THINKING OUTSIDE OF THE CORRUGATED BOX: AN EXPLORATION OF THE CAUSAL TENDENCIES DRIVING HOMELESSNESS

PhD Thesis

Date of submission: 30 September 2024

Colin Boyd MSc, BSc (Hons)
University of Suffolk – School of Social Sciences and Humanities.
Student number – s138340.
University of East Anglia – School of Social Work.
Registration number – 100301509.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Completing this thesis has been one of the greatest challenges of my life so far, and there were many times when I almost gave up. Fortunately, I had a great team around me, without whom this thesis might never have been finalised. Firstly, a massive thanks must be passed to my supervisory team. My primary supervisor **Dr Isabella Boyce** has kept me on track while challenging me intellectually. I have grown both as a person and academically thanks to her input. My secondary supervisor **Associate Professor Paul Andell** has become a great friend, supporting me from day one, and answering many questions I had on critical realism. This has ultimately converted me to this doctrine, although I suspect I was always a disciple without realising it. Finally, **Dr Mark Manning** has provided valuable advice and support during supervisory meetings, as well as in the comments section of my work. This has undoubtedly enhanced my thesis considerably. All three have been a great source of support during the many challenges I encountered over the past few years, and I will be eternally grateful for their support, extensive feedback on drafts, and their invaluable advice. Other academics who contributed at the early stages of this thesis were **Professor John Pitts, Dr Dan McCulloch,** and **Dr Georgia Philip**. My thanks is extended to them for providing the initial advice which got this project started. Thanks must also be given to **Associate Professor David James** and **Professor Jo Finch**, both of whom have provided valuable feedback as I have progressed with this thesis. From my personal life, I would like to thank every friend and family member who has provided words of inspiration. In particular, **Riaz, Bray**, and **Tracey** must be acknowledged for their patience, love, and encouragement. A big thanks also goes to **St Jude's Trust** for their financial contribution towards some resources which were otherwise unobtainable; this was a big help and I really appreciate it. The final thanks goes to **every participant** who agreed to take part in this research, including the organisations from which they were drawn. I am unable to name them all individually for ethical reasons, but please know I remember each and every one of you, and I greatly appreciate your input. This is especially true of those with lived experience who have shared a little bit of themselves during this research, and I really appreciate the courage in doing so.

Abstract

Introduction - Homelessness is a topic which has been extensively researched in the UK, yet an understanding of exactly how it comes to exist remains contested. Critical realist scholars have argued that various causal tendencies interact in the production of homelessness. However, recent critical realist work has positioned several structural factors as central to homelessness.

Objective - Using a critical realist approach, agency and culture will be written back into a causal framework, alongside structure. The purpose is to offer an original contribution by encapsulating the stratified interrelating factors which have a tendency to drive broad homelessness.

Method - Data was collected via poems from individuals who have lived experience of homelessness, semi-structured interviews with practitioners working in the field, and X (formerly Twitter) data. This was analysed using trusted critical realist procedures.

Results - Real mechanisms identified include trauma, patriarchy, discrimination, economic conditions, political will, a culture of distrust, organisational practices, and family structures. These mechanisms can create actual events which put human agents at risk of homelessness. These events include poverty, the proliferation of expensive or poor-quality housing, a lack of employment opportunities, marginalisation, substance misuse, survival activities, and domestic violence. In turn, these actual events can lead to observed experiential outcomes including a lack of suitable housing, poor decision-making, and homelessness subcultures. However, for homelessness to transpire, there usually needs to be a trigger event too. Furthermore, agency is of paramount importance because it can alter the extent to which these factors generate homelessness, but simultaneously, these factors can constrain the actions of agents.

Conclusion - A framework is ultimately offered, encapsulating the stratified factors of significance detailed above, whilst also acknowledging the synergy of agency in the production of broad homelessness. The policy implications of this are wide ranging but are imparted within this thesis.

Access Condition and Agreement

Introduction and structure of the thesis

My motivation for starting this thesis stems from my personal experience of homelessness and a subsequent period spent working as a practitioner in the field. My personal journey through homelessness was deeply unpleasant, it did not have an obvious cause, and there were many barriers to becoming rehoused. The subsequent time spent working in the field led to an awareness that unfounded judgements are sometimes made by practitioners, and this can adversely affect those who are experiencing homelessness. For example, there is a view amongst some practitioners that homelessness results simply from poor choices, and problematically, this view sometimes means that agencies can excuse themselves from the reflective process which might lead to improved practice. I also observed others in the field who attribute homelessness to a lack of adequate housing options only. What I ultimately experienced was a complex journey through homelessness, but with simplistic notions of homelessness being attributed by some practitioners. This is not to say that all practitioners were closed to the notion that a more developed causal framework could enhance understanding and practice, but there was sufficient denial of this to provoke the commencement of this research. As Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) note, understanding the causal tendencies of homelessness reinforces the moral imperative for action while also signalling opportunities to target interventions for high-risk groups. Through the research I conducted for this thesis, I explored the causal tendencies driving homelessness through the lens of a critical realist methodology. This allowed me to build upon the ideas offered by other critical realists in the field of homelessness, with the ultimate intention of contributing knowledge to the causation debate, as well as to policy and practice debates.

To understand 'homelessness' it is first necessary to define what constitutes being homeless, and herein lies the first challenge. Jacobs, Kemeny, and Manzi (1999) suggest homelessness research in the UK has been inundated by government-funded work, and as a result, researchers have been offered contracts to quantify homelessness in line with official measures. Rough sleeping has consequently been the focus of much work, and this serves to distort appreciations of the scale, profile, and location of homelessness in the UK (Cloke, Milbourne, and Widdowfield, 2001). The charity sector has also been prolific in the production of homelessness research in the UK, but conversely, they have a vested interest in overstating the extent of homelessness to secure donations (Jacobs, Kemeny, and Manzi, 1999). These factors combined have hindered a comprehensive discussion on definition, and consequently, a universally accepted definition is imperative (Edgar, Doherty, and Meert, 2002). There has been some progress on this in the European Union. A network of agencies working across Europe in the homelessness arena, known as FEANTSA[1] have advocated

---

[1] FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations working with those who experience Homelessness. They work to end homelessness in Europe and their activities include homelessness research.

for a European Typology of Homelessness to encompass four categories: rooflessness, homelessness, insecure housing, and inadequate housing (FEANTSA, 2007). The model advocates a broad definition of homelessness with all of the following situations included within these categories:

- Rough sleeping

- People using night shelters or hostels

- Those in immigration accommodation

- People due to be released from institutions such as prisons or hospitals without accommodation to go to

- Those in supported care for the homeless

- People who are sofa-surfing

- Those who face a threat of eviction

- Domestic violence victims

- People living in temporary accommodation

- Those in non-conventional structures or unfit housing

- People living in accommodation where there is extreme overcrowding.

It has however been argued that there should be a clear distinction between those who have no accommodation, and the broader category of those with housing need, as a failure to consider them distinctly risks undermining the significance of having absolutely no shelter (Pawson and Davidson, 2006). Nevertheless, a critical factor is that understanding has shifted to the extent that homelessness is no longer seen as consisting of an almost exclusively male alcohol-dependent population, which has been described as being inherent in the public consciousness for decades (Crinall, 2001). A broader perspective labelled the 'new homeless' has since emerged which includes families, women, children, the elderly, and ethnic minority groups (Lee, Tyler, and Wright, 2010). While homelessness amongst these groups is not actually new, Reeves (1996) suggests that major UK legislative changes in the 1980s led to a changing demographic of those who experience homelessness. Changes during this time are said to include the closure of psychiatric units, revision of social services and the care system, as well as ideological variation to state benefits. This disproportionality affected some demographic groups more than others (MacKewen, 1990) and may therefore provide a partial account for the emergence of the new homeless. More recently, Eastwood (2020) also highlights that the make-up of those who experience homelessness alters in accordance with societal changes. Such changes are thought to include the UK's closer relationship with Europe from 1973 onwards leading to a significant rise in

unhoused EEA[2] nationals, who came to the UK in the hope of economic advancement, only to find themselves out of work and with no recourse to public funds. It might therefore be the case that such factors have causal tendencies in relation to homelessness, and indeed an exploration of the causal mechanisms that can lead to homelessness is central to this thesis. However, the primary purpose of this narrative has been to explain how homelessness should be seen more broadly than single alcohol-dependent men who sleep on the streets. This is important because any research focusing too heavily on this group might misrepresent what it means to experience homelessness in modern UK society. Consequently, it is my thesis that homelessness should be seen as a broad issue, notwithstanding that there are likely to be differences between someone who has slept on the streets for a prolonged period and someone who has experienced only a brief spell in temporary accommodation. An inclusive approach to the definition of homelessness, which incorporates a number of broad categories, has previously been adopted by Bramley et al. (2022) and it is, therefore, a recognised way to explore the phenomenon. By considering homelessness in its broadest sense, the findings of this thesis will have broad application, rather than being limited to a narrow group.

Despite adopting a broad view of homelessness, defining it is still a complicated issue, not least because there are variations in how homelessness is viewed globally. For example, in the US, homelessness is often categorised as either transitional, episodic, or chronic depending on the length of the homeless journey and the number of episodes experienced (Culhane and Metraux, 2008). In the UK, a pathways approach to understanding homelessness has been advocated (Fitzpatrick, 1997). This idea advances that homelessness is not static, and instead, individuals can find themselves in and out of various situations of homelessness during their life course. This may include sleeping rough, staying with friends, staying in hostels, but also having phases of being in a secure tenancy. However, Fopp (2009) questions the use of pathways as a term, suggesting it may imply choice on the part of the person experiencing homelessness about which 'paths' to follow. This thesis conversely argues that paths can refer to different directions of travel without there necessarily being an over-emphasis on choice. It is worth also noting that some approaches to understanding homelessness have been criticised for offering a linearity in relation to experiences of homelessness, when homelessness is said to take a much more complex trajectory, with some individuals taking repeated paths in and out (Mallett, Rosenthal, and Keys, 2010). With this in mind, my thesis again argues in favour of the pathways approach, taking the view that it recognises such complexity. As such, as well as embracing a broad definition, this thesis also subscribes to the notion that homelessness is not static, with some

---

[2] EEA nationals are those from the European Economic Area who have the right to move freely throughout member states. The UK seized to be a member state on 31 January 2020.

who experience it taking multiple paths in and out, thus potentially finding themselves in a range of precarious housing situations during their life course.

There is a separate body of opinion that views homelessness as a socially constructed concept. For example, Wright (1997) suggests that those defined as homeless have become stand-ins for the poor in both the public consciousness and political discourse, thus becoming a visible representation of the abstract notion of poverty. Likewise, Pleace (1998) notes that there is no such thing as a unique social problem called homelessness, suggesting any study predicated on the assumption that it can be isolated and studied is founded on a misconception. However, Williams (2005) argues that the social categorisation of homelessness generates incomplete explanations, firstly because they fail to acknowledge that people do in fact live in a variety of precarious housing situations, and secondly because they fail to consider how these real situations will be driven by wider causal factors. This thesis accepts that someone who experiences homelessness might partially construct a narrative around what it means to be homeless, as indeed wider society might also construct ideas on what constitutes homelessness. However, a critical realist position is ultimately adopted, because like Williams, this thesis takes the view that homelessness is an event which exists in objective reality, and one which has causal mechanisms that can be examined to advance understanding of the phenomenon. The primary objective of this thesis is to examine homelessness in this way, thereby contributing knowledge on the causal mechanisms which have a tendency to produce it.

To end this introduction, it is finally worth noting that while homelessness is not a new phenomenon, an understanding of its visibility and extent has become more pervasive (Forrest, 1999). It is a topic that has been researched extensively worldwide including in the UK (O'Sullivan et al., 2020). This has contributed to a changing awareness of homelessness, but also to progress in informing the responses that should be deployed to tackle it (O'Connell, 2003). Housing First is one response which has emerged as the gold standard intervention globally for those who have been sleeping rough long-term (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013; Padgett, Henwood, and Tsemberis, 2016; Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2020). Despite this, there remain ongoing debates around the causes of homelessness more generally (Hornsby, 2018) and on what a complete homelessness strategy in the UK should look like (Dobson, 2018). The purpose of this thesis is to provide a causal framework which contributes knowledge to inform policy and practice in the future. It should be noted that Pleace (2017) suggests that we need not fixate on the root causes of homelessness, and should instead replicate Finland's model, which has undoubtedly been successful in reducing homelessness to very small numbers. However, he also acknowledges that the UK operates in a different cultural and policy landscape, with a different population size and demographic. Given these differences, this thesis argues that an exploration of

casual tendencies must first be explored so that responses can be devised that will adequately address the drivers of homelessness in the UK.

This thesis recycles some of the existing ideas on the causes of homelessness, but it nevertheless makes an original contribution in several ways. Firstly, it advances a stratified approximation of homelessness. Empirical, actual, and real-level factors are proposed in a way that has not explicitly been done in homelessness research previously. Secondly, it considers how agency, structure, and culture interact in the creation of homelessness. Doing this, affords an appreciation of exactly how homelessness can result in various contexts, and this has also been neglected previously. Finally, this thesis proposes a framework to explain broad homelessness, which again offers something original to the field. While critical realism is a philosophical approach which affords the realisation of stratified factors, the wider context in which they interplay, and a framework which embeds them all together, it is seldom for research to make ground in all these areas. This has not been done before in the discipline of homelessness, but the approach utilised within this thesis also provides an exemplar for the wider social sciences field. The overarching outcomes of this thesis ultimately provide a foundation for further exploration in future research, but perhaps the greatest contribution, is the validation within this thesis that it is possible to embed stratification, context, and a framework into a single piece of critical realist informed research.

Research Questions

Through a critical realist methodology, this thesis intends to advance knowledge on the following research questions:

1. Which individual, structural, and cultural factors have a tendency to cause homelessness?
2. How does agency, structure, and culture interact in driving homelessness?
3. How should policy and practice respond to homelessness?

To respond to these questions, the thesis will first provide a comprehensive overview of the literature. The methods deployed will then be explained and a further justification will be given for the chosen methodology. Several findings chapters will then set out the position of this thesis in relation to these questions, applying consideration to both existing theories and empirical findings, but ultimately determining the position based on reason.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of relevant literature on homelessness. It is divided into four sections, with the objective of providing a foundation of knowledge from which to expand on in subsequent chapters. The first section introduces the reader to homelessness by summarising some of the key principles on the topic in the UK. The second section considers causation theories and highlights that homelessness is unlikely to be caused solely by structural deficiencies or individual fallibility, and therefore the historical tendency of research to divert to these causal explanations has created inadequacy in formulating an all-encompassing understanding of why people become homeless. The third section covers homelessness interventions and discusses how Housing First schemes are emerging in the developed world as the quintessential response to homelessness. However, despite the effectiveness of schemes, Housing First does not provide a solution to everyone who experiences homelessness. The fourth section covers challenges to reducing homelessness and highlights the complexities around policy formation, suggesting there are both opportunities and challenges arising in contemporary UK society. The chapter concludes that policy and practice interventions deployed in the homelessness arena should be inextricably linked to a sound causal framework in order to increase the effectiveness of approaches. It further concludes that a need exists to make sense of the current misconceptions and ideological standpoints, which may underpin future policy formation, so that a shift towards evidence-based responses can take place. In doing so, the literature review justifies the need to revisit causality, as well as the need to reconsider policy and practice responses, thereby justifying the need to explore the research questions under examination in this thesis. It is central to my thesis that, despite homelessness receiving extensive coverage, as will be set out in this chapter, there nevertheless remains an opportunity to build upon existing ideas to deliver a framework of causal mechanisms. The framework will unify significant factors into a model, which together have a propensity to explain broad homelessness, thereby adding to knowledge on how future policy and practice might respond.

Section 1 – Key homelessness principles in the UK

This section will explain some of the key principles that have influenced how homelessness has been understood and responded to in the UK. Although not a specific focus of this thesis, the purpose is to introduce the practical and legislative developments which have been fundamental to how homelessness is recognised, thereby providing a foundation of key doctrine to apprise subsequent sections of this literature review and the wider thesis.

Emphasis on rough sleepers

There are a number of difficulties in defining homelessness that were discussed in the introduction of this thesis, but as emphasised, there has been movement towards a broader interpretation of what

constitutes homelessness. Despite the evolution of broader notions, a lot of the focus in policy, practice, and research has remained on rough sleepers (Clapham, 2003). This may be because rough sleepers represent visible cases, and consequently, there may be a greater impetus for the government to respond to this aspect of homelessness (May, Cloke, and Johnsen, 2005). However, narratives around rough sleepers evoke stereotypes, with the result being that a group comprising of many different circumstances can appear homogenised (Wright, 1997). This thesis acknowledges that this is problematic because the stereotypical notion of 'vagrancy' generates perceptions of deserving poor, and furthermore, Belcher and DeForge (2012) note that this prevents a robust examination of the actual causes of homelessness. It has been advanced that the sight of rough sleepers offends civilised communities, eliciting notions of a broken society, and therefore generating demand for government action (Fooks and Pantazis, 1999). Such demand for action could potentially explain government focus on rough sleepers, but it has also been suggested that wider fixation on this narrow group is advantageous to the government because it makes the problem seem smaller than it actually is, and therefore creates the impression that government policy on homelessness is working (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2007).

Enumeration of homelessness

To advance understanding of homelessness scale in the UK, the government conducts regular rough sleeper counts. Cloke, Milbourne, and Widdowfield (2001) question the extent to which figures in this area can be relied upon to be accurate. For example, fear of police action or personal attacks demands that those sleeping rough are unlikely to do so in prominent visible places (Hermans and Pleace, 2020) and therefore counts are unlikely to identify everyone who is sleeping rough. The inaccuracy of these counts is further supported by the BBC (2020) who suggests that 25,000 people slept rough in England during 2019. This contrasts with the official count of 4266 (House of Commons, 2020), a figure that provides only a snapshot on a single night. Furthermore, it can be noted that the government's 'Everyone In' scheme, which was launched during the Covid pandemic to provide immediate shelter to everyone without it, resulted in 33,000 people being helped between April and November 2020 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021). This provides further indication that historic government figures were likely to have significantly under-represented the scale of homelessness in England. Inaccurate enumeration more generally is said to have distracted attention away from the true extent of homelessness (Treglia and Culhane, 2023). Indeed, when a broader perspective of homelessness is taken, the scale is said to exceed 320,000 in Great Britain including 135,000 homeless children (Shelter, 2018). Consequently, it is argued through this thesis that homelessness is a bigger problem than previously characterised, and a significant shift in attention is needed to facilitate a more complete understanding. This therefore justifies the position of this thesis

to consider homelessness in a broad sense. Despite the significant focus on rough sleepers, legislation has a wider remit with various acts acknowledging a broader concept of homelessness, yet homelessness is still ill-defined in statute as will now be discussed.

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act (1977)

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act (1977) was a significant development in the UK, because before this, there was not a statutory definition of homelessness (Crowson, 2013). It was therefore the introduction of this legislation that placed the term in the vocabulary of social policy (Somerville, 1994). This is not to say that homelessness did not exist before 1977, but it was the introduction of this legislation that created a legal and political label for those who experience homelessness. This cemented the idea that homelessness could be separated from wider social issues as a distinct problem with its own set of causes and explanations (Minnery and Greenhalgh, 2007). This piece of legislation forms the framework for subsequent policy, and as such, is responsible for establishing the normative structure within which homeless issues have been viewed (Fitzpatrick and Pleace, 2012). According to Somerville (2013) the structure of the legislation means that to be classified as homeless, and therefore receive full state assistance, applicants are assessed by several conditional categories. Firstly, the legislation contains the mechanisms that enable local authorities to assess individual cases according to `priority need', with individual characteristics compared against criteria that determines who should be given preferential treatment in finding permanent accommodation. Likewise, applications can be assessed by the `intentionality' clause allowing local authorities to determine whether an individual has made themselves homeless in order to be re-housed. Finally, `local connection' demands that applicants have a prior association with the area in which they are applying. This thesis argues that the problem with this legislation is that many individuals fall through the cracks because they do not fulfil these criteria, but despite this, Crowson (2013) notes that the legislation has provided the eligibility for assistance benchmark on which subsequent policy has followed.

The objective of the legislation was to create a legal structure from which people who experience homelessness could claim social housing. Hutson and Clapham (1999) therefore suggest the legislation challenged earlier views which had been consistent since the passing of the 19th century poor laws linking homelessness with vagrancy and idleness. Instead, there was recognition that homelessness was a housing issue, but unfortunately this, in turn, required that the people who experience homelessness became subject to official judgements on 'intentionality' to qualify for the right to housing (Cowan, 2019). Marsh and Kennett (1999) note that such measures are necessary for policy to operate, but equally agree there is a strong aspect of judgement involved in using such criteria. Somerville (1999) concurs, stating that although the act marked a major achievement, it did not put an end to judgements being made about some people who experience homelessness as being

deserving. This is despite the legislation being developed during the 'zenith of homelessness' in the aftermath of the Cathy Come Home film which characterised a view of homelessness as being structurally caused (Jacobs, Kemeny, and Manzi, 1999).

Developments since 1977

Legislation is a structural factor which is of central importance to homelessness, and one which is likely to either impair or cultivate agency and culture, depending on the confines of the legislation. Consequently, it is worth considering more recent legislative developments given a central focus of this thesis relates to how structure, agency, and culture interact. Major changes since 1977 include the introduction of the Housing Act (1996) which set out the statutory conditions under which action should be taken to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people who experience homelessness. Devolution then occurred in 1999, and this resulted in powers being granted to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland to create their own legislative agenda, including on issues such as housing and homelessness. Since then, there have been some differences in how each devolved administration has responded to homelessness, and as such, this thesis will focus on legislative changes in England, although some will apply to the entire UK. Changes since devolution include the introduction of the Homelessness Act (2002), and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order (2002). These constitutions required every housing authority district in England to have their own homelessness strategy. They also extended priority need categories to include 16- and 17-year-olds, care leavers, and vulnerable people leaving the armed forces, prison, or fleeing domestic violence. However, despite the legislative changes, several commentators have noted that local authority housing officials still act as gatekeepers for the limited supply of social housing, only accepting those they deem to be most deserving, and thus a narrow statutory definition of homelessness has remained (Alden, 2015; Reinprecht, 2022).

Homelessness has recently been high on the political agenda, and this has culminated in a government pledge to end rough sleeping in England by 2027, and to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). This new legislation requires local authorities in England to provide a personalised plan to anybody who presents with a housing need. Baldwin (2020) believes the new legislation has led to creative solutions being deployed in some districts, but says local authorities are stuck because there simply is not enough social housing. Furthermore, he suggests the personalised plans often lack personalisation, and problematically, decisions on who to actually accommodate are still made based on priority need, intentionality, and local connection. In 2020 the government took the further step of commissioning Dame Louise Casey, former Director at Shelter, and advisor to Blair's Labour administration, to coordinate the government response to rough sleeping. In the wake of the Coronavirus outbreak, her duties were extended to safeguarding rough sleepers during the lockdown

period and beyond. It is reassuring to see political will in resolving the problem of homelessness, but all of this demonstrates that the government's priority remains on rough sleepers, while local authorities retain the position of determining who else to accommodate. Accordingly, from a constitutional perspective, notions of homelessness remain incomplete in the sense that only a narrow group receives assistance. This thesis intends to set out policy and practice recommendations that can respond to all homelessness. To inform these recommendations, this thesis first intends to advance a robust understanding of causality, but first, existing causal explanations will now be set out.

Section 2 - Causes of homelessness

This section will consider the historical and contemporary debates on the causes of homelessness. This is an important area given that causal tendencies are a central focus of this thesis. An overview of the varying arguments will help identify current positions, thereby providing the foundation for this thesis to later develop a framework. This will encompass individual, structural, and cultural factors. The causes of homelessness have historically been debated from a narrow 'dualistic' viewpoint, with either individual factors or structural issues positioned as dominant, or with people who experience homelessness being viewed as either deserving or undeserving (Neale, 1997). A historical overview of how individual and structural factors have been attributed to homelessness is provided by Gowan (2010) who suggests that up until the 1960s, 'sin talk' dominated homelessness doctrine. People who experience homelessness were seen largely as culpable for their own situation, due to individual factors such as drinking, drug-taking, and general recklessness. From the 1960s to the 1980s, 'system talk' became the dominant notion, in which the causes of homelessness were largely attributed to structural factors such as a lack of jobs paying a living wage, and a lack of affordable housing. Finally, from the 1980s up until recently, 'sick talk' became most dominant. This has coincided with an attempt to bring structural and individual factors together by exploring what makes an individual unable to navigate adverse structures, with poor physical and mental health often attributed to this inability. Despite there being some endeavour to move away from historic debates, Pleace (2019) suggests that structural and individual explanations have continued to dominate, with scholars usually positioning homelessness as a product of individual adversity or as a consequence of the neoliberal pursuit of inequality. Conversely, this thesis acknowledges that various individual, structural, and cultural factors will interplay, and its challenge is to conceptualise this to offer an alternative explanation for homelessness.

Individual causes

While much of the historic literature has positioned homelessness as having either an individual or a structural cause, Somerville (2013) is critical of such literature for lacking a conceptualisation of what counts as individual or structural, because he says some factors such as marriage breakdown can

potentially belong to either of these categories. Despite this assertion, there are some factors which distinctly fit within the individual domain, and within the existing literature, one of the central arguments on individual causation is that choice plays a role. This has led Parsell and Parsell (2012) to make a distinction between theories that consider homelessness as a 'rational choice' and those which view it as a 'deviant choice'. From a rational perspective, homelessness is seen as a calculated choice of a free agent who takes comfort from their refusal to subscribe to societal norms because of the strains this may place upon them, such as the need to pay regular bills. Conversely, from a deviant perspective, homelessness is seen as an irrational choice and a consequence of other deviant life choices. Individual explanations also generally situate the origins of homelessness within the individual, and according to Seal (2005), these explanations usually consider the person who experiences homelessness to be bad, mad, or sad. Some of the specific individual causes that are usually associated with homelessness include excessive drug use, alcoholism, poor budgeting, laziness, an inability to cope with employment, and poor social skills. Such theories constitute individual explanations for homelessness insofar that the individuals are seen to carry some responsibility for the decisions they have made or have some deficiency that impairs their ability to make sound choices. This thesis accepts that human agents can carry some of the responsibility for their homelessness, and consequently Chapter Three will explore this further.

It is worth noting that in recent times, homeless shelters have been observed to have empty beds while rough sleepers are concurrently found on the streets, thereby emphasising that an element of choice may exist in at least some forms of homelessness. However, the shelters offered to those experiencing homelessness can be objectionable places in some cases, and this leads Bowpitt (2020) to suggest that provision should instead provide a supportive space in which a person who has experienced homelessness can reflect on their past, receive care if necessary, and pursue future options from a place of safety. He asserts that many spaces fail to provide these important provisions, and therefore perverse policy is positioned as a factor which impairs agency in those who continue to sleep rough. However, several commentators have nevertheless emphasised the importance of agency when considering the causes of homelessness (Cloke, Milbourne, and Widdowfield, 2001; McNaughton, 2006; Ravenhill, 2008), albeit that agency in such situations is viewed as 'thin' (McNaughton Nicholls, 2010). Indeed, DeVerteuil, May, and von Mahs (2009) suggest that structural constraints such as extreme poverty, excessive unemployment, lack of affordable housing, and ill-thought-out policies set the boundaries for all behavioural choices, but that individuals can still exercise agency within these confines in their larger drive for survival. This thesis recognises that agency functions within these limits, and consequently, agency be written into the causal framework offered. This chapter will now move on to explore how existing literature views structural causes.

Structural causes

In contrast with the accounts of individual causation, existing structural explanations of homelessness locate the causes in external social and economic factors (Fitzpatrick et al., 2009). Central to the argument is the idea that issues beyond a person's control ultimately causes their homelessness. The structural causes associated with homelessness include fiscal conditions, policy directions, and wider deficiencies within societal structures, such as a lack of affordable housing. This body of thought became dominant in reaction to the Cathy Come Home movie and the subsequent efforts by homelessness charities to re-position those who experience homelessness as victims (Hodgetts, Hodgetts and Radley, 2006). However, inferring that those who experience homelessness are passive victims has been contested for striping away agency (Rosenthal, 2000) but despite this, Pleace (2019) suggests that some academics continue to argue that structural factors are solely or mostly responsible for homelessness. Since the incumbent Conservative administration came to power in 2010, several studies have focused on structural deficiencies that have come about as a consequence of the way in which they govern. For example, Loopstra et al. (2016) focus their study on how austerity and budget cuts have contributed to homelessness. Similarly, O'Leary and Simcock (2022) concentrate on welfare reforms as a driver for homelessness. While these studies have not specifically discounted the possibility of there being multiple factors responsible for homelessness, this thesis argues that their focus on structure limits their research. In contrast, this thesis will move towards a framework that includes multiple individual, structural, and cultural factors, acknowledging that the proposed model will still not always explain homelessness.

On the topic of structurally positioned causes of homelessness, it is worth noting that housing-led models have become popular worldwide as a homelessness response (Watts, 2014). This might imply that homelessness is predominantly a structural problem, namely one whereby a lack of housing is a central causal factor. Homelessness as a term implies that a lack of a 'home' is central to the problem, and while that is undoubtedly the end result, the situations which generate this event carry greater ambiguity (Clapham, 2007). Despite this, the government responded to the recent Covid pandemic by providing immediate accommodation to everyone who needed it, and this has been described as a fix to homelessness overnight (Teixeira, 2020). Consequently, the idea that homes for everyone is the solution to homelessness continues to be prevalent, advancing the notion that homelessness is essentially a structural issue. While this thesis accepts that an absence of affordable housing is a significant issue for homelessness, it is also acknowledged that at least some people enter homelessness from a position of having a home, while the absence of affordable housing in itself is insufficient to produce homelessness. For example, some people will be able to navigate a housing market in which expensive accommodation dominates, and consequently, it is necessary to explore

the wider conditions which lead to homelessness. On this note, some studies have posited that risk factors are associated with homelessness such as family disputes, experience of abuse, care leaving, poor educational attainment, unemployment, antisocial behaviour, debt, and addictions (Randall and Brown, 1999; Fitzpatrick, Kemp and Kilner, 2000; Anderson and Christian, 2003). This risk factors approach to understanding homelessness has helped to identify factors from the individual domain which make someone vulnerable to homelessness, such as addiction and antisocial behaviour. The approach also advances that there are other structural factors of concern, beyond housing, such as a history in care. However, this thesis argues that the approach fails to acknowledge how these risk factors might interact to produce homelessness, and also what the deeper mechanisms at play may be, and it is on these issues that this thesis will offer some resolve. Furthermore, given that the risk factors attributed to homelessness are often also found in either individualistic or structural explanations, it can be argued that the same historical debates continue to prevail.

New Orthodoxy

From the 1980s up until recently, some commentators have moved to a position of seeing structural and individual factors as being interactive, a position Pleace (2000) refers to as the 'new orthodoxy'. In this approach, structural factors are seen to create the conditions in which homelessness occurs, but people with personal problems are understood to be more vulnerable to these issues. Therefore, a high concentration of people with personal problems in the homeless population is explained by their susceptibility to macro-structural forces, rather than necessitating an individual explanation of homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Despite this, a more nuanced understanding has, as Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2006) note, evolved from the new orthodoxy. However, Somerville (2013) criticises the new orthodoxy for failing to identify how exactly homelessness results from these structural and individual factors. Fitzpatrick (2005) also acknowledges that whilst the new orthodoxy discerns relationships between structural and individual factors, it is vague about how these structural and individual factors interact to cause homelessness. Consequently, causal models proposed in the new orthodoxy era have failed to adequately explain how homelessness comes into existence, leading some to suggest that the causes are just too complex to be understood (Anderson and Christian, 2003). This thesis argues that complexity can be resolved through continued intellectual endeavour, and that a continued quest to understand causal tendencies is necessary to enable policy and practice interventions to be refined by apprising them of the mechanisms at play.

New approaches and Critical Realism

There have been a few attempts to innovate homelessness scholarship and move away from conventional debates. For example, Neale (1997) advocates for the development of alternative theoretical perspectives in the field. Specifically, she suggests that feminism, post-structuralism,

postmodernism, structuration, and critical theory provide opportunities to increase understanding of homelessness and thus potentially improve policy and practice in the future. In the past few decades, there have been some advances in a few of these areas, but this thesis argues that opportunities to broaden the discipline continue to exist. While some of these advocated approaches are fundamentally different from the one adopted by this thesis, it is nevertheless acknowledged that a wide canvas of theoretical perspectives is needed to enrich the discipline. Another innovative paper in the field of homelessness comes from Fitzpatrick (2005) who advocates for a critical realist explanatory methodology to inform analysis. Such an approach has been adopted by this thesis and is seen as beneficial because it recognises the open nature of social systems, and thus, recognises that something may have a 'tendency' to cause homelessness without 'actually' causing it on every occasion. Models that encompass a range of factors can therefore be developed to advance a partial understanding of why homelessness occurs and move away from historic debates. However, the critical realist approach to understanding homelessness is not without critics. One such criticism is that critical realist research in homelessness has generally failed to introduce a cultural layer of causality which is advocated for by critical realist proponents (Somerville, 2013). A further criticism is that the same individual and structural theories of causation are often recreated, implicitly positioning those who experience homelessness as either passive victims or creators of their own circumstances (McCulloch, 2015). In response to such critiques, a challenge embraced by this thesis is to construct a model that robustly adjoins individual, structural, and cultural aspects of homelessness into a framework. This will then highlight the factors which together have a tendency to produce homelessness, without implying victimhood or culpability.

There has been some progress in the formulation of a framework that can put to rest the continuing structural and individual debates dominating the field. Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) adopt a critical realist approach to identify the profoundly unequal risk of homelessness faced by some systematically disadvantaged groups. Their research performs statistical analysis on several public data sets to suggest inferences about likely causal relationships. They conclude that poverty is central in generating homelessness, but that gender, ethnicity, education level, employment status, housing type, and support networks can all serve as predictors for homelessness. Given such factors are seen as strong predictors of homelessness, they suggest that certain scenarios can increase the likelihood of homelessness without causing it on every occasion. For example, poorly educated single mothers in local authority housing are positioned as more likely to experience homelessness than highly educated men in private housing. They ultimately position various structural factors to be of particular significance, but as is central to critical realist thinking, they also accept the possibility of wholly individualistic causation in some cases. Leading on from this, there is an opportunity for critical realists

to deploy different methods, such as qualitative approaches, and in doing so this can potentially facilitate the augmentation of their contribution. Specifically, further causal tendencies for homelessness may be identified, in particular from the individual and cultural domains. This opportunity is precisely the one appropriated by this thesis so that an original contribution can be made to the field. In turn, this has the potential to inform the development of homelessness solutions, and this chapter will now turn attention to the interventions that are currently understood to be advantageous in addressing the phenomenon.

Section 3 - Homelessness interventions

Workable and effective homelessness interventions need to be based on a clear definition, and a solid understanding of what causes homelessness (Seal, 2005). As already highlighted, a clear definition and a robust understanding of the causal factors associated with homelessness remain tentative. Consequently, interventions deployed to tackle homelessness are sometimes founded on guesswork (Quilgars, Fitzpatrick, and Pleace, 2011). It is therefore unsurprising that uncertainty exists on which interventions should be deployed to address homelessness. One suggestion has been to improve outreach services like soup kitchens to foster relationship-building between those experiencing homelessness and the professionals or volunteers, which in turn will allow for wider issues around homelessness to be addressed (Williams, 2016). Yet some see such approaches as being too 'soft' because they perpetuate harmful lifestyles, and therefore more forceful or punitive interventions are advocated as an alternative way to assist those experiencing homelessness to achieve their 'legitimate' preferences (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). However, those in homeless populations have been criminalised in the UK for decades through archaic vagrancy laws, and more recent legislation such as Public Spaces Protection Orders. Therefore, interventions that seek to solve are preferable to those that propagate the problem (Teixeira, 2017). The challenge is to identify policy and practice responses that can help address homelessness, and this thesis will offer some speculation on this based on the causal framework produced.

Issues with approaches used

One of the issues raised with many interventions is their tendency to focus on male service users, and according to Bretherton (2017), some commentators assume this forces women into transactional survival sex to achieve housing. However, she argues that while women do take a different trajectory through homelessness, such ideas are founded on a misconception because women are more resilient than this. She nevertheless acknowledges that women do have unmet needs because of the focus on men. Another group excluded, according to Dobson (2022), is those with high needs. This, she suggests, is because support agencies often have a remit to move clients on rapidly. In addition to this issue of exclusion, Seal (2005) notes that the archaic notion of deserving and underserving poor has

been preserved in policy and practice, meaning judgements are made on who is most worthy of help. The decision by this thesis to adopt a broad definition of homelessness means that any recommendations made will be inclusive to the diverse groups who experience homelessness. Consequently, the proposed recommendations should cater for women, those with high needs, and anyone who might be deemed as undeserving or might otherwise get left behind by current interventions.

In the UK, interventions to tackle homelessness usually take the form of governmental policy or approaches developed by charitable and voluntary agencies. In terms of policy intervention, the UK is one of the only places in Europe where a statutory responsibility toward those who experience homelessness has been adopted, and the only state to have set up a task force specifically to address homelessness (FEANTSA, 2002). However, the policy environment, particularly in England, necessitates that people must first be accepted as statutory homeless in order to receive state assistance, leading to a process whereby people experiencing homelessness get judged on whether they are deserving or undeserving of assistance, thereby preserving this archaic adjudication. The result of this is an assessment process where people do not feel they can be frank with assessors about their housing circumstances (Jerome et al., 2003). Consequently, the statutory and voluntary sectors are left to fill the gaps in provision by offering services which can respond to a population that is not homogeneous (Crisis, 2019). However, this sector is often dependent on some level of government funding and may therefore be confined to the same limited interpretation of who merits assistance. They may also be hindered by their own preferred interpretation, which could be equally as limiting (Chard, Faulkner, and Chugg, 2009). Consequently, some people who experience homelessness may find themselves without adequate provision to meet their needs. Accordingly, there is a need for a comprehensive homelessness strategy, and the causal framework offered by this thesis has the potential to inform such an approach.

Favoured homelessness approaches

Several suggestions have been proposed in relation to what a complete homelessness strategy should look like. For example, Minnery and Greenhalgh (2007) advocate for good practice approaches combining prevention, early intervention, crisis intervention, and long-term support strategies focusing on the facilitation of independence. They further suggest that organisations working with those who experience homelessness should enable clients to acquire a set of skills that will lead to social competence, securing a home, maintaining financial stability, and exiting social exclusion. However, it is acknowledged that good practice must also be based on an adequate appreciation of the broad makeup of people who experience homelessness and the complex underlying causes that may trigger their homelessness (Avramov, 2018). This thesis agrees, but also argues that theories on

what constitutes a complete approach can at best offer a fragmented strategy when they are not informed by a robust causal framework. Therefore, while it is reassuring to see attempts to tackle multiple facets of homelessness, and as such widening the pool of people who may be assisted, questions remain on what else should be incorporated into a complete strategy. This thesis will offer some contribution in respect of this.

