rough Sleeping and Sofa Surfing Amongst Young People in the UK

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### Abstract

Whilst data on statutory homelessness is well recorded in the UK, there is a lack of data on informal homelessness (such as ‘sofa surfing’) and rough sleeping, other than that which relies on partial information and street counts. This paper presents findings from a recent online survey of young people and helps to fill this gap. It found that rates of sofa surfing and rough sleeping among young people were much higher than previously thought. Twenty-six percent of young people (aged 16–25) had slept rough at some point in their life and 35 percent had ‘sofa surfed’ (stayed with friends or family on their floor or sofa because they had nowhere else to go). The paper explores the implications of this for how we conceptualise homelessness. It suggests that homelessness may often be neither cause nor consequence of wider forms of exclusion, but that we may need to explore further the factors that enable some people to move swiftly out of homelessness more easily than others.

### Keywords

boomerang generation; hidden homelessness; rough sleeping; sofa surfing; street homelessness; youth homelessness

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

In the UK, figures for the number of homeless people assisted by local authorities are collected, but other homeless people not in contact with homelessness services are particularly difficult to count. Those in contact with homelessness services, or who are sleeping on the street may be the ‘tip of the iceberg’ with many more experiencing homelessness but not using homelessness services, possibly because they rely on their own resources to solve their problems, or because they are unaware of the help available, or do not wish to use it.

This research, commissioned by youth homeless charity, Centrepoint, was part of a project estimating rates of youth homelessness throughout the UK (Clarke, Burgess, Morris, & Udagawa, 2015). This paper analyses the findings from the part of the research into ‘hidden homelessness’—young people who experience home-

lessness but are not in contact with any agencies, including sofa surfers and rough sleepers. These groups are hard to find and therefore to count.

This paper aims to help fill that gap and to complement existing data from other sources. It draws on a 2014 survey conducted online of over 2000 young people (aged 16–25) in the UK to establish how many have experienced sofa surfing or rough sleeping. Sofa surfing was defined as “where individuals stay with friends or members of their extended family on their floor or sofa as they have nowhere else to go”. Rough sleeping was defined as having slept in a list of non-housing locations including parks and cars because they felt they had nowhere else to stay.

The high numbers found by this research support the need for the growing body of work around pathways into homelessness, focussing not just on immediate triggers of homelessness, but also on the factors that differenti-

ate the young people who move swiftly out of homelessness and those who do not. It also presents a challenge to notions that homelessness is necessarily extreme or something that effects only the most socially excluded.

## 2. Background

To quantify homelessness, it is first necessary to define what it is that is being counted. Whilst people sleeping on the streets are more visibly homeless, there are a variety of precarious, insecure or unsatisfactory living conditions often termed “hidden homelessness” (Reeve & Batty, 2011). The problem of definition has been a long running debate with little agreement or progress made on defining homelessness (Amore et al., 2011). The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) and the European Observatory on Homelessness have produced a classification system of different types of homelessness, termed ETHOS. However, this has been criticized for mixing up living situations, such as homeless shelters, with counts of people who are housed at present but at risk of future homelessness, such as people under threat of eviction or violence (Amore et al., 2011), reducing its utility as a definition that can be used to count homelessness at any one time. In practice, quantifying homelessness has tended to rely on data collected by governments—which is usually partial and relates mainly to specific categories of homeless people who are accessing services or have rights to be rehoused (Fitzpatrick, Pawson, Bramley, Wilcox, & Watts, 2015). In the UK, some efforts have been made to count rough sleepers, but they are known to present only a partial picture of rough sleeping, especially outside London.

There have been few studies which have tried to look at the rate of hidden homelessness—such as sofa surfing—among young people. A 2007 Danish study found a high prevalence of hidden homelessness in Denmark (Benjaminsen & Christensen, 2007). Sofa surfing has been mentioned in passing as an option used by women which may explain why there are fewer women found on the street (Reeve & Casey, 2006; Weber Sikić, 2008); as preferable to hostels for gay young people (Cull, Platzer, & Balloch, 2006) or as a precursor to more entrenched homelessness (Quilgars, Johnsen, & Pleace, 2008). Disability has received relatively little attention in relation to homelessness, though it is known that adults who had childhood learning difficulties are over-represented among the homeless population (Patterson, Moniruzzaman, Frankish, & Somers, 2012), with a recent UK study emphasising the need to understand disabled young people’s role in shaping their own housing pathways (Mackie, 2012). Understanding the role of informal housing solutions such as sofa surfing could help develop this approach.

In the UK there are data collected from administrative sources on homeless people who are assisted by local authorities, but there appear to have been no real efforts made to systematically count people who are ‘hid-

den homeless’—staying temporarily with friends or family members in what are very often quite precarious and insecure housing arrangements (Quilgars, Fitzpatrick, & Pleace, 2011). A study of single homeless people using homelessness services found that the majority of homeless service users had experience of hidden homelessness (Reeve & Batty, 2011) but we know very little about how many non-service users also have experience of hidden homelessness.

It is also as important to understand the duration and patterns of youth homelessness as it is to quantify it. This is particularly problematic with youth homelessness as it is very often transient and connected to difficulties in making the transition from child to adult status (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013; Hutson & Liddiard, 1994). A 2010 review of research (Quilgars, 2010) highlighted a 1998 research by the European Observatory on Homelessness which suggested that youth homelessness may be considered as a faltered or interrupted transition to adulthood which typically happens to vulnerable young people. It is well established that such transitions have become more protracted over the last two decades (Thomson, 2009) with the ‘boomerang generation’ gaining traction in the British press (Stone et al., 2014) and delayed independent household formation (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014), home ownership, later marriage, cohabitation and increased insecurity in labour markets.

Studies on the needs of the homeless population have often focussed on the ones who use services or approach local authorities for assistance in the UK. These have found homeless young people to have very high rate of vulnerability—missing school, mental health problems or a history of having run away from home as a child (Hodgson, Shelton, & van den Bree, 2014; Quilgars et al., 2008). A high degree of overlap has been found between experience of homelessness and other domains of deep exclusion such as institutional care, childhood trauma, substance misuse, begging, street drinking, sex work, or ‘survival’ shoplifting (Fitzpatrick, Bramley, & Johnson, 2012; Fitzpatrick & Johnsen, 2011). A key aspect to debates around homelessness therefore concerns the nature and direction of causation. Do people become homeless as a result of other factor such as substance abuse or mental ill health? Or does homelessness contribute or directly cause these wider problems and difficulties for those who are living without a permanent home?

Whilst most studies suggest a degree of causation in both directions (Hodgson, Shelton, van den Bree, & Los, 2013), the focus in recent years has been on preventing the tendency of homelessness to cause or worsen other difficulties by focussing on a Housing First approach (Filipović Hrast, 2014; Gaetz, 2014). This approach challenges the notion that it is necessary for homeless people to tackle any wider problems before they can sustain a tenancy and instead endeavours to house people into permanent homes first, and then to support them to tackle any other difficulties, such as

mental health or substance abuse. The Housing First approach has shown good results throughout Europe (Busch-Geertsema, 2014), and presented a major challenge to the previous linear “treatment first” approach used in the United States (Johnsen & Teixeira, 2010). It is known that homeless people who suffer mental ill health or substance abuse tend to be homeless for longer than other homeless people, possibly because this leads them to become involved in a ‘homeless sub-culture’ associated with a street lifestyle to a greater extent than other homeless young people (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013). The impact of street lifestyle on mental health and substance abuse has also been highlighted (Kidd, 2004; McCay & Aiello, 2013). The argument for a Housing First approach is, however, that wider difficulties do not in themselves prevent people from sustaining a tenancy, but rather that being homeless makes it harder to address other problems with proponents arguing that “becoming homeless may mean young people not only lose their families but other natural supports (friends, adults, extended family), and be forced to drop out of school” and can recover more quickly once housed (Gaetz, 2014). In other words, the underlying contention here is homelessness is more a cause than an automatic consequence of other difficulties.

The other major theme in policy around youth homelessness in the UK, as in much of Europe over the last ten years has been on homelessness prevention, rather than alleviation (Maher & Allen, 2014). In the UK this approach is tied in with the development of local authority led services to prevent young people losing their homes including mediation with parents and access to alternative housing before an existing tenancy is terminated (Pawson et al., 2007). The success of this approach is also enhanced if homelessness is understood as being a cause of wider difficulties, which will therefore be avoided if homelessness is prevented.

### 3. Data on Youth Homelessness in the UK

Availability of data in the UK varies greatly between types of homelessness, and few data sources offer the ability to distinguish homelessness in general from youth homelessness among those aged under 25 (Homeless Link, 2014a).

Rough sleepers are notoriously difficult to count. Nevertheless, rough sleeping is a form of homelessness that has attracted much attention, and therefore efforts have been made throughout the UK to count rough sleepers, track them through support systems, and measure progress in reducing rough sleeping. These date back to the 1990 Rough Sleepers’ Initiative. A key focus more recently has been on the ‘No Second Night Out’ project, which aims to ensure that no rough sleeper has to sleep out for more than one night after having made contact with services (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011).

Street counts do not give a measure of the total number of people experiencing homelessness over the course of a year, because the duration of each person’s rough sleeping is not known. However, they are accepted by the UK government as the most accurate method of measuring trends in rough sleeping over time (National Audit Office, 2005). They can also give some indication of the scale of rough sleeping in different locations, though this is dependent on rough sleepers’ counts having taken place in comparable fashions.

Rough sleeping in London continues to receive the most political prominence and funding, though is by no means the only place where people sleep rough in the UK. Services for rough sleepers are better developed in London than in most other areas, and the Combined Homeless and Information Network (CHAIN) database is a key source of data here. CHAIN is a database for people who work with rough sleepers and the street population in London, maintained by a charity, St. Mungo’s Broadway, and tracks individual rough sleepers across their contact with different services<sup>1</sup>. The latest report (St Mungo’s Broadway, 2014) found there to be 6,508 known rough sleepers recorded in London in the year 2012–2013, of whom 773 were aged 16–25.

Outside of London, the government also produce snapshot figures for rough sleeping based on information collected by local authorities (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2014). The figures are based on street counts and also on other sources of information such as information from voluntary sector agencies in contact with rough sleepers, such as day centres. The autumn of 2014, street counts estimated that there were 2,744 rough sleepers on one night in England, an increase of 18 percent from autumn 2013, and of these, 2,002 were outside London. Just over a fifth of the rough sleepers counted in England were in London (742). There is much variation between authorities with some authorities, such as Cornwall, having higher rates of rough sleeping than most London boroughs, whilst in contrast 50 local authorities estimated or counted no rough sleepers at all on the night when data was collected. The DCLG data does not provide a breakdown by age group. However, data compiled by Homeless Link (Homeless Link, 2014b) does provide a split by age group, and suggests that ten percent of rough sleepers in London are aged 16–24, as are 20 percent of those outside London.

In Wales, a rough sleepers survey was undertaken in November 2015, the first for some years, and local authorities reported a total of 82 rough sleepers during one night, based on street counts of areas where rough sleepers were known to bed down. The survey also asked how many people were known to have slept rough in Wales over a two-week period, and this exercise produced a figure of 240. No breakdown by age was given.

Rough sleepers’ counts have not been consistently carried out in Scotland for over ten years. However, the previous housing circumstances of those assessed

<sup>1</sup> [www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN.html](http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN.html)

under the homeless persons' legislation when applying for housing are recorded (Scottish Government, 2013). These show that in 2013–2014 a total of 1,787 applicants had slept rough the night before they approached the council for housing assistance, 6.4 percent of all applicants. This figure is not broken down by age. The data also recorded 17 applicants who were classified as long term roofless (Scottish Government, 2014). These figures are not quite comparable to the CHAIN data on the numbers rough sleeping over a year, as they may include some double-counting (people who were assessed more than once in a year) and would also exclude any rough sleepers who did not approach a local authority, or who did so after having spent the previous night somewhere other than rough sleeping.

In Northern Ireland too, there is very little data on rough sleeping. The Northern Irish Housing Executive report that there are fewer than ten rough sleepers at any one time in Belfast and none elsewhere (Northern Irish Housing Executive, 2012); however, it is not stated when this count took place.

Previous research has tried to pull figures together for the UK as a whole and fill some of the gaps. A 2011 report estimated the number of young people experiencing homelessness in the UK during a year to be around 78,000–80,000 in 2008–2009, including 3,800 who slept rough at some point in a year (Quilgars et al., 2011), though acknowledges that this is likely to be a partial picture.

In short, all existing data on rough sleepers is dependent on the rough sleeper having been observed at some point by someone counting them either whilst rough sleeping, or shortly afterwards when they make contact with a support agency. No data exists on sofa surfing in the UK.

#### 4. Research Methods

To help fill the gap in knowledge and find out more about young people's experiences of rough sleeping and sofa surfing, an online survey of 2,011 young people (aged 16–25) in the UK was drawn from a representative sample of UK adults. The survey was undertaken in September 2014 by ComRes, a leading polling company, with established panels known to be representative of the UK population, large enough to provide the required sample size of young people. The questions were designed by the academics leading the study, with input from Centrepoint, who founded the research, and also from ComRes who contributed technical expertise in questionnaire design. To avoid self-selection bias, the survey was advertised under the topic of "people" with the focus on homelessness only made apparent to young people once they responded to the survey. In total 17,605 invites were sent out, from which 5,537 respondents clicked through to the survey and of those there were 254 who were screened out (for instance on grounds of age), 349 who

only completed part of the survey and 2011 who completed it. Online survey methods do exclude people without internet access, though data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that 99 percent of 16–24 year olds were recent internet users by 2014<sup>2</sup>. Young people who were homeless at the time of the survey may have been less likely to have had reliable internet access, so could be somewhat under-represented.

The survey aimed to establish how many had experienced sofa surfing. Respondents were asked whether they had ever slept in a list of places such as in a park or in a car because they had nowhere else to stay (see Table 1 for the full list). They were also asked whether they had ever sofa surfed, which was defined for them as 'where individuals stay with friends or members of their extended family on their floor or sofa as they have nowhere else to go'—and if they had, whether they had done so in the last year, and the length of time they had spent sofa surfing.

The survey data was weighted by ComRes for region, age and gender and the full dataset supplied to the research team for analysis. In order to be sure of including only those who were actually homeless, the detail provided by those who answered that they had slept rough only 'in another place' and also those whose reason for having nowhere else to stay was given as 'other' were checked. Despite the question having asked about rough sleeping *because you had nowhere else to stay* some respondents gave reasons suggesting that they did have accommodation but were temporarily unable to get to it, or had chosen not to, for instance because they had lost their keys or missed the last train home. Any respondents whose answers indicated that they had slept rough through *choice*, whilst *outside of the UK*, or because they did have accommodation but that they were *unable to access* it were excluded from the rough sleepers group for the purposes of analysis. They have therefore not been counted as rough sleepers in the subsequent analysis. In total this led to 88 responses being recoded as not being rough sleepers.

#### 5. Findings

##### 5.1. Rough Sleepers

The 2,011 young people aged 16–25 surveyed were asked whether they had had to stay in one of a list of places because they had nowhere else to stay. They were then asked whether their experience of rough sleeping was in the last year, or longer ago. Table 1, below, shows the answers to this question:

Overall, the analysis suggested that 26 percent of young people in this age group had experience of rough sleeping because they were homeless, and 17 percent had done so within the last year. These have been termed hereafter as 'rough sleepers', though it should be noted that the definition of rough sleeping is a broad one

<sup>2</sup> [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-395602](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-395602)

that includes not just those sleeping on the streets and in parks, but also those who have slept in cars or tents because they had nowhere else to stay.

A narrower definition of rough sleeping as including only those who were outdoors and open to the elements would include only those who had slept on the streets, in a car park or in a park or other open space. This narrower group of ‘outdoors rough sleeping’ comprised a total of 188 young people, or nine percent of all young people.

Young people answering yes to the question, where asked why they had had nowhere else to stay (Table 2).

Rough sleepers who had rough slept within the last year were asked how long they had slept rough for (Table 3).

From this information, it is possible to make minimum estimates of young people sleeping rough on any one night. Table 4 shows how this has been calculated.

If the young people answering this survey are representative of UK, the 0.53 percent sleeping rough on any one night would equate to 39,557 people (of a population of 7.45 million). This seems a very high figure in comparison to other sources, which are predominately based on rough sleepers counts and rough sleepers in contact

**Table 1.** “Have you ever had to sleep in one of these places because you had nowhere else to stay?”.

Response	Number	Proportion of all young people	Proportion of rough sleepers
In a car	292	15%	55%
In a car park*	83	4%	16%
In a park or other open space*	82	4%	15%
In a squat	50	2%	9%
In a tent	180	2%	34%
In an abandoned building	53	3%	10%
In another place (please specify)	10	1%	2%
On a night bus	74	4%	14%
On the streets*	95	5%	18%
<b>Yes to any of the above</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Of whom had done so within the last year</i>	<i>346</i>	<i>17%</i>	
<b>Yes to any of the outdoor places (marked with *)</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>35%</b>
I have never had to sleep in one of these places	1,478	73%	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,011</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>—</b>

Source: Clarke et al. (2015). Respondents could give more than one answer.

**Table 2.** “Which, if any, of the following reasons explain why you had nowhere else to stay? (All those who have rough slept)”.

Reason	Number	Proportion of those who slept rough
My parents were unable or unwilling to accommodate me	110	21%
I left home due to the negative environment there	88	17%
My friends or extended family were unable or unwilling to accommodate me	79	15%
I split up from my partner	58	11%
The place I was living was overcrowded	44	8%
My tenancy came to an end through no fault of my own and I could not find a new place to live	38	7%
I was suffering from substance abuse (e.g. drugs or alcohol)	23	4%
I was evicted from where I was living due to rent arrears (i.e. unable to pay the rent)	17	3%
I was suffering domestic violence at my family home	16	3%
I am not a British citizen, and didn’t know anyone in the UK I could stay with	13	3%
I had to leave foster care / a children’s home and had nowhere to go	9	2%
I was suffering domestic violence from my partner	9	2%
I had just left prison and had nowhere to go	8	2%
I was evicted from where I was living due to antisocial behaviour (including noise, or damage to property)	8	2%
Other (please specify)	13	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Young people’s survey, September 2014. Respondents could only give one answer.

**Table 3.** Estimates of the average time rough sleepers aged 16–24 in the UK spent sleeping rough in the year to September 2014.

	Total	Proportion of those who slept rough in last year
<i>Number sleeping rough in last year</i>	346	100%
Length of time slept rough		
1 night	137	40%
Between 1 night and a week	119	34%
More than a week, but less than a month	51	15%
More than one month, but less than three months	20	6%
More than three months, but less than six months	11	3%
More than six months, but less than a year	6	2%
A year or longer	1	*
Don't know	1	*

Source: Young people's survey, September 2014. Respondents could only give one answer.

**Table 4.** Estimated number of people aged 16–24 rough sleeping on any one night in the year to September 2014.

	UK
Number of young people answering survey	2,011
Number who have slept rough during the last year	345
Minimum number of nights spent sleeping rough in last year (by all rough sleepers) <sup>3</sup>	3,899
Estimated number of young people in survey sleeping rough on any one night <sup>4</sup>	11
Proportion of young people rough sleeping on any one night	0.53%

Sources: Young people's survey, September 2014 and DCLG Mid-year population estimate; own calculations.

with agencies. It is difficult to estimate the margin of error here in statistical terms as the number sleeping rough on any one night (11) is based on responses from 345 people, but they have contributed unequally to this figure (a relatively small number of long-term rough sleepers constitute a large proportion of all rough sleeping). Nevertheless, even if only 11 rough sleepers had been responsible for all the rough sleeping, this would still give lower and upper confidence limits of 20,357 and 72,726 (at 95 percent confidence). Whilst a substantial range, even the lower figure is still greatly in excess of official estimates for rough sleeping. The fact that 345 people (not eleven) actually contributed something to the figure increases the level of confidence that the population total is closer to 39,557. Whether these people can all be considered "homeless" is also worth considering, as for many the experience was very short lived reflecting one-off events.

It is unsurprising that this is higher than the published data; making contact with rough sleepers can be difficult for agencies, or people trying to count them especially if the rough sleeping is for a short duration or away from areas popular with rough sleepers. It is also important to note the variety of places that people reported they slept rough, as shown above in Table 2. Of those sleeping rough, 18 percent had slept on the streets, with a further 13 percent sleeping in a car park, park or other open space. Most

of the rest had slept in a car, tent or night bus. This may mean that only around a third of the young people sleeping rough were in the more visible outdoor places where they might be more likely to be found by people doing street counts or working with rough sleepers. The extent of the rough sleeping of all sorts found in this survey is however very much higher than was expected.

Even if we focus only on narrow definition of rough sleeping, discussed above the survey still suggests that over 10,000 young people were sleeping rough *each night*—this still very high and suggests that further research would be helpful to see if these results can be replicated, possibly drawing on further surveys.

## 5.2. Sofa Surfing

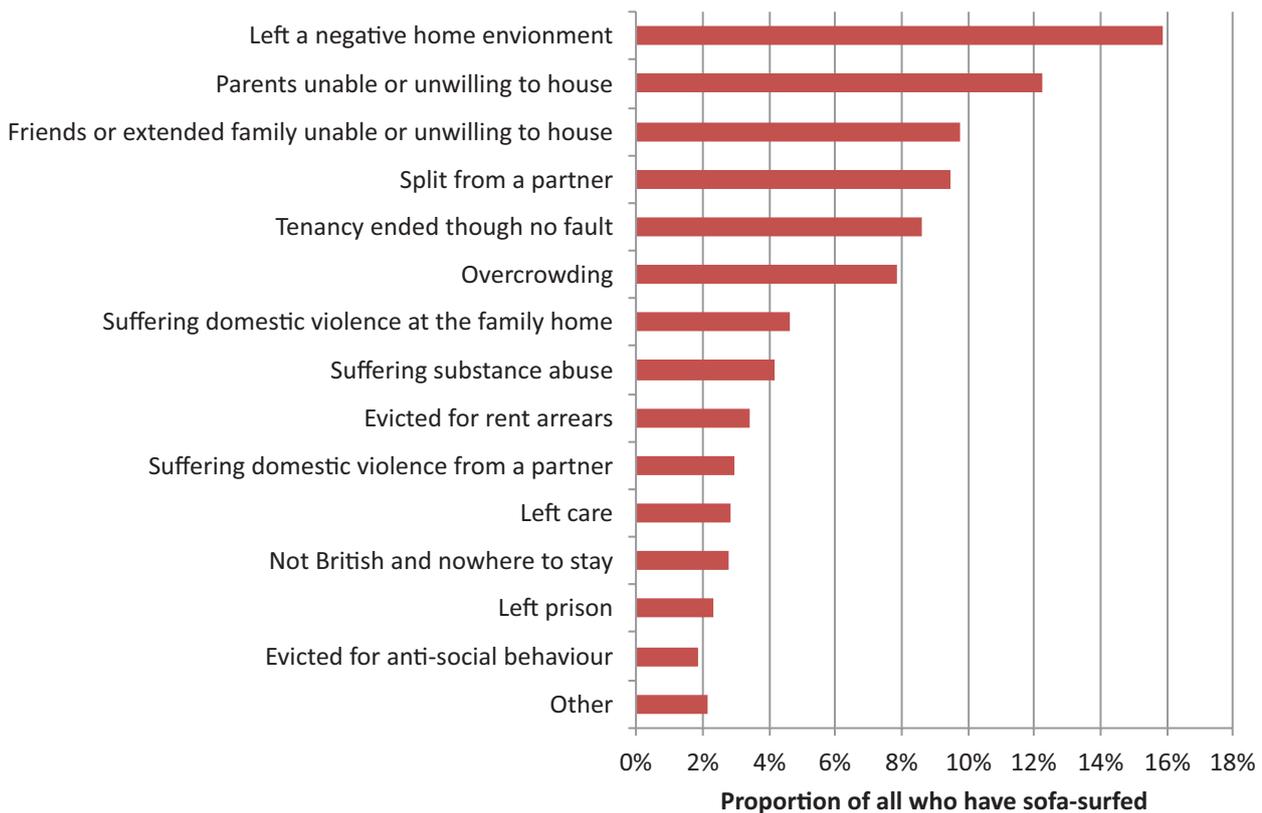
The 2,011 young people aged 16–25 surveyed were asked:

"Thinking about 'sofa surfing' (where individuals stay with friends or members of their extended family on their floor or sofa as they have nowhere else to go), do you have any experience of doing this?"

Those who said yes, were then asked whether this experience was in the last year, or longer ago.

<sup>3</sup> The length of time spent rough sleeping was asked in bands. A conservative estimate has been used here by assuming all spent the lowest time for each band (e.g. 'more than a week but less than a month' has been assumed to be just eight nights). This means that the estimates of the proportion of young people sleeping rough on any one night and the total numbers sleeping rough are lowest possible estimates from the answers given in the survey.

<sup>4</sup> This has been calculated by dividing the total number of nights spent by the number of days in a year (365).



**Figure 1.** Reasons for sofa surfing among people aged 16–24 identified as sofa surfing in the year to September 2014. Source: Clarke et al. (2015). Respondents could only give one answer.

Overall, the survey suggested that 35 percent of young people in this age group (703 of the 2,011) had experience of sofa surfing, and 20 percent (409 people) had done so within the last year. In total 79 of the 409 people who had sofa surfed in the last year had also slept rough, meaning that a total of 675 out of the 2,011 (34 percent) had either sofa surfed or rough slept during the last twelve months. The survey explored the causes of sofa surfing (Figure 1).

As can be seen, the main reasons for young people sofa surfing relate to negative home environments or having been asked to leave by their parents. However there were substantial numbers also indicating that they had sofa surfed after a period of living independently, and were made homeless by a tenancy ending, splitting from a partner or no longer being able to stay with friends or extended family. Overcrowding was a reason in eight percent of cases.