Current strategies are thought to lack depth, and in their investigation into migrant homelessness, Stewart and Sanders (2024), suggest approaches being deployed to address the needs of this population are based on ideological principles rather than intellectual impetus or firm evidence. It is also speculated by Dwyer et al. (2015) that ideologically driven approaches influence homelessness strategies more generally. For example, he asserts that some are advocating for greater conditionality on welfare payments, and this has led to policy debates around refusing remuneration to those who fail to adequately engage in support such as drug rehabilitation programmes. Reeve (2017) takes an opposing ideological viewpoint arguing that such proposals discriminate against the extremely vulnerable, and she instead advocates for high-level support over punitive actions. Similarly, Jarrett (2010) suggests that high-level behavioural change interventions are required to address homelessness, especially for those who are entrenched, but he acknowledges that these are best adopted when an individual is ready for help. This thesis finds merit in these suggestions but posits that improved outcomes can be put forward when the ambiguity around the causes of homelessness is resolved. Indeed, it is this ambiguity which has led US scholars Dennis, Locke, and Khadduri (2007) to argue for zero-intervention so that individuals are empowered to self-determine their own destiny. In the absence of robust causal frameworks, it is unsurprising that some are advocating for literally doing nothing, particularly when this scholarship comes from a nation less accustomed to state intervention. This said, the US have offered some groundbreaking ideas on how to tackle homelessness, with one such notion being Housing First, which will now be considered in greater depth.

Housing First

An innovative intervention has emerged in the last few decades known as Housing First. This approach is deserving of particular attention, not only because of its momentous evolution in recent times, but also because there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating its effectiveness in tackling homelessness worldwide (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008; Pleace and Bretherton, 2012; Blood et al. 2018; Homeless Hub, 2019). Outcomes such as increased ability to manage tenancies, improved mental and physical health, reduced drug and alcohol use, and improved levels of social integration have all been observed after a few years of participation in Housing First schemes (Pleace, 2018). The idea was founded in 1992 by New York psychiatrist Sam Tsemberis after recognising other

homeless interventions failed in delivering the basic human right of adequate shelter. It was a move away from the 'staircase' model which transitioned individuals experiencing homelessness through a variety of housing types, commencing with highly regulated housing, and eventually resulting in participants earning an independent home upon conformity with a high-intensity treatment programme (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010). In contrast, Housing First provides every individual with mainstream housing from the start, accompanied by professional and caring support; the emphasis shifting to the empowerment of individuals to self-determine goals, with a harm reduction approach replacing the requirement for total abstinence from illicit activities (Tsemberis, 2010). Since its formation, Housing First has drifted significantly and now encompasses a range of diverse ideas and service models, with the basic tenet being a housing-led system (Pleace and Bretherton, 2012). Concerns have been raised about the dilution of the original concept, risking its integrity through false association (Tsemberis, 2010). However, it has been argued that high fidelity to the original approach is not necessary to end chronic homelessness at high rates (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). Furthermore, it has been suggested that no alternative model has demonstrated substantial benefits in the same way as Housing First (Padgett, 2013).

Housing First is seen as the gold standard intervention for homelessness, but it should be noted that it does have critics. Stanhope and Dunn (2011) argue that Housing First offers no significant innovation in tackling homelessness. In addition, Eddie Hughes, who was the homelessness minister from 2021 until 2022 is reported to be sceptical of the case for Housing First (Inside Housing, 2023). This is because he apparently argues that government finances are finite, and he therefore says that the key principles of long-term intensive support alongside suitable and secure accommodation are untenable. Yet, Clapham (2018) suggests that Housing First can have cost benefits long term, and it should therefore appeal to politicians anxious to constrain public expenditure, as well as to campaigners looking for a better outcome for those who experience homelessness. The scheme clearly puts emphasis on tackling the structural deficiency first, and Shelter (2019) commends this because they say homelessness is traumatising, and decision-making is affected under conditions of trauma. Conversely, by providing adequate shelter, they say trauma can be mitigated, which in some cases can lead to improved outcomes in other areas of life. The first major evaluation of Housing First was by Culhane (2008), and through a cost-benefit analysis, he demonstrated its value. This has since resulted in a surge in its appeal. More recent research has also shown it can substantially reduce repeated homelessness, with ninety-two percent of scheme participants sustaining their tenancy (Gibson, 2020). It is therefore unsurprising that such an approach now occupies a dominant space, and this thesis recognises the importance of Housing First as part of a homelessness strategy. Housing First, as the name implies, emphasises the need for housing principally, which will then allow support

to be more effective once this important foundation is first laid. Indeed, there is little dispute about the benefits of safe and secure housing. For example, American sociologist Matthew Desmond aptly captures the universal significance of housing:

> "It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart." (Desmond, 2016; p2)

The importance of housing has also been recognised for decades and is embedded in the renowned work of Maslow (1943) who considers shelter to be a basic need, without which the realisation of personal growth and self-actualisation is considered unlikely. This thesis therefore accepts that an absence of suitable housing is a structural issue with consequences for homelessness, and the wider context of how this can result in someone becoming homeless is outlined further in Chapter Four. It should be noted that housing is expensive, and Housing First has often been deployed in the UK without serious investment in affordable homes (Crisis, 2019). Furthermore, several Housing First schemes in England have collapsed due to a general lack of investment in the concept (Homeless Link, 2019). It is therefore likely that economic factors and political decisions have deeper causal tendencies for homelessness too, especially given they have been noted to impair the function of this important intervention. Further consideration will thus be given to this in Chapter Four of this thesis. It is also worth noting that a fully resourced Housing First scheme might yield high success rates, but there are some who will inevitably return to homelessness such as a troubled minority whose addiction, cognitive impairment, or past trauma is too damaging to enable safe independent living (Padgett, 2013) and an entrenched group who simply do not want to be rehoused despite all efforts (Burns, 2020). It is therefore likely that trauma and agency have consequences for homelessness too, and this will be set out further in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Although this thesis has already acknowledged that Housing First should be included in a homelessness strategy, there are concerns that it is being sold to policymakers via a selective use of evidence, making it appear more effective than it actually is (Colombo and Saruis, 2015). The effectiveness of Housing First has further been called into question because it is measured on the length of time an individual is housed and not on their access to the wider economy (Drummond, 2020). Furthermore, while Housing First has been associated with a high rate of successful outcomes in the short to medium term, there is currently little research to support its long-term efficacy in promoting sustained desistance from homelessness. At the time of writing, Heriot-Watt University are conducting such research, but until research of this nature has been published, the long-term benefits remain unclear. A further problem with Housing First is that it is usually deployed as an emergency

level response for single rough sleepers, and this is problematic, because as Wright (1997) acknowledges, an emphasis on rough sleepers means a focus on short-term micro solutions rather than the larger redistributive changes required. This is supported by Murphy (2020) who criticises policymakers for going straight to the easier end of the spectrum, without a commitment or strategy for ending all forms of homelessness. In addition, Blood (2020), who is a proponent of Housing First, submits that not everyone actually needs the support which comes with Housing First, and therefore the scheme is not suited for all. These commentators therefore highlight the need for a comprehensive strategy, and this thesis will submit ideas on what this might look like in Chapter Seven after first imparting causal tendencies for broad homelessness.

It should be acknowledged that Housing First is by no means a simple philosophy that can be applied everywhere. It requires tailoring to meet local needs, time taken to build partnerships, the recruitment of resilient support workers with the right skills and training, the negotiation of referral routes, purpose-built housing extending beyond a simple redistribution of current housing stock, the engagement of those with lived experience in service design, as well as consideration of barriers to implementation and the means by which these obstacles can be overcome (Blood, 2020). As previously outlined, the implementation might therefore require the right mix of economic capital and political desire. However, there is acknowledgement that a wider homelessness strategy should also encompass affordable house building, attempts to combat growing income inequality, a commitment to provide high intensity care for those who need it, a homelessness prevention strategy, and the facilitation of a systems-level response to the problem (Dobson, 2019). Housing First is therefore not in itself a solution, but an effective mechanism which can be incorporated into a wider strategy. In Finland, where homelessness has almost been eradicated completely, Housing First has been part of such an integrated strategy which also incorporates a range of other interventions (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). The evidence discussed shows it is an approach with short-to-medium-term success rates for a certain group of people who experience homelessness, and its inclusion in a homelessness strategy is therefore justified. As highlighted, the challenge for this thesis is to identify the wider policy responses needed. On this note, the chapter will now consider other advocated approaches outside of those already postulated.

Other approaches to address homelessness

In contrast to the notion that homelessness is principally a housing concern, Somerville (2013) suggests that it is not just a lack of abode; it involves deprivation across a number of different dimensions including physiological (lack of bodily comfort or warmth), emotional (lack of love or joy), territorial (lack of privacy), ontological (lack of rootedness in the world, anomie) and spiritual (lack of hope, lack of purpose). He argues that it is important to recognise this multidimensional character,

not least because homelessness cannot be remedied simply through the provision of bricks and mortar. He suggests that all of the other dimensions must be addressed, such as creature comforts, satisfying relationships, space of one's own, ontological security, and a sense of worth. Similarly, Randall and Brown (1999) recognise that a high proportion of people who experience homelessness have needs that extend beyond housing. They recognise the large proportion of the homeless population who have multiple problems such as mental and emotional needs, a history of domestic violence, a history in care, debt problems, unemployment, addictions, and literacy problems. This thesis therefore argues that any emphasis principally on housing risks undermining the complex interplay of other factors. One particular concern which is noted to have been neglected is addiction support, and according to St Mungo's (2020a), this has resulted in a public health crisis. They recommend an increase in investment for rehabilitation services, along with the adoption of the policies put forward by the UK's 2019 Tackling Homelessness Together review. This includes the establishment of homelessness reduction boards, the coming together of a variety of local services and decision-makers to tackle homelessness, an integration within NHS new models of care, a commitment to commissioning specialist interventions including women-only services, the increased use of Housing First and supported housing provision, services for individuals without recourse to public funds, and multi-disciplinary teams providing integrated outreach support.

The need for a more extensive approach is supported by Jerome et al. (2003) who suggest homelessness policies need to address prevention by dealing with wider social and welfare issues, addressing specific accommodation needs, offering care and support, and supporting social reintegration of excluded groups and individuals. They further suggest that approaches need to be innovative to address both the social and the housing needs of clients, while explicitly incorporating integration across relevant programmes, and increasing independence through capacity building. These suggestions hint at some of the factors which may have causal tendencies for homelessness despite not being explicitly informed by such influences. By first exploring causal tendencies directly, this thesis can build upon these comprehensive strategies. For now, it is worth noting that a range of proposals have been made by various scholars and charitable organisations, yet Dobson (2022) suggests that a genuinely joined-up, holistic, and coordinated response is as elusive as ever. She notes that a coherent and consistent policy combining the effects of different partner agencies is desirable, because this is cost-effective and draws synergy from the different resources or expertise of organisations. However, in some instances support agencies have shown reluctance to collaborate because they are too busy, they see others as competitors for limited funding opportunities, or they feel they can better address the needs of those who experience homelessness on their own (Pue, 2023). In summary, a range of interventions have been advocated to tackle homelessness, yet a

coherent strategy offering solutions to broad homelessness which is embraced by policymakers and practice agencies remains unfulfilled. A more robust understanding of causal tendencies, as offered by this thesis, has the potential to inform a coherent strategy on how to resolve homelessness. However, various barriers will need to be overcome, and this chapter will now consider some of the challenges so that they can be factored into recommendations offered by this thesis.

Section 4 - Challenges to resolving homelessness

A limited understanding of homelessness is said to have emerged despite much academic, political, and charitable endeavour, thereby presenting the first barrier to resolving homelessness (Toro, 2007). Imagine the analogy of a mechanic attempting to fix a car without first knowing exactly what the problem is and how it came about. Attempting to do so would be a case of tinkering around without actually resolving the underlying issue, and the same principle might be applied to this social concern or indeed to any dilemma. This section will explore some of the challenges to solving homelessness, as well as opportunities given the prevailing political climate. The UK government have pledged to end homelessness by 2027 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019). However, this utopian vision for homelessness to reach an absolute zero is considered unattainable (Evans and Baker, 2021). Nevertheless, sustained attempts to end homelessness extend beyond the government, with several big charitable agencies providing optimism that this complex phenomenon can one day be eradicated (Sparkes and Downie, 2020). However, the industry has also been criticised for being 'self-perpetuating', in that whilst attempting to alleviate homelessness, it has also been in their interests to ensure there is always a next phase to be looked into (Ravenhill, 2008). This thesis takes the view that homelessness has the potential to be reduced significantly, but only if interventions deployed are informed by a robust comprehension of causal tendencies, and even then, there will be challenges. Following on from the earlier exploration of individual-level and structural-level factors that have historically been attributed to homelessness, the limits to resolving homelessness within these domains will now be considered. A historical overview of interventions deployed in this territory will also be considered to identify practical lessons, before scrutiny is then applied to wider homelessness policy formation.

Meeting individual level needs

Many unhelpful notions of those who experience homelessness still exist, but an increased commitment to supporting them has emerged in recent times (Johnsen, Fitzpatrick, and Watts, 2018). One issue, however, has been the cuts to support agencies in a time of austerity (Stuckler et al., 2017), and this suggests the government is only committed to tackling homelessness to the extent that it can be achieved with limited resources. Despite this, effective support for individuals has been observed to form organically, in some towns and cities, in response to local needs (Whiteford and Simpson,

2016). Consequently, good practice then becomes localised, and this leads Clark (2020) to call on providers to share best practice, something he says does not happen enough. The likelihood of an individual receiving support to meet their specific needs might therefore depend on their postcode. Regional differences have long been acknowledged, leading FEANTSA (2001) to call for 'expertise in resettlement' so that highly knowledgeable practitioners can always assist those who experience homelessness to achieve their practical, emotional, and financial needs. However, realist scholars Pawson and Tilley (2004) suggest that a customary way of working will not necessarily meet the needs of everyone since people are inherently different and they are embedded in different cultures. Another concern about supporting individuals to meet their needs, which is embedded in practice, is the need to prevent dependency on services. On this point, Sanders and Albanese (2016) argue that such perspectives result in clients being kept at arm's length, and this only adds to unmet needs in a vulnerable population. Instead, they advocate for greater provision to meet holistic needs, including recreational needs which are often neglected in the pursuit of expediating more practical demands. Getting the balance of support right can be difficult though, with some interventions criticised for being too paternalistic (Parsell and Marsten, 2016).

It has also been suggested that a tendency by some services to focus on the label of 'homeless person' can over-emphasise the significance of this particular identity, which in turn can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Speak, 2019). Having considered these various assessments, this thesis argues that there needs to be a system for sharing best practice across multi-agencies nationally, along with a person centered approach where harmful labels are avoided, and the service user is empowered to set and reach their own goals. Such an offering has the potential to facilitate the fulfilment of individual-level needs, but even then, individual differences will likely mean that some cannot be helped. By adopting a broad homelessness strategy, informed by causal tendencies, the hope is that the number of people whose needs cannot be met becomes reduced. Attention will now be given to the challenges in responding to structural issues associated with homelessness.

Responding to structural level issues

At a structural level, welfare, and in particular housing, are seen as pertinent to the resolution of homelessness (O'Leary and Simcock, 2022). It is therefore useful to understand the history of housing and welfare in the UK to inform a contextual understanding of present and future challenges in resolving these structural issues permanently. The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century serves as a useful starting point, particularly given it was a time of substantial urban growth. There were profound social consequences of this expansion, especially for housing provision, partially due to there being no state provision at the time. Instead, factory owners housed their workers in poor and severely overcrowded accommodation. Several pandemics occurred during this time, and

consequently, the rich and powerful began to perceive that a serious public health problem could arise from squalid living (Byrne, 2020). This coincided with the first state intervention, where slums were demolished without a rehousing duty to those displaced, and this only led to worse overcrowding (Reeves, 1996). The first housing intervention in the UK was therefore reactionary, and not borne out of a moral obligation to help the great unwashed, but instead to appease the better off. It has been suggested that contemporary housing and homelessness policy is also formed in response to demands from the powerful, and not based on the need for moral action (Birkland, 2019). For example, the formation of the Rough Sleeper's Initiative in 1991, was at least partly attributed to a Conservative MP who stated he was 'fed up' with stepping over those experiencing homelessness on the way to the opera (Seal, 2005). To achieve structural level change, the challenge may therefore be to convince politicians that such adjustments serve their interests, rather than pursuing change on moral principles, although this thesis takes the view that a robust moral argument might be persuasive. The history of social housing, and welfare more generally, will now be considered to identify potential challenges arising in reforming these areas.

The history of social housing

At the start of the 1900s, Guinness Trust in London established the first voluntary housing scheme, but demand far outweighed available provision (Malprass, 2010). Furthermore, accommodation was only provided for those in work, demonstrating that notions of deserving and undeserving poor were evident at that time. Nevertheless, this was the start of a philanthropic contribution to housing, and after the First World War, the first Housing Act was passed. This enabled local authorities to construct municipal housing to generous standards with state assistance (Harvey, 2012). This was the beginning of subsidised housing, but from the 1920s onwards, successive governments reduced subsidies because the expansion of the building societies movement made them consider large-scale local authority provision to be unnecessary (Ball, 2020). Then the aerial bombardment of the Second World War led to destruction on a massive scale, so towards the end, the government started an agenda of building temporary prefabricated dwellings (Steinhardt and Manley, 2016). These were often popular with inhabitants, some still exist today, and consequently Drew (2020) suggests large-scale modular house construction might offer a solution to the current shortage of affordable accommodation. However, it has been argued that this type of accommodation is inadequate, and the government should instead be pursuing the mass construction of good-quality social houses (Shelter, 2020). Nevertheless, modular housing is inexpensive, quick to construct, and popular; consequently, there has been some progress across the UK in advancing this as a means to address the shortage of affordable accommodation (Ferdous et al., 2019). It should be noted, however, that some see the shortage of housing to be of benefit to politicians, and in particular, the property tycoons who often

fund their campaigns (Murphy, 2020). It may thus be in their interests to keep rents high by not infiltrating the market with cheaper accommodation.

The early 1960s was a time when the voluntary housing sector did expand (Butler, 2022). One example was the formation of the Notting Hill Housing Trust, formed when Bruce Kenrick moved to Notting Hill, and alarmed by the poor-quality housing that people were forced to live in, he fundraised to buy a home for several families experiencing homelessness. This was at a time when slum landlordism was rampant in Notting Hill, with notorious figures like Peter Rachman exploiting tenants with the help of equally prominent henchmen like Michael X (Colenutt, 2020). Notting Hill Housing Trust has since completed a number of acquisitions, growing from its humble beginnings into a big corporation. Housing Associations, more generally, have now become enablers of home ownership, which was traditionally a private-sector concern (Moore, 2018). It is argued that this over-commercialisation has resulted in the voluntary housing sector losing sight of their original aims and objectives to serve those who have been marginalised by the success of capitalism (Whitfield and Dearden, 2012). Consequently, there may be a need to incentivise the voluntary housing sector to refocus on the most marginalised.

By the end of the 1960s, it was generally considered that the crisis of insufficient housing and poor conditions had been dealt with (Mullins, 2010). Therefore, this structural problem had seemingly been resolved by the preceding acts of post-war house building and the altruistic tendencies of the voluntary housing sector at that time. These are factors that policymakers may wish to bring to mind when attempting to resolve current housing problems. However, despite affordable housing being plentiful, it was around this time when homelessness really came to attention (Malprass, 2005). This coincided with the 1967 movie Cathy Come Home, leading the mass media to sensationalise the issue, which brought homelessness to the attention of a mass audience and fuelled public disquiet (McKendrick, 2020). Homelessness has continued to provide material for many TV documentaries and dramas since then. Some view this as helpful in raising awareness of the issue (Gamson, 2004), while others argue that it leads to unhelpful stereotypes and ultimately ill-informed policy initiatives (Devereux, 2015). The media might also overstate the problem, as well as the ability of the government to resolve it, resulting in what Smith and Hall (2018) call a 'fatal category error' whereby public concern is whipped up and then soothed creating comfort and complacency. A significant challenge may therefore lie in advancing the realities of homelessness to a wide audience and compelling the government to respond.

The winter of discontent occurred in 1978, and this resulted in the perception that economic management required re-examination (Hay, 2009). The Labour Administration had been using various

levers to reduce hyperinflation and avoid economic destabilisation; this involved reducing capital for public spending, including for housing (Curwen, 1997). Then in 1979, Thatcher claimed to have won the general election by simultaneously promoting the right to buy, while guaranteeing the protection of the NHS (Reeves, 2006). This demonstrated that the NHS had retained its iconic symbol as the jewel in the crown of the welfare state. In contrast, housing had been consigned to privatisation. This was problematic because basic housing needs are not always adequately provided by the market (Payne et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the Conservative party was keen to promote homeownership by prioritising schemes that got people onto the property ladder. Saunders (2021) suggests this is because homeownership convinces working people that they have an investment in the capitalist system. However, Neate (2020) contends there are many for whom homeownership remains unattainable, and thus she suggests focus should shift back to social housing investment. Although Neate acknowledges that building social housing to the scale needed will cost around £12.8 billion per year, she argues that it will eventually pay for itself by reducing housing benefit expenditure to private landlords. The BBC (2023a) reports other high costs associated with a lack of social housing, particularly noting that is fuels a £1.7 billion temporary accommodation industry. This thesis consequently takes the view that significant investment in social housing will likely yield long-term cost benefits, and in addition may overcome a significant structural deficiency which is contributing to homelessness. However, to make large-scale social house building a reality, the think tank Policy Exchange (2020) suggest that significant changes are required to planning processes, but they argue that there has not been sufficient catalyst to bring about such changes. The lack of movement has been partly attributed to pressure from environmental groups to protect wild spaces (Cowell, 2017), but also, as was previously mentioned, the incentive for some politicians to keep rents high (Nowicki, 2018). However, Neate (2020) is optimistic that the post pandemic period has the potential to generate political will in boosting the economy and investing in infrastructure. Despite this, the scale of house building recommended by the charity she leads[3] remains unfulfilled at the time of writing, despite most political parties promising to address the shortage. Ensuring these promises are met is therefore a challenge which requires further enterprise. Further challenges will be now be explored in this chapter through an exploration of the history of welfare, including a continued examination of housing.

The history of the welfare state

The end of the Second World War provided the opportunity not only for the ingenious stopgap approaches previously mentioned, but also for the wholesale clearance of inner-city slums and the creation of new developments. Once set in motion, such a machine is considered hard to stop, and

---

[3] Polly Neate is the Chief Executive Officer at Shelter.

rebuilding therefore continued for several decades (Harvey, 2012). A comprehensive town and planning system were part of the package of state-ism following the crisis management of the war years and included the nationalisation of key industries, the expansion of government agencies, and the emergence of the welfare state (Reeves, 1996). Malprass (2005) suggests the reforms that established Britain as a welfare state were a potent symbol of government commitment to build a better society after the bitterness and hardship of war. However, in more recent times, social housing has undergone a process known as 'residualisation' (Pearce and Vine, 2014). This is where the employed working class, who previously dominated the possession of social housing, have transferred to owner occupation. According to Watt (2021) social housing has now become accommodation for the unemployed, particularly for those with complex needs, and this is considered problematic because services confined to the poor are seen as poor, and economic disadvantage is consequently thought to have become geographically concentrated and mutually reinforcing. While this thesis agrees there have been demographic shifts in social housing occupation, it simultaneously takes the view that such generalisations can create negative stereotypes about social housing. Indeed, Neate (2020) suggests that social housing, and the people who live in it, have been stigmatised in popular culture, with the public image of 'sink estates' and 'benefits street' only making the problem worse. She further suggests that welfare more generally has become emotive and loaded, implying to some a warm and positive role of the state, while to others it promotes idleness, dependency, and a drain on the state. In addition, Bauman (2002) posits that the implosion of the welfare state can be attributed to the fast evaporation of support in quarters once eager to make it work. Therefore, notions of welfare, and of social housing, may require a shift in public thinking in order to return to the progressive policies of the past.

The stereotypical ideas of welfare recipients have created problems in the private rented sector too according to Stewart (2020). He suggests the shortage of social housing has resulted in the private rented sector being asked to accommodate benefit recipients. However, restrictions imposed by mortgage companies, insurance companies, and leaseholders mean that landlords are often unable to rent to those on state benefits. Stewart therefore recommends that these restrictions be lifted, and he also advocates for credit referencing agencies to record rent payments on credit files. This, he asserts, will allow landlords to immediately identify someone with a good history of paying rent on time, irrespective of their employment circumstances. If large-scale construction of social housing remains unfulfilled, such suggestions could assist some of the most disadvantaged to achieve accommodation in the private sector. This highlights that a range of policy options may help address structural deficiencies, but the challenge is to change the way those who experience poverty are viewed, and to compel the government to act. Consideration will now be given to wider government

interventions, as well as the use of expert opinions, to again identify challenges in bringing about the most pertinent changes required in this industry.

Government intervention and expert opinion

The UK government is thought, in some circles, to routinely stay clear of intervening in housing markets (Lovell and Smith, 2010). However, Clapham (2018) argues that intervention is frequent because housing is distinctive from other commodities insofar that it deviates from neoclassical assumptions[4]. He suggests that this is because supply can be inelastic, thereby staying in disequilibrium for long periods and opening the need for state intervention. In other words, the supply of housing does not organically meet the level of demand for it, and this is because landlords, and even developers, are not able to produce more houses when demand dictates it, opening the need for government intervention. However, historic state intervention is attributed to the promotion of interests in the dominant classes (Hall, 2003). An example of this is when the state has focused on galvanising the private housing sector, firstly to promote the principle of homeownership, and secondly to provide a vehicle for landlords in the dominant classes to attain elevated revenues. However, Clapham (2018) argues that policy is not only top-down because social movements can show resistance to control mechanisms, and thus demand that alternatives are fostered, including a more pluralistic network of housing provision with planning policies aimed at promoting the integration and inclusion of those who are most excluded in society. This thesis therefore takes the view that government intervention is possible, but there is a need for various stakeholders, including academics, to push for action which will promote the interests of the most disadvantaged in society.

Following the constitutional reforms of 1999 that were mentioned earlier in this thesis, many of the key areas of policy responsibility, including housing, now rest with the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. These reforms have seemingly resulted in significant changes to housing policy and varying outcomes for the populations in each of the UK member states (Aldridge, 2020). The main ongoing challenge in each of the UK nations is to eliminate policy fallacy, whereby ideas of populism and stereotypes have been said to sometimes dominate over expert opinion (Nelson, 2004). Grundmann (2017) says part of the problem is that the public have had enough of experts, and he therefore suggests that policy deliberation should combine discussions from a variety of knowledge sources, with a view to reaching a pragmatic compromise. He further suggests that experts need to simplify complex issues, define situations, and show possible causes of action, thereby demonstrating how their knowledge can be applied. Schon (2017) agrees, suggesting there are increasing signs that a crisis of confidence is occurring. He suggests this is the result of a perceived

---

[4] Neoclassical economics assumes rational decision making by individuals and corporations in a market economy, with this influencing supply and demand, and avoiding the need for state intervention.

misappropriation of knowledge by experts to preserve dominance over the rest of society. He further suggests that experts have lost confidence in their own knowledge too, but insists their input is essential to the functioning of society. At a time of increased scrutiny, he therefore calls for 'reflection in action'. This approach requires flexibility, appreciation of differentiated responses, and a realisation that others may have expertise too. For expert opinion to surpass populist notions in the fields of housing and homelessness, particularly in offering new policy directions, this thesis therefore postulates that experts must be innovative and versatile in their approach. Broader consideration will now be given to the challenges in forming advantageous policies in the housing and homelessness arena.

Policy formation

When seeking a response to a particular problem, a quick and inexpensive fix is for policymakers to adopt approaches from other developed nations, an approach known as policy transfer. Newburn (2002) suggests policy transfer occurs as a result of globalisation and the operation of dominant capitalist forces. Newburn posits that this can result in nations having less autonomy and cultural distinctiveness, but says it is possible to resist policy transfer. An alternative policy route occurs when an individual is willing to invest their resources to develop a policy position, and this is referred to by Kingdon (1984) as 'policy entrepreneurship.' Kingdon suggests these entrepreneurs can make their policy position a reality by using a 'three streams' approach. This firstly requires waiting for a window of opportunity, secondly presenting a viable solution to a given problem, and thirdly convincing policymakers to select the option. One conceivable issue with policy entrepreneurship is that policy positions may not necessarily offer the optimal solution, but the ideas nevertheless make it on to the agenda because the entrepreneurs are skilled at following these streams. A challenge, therefore, relates to how good policy can become enacted in the homelessness arena.

Neate (2020) suggests there are three ways to get advantageous homelessness strategies onto the policy agenda. The first is the use of traditional public policy tactics to influence parliamentarians, government ministers, officials, and special advisors (SPADs) in the key departments. This includes meeting with SPADs regularly with the aim to build 'down the pub' relationships so that more formal meetings with officials can later be facilitated. The second way involves convincing politicians that voters care about the issue. This can be achieved through community organisers working with local activists, community organisations, and charities to mobilise the people who are most concerned about homelessness issues in their local area. With the use of technology, it is also possible to build a movement via digital channels. The final way involves building alliances between national organisations so that their collective voices send a louder message. With these points in mind, this thesis takes the view that policy is not always ideologically determined, and it is possible to get good

policy enacted. It is therefore the case that any endeavour by the academic community or other experts to formulate policy and practice recommendations is not an inconsequential task. The challenge lies in building relationships to get the message heard.

Conclusion

This first chapter has discussed a range of literature and ideas from the fields of housing and homelessness to set a foundation of knowledge in which to apprise subsequent chapters. Specifically, key principles were initially considered, identifying that a narrow focus on rough sleepers, and a tendency of legislation to exclude certain populations who experience homelessness, justifies the need for a broad definition. In assuming such a stance, any recommendations offered by this thesis have the potential to activate a more inclusive policy and practice landscape. The second section of this chapter explored the historic debates on the causes of homelessness, identifying that structural and individualistic considerations have dominated the field. However, despite recent advances towards integrating these domains, an understanding of exactly how homelessness is produced remains elusive. The discussion highlighted that critical realist research has advanced this to some extent by acknowledging factors can have a tendency to cause homelessness without always doing so. However, there is an opportunity for this thesis to build upon the ideas of other critical realists in this field, in particular by writing agency and cultural factors into a framework which is currently understood to comprise of mostly structural factors.

The third section of this chapter considered current approaches to addressing homelessness, discussing how there are excluded groups from interventions deployed. The discussion also highlighted that the emergence of Housing First has offered some progress in addressing homelessness, but that this response does not offer a solution to everyone, and there is consequently a need for a more complete strategy. While there have been suggestions on what this might look like, this thesis has the potential to contribute to a more robust strategy by first apprising a framework to progress understanding of causal tendencies, with this in turn informing the more complete strategy. Finally, this chapter considered the challenges to resolving homelessness, identifying several hurdles, including the difficulties in advancing favoured policies. It was nevertheless found that it is possible to overcome these. Consequently, any policy recommendations made by this thesis have a prospect of making it on to the policy agenda, although further work outside the ambit of this thesis will be required to progress this. Now that this foundation has been set, the thesis will progress to the next chapter, this being the methodology. It will outline the research process carried out and the specific methods deployed. An explanation of how these methods support the thesis in addressing the research questions forms an additional part of the chapter. A significant volume of the methodology is also devoted to justifying the philosophical approach utilised in this thesis, namely critical realism.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

The first research question of this thesis concerns the specific individual, structural, and cultural factors that have tendencies to cause homelessness. These are examined in chapters three to five of this thesis. Instead of reaffirming the historical debates mentioned in Chapter One, the focus of these chapters is to identify a range of factors from all three domains that yield causal tendencies for homelessness. This includes identifying the factors that are directly observed to have causal tendencies, known in critical realist language as the empirical domain. They are informed by the data gathered for this research, as well as through inductive[5] and deductive[6] reasoning. The chapters will also identify inferential level factors, known in critical realist language as the actual realm. These factors are determined by redescribing partial inferences made in the empirical data through the process of abduction[7]. Finally, the chapters will identify the deeper causal mechanisms, known in critical realist language as the real realm. They are informed by a priori position which is then explored in the context of the data and literature through the process of retroduction[8]. Ultimately, the critical realist approach deployed in this thesis will help elicit a stratified understanding of homelessness. It will also consider the conditions under which various factors can actually produce homelessness, therefore offering some original contribution to the field.

The second research question of this thesis concerns how agency, structure, and culture interact in producing homelessness. This is addressed throughout this thesis, with a framework then offered in Chapter Six through the process of retrodiction[9]. The data is triangulated and interpreted to help with this process, with the outcome being a framework that has a tendency to explain broad homelessness, acknowledging it will not explain homelessness in every situation. The third research question concerns policy and practice responses. Chapter Seven details these in full, but specific policy implications are also set out throughout this thesis in response to factors found to have causal tendencies. Ultimately, the focus on causal tendencies facilitates an explanation of how the emerging outcomes might inform a robust homelessness strategy in the future, because as identified in Chapter One, this is currently unfulfilled. This methodology chapter will now set out the exact methods deployed to gather the data used in these subsequent chapters, namely poems from those who have lived experience of homelessness, X (formerly Twitter) mined data to capture public notions of homelessness, and semi-structured interviews to capture the expertise of professionals who work in the homelessness sector. It will also provide a more detailed appraisal of the analysis process carried

---

[5] Inductive reasoning is a bottom-up approach which involves going from the specific to the general.
[6] Deductive reasoning is a top-down approach which involves going from the general to the specific.
[7] Abduction involves making a best prediction based on incomplete observations.
[8] Retroduction involves exploring deeper conditions which enable and constrain outcomes.
[9] Retrodiction involves exploring the mix of factors that interact to produce a phenomenon.

out and will justify the use of critical realism as a philosophical lens from which to explore homelessness. First, I will set out my own positionality to inform readers of the factors from my own background which may influence the direction of this research, and the actions that have been taken to try and mitigate this.

The first point to emphasise in my positionality statement is that, as previously mentioned, I have my own lived experience of homelessness. It may therefore be the case that I am more markedly sympathetic to those who experience homelessness than some other researchers without this lived experience would be. I am also a white man, and this could jeopardise my ability to fully understand the experiences of woman, as well as those who are black or from an ethnic minority background. I grew up in a working-class household, and while I am no longer fully estranged from my parents and siblings, my contact with them is minimal. I accept that these factors are likely to distort my view on some of the factors explored in this thesis. To mitigate bias, I have approached this thesis with an open mind. Although I started with a priori position in a lot of areas, this was explored in the context of data and literature, thereby allowing the priori position to be challenged and developed, as this thesis will demonstrate. Although I have personal and professional experience of homelessness, I have never analysed the causes of homelessness previously, and while I may have some opinions, these are not fixed, and I see this research as an opportunity to develop my position rather than to reinforce any pre-existing opinions. I accept that my positionality will have some influence on this research, but my acceptance that my own view can be fallible means that the outcomes of this work, as well as any future research, can strive to get closer to objective reality. This is a benefit of utilising a critical realist approach and this chapter will now explain its choice further and will communicate how the approach is advantageous for this research.

Critical Realism

Critical realism is a philosophical system developed by British philosopher Roy Bhaskar in collaboration with a number of other British social theorists including Margaret Archer, Andrew Sayer, and Tony Lawson. Emerging out of the positivist and constructivist paradigm wars of the 1980s (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), critical realism uses components of both approaches to provide a detailed account of ontology and epistemology, making critical realism a comprehensive philosophy of science (Brown et al, 2002). However, the approach is not without critics, with Zhang (2023) suggesting that proponents of critical realism exaggerate its importance to social sciences in the post-positivist era. Instead, the anti-realist tradition embedded in Duhem-Quine holism is said by Zhang to offer a superior critique of positivism and a more thorough structure of human knowledge. However, as identified in Chapter One, this thesis rejects anti-realist positions, because as Williams (2003) acknowledges, situations of precarious housing are real, and people will experience them. Furthermore, Archer (1995) discards

holism, positing that it limits human actions to the imperatives of social norms and structures. Conversely, embracing a realist position provides an opportunity for this thesis to give agency back to individuals while exploring causal tendencies more generally, and this can subsequently help shape more robust policy and practice responses. Yet, as was again noted in Chapter One, this thesis does support the utilisation of a range of philosophical approaches in exploring homelessness, including anti-realist approaches, because it is acknowledged that this can enrich the intellectual discipline of homelessness. Nevertheless, critical realism is the chosen lens through which to explore homelessness on this occasion and further rationale for this will now be imparted.

The customs for analysis and write up of research are not fixed entities; they are a dynamic enterprise that changes within and among generations of scholars and from audience to audience (Gioia, 1999). Yet this thesis argues that the same trusted approaches are regularly exercised in research, and this is stifling innovation, resulting in dominant ideas being reconstructed. For example, Chapter One of this thesis highlighted that in the field of homelessness, a historical lack of methodological innovation has resulted in the same debates dominating the discipline. Indeed, Neale (1997) is critical of the lack of conceptual and theoretical clarity offered by scholars who position the same individual or structural level factors as causes for homelessness without explanation for how homelessness actually emerges, and without consideration for how other factors might entwine in producing it. Using a critical realist approach will enable this thesis to offer some resolution on these matters. Despite criticisms in some circles, others argue that critical realism offers the best available starting point for anyone interested in a post-positivist and post-structuralist vision of social science (Gorski, 2013). This is because, as Archer et al. (2016) note, critical realism situates itself as an alternative paradigm to positivism with its quest for law like forms, but also to interpretivism or social constructivism with their focus on hermeneutics and description at the cost of causation.

In the field of homelessness, causation is sometimes treated as unproblematic (Greve, 1997; Chamberlain and Johnson, 2001) or it is even dismissed as misconceived (Pleace, 1998; Randall and Brown, 1999). By focusing on the social construction of homelessness, such accounts bypass the crucial issue of causation entirely (Fitzpatrick, 2005) thereby denying the homelessness sector an opportunity to devise responses which are informed by the underlying drivers. Yet, McNaughton Nicholls (2009) argues that scholars who have focused on the social construction of homelessness have also tended to assert that homelessness is the outcome of structurally generated inequality, but she says there is a problem with this logic because it is incompatible to assert that homelessness is both a construct and caused by actual structural forces. It should be noted, however, that critical realists are not entirely dismissive of the notion that human perceptions and reasoning are important to the study of social science. The difference is that critical realism does not accept that social science

can be reduced wholly to the interpretation of meaning (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021). On this point, it is worth explaining that the methods deployed in this thesis, which will be outlined later in this chapter, are appropriate for capturing meaning. However, as will be shown, the captured data is considered a partial erudition in which to inform this thesis, and it is the processes of deduction, induction, abduction, retroduction, and retrodiction which facilitate advancement towards a stratified ontology. In other words, the use of critical relist practices afford this thesis an opportunity to get a better understanding of the real social phenomenon known as homelessness.