The research found that some causes were associated with longer periods of sofa surfing. Overall, the median length of time that sofa surfers spent sofa surfing in the last 12 months was 25 days (3.5 weeks). Eighteen percent had sofa surfed for over three months, with four percent having done so for six or more out of the last twelve months. In contrast, 23 percent had sofa surveyed for a week or less. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the cause of sofa surfing reported the duration.

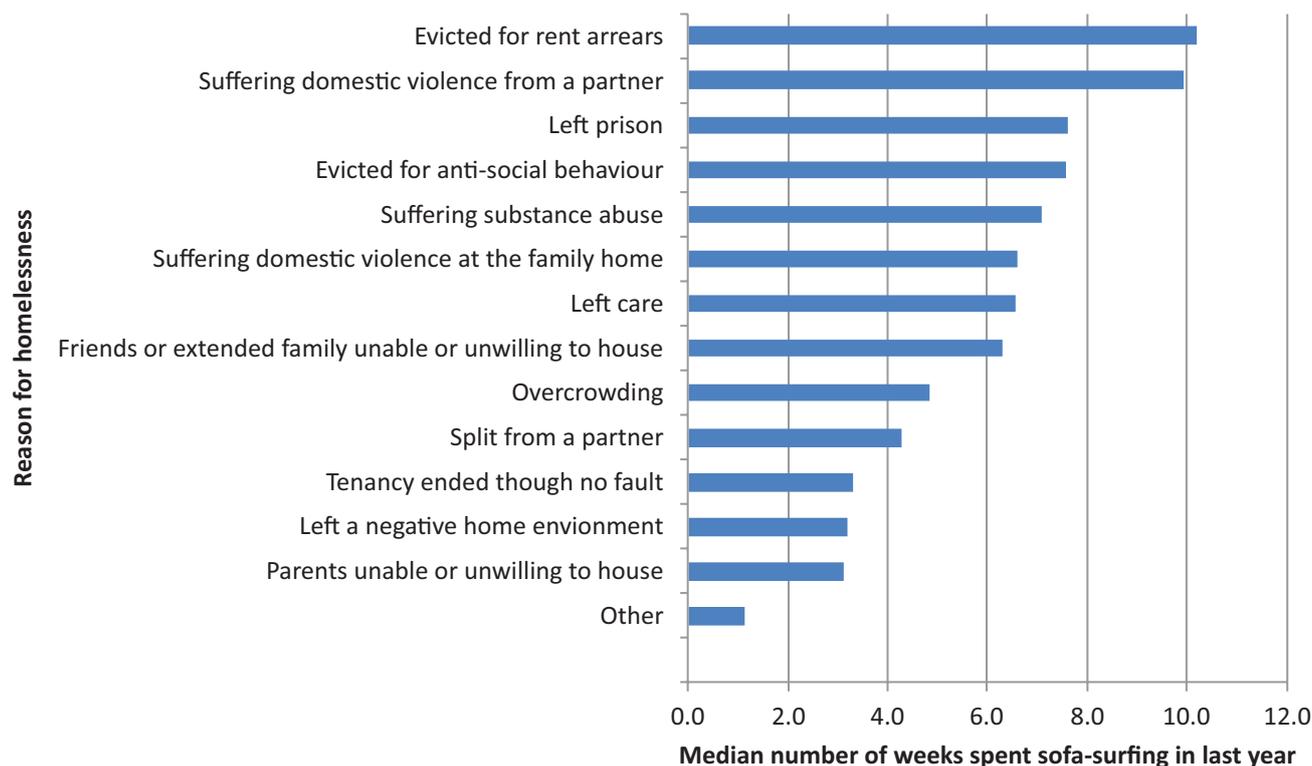
As can be seen, the reasons that are associated with having left home and then lost a home (evictions, leaving

prison and domestic violence from a partner) are all associated with longer lengths of sofa surfing than are those associated with moving directly from the parental home to sofa surfing. This may suggest that for some young people a relatively short stay sofa surfing with a friend may be sufficient to enable them either to move back home or find a more permanent housing solution. In contrast, those who have lost a home of their own find it harder to move on from sofa surfing in a short timescale.

There were also significant differences between men and women, with men having sofa surfed for a median of five and a half weeks (38 days), as compared to two weeks (16 days) for women.

It is possible to make an estimate from the sofa surfing survey of the number of young people who are sofa surfing on any one night. Table 5 shows how this has been calculated.

The survey suggests that one in 35 young people of respondents were sofa surfing on any one night during the previous year. If the survey respondents are representative of the UK, this would equate to a total of 215,957 young people sofa surfing on any one night. As with the rough sleepers, it is hard to give a precise confidence interval to this estimate because some respondents contribute disproportionately to the total. If 57 people were responsible for all the sofa surfing this would give confidence limits of 160,379 to 272,319 young people sofa surfing on any one night. The fact that 409 people (not 57) actually contributed something to



**Figure 2.** Median length of time spent sofa surfing by reason, among people aged 16–24 identified as sofa surfing in the year to September 2014. Source: Clarke et al. (2015).

**Table 5.** Estimated number of people aged 16–24 ‘sofa surfing’ on any one night in the year to September 2014.

	UK
Number of young people answering survey	2,011
Number who have sofa surfed during the last year [From survey]	409
Total number of sofa surfing nights in last year [Sum of all lengths of time sofa surfing by all respondents]	20,977
Average number sofa surfing on any one night during last year [Total number of sofa surfing nights (20,977), divided by total number of nights in the year (365)]	57
Proportion of young people sofa surfing on any one night [Average number sofa surfing on any one night (57) divided by number of young people answering survey (2,011)]	2.9%

Sources: Young people’s survey, September 2014, and DCLG Mid-year population estimate; own calculations.

the figure increases the level of confidence that the population total is closer to 215,957.

The research explored whether certain groups of young people were more likely to have sofa surfed than others. Four key factors could be identified which were related to the likelihood of having sofa surfed, as shown in Figure 3.

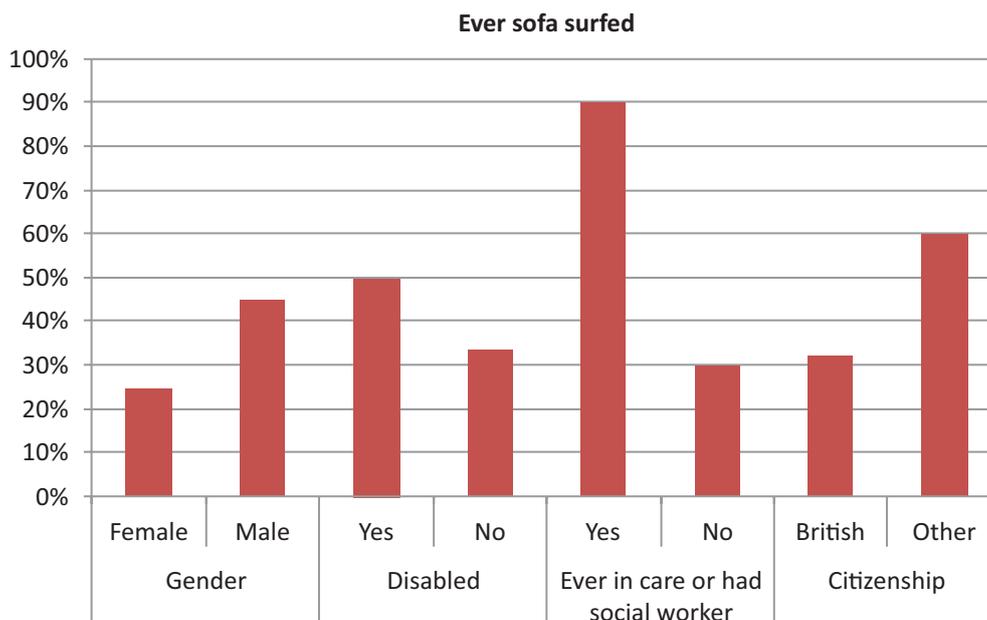
The correlation coefficients were: Gender (0.262); Disabled (0.079); Ever in care or had social worker (0.273); Citizenship (0.102). All were significant at the 0.01 confidence level.

As can be seen young men were substantially more likely than young women to have sofa surfed which is in contrast to the suggestions from previous research that women are more likely to sofa surf (Reeve & Casey, 2006; Weber Sikich, 2008). However the biggest risk factor appears to be having had contact with the social care system as a child; 90 percent of those who had ever been in

the care of a local authority or had a social worker as a child said that they had sofa surfed. Those without British citizenship or who were disabled were also significantly more likely to report having sofa surfed (Table 6).

Of those who had sofa surfed, men, non-British citizens, disabled people and those who had been in care or had a social worker as a child were also more likely to report having done so for longer lengths of time.

There was no statistically significant difference between the qualification level and whether people had sofa surfed. However, this may be somewhat complicated by the fact that many in this age group are still in education and still living at home; the teenagers in the survey were less likely than the early 20s to have sofa surfed, and also more likely to lack qualifications. Comparing the qualification levels just of those in the older age groups (aged 22 or over) showed a clearer relationship between lacking qualifications and sofa surfing with



**Figure 3.** Extent of sofa surfing in different demographic groups, among people aged 16–24 identified as sofa surfing in the year to September 2014<sup>5</sup>. Source: Clarke et al. (2015).

**Table 6.** Vulnerability indicators of young people who had slept rough or sofa surfers.

		Ever rough slept	Ever sofa surfed	All young people	Proportion who have ever slept rough	Proportion who have ever sofa surfed	Proportion of rough sleepers	Proportion of sofa surfers
Ever in care or had social worker	Yes	134	142	<b>158</b>	85%	90%	25%	20%
	No	391	550	<b>1,833</b>	21%	30%	73%	78%
	Don't know	12	10	<b>20</b>	60%	50%	2%	1%
Citizenship	British citizen	426	579	<b>1,804</b>	24%	32%	79%	82%
	Non-British citizen	110	123	<b>206</b>	53%	60%	21%	17%
Employment status	Full-time employment	167	216	<b>471</b>	35%	46%	31%	31%
	Full-time student	175	242	<b>1,010</b>	17%	24%	33%	34%
	Part-time employment	73	98	<b>191</b>	38%	51%	14%	14%
	Part-time student	40	45	<b>88</b>	45%	51%	7%	6%
	Self-employed	17	22	<b>43</b>	40%	51%	3%	3%
	Unemployed	57	70	<b>187</b>	30%	37%	11%	10%
Disabled	Yes	68	78	<b>158</b>	43%	49%	13%	11%
	No	449	602	<b>1,800</b>	25%	33%	84%	86%
	Prefer not to say	20	22	<b>52</b>	38%	42%	4%	3%
Qualifications	None	13	13	<b>43</b>	30%	30%	2%	2%
	Level 1/GCSE grade D-G	44	62	<b>88</b>	50%	70%	8%	9%
	A*-C GCSE	111	135	<b>475</b>	23%	28%	21%	19%
	A level	157	217	<b>762</b>	21%	28%	29%	31%
	BTEC	44	58	<b>143</b>	31%	41%	8%	8%
	Degree/HND or above	168	216	<b>499</b>	34%	43%	31%	31%
<b>Total</b>		<b>536</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>2,011</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Young people's survey, September 2014.

<sup>5</sup> 'Other' citizenship status includes: Asylum seeker; Indefinite leave to remain; Discretionary leave; Limited leave to remain with refugee status; Limited leave—other; Citizen of another EEA country; Humanitarian Protection. The numbers within each of these categories were too small to be statistically significant themselves.

57 percent of those lacking a degree having sofa surfed, compared with 40 percent of those with a degree (significant at the 0.01 confidence level).

Looking at the profile of rough sleepers and sofa surfers, however, it is clear that the large majority did not have any obvious vulnerabilities. Four out of five of sofa surfers had no prior involvement with the care system. And the large majority had British Citizenship, were not disabled and had left school with at least good General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades (C and above). Nearly a third were graduates. This suggests that sofa surfing is not an uncommon experience for large numbers of young people from all backgrounds.

The research explored whether the young people felt that sofa surfing had had a negative or positive impact on various aspects of the respondent's life, as shown in Table 7.

As can be seen, there were very mixed views on this issue. Sofa surfing was often reported as a positive experience in most aspects of life, most likely because re-

spondents were comparing to the situation they had left behind. Moving away from a home situation of conflict or severe overcrowding can help people to repair relationships with their families. Sofa surfing can also allow a young person to remain near a job or to move somewhere they hope to find work or housing.

Using the answers to the questions above, a 'positive rating' was created, using the sum of the scores given above (where 'very positive = 5; fairly positive = 4, etc.). The average score for all sofa surfers was 22.3 (Table 8).

Employment status was strongly correlated with positive views on sofa surfing, with an average rating of 19.3 for unemployed people, compared to 23.4 for full time students and 22.2 for employed people. This suggests that more vulnerable people with less secure employment or educational arrangements were more likely to find sofa surfing to be detrimental to their well-being.

Men were more positive than women, with average scores of 22.9 and 21.2 respectively. Young people who

**Table 7.** Impact of sofa surfing on the situation of people aged 16–24 identified as sofa surfing during the year to September 2014.

	Very negative	Fairly negative	Don't know	Fairly positive	Very positive	Total
Education	10%	27%	14%	32%	18%	100%
Work	13%	27%	11%	34%	16%	100%
Relationships	10%	26%	4%	37%	23%	100%
Well-being	15%	31%	6%	30%	19%	100%
Physical health	12%	33%	8%	29%	19%	100%
Finding housing	9%	28%	11%	33%	19%	100%
Finances	13%	25%	6%	38%	19%	100%

Source: Clarke et al. (2015).

**Table 8.** 'Positive rating' for sofa surfing by demographic group.

	Mean score	Std. Error	Significance	N
<i>All sofa surfers</i>	22.3			703
<b>Female</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>.448</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>.313</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>459</b>
Aged under 22	22.7	.403		278
Aged 22 or over	22.1	.337		425
Working (FT, PT or self-employed)	22.2	.370		336
<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>.827</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Students</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>.386</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>287</b>
Care leaver	25.4	1.277		34
Non-British citizen	23.9	.516		124
<b>Living in England</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>.284</b>	<b>**</b>	<b>568</b>
<b>Living in Scotland</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>.890</b>	<b>**</b>	<b>64</b>
Living in Northern Ireland	20.4	1.351		25
Living in Wales	22.4	1.071		45
<b>Living in London</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>0.684</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Rough slept in last 12 months</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>.412</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>296</b>
Not rough slept in last 12 months	19.8	.516		138
Sofa surfed under 3 months	23.6	.359		335
Sofa surfed over 3 months	24.6	.970		74

Source: Young people's survey, September 2014. Notes: \*\* Significant at 90% confidence; \*\*\*Significant at 95% confidence.

had left care were more likely to report that sofa surfing had been a positive experience, with an average score of 25.4, though this was not statistically significant. Young people currently living in London were also more positive about sofa surfing with an average score of 24.8, possibly reflecting the more constrained housing options available in London and/or the value of being in London.

## 6. Conclusions

The findings from this research suggest that a third of young people have sofa surfed at some point, with a fifth having done so within the last year. If this survey is representative of the UK, it would suggest that around 1.5 million young people in the UK have sofa surfed within the last year. Estimates based on the survey would suggest that on any one night, a minimum of 216,000 young people are sofa surfing. Sofa surfing may, for some young people at least, not necessarily be a negative experience and can enable young people to move to a new area, or remain in their local area gaining or retaining access to education or employment. It may give young people a chance to repair relationships with their families and tends to be a short-term arrangement especially for young people who have had to leave the parental home. The emergence of websites such as *couchsurfing.com*, whilst targeted at travellers rather than people who are homeless, nevertheless highlights the positive way in which sharing living spaces can be seen. It may, as such, fulfil a necessary role in the transient and mobile nature of young people's lives. The extent to which sofa surfing was seen as a positive experience by young people responding to this survey presents a challenge to the way in which we conceptualise homelessness as necessarily negative and often damaging experience. The ways in which young people make choices over housing, maybe compromising housing security for other social goods (such as access to employment or breathing space to repair relationships) would benefit from further research.

It is harder to see rough sleeping in this same way—sleeping in parks, abandoned buildings, car parks or the street clearly places young people in a very unsafe situation and must be seen as a crisis situation, even if short-lived. Yet this survey suggests it is also not uncommon—experienced by a quarter of young people at some point in their lives, and by 17 percent of them within the last year. Even looking more narrowly just at the 'outdoor' places, nine percent of young people said that they had slept in one of these during the last year. Estimates based on the survey would suggest that on any one night, around 40,000 young people are sleeping rough in one of the places listed. At a time when access to mainstream housing is getting ever harder for young people and the welfare safety net further withdrawn, this is clearly a concern, suggesting the housing situations of many young people may already be precarious.

These figures for hidden homelessness are high, and significantly higher than has been found previously; anal-

ysis of official statistics for youth homelessness in the UK suggests a many-times lower figure of just 78,000–80,000 young people experiencing homelessness, with just tiny numbers known to be sleeping rough, and no data at all on sofa surfing. This clearly merits further research, and highlights the potential shortcomings of relying on administrative data and rough sleepers' counts for quantifying something that by its nature does not necessarily bring people into contact with those who collect the data.

These findings also support the argument that homelessness is not the primary cause of other problems, as most of the young people surveyed were—at the time of the survey—in adequate housing, and in work or studying. The widespread prevalence of hidden homelessness by young people and mixed views on the impacts of sofa surfing suggest that these kinds of homelessness do not for most young people lead on to wider forms of social exclusion.

However, the findings also suggest that nor is homelessness necessarily a consequence of wider vulnerabilities, as both sofa surfing and rough sleeping are undertaken by a large number of households most of whom are not entering a period of long term homelessness, or experiencing wider social exclusion, and are doing so without the involvement of external agencies or hostels. It is possible that by avoiding formal homeless provision young people also avoid becoming part of the 'culture of homelessness' (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013; Ravenshill, 2008), and thereby avoid some of the other problems associated with homelessness and street lifestyles.

An important finding is also that the profile of young people surveyed here who had experienced homeless is significantly less vulnerable than found in other research (Quilgars et al., 2008) and quite different in profile to those suffering 'multiple exclusion homelessness' (Fitzpatrick & Johnsen, 2011). This suggests that homeless people who turn to local authorities or other agencies for support are significantly more vulnerable than other young people experiencing a temporary situation of homelessness.

The findings also present a challenge for the focus on UK homelessness policies—which have very much been framed around the prevention agenda for the last ten years. Preventing something that occurs on such a wide scale is clearly challenging. The research suggests that a focus on causation alone may not be sufficient as the numbers who experience homelessness at some point are substantial. The findings instead suggest that there might be merit in improving further our understanding of why some young people move swiftly out of homelessness, whilst others fail to find a quick route out and suffer longer term effects.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

## Rural Homelessness in Western Canada: Lessons Learned from Diverse Communities

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### Abstract

Until recently, there was little acknowledgement that homelessness existed in rural areas in Canada. Limited research and scarce data are available to understand the scope and dynamics of rural homelessness in Canada. As suggested in our previous work, there is a need for rural homelessness research to examine themes from a provincial perspective. The aim of this research was to contribute to expanding the knowledge base on the nature of rural homelessness at a provincial level in the Canadian province of Alberta. In order to understand the dynamics of homelessness in rural Alberta, we conducted interviews with service providers and other key stakeholders across Alberta. We examined homelessness dynamics and responses to rural homelessness in 20 rural communities across the province. Across all of the communities in the study, homelessness was reported however, the magnitude of the issue and its dynamics were distinct depending on the local contexts. We also identified several themes which serve as descriptors of rural homelessness issues. We note a number of recommendations emerging from this data which are aimed at building on the experiences, capacities, and strengths of rural communities.

### Keywords

Canada; disaster management; domestic violence; homelessness; Housing First; immigrant; indigenous persons; rural; seniors; youth

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

With a few exceptions, most research and interventions that focus on homelessness have concentrated on those living in urban areas. The visibility of urban homelessness, the ability to readily estimate their numbers, differences in profile from singles to families, children and youth to seniors, has made it possible to describe population characteristics and begin to determine ways of addressing need. The same cannot be said of the rural experience.

Anderson and Sim (2000, 2011) note the significance of geographic location to social exclusion in housing. While there is a body of work from other countries such

as the UK (see especially Cloke, Marsden, & Mooney, 2006; Cloke & Milbourne, 2012) and the United States (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010) which has more specifically focused on rural housing and social exclusion, there is little research available to understand the scope and dynamics of rural homelessness in Canada (Waegemakers Schiff, Schiff, Turner, & Bernard, 2015). The aim of this research was to contribute to expanding the knowledge base on the nature of homelessness in rural Canadian communities. We begin with a review of the state of knowledge on rural homelessness in Canada. As Waegemakers Schiff et al. (2015) suggest, there is a need for rural homelessness

research to capture common emerging themes from a provincial rather than community-by-community perspective. As such, this study also focuses beginning to address this need through an provincial examination of homelessness dynamics and responses to rural homelessness across 20 diverse rural communities in Alberta Canada. Through this process, our research uncovered a few significant trends with regards to the nature of rural homelessness in Alberta. In particular, we identified three themes which serve as descriptors of rural homelessness issues and are considered in the context of Canadian and international literature on rural homelessness. These themes focused on: Significant sub-populations; economic dynamics and; rural housing market dynamics. We also identified two other unique issues which are mostly unrecognised in the literature on homelessness and might be important considerations in understanding rural homelessness dynamics.

## 2. Background: Rural Homelessness in Canada

Until recently, there was little acknowledgement that homelessness existed in rural areas in Canada (Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2016). Understanding of rural homelessness is minimal compared to that focussed on urban populations, and assessment of needs within the non-urban population is often overlooked. Rural homelessness was unacknowledged in this country, until reports from diverse rural areas of Canada began to emerge in the last decade which shed light on the unique context of the issue (Christensen, 2011; Robertson & White, 2007; Roy, Hurtubise, & Rozier, 2003; Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, 2008). The combination of vast, sparsely inhabited spaces, a harsh climate, and minimal to non-existent social services in remote areas, provides the setting and unique challenges for those who are without adequate housing in rural Canada. Recent reports reveal considerable concerns over dwellings that provided inadequate shelter from the elements, others being unfit for human habitation, and people doubled up and living in extremely overcrowded situations (Christensen, 2012).

A combination of counts and estimates of homeless persons throughout Canada report that every night, at least 30,000 Canadians experience homelessness. Among them, almost 3,000 'sleep rough' indicating that they sleep in cars, parks or on the street and are considered unsheltered. Another 14,400 stay in emergency shelters, which are usually temporary and provide overnight sleeping facilities but often no day-time accommodation (Gaetz, Donaldson, Ruichter, & Gulliver, 2013). Longer term stay is attributed to the 7,350 who stay in domestic violence shelters, although these facilities often have a 30- or 60-day maximum length of stay. A final group includes more than 4,460 who are provisionally accommodated in hospitals, prisons or halfway houses who have no permanent residence to return to upon discharge from the facility (Gaetz, Donaldson, Ruichter, &

Gulliver, 2013). The foregoing reflects urban homelessness. There are no accurate reports of how many people are homeless absolutely or relatively, in rural Canada.

With a few exceptions, most research and intervention has concentrated on individuals and families living in urban areas; consequently, homelessness has most often been framed as an urban phenomenon. In cities and towns, homeless individuals seek a range of support services, including food, overnight shelter and financial help at organizations established to address these needs. These activities make the urban homeless a visible population in many respects. This visibility, the ability to more readily estimate their numbers, and differences in profile (singles families, youth and seniors, aboriginal, immigrant and refugee), has made it possible to describe population characteristics and begin to determine ways of addressing their described needs in Canadian cities (Perezzini, McDonald, & Hulchanski, 1995).

In contrast, rural locations often do not have specific services for homeless people and consequently there are few places available for identification of those who may be in housing distress and consequently for data collection necessary for accurate counts. As a result, the extent of homelessness in different parts of rural Canada is simply unknown. Because rural homelessness is difficult to measure with any accuracy, measures of rural poverty and core housing need are often taken as proxy indicators. As such, they suggest that the rate of rural housing instability is similar to that in urban areas (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2011; United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2015). However, researchers in the United States (Fitchen, 1992; Lawrence, 1995) note that rural housing insecurity may be as ubiquitous as it is in urban settings, and homeless rates may be even higher than in urban areas when those living in substandard or unfit housing are included. Houses which would be routinely condemned in urban areas, fall outside of the view of local officials in rural areas and remain inhabited despite their unsafe condition (Robertson, Harris, Noftinger, & Fischer, 2007).

While rural homelessness has received some attention in Australia (Grigg, Judd, Ryan, & Komiti, 2005), the United States (Fitchen, 1992; Lawrence, 1995; Robertson et al., 2007) and England (Cloke, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2000, 2001, 2003), what little is known about rural homelessness in Canada is confined to small body of academic literature and a group of local reports which generally focus on discrete communities and sub-regions in disparate parts of the country. Some have a general overview of rural homelessness in a given region and others are focused on discrete populations such as Aboriginal people (Belanger & Weasel Head, 2013; Kauppi, Pallard, McGregor, & Seyler, 2015), northern remote areas (Christensen, 2012), and those with a serious mental illness (Forchuk et al., 2010). The lack of consolidated information across the country hinders a clear understanding of the specificity and complexity of Canadian rural homelessness and thus hampers efforts to tailor programs and

initiatives aimed at alleviating homelessness in rural environments (Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2016).

A recent review of the literature on rural homelessness in Canada (Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2016) suggests that there is a need for research to capture common emerging themes from a provincial rather than community-by-community perspective. They suggest that, due to the vastness of Canada and its immense regional variation, a provincial perspective is a more manageable stepping-stone to a detailed national understanding. In keeping with this recommendation, this research focused on a province-wide investigation of homelessness in rural Alberta. We examined homelessness dynamics and responses to rural homelessness in 20 rural communities across the province. In this process, we were able to provide a preliminary assessment of nature of this issue and local responses to rural homelessness across these communities.