At this juncture, it is worth explaining Bhaskar's (1975) 'stratified ontology' from which this thesis draws inspiration. It views phenomena by way of three coinciding domains. The first 'empirical' domain consists of human sensory experiences and perceptions, the second 'actual' domain consists of events that occur in space and time, and the third 'real' domain consists of unobservable causal mechanisms that have the potential to produce these events. This stratified conception of ontology views reality as 'multiply determined', with no single mechanism determining events. Viewing ontology in this way is said by Bhaskar to facilitate a more adequate understanding of the relationship between material and social powers which operate in different locations and at different hierarchical levels. To understand this, Bhaskar asserts that multiple causes must be teased out from detailed explorations of the setting, and so it follows that a key commitment of critical realist research is that there are deeper levels awaiting discovery. Beyond direct observation, it is also possible to posit various other potential mechanisms that may be, in part or whole, neither manifest nor readily observable, but yet still affect the phenomenon of interest. Critical realism also asks what variety of causal relations must exist in order for the empirical events to occur. This stratified ontology is regularly described using an iceberg or flower metaphor. For example, if you look at an iceberg there will be a part of it which is clearly visible above water, and this represents the empirical domain. However, part of the iceberg exists below the water, and this represents the actual domain. Despite not being visible, we can reasonably infer that it is actually there, but perceptions of it may not be accurate. Finally, there are conditions that allow the iceberg to exist, but which are out of the reach of our visual field, such as climate and nutrients in the water. These belong to the real domain, and we can only know anything about these 'real' properties by observing the effects they have on the iceberg and building a theory about it. Applying this to homelessness, the experiential domain consists of human agents exercising their agency, and this is regularly observed in practice. Furthermore, McNaughton Nicholls (2009) acknowledges such agency in her work, describing it as 'thin' because while it might be observed, it is nevertheless constrained by other factors. One such factor which can constrain this agency is drug and alcohol use. This is an event that occurs at the actual level, and as several scholars have noted, this can have causal consequences for homelessness (Fountain et al.,

2003; Kemp, Neale, and Robertson, 2006; Sharman et al, 2016). Finally, there are unseen causal mechanisms occurring at the real level. One such mechanisms already identified by critical realists is childhood trauma (Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen, 2013). This trauma can be the mechanism driving actual drug use, which in turn might be constraining the observed agency of actors. The end product of homelessness can thus be understood as stratified, and this example will be explained further in Chapter Three. The succeeding chapters of this thesis will then decipher other themes that reasonably sit in these domains so that a stratified conception of homelessness is advanced.

In addition to the interpretivist arguments outlined earlier, there has been some acceptance that homelessness is a real phenomenon by scholars in this discipline. From this perspective, it is positivistic notions of causality which have dominated, and this has resulted in observable empirical regularities being offered as the variables that cause homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2005). The first point to note here is that critical realists view causes differently to positivists. This is because, unlike positivists, critical realists see causal powers as necessary tendencies of social occurrences, which may or may not be activated depending on conditions (Sayer, 1997). The second point is that by focusing on observable empirical findings, positivists reduce the nature of reality to what can be seen and known, which Bhaskar (1975) suggests leads to epistemic fallacy. This, he asserts, denies an ontology which exists beyond what is observed or experienced. Critical realism, inversely, makes an important distinction between knowledge and being. Specifically, critical realism subscribes to the epistemological idea that reality cannot necessarily be apprehended directly because it is processed through our brains, language, and culture (Wong et al, 2016). However, critical realists simultaneously posit that there is a state of matter in existence irrespective of how we see it, choose to see it, or are somehow manipulated into seeing it (Archer, 2007). One of the ways critical realists get closer to understanding reality is by exercising judgment rationality, which is based on Bhaskar's (1975) assertion that intellectuals are operators of enlightened common sense. The process of exercising judgment rationality has been described as very easy, but often undeveloped (Critical Realism Network, 2016). It essentially requires a theory-led approach, and an example comes from Matthews (2014) who discerns the causes of crime from a starting position of left realism. In the field of homelessness, Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) use a similar starting point in apprehending causal tendencies, and they advocate for further intellectual effort so that the dominance of different generative mechanisms in homelessness can be better understood. To build on their work, this thesis takes the view that different ideas from both left and right realism can help reveal the conditions that activate and constrain homelessness, ultimately conceptualising it in a way that positivistic studies have neglected, albeit acknowledging that the resulting outcome will have at least some degree of fallibility. For example, the left realist emphasis on poverty provides a priori from which to understand the causes

of homelessness, while the right realist perceptions of agency must also be written in so that those who experience homelessness are not reduced to passive victims. The endeavour to determine other causal tendencies will form the basis of this thesis in the succeeding chapters.

Critical realism is described by Vandenberge (2022) as an approach, which for almost half a century, has infused the social sciences with a sense of philosophical seriousness, political urgency, and hope. However, he acknowledges that many have shown antipathy towards it, and he partly attributes this to Bhaskar's later writings, which he says became more elusive with a move towards dialectical critical realism. Nevertheless, Vandenberg suggests that critical realism has maintained a spirit of openness and self-transcendence, and this has reaffirmed its identity as a social, intellectual, and spiritual movement on the fringes of academia. Despite being on the fringes, critical realism is an approach utilised in the field of homelessness, and according to Hastings (2021), continued use in the discipline can synthesise and evaluate, thereby reducing the sense of disjointed literature when engaging with diversity of explanation. She also asserts that it offers the potential to inform and shape richer explanations of the causal mechanisms of homelessness, but she acknowledges that not every critical realist will agree on causal tendencies because concepts are not fixed, consequently meaning they are open to evaluation, contestation, and revision. Therefore, while critical realism has already got a footing in the field of homelessness, further application within this thesis yields the potential to revise and build upon existing ideas.

In addition to the advantages already emphasised, critical realism is seen by Fitzpatrick (2005) to be useful because it acknowledges that social occurrences are 'complex' with intricate feedback loops linking multiple causal mechanisms, but also 'non-linear'. After all, small changes in causal relationships can bring about sudden and dramatic outcomes. She therefore suggests that the complex and non-linear explanatory framework employed by critical realists can enable a coherent causal analysis to be maintained in the face of diverse circumstances. This is particularly important to this thesis given its focus is on advancing an understanding of why a broad range of individuals will experience homelessness. However, one of the areas neglected in critical realist accounts of homelessness is human agency, and as noted already, this thesis intends to write agency into a framework. In relation to this, post-structural accounts exist which emphasise self-disciplining Foucauldian effects in producing compliant subjects in society (Fyfe and Bannister 1996). However, in an era when surveillance is ubiquitous, and homelessness is seen by many to be repugnant, such accounts fail to explain why homelessness remains prominent. They also neglect the importance of resistance, social structure, and the wider historical context. Critical realism, on the other hand, views human agents as bio-psycho-social structures with emergent powers of intentionality, while social structures are also seen as having agency that transcends and influences the intentions of the

individuals that co-constitute them (Gorski, 2013). Indeed, Archer's (1995) morphogenesis theory posits that there is a dualism between structure and agents, but that both should be treated separately because processes of change occur for agents and social structures in interlocking and temporally complex ways. Agents are seen to be formed within social structures, and the genesis of agents also occurs within these structures. However, the structures themselves are also considered by Archer to change as a result of the choices and activities of agents. This thesis therefore takes the view that applying the principles of critical realism provides an opportunity to gauge a more robust understanding of the causal propensity of human agency as a separate but interconnected factor from social structures.

Despite making the case for critical realism to be a guiding philosophy in respect of this thesis, it is acknowledged that critical realism is not limitation-free, and this is partly why the thesis has already advocated for a range of approaches to be utilised within the discipline so that debates around the nature of homelessness can be enhanced. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a full appraisal of critical realism, or indeed any other philosophical approach, in an attempt to analyse if any singular philosophy offers a superior lens through which to view homelessness. It is nevertheless feasible to explore briefly some of the recognised weaknesses of critical realism, and to provide an explanation for why it remains the chosen approach. One common criticism of critical realism is that it is not able to adequately abstract social structures, with Kemp and Holmwood (2003) suggesting this is because critical realism relies on a priori about how structures operate in an open system. They further assert that this can lead to a number of researchers following a realist method and producing competing causal accounts of the same social phenomenon. However, this is responded to by Roberts (2014) who argues that critical realists can gain knowledge of concrete causal mechanisms operating in a particular social context by investigating a priori using detailed empirical inquiry. Indeed, the undertaking of detailed empirical research by this thesis provides material from which to explore, inform, and revise priori notions about the underlying structures which can produce homelessness.

Another criticism of critical realism is it is seen as being too value-laden, with Hammersley (2009) asserting that there will always be a number of perspectives from which to draw upon, and he thus suggests that scholars should start from a neutral position. However, this thesis argues that adopting a priori does not necessarily mean that this position is rigorously defended, indeed critical realist research allows theories to be explored and refined in the context of empirical data and competing theories. Critical realism might also be disparaged by interpretivists who emphasise the importance of meaning, because Zhang (2023) posits that critical realism considers meaning as subordinate to the functional realm of the social world. However, Vandenberg (2022) advocates for a critical realist hermeneutics so that the symbolic constitution of the world is taken seriously and thus a middle road

can be offered between naturalism and anti-naturalism, explanation and interpretation, universalism and relativism, materialism and idealism, realism and constructivism. The methods deployed by this thesis, in particular poetry to capture lived experience narratives, enable this thesis to embody a hermeneutic approach while maintaining a search for causal tendencies. This might therefore appeal to critics in the field concerned about meanings getting lost. Ultimately, while critical realism may not be impermeable, the case for utilising it as an approach in this thesis has herewith been made. The chapter will now discuss the specific procedures and methods deployed within this thesis, starting with an explanation of the research design.

The Research Design

Critical realism is by its nature a methodological approach which thinks qualitatively and quantitatively (Wiltshire, 2018). This said, it is possible to adopt a wholly quantitative research design if the retroductive analysis is informed by qualitative theoretical perspectives. Indeed, Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) explore the causes of homelessness using a critical realist approach and a largely quantitative appraisal of pre-existing data sets, yielding some really interesting results. Conversely, this thesis adopts a critical realist approach with a wholly qualitative design, thus offering a point of differentiation from which to advance the pursuit of causal tendencies. Although wide utilisation of a wholly qualitative design has not been deployed by critical realists in the field of homelessness, it is an accepted design in the wider field of social sciences (Fletcher, 2017; Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021). By adopting this design, the thesis intends to build upon existing theories of homelessness by drawing upon data collected from three streams, which as mentioned earlier consists of poetry from those who have lived experience of homelessness, X (formerly Twitter) mined data to capture public notions of homelessness, and semi-structured interviews to capture the expertise of professionals who work in the homelessness sector. All three methods constitute self-report techniques yielding qualitative data, the benefits of which will now be considered further.

While not widely utilised in a critical realist capacity, qualitative methods have been used previously in homelessness research, from early studies such as Anderson's *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* (1923) to more recent research by Rea (2023) considering stigma, wellbeing, and relationships within the population of people who experience homelessness. However, much of the focus of past endeavours have been within the positivist and interpretivist traditions of seeking either regularities or meanings, but the extensive utilisation nevertheless shows that a qualitative design is highly regarded. The value of self-report qualitative approaches to socially sensitive research is particularly well documented and is seen to be especially appropriate for research involving vulnerable participants, including people who experience homelessness, because it offers a flexible, fluid, and facilitative way to obtain in-depth information and enable participants' voices to be heard through the

research process (Marvasti, 2003; Flick, von Kardorff, and Steinke, 2004; Merriam, 2009). This said, there has been some variation in terms of the research tools and instruments considered to be appropriate for qualitative research, meaning scholars are obliged to substantiate why they have selected certain tools over others (Richards, 2009). As previously mentioned, this thesis is concerned with offering something new to the debates which have dominated the field of homelessness, and as such, new methods of data collection were seen as desirable. Indeed, Brown (2016) advocates the deployment of new methods, because he says they can enable participants to express their narratives in ways which would otherwise be undiscoverable in research. This emphasises why poetry and social media data were chosen for use in this thesis, since both constitute new methods with capacity to capture forms of participant expression which is fundamentally different to narratives given in traditional methods. As it turns out, the methods came with a number of challenges, including ethical dilemmas, and these will be discussed later in this chapter.

The choice of three streams of data to inform this thesis was partially influenced by the writings of Denzin and Lincoln (2011) who note that researchers naturally start from a priori position, but by triangulating data from different sources, it is possible to extrapolate different facets and viewpoints. They describe this as like looking through a crystal to see many points of light thereby allowing one's own bias to be mitigated. The use of different methods was seen as particularly useful to guide the critical realist analysis deployed in this thesis, and the process of judgement rationality, allowing a range of theoretical perspectives to be drawn upon during the theory building process. Despite some issues with the methods deployed, some golden nuggets of information came through, particularly in the poetry. The design of the research can therefore be justified, albeit that some enhancements would be necessary if commencing this research again. These will be outlined later in this thesis, but first, this chapter will now describe the location in which the research took place, how access was granted, details of the participants who took part, and the sampling methods utilised.

Location, access, participants, and sampling

At the outset, the intention was to keep this research confined to my local town in England for reasons of feasibility. However, this thesis commenced just as the Coronavirus pandemic hit, social distancing became part of everyday life, and several nationwide lockdowns transpired. In addition, temporary structures were put in place by the state, in the form of the 'Everyone In' scheme[10]. This is an action described as bringing homelessness to an end overnight (Teixeira, 2020) meaning it was possible that there was no longer a phenomenon to explore. However, it has since emerged in a report by Inside Housing (2021), that the narrative offered by the state inferring that accommodation was offered to

---

[10] The Everyone In scheme was the government response to homelessness in the wake of Covid lockdowns in England. Its aim was to bring rough sleepers, or anyone without housing, into accommodation during the period of self-isolation to help prevent the spread of the virus.

everyone who needed it, may not have been fully realised. The report goes on to imply that those without recourse to public funds[11] were particularly vulnerable to being left without provision, especially in the later stages of the scheme, and consequently legal action has since been taken against the government for misleading the public. Further consideration will be given to the causal consequences of such government action later in this thesis, but the point to note at this juncture is that these events caused difficulties in accessing participants locally, and there was subsequently a need to be flexible. Fortunately, I have a professional background of working in the homelessness sector, and I was therefore able to use my contacts to get access to some of the participants needed for this research. One of the organisations I had worked for in the past openly supported my research and provided a letter of confirmation to this effect to enable ethical clearance to be granted. This not only provided access to a pool of practitioners, but importantly helped to navigate the hurdle of getting access to those with lived experience. On this point, Clark (2011) notes that service providers to vulnerable populations act as gatekeepers, often denying access to researchers because of heightened anxieties around safeguarding. By having this pre-existing relationship, the process of getting through the gate was arguably easier, although it did still require convincing a director of the organisation about the soundness of my research during a private meeting.

Problematically, even experienced practitioners in this organisation lost contact with some of the individuals they had been supporting before the height of Covid, and it was therefore necessary for me to branch out and get poetry from participants in other nearby sites used by the organisation. Achieving poetry through this route was still a challenge, and it was therefore necessary to recruit two further participants from a partner agency affiliated to the organisation I was working with, and this involved going through yet further gatekeeping with a senior manager of the new organisation. In total twelve participants were eventually recruited to provide original poetry, although one opted instead to be interviewed, and another opted to provide work they had already created prior to my contact. Further consideration will be given to the merits of using poetry later in this chapter, but returning to recruitment of participants, a further challenge in finding willing participants to produce poetry was establishing trust. According to McDonald et al. (2008), the role and ethical significance of participants' trust in research is seldom addressed, but it is nevertheless important in good research. It was particularly important to this research, because without it, engaging participants to take part may not have been possible despite already winning over the gatekeepers. This is because those with lived experience were afforded the ultimate say on whether they wished to be involved or not, and according to Reilly, Ho, and Williamson (2022), homelessness is so highly stigmatising socially that the

---

[11] Certain migrants face restrictions to benefit payments and the rules for this are set out in section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. There are also restrictions in accessing social housing, homelessness assistance, and social care set out in sections 117 to 122 of the same act.

population of people who experience it are especially difficult to engage. Fortunately, I was able to draw upon my own lived experience of homelessness, and while I never made this known to participants, my experiences guided me in building a rapport. Nevertheless, one participant became upset while producing the poetry, and having support on site in the form of their usual worker meant that this could be dealt with promptly and professionally. All poems were produced at a support setting familiar to each participant, and with staff known to them nearby.

The inclusion criterion for participation in the research poetry was a self-identified current or recent episode of homelessness, and the support organisations were able to help me identify participants to approach who fulfilled this requirement. Not wanting to exclude those with poor literacy skills, I offered participants the option of writing or verbally recording their poetry for later transcription. Surprisingly, all of the participants who agreed to take part opted to write their poems, with the exception of the interviewed participant mentioned earlier. The quality of the poetry, from my perspective, was generally good, and this may imply that literacy is not as bad in this population as propagated by authors such as Goodacre and Sumner (2021) who highlight significant problems of illiteracy. Alternatively, it may be that those with poor literacy were amongst those participants who opted not to take part. The sampling method used was availability sampling, and this is said to constitute a useful strategy when attempting to recruit vulnerable participants who might otherwise be unattainable (Curtis and O'Connell, 2013). This sampling method was more of a necessity for this research, given access was granted to a small pool of potential participants, and therefore anyone who was available was approached. It is accepted that this was unlikely to be representative of the population of people who experience homelessness, with those who are not known to the services notably excluded through this approach. Additionally, as mentioned, not everyone who was approached was willing to participate, but a sample of twelve was eventually recruited on the premise that the poetry would allow them to tell their story in their own way without judgement or pressing questions. Once recruited, the participants were instructed to produce a piece of poetry accounting for their experience of homelessness in any way they saw appropriate. They were able to do this in one sitting or over a number of sittings, but they all decided to produce their poetry in one attempt. An informed consent form was signed by each participant prior to the production of the poetry. It should be noted that there was a significant delay in getting to settings to complete this task due to ongoing restrictions caused by the Covid pandemic, and the poetry was eventually obtained several months later than intended.

Attention will now be turned to describing how professionals were recruited to take part in semi-structured interviews. Once again, the initial intention was to interview those working in my local area, from the organisation supporting my research, and from partner agencies. However, the Covid

outbreak led to some staff being furloughed, and a high level of absence amongst others. Consequently, it was once again necessary to broaden the scope. I started by talking to known associates from the organisation supporting my research, and they in turn recommended other organisations and individuals to approach. Therefore, participants were recruited via a snowball sampling method, and this was a useful strategy to attract participants during the Covid pandemic when other means of networking were limited (Leighton et al, 2021). The first stage involved gaining consent from the various organisations, and in most cases I was dealing with individuals working in the charitable sector so an email to the chief executive officer of their respective charity was sufficient to get the green light to proceed. The consent was extended to cover health professionals providing services within their organisation, thus preventing the need to go through an internal NHS approval process. However, interviewing staff from one local authority, and from one government agency, did require approval from their internal ethics committees and this was obtained prior to approaching individual staff. Further details on how this research adhered to ethical principles will be provided later in this chapter, but for now, it must be stressed that approval was obtained from all organisations involved before approaching participants.

Individuals involved in housing or homelessness support in some capacity were approached from health, probation, policy, as well as from statutory and voluntary sector agencies. Upon receipt of all approvals, email invitations were sent to individuals who had been recommended by previous participants and known associates. This process was extremely time-consuming, thwarted by a low response rate from charity leaders to start with, and then from individuals invited to take part within these organisations once the green light had been given. One can only assume that the low response rate was a consequence of the ongoing challenges resulting from the Covid pandemic at the time contact was made. However, through resilience, and by sending over three hundred emails, eventually forty-five participants were recruited for interview. Participants came from right across the UK, and from a broad range of organisations involved in housing or homelessness in some capacity. The intention was to capture a range of divergent perspectives to enhance the critical realist analysis, and indeed this data stream clearly yielded the strongest accounts to apprise this study as will be shown in succeeding chapters. While the eventual sample size was not colossal, it can be justified because research containing interview subjects of less than thirty has widely been considered to offer an admissible sample for analysis (Rae and Rees, 2015; Webb et al, 2016; McKenzie et al., 2019). Once the sample of participants had been recruited, they were emailed an informed consent document to complete, along with a choice of dates and times. Following receipt of the completed form, together with their preferred date, the interview was set up on a videoconferencing platform. This was once

again a necessary measure when social distancing was the norm, and it avoided the same severe delays which occurred with the poetry data.

Finally, attention will be turned to the harvesting of data from mined public tweets on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). Once again, the initial intention was to capture data from my local area, but insufficient tweeting on homelessness in this geographic location led to a need for broadening the canvas. To obtain useful data, the scope was broadened to capture views from across the UK. It was anticipated that such data would capture the views of the general population in respect of homelessness, but instead most of the tweets were noted as coming from communities of interest, insofar that the majority of tweets were from organisations or individuals with some interest in homelessness. In total, two hundred and forty-five tweets were mined, yielding some useful data for analysis, although this was the least valuable of the three data sets for reasons which will be discussed later in this chapter. In addition, it created an ethical headache, for reasons which will also be discussed. The data obtained constituted public tweets in the UK using the hashtag #homeless or #homelessness between 1 January 2021 and 30 June 2021. It is worth noting that much homelessness research in the UK has previously taken place in large cities such as London, often because of the high number of rough sleepers, as well as the presence of large homelessness organisations and funders (Fountain et al., 2003; Hodgetts, Hodgetts, and Radley, 2006; Sharman et al., 2016). More recently, authors have considered sites of rural homelessness (Gibbons et al., 2020; Shucksmith et al., 2023). Some research also exists which considers locations which are neither a large city nor a rural setting (Ravenhill, 2008), but this type of research is less common in studies of homelessness. Although the initial intention of this thesis was to consider homelessness in one location, the Coronavirus pandemic led to the project evolving to explore views from across the UK. Notwithstanding a heavy presence in views from one geographical region, this nationwide focus has meant that the findings are not limited to one town. This chapter will now justify the choice of each data set further, starting with poetry created by those with lived experience of homelessness.

Research Poems

There has been interest and support for alternative forms of data representation, including poetry, as a means to increase attention to complexity, feeling, and new ways of seeing (Eisner, 1997). Poetry also offers a means to say what might not otherwise be said (Richardson, 2000). Furthermore, by drawing on the unexpected, poetry gives language to the unsayable (Gioia, 1999). Research poems therefore offer a way to capture narrative which might otherwise be absent in other data collection methods, and this justifies why the approach was chosen for this thesis. Additionally, poetry has wide application in research, with Owton (2017) suggesting it is a useful tool to positivist researchers because it affords a person the opportunity to document their first-hand experiences of the world.

Indeed, Vandenberghe (2022) notes, there are other ways of amassing knowledge of the world beyond science, with poetry being one of them. In addition, Wakeman (2015) notes that poetry can also contain a writer's reflections and sense of meaning, making it useful to interpretivist researchers. Consequently, poetry has the potential to be a useful tool for critical realists too because data is generated which can inform ontological and epistemological theorising, thereby further justifying its use in this thesis.

Now that some justification for the use of research poems has been established, a description of the procedure used to collect them will next be conveyed. Firstly, participants were recruited according to the process outlined earlier, following which they were provided with materials in the form of a pen and several sheets of paper. They were then instructed to produce their poetry in whatever way they wished, and it was emphasised that there was no need to conform to any rules about what they thought poetry should be. As already stated, one of the participants already had a catalogue of poetry from which they provided a piece of their work. As also mentioned, one participant opted instead to be interviewed because they wanted to be involved with the research, but they struggled to produce poetry. This was unsurprising given Camic (2024) notes that the use of poetry as a research tool can stir up unpleasant memories of school experiences involving writing, memorising, reciting, and analysing poetry. Harbouring a suspicion that poetry might not work for all led to a willingness to be flexible, and for this participant, the alternative took the form of an unstructured conversation which was recorded via software on my laptop, and it was later transcribed in full. The justification for utilising an unstructured approach was to enable the participant to have control over the narrative in the same way the poetry participants did, albeit that a few questions were needed to bring about the dialogue. All of the other poems constituted original work, with their brief being to create poetry on homelessness experiences. The initial intention was to collect the poems over three sessions so that participants were able to reflect and make changes in subsequent meetings, thus allowing them to lead the appearance and content of their data. However, the service providers warned against this on the basis that participants might not make it to more than one session, and in any case, all of those who took part confirmed they were happy with their poems after just one session. There was no time pressure put on participants, with the quickest poem being produced in less than five minutes, and the longest one taking in excess of two hours.

Ethical considerations will be outlined in more detail later, but it is worth mentioning that one of the participants created a dilemma by requesting that I use their actual name in this thesis. On the one hand, I wanted to respect their wishes, but I equally felt a responsibility to protect their anonymity given that the maintenance of confidentiality and protection of anonymity are the most fundamental ethical principles to be upheld by researchers (British Psychological Society, 2021). However, Scarth

(2016) suggests there are circumstances when a participant might have a legitimate claim to waiving their anonymity, such as when they are bereaved and want to give a real name as a form of symbolic immortality, and consequently she suggests there is a need for further dialogue on whether forced anonymisation is in fact disrespectful. This thesis agrees and takes the view that if a participant has any legitimate desire for their real name to be published, their right to waive anonymity should be respected unless this is likely to cause them significant harm. Indeed, there has been movement on this with Godfrey-Faussett (2022) emphasising the importance of participatory approaches whereby participants are involved in decision making, including how they are referred to in publications. Wang et al. (2024) also suggest that the choice should be given to the participant. Despite this thesis agreeing, I have aired on the side of caution on this occasion and decided to keep the participant's name anonymous. This was partly because ethical clearance was granted on the basis that details of all participants would be anonymised, and while it would have been possible to go back to the ethics committee to request an adjustment, doing so would have likely required a robust justification for including the participant's name in the thesis. It was therefore explained to the participant that a pseudonym would be applied in the same way a pseudonym was used for all other poetry contributors. Thankfully, the participant agreed to continue on this basis.

In terms of pseudonyms, one participant picked their own, which according to Allen and Wiles (2015) is good practice because doing so gives power to the participant, and furthermore, self-chosen names often have special meaning or association to the participant. However, most opted for a pseudonym to be assigned to them, and this was duly undertaken, because as Creswell (2013) notes, this is an accepted practice in research where the responsibility of protecting anonymity of participants sits firmly with the researcher. Table One below outlines some key information about the participants who produced research poetry, with some vague background information provided to give context to their narratives, but without compromising the anonymity of any participant.

Poem number	Found in full in chapter	Participant pseudonym	Background information
1	3	Jenny	Female, aged 20-25, experienced multiple forms of homelessness for several years, housed within the last year
2	7	Sam	Non-binary gender, aged 25-30, experienced multiple forms of homelessness for several months,

			housed within the last few months
3	4	Ahmed	Male, aged 18-20, experienced multiple forms of homelessness for the past year
4	7	Eric	Male, aged 45-50, rough sleeping for past 2 years
5	7	Kevin	Male, aged 30-40, experienced multiple forms of homelessness for a few months, housed for a few weeks
6	5	Scar (self-chosen pseudonym)	Male, aged 20-30, in and out of multiple forms of homelessness for 4 years
7	4	Jim	Male, aged 45-50, experienced multiple forms of homelessness for 2 years, housed within the last 6 weeks
8	3	Bianca	Female, aged 30-40, experienced multiple forms of homelessness for the past 2 years
9	3	Sarah	Female, aged 40-50, experienced multiple forms of homelessness for the past 4 years, housed within the last few months
10 (Interview)	6	David	Male, aged 55-60, rough sleeping twice, most recently for 8 months, housed within the last 6 weeks
11	7	Mike	Male, aged 60-65, rough sleeping for more than 5 years
12	5	Lee	Male, aged 30-40, rough sleeping for 1 year

Table One: Details of poetry contributors

As can be seen from Table One, eleven research poems and an interview were collected, and their full work is located throughout this thesis. Although it is not necessary to include each of these verbatim in the main body of this thesis, the importance of lived experience voice is acknowledged, which is often neglected in homelessness research (Speer, 2021). Consequently, the lived experience data is

displayed in full at various points throughout the succeeding chapters of this thesis, and while segments are analysed, the full offering allows readers to get a more complete sense of what participants wanted to say. From the outset, it was anticipated that narratives within the poetry could entail elements of abuse or neglect, but another benefit of using poetry was that participants were empowered to tell of this sensitive and potentially painful information on their own terms, allowing them to choose what to tell, and how to tell it without fear of judgment. In future research, it may be worth employing processes that allow the researcher to work collaboratively with participants, as advocated for by Liamputtong and Rice (2022), because this has the potential to offer an alternative more structured way to guide the production of data whilst still affording empowerment to participants. Nevertheless, the use of poetry was participatory and exploratory in nature, acknowledging that those with lived experience have expert knowledge to share. Ultimately, having little researcher involvement meant that full control was given to participants so they could express their narrative in a way that was comfortable to them.

Robinson (2008) suggests that many people who encounter homelessness services are required to give some level of biographical data in order to access services, with judgements subsequently being made on who is deserving of help. Those who experience homelessness are therefore forced to give a narrative which they feel will help them maintain access to essential services, and a potential limitation of researching this population is they could provide a narrative that is consistent with what they have told services, and this might not be fully reflective of reality. Poetry, on the other hand, allowed those experiencing homelessness to be more creative in expressing their narrative and therefore enabled them to move away from what Hughes (1945) refers to as their 'master status'. Another benefit of the research poems was the creation of an end product that participants were able to take a copy of, and indeed participants outwardly appreciated this, with one even asking for their copy to be laminated, for which I obliged. However, it is worth noting that the use of such data is not without limitations. According to Ferber (2019), one such weakness is the ambiguous nature of poetry, and consequently, the reader is said to be at best able to imagine what was intended by the writer. This thesis accepts this view acknowledging that it was not always a straightforward endeavour to analyse the poetry, but it nevertheless provided a flexible tool which allowed those experiencing homelessness to assert some control over the content and form of their narrative. While interviews with open questions can also achieve this, the use of poetry yielded other benefits, which as discussed included affording creative license to the participants, as well as an opportunity to express themselves in a way which moves away from their master status. Ultimately the poetry was useful to this thesis, because it yielded unique perspectives in which to inform the critical realist analysis. For example, both Bianca and Sarah freely expressed their experiences of domestic and sexual violence. These are

experiences they may not have felt comfortable conveying to a male researcher in an interview setting. Ultimately, once combined with the other data streams, the poetry provided useful insights in which to inform a stratified view of homelessness as will be shown in the succeeding chapters. This chapter will now justify the use of semi-structured interviews with practitioners and will describe the procedures adopted in more detail.

Semi-structured interviews with professionals

The next data stream utilised in this thesis constituted semi-structured interviews which were conducted with forty-five professionals from the fields of housing, health, and probation. The interviews took place online via a video conferencing platform from May to December 2021, with a duration of between sixty and ninety minutes per interview. The video conferencing platform provided the function to record the interviews, and these recordings were later used to transcribe the interviews verbatim. The platform also provided a transcription function, and while this was also trialed, the output was full of errors. Consequently, I found it more time efficient to transcribe the recordings manually. This in itself took a considerable amount of time, but I was conscious of the need to have accurate transcripts from which to inform my analysis. As mentioned earlier, the interviewees were recruited via a snowball method, with each participant providing details of new organisations and individuals to contact. Those recruited came from a wide range of specialisms, with the only prerequisite being that they had some remit for housing or homelessness within their role. The specific roles undertaken by each participant are outlined in Table Two below.

Interview number	Professional role
1	Support worker
2	Homelessness prevention worker
3	Support worker
4	Policy official
5	Supported housing coordinator
6	Support worker
7	Private landlord
8	Probation officer
9	Psychiatrist
10	Floating support manager
11	Support worker
12	Support worker
13	Supported housing manager
14	Psychiatrist
15	Outreach worker
16	Housing First coordinator
17	Support worker
18	Outreach worker
19	Nurse
20	Policy official

21	Support worker
22	Probation officer
23	Probation officer
24	Probation officer
25	Probation officer
26	Director of charity
27	Academic
28	Rough sleeping coordinator
29	Housing First coordinator
30	Support worker
31	Housing options officer
32	Psychiatrist
33	Housing association officer
34	Housing association officer
35	Town councillor
36	Housing options officer
37	Housing options officer
38	Support worker
39	Support worker
40	Director of charity
41	Director of charity
42	Charity worker
43	Policy official
44	Debt advisor
45	Charity worker

Table Two: Roles of interview participants

As can be seen from Table Two, the interviewed practitioners were drawn from a broad canvas of roles, with the rationale being that this would provide a range of divergent perspectives to draw upon in analysis. A justification for the wider approaches deployed during interviewing will now be imparted, after which an overview of their usefulness to this thesis will be discussed. The form of interview chosen for this research was semi-structured, and this type of interview is valued by researchers using a wide range of philosophical approaches. This is because semi-structured interviews provide a degree of relevancy to a topic while remaining responsive to the participant (Bartholomew, Henderson, and Marcia, 2000). The employment of semi-structured interviews also allows flexibility, an openness to change of direction when service providers discuss other topics, and a recognition that service providers have a form of expert knowledge through their experiences (Wengraf, 2001). On this basis, semi-structured interviews were deployed, and the schedule of questions used within this research can be found in Appendix One.

The initial intention was to carry out the interviews face-to-face because doing so is considered a way to optimise communication insofar that both verbal and non-verbal communication is possible, and the physical presence of the interviewer may allow him or her to discern any discomfort or unease on the part of the respondent (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). However, it was noted that participants may

feel more inhibited when asked to respond to sensitive questions face-to-face, and unwanted interviewer effect is maximised in this type of interview (De Leeuw, 2008). Conversely, telephone interviews are seen as beneficial because they enhance accessibility to hard-to-reach populations or those in a different geographical region, but recruitment may be compromised if only participants who have access to a telephone can participate (Liamputtong, 2006). As it happens, the pandemic once again prevented the original plan from coming to fruition, and consequently face-to-face was quickly changed to videoconferencing. This thesis argues that doing so maximised the benefits of both telephone and face-to-face, while also negating some of the limitations. Specifically, it is argued that the visual clues on a video link are similar to those discerned in person, yet the added advantage was the ability to access a geographically spread population of participants at a time when unnecessary mixing was still a concern. Furthermore, videoconferencing enabled participants to take part in an environment that was comfortable to them, with a screen separating interviewer from interviewee, thereby reducing any anxiety or inhibition. Given the participants were professionals who had recently become accustomed to working via videoconferencing, there was minimal issues in terms of access, but there were a few technical difficulties during some of the interviews which were quickly resolved.

The semi-structured interviews yielded a significant volume of data for this thesis, and consequently it is necessary to explain how their use fits with the critical realist approach adopted. Firstly, it should be noted that there has been debate within the social sciences about the form and status of interviews, especially between positivist and constructionist approaches (Smith and Elger, 2012). Positivists have generally argued that the process of interviewing must be tightly controlled, using a uniform structure and standardised questions posed by neutral interviewers, as this is seen as the only way to elicit unbiased and replicable responses (O'Connell Davidson, and Layden, 1994). In contrast, the interpretive tradition celebrates the mutual construction of meanings within interviews as a basis on which researchers can gain access to their informants' subjective understandings of events, social relations, and social contexts (Smith and Elger, 2012). Similarly, critical realists, recognise the significance of meaning construction and communication among human actors, both as a topic of investigation and as an essential medium of research and theorising. Critical realists therefore share some common ground with the interpretive approach to interviewing. However, Elder-Vass (2010) notes that critical realists also emphasise how social action takes place in the context of pre-existing social relations and structures, which have both constraining and facilitating implications for such action. Consequently, this thesis has utilised the interviews as a means to appreciate the interpretations of practitioners, but also to analyse the social contexts, constraints, and resources which guide the social actions they allude to in their narratives.

As previously mentioned, a key assumption of critical realism is that there is ontological depth and a multi-layered character to social reality. According to Pawson (1996), the interview is a tool which can help a critical realist to theorise about the nature of this by exploring the ways in which social events are interwoven between the various layers. In later work with a colleague, he suggests that people may have knowledge about the conduct of themselves and others, but in a way which can never carry total awareness of the entire set of structural conditions which prompt an action, nor the full set of consequences of that action (Pawson and Tilley 2004). They also suggest that to construct explanations for the patterning of social activity, the researcher must use theory to develop an understanding of their subjects' narrative, and thus, the interviewer is the expert on the issues being investigated, and the interviewee is there to confirm or falsify, and to refine the theory. To give an example of how this worked in this thesis, I started with the theory that political decisions have causal tendencies for homelessness. This is debated in the literature with Pleace (2000) positing that homelessness cannot be reduced to the neoliberal pursuit of inequality, but Fetzer, Sen, and Souza (2019) argue that the political decision to lower housing benefit had significant ramifications for homelessness. My priori position was that Pleace is right in the sense that homelessness is unlikely to be caused simply because a government is committed to free markets, and indeed the current Conservative administration in the UK have committed to ending homelessness despite their neoliberal tendencies. Nevertheless, their decision to pursue austerity measures would have yielded consequences for homelessness as Fetzer and colleagues note. My priori hypothesis was therefore that political decisions have a tendency to cause homelessness. This was explored in light of the data, with the insights from the interviews and other data leading to this theory being reworked. This rework found that political decisions do not necessarily lead to homelessness, but a lack of political will to take the right decisions can produce homelessness. This is because governments can and do implement measures to alleviate homelessness, but when there is no will to make the necessary decisions, homelessness can result. This example will be explained further in Chapter Four, and indeed chapters three to five will outline a number of theoretical starting points which are then reworked in light of the interview data, as well as the other data sources.

It is also important to underline the importance of the active, investigative, and analytically informed orientation of the critical realist interviewer in helping to generate such data. According to Smith and Elger (2012), this involves techniques that keep an initial focus on specific events and examples rather than generalities. It also involves encouraging participants to compare their experiences of different settings and episodes, probing for details and implications, raising queries about inconsistencies, including those arising from other data sources. Furthermore, it involves challenging the adequacy of the accounts on offer when appropriate, rehearsing provisional analyses with participants at

appropriate points, and giving attention to the positions from which they chose to speak. Passive interviewing would not do this, whereas the procedure discussed provides critical realists with clearer guidelines for pursuing such interviewing. I must acknowledge that this was not embedded enough in this research, mostly due to my inexperience at interviewing in a critical realist way. However, the semi-structured nature of the interviews afforded me the opportunity to rehearse challenging practitioners on their views, thus enhancing skills so that future interviews can better illicit the type of dialogue Smith and Elger envisage. Nevertheless, the interviews afforded quality data from which to redevelop theories and work towards a stratified conception of homelessness, as will be shown in the succeeding chapters. This chapter will now justify the use of X (formerly Twitter) data and will describe the procedures used to collect this data in more detail.

Mined X (formerly Twitter) data

The use of social media data in research, like poetry, is another method which breaks with convention. It therefore is another data source with potential to provide new material for analysis not found in other forms of data collection, and this is partially why it was chosen as a data collection technique. The use of such data in academic research has taken hold globally in recent years, with a range of topics explored, including the impact of dementia diagnosis on families (Gkotsis et al., 2020) and an exploration of the causes of inferiority feelings (Liu et al., 2022). There are a range of social media platforms which host data that can be mined for research purposes, but X (formerly Twitter) has a particular receptiveness for discussions on topics which are socially and politically constituted (Bruns and Stieglitz, 2014) and it was therefore seen as the ideal platform from which to mine data for this thesis. Much deliberation was given to whether this stream of data was necessary, and if it would yield any useful data for this thesis, and indeed it turned out to be the least useful of the data streams because the entries were often disjointed and sometimes unintelligible when considering them in the context of homelessness. However, another influential factor for its inclusion was that it invited a particular way of participating insofar that it is an emancipatory platform which is open to everyone to express views (Sloan, 2017). The intention, therefore, was to capture a diverse set of opinions on homelessness from a broad audience, although it was noticed that most of the tweets mined for this research came from communities of interest[12]. However, this was not the case for every contributor and the data did yield some interesting as well as controversial views, including narratives around homelessness being a consequence of sinful or indolent action. Although such views are notorious in this industry, their presence in the data of this thesis gave material from which to approximate the

---

[12] Communities of interest include practitioners, academics, and those with some other interest in the topic rather than it being necessarily the general population. This was noted when going back into X (formerly Twitter) to look at the profiles of those who had imparted the tweets used in this research. This was done when obtaining consent.

function of both culture and agency in respect of homelessness. It is also worth noting that the use of such data has been described as morally responsible practice because researchers can gather ideas without any interaction with participants and therefore it enacts 'power to' rather than 'power over' the subjects in a way that other methods cannot (Riley, Schouten, and Cahill, 2012). This might explain the controversial views embedded in the data given that contributors were free to post their perspectives without any interference from a researcher.

To acquire the data from X (formerly Twitter) for analysis, the data was 'mined' directly into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis platform. Data mining has been described by Barbier and Liu (2011) as spearheading research and the development of methods that can handle huge amounts of data in solving real-world problems. They further say that much like how traditional miners extract precious metals from the earth, data miners seek to extract meaningful information from a data set that is not readily apparent and not always easily obtainable. However, the benefit of using the ATLAS.ti platform was that the mining process was straightforward, and I was able to extract a large amount of data from an even greater repository. I simply set the parameters for the tweets I desired to be mined into the system and the software did the hard work for me. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the criteria constituted tweets from the UK between 1 January 2021 and 30 June 2021 where either the hashtag homeless or homelessness had been used within the tweet. An obvious limitation of this approach is that data of potential interest could potentially get missed because it did not fall within these parameters, but I had to set the confines somewhere, and while not every tweet had relevance, some clearly did. One issue encountered was that some of the tweets had pictures or text embedded in the content which had literally nothing to do with homelessness despite the use of the hashtag. Similarly, Ahmed, Bath, and Demartini (2017) identified a lot of spam in their data mine, including what they call link-baiting on popular hashtags in X (formerly Twitter).

The most significant difficulty with using this data came in the form of an ethical dilemma, and this will now be set out. Ordinarily in research, there is a need to solicit informed consent from a participant before using their data in research. Upon designing this research, it was anticipated that a large volume of data would be obtained from this method, and it was further anticipated that there might be barriers in contacting each individual contributor. Consequently, careful consideration was given to whether this method could be used in an ethical way. In deciding this, the literature was explored as a guiding principle. Of particular relevance was a conference paper from Webb et al. (2017) whose comprehensive consultation considers if it is ethically necessary to first solicit informed consent when publishing anonymised individual social media content. They suggest there is no current consensus, and there are various tensions around the ethical use of X (formerly Twitter) data in research. They therefore conclude that a consensus is desirable but unlikely to be reached, noting a

division of opinion within their own team on issues including informed consent, minimising harm, and anonymisation. A lack of clarity therefore exists on how best to achieve ethical research when using this method, and on a similar note, Taylor and Paglari (2018) highlight the deficit of ethical guidance for research involving data extracted from social media. Given the lack of consensus or guidelines, this thesis opted to take a cautious approach and it was decided that each individual contributor should be messaged to check if they were happy for their tweet to be used in this thesis, but this created a significant amount of additional work. In anticipation of this, the initial intention was to treat tweets as public data, because according to Twitter's (2020) privacy policy, users of the platform consent to their information being collected and used by third parties. However, a number of articles have, in recent years, warned against doing so (Ahmed, Bath, and Demartini, 2017; Buck and Ralston, 2021: Stommel and de Rijk, 2021). Ultimately, a cautious approach meant the contributors were safeguarded, and this was seen as more important than mitigating the additional workload.

When planning this phase of data collection, it was recognised that contact could not be made with a contributor until their tweet had already been extracted, because it was only at this stage that the data would be visible to me. Once an initial sift through the data had been completed to eliminate spam and other irrelevant content, it was then that the contributor was identified and messaged. Fortunately, ATLAS.ti provides a link to the original tweet, and therefore identifying the author was straightforward. One week after messaging the contributors, all outstanding data without consent was deleted from further analysis. This resulted in eighty-nine tweets remaining of the two hundred and forty-five initially mined. The next issue was one of anonymity, and this was of concern given that the content of a tweet can be searched within X (formerly Twitter), thus potentially leading to the identify of a contributor being uncovered (Webb et al., 2017). To protect the anonymity of contributors, the tweets published in this thesis have therefore been disguised by making subtle changes to every quoted tweet, but this has been done carefully so that the overarching message is not lost. For example, a tweet saying 'homelessness is the consequence of bad choices' would be changed to say 'homelessness is the result of unwise decisions', so that the message is the same, but the possibility of any particular contributor being identified has been reduced. The example given here is not an actual mined tweet and is instead for illustrative purposes on how tweets were disguised. This process of disguising tweets has been advocated for by other ethically minded researchers using X (formerly Twitter) data (Ahmed, Bath, and Demartini, 2017). However, it should be noted that there is still a chance that a sleuth would be able to locate a contributor from the disguised message, because content remains out there on the platform, and it is also possible for them to do their own mine of data between the relevant dates, and this would potentially enable them to identify a particular contributor. This therefore made the issue of consent even more important, and although

every attempt was made to anonymise the data, the consent message sent to contributors made clear that anonymity could not be guaranteed. A copy of the exact message sent to contributors can be found in Appendix Two.

Having highlighted the careful consideration applied to ethics, one has to reflect on whether the inclusion of this data warranted the level of endeavour. To answer this, it is necessary to draw upon how critical realists view theories. Similar to postmodern scepticism towards theories, Sayer (2004) says critical realists see all theories as fallible. This is not to say that critical realism sees itself as a superior philosophy, because as Sayer notes, theories produced through critical realist endeavour are also fallible. However, he argues that through repeated attempts at building on theories using a critical realist approach, a discipline can get closer to a conception of a stratified ontology. This is relevant because, by analysing a number of views as found in the X (formerly Twitter) data, I was able to check, challenge, and build upon my own fallible priori hypotheses on the structures that might drive homelessness. The divergence of views in this data was what was valued the most, and as was noted earlier, this proved particularly useful for approximating the function of both agency and cultural level factors. This will be demonstrated further in chapters three and five respectively. Ultimately, despite various concerns, all three data streams utilised by this thesis offered something advantageous, as has been discussed so far in this chapter. The next section will outline how all of the data was analysed in accordance with critical realist principles.

Data analysis

To analyse the collected data from all three streams, it was first necessary to import all data into ATLAS.ti, which as mentioned earlier, was the chosen software to complete the analysis. This platform was chosen because of its availability within the University of Suffolk. Prior to this research, it was not a programme I was familiar with, and I therefore had to undertake training to be able to use its core functions. The research poems collected during this research were recreated in a word processing document using the exact language, spelling, and punctuation of the original poems, after which they were uploaded to the ATLAS.ti platform. Similarly, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and then uploaded. The X (formerly Twitter) data was mined directly into the platform using mining tools available within it. Once all of the data was uploaded, analysis took place according to procedures set out by other qualitative critical realist researchers from social science disciplines. The ultimate goal was to engage in empirical as well as highly theoretical and speculative activities (Fletcher, 2017) whereby a set of initial theories were explored so that they could be supported, elaborated on, or denied, thus facilitating a more accurate explanation of reality (Bhaskar, 1979).

There is some acknowledgement within critical realist literature that adoption of the approach can be quite messy, not least because there are tensions around whether the Marxist philosophical origins that are regularly attributed to the approach should be upheld, or whether a more applied approach provides a procedure for social researchers to follow (Banfield, 2015). This thesis has adopted the applied approach by drawing upon the procedures recommended by other critical realist scholars, because doing so provides a modus operandi for the analysis, and this was seen as a valuable way to follow critical realist techniques. As such, the first stage of the analysis involved looking for what Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021) refer to as demi-regularities in the data. This is what might otherwise be known as coding, and it is possible to do this by following the process of thematic analysis. A benefit of doing so is that it is accessible to novice qualitative researchers, and it tends to produce clear and comprehensible findings that meaningfully make sense of otherwise complex data (Braun, Clarke, and Weate, 2016). The analysis undertaken by this thesis therefore duly started with this process, and this initially resulted in ninety-eight themes or demi-regularities being identified. These were later reduced to thirty-seven demi-regularities by recoding the content into a better-defined set of themes. An illustration of the initial codes and the final themes can be found in Appendix Three. The thirty-seven final codes included individual, structural, and cultural factors, as well as experiential, inferential, and dispositional level themes. These broader categories are also set out in Appendix Three. Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021) advocate that critical realists use a thematic analysis approach to identifying demi-regularities in the experiential, inferential, and dispositional domains. They define experiential themes as those which include subjective viewpoints and experiences, such as intentions, hopes, concerns, feelings, and beliefs. Inferential themes are defined as those in which conclusions are formed based on observations. Dispositional themes are defined as theories about the powers that must exist for the phenomena in the world to manifest. All data streams were coded into the same themes to make analysis easier, but it was still possible to identify the precise stream content was imparted from when reviewing the analysis.

Once demi-regularities had been identified as outlined above, the next step in analysing qualitative data using a critical realist methodology involved abduction, also known as theoretical redescription, in which empirical data was re-described using theoretical concepts (Fletcher, 2017). Abduction has been defined as a process of thought operation which raises the level of theoretical engagement beyond description of the empirical entities (Danermark, Ekstrom, and Karlson, 2019). In line with this, the data collected for this thesis underwent a process of abduction whereby the coded data was redescribed in this way. For example, some of the participants in this research observed deviant behaviours within the population of people experiencing homelessness. A positivist researcher might see this as evidence that deviancy is associated with homelessness, but through abduction it was

possible to redescribe deviant events like drug taking as a survival strategy. This process of abduction meant it was subsequently possible to explore more accurately the real mechanisms which might drive these actual events. In the case of substance use, this was posited to be trauma, as will be described further in Chapter Three. A number of other empirical findings were also redescribed in this way throughout chapters three to five.

The next stage of critical realist analysis, retroduction, focuses on the causal mechanisms and conditions. The goal is to identify the necessary contextual conditions for a particular causal mechanism to take effect and bring about the empirical trends observed. Retroduction moves from the manifest phenomena of social life, as conceptualised in the experience of the social agents concerned, to the essential relations that necessitate them (Bhaskar, 1979). As a reasoning process that moves from concrete to abstract and back again, retroduction is the central mode of inference in critical realism (Lawson, 1998). In applying it, critical realists seek to explain and critique social conditions so that concrete policy recommendations can be made, and definitive claims for action can be facilitated (Fletcher, 2017). To commence this process, this thesis was guided by the five-step method proposed by Houston (2010). Step one therefore involved asking a transcendental question, this being a question which seeks to understand what has to be in place to make the situation in the actual domain come about. Step two involved developing priori hypotheses to answer the transcendental question by way of the assumed generative mechanisms at play. Step three involved seeking evidence to support the hypotheses by looking for the effects of mechanisms. Step four involved refining, confirming, falsifying, or reworking hypotheses and seeking more evidence. Eventually, the search for evidence became saturated, and at this point it was possible to answer the original transcendental question with some confidence. Step five involved instigating emancipatory action to counter oppressive mechanisms and to activate enabling mechanisms. At this final stage of retroduction, it was possible to expose oppressive structures and develop strategies to overturn, ameliorate, or challenge them. To give an example of how this worked within this thesis, I started by asking what are the deeper mechanisms which mean those experiencing poverty are vulnerable to homelessness (step one). I then hypothesised that the deeper mechanism is the prevailing economic conditions with high rents and reduced provision that make those experiencing poverty vulnerable (step two). After this, I postulated that homelessness is produced in this way because having little money when rents and other bills are high creates an affordability crisis. Furthermore, this is worsened when there is reduced provision to assist those who are experiencing poverty (step three). However, I also found that absolute poverty, with no recourse to public funds, and a lack of family support make people even more vulnerable, and therefore these factors were worked back into the answer (step four). Finally, I was able to suggest that to reduce homelessness, policy should ensure that nobody is

left without provision, there needs to be political will to do so irrespective of economic conditions, and there needs to be appropriate provision for those who do not have family support (step five). This example can be found in Chapter Four, but this process of retroduction can be found throughout chapters three to five. By analysing causal factors in this way, this process ultimately allowed this thesis to offer an original proposition in respect of the causation debates that exist in the field of homelessness.

There is also a final step critical realists can employ, although it is apparent that this is not carried out in every piece of critical realist research. This final step is known as retrodiction, a process in which an attempt is made to predict social occurrences like homelessness based on the right combination of mechanisms. It is different from retroduction, because instead of identifying individual causal powers and the mechanisms that produce them, retrodiction is concerned with what mix of causal powers interacted in what way to produce any particular event (Elder-Vass, 2015). The final stage of analysis adopted within this thesis involved identifying a model of interplaying causal mechanisms which could predict the experiences of homelessness accounted for by the various participants in this research. In doing so, a model was generated to conceptualise these factors. The outcome model can be found in Chapter Six of this thesis, and these factors when combined, have a collaborative tendency to produce homelessness. To further the retrodictive analysis, inspiration is also drawn from Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach in Chapter Six so that the specific structures which guide the actions of agents could also be imparted. The analysis process used within this thesis has now been fully described and this chapter will next move on to explain the ethical considerations taken during the course of the research.

Ethical considerations

During the process of this research, a number of ethical dilemmas arose, and these have been discussed at appropriate stages of this chapter. My ethical starting point when completing this research was to treat all participants with decency, honesty, and respect. These are principles upheld within previous studies of homelessness and are an appropriate way for carrying out research with people (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The aim when collecting data was to give participants voice, and not to make them feel as though they were being judged or used for data. It is hoped that participants may have benefitted from being involved in the research, and indeed a number commented on their pleasure of being involved in the study at different stages of the research process. The study was guided by the key ethical principles outlined in the British Psychological Society's (2021) Code of Ethics and Conduct, and the British Society of Criminology's (2015) Statement of Ethics. Prior to the commencement of this research, ethical approval was granted by the University of Suffolk's

ethical approval committee and consent was obtained from relevant organisations from which the participants were drawn.

In keeping this research ethical, informed consent was taken from participants, they were given the right to withdraw, and the anonymity of each participant was preserved, with this anonymity extending to the specific organisations from which the participants were drawn. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, obtaining consent from the contributor of tweets was not possible until after the data had been collected, but where consent was not obtained, data was deleted. In terms of the poetry collected from those with lived experience of homelessness, information sheets were used to introduce the research (see Appendix Four) and consent forms were used to obtain their signed consent (see Appendix Five for a blank form). It was made clear in these documents that involvement in the research was voluntary, data would be anonymised, and participants had the right to withdraw up to two months after completing the poem without any consequences. Similarly, a separate information sheet (Appendix Six) and informed consent form (Appendix Seven) were used to introduce the research to interview participants, with the same rights clearly specified. A password protected folder was created on my laptop for all consent documents to be stored in. A screen shot was taken of every reply on X (formerly Twitter), when consent was given for a tweet to be used. This screen shot was pasted into a word document and saved to the password protected folder. The completed consent forms from interviews and poetry came back in both paper version and electronic copies. The electronic copies were moved to the password protected folder, whereas the paper copies were scanned and saved to the same folder. To comply with GDPR guidelines, all other copies of consent documents were destroyed. This included the original replies on X (formerly Twitter), paper copies of the informed consent forms, and emails containing electronic copies of the informed consent form. The password protected folder still exists in case of ethical query or need for an internal inspection. It will be deleted upon final verification of PhD award being conferred.

When considering ethics, it is worth noting that research can cause participants to suffer some pain if they are asked to recall traumatic episodes (Lee, 1993). As mentioned earlier, one participant displayed signs of upset when completing their poem. It was made clear to them that they could either continue, stop, or pause their poem, thereby empowering them to select the best option for them. It was noted that there is sometimes an exquisiteness to data obtained during periods of distress, and the experience can be liberating if the participant is empowered to continue (Padgett et al., 2013). However, the purpose of this research was not to facilitate pain, and upon signs of distress, I was ready to stop the research if this was what the participant wanted. In such circumstances I was ready to direct participants towards professional support if necessary. As an extra safeguard, the details of

further support providers were listed on the participant information sheet. This included a symbol for the lived experience contributors, to ensure it was accessible to anyone who might have poor literacy. My own personal safety was another factor I had to consider when conducting this research. Physical dangers are said to exist when collecting data from unfamiliar research participants (Cloke, Milbourne, and Widowfield, 2001), and research with a sensitive topic can have an emotional impact on a researcher as well as the participant (Ravenhill, 2008). Fortunately, my professional experience of working in this field gifted me the experience of identifying potentially volatile situations, and I was therefore ready to de-escalate or walk away should such a situation arise. Furthermore, risks were mitigated by collecting data in a safe environment, and there was always someone else in close proximity when collecting poetry from those with lived experience. Such an approach has been utilised by a previous researcher in a situation of potential risk (Jamieson, 2000). It was particularly important that I considered how to mitigate the risk of emotional harm that I might face as a researcher given this topic is an emotive one for me. This was achieved by making sure I reflected on how I was feeling after each session of data gathering, and I stood ready to get support myself should it be required. As outlined, the wellbeing and rights of all involved in this research were carefully considered to ensure this research was ethically sound. All of the specific challenges which arose during the course of this research have now been fully discussed.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methods deployed to guide this thesis in responding to its research questions. A justification for a critical realist approach to exploring the topic was also imparted. Specifically, it was mentioned how a qualitative design has been elected to build upon the largely quantitative analysis conducted by an existing critical realist study which had similar aims. It was also outlined how three streams of data collection have been elected for use in this thesis, which when combined, facilitate the capturing of narratives that may not be present in past research. They also gather divergent views to strengthen the analysis in this thesis. The analysis process itself has been set out, and this was guided by the approaches used by other qualitative critical realists from social science disciplines. A number of steps were also outlined to give this research ethical soundness, and this included following guidelines which protected myself and my participants from harm. Additionally, the critical realist approach central to this thesis was explained. It was justified on the basis that it can build on pre-existing theories on why homelessness occurs, and subsequently, help to understand how homelessness should be responded to in future policy and practice. The outcomes offered by this thesis will thus contribute to existing debates on the causes of homelessness and how it should be addressed. The succeeding chapters of this thesis will now analyse the data captured using the methods outlined in this chapter and according to the principles set out within it.

Chapter 3 - Homelessness as a consequence of agency, trauma, and individual circumstances

I used to spend every day wishing I wasn't alive
I had to get off my face to only just about survive
I wonder how you would cope in my situation
How would you deal with the anger, shame and frustration
I used drugs to deal with all the shit in my head
But in the end my whole life was hanging by a thread
How was I meant to handle the flashbacks and anxiety
All the while knowing I was being looked down on by society
At first it was out of the question to get sober
I couldn't cope, it was day one, over and over
I hate who I was, and I held on to all of the blame
I had no focus, every day was the same
Learning to cope without was ridiculously tough
And no matter what I did, it was never enough
I could 'just have one', always took it too far
Couldn't walk past an off licence, pub, or bar
In the end I lost my best mate to fucking addiction
And that caused so much extra pain and affliction
After that I knew I had to try and sort myself out
But it was nearly impossible, filled with self doubt
Some days are still shit, and I really want to erupt
It doesn't help my second nature is to self destruct
Just one moment could ruin everything I've achieved
But that list is far more than I could've ever believed
I didn't think for a moment that I would get to this point
Where I'd manage without a line or even a joint
Some days it's still hard but it's a battle I'm winning
And I know now that this is only the beginning
600 days sober is an absolute fucking dream
And it's not worth going back, however hard things seem

Poem by Jenny

To commence these findings chapters, it felt fitting to start with this powerful poem from Jenny, which along with other data, will go some way to informing the causal framework in respect of homelessness which is central to this thesis. To formulate such a framework, this thesis will adopt a methodical process, rooted in critical realism, in piecing together the causal tendencies that activate real homeless events. The process will involve seeking causal mechanisms situated in the domains of the individual, structure, and culture. The focus of this chapter will be to start this process by seeking causal tendencies situated within the individual domain while also considering the causal effects of wider individual circumstances; namely those factors which do not fall into the structural domain. Examples of areas explored in this chapter include agency, mental illness, trauma, drug and alcohol use, family breakdown, domestic abuse, and other individual circumstances. This will lead to the conclusion that individual-level factors yield causal tendencies for homelessness. Specifically, trauma, patriarchy,

family structures, and agency are the factors from this domain with causal power. This chapter will show some of the wider context which enables these mechanisms. Chapter Four will then move on to seek the causal mechanisms of a structural nature. Chapter Five will consider casual mechanisms embedded within culture before Chapter Six pieces the causal factors together into a framework. This will then inform the concluding chapter which sets out the various policy recommendations and gives an overall conclusion. The first issue when separating causal factors in this way is having a well-defined inclusion criterion for how factors will be attributed to each domain. Indeed, Somerville (2013) criticises past research for failing to provide such clarity. To circumnavigate this critique, this chapter will start by setting out the specific parameters for factors in order to typologies the individual and structural domains. The cultural domain has a more distinctive benchmark and will therefore be explained in Chapter Five.

Attempting to separate individual and structural factors is not a straightforward endeavour, complicated by the fact that many authors view the two domains to be interdependent (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Giddens, 1984). This thesis agrees that individuals create society, and society influences the individual, but it is still nevertheless necessary to foreground the dominant domains if the goal of forming a robust framework is to be realised. The intention of doing so is to distance from the new orthodoxy era where synergy between individual and structural causes of homelessness have been offered, but without a clear schema for how homelessness resulted. By separating the domains, it is possible to explore the wider context in which factors are activated, before a framework is then constructed. The task of separating the domains is also a way of organising the causal factors under consideration, while still checking if the overall category has causal properties. By focusing on the individual domain, this chapter will therefore highlight the factors within this territory that should form part of a framework. It is acknowledged that much of Margaret Archer's work has been concerned with defining the differences, as well as the interrelationship between structure, culture, and agency. This thesis will be informed by her work, and therefore while the domains are being examined separately, the interrelationship between the domains necessitates that structural factors are also considered within this chapter. However, this will be to understand the wider conditions which give individual level factors causal propensity. It should be noted that the homelessness field has taken a slightly different path in its separation of the individual and structural domains, and this adds an extra layer of complication when deciding how to separate them. For example, factors which critical realists might consider as structural such as domestic abuse have been argued to be an individual level circumstance and will therefore be considered in this chapter. The delineation of the individual and structural domains will now be set out further.

Based partly on the ideas of Barker (2003), the individual domain adopted by this thesis will include, but is not limited to, any factors where there is an element of choice or agency exercised by an individual. Conversely, the structural domain will include factors with patterned societal arrangements that limit these choices or constrain the agency. For example, poverty fits within the structural domain because the arrangement of roles and institutions within society means that some individuals will experience poverty, and this will limit the choices human agents can make. To illustrate the point further, many companies in society are thought to drive down wages in pursuit of profits, resulting in some personnel being paid wages that do not cover their living expenses, ultimately resulting in relative poverty (Bennett, 2014). Individuals have little control over this, and therefore, it is reasonable to infer that social structure drives poverty. Similarly, absolute poverty can be driven by rules around who is eligible for state welfare, with individuals having no choice about whether they meet the criteria (Walker, 2019). The welfare system has the function of preventing absolute poverty in UK society, but it does not provide for everyone, and those excluded therefore have little control over their resulting poverty. These are considered patterned societal arrangements because the outcome of poverty regularly results from the arrangements. A human agent, as Archer (2002) notes, will still be able to exercise a degree of agency when confronted with such structures, and it is this agency that will be the focus of this chapter, as a separate but interconnected facet of the social world.

Risk factors associated with homelessness do not neatly fall into either the individual or structural category. For example, a range of risk factors associated with homelessness have been identified in past studies (Randall and Brown, 1999; Fitzpatrick, Kemp, and Kilner, 2000; Anderson and Christian, 2003). The risk factors include disputes with parental figures, experiences of physical or sexual abuse, failure to maintain a home, causing a nuisance to neighbours, debt, and substance misuse, among others. Whether these risk factors fall into the individual or structural domain is debated (Somerville, 2013). However, this thesis takes the view that such risk factors can be considered as individual circumstances rather than macro-level structural forces, and this is a view shared in the literature (McCulloch, 2015). Consequently, such risk factors will be considered within this chapter while seeking individual-level causal tendencies. As such, the individual domain being explored in this chapter is not just concerned with choice and action; it is also concerned with individual circumstances that do not have an obvious patterned structural foundation. The wider structural factors will be consigned to Chapter Four. To use the language of Gowan (2010), as referred to in Chapter One, causal factors embedded within 'sin' talk[13] and 'sick' talk[14] will be the focus of this chapter, leaving factors which

---

[13] Sin talk refers to discussions of homelessness as a consequence of sin or deviancy.
[14] Sick talk refers to discussions of homelessness as a consequence of mental impairment.

might otherwise be considered as 'system' talk[15] to be explored in the next chapter. However, as discussed, human agency and individual circumstances are not bound by illness and deviancy, because various risk factors are also an important consideration, and consequently, such factors will also be considered within this chapter when seeking causal tendencies from within the individual domain.

Method

A critical realist approach to understanding homelessness was endorsed almost two decades ago by Fitzpatrick (2005), yet positivist, constructivist, and to some extent postmodernist research has continued to dominate the field, with critical realism remaining as an emerging methodology. Nevertheless, the previous research that has adopted critical realism has helped start the process of identifying the causal mechanisms which can activate homelessness. As Hastings (2021) notes, the challenge is for future critical realists in this field to build upon the existing causal frameworks offered. Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) offer one such starting point, with their use of critical realism highlighting that some individuals are profoundly more likely to become homeless than others, with a largely structural causal model proposed to account for this. However, they do not discount the possibility that wholly individual causes can lead to homelessness in some circumstances. This work, and the wider work of Fitzpatrick and other critical realists has inspired this thesis and has provided a solid foundation from which to build upon. The emphasis of this chapter is to identify whether specific individual-level factors should be written into their largely structural account, and as will be shown, this chapter argues that they should be.

As noted, the causal model put forward by Bramley and Fitzpatrick is largely structural, however, they do accept that individual-level factors can sometimes be associated with homelessness, and several risk factors can also make someone more likely to become homeless. Their position that individual causes can lead to homelessness in some circumstances raises the opportunity to explore whether such individual factors might have a tendency to activate in some circumstances, rather than being discrete mechanisms which only activate rarely. This thesis starts from a position that specific individual-level factors should be built into an explanatory framework, and this chapter will now set these out. A fundamentally different approach to that of Bramley and Fitzpatrick will be used, as Chapter Two explained, despite the commonality of critical realism. Specifically, this thesis draws upon qualitative data from three streams, in contrast to their quantitative data from several statistical sources. The qualitative data obtained from the three streams will be triangulated throughout this chapter and the wider thesis. More emphasis will be placed on the interview data, because as discussed earlier, there was a significant quantity of useful information derived from this method.

---

[15] System talk refers to discussions of homelessness as a consequence of wider societal structures.

However, triangulation, as Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021) note, allows researchers to test theories, to identify and dismiss inconsistent data, and therefore it can facilitate increased validity and credibility of a study. Thus, by triangulating the data, implausible explanations can be quickly identified and a movement towards an authentic ontology can transpire.

As was again set out in Chapter Two, pursuing several stages of analysis will enable this chapter to identify the causal tendencies from the individual domain. Firstly, demi-regularities will be presented, with these representing the main themes emerging from the empirical data. As described in Chapter Two, these demi-regularities started as a large number of theoretically informed themes, which were then reduced to a smaller number of themes once the process of coding had taken place. The presentation of these demi-regularities provides the first hint of individual level factors which might have causal implications for homelessness. However, the processes of induction, deduction, abduction, and retroduction, as set out in Chapter Two, will transform these factors into a stratified translation of homelessness. The process of retroduction will also ensure that the deeper level causal mechanisms are identified, as well as the wider contextual conditions required for these mechanisms to activate. The process of retrodiction, that was also mentioned in Chapter Two, will ensure that the interplay between various causal factors is identified. This will be considered to some extent and then expanded on in Chapter Six by conceptualising the various causal tendencies together into an explanatory framework.

Demi-regularities

A number of theory-led themes, as set out in Appendix Three, were explored through coding the poetry, X (formerly Twitter) data, and semi-structured interviews. Doing so enabled these themes to be reduced to several demi-regularities for each domain. Table Three below presents the demi-regularities which have been attributed to the individual domain, with the explanation of the realms from earlier in the chapter informing apportionment of themes.

Theme	Quantity in poetry	Quantity in X data	Quantity in semi-structured interviews
Agency	8	47	34
Mental illness	5	11	38
Trauma	4	26	21
Drug/alcohol misuse	4	39	7
Lack of family support	2	0	31
Domestic violence	2	16	12
Hope	2	0	9

Survival	1	0	7
Empowerment	1	0	7
Risk-taking	1	2	4
Self-esteem	1	0	5

Table Three: Demi-regularities within the individual domain

Given their emergence in the data, these themes represent some of the factors from the individual domain which are associated with homelessness. The remainder of this chapter will now explore some of these areas further in pursuit of a stratified approximation of homelessness. This chapter will ultimately show that agency, trauma, family structures, and patriarchy are the deeper mechanisms which have causal tendencies for homelessness when they present in certain contexts. This will now be explained further.

Agency

The individual domain can be understood as a broader category than agency, as was discussed earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, the first factor I will be exploring from this sphere is agency, and this is for several reasons. Firstly, it was the most prominent demi-regularity which emerged from the data. Secondly, agency, along with structure and culture, forms one of the constituent aspects of critical realism (De Souza, 2014). Finally, my own experiences of homelessness, particularly when working in practice, highlighted that agency was often viewed as the main activating agent of homelessness. I still recoil when I recollect the numerous discussions in practice settings where an individual was blamed for their homelessness because they 'failed to pay their rent' or they 'made unwise spending choices'. Indeed, as mentioned at the start of this thesis, the blame and judgement attributed to individual agents in practice, without regard for wider external factors, was one of the driving forces behind the commencement of this thesis. This section explores the merits of such sentiments finding that some degree of agency exists in human agents, but this should be understood within the confines of wider factors.

It is important to note at this juncture that agency encompasses a much broader territory than the choices made by individuals, and indeed Archer (2002) notes it is not only human agents that can exhibit agency. She also suggests that while a human agent can partly transform their society, they are simultaneously partly formed by their sociality, and therefore theories of agency should include both aspects. This section will focus on the agency exhibited by those who experience homelessness leaving wider agency to be explored in Chapter Four. This section will ultimately show that, while human agents take actions that can result in homelessness, there are various factors which will constrain and influence these actions. As such, agency should be included as a causal power in any

framework for homelessness, but the wider context in which an agent acts must be also included. This section will now start exploring agency through the lens of the data, and the first point to note is that divergent views in respect of human agency were apparent. In the X (formerly Twitter) data, the common notion was that homelessness is inflicted on an individual as the below tweet emphasises:

"Nobody deserves to be homeless. Don't vote Tory" (Tweet 22).

Interestingly, this tweet was imparted at a time when the Conservative government had committed to ending homelessness by 2027 and had facilitated the implementation of additional measures to support those experiencing homelessness during the Covid pandemic. The tweet may therefore have been more concerned about making a political statement than it was about implying causation. However, there were twenty-three tweets in total which implied that homelessness is inflicted upon an individual. It is therefore unsurprising to note that other tweets suggested that charity needs to intervene, as is highlighted below:

"Help us to help *** in ending his homelessness. Donate today." (Tweet 26).

Notwithstanding the excellent work that many charities do in supporting those who experience homelessness, the view expounded by the X (formerly Twitter) data might be criticised for stripping human actors of their agency and positioning those who experience homelessness as passive victims. Indeed, Milbourne and Cloke (2006) agree that some views under-emphasise the importance of self-determination in respect of homelessness. Such perspectives might also highlight that victimhood is being bestowed on those who experience homelessness, and according to Van Dijk (2009), this occurs in various disciplines from a spontaneous adoption of the victim label. The notion accentuated by the X (formerly Twitter) data positioning homelessness as a social occurrence that is in some way inflicted on individual actors clearly contrasts with the perspectives I witnessed in practice, which as mentioned, always seemed to emphasise personal blame. The process of abduction allows me to redescribe these arguments, taking both perspectives seriously so that external factors are seen as having constraints on agents, while simultaneously embracing the view that individuals have some capacity to shape their own destiny.

This redescription is partly informed by the offering from critical realist McNaughton Nicholls (2009) who considers the risky behaviours that are sometimes positioned as causes of homelessness. She suggests that individuals choose between a range of actions, each of which are risky, but these choices are influenced by social processes and context. The redescription is also informed by Somerville and Bengtsson (2002) who posit that the self-determination of individual actors should be taken seriously, and their actions should not be reduced solely to an effect of social structure. The wider work of these

commentators' view actors as operating with 'thin' rationality whereby the context of their actions is seen as having a crucial effect on the decisions and choices they make. Individual actors are thus assumed to have some logical consistency in the pursuit of their goals, but this can be open to empirical investigation, where the context is of crucial consideration. This chapter will now move on to explore some of this context through the empirical data, and this endeavour will continue throughout the wider thesis. The critical realist process of retroduction, as noted in Chapter Two, facilitates the excavation of real causal mechanisms, as well as the contextual conditions which give these factors causal power. In the case of human agency, the starting position is that it has causal power in the advancement of homelessness, and the challenge is to ascertain the wider factors which enable and constrain such agency in expediating homelessness.

The transcendental question that this section seeks to answer is what are the contextual conditions which interact with agency in the production of homelessness? To adopt a priori view, I can once again draw upon my time as a reflective practitioner who supported those who were experiencing or were at risk of experiencing homelessness. I accept that my initial opinion is subjective despite my practice experience, but to eliminate this subjectivity I can explore my priori position in the context of literature and data, applying judgement rationality to reconstruct the theory so that it becomes closer to objective reality. This constitutes the critical realist methodology described in Chapter Two. The priori hypothesis I have adopted in view of practice experience is that agency can lead to homelessness when an individual is faced with unaffordable accommodation. This is because, in practice, I regularly observed decisions not to pay rent when the accommodation was unaffordable, and this invariably led to eviction. To clarify unaffordable rent, there are tools practitioners can use to calculate affordability based on income and expenditure, and in situations where the calculation showed rent was unaffordable, I observed individual agents making choices between paying their rent or paying for other necessities such as food for themselves and their families.

My priori position has some support in the literature, with Alakeson and Cory (2013) acknowledging that there is a housing affordability crisis in the UK, which they say is impairing the choices of those on low-to-middle incomes. My theory is also empirically supported, with poetry, X (formerly Twitter) data, and interviews all supporting it to an extent. For example, Jim's poem gives an account of him navigating through a range of unsuitable housing situations, with him declaring that '*there are choices people can make*', but he also says they are '*limited*'. The X (formerly Twitter) data adds that '*a serious commitment to affordable house building*' is necessary to give individuals greater choice (Tweet 51). In the interview data, there is explicit reference to homelessness being a product of constrained agency in the context of unaffordable housing, as the following quote from a support worker demonstrates:

"In other cases, accommodation is so unaffordable that it becomes a choice between paying rent or eating, and so you could say homelessness is a choice, but the alternative options were just as undesirable" (Interview 38).

In the same interview, the support worker also highlights that it is not just a choice between paying for rent or food; agency is also constrained by the undesirability of accommodation options in the affordable market, as the following extract highlights:

"There are often very little choices available, and so it becomes a choice between being homeless or perhaps living somewhere that is physically or mentally unsafe" (Interview 38).

It can thus be deduced that individual actors exercise their agency to become homeless when they view accommodation options as perilous, and this is certainly an experience I can relate to from my own lived experience. Without making this thesis too much about my own journey, I can divulge that I chose to sleep in a bus shelter for a short period because this felt safer than the accommodation I was otherwise offered. In addition, fourteen of the interviewed practitioners supported this idea that individual agents exercise agency in keeping themselves protected, even if their chosen action is not completely safe. However, there is a separate body of opinion within the data which argues that practitioners should be enabling clients to make better choices, because failing to do so creates a homelessness cycle and dependency on services. This is captured in the narrative from another support worker below:

"Homelessness is a cycle. I've done this job for twenty-seven years and it's the same people in and out of homelessness. A lot of my colleagues do too much for their clients, and from experience I can tell you that this only creates dependency. Instead, I take a firm approach, helping my clients to realise that making the same bad choices will bring the same bad outcomes". (Interview 1).

This fits with the opinion mentioned in Chapter One emphasising that those experiencing homelessness should be assisted to achieve their legitimate choices, and while this thesis accepts that such assistance may be necessary in some cases, I argue that the emphasis should be on assisting clients to overcome the structural barrier of unaffordable accommodation so that they are then empowered to make better choices. This is because making judgements about those who experience homelessness, including what might be best for them, risks alienating this population. For example, Mike's poetry refers to others giving judgmental advice with his line '*get a job, get a life, people say'*. Then there is Sam's poem which refers to the trust issues that come from judgements, as the following extract shows:

"It becomes an endless cycle because there is no one we can trust,

Homeless in the 21st century is so fucking unjust,

We should be treated like individuals, none of us are the same,

But the main focus of the system is always personal blame".