**3. Alberta Context**

Alberta is primarily a rural province, with large expanses of sparsely settled areas, two major cities (pop. 1,250,000 and 812,000), and a few larger urban clusters. Although the size of France, Alberta is primarily a rural province, with large expanses of sparsely settled areas, multiple small communities (pop. less than 2,500 persons) which are surrounded by vast swatches of range land, farm land, arboreal forests as well as mountainous areas. Resultantly, we utilised a data gathering approach (see Methodology) that would represent all of these variations. The province is divided, for economic analysis, into fourteen regions, with two major urban regions (Capital and Calgary which were omitted from the study). The remaining 12 regions are mainly rural in na-

ture, although six host cities of 35,000 to 130,000. Rural regions of the province also vary as dominated by either agricultural, energy sector (oil and gas) or recreational/tourist characteristics (see Figure 1).

**4. Methodology**

In order to understand the dynamics of homelessness in rural Alberta, we conducted interviews with service providers and other key stakeholders across Alberta. The participants for this study came from two sources; local representatives who had familiarity with the social services and housing demands in their communities as well as key government officials and stakeholders of larger province-wide organizations. For this study, we focused on Alberta’s economic development regions (Figure 1) and targeted their rural settlements (Table 1). Using this selection, we then narrowed the targeted communities according to population size, densities, agricultural, energy sector (oil and gas) and recreational/tourist characteristics. Within these regions, 51 separate agencies were contacted and 20 communities participated in the study. The study was limited to rural communities with populations under 25,000 to align methods to a concurrent national study (Waegemakers Schiff & Turner, 2014). Study communities had an average of 7,000 residents. The 20 communities involved directly with the study were: Athabasca; Beaver County (Ryley); Brooks; Camrose; Chestermere; Claresholm; Coaldale; Cochrane; Didsbury; Fairview; Fort Mackay; High Level; Jasper; Lac La Biche; Redwater; Pincher Creek; Rocky Mountain House; Slave Lake; St. Paul; Wetaskiwin.

Within these communities we identified and contacted key individuals in government and the local social services coordinating organizations which are allied with



**Figure 1.** Alberta economic regions (2015). Source: Government of Alberta. Available at <http://www.albertacanada.com/business/statistics/regional-economic-indicators.aspx>

**Table 1.** Alberta economic development regions and associated study communities.

Economic Region	Community
Battle River	Camrose
Calgary	Chestermere; Cochrane
Capital	Beaver County; Wetaskiwin
Central	Didsbury
Mackenzie	High Level
North Central	Athabasca; Redwater
North East	Lac La Biche; St. Paul
Palliser	Brooks
Peace Country	Fairview
Slave Lake	Slave Lake
South Central	Claresholm; Coaldale
South West	Pincher Creek
West Yellowhead	Jasper; Rocky Mountain House
Wood Buffalo	Fort Mackay

Family and Community Support Services office across the entire province and requested their participation. For all identified stakeholders and local representatives, phone calls and emails were followed with recruitment packages that contained both the interview guide, ethics approval and informed consent documents.

Between February to April 2014 we conducted interviews with key informants in 20 communities across all of these economic regions and 6 stakeholders at the provincial services level. The narrow time-frame minimized any potential impact of political and economic forces on the regions. Data were collected using a template for surveying rural communities that had been previously developed and used in a national survey of rural homelessness (Waegemakers Schiff & Turner, 2014), with the addition of a few modifying questions salient to the Western Canadian context. Homelessness was defined according to the Canadian Definition of Homelessness (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012). The study included both 'hidden' and visible forms of homelessness, such as rough sleeping, couch surfing, doubled up and sheltered populations. A graduate research assistant who was experienced in interviewing arranged and conducted most of the community interviews which were primarily telephone-based.

## 5. Data Analysis

For each community we created a profile based on key indicators (population size, percent of persons with low income, size of the Aboriginal population) and descriptors arising from the interviews with respect to housing conditions, migration dynamics, homelessness trends, and action on homelessness in the community. We supplemented these community descriptors with a data base that contained 19 key community variables including location, access to major centre, macro-economic trends (community type as defined by Bruce et al. (2005), proximity to First Nations reserve(s), households in core housing need as identified in the national housing study (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/homain/stda/data/data\\_013.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/homain/stda/data/data_013.cfm)), homeless population estimates and trends, the local homelessness response including emergency shelters, rental subsidies, homeless action plan, system coordination across social services organizations, and awareness of and implementation of a *housing first* approach. These were quantified so that we could use a cluster analysis, based on the community profiles compiled from key indicators and descriptors, to aid in thematic analysis through characterization of groups of communities according to common parameters.

## 6. Findings

Across all of the study communities in the study, homelessness was reported and this impression was confirmed by the provincial stakeholders. However, the mag-

nitude of the issue and its dynamics were distinct depending on the idiosyncrasies of local contexts. Nevertheless, on the whole, most community representatives included in the study pointed to the existence of homelessness as something that has 'always been there' to a certain extent. Interviewees also noted that rural homelessness differs from the urban because of its 'hiddenness'. The rural homeless population was reported to be quite mobile, constantly moving from place to place. While interviewees noted issues of outmigration from urban centres to rural areas, and migration between rural communities, there was no identification of migration of the urban poor to rural areas as noted in Belgium by Meert and Bourgeois (2005).

Rural homelessness was described as a 'hidden phenomena,' characterized by families and individuals doubling up and couch surfing, or living in makeshift housing (unsafe housing, trailers, camping out, etc.). Doubling up and couch surfing were the most often-cited manifestations of rural homelessness. A small amount of visible homelessness was reported in the form of transient people loitering in town centres, rough sleeping and people sheltered in shelters in the few towns where these exist. On a per capita basis, some study communities reported quantifiable homelessness prevalence rates. For example, an interviewee from High Level estimated the community to have a homeless population of about 30 people; for a town with a population of 3,610, this would result in a homelessness prevalence rate of 0.8%. Comparatively, Calgary, which is known to have one of the highest urban homelessness rates nationally, reports an estimated 0.307% prevalence rate (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). Smaller study communities that did not have shelters also reported in some instances that transportation was provided, usually through bus tickets, to locations where shelters exist. This practice also minimizes the extent of the homeless population as many of those transported out cannot easily return.

Our research also uncovered a few significant trends with regards to the nature of rural homelessness, program approaches, and policy responses in Alberta. In particular, we identified three themes which serve as descriptors of rural homelessness issues. These themes focused on: Significant sub-populations; economic dynamics and; rural housing market dynamics. We also identified two other unique issues which are mostly unrecognized in the literature on homelessness and might be important considerations in understanding rural homelessness dynamics. One of these issues was of a geographic nature, addressing the issue of parks and recreational areas. The other was of a temporal nature, relating to the impact of disaster situations on homelessness dynamics and service systems.

## 7. Notable Sub-Populations

Interviewees identified six distinct sub-populations of people experiencing homelessness in rural areas of the

province. These included: victims of domestic violence; youth; newcomers; indigenous persons, chronic substance (alcohol) abusers, and chronically homeless people. Notably, interviewees did not mention those with mental health problems, despite the fact that they are a significant part of urban homelessness (Hwang, Stergiopoulos, O'Campo, & Gozdzik, 2012).

### 7.1. *Victims of Domestic Violence*

Domestic violence was cited as a key driver to housing instability and homelessness, not only as a direct factor in pathways into homelessness, but also for its long term repercussions. This is not surprising as Family issues and domestic violence are frequently cited as factors that precipitate rural homelessness (Glass, 2002; Kauppi et al., 2012; Lee, Budgell, & Skinner, 2007; Peters & Robillard, 2009). Community and provincial stakeholders noted the impacts of domestic violence for women, youth, children and seniors, leading to loss of housing and various forms of hidden homelessness. In rural Alberta contexts, the available options for those escaping abuse are much more limited than in urban centres; an issue that is reflected in some of the other Canadian literature (Callaghan & Turnbull, 1999; Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, 2011). Women fleeing violence have to leave their communities to escape their abusers, which also takes them out of their network of social supports.

A network of women's shelters is in place across 33 Alberta communities. About 45% (15) of these are located outside Alberta's main seven cities. The proximity and availability of women's shelters plays a key role in migration to access services as women and children have to leave their community to seek safety and support in localities with such services. Many sought supports in other rural communities with women's shelters. This is especially true for Indigenous people, as the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters reported that as many as 70% of domestic shelter users across the province are Indigenous women. This also reflects reports from other areas (Kauppi, 2012; Schmidt, Hrenchuk, Bopp, & Poole, 2015). Resultantly, in recent years, an increasing complexity of presenting issues for such centres is also reported.

Indigenous women face the additional challenges engendered by systematic racism and sexism upon arrival at their destination. Interviewees reported that landlords are often cautious to rent to women fleeing violence, particularly when they are Indigenous and have children with them for fear of damages to their units or 'partying' and over-crowding from relatives and friends doubling up. These reports are similar to those from Nunavut (Schmidt et al., 2015) and northern Ontario (Kauppi, Pallard, & Shaikh, 2013). One encouraging initiative suggests that solutions tailored to this group are emerging in rural Alberta. Landlords in Camrose are working with Indigenous women fleeing violence, making rental units available to them. Support workers advocate on behalf of the women and support housing stabil-

ity. As a result, landlords are now 'lining up' to be part of the initiative as the women proved to be 'ideal tenants': stable, caring for the property, and paying rent on time.

### 7.2. *Youth*

Youth were another group that emerged as a notable sub-population of the rural homeless. Study communities reported homeless youth to be even less visible on the street, and most likely to couch surf and double up. Youth homelessness was often un-recognized from an official perspective, though interviewees remarked it to be a notable emerging issue. These reports are similar to those that come from many rural areas such as Nova Scotia (Karabanow, Naylor, & Aube, 2014), Ontario (Martin, 2013), and Manitoba (E. Peters & Craig, 2014).

Youth were reported to be homeless most often as result of abuse in the home, which led to notable movement and transience as they sought a safe place to live outside their familial home. The gendered experience of domestic and sexual violence impacts youth further. Sexual and gender identity, identified as a key driver in youth homelessness (Gaetz, 2014) adds yet another dimension in rural contexts. These dynamics often led to significant movement into urban centres. Youth serving agencies in Edmonton, for example, anecdotally report as many as 40% of youth they serve come from rural communities. The impetus for migration of rural homeless youth has become an important area for further study as reflected in the work from Nova Scotia (Karabanow et al., 2014) and Ontario (Martin, 2013), but need to expand to develop programmatic and policy solutions.

One youth shelter was reported in the rural Alberta case study communities (Camrose). As in urban contexts, the service response to rural youth homelessness is entwined with child intervention services and education, particularly given the high rates of abuse reported. For most youth, the lack of access to treatment for counseling, mental health and addictions locally was yet another service gap and is a problem in many rural areas (Kauppi et al., 2015; Forchuk et al., 2010). Here, ongoing challenges of service coordination are noted to limit the range and comprehensiveness of responses to the issue. There is a need for service coordination to ensure developmentally appropriate supports and housing options for homeless youth in rural Alberta.

### 7.3. *Newcomers*

There is currently little to no discussion in the Canadian literature of homelessness among immigrants or refugees in rural areas. One report provides a description of homelessness among a diverse group of participants from several ethno-cultural communities in Windsor/Essex County, Ontario (Anucha, 2006). While it did not specifically address rurality as a dynamic in their experiences, the report notes that newcomers' homelessness in the area is precipitated by housing unaffordabil-

ity. Through interviews conducted in this Alberta study, economic immigrants, refugees, refugee claimants and Temporary Foreign Workers emerged as a notable sub-population experiencing hidden homelessness in some study communities. Where homelessness was reported among this group, it was most often described as a result of low income leading to doubling and over-crowding, or living in poor quality housing. Foreign workers accounted for a large proportion of those living in substandard living situations in certain regions. Many of these individuals are living together in groups in accommodations not suitable for many people. In certain areas, doubling up was reported to be a common trend due to the accommodations provided by employers.

For immigrant women experiencing domestic violence, the added element of rurality exacerbated their isolation and ability to access supports. For some, the prospect of leaving abusers to move to a larger urban centre when they have limited knowledge about Canadian social support and justice systems and competency in English leaves this group particularly vulnerable. When the spouse is also the woman's sponsor for immigration purposes, the situation is particularly more tenuous from a legal perspective as well (Walsh, Hanley, Ives, & Hordyk, 2015).

#### *7.4. Indigenous Persons*

Several local and regional reports from across Canada have noted over-representation of Indigenous people in the homeless population (Kauppi et al., 2009; Hallstrom et al., 2013; Stewart & Ramage, 2011) although the extent to which this applies in rural settings is unknown. Some rural literature has examined the context and process of migration and mobility between reserves and urban areas (Belanger, Weasel Head, & Owasago, 2012; Christensen, 2011; Peters & Robillard, 2009), though not specifically of the problems and dilemmas of their rural homeless experience. The majority of communities included in this study were located near Indigenous communities. In communities with relatively large Indigenous populations and/or proximity to reserves, the makeup of the homeless population consistently demonstrated an over-representation of Indigenous people. In areas where a high number of Indigenous communities and reserves exist near the town, there the majority of homeless people are reported to be Indigenous. In areas where no Indigenous over-representation was reported in the homeless population, limited proximity to Indigenous communities was also noted. There were however exceptions to this trend, as in the case of Fairview where Indigenous women made up as many as 75% of domestic violence shelter users despite no Indigenous communities being in close proximity.

In some areas, Indigenous people are deterred from using town services and encouraged to 'find their way down the highway' to larger cities; a trend which might be attributed to racist sentiments within smaller com-

munities. The issue of racism as a confounding factor for rural homelessness among Indigenous people is also reported by Waegemakers Schiff et al. (2015). Many interviewees, who also noted their familiarity with local residents, reported that homeless Indigenous individuals were often the children of parents who survived the residential school system, and faced complex mental health and addictions issues, domestic violence and traumatic experiences, as well as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), which is often undiagnosed, especially in adults.

Some literature and reports on homelessness among Indigenous people in Canada have focussed on migration between reserves and urban centres (Belanger & Weasel Head, 2013; Christensen, 2012; Carle & Belanger-Dion, 2003; Kauppi et al., 2009; Peters & Robillard, 2009). Interviewees reported frequent migration from Indigenous communities. They also described migration as motivated by a number of factors, including poor housing conditions on-reserve, lack of employment and education opportunities, as well as the need to access services (medical, judiciary, counseling, etc.). Several researchers studying migration patterns have reported similar motivations (Belanger & Weasel Head, 2013; Christensen, 2012; Peters & Robillard, 2009). Lack of safety, abuse, and violence were also reported by interviewees to be main drivers out of Indigenous communities. This is a particularly salient theme for Indigenous women and children fleeing violence on-reserve who seek support outside their home communities.

It is important to distinguish the contexts in which Indigenous rural homelessness plays out. On-reserve homelessness has distinct dynamics that should be noted. As this particular study was not intended to study on-reserve homelessness, we strongly urge that future research specifically examine this issue. In the interim we briefly describe the dynamics reported in one rural Indigenous town that is on a reserve.

#### *7.5. Chronically Homeless Persons*

Several reports from across Canada have noted the existence of chronic homelessness in rural communities, although at rates lower than those found in urban settings (Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2015). People experiencing chronic homelessness were reported as a smaller component of the homeless populations across the study communities and were characterized by complex mental health, addiction, and FASD issues. Those suffering from these disabilities were regarded as relatively small group, numbering less than ten in a typical community. This group was consistently facing housing loss due to these challenges, as subsidized housing and support services are limited in rural areas. The lack of supports available to manage underlying issues leads to further housing instability. For those who struggle with addictions or mental illness in rural Canada, lack of treatment and support services are reported as scarce and there is little (or none, depending on the location) supportive housing

(Callahan & Turnbull, 1999; Forchuk et al., 2010; Glass, 2002; Grodzinski et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2007; Nunavut Housing Corporation, 2013; Smith & Fuller, 2007; Stewart & Ramage, 2011).

Some special populations present specific dynamics influencing their homelessness. Among those with living with mental illness and addictions, there are chronically homeless populations in rural Alberta communities which have become well known to the small pools of landlords. People so identified are often placed on a 'no-rent list'. Particularly during economic growth periods, this group is described as most often 'squeezed out' of existing rental stock by incoming migrant workers. Some of the communities included in the study had a local women's shelter, however, none had emergency homeless shelters available to all adults or to families, to accommodate those in need of basic shelter services. As a result, rough sleeping was commonly reported, along with individuals and families living in makeshift shelters, trailers and tents.

Rough sleeping was reported across Alberta; particularly during warmer months. A small number of homeless people can be found in ditches, backyards, and parks or forested areas. This corresponds to other reports of the various ways the absolutely homeless cope in rural areas (Glass, 2002; Lee et al., 2007; Peters & Robillard, 2009). Notably, a significant proportion of chronically homeless and rough sleepers were reported to be Indigenous people, particularly in areas with proximity to First Nations or other Indigenous communities, which is also reported in other areas (Belanger & Weasel Head, 2013; Kauppi et al., 2015; Peters & Craig, 2014).

## 8. Economic Dynamics

Interviewees who reported homelessness to be a minor issue in their community were scarce. Most noted that homelessness was not only a major challenge to the social infrastructure of their locality, but even noted its prevalence and intensity to be increasing in recent years. This impact on communities is a dynamic that is mentioned (Young & Moses, 2013) but has not been well explored in the literature. Across the 20 study communities, the reported homelessness trends appeared to be closely tied to macro-economic shifts in the global economy impacting Alberta; particularly as related to the oil and gas industry. While some sites are intimately engaged in oil and gas, others were indirectly impacted by the ebbs and flows in prosperity characteristics of the industry. These communities act as service centres, or stop-points between resource-extraction sites and larger urban centres. This echoes what is also reported to drive housing affordability in the western Arctic (Young and Moses, 2013). Not surprisingly, northern Alberta areas reported a much more intimate link with the oil and gas industry, which was attributed to be a main driver in their homelessness population. The ties particular communities have with resource extraction, especially in north-

ern regions or on corridors between urban centres and these sites, have a marked impact on housing markets and homelessness dynamics.

There are a number of reasons behind the reported strained housing markets, which must be contextualized in relation to the larger economic contexts impacting the locality. For example, some centres were experiencing rapid growth brought on by regional economic development, often tied to the oil and gas industry. The influx of new workers created increased competition for scarce housing, driving prices well beyond affordability for those of modest or low income means. A provincial stakeholder reported strained vacancy rates due to the pressure of migration related to oil and gas industry in the region. The oil and gas industry placed significant strain by also recruiting landlords directly to house their workforce. Companies rent out available units at top dollar for their workers, leaving a depleted stock for both secondary industry workers earning significantly less and the community's lower income populations.

Home ownership is also caught in this cycle as housing investment speculation leads to rapid increases in house prices, which squeeze out middle and lower income families. In turn, the pressure on an already limited rental stock increases as migrant workers and local lower income renters compete for available units, driving up costs. As an interviewee from Rocky Mountain House noted, 'things get worse, when things are good'—referring to the fact that a booming economy creates stress on households. The impact of this housing crunch not only affects lower income, vulnerable groups, but also key workers who are unable to afford to live in such communities. These key workers include those in the social service, mental health, and addictions sectors among others; the shortage of such critical services providers hampers the service infrastructure in such centres. Unlike the larger urban centres where such issues are related to lack of social and support services (Kauppi et al., 2015), rural communities are much more sensitive to these economic swings and have fewer resources to mitigate the changing demands for these services (Kauppi et al., 2013).

Both provincial and local interviewees related homelessness to these dynamics. Notably, they reported that in general, local homeless populations resided in these study communities regardless of the ups and downs of the oil and gas industry. However, an emerging homeless population was identified as attracted by an economic boom. As unskilled migrants, often struggling with alcohol or drug issues, they brought an additional layer of complexity in psychosocial issues to the local homeless population in resource-dependent communities.

## 9. Rural Housing Market Dynamics

The housing markets in rural Alberta play a key role in homelessness dynamics. Purpose-built rental housing is very limited and the rate of development is significantly

lower than that of larger urban centres. Most stock exists in the form of single family housing, spread out across a larger surface area than what is often seen in cities. While some study communities reported available housing to exist on the outskirts of town, the lack of public transportation limits lower income groups from accessing it.

The housing stock traditionally available to lower income groups, particularly those with complex mental health and addiction issues, is reported to take the form of rental units on the top floors of older commercial buildings in the town centre (usually on the main road going through the town). While a valuable and limited resource for those with limited incomes, these buildings are reported to be aging to the extent that many are on the slate for demolition. Other forms of housing include hotels and motels, which are rented for longer periods by oil and gas workers in some communities. However, low vacancy rates and high prices limit their accessibility for lower income families and individuals.

Another dynamic that plays out in farming communities involved in this study involves the longer process of corporatization that has pushed people into increasingly smaller areas available for cultivation. Over time, some of these families become squeezed out of available land, leading to over-crowding and living in poor quality housing. As result of these economic and housing market dynamics, low vacancy rates were reported in 13 of the 20 case study communities. Ten of these communities specifically noted rents were also on the rise locally, which is consistent with reported trends across Alberta (CMHC, 2013).

## 10. Unique Regional Issues

Two unique issues emerged in this research which are related to specific regional circumstances or events. The first issues identified was the impact of recreational areas on rural homelessness. Another issue which emerged was related to the impact and ability to respond to disasters and the impact on housing stability in rural areas.

### 10.1. Recreational Areas

An issue that has not been considered in the literature is the impact of recreational areas on homelessness dynamics. Alberta is home to several significant recreational areas which are fueled by both local use and a large tourist base. The recent rise in prosperity for many Albertans has also spawned an increase in secondary and recreational homes in rural areas near both summer and winter destinations. While there is a robust literature on locational impact of recreational (second home) ownership in Canada, and Alberta specifically (Bohlin, 1975; Halseth, 1998; McNicol & Glorioso, 2014), there has not been specific or detailed consideration of the impact of these trends on homelessness dynamics. Notable are

larger communities that are located in or near national parks such as Banff, Jasper and Canmore. Other smaller communities are also affected including those located near provincial parks and recreation areas, such as Sylvan Lake, Pigeon Lake, and towns in the Crowsnest Pass. Those located in national parks boundaries have unique constraints that are distinct from those communities located near but outside of park boundaries. National parks have severe restrictions on additional residential building construction which restricts housing availability, especially for those with lower incomes. Service industry workers and their families are most often impacted by these dynamics. While we recognize that the economic factors that influence homelessness are analogous to those created by energy sector development in other areas, the influences in recreational and tourist areas have unique aspects that require a separate examination.

### 10.2. Disaster Homelessness

In addition to other important aspects of rural housing and homelessness, we identified a need to address the significant challenges created by natural disasters. Interviews revealed that natural disasters hold the potential not only to contribute to acute homelessness but also significantly impact existing homeless people and services in affected areas. Two events that were recent in the context of the study were identified by participants: the June 2013 flooding which ravaged the city of Calgary and parts of southern Alberta and significantly impacted several First Nations (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2014) and the 2011 fires in the town of Slave Lake that destroyed most of the infrastructure and 30% of all homes in the town (CBC News, 2011). The more recent 2016 fire that ravaged the town of Fort McMurray had significant impact on that municipality's infrastructure and housing (The Globe and Mail, 2016); the impact on homeless persons was also reported by some media outlets (McDermott, 2016). Despite the significance of these events, there is little in the peer-reviewed literature which considers their impact on homelessness dynamics.

The June floods of 2013 severely impacted the Stoney and Siksika First Nations and further exacerbated already hidden homelessness and dire housing conditions in Morley, Eden Valley, and nearby Rocky Mountain House. Promised emergency housing did not substantially materialize in these communities and many of those forced from their homes were living in motels in Calgary, Canmore and nearby areas for extended periods. Some families were doubled or tripled up with up to 19 individuals attempting to live in a three-bedroom dwelling. In other instances, family sub-units rotated their place of residence among several houses occupied by relatives, a version of couch surfing that involves entire families. These events continue to exacerbate an already problematic housing and homeless problem on these reserves and continues several years after the disaster.

The experience of Slave Lake in the wake of the 2011 fires provide further learnings about the unique circumstances resulting from natural disasters. The housing situation faced by Slave Lake as a result of a massive fire led to more than 700 people were left homeless. Rebuilding has been a four-year plan and is now essentially complete. But in that time span, many lived in interim housing secured from the province, some on site and others in distant communities. This created unique set of circumstances whereby a large portion of the population could be considered homeless. At the same time, a strong economy fueled by the energy sector kept the local economy healthy and ensured rapid return of the local population. Most often, families were couch surfing and doubling up. Notably, there remained a reported 'base' homeless population that preceded the fire consisting of longer term homeless, who were struggling with mental health and addictions issues. Within the context of the disaster, homelessness-related supports and the needs of this group were reported to take a 'backseat' given the extent of the housing problem facing the general population.

The Slave Lake fire and June 2013 floods examples highlight the unique circumstances natural disasters can create in rural communities. As there is presently no work that explores this issue, a detailed consideration of the impacts of disasters on homelessness should be pursued to examine longer term effects of disasters on rural communities and consider impacts in future planning and emergency preparedness work. Because of the pervasive and specific housing challenges of indigenous people a specific consideration the uneven impacts of disasters on homelessness among Indigenous people, off and on-reserve should be undertaken.

## 11. Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of this research was to respond to a need for rural homelessness research in Canada to examine issues from broader, provincial perspectives rather than community-by-community case study approach. As such, this study focused on an examination of homelessness dynamics and responses to rural homelessness in 20 rural communities, spanning the wide range of landscape geographies and economic regions in the province of Alberta.