This notion that 'none of us are the same' implies some individual differences, and it might therefore be the case that every individual shoulders a different amount of responsibility for their homelessness. This is supported by ideas embedded within the work of Rosenthal (2000), who found that those experiencing homelessness have traditionally been split into three categories by past research, which he defines as lackers[16], slackers[17], and unwilling victims[18]. These categories, he says, have traditionally been related to judgements of whether the individual is perceived as being able to control the causes or not, with this divide also related to ideas of an individual's perceived deservingness of support. This therefore distinguishes between a group who are deemed to make a rational choice to become homeless and groups who are victims of circumstance or lack of ability. Evidence of such a distinction was found in the interview data, with one housing options officer stating:

"There are those I want to take home and mother, those who I feel just need a break, and those who have burnt all bridges and just need a good kick up the backside." (Interview 37).

Such sentiment emphasises that those who experience homelessness are the subject of judgements about deservingness from some of the people employed to help them. Indeed, notions of deserving and undeserving are enshrined in the archaic vagrancy act (Vorspan, 1977), and this is still in force today despite many attempts to repel it. Skeggs (2005) suggests such judgements might be understood as a method of social control because expressing negative value is a mechanism for attributing value to the dominant classes, whereby oneself is made to be tasteful through judging those of a lower standing to be tasteless. According to Skeggs, these judgements assign others as immoral, repellent, abject, worthless, disgusting, and disposable. It is precisely these judgements that can lead those who experience homelessness to become stigmatised, and consequently, Parsell (2010) suggests that those who experience homelessness become easy targets by virtue of their situation. However, Alden (2015) argues that such judgements are a necessary means for gatekeepers to decide who deserves access to limited resources. Consequently, acknowledging that those who experience homelessness have agency may legitimise judgements around deservingness. Applying rationality to the perspectives discussed leads this thesis to view judgements as a barrier to navigating precarious

---

[16] Lackers refers to those who lack mental or cognitive faculty to navigate homelessness.
[17] Slackers refers to those who become homeless because they are lazy or otherwise deviant.
[18] Unwilling victims refers to those who become homeless through no fault of their own.

housing situations, and this is supported by the poetry narratives which demonstrate some resentment towards feeling judged. This thesis therefore takes the view that judgements by practitioners should be included in the wider context of factors that constrain agency, alongside unaffordable accommodation. This is because those who work in the sector have the authority to provide a range of solutions and housing options to those who need it, but greater choice is afforded to those deemed worthiest. While this was observed in practice, the analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that this is a contextual factor which impairs the agency of those experiencing homelessness.

It is now worth returning to Rosenthal's (2000) observation that the homelessness population consists partially of lackers and slackers. This is because there is a similar line of thinking evident in the data, whereby agency amongst those who experience homelessness is seen as being regulated by either deviant tendencies or mental affliction. For example, one probation worker states that '*people who enter homelessness often do so because they are caught up in criminal lifestyles*' (Interview 25). However, a psychiatrist argues that there is '*a high proportion of the homeless community who are suffering from serious mental ill health*' (Interview 14). There is consequently value in considering these areas further to identify if they are likely to be influences on agency. In relation to deviancy, Parsell and Parsell (2012) suggest that a body of thought exists which implies homelessness results from decisions to engage in criminal or deviant behaviours. They suggest that a refusal to engage in the labour market is often considered the main deviant choice, but the idea is also applied to illicit drug use and engagement in other illegal or illicit activities. Interestingly, Jim's poem refutes the idea that homelessness is connected to deviant choices, as indeed he was able to exercise agency in avoiding illicit substance use. For example, he notes that '*the temptation is strong*' when offered illicit substances, but he was able to fight against '*the feeling of knowing it was wrong*'. However, one probation officer reaffirmed that homelessness can be produced by decisions to engage in drug use, as the extract below demonstrates:

> "*People make decisions to get involved with drugs such as heroin. Most of us would never touch the stuff, but once you've got involved, that's it, your life is ruined, and I would say homelessness is almost a certainty. So, yes, decisions to take drugs is one of the causes of homelessness I would say*" (Interview 23).

There is consequently at least some empirical suggestion that deviant choices can lead to homelessness. However, McNaughton Nicholls (2009) suggests that such risky behaviours have a thin degree of rationality and should be seen within a wider context, for which she says mental health is one factor. There is significant data supporting a link between mental illness and homelessness, and

this will be considered further later in this chapter. At this juncture, I want to emphasise that the empirical data offers some support for the notion that agency is thin because of wider contextual conditions. For example, one charity director posits that the agency of those who experience homelessness is impaired by the profound difficulties they have faced, as the extract below highlights:

"From my extensive experience of working in this field, I can categorically tell you that the majority of homelessness stems from chaotic lives. I don't mean this as an insult to those who become homeless because I actually admire many for dealing with the shit they have had to put up with. It's very difficult, if not impossible, to make clear decisions when in these kinds of situations." (Interview 41).

This idea that agency is inhibited is debated in the literature with Long (1992) claiming that individual actors have the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion. Within the limits of information, uncertainty, and other constraints, social actors are said by Long to be both knowledgeable and capable. DeVerteuil, May, and von Mahs (2009), on the other hand, suggest that while people who experience homelessness can exercise considerable discretion, various structural constraints impede their everyday survival. This 'constrained agency' balances the notion of rational decision-makers who can and do negotiate their social world with fundamental structures that set boundaries for all behavioural choices. Based on the overall analysis so far, this thesis accepts that the agency in those who experience homelessness often is constrained, and the wider conditions constraining agency will be examined throughout this thesis. However, so far, unaffordable accommodation and practitioner judgements have been shown to be constraining factors, with a hint that mental impairment might also be a constraining factor. At this stage, the thesis does not accept the view that deviant tendencies lead to homelessness, instead preferring the argument that such risky behaviours are also constrained choices. However, this will be examined further later in this chapter.

It should be noted that this notion of constrained agency may be more applicable for entries into and journeys through homelessness than it is for exiting homelessness. This is because empirical data suggest that agency is more functional when it comes to exiting homelessness. For example, in the lived experienced narrative offered by David, he clearly asserts that he ended his homelessness journey because he *'had enough spirit'* to take a different trajectory. He further suggests that he was not sure *'where the spark within came from'* but he nevertheless found a way to exit. He was not the only lived experience voice to assert this, with Sarah's poem also emphasising that she came to a realisation that a different path was needed as the extract below demonstrates:

"One day I finally realised that I needed a change.

It was while I was standing at the needle exchange."

There was also evidence in the other data streams to support the potency of agency in exiting homelessness. For example, in the X (formerly Twitter) data it was declared that '*it is possible to leave homelessness behind if the desire is there*' (Tweet 16). This was also emphasised in the interview narrative of a specialist nurse who works with those experiencing homelessness, as the quote below highlights:

"There has to be willingness for change, and once you have this, homelessness can be ended very quickly." (Interview 19).

There is also literature to support the notion that agency is a potent mechanism in respect of exits from homelessness (Parsell, Tomaszewski, and Phillips, 2014; Johnson et al., 2015), and given the strength of sentiment, this thesis accepts that agency may be less constrained when it comes to exiting homelessness. This might help explain why practice discussions were observed to have a strong emphasis on agency. It is potentially the case that practitioners have confused agency as an activating agent of homelessness, with agency involved in its termination. To explain this point further, in their everyday pursuits, homelessness practitioners will encounter human agents with different levels of motivation to address their homelessness. It is conceivable that some practitioners will make judgements about how homelessness started based on this presentation despite the mechanisms driving exits from homelessness likely being different to those which activated it. It is important to note that this assertion does not imply that actors willingly elect to stay on a homeless pathway, but rather that agency has a causal role on successful exits insofar that when an individual exercises will, exits tend to occur. However, this will still require the presence of other structural conditions such as suitable accommodation, and further consideration will be given to this in the next chapter.

Overall, it has already been shown that agency has causal tendencies in respect of homelessness when there is also an absence of affordable accommodation. This is because agents may prioritise other expenses over unaffordable rent, or they may opt to be homeless as a substitute to the inadequate accommodation that is otherwise available to them. Ultimately, some agency is exercised in bringing about homelessness, but the wider context also matters. It was also posited that agency is exercised within the constraints of judgements made by practitioners about their deservingness. This matters because judgements may be a barrier to accessing support, and furthermore, practitioners may offer the full directory of help to those deemed most worthy. The individual experiencing homelessness can still exercise agency in engaging with the support on offer or accepting other more practical help, but the practitioner judgement will be constraining this. In addition, it has been emphasised that agency is most formidable when it comes to exiting homelessness. This is because an individual can ultimately

show strong determination to exit homelessness, and this is useful, whereas entries into homelessness can occur despite it not being the desired outcome. Instead, a 'thin' layer of constrained agency is likely to be the deeper causal tendency in relation to entries. The right structural conditions will need to be present even for exits to be facilitated, but ultimately, agency is fundamental to expediating the exit. These findings have policy and practice implications. From a policy point of view, it can first be re-asserted that more affordable accommodation options need to be made available. From a practice perspective, practitioners should be trained to leave aside judgements and to offer the same service to everyone irrespective of their view on deservingness. This might be controversial to those practitioners who insist that limited resources need to be targeted towards the worthiest, but if homelessness is to be reduced, everyone needs to have the possibility of being helped. Those experiencing homelessness should also be empowered to facilitate their own exit from homelessness when other conditions allow this. McNaughton Nicholls (2009) argues for agency to be written back into causal approximations of homelessness, and this thesis agrees subject to these wider contextual conditions also being included. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the other individual factors which enable homelessness. Agency will continue to be foregrounded throughout this thesis as an interacting factor of relevance, thus providing an opportunity to continue developing the priori theory set out in this section. The focus will now move to mental illness, substance misuse, and trauma given the dominance of these factors in the demi-regularities, as well as the earlier indication that these factors have significance.

Mental illness, substance misuse, and trauma

When working in practice, a high prevalence of mental illness was inferred to exist amongst the client group by colleagues, although there was debate around whether this was a consequence or cause of homelessness. For those practitioners who saw it as a cause, poor mental health was sometimes offered as a factor which constrained agency. Similarly, when getting to know clients, it was commonplace to hear accounts of significant past events and ongoing distress as factors which influenced past decisions. Although observed a little less frequently, substance misuse, including alcohol abuse, was also regularly associated with homelessness by both practitioners and clients. There was again a debate around whether this was a cause or consequence of homelessness, and whether this was a factor which constrained agency. This practice experience prompts the exploration of mental illness, substance misuse, and trauma within this thesis. The examination of these specific factors can be justified further by their voluminous inclusion within the data. These factors are grouped together because they deal with the psychological dimension of individuals. However, appropriate attention will also be given to each in isolation. Ultimately, this section will show that human actions observed at the empirical level can be constrained by mental illness and substance

misuse occurring at the actual level, and these have a tendency to be caused by 'real' traumatic life events.

To start this analysis, it is first necessary to describe the distinction between mental illness and trauma. According to the mental health charity MIND (2020) mental illness can be easily defined as any condition that affects the way people think, feel, behave, or interact with others. Trauma, on the other hand, is not so easily defined and has been the subject of academic speculation around the origins of the term and how it has evolved in popular western discourse. However, the contentious nature of the term is eloquently detangled by Luckhurst (2013) who suggests the label was originally applied to any individual who had directly experienced wars, disasters, accidents, or other extreme 'stressor' events which subsequently produced identifiable somatic and psycho-somatic disturbances. He further suggests that the term has since been extended to account for anyone who has lasting emotional turmoil from exposure to an incident or series of events including emotional abuse, childhood neglect, sudden loss of a loved one, poverty, racism, and violence. This latter definition encapsulates what this thesis means by trauma, although it is worth noting that any respondents who referred to trauma throughout the research process were not specifically challenged to check their notions conformed to this particular definition. In any case, trauma is seen by this thesis to be a deeper-level mechanism which is not observed in the empirical realm, although this section will later show that some agents made assertions about it.

This section will first focus on mental health, and in this respect, it is worth noting that a high prevalence of psychotic disorders, major depression, and personality disorders are said to exist in those experiencing homelessness (Fazel, Geddes, and Kushel, 2014). Furthermore, there are several references to mental illness throughout the poetry gathered for this research. For example, Jenny's poem questions how she was *'meant to handle the flashbacks and anxiety'* while Jim's poem declares that he *'ended in a mental health crisis'.* However, these references seem to describe a worsening of mental health during a homeless pathway rather than indicate that it was mental illness that contributed to their entry into homelessness. Similarly, the X (formerly Twitter) data contains several news headlines from which it is possible to make such assertions, and an example is given below:

"Homeless man in Leeds attempts suicide following a serious breakdown." (Tweet 3).

This may imply that homelessness leads to a deterioration in mental health, rather than mental illness necessarily causing homelessness. However, there is some empirical evidence from within the interviews to support the presence of mental illness prior to homelessness, as can be seen from the following extract from a town councillor with portfolio responsibility for housing:

> *"I don't think mental illness suddenly surfaces because someone becomes homeless, even though this will undoubtedly make things worse. In fact, those who present to the council with housing need regularly cite mental health difficulties on their application for assistance"* (Interview 35).

On a similar note, one support worker stresses that '*mental illnesses such as depression lead some people to bury their heads when they are faced with difficult decisions about how to spend their limited money*' (Interview 17). Consequently, it remains possible that mental illness contributes towards entries into homelessness. Alternatively, it remains conceivable that mental illness interacts with agency in producing homelessness. There is some support for this by Crane et al. (2005) who found that mental illness is a contributory factor, particularly in later life homelessness. However, there is some division within the literature, with Snow et al. (1986) suggesting that psychiatrically orientated researchers have over-emphasised the extent of mental affliction within those who experience homelessness. They further assert that when diagnostic biases are removed, the typology changes to a non-impaired individual who is financially impoverished. However, Smartt et al. (2019) argue that mental illness makes someone especially vulnerable to homelessness. Furthermore, Crisis (2023) suggest that forty-five percent of those who experience homelessness have a diagnosed mental health condition. While this is not quite the majority, it is significant, and this thesis therefore sides with the view that mental illness and homelessness are highly associated. This was extensively supported by the data, with a widespread view espoused by one Housing First coordinator who submits:

> *"The majority of people I have supported over the years suffer from depression and other mental health conditions. I'm not a psychiatrist, but I think there has to be a greater emphasis on mental health when responding to homelessness."* (Interview 29).

Despite the earlier-mentioned view arguing that the link between mental illness and homelessness has been over-emphasised, the association between these concerns has been well-documented by others. This includes a study that considers the complex needs of those who experience homelessness (Queen et al., 2017), a study that considers multiple exclusion homelessness (Pattison and McCarthy, 2022), and a study that considers risk factors associated with homelessness (Watts, and Fitzpatrick 2020). While there is some inference within these studies that mental illness only comes to the foreground after the commencement of homelessness, the overwhelming suggestion is that poor mental health precedes homelessness. It is thus accepted that poor mental health can be a risk factor for homelessness, and naturally, when someone is not of sound mind this may constrain their agency. This was accentuated in the interview data, for example, by one charity worker who suggests that agency is impaired by mental illness, as is highlighted below:

"I would definitely say that mental illness affects the way someone acts. I mean, money management is the common one, and I think it is common knowledge that unwise spending decisions are linked to depression, and obviously this can also result in homelessness" (Interview 42).

In total, there were eight interviews with a similar view, overall signifying that mental illness can be understood as a factor which precedes homelessness, is exacerbated by it, and interacts with agency in generating it. This examination of mental illness highlights the usefulness in considering factors both as independent from and interdependent on other structures, as is central to critical realism. This is because mental illness has been shown to have causal propensity for homelessness in its own right, while also interacting with other factors such as agency. However, this thesis takes the view that the presentation of mental illness is an actual level event which is driven by a deeper-level real mechanism. This thesis postulates that this mechanism is trauma, and further consideration will be given to this after first considering substance misuse.

Despite earlier assertions that substance misuse was observed less in practice than mental illness, Mental Health Foundation (2023) reports that sixty-three percent of those experiencing homelessness suffer from substance misuse. This includes illicit drug use as well as excess alcohol consumption, and this statistic is clearly greater than the forty-five percent of the homeless population purported to have a mental illness. However, the same debates exist concerning whether substance misuse precedes or is aggravated by homelessness. For example, Johnson and Chamberlain (2008) studied homelessness in a major city and found that only fifteen percent reported substance misuse difficulties prior to entering homelessness, indicating that substance misuse escalates while on a homeless pathway. However, Stablein et al. (2021) argue that the relationship is 'bidirectional' with substance use disorder having a causal effect on homelessness while also being exacerbated by it. This thesis agrees with the latter study, positing that substance misuse precedes homelessness, is exacerbated by it, and interacts with agency in producing it. This segment will next justify this position, highlighting that substance misuse has a similar relationship with homelessness as mental illness, but in addition, this section will highlight how substance misuse can prolong exits from homelessness.

This relationship between substance misuse and homelessness will now be analysed further, but it should first be noted that when discussing the issue of drug and alcohol misuse as a possible cause of homelessness, there is a need to tread cautiously to prevent perpetuating the stereotype of a drunk vagrant. Nevertheless, the narratives embedded in the poetry collected for this research show a strong theme of substance abuse. For example, Jenny's poem states that '*at first it was out of the question to get sober*' while Sam's poem says that *'we need an escape, so we turn to drugs and drink'.* In

addition, Lee's poem includes the passage '*I am holding a beer. It is the only way to cope.*' The wider poetry narratives tend to imply that substance misuse is a coping mechanism during homelessness, but the interview data instead suggests that any inclination to misuse substances comes before homelessness. This is mentioned in six separate interviews, including from a homelessness prevention worker whose quote can be found below:

> *"So, I work in the homelessness prevention team, and my job involves visiting people in their home and working with them to stop homelessness from happening. One of the biggest issues I come up against is drug and alcohol addiction. The people struggling with this can have difficult relationships with their neighbours and landlords because of their addiction. They might also prioritise buying drugs or alcohol instead of paying their bills and rent. These things mean that my role of preventing homelessness is difficult if not impossible at times"* (Interview 2).

This narrative explains some of the ways that homelessness can result from substance misuse, and this notion that such actions can give rise to homelessness is supported by the X (formerly Twitter) data insofar that one tweet submits that '*drugs ruin lives and lead to homelessness*' (Tweet 11). A separate tweet provides some wider context by suggesting that '*drug and alcohol dependency prevents employment and results in homelessness*' (Tweet 72). The triangulated data thus indicates that impaired relationships, reduced capacity to pay rent, and decreased capacity to work mean that homelessness is a product of substance misuse. In the interview data, one respondent who works as a specialist nurse conversely subscribes to the view that homelessness aggravates substance misuse, as can be highlighted in the following extract:

> *"Drugs and alcohol are part of a homeless lifestyle. They ease the pains of homelessness and allow users to fit in with compatriots. I see people change quite rapidly upon becoming homeless as a result of drugs and alcohol."* (Interview 19).

This view that substance misuse is a consequence of homelessness rather than a cause is supported by a critical realist paper from Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen (2013). However, O'Sullivan et al. (2020) argue that substance abuse is causal, but they submit that this is only for a minority of those who experience homelessness. This thesis ultimately takes the view that substance misuse can both precede homelessness and be exacerbated by it. As has been discussed, substance misuse can prevent human agents from having the capacity to pay rent, it can impair ability to maintain employment, and it can adversely impact on the maintenance of the positive relationships that are necessary for tenancy sustainment. Essentially, it is posited that substance misuse can and does impair agency to such a degree that homelessness sometimes follows. In addition, there is evidence within the empirical data

to suggest that substance misuse inhibits exits from homelessness. For example, Lee's poem referred to earlier acknowledges that while alcohol use is a coping mechanism, it does not help. He then goes on to say, '*I'm stuck, I'll never be free.*' This notion that exits from homelessness are thwarted by substance misuse is substantiated further by the interview data. This is particularly evident in the following quote from a psychiatrist who works in a multi-disciplinary team to address the needs of those experiencing homelessness:

> *"Those who are heavily involved in drug taking and drinking are undoubtedly the hardest to re-house. Once they become clean, or once they have made great strides to stop, it becomes far easier to re-house them."* (Interview 9).

As well as supporting the idea that exiting homelessness is impaired by substance misuse, this psychiatrist is also suggesting that abstinence from drugs and alcohol aids successful exits. The benefits of staying 'sober' are further acknowledged in Jenny's poem with her declaration that '*600 days sober is an absolute fucking dream,* an*d it's not worth going back, however hard things seem.*' It might thus be inferred that rehabilitation is necessary to enable successful exits from homelessness, although O'Sullivan et al. (2020) submit that drug and alcohol treatment is in fact more effective once housed. However, the psychiatrist quoted earlier highlights a possible challenge insofar that housing may not be offered to those who misuse substances, as the following quote demonstrates:

> *"I think the problem is that landlords, including some social landlords, are apprehensive to offer accommodation to those with addictions."* (Interview 9).

Consequently, it can be inferred that substance misuse can prevent exits from homelessness, not just because an individual agent is impaired by their addiction, but also because housing may not get offered to those with a history of substance misuse. There is further evidence within the data to suggest that the problem worsens when an individual has a dual diagnosis[19]. This is because those who have a dual diagnosis, as one support worker notes, '*have the most complex needs meaning they are by far the most difficult to help*' (Interview 6). This is reinforced by a specialist nurse who asserts that those with a dual diagnosis have serious health concerns to contend with, meaning their capacity to navigate challenging structures when they present is compromised, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *"As I've mentioned, I don't like the term complex needs, but in relation to those with a dual diagnosis, I would say that any strength they can muster is spent on working through their*

---

[19] Dual diagnosis in this context refers to the presence of a mental health condition and substance use disorder concurrently.

mental torment while also trying to reduce their dependency on drugs and alcohol. This means that when they have added pressures such as housing problems, their ability to deal with it is limited" (Interview 19).

This reinforces the notion that both mental illness and substance misuse impair agency, and this is especially prevalent when the human agent has these struggles contemporaneously. Overall, this section has determined that both mental illness and substance misuse precede homelessness, are exacerbated by it, and interact with agency in producing it. It has also been established that substance misuse has a tendency to impair exits from homelessness. However, both mental illness and substance misuse may have a deeper mechanism which activate their causal propensity and this thesis hypothesises that this real-level mechanism is trauma. This is because deeply buried trauma can perpetuate mental decline and lead to substance misuse as a means to numb the discomfort associated with trauma (Zarse et al., 2019). Both mental illness and substance misuse have been shown to have a multifaceted association with homelessness, but further analysis of trauma will now be performed to explore its hypothesised function as the deeper-level causal mechanism.

To draw on practice experience again as a starting point, it was observed in practice settings that some of the people being supported had ongoing emotional distress, and if they felt inclined to speak about their distress, there was often an indication that significant past events were at the root of this distress. This notion is supported by research evidence which finds that individuals who experience homelessness often report traumatic personal histories (Spence, 2009), and a further study finds that they display a particularly negative outlook on their own past lives (Pluck et al., 2012). This knowledge informs the priori hypothesis under consideration, this being that trauma tends to have a generative causal effect on homelessness. As a starting point in exploring this, the X (formerly Twitter) data indicates that such an association exists, as can be demonstrated in the quote *'many homeless people have deeply buried trauma'* (Tweet 19). While it is not always apparent how the authors of such social media posts come to these conclusions or indeed what authority they have to make such assertions, the connection is nevertheless made. Furthermore, this same speculation is found in the interview data, and it might be argued that these participants have the professional credentials to make such a link. It might be argued further that there is greater value when a medical expert makes such assertions, as was the case with one psychiatrist who is quoted below:

"I would say the vast majority of the homeless community I work with carry profound trauma, most notably from childhood events such as witnessing domestic violence between parents or experiencing sexual abuse from a family member. As you can imagine, most don't wish to talk

about it, but occasionally they will open up, and it becomes clear that they've never properly dealt with the trauma." (Interview 32).

However, not every interview subject agreed that trauma is the factor that yields causal power. For example, one rough sleeping coordinator suggests it is ultimately structural factors which cause homeless events, as can be seen from their extract below:

"No, it's not trauma that causes homelessness, it's a lack of housing that causes homelessness. Don't get me wrong, there is trauma in a lot of the homeless people I work with, but that's not the cause, because trauma affects everyone differently." (Interview 28).

This practitioner places more emphasis on housing as a causal factor, and as has already been discussed, a lack of affordable housing will constrain agency. Further consideration will also be given to housing in Chapter Four. In respect of trauma, this rough sleeping coordinator acknowledges its presence within the population of people he works with but says that it manifests differently in each person. I agree that this is likely to happen, but I argue that while some people will be able to live fulfilling lives despite traumatic pasts, there is a tendency for trauma to impair an individual to such an extent that they become vulnerable to homelessness. Ultimately, while not every interview subject agreed that trauma is a driver for homelessness, the suggestion that childhood trauma can be a driver for homelessness is supported by literature (Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen, 2013). Furthermore, a study which surveyed adult homeless populations found they self-reported high levels of adverse childhood and later life events prior to their homelessness (Spence, 2009). Therefore, while there was debate about the causal propensity of trauma within the empirical data, this is not a positivistic piece of research, and an advantage of the critical realist approach is that judgement rationality can be applied. Given there is some solid suggestion within the data that trauma has causal propensity in respect of homelessness, and this is backed up by literature, the resulting judgement is that trauma is likely to have causal tendencies. It is further asserted that this deeper causal tendency can activate mental illness and substance misuse because as one psychiatrist notes *'the foundation of most mental illness is trauma.'* (Interview 32). In addition, a support worker explains that *'they tell me that they use drugs to cope with the traumas from their past.'* (Interview 3). These assertions were common within the data as some of the past extracts have already highlighted. However, consideration must now be given to the wider context which gives trauma this potential, especially given there is some dismissal of its causal propensity.

As a starting point, while Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen (2013) see childhood trauma as a driver for homelessness, they also suggest that adverse life events can develop later in a homelessness journey. The notion that adverse trauma is aggravated by homelessness carries merit, despite the

presence of traumatic childhood events being engrained within the psyche way before this. This thesis argues that the presence of trauma before a homelessness journey can result in mental health difficulties and substance misuse, and the worsening of these factors during a homelessness pathway can be explained by an individual's exposure to new traumatic events. This is supported by a probation worker in the quote below when discussing their observations of the individuals they work with who experience homelessness:

> *"When you are spat on, urinated on, kicked, punched, and generally seen as the scum of the earth, this has profound psychological consequences. What you then observe is behaviour that most of us would see as unusual, including a preference for dangerous ways of living, despite the risks. It's like the trauma is affecting their decision making and ability to make healthy choices going forward."* (Interview 22).

This notion that impaired decision-making is affected by ongoing trauma is supported by the literature with Pluck et al. (2012) attributing the neurotypical behaviours observed in adults experiencing homelessness to their sustained trauma. The poetry from those with lived experience also hints at enduring trauma, and associated negative symptomology, as is evident in Jenny's line, '*I couldn't cope, it was day one, over and over.*' This implies that the symptoms of trauma are difficult to handle, and this may suggest why decision-making is impaired, namely because the symptoms carry a significant emotional load and the capacity for clear thinking is therefore depleted. The idea that trauma has a causal effect on sustained homelessness is prevalent within the empirical findings, particularly within the interview data. One outreach worker discussed how the streets offer a place of sanctuary away from past trauma, as can be seen in the following quote:

> *"He repeatedly said that the streets were the first place where he felt safe and felt free. So, me turning up every morning and repeatedly telling him that I could offer accommodation, with hindsight, was flawed. Being within the confines of four walls had never worked for him, it brought back too many distressing memories, and what he therefore needed was some help to deal with his trauma."* (Interview 15).

This notion that an individual may elect to live on the streets is supported to some extent by the literature. For example, Luckhurst (2013) suggests that aside from a myriad of physical symptoms, trauma leads people to act in peculiar ways, including the persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with their trauma. As such, individual agents may avoid becoming re-housed if they have trauma associated with housing as described by the outreach worker above and reasserted in the X (formerly Twitter) data as can be seen in the quote below:

89

"He was beaten in a home, sexually abused in a home, and saw dreadful events in a home; so why would he ever want a home again?" (Tweet 4).

This implies that the avoidance of future housing is directly caused by the traumatic events experienced within past accommodation. This is further emphasised in the below extract from an interview with a psychiatrist:

Interviewer: *"What factors prevent exists from homelessness?"*

Interviewee: *"Trauma; it's always trauma."*

Interviewer: *"Does this apply to everyone who is homeless?"*

Interviewee: *"Yes, most, if not all."*

Interviewer: *"What makes you say this?"*

Interviewee: *"I'm a consultant psychiatrist who has worked specifically with the homeless for the past eight years. When I enquire what the reasons were for not accepting accommodation when it was offered, the reasons given by my patients are always related to trauma. They might start with the accommodation wasn't suitable, but when you unpack this, it's always related to the risk of eliciting deeply buried traumas."* (Interview 14).

There is subsequently corroboration for the idea that trauma has a tendency to cause sustained homelessness. This is further supported by the literature and a narrative from Harding, Irving, and Whowell (2011) offers a valuable summary and is therefore given below as a direct quote:

"The impact of trauma has been an increasingly important theme in homelessness research in recent years and there is a growing realisation that, for the majority of people for whom homelessness is an issue, trauma is always there in the background of their lives, whether that is from childhood, adolescence, as an adult, or throughout their whole lives. One important finding which comes out through research is the value of a trauma-informed approach to service delivery which is mindful of the traumatic experiences someone has gone through. This isn't about creating new services. There are already housing, mental health, and substance misuse services available. However, we need to ask why some individuals are unable to access or engage with services, and why some are returning to these services again and again. But a trauma-informed approach may be key to making it easier for those who need support to access these services." (Harding, Irving, and Whowell, 2011, p. 63).

This excerpt offers a practical solution to the trauma which has been shown to have tendencies in respect of homelessness. Specifically, the emancipatory action advocated for is trauma-informed support. This practice idea will therefore be included in the recommendations offered by this thesis,

ultimately offering a complete strategy informed by causal tendencies. Overall, the analysis supports the priori hypothesis positioning trauma as tending to have a generative causal effect on homelessness. In addition, the analysis throughout this section has helped to identify a layered ontology. At the empirical level, decisions to become homeless are observed and experienced. At the actual level, mental illness and illicit substance use are constraining these choices, whether they are observed to be doing so or not. At the real level, a deeper mechanism of trauma sits underneath mental ill health and substance use. This layered ontological proposition provides a more developed explanation for homelessness than the practice arguments which confine homelessness to bad decisions. It is worth noting that the literature attributes additional cognitive and psychological factors to homelessness that were not referred to in any of the data sources. For example, acquired brain injury is thought to exist to a much greater extent in the homeless population than it is in the general population (Oddy et al., 2012). This thesis accepts that such factors may have causal implications for homelessness despite their absence in the empirical data. However, it is argued by this thesis that such factors sit within the umbrella term of trauma. This is because Luckhurst's earlier mentioned definition of trauma incorporates such factors, with the explanation contending that trauma includes 'any accident that produces identifiable somatic and psycho-somatic disturbances.' Attention will now be turned to family breakdown and lack of family support to identify if there are causal tendencies originating from these factors.

Family breakdown and lack of family support

Family breakdown or a lack of family support has consequences for individuals who find themselves without a home. The lack of a family abode to return to, which can come with loving support until circumstances improve, might naturally mean that some people have no choice but to enter homelessness. This was certainly the case in my own homelessness journey, and the lived experience data collected for this thesis contains hints of family breakdown as a pivotal facet in the journey of others. For example, David posits that '*before you know it, you have no family, no friends, nothing. It's you, and you alone, and that's not a nice place to be'.* This implies that his relationships broke down, leaving him isolated and with nowhere to go. However, it is acknowledged that personal relationships often end, and when accommodation is shared by a couple in this situation, one person in the partnership will usually need to vacate. Wider family may be available to support an individual, or alternatively, sufficient financial resources may be in place. This might also be the case when an individual is required to leave accommodation in which they reside alone, but the point is that any individual vacating accommodation might be able to avoid homelessness if they have family or financial reserves as a buffer. However, when these cushioning factors are not available, an individual may be more susceptible to homelessness. This applies too when individuals face eviction directly

from their parental home, with a lack of wider family willing to help meaning some individuals will have nowhere to reside. Indeed, Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) position such family breakdowns and lack of support as significant risk factors for homelessness. This section will now explore how these risk factors can lead to homelessness.

Firstly, it is argued that a lack of family support sits aptly in the individual domain because there are not always patterned structural factors that lead to family breakdown or a lack of family support. Instead, this might simply result from the dynamic within a particular family, which I shall refer to as family structure. However, as with the other factors explored in this domain, wider structural factors may interact with family structure in generating homelessness events. The challenge is to identify whether the cause of homelessness is ultimately the family structure, wider structural factors, or a combination of both. The starting point of this thesis is to assume that family structure is a partial but generative causal mechanism for homelessness, and this is activated when other factors are also present. This will now be explored further.

When considering family structures, it is worth noting that any lack of support from within this structure can be due to a family breakdown, as has been intimated, but family breakdown is not necessarily why support is not forthcoming for an individual. For example, someone might find themselves without support because they have a history in care, they have no living family members remaining, or their family are around but lack the resources to help. Moreover, a family might step up to offer support to someone when they have nowhere to reside despite past estrangement. Any situation whereby family support is not forthcoming is therefore likely to be the most significant aspect of family structure associated with homelessness, rather than necessarily a family breakdown. A full appraisal of empirical data reveals there to be no relevant findings on family structures in the X (formerly Twitter) data. However, noteworthy narratives emerge in the other data streams, particularly in the interview findings. For example, one support worker suggests that having family to call on is a crucial preventative mechanism for homelessness, as can be seen in the extract below:

> *"Most people who are required to suddenly leave accommodation, for whatever reason, will have some form of support network to fall back on, usually in the form of family who will house the person until they find somewhere suitable. Sadly, there are lots of people who do not have this, because they either have no surviving relatives, or because the relationship with surviving relatives has broken down, or because surviving relatives don't have capacity to help. For these people, homelessness is almost inevitable."* (Interview 3).

This supports the earlier assertion that various factors can lead to a lack of family support, and ultimately, this lack of support is seen as central to someone entering homelessness. Interview

participants extensively reinforced this idea, with thirty-one respondents making this judgement. The following quote from another support worker provides a further example:

"One of the things I have noticed is that having no family backup is common in those who become homeless. Not having the help of loved ones during these most challenging of times is a big problem. Family is important because maybe they can provide a room, provide some money, or at the very least provide some help to get you back on your feet so you can avoid becoming homeless." (Interview 17).

This respondent suggests that family can help in several ways and a lack of family support is therefore crucial in preventing homelessness. There is also some emphasis in the literature on the importance of family, with Quilgars, Johnsen, and Pleace (2008) suggesting that problems within a family explains why most young people enter homelessness. It might be contended that being kicked out of the parental home as a young person, or coming from a history in care, is very different to having no support later in life, but this thesis argues that family support is needed throughout a lifespan to prevent pathways into homelessness. The same level of vulnerability will clearly not be present in adults, but if there is nobody to help when difficult circumstances present, then the same outcome of homelessness is possible. This has been extensively supported within the interviews, and while only a few quotes have been provided, the general sentiment can be summed up by the following supported housing coordinator:

"I guess you could say that we step in when family is not available for whatever reason. We give that spare room, we give that listening ear, we have rules that must be respected like if going to stay with family, but we are there when things get tough. I think everyone needs that kind of support no matter what age you are. We essentially rescue people from homelessness by providing the care that family would." (Interview 5)

This emphasises that adults too can be at risk of homelessness when the appropriate family structure is not in place to safeguard them. It could even be argued that adults are at greater risk of homelessness in some instances, and this is because they may be less inclined to convalesce difficult family relationships or be picked up by statutory services. This should in no way be taken as a devaluing of child homelessness, which undoubtedly is a significant problem, but in essence, the assessment is that family support is crucial for everyone, and without this, homelessness can result. As with every factor under consideration, the wider context is important, and as alluded to earlier, having appropriate financial provisions may mitigate any causal propensity of family structure. However, the interplay of such factors will be considered throughout this thesis, and Chapter Four will examine structure more closely. For now, it is posited that structural factors such as poverty and unaffordable

accommodation will not lead to homelessness if there is adequate family support, and thus family structure should be included in any causal framework for homelessness. This carries policy implications, and it is postulated that provision needs to be available to those who do not have family to turn to. As the supportive housing coordinator pointed out earlier, this type of provision is already in place, but a supportive housing manager warned in his interview that '*funding for supportive housing is under threat*' (Interview 13). This thesis argues that funding for supportive housing provision needs to be maintained, and as such, this policy recommendation will be carried through to the concluding chapter. The focus will now move to domestic abuse and patriarchy to identify whether these factors can result in homelessness.

Domestic abuse and patriarchy

Domestic abuse is a factor that featured extensively in the demi-regularities, and consequently, there is value in exploring its link with homelessness. To accentuate the relationship between domestic abuse and homelessness, this section will start with the poems of two participants, whose words convey strong accounts of domestic abuse. These poems can be found below:

He was a friend of Carla's, right
She said I'd be safe with him for the night
I thought I could trust this one, but he wanted more
He wanted a favour, in return for a score
When I said no, he started to shout
I ran for the door, but couldn't get out
I was left with a decision; give in or get hit
How did life become this shit?
All I wanted was to feel normal again
But life was just like this again and again and again
Poem by Bianca

I was in an abusive home at the start, but I had to get out despite it breaking my heart. I had no help or money so had plenty to lose by leaving, I became homeless and for my former life I was grieving. I felt worthless after what he did to me, I was beaten black and blue! So, I decided to go and explore pastures new. I was in a really bad way when I got with Dan. He got what he wanted from me and then sent me to another man. I didn't realise at the time, but I was being used. My story became one of being abused. One day I finally realised I needed a change. It was while I was standing at the needle exchange. How had my life spiralled out of control? I've escaped it at last and re-found my soul.
Poem by Sarah

Domestic abuse is defined as an incident, or pattern of incidents that are directed at an individual in a home environment and include controlling, coercive, threatening, and degrading behaviour (Women's Aid, 2023). Bianca's poem indicates a recurring need to give in to the demands of a man she was staying with to avoid violence, while Sarah clearly indicates that she became homeless after leaving

an abusive home, only to end up in further problematic relationships. These poems therefore demonstrate an association between domestic abuse and homelessness. More widely, domestic abuse is an event or series of events that many individuals will experience at some stage in their lives, and it is an issue that disproportionately affects women in England and Wales (ONS, 2022a). This is not to say that men are not victims sometimes too, but the principle that women are more likely to be victims has relevant because past research into homelessness has been criticised for focusing on male homelessness (Bretherton and Maycock, 2021). The exploration of domestic abuse as part of this research thus means there is potential to partially redress the gender imbalance associated with past homelessness research. There is sometimes a simplification in popular discourse which suggests that men experience homelessness while women experience domestic abuse, but this view has been criticised for ignoring the reality that women who flee domestic abuse often become homeless in doing so (Reeve, Casey, and Goudie, 2006). This can be related to the previous section because women in abusive relationships may have lost wider family connections, and therefore the act of leaving can be inhibited by the absence of wider family support. The view that women become homeless after fleeing abuse was extensively supported empirically. For example, the X (formerly Twitter) data suggests that some women have a choice between homelessness and violence, as the following quote demonstrates:

> *"Should she stay and take another beating, or leave and become homeless? Help us to create safe spaces for those fleeing domestic violence."* (Tweet 18).

This notion that fleeing violence can result in homelessness is widely supported within the interview data too, demonstrated by the following extract from a housing first coordinator:

> *"Yes, I've worked with a lot of homeless women, and I would say nearly all of them have fled violence of some kind."* (Interview 29).

Unlike when exploring other causal tendencies in the data, there were no dissenting voices on this topic. The respondents were unanimous in their belief that domestic abuse can lead to homelessness. A further quote in support of this can be found from a rough sleeping coordinator below:

> *"The causes are different for men and women. In women, the cause is almost always fleeing domestic violence."* (Interview 28).

This uniformity in response is replicated in the literature with those studies considering the link between domestic abuse and homelessness always positioning it as at least a partial cause of homelessness (Netto, Pawson, and Sharp, 2009; Baptista, 2010; Bretherton, 2017). There can consequently be no hesitation in accepting that domestic abuse is a causal factor in homelessness,

particularly for women. However, this should not be inferred as an indication that every woman who experiences homelessness is a domestic abuse victim, because as is central to critical realism, this pronouncement represents a tendency and not a law. Furthermore, as with the other factors discussed in this chapter, it is expected that other mechanisms interact with domestic abuse in causing homelessness. For example, a lack of family support will mean that an individual fleeing violence will have nowhere to go, and this will only be exacerbated by a lack of affordable accommodation options when alternative forms of housing are pursued. This is supported by the interview data with a support worker noting that an individual may stay in a violent relationship because of a lack of support and a lack of affordable accommodation options to move on to, as can be seen from the quote below:

> *"One of the things that I suspect keeps a woman in a violent relationship is that she has nowhere else to go. Accommodation is expensive, and I hear about abusers who have isolated their partners to such an extent that their support network is no longer available."* (Interview 30)

Some of the wider contextual conditions that link domestic abuse to homelessness are thus identified. However, it should be noted that this thesis views domestic abuse as an actual level event because it is an outcome of a higher-level power, and while it is experienced, it occurs whether it is acknowledged to be abuse or not. Given it is therefore placed at the actual level, the deeper unseen forces that produce it will next be explored. To get a sense of these, it is necessary to first consider the literature so that a priori theory can be formed, but here there is some competing ideas about the origins of domestic abuse. For example, domestic abuse has been attributed to poverty (Fahmy and Williamson, 2018), observed behaviour within a family (Wagner et al., 2019), anger issues within an individual (Johnson et al., 2006), and it is also said to often be perpetrated by individuals who have experienced a history of abuse themselves (Lloyd, 2018). However, there is a significant contribution suggesting that patriarchy is the underlying cause of domestic abuse (Freeman, 1982; Cubbon, 2000; Hoyle, 2012). This thesis does not dispute the complex web of factors that can lead to domestic abuse but argues that the higher force driving all of these is patriarchy. This is because patriarchy is a power that can bring about these wider conditions. There is some support for the presence of patriarchy within the practitioner narratives, even though it is not labelled as such. For example, one policy officer working in a local authority setting submits that men still possess most of the influence despite some progress, as the extract below highlights:

> *"There is no doubt we have progressed as a society, but let's be honest, men still dominate in positions of power, there is a gender pay gap, many households still conform to conventional roles, and men are usually physically stronger, something many men exploit"* (Interview 20).

This notion that men abuse their power is highlighted further in the poetry of Bianca and Sarah presented earlier. A similar narrative runs through several of the interview threads, with one support worker emphasising the power imbalance by saying *'I worry about the girls. They disappear for months at a time, and you just know they are being exploited by men'* (Interview 38). It is thus accepted that patriarchy is a deeper causal power, and it is particularly useful for understanding homelessness in women. However, patriarchy is also considered to be harmful to men, creating a conception of maleness which is detrimental (Kaufman, 1994). For example, notions of maleness might imply that men need to be tough in whatever circumstances they face, and indeed one outreach worker stresses that this can create a barrier to support by stating *'some men just don't want to accept help, particularly from a woman. It's like they see it as a sign of weakness'* (Interview 15). Patriarchy is thus postulated to be a real-level mechanism which can produce homelessness in the context of other factors also being present. These wider factors will continue to be explored throughout this thesis.

It should however be noted that while Bretherton (2017) supports the idea that women take a different trajectory through homelessness to men, she emphasises that the pathway of women is comprised of choices about how best to navigate through homelessness. She asserts that it is a misconception to suggest that women engage in activities like survival sex to avoid homelessness because, she says, women are more resilient than this and can find accommodation without depending on men. This thesis does not dispute Bretherton's assertions but argues that patriarchal forces can nevertheless lead to entries into homelessness, evidenced by the strong theme of abuse at the hands of men found within this research. This oppressive force might also limit the choices of some women who are navigating their way through homelessness. Undoubtedly, women do successfully navigate their way to safety and even to positions of influence, but this does not negate the existence of patriarchal forces. Instead, it highlights that some women can overcome oppressive structures despite its existence. Ultimately, it is possible to assert that women take a different trajectory through homelessness, with domestic abuse being an actual event which often precedes their journey, and patriarchy being the real level mechanism that accentuates it. As noted, patriarchy may also be responsible for some men not accessing support. This overall outcome carries policy and practice implications, notably that there is a need to address patriarchal structures. This may be achieved to some extent by first acknowledging there is a problem, secondly by attempting to educate younger generations about gender roles, and thirdly by continuing to take steps that eradicate oppressive forces by striving for a more equitable society. This is no easy task, but it is a necessary policy recommendation to reduce some aspects of homelessness. This chapter will now explore whether there are any other individual-level circumstances of significance to homelessness.

Other individual circumstances

The literature supports several other individual circumstances as being potential drivers of homelessness. For example, Daly (2013) suggests that once someone is classified as belonging to the underclass, they are seen by many as hopeless, and they thus become a contemporary version of the undeserving poor. The idea that labelling might perpetuate homelessness will be explored further in Chapter Four. However, themes of hope, empowerment, and self-esteem have been identified in the search for demi-regularities within this chapter, with an emerging narrative suggesting that these factors have importance for a sustained exit from homelessness. For example, David's narrative emphasises the importance of all three factors with his suggestion that *'some people lose the spark because they are not around those who can give them confidence and hope'.* This has relevance insofar that it can reasonably be deduced that when an individual loses hope and self-esteem, perhaps because of stigmatising labels, then their ability to move out of homelessness diminishes until they are empowered to make positive changes. The earlier finding that agency has a tendency to exhibit causal power in respect of exiting homelessness therefore now has some further context, namely that hope, self-esteem, and empowerment are necessary individual factors which should be activated to facilitate a desire to exit. The other themes which emerged from the empirical data were risk-taking and survival. These factors are often seen as interdependent by the literature. For example, Carlen (1996) suggests that those who experience homelessness engage in risky activities such as begging, busking, prostitution, drug taking, drug dealing, bouts of public drunkenness, and more serious criminality. However, such behaviours are also positioned by Carlen to be survival strategies. This is reaffirmed in the empirical data, with one psychiatrist stating:

> *"Being homeless is really shit, particularly if you are rough sleeping. So, when someone is drinking to excess, taking drugs, or involved in general recklessness, you shouldn't judge. It's hard not to judge, but generally these behaviours are a way to cope with the tribulations of being homeless."* (Interview 9).

There in an alternative argument that views homelessness as an act of deviancy by those who have a deviant disposition, and this view is captured in the X (formerly Twitter) data with the line *'homelessness is a sin committed by those who are otherwise sinful'* (Tweet 10). However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the proposal by the psychiatrist carries greater credence; risky behaviour as a survival mechanism seems more plausible than the idea that homelessness stems from deviancy and risky behaviours. It remains possible that some individuals become homeless because they have a criminal disposition, but the argument here is that any observed deviancy within homeless populations should be seen in the context of their need for survival. Another common pathway into homelessness suggested by the literature is the presence of financial debts (Van Laere, de Wit, and

Klazinger, 2009). Although accumulating debt is a conceivable risk factor, the empirical findings did not highlight this as an area of significance. This does not necessarily mean that debt has no causal power, but deeper unseen structures are likely to lead an individual into debt, and these factors will be fully explored in Chapter Four. Another individual factor that is seen to have a bearing on homelessness in some literature is intelligence. For example, one study in the UK reports an average full-scale IQ of homeless populations as being significantly lower than the general population (Oakes and Davies, 2008). However, an earlier study found that it is the experience of homelessness that is associated with a drop in IQ, and the level of IQ drop is correlated with the duration of homelessness (Bremner et al., 1996). This suggests that cognitive function declines as a consequence of homelessness, rather than a below-average intelligence being a causal factor for entries into homelessness. Empirical findings, once again, did not highlight intelligence as a specific issue, but it is nevertheless reasonable to infer from the literature that cognition reduces as a consequence of the severe strains experienced during a homelessness pathway. Any suggestion that below-average IQ is a causal factor for homelessness is therefore dismissed unless further evidence comes to light that suggests otherwise.

One final point to note in this section relates to what Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) call a simplistic positivistic notion of 'necessity', that is, assuming a phenomenon can only occur when a factor is present. On a similar note, they suggest there is a simplistic notion of 'sufficiency', that is, assuming the factor must inevitably lead to the phenomenon. There have been several examples discussed where such assumptions have been made by literature and research participants, but by adopting a critical realist position, this thesis conversely holds the view that a factor does not always have to be present for it to have causal tendencies, nor does its absence indicate that there is no causality. For example, it would be wrong to assume that low IQ is a causal tendency for homelessness just because some have observed this within the population of people who experience homelessness. It would also be wrong to assume that a thin degree of agency does not have causal tendencies just because some commentators have not observed this.

Conclusion

Existing research on the causes of homelessness generally offer individualistic factors, structural factors, or a combination of both without being specific about exactly how homelessness occurs. Critical realist research has been more precise in identifying interacting factors which yield causal tendencies. However, this chapter has built upon these ideas by re-examining individualistic factors, because this represents a domain where the importance is currently under-emphasised. This thesis takes the view that for a homelessness framework to be robust, factors from the individual domain need to be written back in. It is accepted that the offering of this chapter will still be subject to

fallibility, but nevertheless, the eventual framework to be offered by this thesis can be subject to continued revision in the future until a point of saturation is reached, at which point the framework becomes as robust as possible. To start this process of refining the homelessness framework this chapter has found that several individualistic factors are part of the interacting enterprise which can produce homelessness. Specifically, agency, trauma, family structures, and patriarchy were found to have relevance.

One of the features of this chapter which differentiates it from other work has been the exploration of factors which facilitate entries into homelessness, as well as factors influencing exits from homelessness. This is because homelessness is a social phenomenon that has mechanisms which continue to be activated during a pathway, and these may differ from the mechanisms that advance entries into homelessness. Ultimately, this chapter has found that the individualistic factors are the same for both entries into and exits from homelessness, however, agency was found to be particularly crucial for exiting homelessness. The wider context is still important, and structural factors which interact with this agency will be examined in Chapter Four. However, this chapter identified that the activation of hope, self-esteem, and empowerment can provide the wider milieu in which agency leads to successful exits from homelessness.

This chapter also identified that agency is a thin driver for entries into homelessness, but that agency in this respect is constrained by the lack of affordable accommodation, as well as by judgements made by practitioners about an individual's worthiness of assistance. From a stratified point of view, this chapter identified that impaired decision-making is often observed at the empirical level. However, mental illness and substance misuse are actual level events that can affect the decisions made by human agents, irrespective of whether they are observed to be doing so or not. Trauma was postulated to be the deeper-level mechanism which creates episodes of poor mental health and substance misuse, and it was thus positioned as a factor which has causal tendencies for homelessness. Family structures were also found to yield causal tendencies in respect of homelessness insofar that having no family support can enable homelessness when wider conditions are also present. Finally, patriarchy was identified as the deeper mechanism which contributes to domestic abuse and thus homelessness in women. It was also found to create a barrier for some men in accessing support to address their homelessness.

To complete the conclusion of this chapter it is worth emphasising that a lot of data was collected during this research. In analysing the individualistic domain, it has already become clear that it is not feasible to include every quote which supports a particular judgement. Instead, this chapter has focused on identifying as many of the individualistic factors of relevance as possible. It is accepted that

an alternative approach would be to focus on one or two areas and to fully explain judgements in the context of empirical data. However, this thesis can instead be seen as a scoping project which explores as many possible causal tendencies that can eventually be included in a framework. Ultimately, several factors of note have been identified, and this will continue to be built upon so that a framework can later be constructed. As mentioned, this can be revised in later work through a more detailed appraisal of specific factors. Chapter Four will now explore the structural domain to similarly identify how factors from this sphere can contribute to homelessness.

Chapter 4 - Homelessness as a consequence of poverty, socio-political events, and wider structural factors

"You go to the council and think they will assist,
Instead, they do all that they can to resist.
They send you to a shelter and say you'll be fine,
But there you share a room with at least another nine.
You feel like a dog in a kennel while there,
Except in this place there's not as much care.
Then you go for some help to find somewhere to live,
They keep you waiting for ages then say there's nothing to give.
You go back to the shelter and the cycle's the same,
Then one of the strangers offers substances to help with the shame.
You want to fit in, so the temptation is strong,
So, you battle the feeling of knowing its wrong.
Eventually I ended in a mental health crisis,
And you start to think maybe I'll get help with this.
But the ward staff are too busy to talk to you,
Then you feel despair and don't know what to do.
In the end I was lucky and got offered a flat,
I just worry about the others who didn't get that.
So, the journey is horrid, make no mistake,
The system needs to change, there are changes to make.
They can start by offering a decent home,
To anyone who needs it when they are all alone.
Don't just blame the person, you have to know,
It's not completely their fault that they have nowhere to go.
Of course, there are choices people can make while they are here,
But they really are limited and driven by fear.
So over to you, please make it better,
I don't want to have to keep writing this letter."

Poem by Jim

To commence this chapter on the structural aspects of homelessness, the above poem from Jim is presented. It provides a potent insight into his recent homelessness journey, with one clear suggestion being that the structural issue of accommodation availability was central to his journey through homelessness. He even refers to how lucky he felt upon being offered a flat, highlighting that the absence of this was a crucial factor. Jim's narrative offers several important findings, such as the significance of blame, and these will inform the analysis throughout this thesis, but housing is clearly a central issue for Jim, and one which forms part of the scope of this chapter. Other structural level factors are also considered, through the lens of the three data streams deployed by this research, to identify which specific factors have causal tendencies in the proliferation of homelessness. Furthermore, the same critical realist informed approach to analysis, as utilised in Chapter Three, helps identify stratified factors within this domain, and their wider interaction with mechanisms across spheres. Specifically, this chapter will contribute real-level mechanisms in the form of political agency

and economic conditions as the deeper level factors driving actual events in the structural domain. These actual events include poverty and lack of employment opportunities, which in certain contexts, put individuals at heightened risk of homelessness. The agency of various actors will be shown to interact with these structural events to either engender or reduce homelessness.

Chapter Three set out the parameters which confine a factor to the individual or structural domain within this thesis. To briefly recap, the structural domain consists of factors where there are patterned societal arrangements which limit individual freedoms. Patterned arrangements refer to regular and repetitive forces that change the organisation of society (Krasner, 1982). This description of social structure has however been described as abstract, and consequently there have been inconsistencies in which factors have been deemed to be structural in past studies (Bourdieu, 2005). To provide some additional clarity, Chapter Three focused on the behaviour, disposition, and circumstances of individual actors, whereas this chapter focuses on the wider conditions that these actors must navigate from within the societal sphere. For example, poverty was described in Chapter Three to be one such factor which is structural. This is because, while it is a circumstance which is bestowed on an individual, it stems from the arrangement of the welfare system and profit seeking institutions. They collectively create the conditions of poverty, thus limiting the freedoms of the individual.

I must emphasise again that scholarship in the field of homelessness has historically viewed causation to arise from individual factors, structural factors, or both. However, the precise constitution of these domains has itself been debated, with the separation being distinct from how critical realists differentiate between structure and agency. Nevertheless, as explained in Chapter Three, the separation of domains in this thesis is mostly helpful in offering a sequence in which to explore the causal potency of various mechanisms, although it is also useful in providing a level of scrutiny to historic dualistic debates on whether it is mostly structural or individual factors that drive homelessness. However, a framework of causal tendencies is what this thesis ultimately seeks to offer, and this will be achieved by piecing together factors from each domain into a coherent model. To facilitate the formulation of the framework, this chapter's exploration of causal tendencies from within the structural domain identifies specific mechanisms which can later be considered as part of the wider model. In exploring the causal tendency of structural level factors, the critical realist approach of considering demi-regularities will again provide a foundation of themes. These are then transformed into stratified factors through the processes of abduction and retroduction. First, this chapter will now provide some relevant groundwork by considering triangulated data findings in the context of practice reflections and literature contributions.

Structural foundation of homelessness

A review of Jim's poem from the start of this chapter allows a structural foundation for homelessness to be envisaged. For example, he offers a narrative of being denied suitable help from the council, and instead, he gives an account of being placed into a shelter that he perceives to be wholly inadequate. He also refers to a lack of support from within the shelter and mental health services, before he is finally offered housing. He makes no reference to his circumstances before his homelessness journey, but clearly refers to the challenges in navigating various structures upon becoming homeless, thus emphasising that there may be a structural basis to homelessness. However, this does not necessarily mean that structural factors alone are the reasons for his experiences. As mentioned in Chapter Three, to take this view would be conforming to the positivistic 'necessity' principle whereby it is assumed that other factors cannot have played a role in Jim's homelessness because he does not mention them. Instead, this thesis takes the view that a structural aspect to his homelessness journey is corroborated, but that other unaccounted factors were likely to have also influenced his pathway. Through the application of theories, and by analysing the other data, there is scope to uncover some of the additional mechanisms at play. Firstly, Ahmed's poem will also be considered, and this is given below:

"My life has been a horrible mess.
I got no money. I got no hope. I got no love. I am broke.
I can't get a house. I can't get a job. I can't get a girlfriend. I can't get a future.
I tried. I tried. I tried again. I cried. I cried. I cried.
I have given up trying now. This is my life. Get used to it."
Poem by Ahmed

Ahmed specifically refers to difficulties in achieving housing and employment, as well as money and a relationship, leading him to suggest that he has accepted his life of homelessness. Ahmed clearly fails to provide wider context for why he has struggled to acquire these particulars, but there is a clear sense of fatalism from having exhausted his agency. It might therefore be inferred that the patterned arrangement of society has in some way constrained him. Indeed, wider views as embedded within the X (formerly Twitter) data, support the notion that societal structure is significant for homelessness. For example, the tweet below attributes homelessness to political influence:

> "Rising number of people are skint and homeless. It doesn't have to be this way. Tories out!"
> (Tweet 17).

This offering has similarities to Tweet 22 presented earlier in this thesis, with both attributing homelessness to the Conservative administration, although unfortunately, the authors do not allude to the specific policies which they feel give rise to an increase in homelessness and poverty. There is, however, a significant number of tweets which are more specific, with housing issues being a central structural theme. For example, one tweet asserts that '*homelessness can be fixed easily by building*

more social housing' (Tweet 49) while another suggests that *'private rents have skyrocketed. Council housing availability has plummeted. It's no wonder we have a homelessness crisis'* (Tweet 5). Housing related structures dominate in the interview narratives too, and further consideration will be given to this issue later in the chapter. Another structural issue raised relates to employment, with the following quote from a support worker demonstrating a viewpoint also observed in some of the other interviews:

> *"I don't think the employment market is very favourable in a lot of ways. I mean, wages are low, fulfilling job opportunities are hard to get, and there isn't the job security for a lot of people. I think a well-paid, secure, and fulfilling job is probably the best way to prevent homelessness."* (Interview 39).

Employment is another structural theme that will be analysed later in this chapter, but at this juncture, it can be submitted that the triangulated data offers preliminary testimony in support of causal tendencies being rooted in the structural domain. This is because, the process of inductive reasoning allows me to transform the sizeable empirical accrediting of structural factors into the inference that there is likely to be a structural basis to most homelessness. Several sources of literature also support this, with poverty, housing supply, housing affordability, and unemployment all posited as factors which influence a person's vulnerability to becoming homeless (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Johnsen and Watts, 2014; Fitzpatrick, Mackie, and Wood, 2019). Furthermore, practice experience also supports the existence of structural level causal powers being of significance to homelessness. Policy represents one such example of a structural issue observed in practice to yield consequences. Specifically, the introduction of welfare reforms from 2013 onwards, including the bedroom tax[20], were observed to make rent affordability an issue for some, with increased eviction and homelessness thus observed. Conversely, the introduction of the household support fund[21] from October 2021 has been a policy measure which visibly reduced the number of people seeking homelessness assistance.

The theoretical foundation of this chapter is thus that poverty, policy, housing, employment, and other structural factors have causal tendencies in engendering and reducing homelessness. A further exploration of structural level factors forms the basis of the rest of this chapter, with this identifying deeper level causal factors such as economic conditions. Much of the focus centers on the narratives of professionals and practitioners embedded within the semi-structured interview data. This is because, as noted in Chapter Two, this data is the most voluminous. Nevertheless, X (formerly Twitter)

---

[20] The bedroom tax, as it became known, was a policy to reduce the amount of housing benefit paid to those with a spare bedroom.
[21] The household support fund provides financial assistance to those struggling with rent and other household bills.

and poetry data will be triangulated where appropriate to facilitate a balanced analysis considering varying perspectives. Before this, the demi-regularities for the structural domain will next be presented to highlight relevant themes and the extent to which they appeared within each data stream.

Demi-regularities

Like in Chapter Three, a number of theory-led themes were explored through coding the poetry, X (formerly Twitter) data, and semi-structured interviews. Doing so enabled these themes to be reduced to several demi-regularities for each domain. Table Four below presents the emerging demi-regularities which have been attributed to the structural domain.

Theme	Quantity in poetry	Quantity in X data	Quantity in semi-structured interviews
Poverty	7	26	37
Inadequate welfare	1	19	27
Lack of affordable housing	4	16	27
General living costs	1	14	25
Policy	3	11	24
Lack of employment opportunities	3	3	21
High private rents	1	5	20
Low wages	0	3	19
Covid	1	3	17
Brexit	0	4	17
Unfair evictions	1	6	14
Austerity	1	9	11
Lack of support	6	3	11
House building restrictions	0	2	9
Debt	3	2	6
Labelling	5	2	2

Table Four: Demi-regularities within the structural domain

These demi-regularities cover a number of areas, but it is possible to merge them into the broader parent themes of poverty, sociopolitical events, housing, employment, and other structural factors. These broader themes represent the wider topics which will be examined in greater detail. The remainder of this chapter will analyse data under these headings in continued pursuit of a stratified

approximation of homelessness. The separation of themes into experiential, inferential, and dispositional, as seen in Appendix Three, provides some hint of the stratified nature of homelessness. However, this chapter will ultimately show that political will and economic conditions are the deeper structural mechanisms which have causal tendencies for homelessness when they present in certain contexts. This outcome is achieved through retroduction and will now be explained further.

Poverty

Poverty is positioned as a central causal factor which has a tendency to drive homelessness by Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018). Their paper highlights several other risk factors which can make someone more likely to encounter homelessness, but poverty is seen as central. Absolute poverty, by definition, is the absence of even the most basic needs. Consequently, anyone in this most extreme form of poverty will likely experience homelessness. While Bramley and Fitzpatrick do not make a distinction, their notion of poverty seems to include relative deprivation, with this being when income only just covers the basics. It is reasonable to assume that access to some level of wealth has a general propensity to preclude an individual from homelessness because they will have the monetary means to find alternative accommodation quickly should they encounter a situation whereby they need to vacate their home. In contrast, someone who is just about getting by from month to month will unlikely be able to locate the financial resources to avoid homelessness, and the centrality of poverty as a causal tendency for homelessness is therefore clear. This thesis does not intend to dispute Bramley and Fitzpatrick's assertion that poverty is central; their point is well-articulated in a critical realist informed piece of research. Furthermore, poverty has emerged as a central concern in the empirical data collected for this thesis, thereby further supporting its important function in relation to homelessness without the need for too much further deliberation. Nevertheless, to emphasise the point, the following quote from the director of a homelessness charity reaffirms poverty as being a central causal factor:

> *"Homelessness is something that will only ever be experienced by the poor. Of course, anyone can lose accommodation, and while those with money may find themselves in some type of temporary accommodation for a short time, this really isn't the same as actually being homeless. What I'm saying is that living in a four- or five-star hotel for six weeks isn't the same as living in a grotty bed and breakfast for six months or more, not knowing where you will go next, or being forced to sofa surf or sleep rough because you're not prioritised for temporary accommodation, and this is a fate that will only ever happen to the poor."* (Interview 41).

This narrative may challenge some definitions of homelessness, because as mentioned earlier in this thesis, delineations can include any stay in temporary accommodation. However, the argument

ultimately implies that wealth can afford luxury options not obtainable to those in financial hardship, and therefore poverty is cogently a factor which will constrain agency in driving the most acute forms of homelessness. Not everyone will recognise poverty to be a factor which constrains agency in this way. For example, one support worker insists that '*it's not about being rich or poor, it's about how you play the cards that you are dealt*' (Interview 17). Yet others, including a homelessness prevention worker, argue that '*there is something about being poor which leads to poor decision-making*' (Interview 2). Poor decisions that practitioners say they have observed include '*prioritising tobacco over rent*' (Interview 38), '*gambling away benefits, leaving no money for bills*' (Interview 44), and '*purchasing extravagant items that their budget doesn't allow for*' (Interview 1). However, these accounts do not explain why people experiencing poverty exercise their agency in this way. To get a sense of this, it is necessary to redescribe the accounts through the process of abduction. In chapters one and three, it was discussed how those who experience homelessness engage in survival strategies to cope with their circumstances. This theoretical foundation may explain why those experiencing poverty make decisions deemed by practitioners to be unwise. Essentially, it is posited by this thesis that poverty is an actual event which can lead to dejection in those who experience it, but to survive this, decisions are made which are sometimes considered as unwise.

Welfare and political decisions

To advance a stratified understanding of homelessness, analysis next needs to excavate the deeper real-level mechanisms which can engender poverty. This is because, as discussed, poverty is considered to be an actual-level factor which can accelerate risk of homelessness. Therefore, through deductive reasoning, it can reasonably be inferred that any driving mechanism for poverty is also consequently a casual tendency for homelessness. Thus, an exploration will now take place to identify which deeper structures tend to result in poverty. To get a sense of this, one can hypothesise that political decisions are a real factor which tends to drive poverty. This priori position is adopted based on the notion that policymakers could decide to redistribute wealth more evenly. Indeed, one prevalent demi-regularity relates to welfare provision, and this will now be considered further. By way of background, Brewer (2008) notes how the last Labour administration created a welfare system which was amongst the most generous by international standards. However, it is also noted that the coalition government which followed, and the more recent Conservative administration, have implemented a number of welfare reforms. One such reform is a real-terms reduction in the local housing allowance (LHA); this dictating the maximum amount of welfare payable towards housing costs for single under 35s and for households of various other sizes. Some research has found this decision to mostly influence homelessness in large cities like London where there is a huge gap between the LHA rates and market rents (Beatty et al., 2014). However, more recent research by Clair

(2022) suggests this reform has yielded a significant impact on welfare recipients' ability to source affordable accommodation right across the UK. Charities such as Shelter are therefore calling on LHA rates to be brought in line with private rents, and the interview data supports the need for this, with one housing options officer stating:

> *"We are told we should be recommending private rentals wherever possible because we don't have the housing stock to accommodate everyone, but in reality, we are setting people up to fail because we know a lot of people can't afford to be in the private sector. Private rents here are much less than in some places, but still much more than can be claimed back in the housing related element of Universal Credit. You therefore know that sending someone to the private sector will eventually lead to rent arrears, which will then lead to homelessness again unless the person finds some other way to make up the rent deficit"* (Interview 36).

Concerningly, this narrative implies that housing options practice can involve recommending unaffordable accommodation, and this is contrary to what one would expect from a housing advice service. This highlights how the agency of a support service can be constrained by structure. The lack of 'housing stock' will be considered further later in this chapter, but the issue around welfare deficit highlights how the political decision not to raise LHA rates may have yielded consequences for homelessness. Specifically, it has created a shortfall between income and expenditure for some people, and this is something I widely observed in practice, with the emergent outcome being rent arrears and subsequently homelessness. This offers some support for the priori hypothesis, but a further exploration of political decisions around welfare will now continue. On this theme, there are contrasting views within the empirical data, particularly around the munificence of welfare. For example, one homelessness support worker suggests that *'the broken benefits system is letting people down by causing starvation, misery, and homelessness'* (Interview 17). However, an opposing view is offered by some of the X (formerly Twitter) data with views that include '*benefits create dependency*' (Tweet 14) and '*hard work doesn't pay when those on benefits live a better life than I do*' (Tweet 89). An arguably more pragmatic position is offered by a policy officer within a central government department who recognises that many people can get by on benefits, while others will struggle, as the quote below shows:

> *"The UK has millions of benefit claimants, and while this is never going to make anyone wealthy, the majority are able to live reasonably comfortable lives on state welfare. There are always going to be some who struggle because everyone has different circumstances, but given most get by, I think you therefore need to look carefully at what else has gone wrong for*

those who become homeless. I'm reasonably confident that it's not because state welfare is inadequate" (Interview 4).

Although the policy officer is clearly denying that current welfare provision directly leads to homelessness, she does at least acknowledge that in certain circumstances the level of aid can cause people to 'struggle'. One such circumstance is when the claimant has a rent which is considerably greater than the LHA rate. On this point, Fetzer, Sen, and Souza (2019) posit that the failure of LHA to keep up with market rents has resulted in far-reaching consequences including an increase in evictions, individual bankruptcies, property crimes, use of insecure temporary accommodation, statutory homelessness, and rough sleeping. This thereby highlights how such political decisions can engender a range of social predicaments including homelessness. Another issue which may be influenced by political decisions relates to an agent's ability to financially secure accommodation in the first place. On this point, Rugg and Rhodes (2018) refer to the barriers low-income households, including benefit claimants, have in acquiring a deposit to secure accommodation. However, it is argued by one homelessness prevention worker that there are pots of money available to help in these situations, as well as in a variety of other circumstances which may make an individual vulnerable to homelessness, as the extract below highlights:

> *"When someone has a rent which is greater than their standard benefit allowance, they can apply for a DHP[22] to cover the deficit. This is an ongoing payment, and they can receive it each month. Alternatively, if someone builds up arrears, the local authority can cover this through spend to save[23], and this allows someone to stay in their tenancy. The housing staff at the council have access to lots of other pots of money too. There is money to help with arrears, rent deficits, and even deposits. The central government has thrown lots of money at all local councils in the last few years in their promise to end homelessness."* (Interview 2).

This implies that a political decision has been made to progress a variety of welfare funds to prevent homelessness, albeit that individuals must present with difficulties before they can access this additional provision. Nevertheless, making this provision available demonstrates how political decisions can potentially reduce homelessness, and they do not therefore only perpetuate it. It should be noted that policymakers initiate a range of welfare decisions, and these will have varying consequences. For example, the decision to introduce welfare sanctions for those who have not fulfilled the obligations of their benefit claim is seen as an important ruling by some, but highly

---

[22] DHP refers to discretionary housing payment. This is a short-term benefit to cover the deficit between income and the cost of rent.
[23] Spend to save is a scheme whereby rent arrears are covered by a local authority to save a tenancy and thereby reduce the cost of later needing to provide a homelessness service.

controversial by others due to the risk of housing insecurity (Veasey and Parker, 2022). Another popular but controversial political manoeuvre has been to restrict eligibility to benefits, for example, based on the fulfilment of the habitual residency test[24]. This restriction can leave an individual or family without recourse to public funds, and this has widely been reported to be a predictor for homelessness (Farmer, 2021; Jolly, Singh, and Lobo, 2022; Benton et al., 2022). The empirical interview data also highlights that having no access to welfare when needed can have profound consequences, as the following quote from a homelessness support worker demonstrates:

> *"I was working with a client who was a Polish national. He couldn't return to his country of origin because of a difficult past, but despite his best efforts he was unable to secure long-term work here. He applied for benefits but was denied and he therefore had no choice but to sleep on the streets. Unfortunately, having absolutely no income meant he didn't survive for very long and he died cold and hungry."* (Interview 11).

This narrative refers to a particularly tragic case, but the wider interview data supports the idea that even short-term welfare sanctions can lead to housing insecurity. One housing association worker explains the consequences in the extract below:

> *"I had one tenant who kept having benefit sanctions because she had a lot of difficulties getting to the Jobcentre. She then had further issues with subsequent benefit applications because she didn't complete the complicated forms correctly. Although she only had short periods without benefit, it was enough to build up quite substantial rent arrears. We therefore had no option but to take her to court to get possession of her property."* (Interview 33).

The evidence therefore suggests that having no access to benefits when they are needed, even for a short time, leads to housing insecurity and other forms of homelessness. Furthermore, there are likely to be continual consequences throughout a homelessness pathway for as long as there is no access to benefits. This is because having no welfare provision can propel an individual into absolute poverty. From a policy perspective, this means that for homelessness to be reduced, a political decision to make welfare available to all is necessary. This would mean making welfare available to all migrants and to those who do not adhere to the terms of their benefit claim. Such a move would clearly be unpopular in some ideological traditions, and this thesis acknowledges that providing welfare in these situations might adversely impact some people's motivation to seek employment as well as migration statistics. However, both are byzantine issues which are beyond the scope of this thesis to delve too deeply into. Instead, causal powers for homelessness are being examined, and it is essentially argued

---

[24] The habitual residency test checks welfare eligibility based on several set criteria. It was designed to stop someone with the right to enter the UK from claiming benefits immediately after their arrival.

that when policymakers decide to limit access to the welfare safety net, for whatever reason, then causal consequences for homelessness tend to be activated.

As emphasised above, making political decisions around welfare is clearly not a straightforward endeavour. Nevertheless, policymakers have attempted to mitigate the impact of poverty on some communities through the introduction of various provisions, which as discussed earlier, include disbursements such as discretionary housing payments. Yet, even with this additional provision, homelessness is still experienced by some, including those who are unable to access the additional financial support. Therefore, political decisions that bring about a simplified and generous welfare system can potentially reduce homelessness further. However, a separate body of opinion views welfare to be an intervention which enables poverty, and this has led US scholars Shaheen and Rio (2007) to suggest that employment is central to ending homelessness. Yet, according to McGovern et al. (2007), this assumption fails to take account of barriers to the job market which include health obstacles and skill deficits. Furthermore, Gray (2020) notes that the homelessness experience itself creates several barriers to employment, for example, an inability to make oneself presentable in a working environment. Nevertheless, some people who experience homelessness do manage to work, but the overall point is that policymakers should not divest themselves of their responsibility to intervene based on the misleading principle that individuals can navigate their own way out of homelessness through employment. Further consideration will be given to the causal propensity of the employment market later in this chapter. At this juncture, it is tentatively concluded that the priori hypothesis can be accepted. Political decisions do seem to be a causal power influencing poverty and homelessness, although this will also be explored further as this chapter progresses.

Living costs and economic conditions

Next, consideration will turn to another omnipresent demi-regularity, this being general living costs. This was extensively reported as an area of concern in the semi-structured interviews despite the data collection taking place before the current cost-of-living crisis which is commonly reported by the media at the time of writing (BBC, 2023b; The Guardian, 2023). Such a crisis is likely to have adverse consequences, and indeed, several commentators have linked rising housing costs with increased homelessness (Milbourne and Cloke, 2006; Tunstall et al., 2013; Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). Studies have also linked homelessness to debt from rising costs (Wallace and Quilgars, 2005; Maguire, 2022). During times of rising costs, it is likely that those who experience poverty will be less able to withstand the financial burden this can have, as one director of a charity notes in their interview extract below:

> *"I consider myself fortunate, and most of my network of friends are fortunate too, because we can shoulder rising costs and still live quite comfortably. However, the closer you get to the lowest incomes, the more difficulties you will find in withstanding rising costs."* (Interview 41).

This highlights that those who experience poverty may be less able to navigate changes to the economic structure of society, and the constraints imposed on those with low income by rising costs was extensively observed when working in practice. This erudition informs the next priori hypothesis to be explored, this being that economic conditions have causal tendencies for homelessness in those who experience poverty. It is postulated that during times of economic prosperity, those who experience poverty will be better equipped to avoid homelessness, whereas economic downturns have an adverse and disproportionate bearing on this population. In exploring this further, empirical debates can help apprise the examination of the priori position. Firstly, a line of thinking resurfaces about individual actors being in some way culpable through financial mismanagement. For example, one homelessness support worker implies that we are all equally burdened by rising costs, but it is those who fail to make the tough calls that might leave themselves vulnerable to homelessness, as can be seen from the quote below:

> *"We all have rising costs to contend with, and it's not easy for any of us, but we have to make tough decisions such as whether to renew Netflix. Some of the people I work with act as though they are entitled and show no willingness to make cutbacks. It's therefore of little surprise when they come to me again and say they are about to be kicked out for not paying their rent"* (Interview 30).

However, this perspective fails to take account of how keeping a few extravagances might be a means to cope with the bitterness of poverty or past traumas, as discussed earlier, and as emphasised again in the narrative of a charity worker who suggests '*being poor and having experienced difficult things in life is ghastly, so I don't begrudge these people a few indulgences, and it annoys me when others do show resentment over this*' (Interview 42). Many of the poetry narratives also refer to the use of coping mechanisms, during their journeys, and it is reasonable to deduce that challenging economic conditions might give rise to an even greater need for comforts so that hardship can be tolerated. However, it is not just exercising coping strategies that make people vulnerable to homelessness during precarious economic conditions. The ability to meet rising costs, even before treats are factored in, can be difficult for those on the lowest incomes. This has led some to call for a narrowing of income inequality, as demonstrated in the tweet '*families struggle to meet basic needs while the loaded sail on their yachts. Income divide in the UK is preposterous*' (Tweet 60). The literature extends on this point by highlighting how countries with lower income inequality have less homelessness (Shinn, 2010; Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015). The authors explain this by way of levelling up of those in the lowest income streams, so they can meet their financial obligations comfortably, and thus avoid homelessness. While the UK has historically been seen to have one of the most generous welfare

systems globally, as mentioned earlier, there still appears to be difficulties for those in the lowest income groups in managing their finances, as one debt advisor explains in the extract below:

> *"My job involves helping people to manage their debts so they can avoid homelessness. I would say all aspects of my job are challenging because when everything costs so much, and people have mounting debts and low incomes, it's almost impossible to find a way to balance the finances of the people who come to me for assistance. There are options available such as DROs[25], and they can wipe out debts, but they don't fix the issues that caused debt in the first place"* (Interview 44).