In this study we became acutely aware of the ways in which international research on rural homelessness has similarities and differences, depending on geographical and political context. In comparison to the UK, where local authorities keep a closer count of those in housing need and research has been more precise (Cloke & Milbourne, 2012), and the US where housing assistance by way of rental subsidies and social programs extends a bit further into small towns (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010), the rural areas of Canada are vast, under-served, under-populated and have few resources. Moreover, the concept of rurality in a densely populated country such as the UK generally concerns it-

self with localities within ready access to urban areas and facilities, which significantly impacts the ways in which the needs of rural homeless people can be addressed. The vast stretches of Canadian and north western US states create additional challenges in location of homeless people, accessing and delivering services. One commonality which stretches across all of these geographies is the limited attention devoted to understanding the size of this population, the multiple aspects of, challenges and needs of the rural poor who are often on the edge of housing loss.

We identified a few significant trends with regards to the nature of rural homelessness in Alberta; some of which supports existing findings in other Canadian contexts and some of which add a new perspective to existing literature on rural homelessness in Canada. In particular, we identified a few issues which are mostly unrecognised in the literature on homelessness and might be important considerations in understanding rural homelessness dynamics. This includes the impact of economic dynamics and rural housing market dynamics on rural homelessness, the impact of recreational areas on rural homelessness, and the impact of natural disasters on homelessness populations and support systems in rural areas. We also note the importance of further exploration into homelessness related to the experiences of immigrants and refugees in rural areas; indigenous persons who choose to stay in rural areas, and chronically homeless people.

A number of recommendations emerging from this data are aimed at building on the experiences, capacities, and strengths of rural communities. A first and crucial step is the development of regional and systematic approaches as part of an intentional response to rural homelessness (Nichols & Doberstein, 2016). This would include coordinating resources and developing systemic regional strategies as well as the tailoring of strategies to groups of communities with similar challenges in service delivery. Similar to larger efforts in urban areas, such approaches should include a comprehensive housing and service infrastructure plan to address housing instability in smaller centers as part of broader regional responses (Kauppi, Pallard, Lemieux, and Matukala Nkosi, 2012; Schiff & Brunger, 2015). The plans should also encourage exploration of innovative alternatives to shelter, which leverage local resources, and innovative adaptations of 'housing first' approaches in rural communities. There should also be consideration given to the integration of homelessness in future emergency preparedness initiatives to address 'disaster homelessness'.

We also note the need to identify strategies for enumerating rural homelessness. While the 2016 Homeless Point-in-Time Count (initiated by the Government of Canada through the Homeless Partnering Strategy) will provide more accurate numbers on homelessness in key Canadian larger communities, rural communities do not have formalized data collection approaches with respect to homelessness to track the level of need for hous-

ing. Most respondents provided anecdotal estimates, but were unable to point to data collection and analysis processes. This was reported to be a key hurdle to making the case for investment in responses locally and to understanding the needs of the population. Without a comprehensive needs assessment to determine the magnitude of the issue locally, and the needs of the population, service providers and advocates were hampered significantly.

Regional and systematic approaches must respond to the needs of priority sub-populations: Indigenous persons, victims of domestic violence, youth, seniors and immigrant newcomers. Indigenous people on- and off-reserve require targeted approaches to overcoming complex jurisdictional barriers to services and supports (Christensen, 2011; Peters & Craig, 2014). Victims of domestic violence in many rural communities need alignment with housing and homelessness responses. Targeted responses to youth, seniors, and newcomers' housing stress and homelessness in rural communities also need to be developed.

There is a need to increase awareness of, and leadership for, rural housing and homelessness which will champion solutions at all levels of governance. Locally, rural communities of practice can be supported through targeted networking and capacity building activities in the areas of 'housing first' implementation, performance management, system planning, and research.

As many other authors cited in this article have noted, there has been scarcity of information about rural specific elements, although the recent spate of activity is beginning to address this gap. Emerging research priorities for a research agenda on rural homelessness should include: developing baseline information on rural homelessness; service infrastructure analysis to assess available resources and gaps systematically; probing macro-economic impacts which affect homelessness dynamics in rural communities; increasing understandings of rural Indigenous homelessness, on and off-reserve and the role of migration; enhancing knowledge about rough sleeping and chronic homelessness in rural contexts; identifying potential policy responses and funding allocation models that meet the needs of rural residents and; tailoring housing first interventions in rural contexts, particularly to address the needs of priority sub-populations. Planning and implementation responses would be enhanced through the development of a combination of a research network to facilitate knowledge mobilization and a Canadian research agenda on rural homelessness.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare for this manuscript.

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Article

## Preventing, Reducing and Ending LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness: The Need for Targeted Strategies

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### Abstract

Gender non-conforming and sexual minority youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population and are frequently discriminated against in shelters and youth serving organizations. This paper provides a contextual understanding of the ways that institutional and governmental policies and standards often perpetuate the social exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and 2-Spirit (LGBTQ2S) youth, by further oppression and marginalization. Factors, including institutional erasure, homophobic and transphobic violence, and discrimination that is rarely dealt with, addressed, or even noticed by shelter workers, make it especially difficult for LGBTQ2S youth experiencing homelessness to access support services, resulting in a situation where they feel safer on the streets than in shelters and housing programs. This paper draws on data from a qualitative Critical Action Research study that investigated the experiences of a group of LGBTQ2S homeless youth and the perspectives of staff in shelters through one-on-one interviews in Toronto, Canada. One of the main recommendations of the study included the need for governmental policy to address LGBTQ2S youth homelessness. A case study is shared to illustrate how the Government of Alberta has put this recommendation into practice by prioritizing LGBTQ2S youth homelessness in their provincial plan to end youth homelessness. The case study draws on informal and formal data, including group activities, questions, and surveys that were collected during a symposium on LGBTQ2S youth homelessness. This paper provides an overview of a current political, social justice, and public health concern, and contributes knowledge to an under researched field of study by highlighting concrete ways to prevent, reduce, and end LGBTQ2S youth homelessness.

### Keywords

homelessness; homophobia; LGBTQ2S youth; policy change; social inclusion; transphobia

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

This paper provides a contextual understanding of the ways that institutional and governmental policies and standards often further oppress, marginalize, and perpetuate the social exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and 2-Spirit<sup>1</sup> (LGBTQ2S) youth. The acronym “LGBTQ2S” is used throughout this paper to refer collectively to the wide range of gender

and sexual identities that individuals identify with and is meant to represent gender and sexual diversity. Although there may be intersections among the various identity categories, each identity has its own unique needs and experiences. The terms “trans” and “queer” are used interchangeably with LGBTQ2S throughout this paper. The term “trans” (transgender) is used as an umbrella term to describe people who do not conform or identify with the sex assigned to them at birth. Whereas,

<sup>1</sup> The term “2-Spirit” refers to Aboriginal people who identify with both a masculine and feminine spirit. This term is not exclusive to gender identity, and can also refer to sexual identity, and spiritual identity (Taylor, 2009).

the term “queer” is a multi-faceted term that has been reclaimed by LGBTQ2S people as an identity category for those who do not identify with binary terms that describe sexual, gender, and political identities (Jagose, 1996). When we deviate from the norm and do not conform to hegemonic identity categories, we are likely to be pathologized and/or labeled (Anzaldúa, 1987; Burstow & Weitz, 1988). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) classified homosexuality as a “mental disorder” up until 1973 (Cooper, 2004). Although homosexuality was removed over 40 years ago, the DSM-5 still pathologizes and labels individuals who have identities that do not fit into the gender binary, with the label “Gender Dysphoria”, formerly named “Gender Identity Disorder (GID)” (Moran, 2013). The pathologization of homosexuality and gender non-conformity has led to stereotypes, stigma, homophobia, transphobia, and the exclusion of LGBTQ2S individuals in many spheres of daily living. For example, as Sue (2010) argues, LGBTQ2S individuals are often gawked at in public spaces and are recipients of daily insults and derogatory comments. These intentional and unintentional day-to-day negative attitudes and stigma towards LGBTQ2S individuals can be described as microaggressions (Sue, 2010).

This paper draws on data from a qualitative Critical Action Research study (Carson, 1990) that investigated the experiences of a group of LGBTQ2S homeless youth ( $n = 11$ ) between the ages of 16–29 years old in shelters, and the perspectives and understanding of shelter workers ( $n = 14$ ) and program managers ( $n = 8$ ) in Toronto, Canada, through semi-structured one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Youth participants were initially recruited through recruitment posters in a wide variety of shelters and population-based support services, as an attempt to recruit a diverse group of young people, however, not enough participants were recruited through this method; leading to the administration of snowball sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Maximum variation and opportunistic sampling were administered to ensure that shelter workers and program managers had a diverse range of comfort levels in dealing with situations of homophobia and transphobia in the shelter system, training experiences, and number of years of professional work experience. Critical Action Research combines critical theory and action research in an effort to create practical social change (Given, 2008). A major goal of the study was to share knowledge to help improve the condition of shelters and the policies that rule them, in an effort to provide LGBTQ2S youth with safe, affirming, and accepting services to turn to for support. One of the key recommendations of the study included the need for governmental policy to address LGBTQ2S youth homelessness. This paper shares a case study that illustrates how the Government of Alberta has put this recommendation into practice by prioritizing LGBTQ2S youth homelessness in their provincial plan to end youth homelessness. Youth and staff quotes collected through the Criti-

cal Action Research study are shared throughout the paper to exemplify the different ways that the issues presented affect the young people at the center of this work.

Over the past two decades, society’s acceptance of sexual and gender diversity has grown, and consequently, youth are coming out at younger ages than ever (Lepischak, 2004; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000). Nonetheless, many young people continue to encounter microaggressions, homophobic and transphobic violence, and discrimination in their personal, familial, and professional lives. One of the most frequently cited pathways leading youth into homelessness is family conflict, regardless of gender or sexual identity (Cull, Platzer, & Balloch, 2006; Gaetz, 2014; Hagan, & McCarthy, 1997; Karabanow, 2004). However, identity-based family conflict resulting from a young person coming out as LGBTQ2S is the most prevalent cause of homelessness among queer and trans youth (Abramovich, 2012; Choi, Wilson, Shelton, & Gates, 2015; Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002). Compared to their heterosexual and cisgender<sup>2</sup> counterparts, LGBTQ2S youth face increased risk of physical and sexual exploitation, mental health difficulties, substance use, HIV risk behaviours, and suicide (Denomme-Welch, Pyne, & Scanolon, 2008; Durso & Gates, 2012; Ray, 2006). Further, LGBTQ2S youth commonly experience homophobic and transphobic discrimination when accessing youth serving organizations, emergency shelters, and housing programs (Abramovich, 2013; Denomme-Welch et al., 2008; Ray, 2006; Tyler, 2013). Factors such as institutional erasure, homophobic and transphobic violence, and discrimination that is rarely dealt with, addressed, or even noticed by shelter workers and management, make it especially difficult for LGBTQ2S youth experiencing homelessness to access shelters, resulting in a situation where they feel safer on the streets than in shelters and support services (Abramovich, 2013; Keurghlian, Shtasel, & Bassuk, 2014).

Family rejection, inadequate social services, and discrimination in housing, employment, and education, result in situations where LGBTQ2S youth are unable to secure safe and affirming places to live. Transgender youth, especially young transgender women of colour, are amongst the most discriminated against groups of people in housing programs and shelters (Grant et al., 2011; Mottet & Ohel, 2003). They are often faced with intersecting oppressions, such as transphobia, racism, and homophobia. Due to gaps in knowledge and a lack of reported incidents, discrimination against LGBTQ2S homeless youth is rarely acknowledged or even noticed by shelter workers, shelter management, and policy makers (Abramovich, 2013; Josephson & Wright, 2000). Research on youth homelessness has continuously cited the overrepresentation of LGBTQ2S young people (Abramovich, 2012; Dunne, Prendergast, & Telford, 2002; Durso & Gates, 2012; Ray 2006). One Canadian study, approximately 16 years ago, estimated that 25–40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2S

<sup>2</sup> The term “cisgender” refers to people whose lived gender identity matches with the sex (female/male) they were assigned at birth.

(Josephson & Wright, 2000). However, large-scale data collection remains limited, which is why provincial and national measurements of LGBTQ2S youth homelessness are often based on older data. The hazard of relying on old data, include that there is an under-estimate of the real prevalence. Without an accurate measurement it is difficult to confirm crucial characteristics of the population, secure necessary increases in funding, or build a policy case for the delivery of more targeted services. This gap in data inevitably impairs service delivery.

A major challenge in accurately measuring LGBTQ2S youth homelessness is that programs and services often do not collect data on gender and sexual identity. Key forms (e.g. intake forms) typically do not include LGBTQ2S identities, particularly transgender and gender non-binary identities. Up until fairly recently, research, government, and community efforts to conduct homelessness counts and street-needs assessments left out important questions regarding LGBTQ2S identity, resulting in minimal understanding of the correlation between coming out and homelessness, the challenges that youth face in trying to form their gender and sexual identities<sup>3</sup>, and the unique needs and challenges experienced by LGBTQ2S youth. Another major challenge in accurately measuring the prevalence of LGBTQ2S youth experiencing homelessness is the issue of hidden homelessness, which refers to individuals who do not access shelters or housing programs, but are living in precarious housing situations, such as couch surfing (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012). Hidden homelessness is a significant concern for this population of young people, especially for those living in rural and remote communities. Targeted youth homelessness strategies that prioritize the diverse challenges and needs of subpopulations of youth that are disproportionately represented amongst homeless youth, including LGBTQ2S youth, are a necessary approach in order to appropriately address youth homelessness.

## 2. Institutional Erasure and Invisibility of LGBTQ2S Youth

There are numerous methods by which LGBTQ2S youth are excluded and made invisible in shelters and housing programs. Institutional and governmental policies and standards frequently further oppress, marginalize, and exclude LGBTQ2S youth. It is critical to understand how institutions and institutional policies, such as shelters and shelter standards, can work to erase LGBTQ2S individuals by not including them in key forms, reports, and the day-to-day operation of programs. Institutional rules and policies that do not consider or include LGBTQ2S identities, particularly transgender identities, play a major role in rendering them invisible and thereby erasing

them. Namaste (2000) describes institutional erasure as the “conceptual and institutional relations” (p. 137) that render transgender individuals invisible and non-existent. She argues that the use of “men” and “women” dismisses the possibility that trans people could even exist. Similarly, Serano (2007) argues that by labeling people as either male or female, trans people are erased from public awareness, ignored, and viewed by cisgender individuals as nonentities. Erasure begins when youth first enter the shelter and undergo a formal intake process, where they are asked a series of standard questions. These questions help staff determine if youth belong in the shelter and if they do, then which floor of the shelter they will be placed (male vs. female)—already an erasure. When services do not allow people to self-identify on key forms and only provide the option for people to identify as “male” or “female”, any identity that does not fall into the gender binary is not included or documented. One of the youth interviewed, spoke at length about how he attempted to come out as trans during the intake process at a shelter:

“The intake was so shitty in terms of trans stuff. There’s just no room for trans or even LGBTQ stuff on their intake. I tried to incorporate it in, ‘cause they are like, ‘do you need subway tokens to go to your appointments?’ and I’m like ‘yes! I’m going to this trans program Monday, this trans program Tuesday..’ and they just kind of ignored that.” (J. J., 26 years old, Critical Action Research Study)

The exclusion of LGBTQ2S identities from key institutional forms and questionnaires creates challenges in accurately measuring the prevalence of LGBTQ2S youth experiencing homelessness, and determining the need for specialized services. Heteronormative<sup>4</sup> and cisnormative beliefs—such as the assumption that all people born female will identify as women, and that all people born male will identify as men—typically rule gendered spaces, such as the shelter system. Serano (2007) argues that everyday gendering and cisnormative assumptions facilitate the majority of trans-erasure. Shelters are often segregated by male and female sleeping and living corridors, and male and female bathrooms and showers; this enforcement of gender conformity is another form of institutional erasure. The expectation that shelter residents will fit into the gender binary makes the shelter system an especially difficult place for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. The following quote illustrates how the manager of a youth program described the way that trans-erasure occurs in shelters:

“The fact that there are only men’s and women’s shelters, the fact that youth shelters have boys and girls’

<sup>3</sup> Numerous studies have clumped transgender people under the label *sexual minority*. While, gender and sexual identity overlap, they are not the same. Gender identity refers to how an individual identifies their gender (male, female, genderqueer, genderfluid, transgender, etc.) and sexual identity refers to how an individual identifies whom they are sexually attracted to (lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> Heteronormative beliefs assume that all people are heterosexual, unless told otherwise, and that heterosexuality is the normal and preferable sexual orientation for everyone.

dorms, and they have boys and girls’ bathrooms. Then any time a trans person shows up it’s an anomaly, it’s like ‘whoa, what do we do with you?’. Hopefully that will start to be different if the city keeps track of trans residents. There should be more than one box, they should be keeping track of MTF and FTM, but they’re not. That’s the type of thing we can say, ‘ah ha, there’s some kind of need’. Otherwise trans people are completely absent. People who don’t exist, don’t need access to services, you know, there’s no case to be made.” (Youth Program Manager, Critical Action Research Study)

As a response to the institutional policies and culture of shelters, and to prevent being stigmatized and excluded, LGBTQ2S youth frequently avoid shelters altogether, or do not feel safe coming out as LGBTQ2S and attempt to hide their identities. For example, one young person stated:

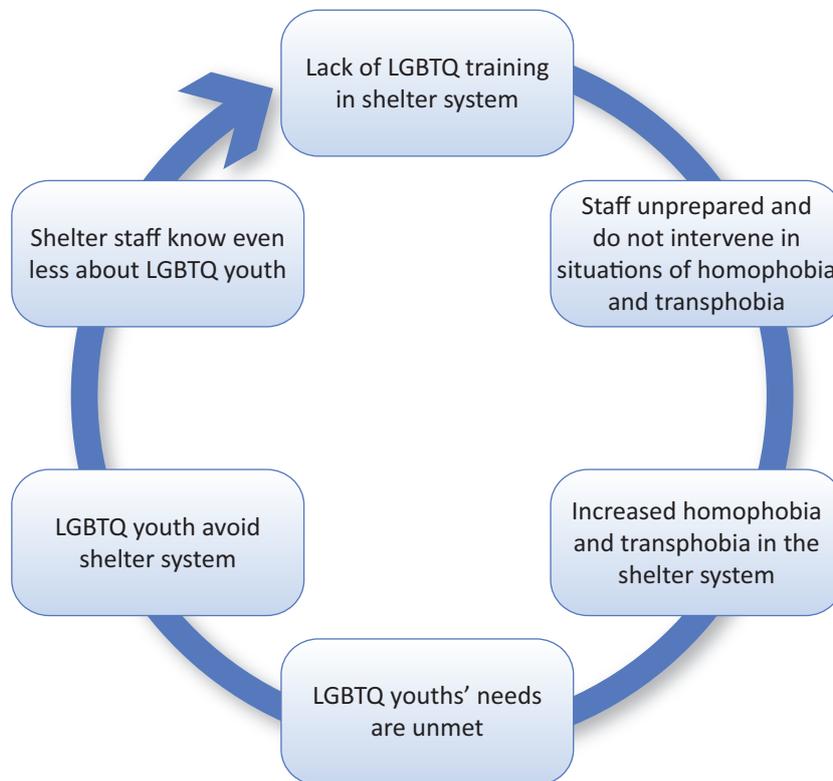
“It was a women’s shelter and I didn’t feel comfortable there because I didn’t identify as female. I stayed one night and then I just stuck with friends.” (Kelly, 27 years old, Critical Action Research Study)

The decision to not come out can be understood as a survival strategy, youth also engage in passing as straight and/or cisgender in order to feel safe in the shelter sys-

tem and as a way to try to obtain the privilege afforded to those who conform to heteronormative and cisnormative rules. Even though choosing to pass as heterosexual and/or cisgender, still there are implications when youth are forced to do so in order to get support from the very systems that are meant to help all youth. When LGBTQ2S youth avoid shelters, not only do they become invisible, but also staff become even less aware of their existence and needs, and therefore do not recognize their inability to provide support or their need for training (Namaste, 2000). There is a cyclical nature to these relations described that result in institutional erasure and invisibility. Firstly, LGBTQ2S cultural competency training<sup>5</sup> is often not made mandatory for staff working in shelters or youth serving agencies, resulting in staff and management not feeling prepared to intervene in situations of homophobia and transphobia. Secondly, the lack of staff training perpetuates the dangers towards LGBTQ2S youth in the shelter system because not only do staffs not intervene in situations of homophobia and transphobia, but also youths’ needs more generally are not met. As a result, LGBTQ2S youth avoid the shelter system, and staff end up knowing even less about how to meet their needs and how to interact with them (see Figure 1 for illustrations of the cyclical nature of the relations described above).

LGBTQ2S youth have distinct and complex needs, however, they are frequently discriminated against and

<sup>5</sup> LGBTQ2S cultural competency training is widely used for staff working in health care and social services to increase skills and knowledge regarding the diverse and complex ways that identities intersect and to improve the delivery of services to LGBTQ2S individuals (Margolies, Joo, & McDavid, 2016).



**Figure 1.** Cyclical nature of the relations.

excluded from services that are meant to support all young people, regardless of gender and sexual identity. Needs include safe, affirming, and supportive shelter and housing environments, and health care. The needs of transgender youth may differ from those of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, for example, transgender youth may choose to start hormones, which requires monitoring, including regular blood work. The lack of specialized health care services for transgender youth often results in youth turning to unmonitored street suppliers for transition-related treatment (e.g. hormones, silicone injections), which can have severe health complications (Quintana, Rosenthal, & Krehely, 2010). The profound impact that homelessness and the lack of support has on LGBTQ2S youth perpetuates issues relating to substance use, risky sexual behaviour, victimization, and crime (Ray, 2006). These issues make LGBTQ2S youth experiencing homelessness even more vulnerable to concerns such as depression and loneliness (Ray, 2006), resulting in a greater need for mental health support. Focused responses and targeted strategies that prioritize LGBTQ2S youth are necessary in order to meet the unique needs of the population and promote social inclusion and acceptance of all identities.

### 3. Prioritization of LGBTQ2S Youth

“You can’t just keep creating new systems and new hotlines and fax numbers, you need to go to the root of the problem and create spaces that are queer and trans inclusive....There needs to be some kind of reporting system or accountability process, some transformative justice happening.” (J. J., 26 years old, Critical Action Research Study)

It has been known for over two decades that LGBTQ2S youth are overrepresented amongst the homeless youth population and are frequently unsafe in emergency shelters and housing programs in Canada (O’Brien, Travers, & Bell, 1993). However, this issue has only recently entered important dialogue on youth homelessness, both nationally and internationally. It has taken many years to convince key decision makers that LGBTQ2S youth have distinct needs that are often unmet and excluded in shelter services. Support services play a fundamental role in fulfilling homeless youths’ daily needs, such as shelter, food, health care, and presumably safety. However, it is essential that services be equipped to deal with the wide-ranging needs of youth, which have undoubtedly become more complex and diverse over the years (Youth Shelter Interagency Network, 2007). Shelters are part of the emergency response to homelessness and are meant to be an entry point for people to gain access to the proper services they need in order to help them out of homelessness and into housing (Raising the Roof, 2009). The inability of shelters to provide safety and support to LGBTQ2S youth is a major barrier in moving this population of youth out of homelessness and into housing.

Support services must be revised and adapted to reflect the changing needs of youth, for example, one youth program co-ordinator stated:

“Systemically there aren’t policies that necessarily protect people and talk about inclusion from a useful perspective, address the kinds of barriers that exist for trans people for example. They need policies about access and intake. There need to be policies that say if a trans person comes into the shelter, they will be served in the gender in which they’ve identified as the safest and most comfortable for them....The onus is on the agency to make the space safer. That needs to be there and that hasn’t happened yet.” (Youth Program Coordinator, Critical Action Research Study)

Given the range of youth at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness, many have diverse, complex, and unique needs that must be recognized and addressed. Which is why preventing, reducing, and ending youth homelessness requires targeted responses for specific subpopulations that are disproportionately represented among homeless and street-involved youth. Prioritizing subpopulations of youth, including LGBTQ2S youth, provides an opportunity to develop targeted responses and strategies that involve critical attention to the unique and diverse needs of the population because the common “one size fits all” approach does not actually work. Even though interest in the issue of LGBTQ2S youth homelessness is growing, still there are minimal specialized housing programs and services that meet the needs of this population in Canada. Focused responses including targeted prevention tactics, specialized housing programs, as well as building the capacity of existing housing programs to serve LGBTQ2S youth in a safe and affirming manner, promote social inclusion and acceptance, and provide a strategy to meet the needs of LGBTQ2S youth. In 2015, the Government of Alberta was the first province in Canada to prioritize LGBTQ2S youth through a targeted plan reflecting the unique needs of LGBTQ2S youth and providing key stakeholders, government, and communities with a common understanding of the causes of homelessness experienced by this population of young people, as well as the needs of LGBTQ2S youth and service providers, and recommendations for solutions.

### 4. The Government of Alberta’s Youth Plan: A Case Study

*Supporting Healthy and Successful Transitions to Adulthood: A Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness* (Youth Plan) was developed to address the unique needs of youth across the province of Alberta, Canada. The Youth Plan has placed particular importance on strengthening and reunifying families whenever possible, ensuring that youth experience healthy transitions across the system of care and within the youth serving sec-

tor, and preventing youth homelessness. The Youth Plan identified that ending youth homelessness requires the prioritization of subpopulations of young people that are disproportionately represented amongst homeless youth, including LGBTQ2S youth. In order to ensure that LGBTQ2S youth are served more appropriately, the Government of Alberta worked in partnership with a community group and myself (researcher) over the course of ten months, to develop a provincial LGBTQ2S youth strategy that is grounded in evidence-based research, and is rural and urban in focus, given the landscape of communities and services across Alberta. In line with the Youth Plan, emphasis is placed on strengthening families first and ensuring youth experience healthy transitions across the system of care. The prevention of youth homelessness and reunifying families when possible is a top priority.

One of the initial stages of this work involved a provincial youth homelessness symposium, which brought together approximately one hundred service providers, youth workers, managers, and health care professionals to share knowledge and expertise in addressing youth homelessness. Informal and formal data was collected during the symposium, including surveys, group activities, and questions. The data collected provided knowledge regarding the type and frequency of LGBTQ2S cultural competency training offered to shelter workers, housing providers, and youth serving agencies across the province, as well as participants' comfort levels in dealing with situations of homophobia and transphobia in youth serving agencies and shelters, and of course, their perspectives and understanding of LGBTQ2S youth homelessness in Alberta. One of the main outcomes of the provincial youth homelessness symposium was the creation of a provincial LGBTQ2S working group made up of approximately twenty managers of youth serving organizations, government officials, academics, and youth workers (Klingbeil, 2015). Members of the working group were selected by the Alberta Government in order to ensure representation from all parts of the province. The purpose of the working group was to develop policy recommendations and implement program strategies for responding to the needs of LGBTQ2S youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the province of Alberta. The work of the working group supported the overarching goals of the Youth Plan through providing strategic policy recommendations on how to respond to the needs of this population of young people. Monthly teleconference meetings were held, encouraging interagency collaboration and the need for community engagement and building partnerships amongst services across the province.

Early work with the working group suggested that rural communities felt isolated in providing support to gender and sexually diverse youth and that there are minimal specialized services available to LGBTQ2S youth in rural communities. Additional findings revealed that LGBTQ2S cultural competency training is not always offered or made mandatory for staff working in youth serving organizations. Unavailability of training makes it dif-

ficult for staff to identify homophobia and transphobia, and of course intervene when such incidents occur. Difficulty measuring the prevalence of LGBTQ2S youth accessing services was also revealed, partially due to the absence of standardized policies and procedures, such as provincial or municipal shelter standards, and LGBTQ2S inclusive and affirming intake forms.

An initial report including Short, Medium and Long Term solutions was developed in response to the work of the LGBTQ2S working group and to provide an outline and agenda to launch the prioritization of LGBTQ2S youth homelessness in Alberta. Short-term solutions included recommendations that could be implemented immediately to streamline and prioritize service delivery for LGBTQ2S youth; Medium-term solutions included recommendations requiring system planning and negotiations with funders and agencies to adopt; and Long-term solutions included recommendations requiring policy change or legislation reform to ensure responses and service delivery are tailored to the population. A final report was delivered to the Alberta Government, outlining six key recommendations. Multiple stakeholders were engaged in the development of the recommendations to ensure that the range of LGBTQ2S youth and children receive appropriate supports. Communities and young people need to be involved in the development of strategies and services that are meant to support them, which is why the following recommendations have been greatly driven by community. The implementation of these recommendations will engage government, communities, service providers, educators, parents, and the young people affected most by these issues. The Alberta Government and I worked collaboratively with the working group to develop the following six recommendations, which met the objectives of the Short, Medium and Long-term solutions. The recommendations are meant to help design an effective systemic response to LGBTQ2S youth homelessness and a model of care that is appropriately designed to meet the needs of this population of young people.

## 5. Core Recommendations to Alberta Government

1. Support the delivery of LGBTQ2S specific housing options (development of new housing options and/or refinement of existing housing options):

- Ensuring that there are emergency shelter beds available to LGBTQ2S youth.
- Transitional housing programs.
- Supportive housing programs (Housing First) that are choice focused and place-based (e.g. Host Homes).

2. Support the delivery of population-based programs for LGBTQ2S youth that foster an intersectional approach (development of new programs and/or programs within existing services):

- Drop-in programs, including: arts, social, cultural, and recreational activities.
- Mentorship programs.
- LGBTQ2S health clinic hours.
- Skill building and employment support.
- Population and/or cultural-specific programming to provide cultural connectedness and access to cultural traditions and practices, including: newcomer/immigrant LGBTQ2S youth; LGBTQ2S youth of colour; and Two-Spirit Indigenous youth.

3. Create provincial housing/shelter standards that focus on working with and meeting the needs of LGBTQ2S young people:

- Standardized gender inclusive intake process (see Figure 2).
- Service providers must respect and accept each client’s self-defined gender identity and gender expression, including chosen name and pronoun.
- Gender inclusive washroom policy: Ensuring that all services are equipped with single stall, gender-inclusive washrooms (this may be in addition to gendered washrooms in some services) and providing the tools required to convert washrooms, such as signage.
- Guidelines for mandatory and ongoing training, during the first 3 months of hire, for all frontline staff, management, and volunteers of youth serving organizations across the province, as well as foster parents/families fostering LGBTQ2S youth.
- Provincial LGBTQ2S Working Group (continuation of existing working group).
- Supply all shelters, housing programs, and youth serving organizations with appropriate and diverse

resources for the young people accessing services, including, pamphlets, fliers, posters on walls, information regarding coming out, LGBTQ2S health, safe sex, as well as information on any local LGBTQ2S services and events. This recommendation requires that staff are made aware of the LGBTQ2S specific programs available, so that they can refer youth to appropriate services when necessary.

- A separate standard regarding access to services for transgender, two-spirit, and gender non-conforming individuals, stating that all shelters/housing programs, and youth serving organizations must accommodate all transgender, two-spirit, and gender non-conforming residents/clients in their self-identified gender. Services should also be equipped with the appropriate resources and knowledge to refer youth to transition-related treatment (e.g. hormone therapy, legal name change, counseling), and funding and support should be made available for transition related needs.
- A formal grievance/complaints procedure—All shelters/housing programs to implement an internal grievance/complaints process, so that clients/residents can lodge formal anonymous complaints. Clients must be informed of the procedure during the intake process, as well as by posting the grievance/complaints procedure in a conspicuous area of the service.

4. Develop integrated, provincial training solutions for expanded staff training for all aspects of LGBTQ2S cultural competency:

- Expand LGBTQ2S youth homelessness training within all youth serving organizations across the

<p>How do you describe your <b>sexual identity</b>?  <i>Check all that apply:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gay</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Queer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pansexual</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Questioning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Straight/Heterosexual</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Asexual</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Two-Spirit</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Identity not listed (please specify)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>How do you describe your <b>gender identity</b>?  <i>Check all that apply:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Woman</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Man</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Transgender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Trans woman</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Trans man</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Two-Spirit</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Genderqueer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Genderfluid</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Androgynous</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cisgender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Questioning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Identity not listed (please specify)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What gender pronoun do you use?</p> <p>_____</p>
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**Figure 2.** Standardized intake form questions regarding gender and sexual identity.

province by: (a) Supporting partnerships between local and/or out of province LGBTQ2S organizations when necessary; (b) Borrowing key principles from best practice guidelines and successful training models.

- Promote the delivery of immediate training to organizations and communities that lack specialized LGBTQ2S resources and have requested support in order to meet the needs of LGBTQ2S youth, such as rural and remote communities.
- LGBTQ2S Cultural Competency Training should include, but not be limited to, the following areas (depending on population served):
  - *Language/Terminology*: Help staff develop more understanding and clarity regarding LGBTQ2S language and terminology, and navigate discussions with comfort and ease.
  - *Homophobia and Transphobia*: Increase understanding and awareness of the causes of homophobia and transphobia and the importance of intervention, as well as the needs, barriers, and experiences of LGBTQ2S homeless youth. Training will help participants identify and intervene when homophobic and transphobic incidents occur, as well as learn how to create safe, secure, and affirming spaces for LGBTQ2S young people.
  - *Transgender Awareness*: Help staff understand how to support young transgender individuals, provide a private space for staff to ask questions regarding working with transgender youth, help organizations create a transgender inclusion policy, and develop trans inclusive and affirming services, become more knowledgeable and develop strategies for reducing barriers for trans service-users.
  - *Two-Spirit/Indigenous*: Increase understanding and awareness of two-spirit identity, and Aboriginal culture and traditions, as well as Aboriginal youth who identify as LGBTQ2S. Training will help service providers create culturally sensitive programs and spaces, and help reduce stigma and discrimination towards LGBTQ2S identified Aboriginal youth.
  - *Systems Navigation*: Ensure that staff members are aware of all local LGBTQ2S resources and programs available for client referrals and education.

5. Develop a prevention plan that emphasizes strategies on early intervention, awareness raising, and programs for children, youth, and families:

- The development of a prevention plan that emphasizes strategies on early intervention, aware-

ness raising, and programs for children, youth, and families, and focuses on: (1) Preventing young LGBTQ2S people from becoming homeless; (2) Preventing young LGBTQ2S people from becoming adults experiencing chronic homelessness; (3) Family first/family reconnection (with a supportive family member); (4) Schools with Gay-Straight Alliances<sup>6</sup> (GSA) are encouraged to explore the role of GSA's to support LGBTQ2S youth in schools.

- This will involve working collaboratively in a multi-system approach to promote awareness and prepare families, teachers, support workers, health care professionals, and communities with resources and outreach information, sharing programs so that when young people come out as LGBTQ2S, they are provided with the support they need.
  - Placing more emphasis on prevention will help shift the current response to LGBTQ2S youth homelessness from an emergency approach to a longer-term approach, aligning with the Alberta Youth Plan.
6. Develop the capacity for research that frames new approaches and solutions to LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness:
- Investigation of LGBTQ2S youth homelessness in rural Alberta.
  - Evaluation of new and emerging LGBTQ2S programs across the province, which will allow for future LGBTQ2S housing services to operate from an evidence-based model.
  - Reassess LGBTQ2S specific questions on measurement procedures and point-in-time counts. Ensure that volunteers conducting counts and surveys receive sensitivity training with regards to asking questions pertaining to gender and sexual identity, and that every respondent is asked about gender identity, and not only the respondents that volunteers perceive as transgender or gender non-conforming. Integrate LGBTQ2S youth with lived experience and LGBTQ2S organizations into the design and execution of counts, which will improve outreach, especially to those who are not accessing services.
  - Accurately measuring LGBTQ2S youth homelessness will provide an idea of the prevalence of LGBTQ2S youth homelessness in Alberta and may help us better understand how LGBTQ2S youth move through programs and systems, in order to determine which interventions are working.
  - Research that focuses on prevention strategies (e.g. which strategies are successful, which ones should be used, etc.).

<sup>6</sup> A Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a student-led club or organization that is intended to provide a safe and supportive space for LGBTQ2S students to support one another and work towards ending homophobia and transphobia in the school system.

## 6. Discussion

The LGBTQ2S youth homelessness strategy emphasizes alignment across government programs and systems, and engages government, communities, and parents and youth, in building solutions. The strategy fosters a standardized model of care for all youth serving agencies, which is necessary in creating accepting, affirming and supportive environments for youth. Enforcing youth serving organizations to conform to the same set of formal rules and regulations will influence service providers to consistently follow standards and create a level of standardization within the youth serving sector, helping youth know what to expect from services and creating a more predictable service system for young people across the province. An integrated provincial LGBTQ2S training plan will help ensure that youth serving organizations are familiar with the needs and experiences of LGBTQ2S youth and help staff navigate discussions with comfort, ease, and understanding. The implementation of inclusive intake forms, close consideration of the physical environment of services (e.g. private and semi-private rooms with washrooms increase access by improving safety), and specialized LGBTQ2S housing options and programs are all critical factors in developing a targeted response to meet the needs of this population of young people and promoting an accepting, affirming, and supportive environment.

LGBTQ2S specialized housing programs are still not recognized as a priority in the majority of governmental policies, however, by supporting the development of LGBTQ2S specific housing options across the province, and developing the capacity for research that frames new approaches and solutions to gender and sexual diversity within the homeless youth population, the Government of Alberta has set a national standard for how to address the issue of LGBTQ2S youth homelessness.

## 7. Conclusion

Proposals and strategies for ending youth homelessness should be comprehensive in scope and need to encompass all of the elements that youth need, not only to survive, but also to thrive. The unique and diverse needs of all young people must be considered and included. We must also find ways to collaborate with the young people who are affected most by these issues because their voices matter and they need to be heard and included in the design of programs and strategies. While the emergency response to youth homelessness remains necessary and important, especially for LGBTQ2S youth who have recently been kicked out of the house after coming out or forced to leave home due to unsafe conditions; there is also a need for strategies that focus on longer-term solutions and on helping young people find and keep housing, as outlined in the recommendations. Traditional prevention strategies typically focus on strategies that keep youth from becoming homeless in the first

place. However, it may not always be possible to prevent LGBTQ2S youth from becoming homeless, which is why we need to place more emphasis on helping youth exit the streets, so that they do not become adults experiencing chronic homelessness. Although reuniting LGBTQ2S youth with their parents may not always be an option, there tends to be at least one supportive family member and we need to focus on reuniting youth with those family members. By developing targeted responses that focus on subpopulations of young people that are disproportionately represented among homeless youth, we can change the way that we approach youth homelessness, and ensure that no young person is excluded on the basis of their gender or sexual identity. A comprehensive approach that involves various initiatives is necessary in developing a prevention strategy for this population of youth, as well as continuing to collect data on LGBTQ2S identity and pathways into homelessness. If we learn more about the primary causes and risks, we can better address prevention strategies and work towards ending LGBTQ2S youth homelessness.

This paper has provided an overview of a current political, social justice, and public health concern, and contributes knowledge to an under researched field of study by highlighting concrete ways to prevent, reduce, and end LGBTQ2S youth homelessness.

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## Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

## Outsiders Within: Claiming Discursive Space at National Homelessness Conferences in Canada

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### Abstract

Homelessness in Canada is a large and growing problem affecting more than 235,000 men, women, youth, and families per year, in urban, suburban, rural and Northern communities. Though it is produced by economic and policy drivers including colonization, income insecurity, and state withdrawal from housing provision, policies on homelessness tend to focus on service provision rather than addressing root causes. This article reviews activist, advocacy, service and policy responses to homelessness in Canada, and in particular, homeless sector conferences. Taking as its starting-point a demonstration at a 2014 national conference on homelessness, it examines these conferences as important sites of governance in which service organizations collaborate in the development and delivery of policy. Conferences' normative culture, and their discursive construction of homelessness as a technical problem, tend to leave unchallenged the prevailing economic, social, political and institutional arrangements that produce homelessness. Recent interventions by people facing homelessness and their allies, though, have claimed discursive space at national homelessness conferences for outsider perspectives and demands. These interventions open possibilities for new alliances, analyses, and tactics that are necessary for ending homelessness.

### Keywords

activism; conferences; governance; homelessness; lived experience

### Issue

This article is part of the issue “Homelessness and Social Inclusion”, edited by Isobel Anderson (University of Stirling, UK), Maša Filipovič Hrast (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Joe Finnerty (University College Cork, Ireland).

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### 1. Introduction

*On a chilly, rainy evening in November 2014, dozens of anti-poverty activists marched down a busy street in the business district of Vancouver, British Columbia, on Canada's Pacific coast. Wet placards and banners illuminated by the headlights of passing cars read, 'Housing is a right' and 'Social housing now.' As the marchers turned into the dark courtyard of a luxury hotel, they were greeted by security guards who informed them that this was private property and they would have to leave or police would be called. Undaunted, the activists pressed forward, their chants of 'Homelessness has got to go!' echoing from the walls of the hotel's two towers. The guards rushed inside as the protestors assembled before the hotel's main entrance, and police soon arrived to form a barricade line across the lobby.*

*Outside in the rain, separated from police by a glass wall of windows and locked doors, speakers addressed the crowd using a portable PA system. Most speakers identified themselves as Indigenous, many identified as having disabilities, and all explicitly spoke from lived experience with homelessness and poverty. They decried the City of Vancouver's failure to take effective action to end homelessness, and its recent eviction of a homeless encampment from a local park. They called for an end to gentrification, displacement, and criminalization of homeless people, and demanded that Indigenous territorial rights be respected, social housing be built and welfare rates be increased.*

*Things heated up. A guard crushed a protestor's hand in a revolving door as he tried to push his way in, and the mood turned angry, with some activists pounding on the lobby windows. Some supporters tried to join the demon-*

stration from within the hotel, but were prevented from exiting by security. Unable to get inside, the demonstrators eventually dispersed, leaving behind a wet stack of real and satirical reports as testament to the failure of research and policy to meaningfully alter the conditions causing homelessness.

Scenes like this one have become familiar in urban Canada: a direct action by impoverished, racialized, Indigenous, disabled, homeless, psychiatrized, and otherwise stigmatized protestors and their allies, targeting a site of political and economic injustice, forcibly contained and dispersed by police.

What sets this demonstration apart, though, is the event whose opening reception the protestors aimed to disrupt: the 2014 National Conference on Ending Homelessness.

How do we account for the apparent contradiction of an anti-poverty protest targeting a conference to end homelessness? What can be learned from this familiar yet surreal scene—poor and homeless protestors locked outside a conference in the rain while delegates enjoy wine and salmon skewers inside—and what are its implications for both groups' stated goal of ending homelessness?

To explore these questions, this paper will locate this event within its larger context, examining the dilemmas it raises about inclusion for people facing homelessness. Drawing upon my own participation in and observation of these events, I will discuss the significance of Canada's national conferences on homelessness: as discursive sites in which framings of homelessness are defined, circulated and consolidated; as sites of governance, in which policy-makers and non-government actors develop policy and program responses; and as sites of contestation, in which people facing homelessness claim space for oppositional perspectives.

Arguing that neoliberal hegemony "is sustained not only through (external) force but also by processes of identification and responsabilization," Mayer and Kunkel (2012, p. 6) call for studies that combine post-structuralist and political-economic approaches, to examine what Brenner and Theodore have termed "actually-existing neoliberalisms" (cited in Mayer & Kunkel, 2012, p. 3). This paper, accordingly, examines the discourses, practices of governance, and contestations enacted through conferences on homelessness, while attending to the ways in which these may hold in place or unsettle the structural, material conditions that give rise to homelessness. In so doing, it contends that the norms of professionalism and the tactics of collaborative governance that characterize these conferences risk leaving unchallenged the fundamental causes of homelessness, and that "outsider" interventions by people facing homelessness offer a necessary corrective to these tendencies.

In order to situate these arguments, the paper first introduces the larger context of homelessness in Canada,

demonstrating that it is produced by, and embedded in, current economic, political, social, and institutional arrangements. It then briefly surveys three kinds of responses to homelessness in Canada—grassroots activism, advocacy, and service provision—examining their understanding of homelessness, their activities and tactics, and the role of people facing homelessness within them. Turning to national conferences on homelessness, the paper considers their significance as sites of homelessness governance, and examines to what extent these influential gatherings challenge the arrangements through which homelessness is produced. Finally, the paper introduces a national council of persons with lived experience of homelessness. This council's interventions call upon organizations in the homelessness sector to engage the leadership of people facing homelessness in all initiatives to end it.

## 2. Context: Homelessness in Canada

To fully understand these events and their significance, it is first necessary to step back and consider the current state of homelessness in Canada, the economic and policy drivers that produce it, and the relations of exclusion and disenfranchisement that characterize it.

### 2.1. State of Homelessness in Canada

While not as rampant as in the US, homelessness in Canada is a large and growing problem affecting men, women, youth, and families with children. It is found in major urban centres, small cities, rural areas and the North. Homelessness statistics have not been systematically tracked at the national level by government; however, a recent comprehensive analysis estimates that 235,000 people in Canada experience homelessness every year, 35,000 on any given night (Gaetz, Gulliver, & Richter, 2014).<sup>1</sup>

Many others are currently housed but at imminent risk of homelessness due to factors including family violence and severely unaffordable housing. In Canada's largest cities, about one in five renter households have low incomes and pay more than half their income on housing costs, leaving them vulnerable to homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2014, p. 43). In Toronto, for example, a recent survey of more than 1,500 renter families in low-income neighbourhoods found that 32% were paying more than half their income on rent; one in three were at risk of homelessness due to combined problems with unaffordability, overcrowding, poor unit and building conditions, safety concerns, and risk of eviction (Paradis, Wilson, & Logan, 2014).

Certain groups are disproportionately represented among those facing homelessness in Canada. These include Indigenous people; people with physical and mental health disabilities and addictions; youth; and sur-

<sup>1</sup> This includes persons without a stable home of their own, who are staying in shelters (180,000), unsheltered (5,000), or provisionally accommodated in institutions, with other households, or in other temporary dwellings such as motels (50,000).

vivors of violence. Families with children are the fastest-growing group experiencing homelessness (Gulliver-Garcia, 2016) and the share of older adults is increasing rapidly in some urban centres (City of Toronto, 2013). Specific groups are also over-represented among subgroups of the homeless population: for example, LGBTQ2S<sup>2</sup> youth make up a large proportion of homeless youth (Abramovich, 2014); and among families using homeless shelters, lone-mother led families, young mothers, those with infants, Black and Indigenous families, and those with precarious immigration status are over-represented (Paradis, Novac, Sarty, & Hulchanski, 2008). Refugees and recent immigrants face high rates of inadequate housing and hidden homelessness (Murdie & Logan, 2010; Preston, Murdie, D'Addario, Sibanda, & Murnaghan, 2011).

## 2.2. Economic and Policy Drivers of Homelessness

Homelessness has emerged as a mass phenomenon in Canada only in the past three decades; indeed, before the 1980s, the word “homeless” barely entered the public lexicon, and when it did, it referred to single adult men who lived in rooming houses and hotels rather than in a family home (Hulchanski, Campsie, Chau, Hwang, & Paradis, 2009).

As is the case in other rich countries of the global North, the emergence of mass homelessness in Canada parallels the economic and policy shifts characteristic of neoliberal globalization: the deregulation of markets and the increasing flow of capital and labour across national borders, accompanied by the constriction of state social spending and the prioritizing of deficit reduction in economic policy. These trends enable enormous concentration and privatization of wealth, resulting in high levels of inequality and polarization in cities (Walks, 2013). The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing has identified these trends as a key structural cause of homelessness (United Nations General Assembly, 2015, para. 28 and 31).

These global trends undergird the direct structural drivers of homelessness in Canada. Primary among these is colonization, which includes three key elements directly tied to homelessness. First, ongoing contravention of treaties, environmental devastation of Indigenous territories for resource extraction, and deep disparities in state social spending, systematically impoverish First Nations and Northern communities and Aboriginal people living in urban centres (Patrick, 2014). Secondly, the legacy of dispossession, displacement, child abduction, and genocidal social violence has given rise to intergenerational trauma that ruptures families and communities, and heightens vulnerability to violence, addiction, and mental health problems (Menzies, 2009; Patrick, 2014). Finally, racism against Indigenous people pervades service systems such as health care and child welfare (Allan & Smylie, 2016); produces widespread discrimination in

housing and employment; and incites horrifying levels of violence, in particular towards Indigenous women.

A second key economic and policy driver of homelessness is income insecurity. Labour market trends—including the decline of manufacturing and organized labour, the shift to a polarized knowledge and service-based economy, and the increase in precarious employment—have produced an economy in which an increasing proportion of workers have precarious jobs (PEPSO Research Alliance, 2012) and women and racialized groups are concentrated in the lowest-paying sectors (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Meanwhile, the restriction of state income support programs and other services has deepened the poverty of people excluded from the labour market, including those who are unemployed, injured workers, people with disabilities and lone mothers. Social assistance rates, for example, are far below the poverty line in every province and territory (Tweddle, Battle, & Torjman, 2015). At the same time, changes to immigration policy have enabled industry’s increasing reliance on temporary workers (Sharma, 2006), and produced protracted periods of precarious status for those settling in Canada, leading to deep and long-lasting income disparities between Canadian-born workers and those born elsewhere (Goldring & Landolt, 2012).

And finally, the changing economic and policy landscape of housing drives much of the increase in homelessness in Canada. After decades of robust housing production spurred by both state-led social housing programs and government subsidies to private rental housing development, the federal and provincial orders of government largely withdrew from housing provision in the 1990s (Suttor, 2015). As a result, during a period in which Canada’s population has increased by 30%, the annual national investment in housing has decreased by 46% (Gaetz et al., 2014). In Canada, as in many other rich countries, the housing system has become increasingly market-based, with real estate development and speculation driving urban economies (Picture the Homeless, 2012) and housing treated as a commodity rather than a social right (United Nations General Assembly, 2015, para. 29).

## 2.3. Market-Based Citizenship and Social Exclusion

The demographic profile of homelessness and risk of homelessness in Canada is composed of those most disadvantaged and excluded by the prevailing market logic of neoliberalism. While the material causes and effects of this exclusion are devastating to health and life, scholars have long insisted that the social dimension of homelessness also demands attention. Kennett (1999) links homelessness in the UK to a shift from a Keynesian model of social citizenship in which all are guaranteed a basic standard of living, to a market-based model in which social entitlements are contingent on market participation. Social rights scholar Bruce Porter (2007) notes that

<sup>2</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirited.

in Canada, the exclusion of social and economic rights from protection by the courts amounts to a denial of poor and homeless people's citizenship and even their status as persons under Canada's Charter of Rights. And Liggett (1991, p. 205), following Patterson's work on slavery, argues that people who are homeless are consigned to a radical denial of personhood she refers to as a "social death." People who are poor and homeless are targeted with interpersonal and institutional stereotyping and stigma. In popular depictions and policy discourses, they are portrayed as dishonest and blameworthy, as silent and passive victims, or as incompetent and disordered (Rosenthal, 2000; Swanson, 2001). The exclusion homeless people face is not only social; it is given legal force through the regulation and criminalization of their activities of daily survival through municipal and provincial laws (Baillargeau, 2014; Hermer & Mosher, 2002; O'Grady, Gaetz, & Buccieri, 2011).

Theorists are not the only ones who note the importance of the social dimension of homelessness. People facing homelessness, too, often emphasize that dehumanization and the denial of fundamental rights are among the most devastating aspects of their experience (United Nations General Assembly, 2015, para. 22). This was the case in my own participatory research with women facing homelessness (Paradis, 2014): participants' individual and political claims focused on self-determination and personhood even more prominently than the material necessities of life.