The difficulties in balancing such high living costs, low income, and debt are said by Sachs (2002) to be worsened during times of economic difficulty. This may be because economic turbulence often results in austerity and high inflation (Berry, 2016). Therefore, services to support those experiencing homelessness may experience funding cuts, while simultaneously, increased rents and other bills mean that those on low income face an increased struggle to stay afloat. Problematically, housing support can be denied to those who build up rent arrears during this time, as a support worker explains in the following quote:

> *"When providing a relief duty, the local authority still makes decisions on who to prioritise, particularly for social housing. It is often the case that when someone presents with arrears from their past property, they are deemed to be intentionally homeless, and consequently there are limits to the help that is offered. However, there seems to be little regard for the excessive costs and low income which caused the arrears in the first place"* (Interview 17).

This highlights how the structures designed to assist those at risk of homelessness may instead push some people into homelessness when they are assumed to be culpable. Instead, the support worker notes that wider economic circumstances may be attributable to rent arrears in these individuals. Overall, the discussion in this segment has highlighted that adverse economic conditions can create circumstances whereby those on low income feel a greater need to engage in coping activities, but they can be judged adversely for doing so, meaning scarce resources are prioritised for those deemed worthiest. The impact of inflationary rises may not be given due consideration during these times. So far, the priori hypothesis has therefore been supported, because economic conditions have been shown to have causal tendencies in respect of homelessness, particularly for those who experience poverty. Ultimately, this chapter has so far positioned political decisions and economic conditions to

---

[25] DRO refers to debt relief order, a scheme for people who are struggling to pay back debts under £50,000. It affords a one-year reprieve from paying back all money owed plus interest, after which the debt is written off if financial circumstances have not improved.

be the real-level mechanisms exhibiting causal tendencies for homelessness. This will continue to be explored as the focus next turns to sociopolitical events, during which, political decisions and prevailing economic conditions will be shown to be of paramount importance to homelessness.

Sociopolitical events

For the purposes of this segment, sociopolitical events can be understood to be occurrences which change the fabric of society and have political ramifications. Recent examples include the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union, commonly known as Brexit, and the health pandemic typically referred to as Covid. Both events are thought to have yielded some adverse outcomes for the UK, including having implications for homelessness (Saxunova, le Roux, and Oster, 2022). These events are therefore considered further within this section, but first analysis will be applied to policy. This is because the introduction of new policy can be understood as a sociopolitical event given it is usually a politically motivated occurrence which can transform society considerably. New policies are implemented frequently, so from this standpoint, society is constantly evolving. As it evolves, the need for new forms of political intervention emerges, and this will now be considered further.

Policy

A useful starting point in considering the implications of policy for homelessness is the work of O'Leary and Simcock (2022) who gave consideration to this topic and identified the following six reforms as being significant:

1) Housing benefit reforms, including the introduction of local housing allowance (LHA) rates in 2008. This has resulted in a real terms decrease in the amount of benefit paid towards rent, leading to affordability issues in the housing market.

2) In 2010 the rate at which benefits are uprated moved from being determined by the consumer price index to just one percent, and this coincided with a 4-year freeze to LHA rates. This created further affordability issues.

3) The 2012 expansion of the shared accommodation rate[26] to all single under-35s claiming housing benefit, essentially resulting in some people in this category being priced out of independent living.

4) Housing benefit reduction for under-occupation in the social rented sector from 2013, more commonly known as the 'Bedroom Tax'. This again led to affordability issues for those residing in a home with a spare bedroom.

---

[26] The shared accommodation rate is an amount of benefit deemed to be a sufficient contribution towards shared housing. This rate is paid irrespective of whether recipients live in shared accommodation or not.

5) The introduction of the household benefit cap in 2013, which set a limit on how much a household could receive in benefits. This amount was subsequently reduced in 2015 and the cap again contributed to affordability issues in the housing market. This affordability issue resulted in arrears and evictions for some, ultimately increasing the extent of homelessness.

6) The commencement of Universal Credit, as a single benefit, to replace a range of legacy benefits in 2013, and the national roll out since. This initially led to delays in people receiving benefits due to the 5-week processing period. It also resulted in people receiving a monthly payment instead of weekly or fortnightly disbursements, meaning some struggled to budget. It has also resulted in some individuals receiving less money than before the transition. A range of other issues with the roll out include payments which were historically paid directly to landlords now going direct to claimants, and this resulted in arrears in those who struggled to budget.

These policy reforms fall under the category of welfare, and as has already been noted, the failure of policymakers to maintain munificent rates of welfare has yielded consequences for homelessness. Furthermore, research has shown that welfare provision serves as a critical buffering factor during times of hardship (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018; Butler, 2022). Despite this, Kris Hopkins, who was Conservative housing minister in 2015, after many of these reforms had taken effect, denied that welfare reforms lead to increased homelessness (The Guardian, 2015). This was despite an independent report from Homelessness Monitor being published at the time showing a direct link between welfare reforms and increased homelessness. Mr Hopkins instead insisted that increased funding was being put into homelessness interventions, but this political spin neglected to point out that this was essential to mitigate the effects of the wider reforms. Several academic studies have since reinforced that shifts in homelessness patterns occur following policy reforms (Loopstra et al., 2016; Reeve, 2017; Pleace, 2019). However, correlation does not necessarily imply causation (Ksir and Hart, 2016), and as such, it is necessary to explore this further to identify if policy reforms have causal tendencies for homelessness. When asked about the role of policy in relation to homelessness, one policy officer stated:

> *"Policy is key to reducing homelessness and the strains of homelessness. It's why we exist. It's what policy is for."* (Interview 4).

While this is accepted, Fairclough (2013) suggests policy interventions can be formulated based on assumptions about the causes and nature of a problem, and these can be derived from professional or political definitions, which may challenge or reinforce dominant discourses. On this note, Neale (1997) asserts that homelessness policy and provision tend to be influenced by notions of deserving

or undeserving poor, but given such explanations are less than adequate, the responses too are likely to be less than optimal. These points are reinforced in the interview data by a homelessness support worker who suggests:

> "Homelessness is high on the political agenda at the moment, and I think this is because public sympathies have grown in recent years. Because of this, huge amounts of money have been made available by the government. This of course is a good thing, but there are two problems. The first problem is that most of the money is going to local councils who already hold the power in deciding who is worthy for social housing, and now they can also make judgements about who is the most deserving of financial assistance. The second problem is that using these huge amounts of money to clear rent arrears, which from my experience is often how the money is spent, isn't really getting to the bottom of the issue. I get that it's about homelessness reduction and prevention, but the money just plasters over the issue while the cracks are still very much present." (Interview 21).

As well as acknowledging that judgments on who is most deserving are preserved in practice, this account also implies that current homelessness interventions can provide temporary relief to some individuals, but they are not necessarily resolving the underlying causes. It can be argued that this failure to deal with the root causes is perpetuating the problem of homelessness, as the support worker seems to imply. This is because policy has the potential to eradicate, or at least reduce homelessness, but a failure to introduce the right non-judgemental policies can facilitate the continuation of homelessness at high levels. However, some approaches used to tackle homelessness are thought to be working. For example, many practitioners supported the findings from Chapter One about the effectiveness of Housing First, with this view captured by a charity director who stresses:

> "In my long career working in this sector, the implementation of Housing First has got to be the most pivotal moment. It worked in other countries like Finland, so it's great to see its implementation here, and so far, its use has really made a difference here too" (Interview 26)

Housing First will be discussed in greater detail later, but this account highlights that some policies are seen to be working. Another policy which some practitioners have found to be useful is the formation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in 2017. One homelessness support worker captures a view which she notably shares with some colleagues in the quote below:

> "I would say the Homelessness Reduction Act has been a good policy. It means the housing options team at the council must provide some level of duty to everyone who presents as

homeless. Before the introduction of this, people were regularly denied help, but now at least some level of service is given to everyone." (Interview 3).

In this account the support worker refers to some individuals being denied service, and in Chapter One it was explained that such denial was common on the grounds of intentionality, there being no local connection, or there being a lack of priority need. In introducing the HRA, an objective was to remove these barriers for homelessness assistance (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020), but some practitioners feel these grounds are still being used to determine who is worthy of the most help, as the quote below from a homelessness support worker demonstrates:

"I don't think anything has changed since the homelessness reduction act was introduced to be frank. Housing options must sit down with everyone now, but they don't have capacity to help everyone, so decisions on who to offer the most help to are still made based on who has made themselves homeless intentionally, and I have a real issue with this because I don't think anyone makes themselves homeless intentionally." (Interview 17).

This therefore highlights that debates exist around the overall effectiveness of certain policy decisions, with HRA being a notable example. However, there are other policies unanimously found to be problematic for homelessness within the interview data. One such example is Right to Buy, which was introduced by Thatcher in 1980 and recently expanded to include housing association properties. One housing association worker sums up the sentiment of Right to Buy below:

"I understand that people have benefited from Right to Buy; I have former tenants who have recently benefited. However, it has caused a huge problem for homelessness. It has reduced the availability of social housing because the stock which has been sold hasn't been replenished. Of course, making home buying affordable to those who would otherwise struggle is a good thing, but I'm not sure selling social homes is the answer if new stock isn't forthcoming. I would say it is of greater importance that we have enough social housing for everyone who needs it" (Interview 34).

On this specific policy, it is estimated that over two million properties have transferred to owner-occupier since the scheme was introduced, and approximately forty percent of these are now part of the private-rented housing stock (Whitehead, 2018). This number is likely to be far greater now, and consequently, the concerns about Right to Buy have some evidential basis. Another area of policy which was a concern to practitioners was economic policy. This too was a concern in the literature, with several commentators maintaining that the main cause of homelessness stems from profound inequalities generated by late Capitalism (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998; Okamoto, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2010;

Willse, 2015; O'Flaherty, 2019). Austerity is of particular concern amongst practitioners with one charity director suggesting that homelessness rates surge during austerity, as can be seen from the quote below:

> *"I think economic policy is the single biggest cause of homelessness. The current government have at various points focused on reducing budget deficits. However, there are a range of economic levers the government could pull, but taking money away from essential services for the poorest in society is all too easy for this government despite it not being morally right. My organisation closely monitors homelessness figures, and they shoot up quite quickly during times of austerity."* (Interview 41).

This notion is further supported by Stuckler et al. (2017) who suggest that the application of austerity to housing support and subsidies, at a time of rising housing costs throughout much of Europe, has contributed to a growing burden of homelessness. Meanwhile, FEANTSA (2011) submit that the need to introduce austerity measures has been used as an excuse by governments across Europe not to commit to ambitious homelessness strategies. As the quote below shows, another charity director implies that the UK government has itself noticed the danger of cutting back too far, and this has resulted in the new funding streams being introduced to buffer the impact of the government's own economic policies:

> *"Funding cuts can be dangerous. It's a delicate balance between how far services can be cut without serious risks surfacing. As risks are in nobody's interests, and the government at least claim to be serious about ending homelessness, the impact of austerity has resulted in the government introducing new sources of homelessness reduction funding to overcome the harms caused by their own austerity measures."* (Interview 40).

The description from the last few quotes reinforces the earlier declarations of this thesis proclaiming that economic conditions can be real-level causal powers for homelessness. However, the emerging narrative emphasises the importance of political agency in mitigating harm. For example, during precarious economic times, cutbacks to services may be necessary, but a political willingness to deliver additional funding provision can mitigate the harms. A focus solely on cutbacks can instead perpetuate poverty, with some research indicating that cutbacks to essential housing services coincides with a higher rate of claims for financial help. For example, one study carried out a comparative analysis of 323 local authorities in the UK, finding that budget reductions in housing and homelessness services strongly correlated with rising rates of people seeking emergency financial aid (Loopstra et al., 2016). The introduction of additional funding streams may therefore be an act of necessity to avoid worsening poverty and homelessness at a time when services are reduced.

This section has so far highlighted that policy decisions can have both positive and negative consequences for homelessness. Furthermore, when challenging economic conditions present, negative outcomes have been observed, but these can be mitigated through political endeavour. For example, Connell, Martin, and St Denny (2017) emphasise how Wales were able to deploy resources to shape a distinctive approach to homelessness legislation in the face of global economic challenges and a UK-wide programme of austerity. This thereby shows how devolved administrations can take policy action to respond to local priorities, even in the face of wider economic challenges. It also shows that political agency is important, because where there is political will to disrupt causal mechanisms, a reduction in real events such as homelessness is possible. This was further emphasised in the interviews, with one policy officer suggesting that *'when there is a commitment to resolving issues such as homelessness, it is absolutely possible to do so'* (Interview 20). However, one charity director added *'policy is most effective when it is led by evidence, otherwise you can end up with unintended consequences and a worsening of the problem'* (Interview 26). These accounts offer further support for political intervention being an enabling and constraining mechanism in respect of homelessness.

It should be noted that even the most well-meaning policies can fail, and this is said to happen when they do not achieve the goals that proponents set out to achieve, or alternatively, when support for the policy is virtually non-existent (McConnell, 2010). However, policies might also succeed in some ways but have negative effects in other ways. For example, the Right to Buy policy referred to earlier, succeeded in its goal of facilitating increased homeownership, but as discussed, it also contributed to a shortage of affordable housing for those who need it most. Similarly, welfare reforms and austerity may have succeeded in cutting deficits, but policymakers have since felt compelled to introduce additional financial provision, ostensibly because homelessness figures were seen to be rising. This therefore highlights that political interventions can have a crucial role in determining outcomes. When evaluating such governmental policy interventions, the appraisal can be complicated by demands to assess immediate outcomes (Clapham, 2003). For example, a policy evaluation might show success in moving people off the streets and into temporary accommodation, but such outcomes are only another short-term stage in a housing pathway without the underlying causes of homelessness ever being dealt with. Therefore, the capacity of some policy interventions to reduce homelessness may be overstated. Nevertheless, the wider discussion in this section has emphasised that some policies have at least partial effectiveness in responding to homelessness. This is greatest when policies are led by evidence, and when there is firm political will to solve a particular issue. As one study notes, policies which address causes are the most effective in eradicating homelessness if creative policies are targeted at those most at risk (Daly, 2013). However, this section has also highlighted that certain policies have a tendency to cause a worsening of homelessness. This includes welfare reforms,

austerity, and Right to Buy amongst others. Finally, it was discussed how the need for political intervention is greatest when a nation is facing challenging economic conditions.

Ultimately, this section has reinforced that political will to implement policies, good and bad, have causal tendencies for homelessness, as do the wider economic conditions. However, the centrality of agency has also been emphasised, in respect of agents in power, given they are fundamentally able to reshape economic conditions or policy outcomes through their actions and reactions. Clearly the economic conditions and policy outcomes will impel political agents to take certain measures too. For example, it is unlikely that austerity would be introduced at a time when an economy is thriving, in the same way that it is unlikely that a government would introduce new financial provision if their welfare reform agenda had not seen a rise in homelessness and other strains. The causal propensity of these factors will continue to be analysed as this segment now progresses to consider the sociopolitical events of Covid and then Brexit.

Covid

The 2019 global Covid pandemic resulted in social and political ramifications for the UK and across the globe (Efebeh, 2020). To counteract the health emergency, the UK government ordered a nationwide lockdown, and this coincided with their launch of the 'Everyone In' initiative, whereby local authorities were required to mitigate infection transmission by accommodating anyone without housing immediately so they too could lockdown (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020). This policy reduced severe forms of homelessness to virtually zero, and as mentioned in Chapter Two, it has therefore been described as fulfilling an ambition long held by the homelessness sector practically overnight (Teixeira, 2020). By the end of 2020 the scheme had accommodated over 33,000 individuals (National Audit Office, 2021) and the response is thought to have saved many lives in a particularly vulnerable population (St Mungo's, 2020b). However, there are some differences of opinion about the wider successes of the scheme. For example, Neal et al. (2020) found it to be helpful in providing warmth, comfort, and privacy during a difficult time. They also suggest that living in a hotel was a transformative experience and rated much more positively than options provided before the pandemic. However, Whitehead et al. (2021) argue that while many benefitted enormously, the story is much more complex than it appears from the public discussion. This is supported by the interview data with one support worker indicating:

> *"We did manage to get people off the streets, but we put them all together into hotels where staff were not trained to cope with the support needs, and this caused the escalation of support needs in some cases. I know there are some success stories, but there were also plenty of problems with violence and drug dealing."* (Interview 12).

This was further supported by one housing options officer who indicates that *'housing people with multiple needs together presented challenges, which has resulted in us as a local council no longer looking at housing options which involve close proximity living'* (Interview 37). This is an important account which highlights that at least one local authority has changed the way they seek to accommodate certain people who present as homeless, with them now attempting to avert communal living because of issues observed during the Covid response. From this, it can firstly be extrapolated that a sense of community may form when people with similar circumstances are forced to reside together, with observed actions within this group clearly seen as undesirable. This will be subject to further consideration in Chapter Five when culture becomes the focus of this thesis. However, the account also shows how the agency of a local authority can interject when officials within it observe problems with a national policy. Although the reaction of the local authority may have occurred at some point after the scheme had concluded, it nevertheless highlights that the local authority can exercise agency in adapting their approach following a process of reflection.

It is potentially useful to consider other critiques of the UK government's response to Covid, and a critical evaluation comes from Cross et al. (2022) who consider the offering given to families experiencing homelessness during Covid. They suggest that families were forced to occupy a single hotel room and share facilities with other residents, meaning social distancing was often impossible, and children's opportunities for learning and play were restricted. They further suggest that children, who were already barely visible to state support systems before Covid, were no longer receiving visits from community services and were not in school to access early help. They therefore conclude that Covid exposed the fault lines in our current economic, political, and social settlement, with the scale of housing-related issues proving to be a particularly stark example. Further consideration will be given to housing later in this chapter, but the unravelled predicament facing homeless families further highlights the need for political will to interject and disrupt the burdens faced by this vulnerable population. The Covid pandemic also helped to reveal the plight of another group, namely that of homeless migrants. This is a population who, as briefly mentioned earlier, can find themselves with no recourse to public funds. The 'Everyone In' scheme was the first time this changed, but according to one charity worker, this was short lived as can be seen from the following quote:

> *"For the first time ever, we could do something for those without recourse to public funds. However, in the second phase of the 'Everyone In' project, guidance had changed, and it was down to each local authority area to make their own decisions on this. Eventually, we got back to the position of refusing any sort of help to those without recourse to public funds."* (Interview 42).

The utilisation of the scheme clearly highlighted that homelessness in migrant communities can be reduced when there is political will to help, and indeed, it is suggested that the government can reduce migrant homelessness immediately by getting rid of the no recourse to public funds regime (Morgan, 2022). In taking such action, non-UK nationals experiencing homelessness could be assisted, through Housing First and similar schemes, based on need rather than immigration status. This thesis argues that other factors such as an absence of affordable accommodation could still drive homelessness in non-UK nationals should no recourse to public funds be scrapped, but its perseverance in policy is manifestly contributing to homelessness. The X (formerly Twitter) data highlights why there may be concerns about scrapping this policy, with several tweets referring to the need to prioritise UK nationals first. One example is '*Army veteran left to rot on streets while immigrants given red carpet treatment at luxury resort*' (Tweet 46). It should be clarified at this stage that those who come to the UK seeking asylum may have some claim to assistance, although they will not have access to the full welfare state unless their claim for asylum is approved. Those who admit to being economic migrants, on the other hand, have historically been denied housing assistance, and this only changed when the 'Everyone In' scheme launched. Policymakers hold the power in scrapping oppressive policies faced by some migrants, as was noted by their initial response to the Covid pandemic. This section has therefore ultimately reinforced the importance of political will in engendering and reducing homelessness, with this emphasised again in the below quote from a charity worker:

"When politicians have committed to tacking issues like the lack of rights available to certain factions in society, they have been able to reduce homelessness substantially. However, when a lack of political desire to intervene has existed, perhaps due to pressure from public opinions, then unfortunately homelessness has continued to thrive" (Interview 45).

Brexit

The sociopolitical event of Brexit can be introduced at this juncture, since on a similar note, the empirical data reveals one of the consequences to be the plight of migrant workers, and this will be discussed further. First, by way of background, it can be noted that the 2016 referendum decision to leave the European Union, commonly referred to as Brexit, is an event which is thought to have brought about long-term consequences for UK society (Brown et al., 2020). As noted by Green, Hellwig, and Fieldhouse (2022), debates remain ongoing across the political spectrum about whether this event will ultimately be good for the UK. For example, some argue that potential benefits can be exploited, while others equally argue that only significant problems will result from it. In the empirical data, as mentioned, implications for the migrant community were highlighted, as can be seen from the following testimony of a policy officer:

> *"Brexit has resulted in the abolishment of free movement for EEA nationals. It is therefore far more difficult for recent EEA arrivals to prove they have a right to be here, and therefore a right to welfare. Also, there are the political consequences of the referendum result, with politicians now trying to show they are taking tough action on migration. No recourse to public funds is not a new thing, but I suspect you are going to hear a lot more about this now following Brexit, and I've personally witnessed a lot more discussions around this since the Brexit vote."* (Interview 43).

The merits of this account, especially on the point about political reactions post-Brexit, were recently authenticated through the words of Suella Braverman whist serving as Home Secretary. Coinciding with the time of writing this chapter, Ms Braverman issued a statement suggesting homelessness is sometimes a lifestyle choice. One of the aspects of homelessness she specifically refers to in making this assertion is migrants living in tents, and she substantiates this by declaring that she will be looking at ways of sending them back to their country of origin. The narrative around lifestyle choice demonstrates a particular lack of regard to how the no recourse to public funds agenda might eclipse any agency involved in this type of homelessness. This is not to say that such structural determinism is solely at play, but that any individual choice is likely to be navigated within the constraints that no recourse to public funds places on those who experience migrant homelessness. Despite there being some evidence of increased intolerance towards migrants post-Brexit, the rhetoric on migration is long-standing. For example, when Theresa May was Home Secretary in 2012, she made clear that her aim was to create 'a really hostile environment for immigrants' (Griffiths and Yeo, 2021). It is possible that Brexit may have since legitimised this type of sentiment, as well as potentially creating a growing population of migrants who will find themselves with no recourse to public funds as the policy officer forecasts. This worsening of conditions for EEA migrants post-Brexit is further predicted by one charity director who asserts:

> *"I think it's too early to tell if Brexit will have consequences for homelessness, but I think it probably has caused problems for those coming from European Union countries. I think they probably already got a rough deal when they came here, but I dare say things will become even more challenging for them now after Brexit."* (Interview 26).

The 'rough deal' alluded to by this charity director is supported by literature, with a study from Bramley et al. (2022) asserting that tailored support for EEA citizens is necessary to enable them to resolve their housing difficulties. The study positions this population as frequently being subjected to the worst conditions in the labour and housing market, including low pay, long hours, high rents, overcrowding, and various forms of exploitation. All these factors are said by the study, to have a

critical role in engendering homelessness. It seems plausible that conditions for these workers post-Brexit will only deteriorate as the UK expurgates its relationship with the various EU nations from which the migrants originate. However, another possible consequence of Brexit is economic turmoil, and this is also predicted in the empirical data, as the below quote from a homelessness support worker indicates:

> *"I have to be honest, I voted for Brexit for reasons I will not go into because it's not relevant to what you are looking for. I do accept though that there will be economic problems from losing our trading relationship with Europe. These economic problems will probably lead to more homelessness, as economic consequences invariable do."* (Interview 1).

While this testimony might constitute speculation, it has support in literature, with economic problems from both Brexit and Covid foretold. For example, Duke (2023) maintains that the UK had not fully recovered from the austerity measures introduced in response to the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 before being thrown into economic turmoil again in 2021, when in quick succession, both the UK Brexit transition period and the bulk of governmental financial support in response to the Covid crisis ended. This economic turmoil was reaffirmed as having causal potential in respect of homelessness. This discussion has ultimately explored the sociopolitical events of Covid and Brexit, identifying some concerns about the economic consequences of these events, but also some potential impact on groups including EEA migrants. The policy segment of this chapter highlighted how political will to implement the right policies can help to reduce homelessness, and this is reinforced, since the consequences of sociopolitical events will depend on the willingness of politicians to take actions which mitigate their impact.

In the case of EEA nationals, the discussion has highlighted that the rise of homelessness might be disrupted through a tailored support package, and this is likely to be more helpful than regurgitating problematic rhetoric while committing to the no recourse to public funds agenda. While this remains a politically sensitive area, with a broad spectrum of views, homelessness is likely to continue without a fresh approach. The same can be said for the economic difficulties arising from sociopolitical events, since the impact on homelessness is likely to depend upon the actions taken by politicians to alleviate the economic pressures. Ultimately, this section has found that while some people may enter a homelessness pathway in the immediate aftermath of sociopolitical events, the tendency for this to happen will depend on the consequential economic conditions and whether political will is exercised in disrupting the after-effects. It is not therefore an expected consequence that people will experience homelessness following the occurrence of such events. Attention will now be turned to housing to

identify how this structural factor might fit within a stratified and contextualised comprehension of homelessness.

Housing

One logical view which exists regarding homelessness is that if every person had access to a decent affordable home, quite simply, it would not happen (Hartman, 1998). This is an idea rooted in materialism, emphasising that homelessness is essentially the absence of a physical dwelling. However, this position has been criticised for simplifying a complex issue (Whiteford and Simpson, 2016), but nevertheless, many commentators support the idea that the absence of affordable housing is the single most important reason for homelessness (Jones and Pleace, 2010; Leishman and Rowley, 2012; Gibb, 2021; Hilber and Schoni, 2022). This section will now explore this structural aspect of homelessness, showing that a commonly observed lack of suitable housing absolutely contributes to the problem of homelessness, but that this has a tendency to result from the deeper level powers already advanced throughout this chapter. Essentially, economic conditions can drive the proliferation of expensive rents, and this results in people experiencing difficulties in securing affordable housing. Similarly, the lack of willingness from successive governments to tackle the shortage of affordable housing has also augmented the crisis. On the issue of affordability, it is worth explaining what constitutes 'affordable'. Clearly this will mean different things to different people, but for clarity, when this thesis refers to a lack of affordable accommodation it means an absence of housing within the financial reach of the lowest earners in the UK. Social housing neatly fits the category of affordable accommodation since one of its primary objectives is to provide homes to those who are priced out of the private sector (Pryke and Whitehead, 1995). The problems securing this type of tenure was raised extensively in the semi-structured interviews, with one homelessness support worker stating:

> *"My job feels impossible at times, and this is because I am working with people who have a housing need, yet there is no housing to give them. They are either priced out of the private rented market, or landlords refuse to take them. Then you fill out a Gateway to Homechoice[27] application, only to find they have been placed in a band D and they therefore have no prospect of getting social housing either. I understand why this happens, because there isn't enough social housing for everyone who needs it, but what am I supposed to do in these circumstances?"* (Interview 6)

---

[27] Gateway to Homechoice is a platform used by some local authorities to manage applications for social housing. Applicants are given a banding from A to E, with A being the highest, based on how worthy the authority deems the applicant to be. Every applicant can bid for housing via the platform, but only those on the highest bands have a realistic prospect of securing housing. Most local authorities in the UK use a similar method to allocate social housing.

Concerningly, this highlights that people may find themselves priced out of the private sector while concurrently being denied prioritisation for social housing. This was an issue I repeatedly observed when working in practice, so as a follow-up question in the semi-structured interview, this homelessness support worker was asked what she did in these circumstances, to which she explained:

> *"Well sometimes nothing, and the person remains homeless. Or sometimes we find accommodation, which is totally unsuitable, either because it's unaffordable, unsafe, too small, or it's a place you wouldn't expect even your worst enemy to live in. I mean, what's the saying, beggars can't be choosers, but seriously, you should see the type of places we end up housing people in. You know they are only going to end up back in the system, but what are we supposed to do?"* (Interview 6)

This implies that even when accommodation is found, it's often unacceptable, and those housed within it 'end up back in the system'. The poetry data also supports this, with experiences of poor-quality housing referred to in several entries. For example, Kevin's poem refers to him being put in a 'horrible place'. However, these findings only tell us what is experienced at the empirical level, this being an absence of suitable accommodation. Applying abduction to these observations allows this thesis to assert that poor-quality accommodation is multiplying to respond to need. There is clearly a demand for low-cost accommodation, and the private sector is therefore responding by offering substandard dwellings. These properties can be offered at below-market rates because they are at a below-market standard. Meanwhile, the economic conditions referred to earlier in this thesis are pushing up rental costs. Therefore, at the actual level, expensive accommodation and poor-quality housing is proliferating. This therefore reinforces the need for policymakers to interject and escalate the building of social housing, as called for in Chapter One.

The identified issues with housing are reinforced in the X (formerly Twitter) data, with several tweets mentioning poor conditions and problems with social housing availability. One of these tweets submits that *'foreign nationals get council houses, while our own get forgotten about and are left to live in filth'* (Tweet 8). This notion that foreign nationals are prioritised was regularly espoused by frustrated clients I supported in practice. Having a working knowledge of the system from a practice perspective means I can categorically say that race or country of origin does not make a difference in band allocation, although a vulnerable person who has been granted asylum will be given priority. Nevertheless, the frustration with the system only serves to highlight that making more affordable housing available for everyone who needs it should be a priority. Having said this, there is indication in the interview data to support the notion that other factors, beyond housing, are also at play. For example, there is an indication that suitable housing is sometimes offered but declined, thus

emphasising that a lack of suitable housing is not always a causal factor, as one homelessness support worker explains below:

> *"So, I have had it happen a few times now, where social or low-cost private housing has been found for someone. You've gone to great lengths to source this, but then on the day of the viewing, the person you sorted it for hasn't turned up despite several reminders. I therefore don't think it's just a lack of social housing that causes homelessness."* (Interview 39)

A similar narrative was provided by several separate interview respondents thus highlighting that homelessness is not always driven by a lack of suitable housing. However, as noted in Chapter Three, the sufficiency assumption might mean positivists would take this to indicate that a lack of suitable housing is not a causal factor for homelessness. Conversely, this thesis takes the view that it can still have causal tendencies without causing it on every occasion. These accounts simply indicate that a lack of suitable housing will not always be a driver for homelessness. The narrative also re-emphasises that those who experience homelessness have some agency, although one might question why they would decline social housing given its scarcity. To answer this, Chapter Three might again provide some clarity, since past trauma inside the confines of housing would offer one such explanation.

It is worth re-asserting at this point that housing-led interventions are widely considered to be the most effective way to resolve long-term chronic homelessness (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013; Padgett, 2013; Fitzpatrick, Watts, and Perry, 2021). Consequently, having an offer of suitable housing, first and foremost, is likely to be vital in resolving homelessness even though this might sometimes get rejected. A broad range of accommodation options is likely to be needed to satisfy the diverse needs of people who experience homelessness. After all, it is noted that in all tenures, demand for housing which is good-quality, affordable, and stable greatly outweighs supply (Morton, 2010). However, this offer should coincide with the trauma-informed practice advocated for in Chapter Three, so that those who are not yet housing-ready can be supported until they are able to accept accommodation.

So far, the discussion has centered on the inadequacies of housing options once someone is already in a precarious housing situation. However, the interview data also provides some insights into whether housing-related concerns can engender entries into homelessness. For example, one housing association worker asserts that homelessness can be triggered from a starting point of stable housing, as the extract below demonstrates:

> *"If a lack of affordable housing was a cause of homelessness, then you wouldn't get people being evicted from social housing. This is the most affordable tenancy, yet I still deal with a large number of evictions every week."* (Interview 33).

This implies that pathways into homelessness can include eviction from social accommodation, which the housing association worker infers to be an indication of suitable housing availability not being a causal factor in engendering homelessness. In doing so she is adopting the positivistic necessity principle and is failing to acknowledge that some people may become homeless from a place of stable accommodation, but this does not mean that significant issues with suitable housing availability can be rebuffed. Instead, social housing may not work for some, and this is a view advanced by one charity worker, as seen in the quote below:

> *"There will always be some people who are not suited to social housing, perhaps because they have higher support needs than what a general needs property[28] offers. What is required is a range of affordable tenures to suit different circumstances, and a range of different support provisions to run alongside the tenancies to help those with varying needs. What we have at the moment is too many people living in accommodation they can't afford, and homelessness is therefore knocking at their door. The only way to stop this is to have a range of affordable accommodation options, and yes, this definitely includes social housing. We have a very significant shortage of it."* (Interview 45).

This account reinforces the earlier proposal of this thesis advocating for a range of accommodation types alongside specialist support for those who need it. In most cases, interview respondents stressed the urgent need for social and other forms of affordable accommodation, and this is again emphasised in the extract below from a homelessness support worker:

> *"From my experience, things happen in people's lives, and they find themselves without housing. The reason they actually become homeless though is because there is a lack of affordable options for them to move into when they find themselves in a housing emergency."* (Interview 21).

This testimony affirms that when someone finds themselves in a housing emergency, a lack of affordable options is likely to engender homelessness. The wider discussion of this section has thus highlighted that a lack of suitable accommodation is regularly observed at the empirical level, and this has a tendency to create pathways into homelessness, as well as prevent exits from it. As stressed, there is consequently a moral imperative for policymakers to stimulate the construction of a range of suitable homes, yet so far, this has remained unfulfilled to the required levels. This thereby re-emphasises the need for political will in alleviating the oppressiveness of such structures.

---

[28] A general needs property is the most common form of housing offered in the social tenure, indicating that needs are non-specific. A more specialist offering is sometimes available, for example, to those with severe mobility difficulties.

This section will now give further consideration to the private rented sector, and this is important because Bramley (2013) notes that social housing will unlikely return as a dominant tenure in the near future, as it was in the 1960s, due to a continuing policy focus on housing in the private sector. Furthermore, Bimpson and Goulding (2020) submit that the chronic social housing shortages mean that private landlords are increasingly operating as an arm of the welfare state. The increased reliance on the private rented sector is believed to have presented a number of challenges to UK housing consumers. This includes rent affordability for low-paid, part-time, and zero-hour workers (Rugg and Rhodes, 2018) as well as imbalances of power in landlord-tenant relations and a general fear of evictions (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2018). The semi-structured interviews augment these points by suggesting that rent affordability issues extend beyond the lowest earners in some geographical areas, as the following quote from a charity worker verifies:

> *"What you get in the private sector locally for £1000 per month really isn't very much. It's far worse in cities like Cambridge and London, where you are priced out of the market unless you earn close to a six-figure salary."* (Interview 42).

This high cost of rent in certain urban neighbourhoods might be attributable to a rise in buy-to-let properties, which Paccoud (2017) suggests came about following reforms favouring landlords in the 1988 Housing Act, followed by the introduction of buy-to-let mortgages in 1996. This, he asserts, has led to gentrification[29] in these areas. Many buy-to-let investors are also thought to be savvy by choosing neighbourhoods with favourable macroeconomic variables such as high levels of employment so that their investment returns can be maximised (Leyshon and French, 2009). However, in doing so, the level of rents commanded increase, and consequently, the economic conditions in these areas seize to serve those on lower incomes who still require housing. This therefore reinforces the causal propensity of deeper economic conditions. Yet, the interview data again emphasises that there is no other choice but to call on the private sector, and consequently, a low-quality product emerges to meet the needs of those who would otherwise be displaced. The below quote from a homelessness support worker exemplifies this narrative:

> *"We are forced to rely on private landlords, but when income and benefits don't cover the market rate for rents, we end up sending people to very poor-quality housing"* (Interview 17).

The suggestion that income and benefits are insufficient to cover property costs reinforces the earlier highlighted issues around LHA rates not being kept in line with market rents. Other contemporaneous issues with benefits are thought to include difficulties making rent payments on time due to the

---

[29] Gentrification refers to the displacement of poorer residents, because of investment from wealthier individuals, who improve the character of a neighbourhood through their investment in it.

negative impact of housing benefit caps and Universal Credit reforms (Joyce, Mitchell and Keiller, 2017). It might thus be argued that politicians should show willingness to improve welfare, as considered earlier in this thesis. An alternative solution to raising benefits is rent regulation as a policy (Marsh, Gibb, and Soaita, 2023), but unsurprisingly one housing expert, who is also a private landlord, was against this idea, suggesting this would simply stop landlords from entering the market, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *"The private rented sector is being asked to do a job it was never designed to do in providing accommodation to those on benefits. I realise that some are priced out of the market, but rent regulation is not the answer. Over recent years I have seen quite a few landlords leaving the rental sector because conditions no longer favour landlords. If you start to regulate rents then you will just create an even greater housing shortage, because private rentals will disappear quickly."* (Interview 7).

It seems credible that private landlords would leave the sector if rents were regulated, with this potentially causing an ever-greater housing shortage. The semi-structured interview was therefore used to question the private landlord further on how affordability issues in the housing market can be addressed. He was also asked if his solution might lead to unintended consequences for the private rented sector, and his reply is documented below:

> *"The solution has got to be the building of more social housing, and no, I don't think this will cause problems for the private rented sector. To the contrary, I think it will eradicate shoddy practice from within the private sector because low quality accommodation will no longer be required, and private landlords can then focus on delivering what they should be doing, which is offering quality accommodation to those who can afford it."* (Interview 7).

This account therefore adds to the growing number of voices calling for more social housing, and it is slightly surprising that even voices in the private sector are advocating for this. Political will to address social housing shortages might therefore lie at the heart of resolving issues within the private rental market too. However, affordability of this tenure was not the only identified issue, with the rise of no-fault evictions, legally known as section 21 evictions, also being of concern to interview participants. On this issue, one housing options officer submits that '*I see a large number of people who have been evicted under section 21, and they are therefore literally homeless through no fault of their own*' (Interview 36). It was somewhat perplexing as to why a landlord would evict someone without good reason, for which one homelessness support worker offers some resolution in their quote below:

> *"There doesn't have to be a reason for a section 21 eviction. It's just a power that landlords have over tenants. They can evict them at any point by giving notice of 2 months I think, although this was temporarily raised to 3 months during Covid. I have seen tenants of 20 years being evicted under section 21, when they've been a model tenant for all of this time. Of course, there will be genuine reasons why a landlord might want their property back, like if they intend to move in themselves, but often I see situations where the landlord gets the property back, does it up, then puts it back on the rental market with a much higher rent."* (Interview 38).