### **3. Insiders and Outsiders: Responses to Homelessness in Canada**

As shown above, homelessness in Canada is actively produced by economic, political, social and institutional arrangements. Responses to homelessness in Canada—including grassroots activism, advocacy, and service and policy responses—differ in the extent to which they challenge or hold in place these arrangements. As suggested by the example of the Vancouver protest and conference, these responses also differ in their understanding of homelessness, their activities and tactics, and the role of people facing homelessness within them. While responses fall generally into these three categories, it should be noted that individuals and organizations may be engaged in more than one type of response. Indeed, some significant initiatives have involved coalitions across activist, advocacy, and service-oriented groups.

#### *3.1. Grassroots Activism*

Grassroots activist responses to homelessness have mainly been led by local anti-poverty groups such as the Carnegie Community Action Project (one of the organizers of the protest) and Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. Their leadership and membership is largely composed of people facing poverty, homelessness, and disability, along with some non-poor allies. Grassroots groups of-

ten embrace a radical and intersectional analysis, including a critique of capitalism, a rejection of institutional responses, and a naming of social relations of power and dominance—such as colonization, racism, sexism, poor-bashing, and exclusion of people with disabilities—as key forces in producing homelessness and poverty. They often take a direct action approach, and their campaigns tend to be reactive to local events, such as shelter closures, welfare cuts, gentrification, and displacement. Tactics include squatting, encampments, and occupations, such as the Oppenheimer Park encampment in Vancouver that had recently been dispersed at the time of the protest, and the Super InTent City encampment in Victoria. These interventions not only directly claim homespaces for people facing homelessness, they also propose a prefigurative vision of an autonomous community outside colonial, capitalist, and institutional relations.

#### *3.2. Advocacy*

Advocacy responses, on the other hand, have generally been initiated by formal organizations such as legal clinics. Campaigns often focus on the lack of state measures to effectively address homelessness, using the Canadian courts (Heffernan, Faraday, & Rosenthal, 2015), international human rights forums (Monsebraaten, 2016), public awareness campaigns (YWCA Canada, 2013a), and lobbying of elected officials to urge policy and program changes. Direct involvement of people facing homelessness in such campaigns has been variable, with some planned and led by professional advocates while others are shaped by coalitions of formal organizations and grassroots groups (Dirks, 2015). Advocacy on homelessness in Canada has often adopted a social justice or rights-based framing, in which homelessness is identified as a violation of human rights. While the role of inequities based on race, gender, and disability is often acknowledged, fundamental critiques of capitalism and institutionalization are typically absent, and state-led solutions are promoted. One major focus of these campaigns, for example, has been to urge the federal government to implement a national housing strategy.

#### *3.3. Service and Policy Responses*

Service and policy responses to homelessness, meanwhile, have tended to focus on providing material supports to people facing homelessness, and less so on addressing its root causes or its social dimensions. The uneven emergence of homelessness in Canada, along with jurisdictional confusion about responsibility for it, produced a fragmented collection of front-line services across the country. These include charitable, faith-based, and community-based organizations large and small, municipal services, and homeless-serving programs within larger health and social service institutions. These are funded through private donations and a patchwork of municipal, provincial and federal programs to provide

critically needed shelter, food, medical care and other supports to people who would otherwise lack access to the bare necessities of life. From time to time, people who are poor and homeless may be consulted in policy development or hired in “peer” roles to provide services; but typically, service and policy responses confine people facing homelessness to a passive role as objects of policy-making and recipients of services.

In 2007 the federal government introduced the Homelessness Partnership Secretariat—now Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)—to provide direct support to homelessness services via local entities in designated communities<sup>3</sup> across Canada. Through its requirement for local service coordination and its regulation of the activities for which funds could be used<sup>4</sup>, HPS has shaped the sector’s understanding of and response to homelessness. Coordination of the sector increased further as a result of the founding of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) in 2013, a national coalition of services whose aim is to promote the development and implementation of local and provincial ten-year plans to end homelessness<sup>5</sup>. While individual homelessness service organizations have wide variations in history, mission, philosophy and activities, the influence of HPS and CAEH has contributed to a technical and service-oriented approach to homelessness across the sector as a whole.

### 3.4. *Insiders and Outsiders*

One key difference among responses to homelessness is their adoption of an insider or outsider stance—that is, the extent to which their discourses, activities, and demands align with or are contrary to those of the powerful entities they seek to influence. In her study of homelessness sector organizations in Chicago, Mosley (2012) found that organizations reliant on service contracts and funding from government sources tend to engage in advocacy using insider tactics such as participation in sectoral networks and meeting with policy-makers. Moreover, their advocacy goals typically focus on heightening the visibility of their organizations, forming reciprocal relationships with funders, promoting policy and program directions that align with their funded services, and brokering resources. In contrast, organizations reliant on private funding focus their advocacy efforts on raising awareness among their donors and the general public; when they do participate in discussions with policy-makers, they see themselves as providing information to inform policy decisions. Both groups explicitly reject confrontational approaches, instead seeking to position themselves as partners in the planning and delivery of policies and programs, or as outside experts.

Neoliberal political and institutional trends have produced a shift from government—characterized by the centralized development and delivery of policy through vertical structures—to governance—characterized by horizontal policy networks in which non-government organizations play an active role. The trouble is, Mosley explains, as participants in collaborative governance, “advocacy by nonprofit service providers may serve to amplify rather than challenge current political and institutional arrangements” (2012, p. 21). If, as suggested above, homelessness is a direct result of these economic, political and institutional arrangements, advocacy of this kind risks leaving unchallenged the fundamental causes of homelessness.

A further concern arises with what Mosley (p. 5) identifies as processes of “isomorphism”—that is, the tendency to adopt specific practices and discourses in order to be understood as legitimate. In fostering reciprocal, collaborative relationships with government, organizations tend to conform to institutional and professional norms in their language and tactics. She notes that organizations that fail to conform to these norms in communication with governments—such as those engaging in activities such as protest—tend to be isolated outsiders in networks of governance, lacking influence and connections. In other words, organizational environments shaped by isomorphism produce outsiders whose communications are devalued.

## 4. **Conferences as Sites of Governance and Contestation**

### 4.1. *National Homelessness Conferences in Canada*

With increasing coordination of the homelessness sector in Canada, conferences have become key sites of these dynamics. The 2014 Vancouver conference, along with previous national conferences held in Calgary (2009), Montréal (2010), and Ottawa (2013), brought together academics, service managers and policy makers for agendas focused on presentations of scholarly research, demonstration studies, and policy options. Elected officials from all levels of government—including those whose policy portfolios perpetuate the very conditions that produce homelessness—were strategically included as plenary speakers, and received with polite applause. Critical discourses and confrontational tactics were largely absent; instead, the proceedings emphasized collaboration, evidence-sharing and consensus-building around favoured intervention approaches.

Also largely absent from the 2009, 2010 and 2013 conferences were people facing homelessness and

<sup>3</sup> “Designated communities” are municipalities or regions considered to have a significant problem with homelessness. There are currently 61 such entities across Canada.

<sup>4</sup> For example, local entities are prohibited from using HPS funds to develop or repair social housing.

<sup>5</sup> According to its website, CAEH was formed “to create a national movement to end homelessness in Canada from the community up” through four key activities: raising awareness of homelessness; encouraging governments and communities to commit to ending homelessness through the implementation of ten year plans; providing information and tools to communities to enable the development of such plans; and pursuing provincial and federal policy change (<http://www.caeh.ca/about-caeh>).

the grassroots self-advocacy organizations representing them. These gatherings hosted hundreds of attendees and offered dozens of workshops, but few were from the perspective of lived experience. A handful of people facing homelessness and anti-poverty activists were present as delegates, but there was no space in which to connect with each other and formulate demands to bring to the conference as a whole. Overall, at these gatherings, people facing homelessness were talked *about*, not *with*, and for the most part this talk lacked the urgency of direct engagement with a life-threatening catastrophe. Many of the academics, policy makers, and service providers in attendance were staunch anti-homelessness advocates, but our discussions took place in the absence of an organized, visible collectivity of people living in poverty to challenge our analyses and investments. Processes of isomorphism shaped these spaces, producing a normative culture of middle-class professionalism which further discouraged expressions of outsider perspectives and identities<sup>6</sup>.

#### 4.2. Conferences as Sites of Governance: The Example of Housing First

The prevailing discourse at these conferences tended to construct homelessness as a technical problem to be remedied with targeted service and policy interventions to be delivered by professionals, rather than as a problem of economic and social injustice requiring structural change. This discursive framing is exemplified in the sectoral embrace of Housing First, leading to its implementation as federal policy in 2014.<sup>7</sup>

Housing First was first implemented as policy in Canada by the province of Alberta, drawing heavily upon a US model that emphasized the cost-recovery potential of targeting housing and supports to a small group, defined as chronically homeless, who are understood to consume a disproportionate share of shelter nights and costly emergency services.<sup>8</sup> A federally-funded, multi-year demonstration study on Housing First, called *At Home / Chez Soi*, was launched in 2009 in five Canadian cities. Its methodology, preliminary results, and findings were prominently featured at the 2009, 2010, 2013 and 2014 national conferences. The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, with the support of a research consortium called Canadian Observatory on Homelessness,

strongly promotes Housing First as an evidence-based service and policy approach, and the national conferences co-hosted by COH and CAEH in 2013 and 2014 have been key sites in advocacy for its adoption by the federal government. The federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy directives for implementation of the program are highly technical, requiring communities to conduct local homeless counts using a consistent methodology, assess eligibility for Housing First programs employing a prescribed vulnerability assessment tool, and collect and report outcome data (Government of Canada, 2014). The 2013 and 2014 conferences have included concurrent session “streams” dedicated to disseminating the tools and techniques of Housing First implementation.

Critics have raised multiple concerns about the federal Housing First policy. They suggest that it excludes women, families, and others whose experiences don’t align with the definition of “chronic homelessness” (YWCA Canada, 2013b); that its effectiveness is limited by the shortage of social housing and affordable, good-quality units in the private rental market (Stock, 2016); and that it falsely promises to “end homelessness” while failing to address root causes such as poverty and lack of affordable housing (Heffernan, Todorow, & Luu, 2015).

Katz, Zerger and Hwang (2016, p. 1), while acknowledging these critiques of the Housing First program, also point to broader problems with what they refer to as the Housing First “conversation”—that is, the marketing of Housing First as a solution to homelessness by policy-makers, researchers, and service managers. They suggest that the sectoral conversation about Housing First has muted necessary discussion of the structural drivers of homelessness, that it has framed homelessness as an individual affliction requiring a technical cure, and that it reifies market logics of scarcity, competition, and cost-recovery. In so doing, they suggest, the Housing First conversation may in fact undermine the ultimate goal of ending homelessness in Canada.

#### 4.3. Outsiders Storming In: Claiming Discursive Space

The Vancouver protest sought to interrupt this conversation, and draw attention to the damaging effects of its limited scope. The call-out for the protest, circulated on Facebook<sup>9</sup>, condemned the medical and police control of poor and Indigenous people’s lives and bodies via

<sup>6</sup> The All Our Sisters national conferences on women and homelessness in London, Ontario in 2011 and 2014 (<http://www.alloursisters.ca>) have offered an alternative model, grounded in feminist praxis. Both conferences included a large proportion of delegates facing homelessness—about one in four attendees—whose registration fees and travel costs were covered by the conference. Workshops and plenary sessions included a balance of expertise from research, services, activism, and lived experience. There was a room set aside for delegates facing homelessness to connect with each other and take a break from the sometimes-alienating conference culture. In 2014, the conference was co-chaired by a group of women facing homelessness, and even included a demonstration that was organized from within the conference.

<sup>7</sup> As defined by HPS, Housing First programs provide permanent housing with supports to persons who are considered to be chronically homeless and have “disabling conditions” such as mental health problems and addictions (Government of Canada, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Though the right-leaning governments that adopted Housing First as policy in the US and Alberta (and later as federal policy in Canada) emphasized its cost-recovery potential, it is important to note that many scholars, practitioners and advocates consider it to be a “rights-based intervention” (Gaetz, Scott, & Gulliver, 2013, p. 2). Two of the programs in which the model originated—Pathways to Housing in New York City and Houslink in Toronto—emerged out of the mental health consumer-survivor movement and were founded on the principles of consumers’ right to housing, and their right to choose whether or not to engage in treatment (Waegemakers Schiff & Rook, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/events/1493810717546493/?active\\_tab=highlights](https://www.facebook.com/events/1493810717546493/?active_tab=highlights)

state and institutional responses to homelessness. The “elite class of managers” attending the conference was complicit in this régime of control, the online flyer declared. It concluded: “The Social Housing Alliance calls for a major mobilization to confront, expose, and oppose the government policies and NGO industries that manage homeless, low-income, and Indigenous people without challenging or disrupting the systems and social conditions that cause homelessness and poverty.” The locked doors and police barricade marked this message, and the people who delivered it, as unwelcome and dangerous. The conference organizers and attendees, meanwhile, shielded from the protest by police, were implicitly positioned in alignment with exclusionary responses to homelessness driven by what Baillargeau (2014) has identified as a rationality of public order.

This action had a significant historical resonance with the fifth International Conference on AIDS in Montréal in 1989, at which 300 AIDS activists stormed in uninvited and seized the microphone at the opening plenary to open the conference on behalf of people with AIDS, receiving a standing ovation even from many of the scientists present (McCaskell, 2011). That demonstration and the changes that followed it radically altered research and practice on HIV/AIDS. In claiming their place at the table, the protestors ushered in a new era in which people with AIDS and the organizations that represent them are included in framing policies and programs, defining research priorities and ethics, and providing services. The inclusion, leadership, and unique perspectives of those directly affected have been critical to global progress in this sector, and have influenced other sectors as well. Nevertheless, decades later, AIDS conferences continue to be sites of contestation at which activists underline the social dimensions of an epidemic that is still often viewed only as a technical, scientific challenge. As Tim McCaskell (2012), a leader of the 1989 action and lifelong activist, notes about the 2012 International AIDS Conference, “If many of the key issues about AIDS have now shifted from the medical to the social, activism represents the political muscle to actually demand implementation”.

Like homeless encampments in public parks and squares, these actions have multiple objectives and effects. First, they claim space for the embodied presence of stigmatized groups who are physically and/or socially excluded from the places in question. Secondly, they make unsanctioned use of these spaces, engaging in talk and activities that fall outside the legitimate or prescribed conduct for these social settings. Thirdly, they serve as a reminder of realities that may be obscured in (or by) these sites: just as an encampment reminds passersby that homelessness persists in their prosperous city, these actions seek to remind conference attendees of the deeper social and structural dimensions of AIDS and homelessness, and of the suffering they inflict on so many. Fourthly, in so doing, they summon not only the attention of witnesses, but their self-reflection—an

accounting for their own positions in relation to homelessness and AIDS, and their role in perpetuating or eliminating these forms of social violence. Fifth, they give collective voice to a demand for change. And finally, as McCaskell suggests, they apply pressure to powerful entities, with a goal of changing prevailing economic, political, social and institutional arrangements.

Canadian social rights scholar Bruce Porter (2007) examines failed litigation for economic and social rights, and asks whether there is value in persisting with these unsuccessful attempts. He concludes that whether they succeed or fail, the importance of these cases lies in their potential to give voice to the aspirations, perspectives, and claims of individuals and communities who have been excluded from mainstream conceptions of rights and citizenship. In “claiming adjudicative space” (p. 77) for these excluded perspectives and entering them into the record, he suggests, such cases assert the personhood and citizenship of the claimants, and contribute to incremental shifts in law that can lead to important interpretive changes down the road. I contend that actions like the Vancouver protest have a similar effect: they claim discursive space for identities, points of view, modes of expression, social critiques, and demands that have been excluded by the norms of professionalism and tactics of collaborative governance that shape national conferences on homelessness.

## 5. Outsiders within: Nothing About Us, Without Us

### 5.1. *The Formation of the Lived Experience Advisory Council*

If one goal of such action is to confront witnesses with a painful reality and incite them to examine their own positions in relation to it, the Vancouver protest at first glance appears to fail in that regard. Instead of inspiring a reconsideration of relationships that could lead to new possibilities and alliances, it seemed to simply re-enact and entrench relations of power and dominance: poor and homeless people were shut out, wet, cold, disregarded, injured, and policed; while conference delegates stayed inside, warm and well-fed, their comfort protected, at a comfortable distance above the fray.

But while the optics of the protest suggested an unbreachable divide between conference attendees and protestors, the reality was much more complex. The physical spaces and political alignments inhabited by the two sides were more porous than it appeared. Many conference delegates managed to find a way outside to join the protest. A conference delegate who uses a wheelchair convinced the security guards to let her back in to the hotel, with an organizer of the protest posing as her attendant. With the help of other conference delegates, the protestor successfully negotiated with the conference organizers to allow her to address the reception.

Perhaps most significantly, many of the conference delegates who acted in solidarity with the protest were

themselves facing homelessness and poverty (Jarrett, 2016). For the 2014 conference, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and Canadian Observatory on Homelessness sponsored the attendance of more than forty delegates with lived experience, including some local activists who had also helped organize the protest. Two workshops at the conference focused on inclusion, several others featured presenters with lived experience, and a meeting room was made available for people facing homelessness to re-charge and collaborate. These initiatives not only opened a space for the perspectives and claims of delegates facing homelessness, they also made room for professional delegates to verbalize oppositional viewpoints and explore new alliances.

Delegates facing homelessness and their allies seized these opportunities. One group developed a declaration of principles for inclusion of people with lived experience, while a second brought forward ideas for connecting with local activist groups at future conferences. The declaration of principles—under the banner of the disability rights slogan “Nothing About Us, Without Us”—was presented by lived experience delegates during the conference’s final plenary lunch.

Out of these collaborations, the Lived Experience Advisory Council (LEAC) emerged. This group includes lived experience leaders from across Canada, along with professional allies (including this author). Members represent a broad diversity of social locations, political inclinations, and lived experiences with homelessness and poverty. Members also bring different backgrounds with insider and outsider tactics: some have been involved in encampments and other direct actions, some in human rights advocacy, some in service provision, and some in mechanisms of collaborative governance such as municipal committees. Many have been involved in multiple types of responses.

The group stayed in contact after the 2014 conference, using email and the occasional borrowed teleconference line to articulate a mission, develop recommendations on inclusion for the conference organizers, and plan session proposals for the following year. It has negotiated many of the challenges that face poor people’s movements, including the catch-22 of finding resources to support its work while maintaining its autonomy. Precarious housing, unstable and inadequate incomes, discrimination and violence continue to take a toll on members’ health and well-being, and sometimes make it impossible to participate.

But in the face of these challenges, LEAC has intervened in the processes of isomorphism that shaped previous national conferences, holding open a space for new kinds of conversations about homelessness. One of three sessions led by LEAC at the 2015 national conference, for example, was an activist-ally dialogue in which the panelists began by moving the furniture, breaking apart the rows of chairs facing a head table and rearranging them into a huge circle. The message was clear

and concrete: ending homelessness will require new approaches that challenge existing relations of power and dominance based on class, race, gender, ability, age and social condition.

## 5.2. Tools for Inclusion

Out of dialogues held at 2014 and 2015 conferences, LEAC developed two tools for the promotion of leadership and inclusion: a statement of principles, and a checklist for organizing inclusive events. These documents are at once pragmatic and visionary, calling upon organizations in the homelessness sector to engage in new relationships with people facing homelessness<sup>10</sup>.

The preamble to the statement of principles reads:

“We believe that without including individuals with lived experience in the decision making process, in research, and in all other endeavours, it creates an unbalanced approach to ending homelessness in Canada.

[...]

These principles point to the importance of first voice inclusion in all endeavours to end homelessness. This is true of any social issue—the people who are living it usually have the best understanding about what the problem is and what needs to be done to address it. Inclusion is especially vital in the context of homelessness, though, because being excluded and silenced is a huge part of the experience of homelessness and poverty. The belief that people who are homeless do not have the competence to participate as equals in organizations is layered on top of the other stereotypes directed at us because of racism, sexism, ableism, poor-bashing, and other oppressions.

Many organizations are learning to value lived expertise, but overcoming outdated, paternalistic beliefs and practices doesn’t happen overnight. Service providers, researchers and policy-makers need to work alongside people with lived experience to create new structures in which we come together as equals. We hope this document can provide support to professionals and people with lived experience as we all work together to plan and implement these changes.”

The document underlines the importance of including people with lived experience as equals at all levels of the organization, and in all activities and decisions, and it provides practical guidelines for how to accomplish this objective.

## 6. Conclusion

With the neoliberal shift to horizontal, distributed policy-making, homelessness conferences in Canada have

<sup>10</sup> These tools can be viewed on the Homeless Hub website at <http://www.homelesshub.ca/NothingAboutUsWithoutUs>

emerged as important sites of governance in which formal homelessness sector organizations collaborate with state actors in the development and delivery of homelessness policies. There is evidence, though, that the advocacy activities of such organizations tend to focus on maintaining relationships and securing funding streams. As a result, sectoral conversations about policies such as Housing First risk leaving unchallenged the root causes of homelessness. Meanwhile, processes of isomorphism at these conferences produce a normative culture in which the language, actions, priorities, and self-presentation of activists and persons facing homelessness are marked as deviant and therefore illegitimate, thereby perpetuating the relations of exclusion, disenfranchisement, and dehumanization that are themselves key elements of homelessness.

Poor and homeless activists and their allies have contested these tendencies from both outside and inside conferences. Their interventions have claimed space for the bodies, perspectives, modes of expression, and demands of individuals and collectivities who have faced exclusion, invisibility and stigma in normative conference settings—and in Canadian society at large. In so doing, they contest the ways in which conferences themselves risk becoming conscripted into a neoliberal project to “facilitate the spread of market rule into more and more arenas of social life” (Mayer & Kunkel, 2012, p. 11)—both through their role in neoliberal policy transfer, and their reproduction of neoliberal subjectivities.

The interventions of homeless activists from outside and within these conferences make clear that the goal is not simply for homeless and poor people to be included in the normal operations of organizations and conferences. Instead, the active participation and leadership of people facing homelessness calls into question these operations, and the prevailing social, political, economic and institutional arrangements of which they are a part. The outsider perspectives, demands, and tactics that emerge from lived experience are necessary for the transformation of the structures and relations that produce homelessness. It would be impossible to end homelessness without them.

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The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

## The ‘Arc of Prosperity’ Revisited: Homelessness Policy Change in North Western Europe

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### Abstract

This paper compares continuity and change in homelessness policy in Ireland, Scotland and Norway with a particular focus on the period of post-crisis austerity measures (2008–2016). The analytical approach draws on institutional theory and the notion of path dependency, which has rarely been applied to comparative homelessness research. The paper compares welfare and housing systems in the three countries prior to presenting a detailed analysis of the conceptualisation and measurement of homelessness; the institutions which address homelessness; and the evidence of change in the post-2008 period. The analysis demonstrates that challenges remain in comparing the nature of homelessness and policy responses across nation states, even where they have a number of similar characteristics, and despite some EU influence towards homelessness policy convergence. Similarly, national-level homelessness policy change could not be interpreted as entirely a result of the external shock of the 2008 general financial crisis, as existing national policy goals and programmes were also influential. Overall, embedded national frameworks and institutions were resilient, but sufficiently flexible to deliver longer term policy shifts in response to the changing nature of the homelessness problem and national policy goals. Institutionalism and path dependency were found to be useful in developing the comparative analysis of homelessness policy change and could be fruitfully applied in future longitudinal, empirical research across a wider range of countries.

### Keywords

homelessness; institutionalism; path dependency; policy change

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

“We believe that Scotland can match the success of similar countries—Ireland to our west, Iceland to our North and Norway to our east, nations that sit at the top of world wealth league tables and form an arc of prosperity around our shores.” (Scottish Government, 2007, p. 9)

This ambitious vision on the part of the Scottish Government pre-dated the global financial crisis (GFC) which commenced with the 2008 credit crunch and continued to affect all four countries mentioned to varying degrees. The quotation was also a point of departure for an earlier comparative analysis of homelessness policy in Ireland, Scotland and Norway (Anderson, Dyb, & Finnerty, 2008). Subsequently, the financial crisis hit large parts of Europe, with the implementation of austerity policies as

national governments sought to address the impact of the crisis via contractionary fiscal policies.

Building on our earlier comparative analysis, this article explores whether and how homelessness policy changed in this economically challenging period, framed within theories of path dependency regarding welfare and housing systems, as well as homeless-specific policies. Prior to the GFC, the three countries exhibited some similarity in homelessness problems and policies (e.g. convergence on housing-led approaches to homelessness), despite being dissimilar in other aspects of homelessness governance, housing systems and welfare regimes. Given the differing nature and severity of how the GFC manifested and was responded to in the three countries, the paper explores whether this resulted in increasing divergence in homelessness policies and in the nature and scale of homelessness since 2008.

The three countries considered here were differently affected by the crisis: Ireland as one of the hardest hit countries in Europe, Scotland less so, and Norway with hardly any noticeable changes to the economy during the period in question. Though hardest hit by the crisis, Ireland responded as the 'model pupil' in relation to complying with the demands of the EU Troika programme (which provided aid through the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF to Ireland and four other countries, Pisany-Ferry, Sapir, & Wolff, 2013) and implemented policies which prioritised cutbacks in capital expenditure programmes such as social housing construction (Dukelow, 2016). While the devolved nature of Scottish government makes it appropriate to consider Scotland as a distinct nation in relation to housing policy and responses to homelessness (McKee, Muir, & Moore, 2016), Scotland experienced severe cuts to public expenditure and welfare services as part of the UK response to the GFC, particularly in the post-2010 period (Lupton, Burchardt, Hills, Stewart, & Vizard, 2016), even though the UK avoided any troika 'bail out'. Due to a solid oil-based economy, Norway was largely shielded from the effects of the crisis until as recently as late 2015, although a sharp drop in oil prices at an early stage of the crisis created uncertainty in the oil dependent part of the economy. By 2016, investments in oil production and oil related activities were in a phase of rapid downsizing, with widespread consequences, in particular for the Western coastline of Norway with a rather dramatic increase in unemployment.

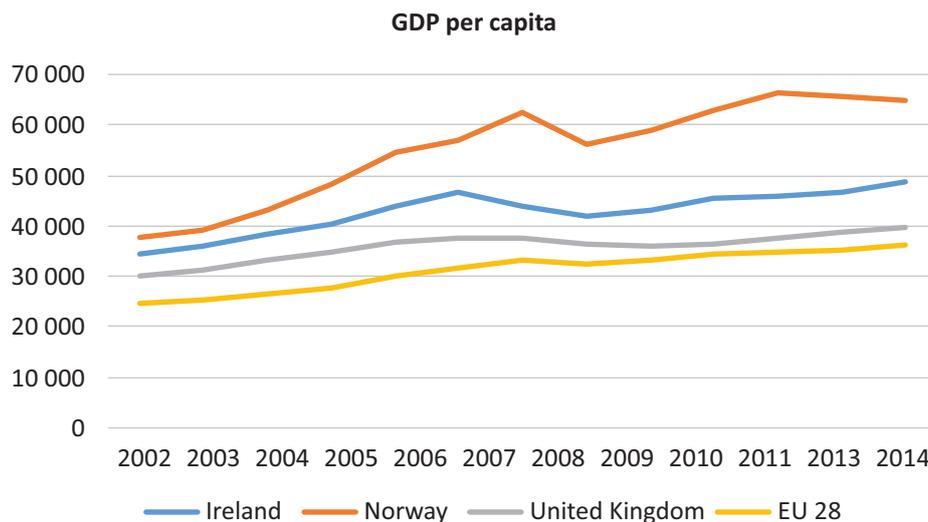
The connections between homelessness, wider societal structures and events such as the global financial crisis are complex. Although a detailed critique of the impact of the GFC on Ireland, Scotland and Norway is beyond the scope of this paper, it is possible to examine whether and how homelessness policies developed and changed during the subsequent period of profound economic and social change in Europe. In contrast, the immediate prior period (2000 to 2007), had been largely characterised by prosperity and a degree of convergence in progressive, inclusive homelessness policies, particu-

larly embracing housing-led approaches, in and beyond our three countries (Anderson et al., 2008; Benjaminsen, Dyb, & O'Sullivan, 2009).

Our key research question then is whether and how homelessness policy changed across the three countries in the more economically challenging period after the GFC. Section 2 sets out our analytical approach to the question and our research method. Our comparison of welfare regimes and social housing systems is further developed in section 3. In section 4 we revisit the conceptualisation and measurement of homelessness in the three countries and the nature of the institutions which deliver homelessness policies and responses, before examining change in the post-2008 period. Taking account of differences in conceptualisation and measurement in the three countries, we examine whether there were changes in the nature of homelessness in the post-2008 period and what were the resultant policy challenges in sustaining a housing-led focus on resolving homelessness. Our analysis of homelessness in relation to notions of path dependency and institutional embeddedness enables development of our final comparative analysis and conclusions on homelessness policy continuity and change across the three countries (Sections 5 and 6).

## 2. Analytical Model and Research Method

Our analytical approach draws on institutional theory and the notion of path dependency. This approach is well suited to compare cases that share some overall features, however divergent in specific areas. Although the 'arc of prosperity' phrase seemed of limited validity in retrospect, the three countries continued to share some key characteristics which suggested they remained reasonably comparable with each other as case study examples (Yin, 1994). They are sited within the Northern arc of Europe and geographically at the fringe of the European Union. Ireland and Scotland/the UK are EU members (the research was completed prior to the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership) and although Norway is not a member of the EU, its economy is deeply woven into EU legislation and the wider economy of the European Economic Area (EEA). The countries have similar populations, ranging from just above 4.8 million inhabitants in Ireland, to 5.2 million in Scotland, with Norway in a middle position with just above 5 million inhabitants. They are all 'mature' welfare states with well-established welfare institutions, and included both as 'Northern European' countries and as 'high-income' countries in the United Nations (2015) classification of countries by major areas/region of the world. Comparing the three economies is complicated by the inclusion of Scotland within the larger UK economy with a population of 60 million (Figure 1). Scotland (UK)'s GDP has been consistently lower than that of Ireland, with Norway significantly more prosperous than the other two countries, though all three remained above the EU average GDP before and after the GFC.



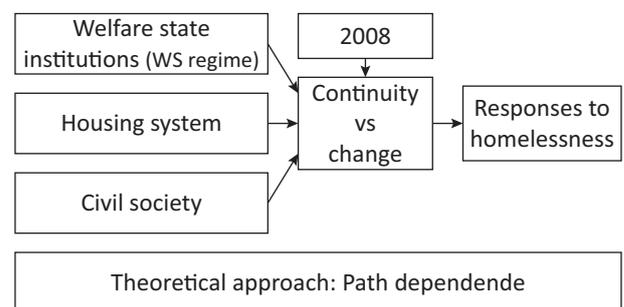
**Figure 1.** GDP per capita for the three countries and EU average. Source: OECD <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/national-accounts/data/database> (Scotland represented by UK figures).

Our comparison of the three countries is derived from desk-based research by the three authors drawing on the international research literature and publicly available official statistics and policy documentation for the three countries. The research method incorporated application of our theoretical approach to the comparative review of the evidence of continuity or change in homelessness and policy responses in our three case study countries. While other studies (e.g. Fitzpatrick & Stephens, 2014) have benefited from cross-national empirical data collection, this article focuses on change over time, utilising the existing data sets for the three countries.

Our theoretical approach draws on the notion of path dependence and institutional theory (Mahoney, 2000; North, 1990). That is to say, what are the conditions for emergence of institutions, for sustaining institutions and for institutional changes? The notion of path dependency does not predict a deterministic process, ‘it is not a story of inevitability in which the past neatly predicts the future’ (North, 1990). There might be, and usually are, several events influencing any one event, decision, policy programme etc., some of which perhaps lead to unintended results or to the final result (intended or unintended). The decisions made at one point in the historical pathway are likely to narrow the choices at a later point. However, while the main institutions in society may be solid and only change slowly, at a particular moment striking turns may occur or be activated, for example involving sudden economic shocks such as the GFC. These possible turns or developments are, however, dependent on and limited by former developments and structures.

The development of the divergent housing systems in the Nordic countries was rigorously investigated by Bengtsson, Annaniassen, Jensen, Ruonavaara and Sveinson (2006) and Bengtsson and Rounavaara (2010) who argued that path dependency allowed for the possibility that single events might influence societal outcomes, but

also that previous events might be distant in time from the outcomes explained by them. Importantly, explanation required a process or ‘temporal’ approach, analysing change over time: ‘progress in the analysis of social, institutional and discursive change in housing...lies in combining historical and contextual sensitivity with a thinking in terms of social mechanisms’ (p. 200). Discussing homelessness in relation to institutionalism and path dependency is rare in the European research literature on homelessness, though Irving-Clarke (2016) applied this framework to his analysis of policy development for supported housing in the UK. This paper seeks to contribute to the literature on homelessness and social inclusion by taking forward the longitudinal analysis of institutionalism, path dependency and homelessness. Figure 2 shows a simplified diagram of our analytical model relating institutional structures and path dependence to an analysis of homelessness policy.



**Figure 2.** Institutional structures influencing homelessness policy change (source: authors).

Path dependency is the analytical concept of the model. From left to right, Figure 2 shows three sets of variables (welfare state institutions, the housing system and civil society) which to a larger or smaller degree in different national settings influence policy responses to homelessness. The welfare state institutions comprise the most

comprehensive set of variables and cover all types of institutions involved in homeless policy in a broad sense. Esping-Andersen's (1990) typology of welfare regimes serves as a concept to narrow and handle the welfare state institutions. The relationship between the welfare system and the housing system is complicated (section 3 below). Stephens, Fitzpatrick, Elsinga, van Steen and Chzhen (2010) found welfare systems to be a vital factor in explaining levels of homelessness and interventions within nation states, but they also emphasised that the housing system and housing policies are important influences. Within civil society, voluntary organisations are particularly important players in the homelessness field, although their role varies across the three countries in this article. Private providers of homelessness services might also be included within the civil society set of variables, depending on the nature of their involvement in welfare arrangements to tackle homelessness. The 2008 point marks the onset of the GFC which was followed by a period of austerity politics, which may or may not trigger changes in responses to homelessness. The institutional arrangements covered by the independent or explanatory variables will also have developed along certain paths, with vital decisions taken at certain points in time. While it is important to acknowledge that 'politics matters' in the analytical frame of path dependency, selected policy alternatives are likely to depend on prior events and choices.

Delving into each of the three sets of variables in detail is beyond the scope of this article. Rather, our ambition is to shed light on how homelessness and policy responses were shaped by the footprints of the welfare and housing institutions in the three countries and to examine the responsiveness of institutions to austerity policy after 2008. For example, path dependence would suggest a preliminary hypothesis that policy reactions to increased risks of structural homelessness and associated changes in the profile of the homeless population would reflect both prior policy arrangements and some degree of institutional inertia, particularly in relation to social housing supports. Regarding the comparative aspect, DiMaggio and Powell (1991) argues that modern institutions tend to develop towards isomorphism and convergence. Processes and initiatives at EU level, such as the Open Method of Coordination, peer reviews of homelessness strategies across the EU members, and work by FEANTSA [European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless] (the umbrella organisation for European organisations working with homelessness) to coordinate policy and research across the EU may also have driven convergence rather than differentiation (Gosme, 2014; Gosme & Anderson, 2015).

### 3. The Welfare State and Social Housing

Approaches to the comparative analysis of social policy, including housing and homelessness, have developed substantially since the ground breaking work of

Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990) which set out the thesis of three distinct, path dependent models of welfare capitalism (universalistic, corporatist and liberal). Criticisms have included neglecting the position of women (Sainsbury, 1999) as well as the role of housing systems. Esping-Andersen's analysis did not incorporate the Southern European nations and was completed before the post-communist Eastern European nations became integrated into European social policy, but scholars have subsequently sought to address these issues (e.g. Deacon, 2000; Ferrera, 1996; Gal, 2010). Our three countries diverge in their welfare state regime categorisation. Ireland and Scotland belong to the liberal welfare state model while Norway is an archetype of the social democratic (universal) welfare state. However, while accurately placed in the liberal model over many policy areas, Ireland had, up until the early 1990s, conformed to a more social democratic approach in some areas of housing, involving a lead role by local authorities in social housing provision (Finnerty, 2002; Finnerty & O'Connell, 2014a; Kenna, 2011). Similarly, Anderson (2004) argued that Scotland had more social-democratic roots forged in the 1945-1979 period of welfare and state housing expansion. What is less often noted in discussions of Esping-Andersen's welfare state typology is his emphasis on the similarities of modern (20<sup>th</sup> century) welfare state formation. Notably the three countries considered here are all mature welfare states with highly developed welfare arrangements.

While housing has typically been provided through both market and welfare mechanisms, services for homeless people in all three case study countries (shelters, temporary accommodation, day care, soup kitchens/food distribution, etc.) have been the responsibility of welfare services (particularly local authorities, social services, and to a varying degree, the voluntary organisations operating in the field). Housing provision plays a vital role in preventing and counteracting homelessness. The relationship of the housing sector to the welfare state has long been recognised as challenging and complex (Hoekstra, 2010; Kemeny, 1995; Malpass, 2005; Torgersen, 1987) with the housing sector mainly market-driven, even at the height of post-war welfare state provision. However, in parallel with the evolution of welfare states, Governments across Europe have supported the housing sector at certain points in time, in some countries quite heavily (e.g. all the Nordic countries, the UK, the Netherlands and Ireland) even though distinct housing systems developed in different countries. Social housing has been a key element in resolving homelessness and while generally a responsibility of local authorities (social service and/or housing authorities) or voluntary agencies, the development of social/affordable housing is connected to and interwoven with the general housing system.

In Ireland, post-2008 austerity policies initially accelerated the existing policy shift (since 2003) away from traditional local authority housing towards provision by

housing associations and private landlords renting to tenants in receipt of some form of rental subsidy (eligibility for this means-tested subsidy is determined by the local housing authority.) Central to this policy shift was a deepening reliance on the private market for both the financing and supply of social housing, under the banner of creating the ‘flexible and responsive social housing supports’ envisaged in the *Social Housing Strategy 2020* (DECLG [Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government], 2014, p. 51; Finnerty & O’Connell, 2014a, 2014b).

However, since 2014, an increasing shortage of affordable accommodation in the private rented sector has cast doubt on the wisdom of reliance on private landlordism in meeting social housing need, especially where policy had embraced housing-led solutions to homelessness. Policy responses to this shortage have included: landlord-tenant mediation services (including case-by-case discretionary increase in housing subsidy), more recently followed by an increase in the amount of housing subsidy paid to eligible renters; a two-year rent freeze, and the introduction of a new rental housing subsidy (the Housing Assistance Payment) whose novel feature is a tapered withdrawal of subsidy as household income increases.

Within the UK, Scotland was influential in the 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of council housing (and later the housing association sector) both of which provided secure, affordable housing for the working classes. UK-wide policy influenced the subsequent residualisation of council housing through sales to sitting tenants, a policy emphasis on home ownership, and reduced investment in social housing from the 1980s onwards. Like Ireland, Scotland experienced a gradual process of tenure transformation over the long term, where the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw continuing pressures on social housing, stagnation of home ownership and a resultant resurgence in private sector renting. Scotland’s social democratic welfare roots appeared to wither somewhat as income inequality increased in the devolved period (Morelli & Seaman, 2012). By 2015, while house prices and market rents showed an upward trend, overall housebuilding levels were well below their 2007 peak and social housing completions fell by 44% from 2010–2014, to just 3,217 in 2014 (Powell, Dunning, Ferrari, & McKee, 2015). These trends caused significant housing pressures including increased difficulty in entering home ownership. The estimated affordable housing requirement for Scotland was 12,014 dwellings per annum over five years, where the Scottish Government was committed to 6,000 per year in 2011–2016 (Powell et al., 2015).

In contrast to Ireland and Scotland, Norway was known as the social democratic homeowner nation (Annaniassen, 2006), with successive governments since the 1950s supporting homeownership. The main policy tool was the provision of low interest loans by the State Housing Bank combined with favorable taxation schemes which supported homeownership. According to Annaniassen, the decision to support homeownership was a moment creating a path dependency delimiting the choices

of the next generation of politicians and entrepreneurs. In the mid-1980s a conservative government took the decisive step to liberate the housing and financial markets, followed by downscaling of state subsidies to the housing sector. The large sector of cooperative housing had been characterised as a type of solidarity homeownership and, to a certain extent, as social housing. Deregulation led to house price rises in the pure private owner market, and the cooperative sector (still with price regulation) had a strong case when arguing for repealing the regulations. The two sectors became more equal with respect to price and second hand sale (remaining restrictions in the cooperative sector have no impact on price setting). These crucial changes in housing policy affected homelessness policy, or rather, the future basis for homelessness policy. Firstly, the cooperative sector became too expensive for the poorer and more vulnerable households. Secondly, because the cooperative sector was built as a substitute for, and came to a certain extent to replace publicly owned dwellings, these were and remained relatively few in number. Council housing was an important tool in homelessness policy; however due to the shortage of dwellings (just 1.5% of the total housing stock), it had largely become transitional housing. The policy shift reducing the traditional responsibilities of the Housing Bank might have resulted in a dramatic downsizing of the institution, but, from the end of the 1990s, the Housing Bank became a major national player in social housing policy targeting vulnerable groups. As a vital welfare institution in implementing homelessness policy, the strong position of the Housing Bank also enhanced a housing led homelessness policy at an early stage (around 2000).

Housing systems in Ireland and Scotland historically had some characteristics of a social democratic (rather than a liberal welfare) system, resulting in ‘social renting’ in these two countries, while the Norwegian housing system developed ‘social homeownership’. While momentum for far reaching changes in the structure of the housing systems may be identifiable in all three countries, the specific outcomes were not detached from the pre-existing structures in any of them. In all three countries a marked shift towards economic liberalism occurred during the 1980s, continuing through the 1990s and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the Irish case, the large local authority housing sector was supplemented by housing association provision and from 2003, displacement of this public and housing association provision by private landlords. In Scotland, the late 1980s also marked a long-term shift to privatisation and residualisation of the council housing sector, while in Norway, ‘social homeownership’ evolved into a ‘liberal’ system (Stamsø, 2009, 2014) with limited public intervention to alleviate the negative effects of the market. Although Ireland saw further reliance on private provision of finance and accommodation supply in the social housing sector in parallel with austerity policy, there was no significant institutional turn in structures for social housing provision directly linked to the GFC in any of the three cases.

#### 4. Homelessness, Institutional Embeddedness and Policy Change

##### 4.1. Conceptualising Homelessness and Trends in the Homeless Population

How homelessness is defined in any country directly influences the measurement of homelessness, and the influential ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) conceptualisation of homelessness (Edgar, 2009; FEANTSA, 2016) has aided international comparisons. The ETHOS typology identifies four broad conceptual categories (rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing) which can be utilised in comparing the definition and measurement of homelessness in Ireland, Scotland and Norway.

In Ireland, homelessness policy continues to understand homelessness as encompassing rooflessness and houselessness only. The official definition remains that of Section 2 of the Housing Act 1988, where a person is regarded as homeless if the housing department of their local authority judges that they have no accommodation that they can ‘reasonably occupy’, or they are living in some form of emergency accommodation, and are judged to have insufficient resources to secure reasonable accommodation. While this could encompass a wide range of housing need, in practice the definition is interpreted narrowly to focus on those sleeping rough and those living in emergency and transitional accommodation. In the 2008 revised national homelessness strategy, other groups at acute risk of homelessness such as soon-to-be released prisoners without an address were included in the definition DEHLG [Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government] (2008a). Ireland also conducts national counts of homeless persons. Every three years, Irish local authorities conduct a point in time assessment of homelessness as provided for in section 9 of the Housing Act 1988. The 2008 count enumerated 1394 homeless persons (DEHLG, 2008b, p. 103), although homelessness NGOs disputed these official figures. The local authority three-yearly count has been superseded by a count of rooflessness and houselessness in the five-yearly Census of Population, and more significantly, by a new software system to provide monthly statistics on numbers using emergency shelters only. The most valid and reliable count of rough sleeping has been conducted twice yearly in Dublin since 2007 by the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive. The extent of rough sleeping was relatively low at around 70 persons in Dublin in 2010, predominantly (around 80%) male and single, with high levels of addiction and mental health issues (O’Reilly et al., 2015). A separate count of those in social housing need, including categories such as living in unaffordable accommodation and involuntarily sharing showed a much larger and growing population, reaching almost 90,000 persons by 2012.

Homelessness in Ireland is highly concentrated in the main cities, with the Dublin region accounting for 70% of

the recorded houseless population. A significant factor impacting on demand for Irish homeless services prior to the global financial crisis was the growth in homeless persons of Eastern European origin (Bergin, Lawless, Lalor, & Pym, 2005), resulting from rising unemployment, enlargement of the EU, and the application of a Habitual Residency Condition (which barred anyone not resident in Ireland for the previous two years from claiming social welfare assistance and from eligibility for social housing assistance). From early 2014, houselessness (excluding rough sleepers) increased rapidly, to 6,611 persons nationally (4,248 adults and 2,263 dependent children) in August 2016 (DECLG, 2016). This increase is noteworthy for the number of families accommodated in emergency accommodation, involving a 215% increase in the number of families, and a 215% increase in the number of children, since July 2014 (DECLG, 2016). In Dublin, the numbers recorded as sleeping rough have fluctuated between 90 and 105 persons in the counts from Spring 2015 to Spring 2016 (DRHE, 2016). Increases in rough sleeping since late 2014 have been recorded by homelessness services in Cork City, with an average of 17 people sleeping rough in August 2016, and a total of 345 people sleeping rough and 124 people in squats throughout 2015 (Cork Simon Community, 2016). Although lagging behind the immediate impact of the 2008 GFC, rising homelessness has been clearly linked to structural/economic (rather than individual level) mechanisms, such as the shortage of available and affordable accommodation in the private rented sector (behind which lies a resumption of rental inflation in the private rental sector for which housing subsidies have failed to compensate; lack of private social housing new build; and policy reliance on private landlords to assume a social housing role) (Finnerty, O’Connell, & O’Sullivan, 2016; Walsh & Harvey, 2015). A statutory measure of the ‘waiting list’ for social housing is an unreliable indicator, as those in certain kinds of rent supplemented accommodation have been removed from the list as being ‘adequately housed’ in their current private rental accommodation.

For Scotland, the definition of homelessness was consolidated in Section 24 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, and summarised for Government reporting purposes as: ‘A person is homeless if he/she has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere. A person is also homeless if he/she has accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it, for example because of a threat of violence. A person is potentially homeless (threatened with homelessness) if it is likely that he/she will become homeless within two months.’ (Scottish Government, 2008, p. 18). Although superficially similar to the Irish legal definition, Scottish practice embraces elements of all four ETHOS categories (rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing) through a wider interpretation of tests of ‘reasonableness’ of existing or previous accommodation. The legal definition underpins local authority statutory homelessness duties, and official homelessness statistics for Scotland have counted applicants

who apply to local authorities for assistance under the legislative framework since 1977, resulting in a comprehensive annual data set spanning nearly 30 years. Some 34,662 applications were recorded in the year 2015–16, of which 16,395 were assisted into settled housing, following assessment (Scottish Government, 2016a). For international comparison however, the point in time data on the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation at the end of the annual statistical period is more useful. At 10,555 households on 31 March 2016, this was still significantly higher (pro-rata total population) than the level of homelessness in Ireland. The number of households in temporary accommodation had steadily increased from 3,995 in 2000, to 11,254 in 2011 but this reflected a pre-GFC policy change in the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 which widened the statutory homelessness safety net over the period up to 2012 (Anderson & Serpa, 2013; Scottish Government, 2015a) rather than the direct or exclusive impact of the GFC. Homeless people who apply for assistance are asked if they have previously slept rough but the Scottish Government has not maintained distinct rough sleeping counts, representing a weakness in the Scottish data on homelessness. However, the Scottish Household Survey indicated rough sleeping was experienced by as many as 5,000 persons a year with around 660 people (mostly men) sleeping rough on a typical night (Fitzpatrick, Pawson, Bramley, Wilcox, & Watts, 2015). National survey data also confirmed the key role of household-level poverty in the generation of homelessness in Scotland (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). Over the long term, reasons for homelessness in Scotland have remained closely linked to the breakdown of a relationship or the breakdown of living arrangements in shared accommodation, reflecting a lack of alternative housing availability (Scottish Government, 2015a). The characteristics of homeless applicants were also reported as fairly consistent before and after the GFC: the majority of applicants tend to be single, younger males of White Scottish ethnicity (Scottish Government, 2016a) although the proportion of all applicants reporting needs for support beyond housing increased from 34% in 2012/13 to 42% in 2015/16.

Unlike Ireland and Scotland, Norway has no statutory definition of homelessness. Rather, the definition was adopted for research purposes. Inspired by a Swedish national homeless survey in the early 1990s, and informed by the similarities of the two countries' welfare arrangements, Norway adopted the Swedish definition and methods for the first Norwegian homelessness survey. The definition is, as in the Irish case, primarily convergent with the 'roofless' and 'houseless' ETHOS categories. Those counted as homeless in this and future surveys are those without an owned or rented dwelling and staying in one of the following situations: in casual or temporary accommodation, without an organised place of residence for the coming night; and living temporarily with family, friends or acquaintances. Also included are

people who are in prison or in an institution, and who are to be released or discharged within two months without an address. Those in precarious housing situations (e.g. moving between short-term tenancies) are not defined as homeless. The Norwegian definition of homelessness may be characterised as rather narrow compared to the legislative driven definition in Scotland, but wider than in countries defining homelessness mainly or exclusively as sleeping rough and staying in homeless shelters. Norway's homelessness census is cross-sectional and measures homelessness during one specific week (usually week 48 or 49). Registration is carried out by service providers (social services, housing authorities, child welfare, correctional services, local and national health services and civil parties). Five homelessness surveys have been conducted since 1996 with the sixth due in late autumn 2016, creating time series data on homelessness in Norway over a period of 20 years (including the 2016 survey), with very little amendment to the definition and operationalisation since 1996. However, the number of variables in the survey was increased successively. The surveys represent a comprehensive picture of homelessness in the country in addition to enumeration of the population. Apart from a drop in the number of homeless people from the first to the second survey, homelessness in Norway has increased slightly with each survey. However, relative to the population growth the increase in homelessness figures were minimal from 2008 to 2012. In 2012 the number enumerated was 6,257, corresponding to 1.27 per 1,000 population (Dyb & Johannessen, 2013). As also noted by Benjaminsen and Lauritzen (2015) the homeless populations in the Nordic countries are dominated by people with multiple problems. The largest group is single males of national ethnic origin, with an addiction, and with social security benefit as main income. Despite an overall moderate growth in the number of homeless persons, the number of children homeless with their parent(s) increased by 70% (from 400 in 2008 to 679 in 2012) (Dyb & Johannessen, 2013), which may reflect a noticeable increase in the number of children living below the EU poverty limit of 26% from 2008 to 2015 (mainly a structural poverty problem). The 2012 census made an effort to include migrants living on the streets and in night shelters. The objective was only partly successful, not because of the rigid definition of homelessness, but because these groups have very limited rights to welfare services in Norway, and thus are exceptionally hard to reach.

Comparing our three cases, there is no simple correlation between conceptualisation and measurement of homelessness, and either housing system or wider welfare regime, with Ireland and Norway more similar in focusing on rooflessness and houselessness, compared to Scotland's more generous interpretation (including elements of insecure and inadequate housing) which resulted in a higher level of enumerated homelessness. All three countries have collected data on homelessness over the long term and have some post-2008

data, but differences in definition and frequency of enumeration still preclude straightforward numerical comparisons, though similarities in the profile of homeless households can be identified.

#### 4.2. Institutions and Homelessness

Fitting a policy analysis approach, institutions sit below the level of welfare regime types, and include national and local government and other stakeholders governing homelessness (Beer, 2012). Bengtsson and Ruonavaara (2010) highlighted social exclusion and norms of eligibility for access to housing as factors which could contribute to the long term continuity of residential structures. While housing may be largely distributed through the market, homelessness interventions are rarely, if ever, delivered by market mechanisms (though they may reflect market failure). Comparative homelessness research has often used welfare state regimes as a background typology (Anderson & Ytrehus, 2012; Baptista & O'Sullivan, 2008; Benjaminsen et al., 2009) and there is some consensus that homelessness to some extent reflects welfare state regimes, the degree of de-commodification of welfare and the generosity of welfare spending. Nordic welfare states would be characterised as least commodified/most generous, with the Southern European countries at the opposite end of the spectrum. Stephens et al.'s (2010) comparative study concluded that welfare regimes were of decisive importance for homelessness, although housing systems impacted the risk of becoming homeless. As well as defining homelessness in relation to position in the housing market, homelessness policy often also embraces individual vulnerability. The proportion of people with complex needs in the homeless population is at least partly explained by a low level of poverty and a higher threshold for becoming homeless in the Nordic welfare states compared to countries in the other regime clusters (Stephens et al., 2010). Broadly, the study found that structural homelessness (arising from prevailing social and economic conditions) was lowest where welfare safety nets were strong. The housing market was a major driver of structural homelessness, and access to affordable housing for vulnerable groups was a major concern even in countries with the strongest welfare protection. Targeted interventions could deliver reasonably good outcomes for homeless people, while homeless migrants were often the least well protected group. Drawing on data from the same six-nation study, Fitzpatrick and Stephens (2014) further identified social cohesion and egalitarianism (along with familism and individualism) as factors influencing interventions and outcomes for vulnerable groups of homeless people. In this section, we examine continuities and changes in the key institutions which provide accommodation and services for homeless people in our case study countries.

In Ireland, the Housing Act 1988 remains the key piece of homelessness legislation, giving power to local

authorities to intervene directly via cash payments to homeless persons (e.g. for emergency Bed and Breakfast (B&Bs)) or by direct provision of social housing (local authority and voluntary providers); or indirectly via cash assistance to voluntary bodies for providing emergency shelters, to assist homeless persons find accommodation. Another housing option is some form of rental housing subsidy, eligibility for which is determined by the housing authority (section 3 above). However, the 1988 Act left unclarified the relations between local authorities and the other statutory provider, the Health Boards (subsequently the Health Services Executive), and indeed with voluntary providers. The Housing Act gave considerable discretion to local authorities in terms of who was to be counted as homeless and what services were to be provided to them, while the Health Service Executive continues to have a broadly defined remit to meet the needs of homeless persons. The strong position of the church in Ireland has also been emphasised with respect to homeless policies (Baptista & O'Sullivan, 2008). This position has played out at a number of levels: in terms of the mixed economy of welfare, a strong reliance on charities (albeit now with quite high levels of state funding) to provide emergency responses; in attitudinal terms, a relatively high level of public support for tackling homelessness (in the abstract); and—in the face of loss of trust in a variety of institutions (including charities)—a continuing high level of public goodwill towards organisations providing services for, and advocating policy change in relation to, homelessness (Finnerty, 2014a, 2014b).

In Scotland, local authorities also emerged as state providers of housing and also became the institutional solution to homelessness from the introduction of the legal framework in for England and Scotland in 1977. An important difference from the Irish case is that Scottish legislation conveys statutory *duties* to assist certain households facing homelessness, rather than merely discretionary powers to intervene. By and large, up to the end of the 20th century, Scottish households who applied and were eligible for assistance were rehoused in secure council or housing association tenancies. However, the legislation worked least well for single people and couples without children, who were largely excluded from the benefits of the legislation as 'not in priority need'. The institutional role for local authorities was expanded in Scottish legislative change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the abolition of the 'priority need test' by the end of 2012 effectively enhancing the strong legal framework, so that all applicants assessed as unintentionally homeless were entitled to settled accommodation (Anderson & Serpa, 2013). Institutionally, local authorities are assisted in their homelessness duties by third sector housing associations, advocacy agencies and support service providers, as well as by welfare policy (through UK and Scottish government health and social security services and local social care authorities), reflecting the dual requirement for both a housing policy and welfare policy solution to homelessness.

Although Norway has no homelessness legislation, the right to a roof over your head and to receive assistance with acquiring a permanent dwelling is legislated for in the Social Services Act, and institutionally embedded in welfare provision nationally in the Ministry of Social Affairs and locally by the municipal social services authorities. Homelessness policy is shaped and implemented by and between the institutional spheres of the national housing authority, which has no real counterpart at the municipal level, and the social welfare authorities both nationally and locally. Embeddedness of homeless policy within the national housing authority (the Housing Bank) has secured a steady focus on access to housing as an objective to counteract and alleviate homelessness. However, policy tools are limited, comprising targeted economic support and soft measures like programmes accompanied by support for developing competence and guidance. Local authorities exercise extensive autonomy in welfare service delivery, whereas social housing, with a weak legal status, varies widely between municipalities. The voluntary sector is an important stakeholder, however its role as advocate for homeless people is of greater importance than its share of total homeless service provision.

Looking at homelessness institutions in our three case study countries, we can see that core housing and welfare institutions have displayed considerable embeddedness since the post-world war II growth of the welfare state. Ireland and Scotland are most similar due to the institutional role of local authorities and housing associations in providing affordable rented housing, with Norway displaying a degree of institutional change in the role of the State Housing Bank in developing and implementing homelessness policy. The increasing role for voluntary sector institutions in homelessness advocacy and service provision has been identified in all three countries, albeit often in partnership with the state sector.

#### *4.3. Homelessness After the 2008 Financial Crisis—Policy Change in Three Case Study Countries*

In this section of the paper, we examine whether key policy shifts in homelessness occurred in the post-2008 austerity period, despite institutional embeddedness of housing systems and institutionalised homelessness structures. Given that the GFC was more directly associated with austerity policy in the two liberal welfare states, compared to the more economically resilient social democratic welfare state, we consider whether there has been associated divergence in homelessness and policy responses.

In relation to housing and housing policy in Ireland, a very sharp decrease in funding available for social housing construction occurred after 2008. However, the GFC merely intensified an existing trend, visible since 2003, toward increased reliance on the private rented sector to meet social housing need, via both leasing and housing subsidy arrangements (Finnerty et al., 2016). While

this planned private provision of the social housing ‘offer’ was clearly inferior to the housing offer from local authorities and housing associations in relation to security of tenure, the principal problem continued to be the lack of participation by private landlords in these leasing and subsidy arrangements. Nonetheless, the three governments in power over this period remained committed to tackling homelessness and increasing social housing output in response to the wider context of growing housing insecurity amongst low-income households in the private rented and in owner-occupied tenures (including those in long-term mortgage arrears). The ‘partnership government’ of May 2016 created a new Department of Housing, and the new Minister of Housing rapidly produced an *Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* which, inter alia, provides incentives to private landlords to participate in social housing delivery and accelerates the resumption of social housing construction by local authorities and housing associations (with a target of 47,000 new units by 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2016). In relation to homelessness, the national homelessness policy, published in 2008 just as the housing bubble was bursting, had as its key target the elimination of long term homelessness by end 2010 (DEHLG, 2008a). When this target was not met, and despite the backdrop of economic crisis, the target was restated briefly in the context of a 2011 housing policy statement by the incoming coalition government, and elaborated on in a 2013 homelessness policy statement (with 2016 as the revised target year for ending homelessness) (DECLG, 2013). A further significant intervention was the requirement placed on the main urban local authorities to prioritise homeless households in their allocations policies. While the Action Plan omits mention of the elimination of homelessness, it nonetheless lists a series of measures to prevent and address homelessness (such as 1,500 rapid-build units, higher rates of rental subsidy for those exiting homelessness, and an expanded tenancy protection service in urban areas) and to address aspects of housing precarity in the private rented and owner occupied tenures. The explanation for this high political salience of homelessness lies, as noted above, in the spread of housing precarity amongst low-income households who are private renters or are in mortgage arrears, and the increase in family homelessness, particularly in the Dublin region.

Scotland (as part of the United Kingdom) was subject to sweeping austerity measures in the post 2008 period, with an emphasis on the reduction of the public sector deficit through cuts in public expenditure which fell disproportionately on the poor and the young (Institute for Policy Research, 2015). The Scottish homelessness policy response was to promote homelessness prevention (known as Housing Options) alongside the existing legal safety net, acknowledging that it would not be feasible to ‘build a way out of homelessness’. Homelessness prevention guidance was launched in 2009 with Scottish Government funding from 2010 to promote joint working

and sharing of practice across local authorities. Policy change was governed through a joint stakeholder group with representation from central and local government (housing, health and social care services), third sector service providers and homelessness charities. From 2013 this Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group had an explicit brief to further embed homelessness prevention activity in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2015b). The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 gave greater discretion to social landlords in terms of who should be prioritised for housing, but also announced the abolition of the 'Right to Buy' in order to preserve the remaining social housing stock. The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 provided for modernisation of the terms of private rented tenancies in parallel with policy goals to better support access to private renting for lower income households. Further Housing Options guidance was issued in 2016 (Scottish Government, 2016b). Scottish Government (2016a) homelessness statistics reported a continuing fall in homelessness applications in the post-2008 period. However, this was acknowledged as reflecting the impact of housing options/homelessness prevention strategies rather than changes in the structural drivers of homelessness. It was further acknowledged that the reduction in homelessness had already slowed to a point where the impact of prevention was unlikely to lead to further large reductions in homelessness applications, with two thirds of homeless applicants having first been through the housing options service (Scottish Government, 2015a, 2015b).

Longitudinal, independent analysis of the impact on homelessness of economic and policy developments (from a baseline in 2012) concluded that Scotland faced a slow pace of economic recovery combined with the impact of welfare and housing reform (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015), but Scotland retained the most ambitious homelessness legislation in the UK. Enumerated homelessness actually peaked in 2005/6 ahead of the GFC, as Scotland expanded its homelessness safety net up to 2012. This was followed by a marked downward trend in the 5 years up to 2015, acknowledged to be a result of homelessness prevention and despite wider austerity measures (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015; Scottish Government, 2015a, 2015b). Anderson and Serpa (2013) interpreted these trends as a 'blurring' of homelessness policy in the austerity period, and the Housing Options approach was also reviewed critically by the Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) for lack of clarity in relation to the statutory homelessness system. Research by Mackie and Thomas (2015) revealed that 80% of approaches to homelessness prevention services were from single people, who remained more likely than families to become homeless, to experience drug/alcohol dependency or mental health issues, to be temporarily accommodated in hostels or B&Bs, and to wait longer for settled accommodation.

While homelessness has been an important policy issue in Norway for more than a decade, the number of homeless people saw a slight but steady increase in the

post-2008 period. The Norwegian government had previously implemented two national schemes to prevent and combat homelessness. Project Homeless (2001–2004), included only the largest cities while Pathway to a Permanent Home (2005–2007) was implemented nationwide, and the subsequent national homeless census for 2008 coincided with the onset of the GFC. Although Norway was largely shielded from the effects of the crisis, some financial uncertainty was experienced in the housing market. People became more hesitant to buy housing, and so some of those in cohorts expected to move into homeownership lingered in the rental sector, thus 'occupying' dwellings that under other conditions would have been available for vulnerable households (Dyb, Helgesen, & Johannessen, 2008). This interpretation would explain why homelessness increased despite a nationwide program to combat homelessness, although pressures in the sparse municipal rental sector and similarly limited private rental sector also contributed. The national strategy had set some quite ambitious targets for combating homelessness, and evaluation found that the single most important explanation for not reaching those targets was shortage of available housing in the municipalities (Dyb et al., 2008). Since 2008, Norway has not had a homeless strategy or scheme. From around 2010 the Housing Bank coordinated the 'Social housing development program' in which selected municipalities facing considerable social housing challenges (including homelessness) were invited to cooperate with the Housing Bank. Contractually, the Housing Bank provided funding and assistance, while municipalities committed to working towards specific objectives (defined by the municipalities or with assistance from researchers/consultants). Evaluation (utilising 'soft' measurements) demonstrated that the participating municipalities implemented the programme in accordance with the contracts (Grønningsæter, Becken, Bakkeli, Klingenberg, & Strand, 2015), and the homeless census due in November 2016 was anticipated to provide a further measure of the effects of the programme. The 'Social housing development programme' was winding up during this research with the 'Housing for welfare' strategy being rolled out (2015–2020). Homelessness and housing exclusion were increasingly recognised as "wicked problems" in Norway, requiring involvement of all national welfare institutions and other stakeholders. 'Housing for welfare' was supported by five Ministries and was more far-reaching than the former scheme (Housing for Welfare, 2014). Among priority groups were families with children experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, and refugees with a residence permit waiting in a refugee centre for settlement. The most visible change in homelessness and social housing policy since 2008 was to a broader approach, additionally including households in precarious housing situations and linking homelessness policy to anti-poverty and labour market policies. However, the Ministry responsible for housing and the Housing Bank were still the main stakeholders for the homelessness policies.

The evidence in this section has raised some further challenges in interpreting post-2008 homelessness policy change in terms of direct responses to the GFC and to austerity politics. The comparative analysis is further developed below (section 5).

## 5. Comparative Analysis

In this section, we refine our comparative analysis of homelessness policy change in the ‘former arc of prosperity’ drawing on our analytical model (Table 1) and the empirical evidence presented from the three case study countries. We consider in what ways politics and institu-

tional settings may have mediated the homelessness policy responses, and whether conceptualisation of homelessness and policies have exhibited greater divergence or not in the period since 2008.

In Ireland, the national homelessness strategy published on the eve of the GFC embraced a housing-led approach to tackling homelessness, albeit that a heavy reliance was now placed on the private rented sector as a housing exit. Moreover, a preventative dimension also featured strongly in the strategy. The impact of the GFC (and the bursting of the property price bubble) led to a lagged impact on the scale and nature of homelessness, manifesting as a steady increase in the numbers of fam-

**Table 1.** Continuities and Changes in aspects of homelessness in post-2008 Ireland, Scotland and Norway. Source: authors.

Aspects of Homelessness	Ireland	Scotland	Norway
Nature and scale of homelessness	Increase in family homelessness due to structural (housing and economic) factors.	Decrease in homelessness explained by prevention strategy despite austerity; continuity in profile of homeless population.	Minimal increase in the relative number of homeless persons. Considerable increase in family homelessness.
New/updated strategy	Yes: a number of policy and legislative changes: Housing Act 2009, Homeless Policy Statement 2013, Implementation Plan 2014, Rebuilding Ireland 2016.	Continuation of strengthening of legislative frame work through GFC (2003–2012), combined with parallel strategy to enhance homelessness prevention through Housing Options services from 2009.	Continuous programmes since 2000. Post 2008: Homelessness is part of a wider programme addressing social housing and services.
Objectives	The target of eliminating homelessness remained, but the end-date was pushed back from 2010 to 2016.	From 2009, aim to prevent homelessness where possible (e.g. earlier intervention through Housing Options), while sustaining existing legal safety net.	Preventing and curbing homelessness. Soft measures: financial project support, development of qualifications. No changes post 2008.
Institutions	Establishment of Regional Homeless Fora.	National: multi-stakeholder Homeless Prevention and Strategy Group. Local: local authorities lead partnerships with other statutory and voluntary agencies.	National: Multi-stakeholder programmes, the Housing Bank is the coordinating agency. Local: Social services are the main stakeholder.
Basic idea/philosophy	Deepening of housing-led approach to what was conceived as a small number of ‘chronic’ homeless persons with individual-level deficits.	Housing-led since 1977, legal framework strengthened in 2001 and 2003 Acts. Increased recognition of need for improved joint working with health, care and support services in 21 <sup>st</sup> century, continued post-2008.	Housing led from the first programme in 2000. No changes post 2008.

ilies in emergency accommodation, with the issue gaining high political salience from 2014. A new social housing strategy continued to emphasise the role of the private rented sector as an accommodation solution, despite rising rents and lack of participation of private landlords. A series of rather ad hoc policy responses to what is now widely deemed to be a homelessness crisis has been outlined by the new 'partnership government'. In retrospect, the ambition of the 2008 target of eliminating homelessness was based on the assumption of rooflessness and houselessness as (a) caused by individual level deficits and (b) as generating a small and stable number of 'chronic' homeless persons.

Scotland demonstrated 'positive path dependency' in the period immediately following the introduction of devolved government in 1999 when its 'rational' review of homelessness policy (Simon, 1959) through a Homelessness Task Force resulted in a strengthening of the longstanding legal framework at a time of economic prosperity and political confidence (Anderson, 2009). Post 2008, neither political change nor economic crisis produced sufficient pressure to undo the strongly inclusive policy and legislation in place since 2003. Rather, these embedded structures were more subtly affected by welfare reform, constraints on social housebuilding and a switch of emphasis to the 'soft policy' options of homelessness prevention and housing advice. Perhaps unusually, trends in homelessness reflected policy change more than economics. Homelessness applications increased during the period of prosperity (2000–2006) as the legislative framework was expanded and showed a modest decline during 2006–2012 as the expanded framework bedded down and the housing options/homelessness prevention services were introduced. Homelessness reduced significantly during 2011–2015 with the increased push to housing options services, but this may already have reached its full potential by 2016. While homelessness policy and practice may have mitigated some of the potentially worst effects of the financial crisis, avoiding a surge in homelessness post 2008, homelessness remained at a high level compared to Ireland and Norway, and other dimensions of hardship increased, such as time in temporary accommodation and use of new services such as food banks in the austerity period.

For Norway, the notion of path dependency demonstrates points of change and continuity in homelessness policy with the continuing presence of the Housing Bank as the main player. The transformation from a bank, although state owned with a social profile (it was first and formerly a finance institution), into a state welfare agency was not an obvious outcome of earlier rapid changes in housing policy. On the other hand, downsizing of the Housing Bank's traditional responsibilities coincided with an increased and renewed interest in homelessness research and policy. Unlike Ireland and Scotland, the definition of homelessness is not institutionally embedded in the housing legislation in Norway. The right to

housing holds a weak position in the social welfare legislation phrased as the social services' duty to assist with acquiring a permanent dwelling, whereas the responsibility for homeless policy and intervention programmes is assigned to the housing sector at the national level. Responsibility of homelessness policy placed on the housing authorities represents a strong incentive for maintaining housing as part of the homelessness solution and from the very first national programme launched in 2001, a housing led homelessness policy became a principal objective. Distinct from the financial crisis, it is hard to detect any austerity policy in the homelessness sector from 2008 to 2016.

Overall, our comparative analysis suggests few distinctive characteristics of homelessness policy according to Esping-Andersen's welfare regimes. This conclusion differs somewhat from that of a comparative analysis of homeless strategies in five liberal welfare states (Ireland, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and four social democratic welfare states (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), in the period 2005 to 2011 (Benjaminsen et al., 2009). The 2009 analysis was based on a review of homeless strategy documents and not on the implementation of the strategies. All the strategies shared some common objectives, like ending street homelessness, reducing stays in shelters, providing long-term or permanent accommodation and providing individualised services and support. In the five liberal welfare states, a statutory definition of homelessness embedded in the housing legislation was evident in the strategy documents. Generally, the link to housing policy was less evident in the homelessness strategies of the social democratic welfare states. As demonstrated here, Norwegian homelessness policy shares a strong linkage to housing policy with its two liberal counterparts, although the ties to the housing system have different institutional sources; the Housing Bank in Norway and the legal framework in Ireland and Scotland.

Thus, while in Ireland and Scotland the concept of homelessness is shaped by the legal framework, in Norway the definition derives from research and policy purposes. The definition of homelessness in Ireland appears more elastic than that of Norway, with Scotland embracing the broadest interpretation of homelessness. In both Ireland and Scotland municipalities have some discretionary authority in their interpretation of the respective legal frameworks and national policies. This allows for a certain flexibility in assessing homelessness, but overall interpretation is driven at national level, albeit in partnership with municipalities. The Norwegian definition has been developed from homelessness censuses over a period of 20 years, and conformity to the definition throughout the censuses is an important part of maintaining the time series of homelessness data. Looking past the formal definitions, all three countries apply concepts of homelessness with extensive room for political priorities and shift of focus between different homeless subgroups.

In their analysis Benjaminsen, Dyb, & O'Sullivan (2009) observed that the strategy documents in the liberal cluster of welfare states were extremely detailed. The authors noted that this was likely to reflect the relationship between central and local authorities, which left limited room for the local authorities to make their own plans. In contrast, the relatively greater autonomy of the municipalities in the social democratic welfare states afforded them far-reaching scope for local adaptation of the national strategy. The analysis in the present article nuances this conclusion from the homelessness strategy analysis. In Ireland and Norway, municipalities have a rather wider autonomy to prioritise between groups and shape a local service provision, compared to Scotland, where local autonomy in homelessness policy is more limited, although evidence does indicate some local discretion in practice. In Ireland, however, the centre has asserted greater control since 2008, with more stringent reporting requirements re process and outcome imposed on local authorities. Moreover, in all three countries, it is acknowledged that the high proportion of persons with multiple needs in the homeless population requires cooperation and coordination between housing, health, social services, child welfare and criminal justice services. The increasing effectiveness of their incorporation into national homelessness strategies and implementation demonstrates a gradual shifting of institutional embeddedness linked to the long term trend to better joined-up governance across public services.

The voluntary sector has traditionally played an important part in service provision to the poorest and most in need, including homeless households. Its size and the role differs considerably between Ireland, Norway and Scotland. Among the three case study countries, Ireland stands out as having a particularly influential voluntary sector in the homelessness field, with Norway and Scotland more equal regarding the role of homelessness voluntary organisations as partners of local authorities. A common characteristic of the present position of the voluntary sector in the North European countries is increased reliance on public funding, implying a degree of regulation of standards of service provision. However, the voluntary sector can still maintain some distance from statutory authorities, and define themselves as advocates for specific groups. Increasing dependence on public funding will require voluntary organisations to follow national and municipal priorities regarding homelessness groups and the orientation of public programmes, as public budgets reflect policy priorities.

Defining and redefining the concept of homelessness, and making decisions about who is entitled to support and who is not, is a way of governing homelessness policy. This observation was made by Sahlin (2004) analysing Swedish homeless policy more than ten years ago. One of the conclusions from the comparative analyses in this article is that, beyond diverging legal and/or research driven definitions of homelessness, governments in all three countries exercise power to define and re-

define who and which groups are a focus of homelessness policy in any given period. The voluntary sector often represents one or several voices in the homelessness discourse, which may produce some challenge to government programmes and policy along with service user organisations. These voluntary and service user organisations are present in all three countries, but appear to have a particularly strong voice in the Irish case.

Although there are differences across the three countries in the conceptualisation and measurement of homelessness, it is evident that homelessness remains a persistent problem across Ireland, Scotland and Norway. Our analysis supports the path dependency approach that 'history matters' in housing policy analysis (also Malpass, 2000, 2005). Despite institutional inertia and converging processes at European level, the analysis here also suggests that national 'politics' matters—as policies can defend inclusive, housing led approaches to homelessness, even in an era of neoliberal political convergence, economic crisis and austerity politics.

## 6. Conclusion

Despite progress made by FEANTSA and the introduction of ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion), comparing the exact number of homeless persons between different countries is still a considerable challenge. However, a growing body of comparative policy reviews, analysis and, to some extent, research in the field of homelessness has contributed to increased mutual understanding of concepts and a mutual language for comparison across countries and welfare state regimes. Due to unsystematic differences in the housing systems without any obvious pattern, comparative research and analysis has been hugely challenging in the field of housing (e.g. Crook & Kemp, 2014; Oxley, 2001; Stephens, 2016). To some extent, these challenges of conducting comparative research in housing also affect the homelessness field. At the end of the day, regardless of the definition of homelessness and whether policy is primarily embedded in housing or welfare policies, housing is essential in order to end or alleviate homelessness. Definitions, discretions and prioritising thus still govern who should have access to social or subsidised affordable housing and who has less priority or is excluded from the 'deserving' groups.

Our analysis of Ireland, Scotland and Norway indicated that Esping-Andersen's notion of welfare state regimes is not the most fruitful approach to comparing homeless policy among a small group of countries that share some common features regardless of their welfare regimes. Nonetheless, welfare state regimes continue to offer researchers an attractive departure point for comparative analysis, despite longstanding acknowledgement that housing does not fit the typology at all well. Kemeny (2001) emphasised the difference between the welfare regimes and the welfare systems produced within the regimes. National welfare systems are not a

static reflection of a specific welfare regime. The related approach of institutionalism led us to consider the significance of path dependency in relation to the institutions which underpin homelessness policy and practice in our three countries, the opportunities for change and the constraints which determine continuity in approaches to homelessness. This approach was fruitful in confirming strong formal linkages to housing policy in the homelessness strategies of all the three countries, and a considerable degree of resilience in relation to housing-led solutions to homelessness through varying political and economic pressures in the three countries since the GFC. Our analysis here points in the direction of curbing the use of the welfare state regimes as a comparative parameter and reconsidering the potential of institutional analysis as an alternative. Further empirical research across a larger number of countries and welfare regimes would enable more rigorous testing of this conclusion, and such research would require to be longitudinal in order to test for continuity or change in path dependency of housing and homelessness policies in relation to wider welfare structures.

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