Power afforded to landlords by legislation, as it stands at the time of writing, therefore has the capacity to cause a worsening of homelessness. Indeed, the acceleration of section 21 evictions has been noted to be a contributory factor to homelessness (Whitehead and Williams, 2019). The formation of the Renters Reform Bill in 2023 has given hope that power imbalances might be on the verge of shifting (Cheshire and Hilber, 2024), with promises from the government indicating that section 21 evictions will soon become outlawed (House of Commons, 2023). However, at the time of writing, this has been shelved pending improvements within the court system to speed up Section 8 evictions[30] (Shelter, 2024). A willingness of politicians to intervene is evidently necessary, but as discussed, this needs to be managed carefully to prevent possible escalation of the issues. Ultimately, building more social and affordable homes has been identified as a priority area for political intervention, but as one charity director notes in their narrative below, building restrictions may be hampering progress:

> *"My charity and other well-known national charities have been calling for more social housing for years, and actually there is little resistance from politicians, who at least play lip service to our demands. I can therefore only assume that there are building restrictions preventing house building to the scale we need."* (Interview 41).

This notion that building restrictions hamper house building to the required scale is supported by Wilson and Barton (2023) who further suggest that the key to building more affordable housing involves all of the following:

1) Major public sector investment in a housebuilding programme, including investment from local authorities and housing associations.

---

[30] Section 8 evictions happen when a landlord has reasonable grounds to evict a tenant, for example, for non-payment of rent. At the time of writing, there is a backlog of cases waiting to be heard in court, and a landlord cannot legally proceed with an eviction until a court order is granted.

2) Acquisition of more land which is suitable for development. This includes buying private land at a reasonable price and bringing public land forward quickly.

3) Resourcing local authority planning departments adequately and addressing the planning system, which is widely seen as slow, costly, and complex.

4) Having essential infrastructure to support the funding of housing development.

5) Encouraging and supporting small and medium sized building firms into a market dominated by a small number of large companies.

6) Ensuring the construction industry is in a fit state to deliver housebuilding capacity. For example, by encouraging apprenticeships and improved training.

To address these issues, a commitment from politicians is clearly needed, thus emphasising again the need for political will. However, there are various other agents who must also collaborate to overcome the issue of housebuilding restrictions according to this account. This includes officials from within local authorities, planners, private investors, housing associations, and construction firms of various sizes. A town councillor who was interviewed as part of this research also identifies the important role of local citizens in giving their backing to such building projects, as is noted in the quote below:

> *"The delays in starting social house building can be down to the problem of nimbyism[31]. I've been to lots of planning meetings where there have been strong objections from local voices who don't want this kind of housing in their community. They know there is a need for it, but they don't want it where they live."* (Interview 35).

Agents in the form of local citizens can thus be added to the list of stakeholders who have a responsibility to counteract the oppressive nature of housebuilding restrictions. As discussed, these restrictions are contributing to a lack of suitable housing, which is ultimately having observable causal tendencies in respect of homelessness. The agency of various stakeholders can therefore interact with structures, reducing their oppressive nature through joint affirmative action, or enabling their oppressive tendency through inaction and parochialism. There is some optimism that such collective enterprise might be achieved so that building to the scale required transpires, and this is exemplified in the narrative of a charity worker below:

> *"It doesn't have to be this way. Serious housebuilding took place in the aftermath of World War 2 and I'm optimistic that we can do it again."* (Interview 45).

---

[31] Nimbyism refers to a 'not in my back yard' mentality, which occurs when local people object to much needed projects like social housing through fear it will negatively impact them. For example, through more congestion on the roads, more antisocial behaviour, or through an increased strain on local services.

This implies that housebuilding to the scale required happened in the aftermath of the last world war, and consequently, it is possible for it to happen again. However, Hashemi (2013) suggests that the post-war conditions of the UK were unique, and with it came a massive urgent housing demand. It might be argued that such a demand exists again despite the absence of an aerial bombardment, and therefore the charity worker's optimism is not misplaced. There are possible lessons which might be taken from the post second world war era, and on this, Hashemi declares that a shortage of skilled labour and raw materials, as well as high costs of construction resulted in the UK government using new and innovative methods of construction including prefabricated methods. In recent years, there has been some movement towards this again, with modular homes now growing in numbers (Nazir et al., 2021). However, it remains the case that nowhere near enough affordable houses are being built (Shelter, 2023). This section has ultimately highlighted that economic conditions can be a factor which results in housing concerns, but political will to intervene is paramount. This should coincide with collective action from numerous agents to overcome issues such as housebuilding shortages. This chapter will now move on to similarly consider how issues within the employment market might be contributing to homelessness.

Employment

At the time of writing this chapter, Jeremy Hunt serves as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and recently announced increased sanctions for welfare claimants failing to take affirmative actions to get back into work. Such conditionality requirements have been found to make those who experience homelessness engage with various forms of labour market activation (Beatty et al., 2014). However, this is contrary to what this thesis has already advocated for in respect of political action to ensure that nobody is left without welfare provision. While it is accepted that there might be economic benefits to incentivising work, this thesis argues that penalising those who fail to take prescribed steps can lead to increased poverty in some individual actors, and this in turn has a tendency to increase their risk of homelessness. The wider links between employment and homelessness will be explored in this section, but it should first be noted that several misconceptions seem to exist around the importance of work in preventing homelessness. Firstly, as Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) point out, not everyone is merely two paycheques away from experiencing homelessness, and to imply this denies the profoundly unequal risks faced by some systematically disadvantaged individuals. Secondly, as pointed out earlier in this thesis, some people who experience homelessness are in paid work. Nevertheless, the importance of a stable well-paid job in preventing homelessness has been recognised by some studies (Shaheen and Rio, 2007; Tenekenov, Fitzpatrick, and Johnsen, 2018). This will now be explored further, with this thesis ultimately postulating that a lack of employment opportunities to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness is an actual level occurrence

with causal tendencies. As with other actual level events identified in this chapter, this lack of employment opportunities is likely to be driven by the economic and political climate, with various agents mutating its causal potential, as will now be discussed.

Upon examining the demi-regularities, one of the notable views contained within the theme of employment is the familiar conviction that some who experience homelessness are deserving of their circumstances. For example, one homelessness support worker states, '*I believe that working hard can prevent homelessness, but there are some people who don't want to work, and I have little sympathy for them*' (Interview 30). This is reinforced in the controversial tweet stating, *'to all homeless people, I say get a job you lazy bastards!'* (Tweet 31). These views highlight that the agency of the individual concerned may again be overemphasised in some discourses. However, this body of opinion is noticeably balanced by an understanding that constraining factors might impair agency, with a different homelessness support worker explaining:

> *"Work may offer a solution to homelessness but there are lots of reasons why work is not possible for some people. Let me give you some examples. I have one lady I work with who is so profoundly traumatised by past circumstances that she may never be able to work. I also have one gentleman I work with who has severe addiction problems, combined with mental health needs, and I struggle to see how he would ever cope in a workplace."* (Interview 11).

This clearly implies that psychological difficulties have the potential to cause restrictions for employment, and this idea that some people are unable to work through such personal afflictions is supported by literature (Poremski and Hwang, 2016). Interestingly, these identified issues are the same psychological factors positioned as having causal consequences for homelessness in Chapter Three, thereby indicating that these psychological conditions may constrain an individual in multiple ways. It might also indicate that an agent's capacity to engage in the employment and housing markets are constrained by the same factors, thereby providing a link between homelessness and unemployment. However, when considering this relationship, it is important not to write off those in precarious housing situations, because as one study notes, many have the capacity to become active in their communities again once their housing circumstances improve (Yanos, Barrow, and Tsemberis, 2004). Having said this, regaining suitable work may be a challenge because the employment market is said to be lacking in opportunities which match the skills found in the unemployed (Adams, Greig, and McQuaid, 2000). Furthermore, issues such as low wages, poor working conditions, and zero-hour contracts are said to be making the employment market insecure, and therefore creating difficult conditions for those who are trying their best to exit homelessness (Buzzeo et al., 2019). The economic climate is therefore likely to be driving this insecure job market since such conditions are likely to

manifest during economic downturns. Conversely, when there is economic prosperity, one would expect to see an improvement in these conditions.

The interview data supports there being wider structural issues, beyond economic conditions, that are leading to difficulties in securing employment for some people who experience homelessness. For example, a homelessness support worker emphasises that employers may not offer the required support to someone who continues to experience personal difficulties and who might also have been out of work for some time, as the extract below highlights:

> *"Some of the people I have worked with over the years are desperate to get back to work, and there are jobs, but maybe not the right type of jobs. There may not be the right type of employers either who are prepared to be patient with someone who has difficult circumstances and may need to adapt to the workplace after being out of it for some time."* (Interview 38).

This notion that employers are unwilling to assist individuals who have unmet support needs is further emphasised by Poremski and Hwang (2016) who suggest that some employers hold negative attitudes towards people who experience homelessness. Consequently, it may be the case that employers, and perhaps support agencies, need to be doing more to reintegrate those who experience homelessness back into workplaces. However, even if these various agents ensure that support is forthcoming, further structural issues may still prevent employment. For example, one supported accommodation manager explains how the funding structure for their accommodation can cause a barrier to employment, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *"If someone starts working while living in my project, they will need to fund the extra support costs themselves, and I have to be honest, it's not cheap. The system is therefore effectively stopping some people who may want to work from entering a job because their housing will no longer be affordable. It's something we see regularly, and I just wish there was a way we could work around this."* (Interview 13).

The accommodation project referred to above constitutes exempt accommodation, which is a type of housing often provided to those who have been experiencing homelessness so that they are supported to manage their tenancy going forward. This accommodation is exempt from local housing allowance limits, and purveyors of these schemes can therefore recover a higher rate of rent from benefits to cover the support costs. However, as the quote acknowledges, this charge can be expensive and out of the reach of those who are not claiming housing-related benefits. It is also recognised that employment might therefore be unfeasible for some residents in this type of accommodation. Consequently, the need for policymakers to remove such obstacles is highlighted,

perhaps by allowing residents of exempt accommodation to reclaim support charges even after they have commenced employment.

Teasdale (2012) submits that there is another issue preventing employment in those who experience homelessness, with this being, quite simply, that there are not enough jobs. He therefore asserts that any efforts made to make those experiencing homelessness 'work ready' might be futile because this will not necessarily create new work. However, some service providers have found a workaround by directly employing ex-service users, recognising the importance of lived experience in informing operational activities (Barker et al., 2018). One issue with this is that the number of opportunities available within service providers is likely to be significantly outnumbered by the number of unemployed former service users. This said, another possible solution lies in social enterprise, this being an entrepreneurial innovation designed to promote both social and economic integration, usually with an emphasis on paid work. Real-life examples that have recruited and trained people experiencing homelessness include cafes and landscaping companies (Hibbert, Hogg, and Quinn, 2002; Teasdale 2012).

Emmaus is one notable provider who use the income generated from their social enterprise to house, support, employ, and train further people experiencing homelessness. According to Clarke (2010), this endeavour therefore offers a significant solution to those who experience homelessness. However, Teasdale (2012) argues that there are several issues with such schemes, with the most notable one being difficulties individuals might experience in transferring from these highly supported environments to the formal economy. He also suggests that such projects are not easily replicated at scale because of the level of resource and private equity needed. Considering these arguments, it is my thesis that a collective responsibility exists to offer sustainable opportunities to individuals who need support to return to the workplace. Social enterprises and homelessness service providers offer a solution to some, as discussed, but other types of business should show willingness to extend opportunities to those who might otherwise be left without employment. The initial outlay in committing to this might be vast in some cases, but the long-term returns could potentially offset this. Indeed, this is supported by a probation officer who submits:

> *"There are some good employers out there who are willing to invest their time in recruiting people with challenging needs, and while it doesn't always work out, sometimes I have seen people really seize the break they have been given. They often really appreciate it too, so the employer can end up with loyal, determined, and motivated workers once they have settled into the environment."* (Interview 24)

Providing employment opportunities to those who might not find openings in the formal economy therefore has some potentially mutual benefits, but a question remains around whether this can help sustained exits from homelessness. On this issue, one homelessness support worker expressed concerns about the level of wages those entering the job market can command, as the extract below demonstrates:

"Returning to work is a big challenge for the people I support, but when they do successfully find work, low pay is generally offered. There can be quite a lot of resistance because of the low pay. Don't get me wrong, there are other benefits to being in work, such as an improvement in self-esteem, and that's why I always encourage it, but the financial incentive isn't always there." (Interview 17).

While this accentuates the psychological benefits that can come from returning to work, the issues expressed around levels of pay were shared throughout the interviews. For example, another homelessness support worker even suggests that low pay can cause entries into homelessness and prevent exits from it, as can be seen in their quote below:

"There are lots of people in low paid work, and I would definitely say this makes them vulnerable to homelessness. There are also quite a few people who are trying to work their way out of homelessness, but it's really difficult to find jobs that pay enough to escape from it once and for all." (Interview 38).

This narrative was similarly repeated in a number of interviews, and therefore, contrary to the belief of some, employment may not be the crucial resolution to homelessness. Having said this, Bretherton and Pleace (2019) reviewed an employment programme for those experiencing homelessness and found evidence of a positive effect in those who were ready to reintegrate. However, sustained exits from homelessness required various combinations of education, training, and helping people into paid work. In addition, sustained employment was only observed when the work was secure, well-paid, and the employee was in secure affordable housing. The study also advanced that some nominal success did not guarantee a lasting solution to homelessness and people could 'do the right thing' yet remain unemployed, in a precarious housing situation, or both. This therefore emphasises that making employment opportunities available can be part of a multifaceted solution to homelessness, but work should be paid well to facilitate exits from poverty and homelessness. Furthermore, appropriate support and accommodation is needed for employment to be a success, and even then, some will not manage to stay employed.

Overall, a lack of employment opportunities is postulated to be an actual level occurrence with a tendency to cause homelessness. This is because a lack of suitable opportunities exists even though some have not directly observed this. This assertion can be made because there was evidence of available work being low-paid, insecure, and unsupportive, thereby signifying that an absence of suitable openings is occurring at the actual level. Nevertheless, the causal propensity of this lack of opportunities, as discussed, will depend on the presence of other factors. For example, trauma can constrain an individual, preventing them from coping in formal workplaces, as well as their ability to exploit opportunities when they are available. Suitable housing is another example, which must be present to create the best conditions for success in employment. The lack of suitable employment opportunities can be caused by the same higher powers dominating this chapter, namely political will and economic conditions. As discussed, the economic climate can make the employment market insecure, but policymakers have the ability to take actions which can stimulate the economy through the creation of investment opportunities. This can help the employment market to flourish, but employers may still need to be incentivised to offer opportunities to those who would otherwise stay unemployed. Ultimately, the actions of various agents is important. For example, there needs to be a readiness of the unemployed to work, but this must coincide with a willingness of employers to provide well-paid, supportive, secure, and stimulating opportunities. In addition, service providers can help break-down certain barriers by sourcing training opportunities and secure housing, both of which can increase the chances of employment succeeding. Now that employment has been fully considered, this chapter will finally consider if there are any other structural level factors which can yield causal consequences for homelessness.

Other structural factors

During the search for demi-regularities, the other structural factors which emerged as being of concern were lack of support and labelling. There are likely to be other structural factors yielding causal tendencies in relation to homelessness, but it is not within the scope of this thesis to give a full appraisal of every possible structural factor. Instead, this thesis is guided by dominant themes, exploring how a stratified approximation of homelessness might transpire based on data within these topics. Lack of support and labelling are the remaining emergent themes, and therefore this chapter will finish by considering these factors further. In relation to support, the benefits of a supportive family structure have already been discussed, but unsupportive service provision may also be a structural issue with causal consequences for homelessness. Indeed, it is posited that without access to advice and support, the prospects for resolving homelessness are bleak and can lead to needs intensifying (Reeve and Batty, 2011). This is supported by the interview data, with one homelessness prevention worker stating:

> *"Support is crucial for those who are homeless. It's why we have supportive outreach workers. It's why we have support as part of Housing First. It's why we have supported accommodation. It's why we have support at drop-in centres, support at soup kitchens, support at housing options, and floating support[32] for those who are struggling to manage their tenancies and are therefore at risk of homelessness. We then also have mental health support, as well as drug and alcohol recovery support. I'm only getting started, but I think you get the idea. Without all of this support, I have no doubt we would have a very serious homelessness problem."* (Interview 2).

This account highlights that a lot of support is available for those who experience homelessness, and the consequences of not having it might be 'a very serious homelessness problem'. This is supported by Reeve and Batty (2011) who suggest that a lack of support can lead to desperate incongruous measures being taken by those experiencing homelessness, and this can result in those who would exit homelessness quickly, if they had support, joining the ranks of the long-term chronically homeless. However, one support worker notes that '*not everyone who becomes homeless needs support, because it is possible to exit homelessness quickly if you have a good network of friends and family around you*' (Interview 11). It might therefore be implied that support by service providers acts as a necessary replacement for those without the appropriate family structures identified in Chapter Three. Indeed, David's lived experience narrative refers to him losing family support, and his later need to put 'faith' in service providers. It is unlikely that service provision can ever fully replace a supportive family, but this nevertheless emphasises the importance of service support for those without appropriate family input. It is therefore concerning to note that one manager of a floating support service explained that their service had recently been terminated, as the quote below shows:

> *"Well, it's a coincidence that you are interviewing me today because they have literally just told me this morning that they are closing my service. I probably shouldn't be talking to you, but I guess it's good to get it off my chest. I'm just really worried about it. As well as being concerned for my colleagues, I'm really concerned for service users because who is going to support them now? Other services are already too stretched."* (Interview 10).

This account again highlights the importance of political will, since it is ultimately political decision that result in service provision being cut. The decision to cut floating support might mean some people

---

[32] Floating support is help provided to people living in the community. A support worker visits people in their homes to deliver intensive but short-term help. It can facilitate the transition of people moving from supportive accommodation into independent housing by continuing support at the start of an independent tenancy. It might also help individuals who are at risk of homelessness by providing help to overcome issues that put them at risk. For example, help can be given to apply for welfare payments so that rent arrears can be addressed.

struggle to get the help they need, and this in turn can result in increased homelessness. Concerns about gaps in service provision, including the void left by the closure of floating support, was further emphasised by a homelessness support worker, as the quote below demonstrates:

"There are gaping holes in the support that is offered. There's no longer floating support locally, and I think support comes in way too late. There needs to be more on prevention. The lack of early support is why we have lots of people becoming homeless in the first place. So, I would say this needs to be a focus, and we need to put people at the front, you know, without going in with pre-judgements." (Interview 38).

These accounts substantiate that support services provide an important function, and this is also recognised by Mackie, Johnsen, and Wood (2019) who suggest that person-centred support and choice is at the core of addressing homelessness. However, they also acknowledge that this support must be underpinned by several other factors, some of which align with the findings of this chapter. For example, they suggest that support must come with an offer of settled accommodation, there must be support for those who are ineligible for welfare, and there must be increased political will at different levels of government. Such accounts clearly appreciate the need for multi-dimensional responses to tackling homelessness, with support being one facet. However, engagement of the service user is an important aspect of support, with withdrawal thought to occur due to the stigma associated with homelessness (Rea, 2023). This leads appropriately to the remaining topic of labelling since the application of problematic terms can increase stigma. Several poems identified this as an issue, for example Sam's poem includes the line '*you stick us in a box and then you label.*' Such sentiments emphasise the importance of neutralising language, yet I too was unwittingly guilty of using stigmatising words during the interview process, with one healthcare worker who specialises in looking after the health of those who experience homelessness stressing:

"Can I just say, I don't like the way you have repeatedly referenced homeless people in your questions. This is stigmatising language, and may I suggest that you use a term such as people who experience homelessness." (Interview 19).

Despite having lived experience of homelessness, and several years of practice experience, I was not aware until this interview that I too was guilty of dishonouring those who are currently on a homeless pathway. However, I fully accept that the term 'homeless person' can be stigmatising, and subsequently, I have been careful with the language used throughout this thesis, with an exception being when quoting the words of others. As mentioned at the outset of this thesis, it is accepted that practice sentiments can be contributing to homelessness, and as such, it can be said that those working in the field of homelessness have a responsibility to think carefully about the language they

use. Indeed, Snow et al. (1986) used the term 'salvaging the self' to describe some of the ways in which those who experience homelessness eschew negative stereotypes to preserve their self-respect and dignity. Subsequent studies have also emphasised that strategies are used by those experiencing homelessness to preserve their sense of self-worth and protect against stigma (Meanwell, 2013; Rayburn and Guittar, 2013; Roche, 2015; Terui and Hsieh, 2016). Terms used within homelessness practice are evolving and this might denote that practitioners have realised the stigmatising effect of certain language. The progression of semantics is accentuated by one charity worker in their extract below:

> *"Problematic labels have always been used. It started with down and outs, it moved to hobos and tramps, then more recently it moved to terms like entrenched and complex needs. All of these were considered acceptable ways to describe patrons, but they obviously have negative connotations, and they are therefore terms we are pushing to have removed from reports and discussions around homelessness."* (Interview 45).

The notion that 'problematic labels' have implications is supported by several commentators who submit that labelling theory can be applied to homelessness, with the label of vagrant or homeless person being played out by individuals assigned this identity in a way which fits stereotypical behaviour (Phelan et al., 1997; Prather, 2010; Asencio and Burke, 2011). Moreover, Tipple and Speak (2004) suggest public and popular attitudes towards those who experience homelessness are important in shaping the way interventions are framed. They posit that in general, people and authorities hold negative attitudes towards those who experience homelessness, and narratives of inadequacy are often adopted with little regard for the heterogenous circumstances within the population. They further suggest that in this negative context, interventions to reduce homelessness are limited because they are frequently developed without a full understanding of the personal, social, or cultural context within which homelessness is experienced. This idea that services can be inaugurated based on typecasts is supported by one charity director who suggests:

> *"I think many interventions are founded based on misconceptions around what it means to be homeless. Let me give you an example. Locally we have a service run by lovely well-meaning people. The service involves assigning a mentor to a service user, with the intention of guiding the person to make better life choices. Now, I must stress that I don't have a problem with the principle of mentoring if it's empowering people to achieve their goals. The problem with this service is that someone is going in with pre-conceived ideas on what should be done to help the person, and it's very paternalistic. I dare say that a lot of services that are trying to address*

homelessness have the same well-meaning principles but are founded on stereotypical ideas about what people need." (Interview 40).

One of the points made in this account is that paternalistic services can be ineffective, and this may contradict with the earlier assertion of this thesis that services stepping in when family structures are absent can be advantageous. However, the wider point seems to be that such interventions usually have problematic ideas about what a service user might need. This is inherently different to a family structure, which offers a place of safety, familiarity, and can come with unconditional long-term affection. Inversely, some paternalistic services may be founded on stereotypical ideas about homelessness, as is suggested in this account. Support from services can still be important, particularly when family is absent, but it is important that service users are empowered. This is because, as discussed, service users may disengage if they feel stigmatised, and interventions may fail to work when they are founded on misconceptions, thus allowing homelessness to thrive. Conversely, movement towards a stratified and contextual understanding of homelessness can inform enhanced interventions, thereby breaking the harms engendered by labelling. This finding that labelling can have causal implications for homelessness will be explored further in Chapter Five when considering the domain of culture. For now, it can be concluded that support provision, which is an important structure in mitigating homelessness, can instead be oppressive when informed by problematic labels. This idea that labelling is important should not be taken to mean that homelessness is socially constructed. This thesis instead argues that homelessness is out there, but labels can still become self-fulfilling when an individual accepts their ascribed identity.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored various structural level factors to identify how they contribute to homelessness. An initial consideration of the domain found some preliminary support for there being a structural basis to homelessness. The search for demi-regularities then identified several structural themes to analyse in the continued pursuit of a stratified understanding of homelessness. Each theme was examined in isolation, and this facilitated an exploration of the causal propensity of each factor, the context in which causality was enabled or constrained, and the identification of deeper-level mechanisms which ultimately give the structural factors causal power. The intersectional relationship between factors was also explored and some policy implications were imparted throughout the chapter. It was ultimately identified that the actual event of poverty is a central driver for homelessness, thereby reinforcing the findings of other critical realists in this field. However, to extend on existing ideas, this chapter found that poverty can either be enabled or constrained by political intervention. Similarly, economic conditions were postulated to be a mechanism which can activate or reduce the causal propensity of poverty. Consequently, political will and economic conditions were

positioned to be the real mechanisms driving poverty. Equally, political will and economic conditions were identified to be significant powers during sociopolitical events. For example, the precarious economic conditions brought about by the Covid pandemic and Brexit yielded causal consequences for homelessness, and a political willingness to interject was paramount in mitigating the causal propensity of these events. Like poverty, housing and employment were found to be crucial structural factors which can have causal consequences for homelessness. With regards to housing, a lack of affordable accommodation is regularly observed, but it is brought about by the proliferation of expensive and poor-quality housing, and this is an event which tends to occur when a precarious economic climate is enduring. Political willingness to interject was again found to be significant too. For example, a failure of successive governments to substantially increase social housing stock was positioned to be a factor which is contributing to growing homelessness.

When exploring the causal role of employment, a lack of suitable opportunities was found to occur, duly having consequences for those trying to navigate homelessness. However, the driving force was postulated to again be the wider economic climate and a failure of policymakers to stimulate new ventures. Furthermore, the actions of various agents were found to interact at every level. For example, policymakers working with international partners can pull fiscal levers to shape the real-level economic conditions. In addition, those who experience poverty can exercise some agency in changing their circumstances, albeit that this is constrained by other factors. Finally, landlords, housebuilders, and local planners have the capacity to work together in counteracting the observed lack of suitable accommodation. Agency can thus be understood to interact with various structural factors in engendering and reducing homelessness. The final part of this chapter identified that support provision is important for mitigating homelessness, but it can be oppressive when informed by unhelpful labels. This thesis will now progress to Chapter Five where the stigma arising from stereotypes will be considered further. The wider objective of the chapter will be to explore the cultural domain, ultimately broadening an understanding of how cultural influences can contribute to a stratified and contextual conception of homelessness.

Chapter 5 – Homelessness as a consequence of stigmatisation, discrimination, and culture

Fuck the system.
Fuck you!
You all are cunts.
I hate you.
You hate me.
Can you NOT see?
I want to be free.
Instead I am here.
I am holding a beer.
It is the only way to cope.
But it is not helping.
I AM stuck.
I will never be free.

Poem by Lee

The above poem from Lee provides a narrative of someone who is detached from societal norms. Such poetry can serve as a means of communication to articulate the complexities of personal experiences. The role of the realist researcher is to consider how an actor may reach such a place of anomie by considering how their use of language intersects with their material conditions. Doing so can be achieved through a brief literary critique, and the interpretations can then be explored through further analysis of all relevant data, as has been the procedure in the preceding chapters. It is reasonable to infer from Lee's poem that he is angry at mainstream civilisation, and there are hints of this in some of the other poetry. For example, Sam's poem clearly states that their anger is 'super fucking righteous' after describing a system in which they feel 'systematically oppressed'. Through inductive reasoning, it is possible to infer that those who experience homelessness feel let down and alienated from those who thrive in constraining conditions. Within the population of people who experience homelessness, it is feasible that commonality will be found with others in similar circumstances. McNaughton (2008) suggests this can lead to the formation of a new set of rules, and Ravenhill (2008) posits that this can lead to the development of a unique homelessness culture. The significance of culture in relation to homelessness forms the basis of the rest of this chapter.

Including culture in critical realist research is important because according to Somerville (2013), culture has been neglected by critical realists exploring homelessness. Furthermore, in the past decade since Somerville's assertion, consideration of culture has remained largely uncharted territory in critical realist research. One of the exceptions comes from Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen (2013) who acknowledge that street culture is one of the pathways into multiple exclusion homelessness. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to explore culture in greater depth, thus allowing the findings of this chapter, and their application to the wider thesis, to offer an original contribution to critical

realist research on homelessness. As a starting point, it is first necessary to define what constitutes culture, and on this topic, the work of Margaret Archer has been highly influential.

Archer (2016) sees structure and culture as analytically distinct but causally related. She describes structural conditions as the material relations among social positions that not only constrain and enable, but also motivate people's intentionality and action. Hence, structure tends to refer to policies, institutions, organisations, social positions, and material resources which usually have the power to govern, make demands, and dominate. Culture is defined as distinct from structure insofar that cultural conditions exist intersubjectively within collective ideas, beliefs, and opinions. Cultural conditions, like structural conditions, produce motivations and intentions, but they are more like norms and expectations than laws and policies. In Archer's morphogenetic model, culture is held to be just as important a concept as structure or agency, with the three concepts forming a 'trinity' (Archer, 1996). Application of Archer's morphogenetic approach thus enables social researchers the opportunity to more robustly consider the dualistic interaction of structure and agency, thereby enhancing the ideas offered in the 'new orthodoxy' era of homelessness research that was referred to in Chapter One. However, one issue, according to Newman (2017) is that many social researchers have historically merged together culture and agency, making the assumption that agents have total control over their ideas and beliefs. Archer (1996), on the other hand, offers a distinction between 'the cultural system' (culture) and 'socio-cultural interaction' (agency), and this analytical separation of the two concepts is a key strength of Archer's work (Newman, 2017). Application of the morphogenesis approach within this thesis is therefore justified further to the extent that it facilitates a clear distinction between culture and agency.

In making the separation between culture and agency, Archer (1996) posits that the cultural system is a set of ideas that are bestowed on individuals at birth or through residing within a society. In contrast, socio-cultural interaction occurs by everyone having an 'internal conversation', whereby they reflect on their social context and develop their own relationship with their structural and cultural conditioning. When people act upon beliefs that contradict societal norms, this is a demonstration of the causal power of agency. However, when people are passive or maintain the cultural system, the dominant ideas within a cultural system will have a role in shaping society, including the real events which occur within it. Nevertheless, Archer insists that any theory of culture must allow for the possibility that a set of contradictory beliefs can come to be dominant within a society, but that such ideas are more difficult to maintain over the long term, while cultural norms can dominate for long periods of time with limited revision or challenge. In relation to the cultural system, Archer posits that ideas are embedded within 'items of intelligibilia' (Archer, 2016, p.430). Such items include books,

computer files, and voice recordings that are capable of being grasped, deciphered, understood, or known by someone, but which exist objectively regardless of whether anybody notices their existence.

In addition to the critical realist pursuit of ontological stratification, which has been one of the central aspects of this thesis, the morphogenetic approach has additional value in explicitly introducing temporality to the conceptualisation of social change. Archer (2016) submits that it is essential to incorporate the element of temporality to understand how interactions between agency, structure and culture result in morphogenesis or morphostasis. Such temporality is understood through three phases which provide guidelines about how to analyse what might be going on in any context. Phase one or T^1 represents what occurs before agents interact with their circumstances. Within this phase, social and cultural conditions, resulting from past social interaction between agents set the context within which social agents operate. Phase two or T^2-T^3 represents the interaction between agents with their structural and cultural conditions, whereby they explore inherited powers and boundaries through deconstruction or play. Phase three or T^4 is the after stage whereby reproduction or transformation occurs. The three phases only progress if there is some interaction between people and their circumstances, and upon completion, the next cycle starts.

To provide an example relevant to homelessness, at T^1 a culture of demonising those who experience homelessness exists, and this is embedded in television show archives, newspaper clippings, and social media posts, to name just a few. This is supported by several of the interviews, for example, one charity worker submits that *'a lot of media forms continue to portray those who experience homelessness as immoral'* (Interview 42). Evidence of this demonisation is also borne out in the X (formerly Twitter) data. For example, one tweet states *'I just walked past the homeless tents, and it stinks of booze and cannabis. This is what our taxes and donations pay for'* (Tweet 23). Other examples of such demonisation within the mined X (formerly Twitter) data has also been provided throughout this thesis. At T^2-T^3, agents may be confronted with information that challenges their view of homelessness. For example, if someone who is experiencing homelessness is observed running into a burning building to help save a family this might challenge preconceptions viewing individuals who experience homelessness as lazy substance-dependent burdens on society. However, they might put this down to an isolated case and continue to push the narrative of homelessness being reprehensible. Alternatively, they can actively attempt to overturn these prevailing discourses, as is seemingly the case with Sam who acknowledges the existence of these norms in their poetry, but then submits that they *'deserve a seat at the table'* presumably so they can challenge them. At T^4, demonisation is either reproduced because agents continue to create content which demonises homelessness. Alternatively, it is transformed because agents like Sam are successful at reshaping cultural norms through their attempts to alter the narrative which permeates the cultural system.

By embracing Archer's teachings, it is possible to avoid what she calls conflation (Archer, 1995). This is when causal efficacy is only afforded to agents (upward conflation), to the fusion of structure and agency (central conflation), or solely to structure (downward conflation). The avoidance of these three conflation types has been a central undertaking of this thesis, and this will continue as this chapter explores how cultural factors coalesce with agency and structure in influencing homelessness. The emphasis this time will be on cultural level factors in the continued pursuit of a stratified understanding of homelessness, with the exploration ultimately extending on the example provided earlier. Taking Archer's concepts collectively, culture can be understood as ideas in a society, which are embedded in items, and are capable of being grasped. They set the context in which agents operate, but they are also reshaped through their interactions with agents. Utilising this interpretation of culture affords this thesis the ability to ontologically separate culture from structure and agency, while also considering their interaction. However, there are other notions of culture, and these will briefly be described so that a comprehension of contrasting ideas about culture is facilitated, despite the reliance on Archer's work.

Of note is the work of Edward Hall in the 1970s and the more recent work of Stuart Hall. Firstly, Edward Hall (1976) offers the cultural iceberg analogy as a means to grasp the properties of culture, whereby observable structures such as language, rituals, and stories are positioned as important aspects of culture alongside unobservable structures such as shared values and shared assumptions. This stratified notion of culture is useful for critical realists and broadens Archer's ideas by acknowledging that there may be aspects of culture, such as shared assumptions, which are not necessarily capable of being grasped. For Stuart Hall (2013), culture is not so much a set of things, but is instead concerned with the production and exchange of meanings between the members of a society or group. He suggests that two people who belong to the same culture usually interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts, and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. However, he accepts that there is not a singular experience amongst people within a culture, but he nevertheless notes that cultural meanings can to some extent organise and regulate social practices, influence our conduct, and consequently have real, practical effects. Here, culture is like an interpretive schema, and while it is an interesting idea, it may not be possible to keep culture as ontologically separate if adopting such a position.

Another perspective on culture is offered by Willis (1990) who writes at a time when he says a crisis of values occurred. He thus suggests that a common culture has developed as a means to sustain individual and group identities. This he says is expressed in several ways including through clothes, music, fashion, and styles of banter. Such a position, while again interesting, has its place in a neo-Marxist and structural semiotic tradition. Consequently, analysing culture in line with this school of

thought may not pass Archer's conflation test. This thesis ultimately views culture in line with Archer's ideas, and in doing so, its role in engendering homelessness will be explored. To commence this exploration, the identification of demi-regularities will highlight themes pertaining to culture which are worthy of analysis. Some wider background and context will then be provided.

Demi-regularities

The same process of coding deployed in the two previous chapters has once again helped to identify demi-regularities within the data, as well as to quantify the extent of these demi-regularities within the poetry, X (formerly Twitter data), and semi-structured interviews. Table Five below lists the demi-regularities found within the cultural domain and quantifies their occurrence within each data stream.

Theme	Quantity in poetry	Quantity in X data	Quantity in semi-structured interviews
Homeless culture	2	26	33
Subculture	1	17	24
Stigmatisation and marginalisation	12	11	19
Criminalisation of homelessness	5	13	19
Family dynamics	2	7	22
Cultural positioning of women	2	3	24
Culture and class	2	1	21
Cultural diversity	0	2	21
Cultural competency in services	1	8	10
Regional variations	1	4	11

Table Five: Demi-regularities within the cultural domain

The table offers a basic illustration of the number of times these themes emerged in each data source and should not be taken as a comparison of their occurrence across the data sets. Instead, by considering the table, some logical inferences about causality might be drawn. However, the presentation of these demi-regularities ultimately represents the topics which will be considered further in this chapter. They cover culture in a broad sense, as well as different aspects of culture that might relate to homelessness. Their exploration is intended to draw out the elements of culture which form part of a stratified ontology, as well as the context in which they occur. Before this, some of the

data will be triangulated and discussed in relation to relevant literature so that a foundation of background and context is provided.

Background and context

Lee's poem, reproduced in full at the top of this chapter, can be interpreted through a brief literary critique, drawing particularly on biographical criticism. In doing so, Lee's personal experiences can be understood, with some relevancy to culture reasoned. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Lee is clearly marginalised, and this conclusion is reached based on his apparent anger towards the system and his assertion that he is equally hated. Consequently, he is likely to be rendered powerless and on the margins of society. Lee's perception that he is hated as much as he hates others might be a sentiment which is common in any community living outside of the mainstream, and indeed other poems collected for this research suggest that those experiencing homelessness perceive themselves to be detested. For example, Eric's poem contains the line *'they just call me a homeless bastard'* while Mike's poem states *'people think I am thick in the head'*. With such cynicism being ubiquitous, it is unsurprising that those who experience homelessness might respond with a mutual aversion. On this, the X (formerly Twitter data) suggests that fear, anger, and distrust towards mainstream society is common within homeless communities, and this collective sentiment exacerbates the feelings further, as the following tweet highlights:

> *"We need to tackle trust issues, anger issues and fear within homeless communities because they become self-fulfilling, they are perpetuated by peers espousing the same issues, and then they become deeply engrained sentiments within this community"* (Tweet 41).

It is not possible to divulge information about this tweet's author due to the ethical implications discussed in Chapter Two, and subsequently, readers might find it difficult to know the authority this author has in making the claims. However, as previously revealed, some of the tweet's came from academics, charity workers, and other communities of interest. The tone of the tweet seems to be indicative of an informed author, and while this cannot be guaranteed, the narrative nevertheless offers some support for the idea that a culture of suspicion towards others might form within homeless communities. Indeed, suspicion towards outgroups is seen as one of the principal constituents which binds a culture together (Brewer, 2001). It is therefore possible that within homeless communities, a culture of suspicion is formed, and this will be explored further in this chapter.

The nature of ideas shared within a population of people who experience homelessness can be explored further. Lee's poem refers to the use of alcohol as a coping mechanism, thereby reinforcing the findings of Chapter Three. However, Lee's poem also contains a narrative acknowledging that this does not work, but he nevertheless seems to feel compelled to turn to drink. It is possible that this

association may be driven by survival ideas passed between members of a group, and the X (formerly Twitter) data lends some support for this, with a tweet suggesting that 'w*hen homeless you learn survival strategies through others in the same boat'* (Tweet 86). It might therefore be the case that being part of a homeless community facilitates the sharing of ideas on how to survive some of the difficulties associated with being in this situation. This notion that survival may constitute part of a culture will also be explored further in this chapter.

One of the regular views expressed in the data was the notion that a unique homeless culture exists. However, the literature is divided on this topic. Ravenhill (2008) submits that a homeless culture exists in most major towns and cities in England and entails strong intense friendships which offer an informal counselling and support service, but she acknowledges that an undercurrent of violence is also evident due to in-group conflict. She suggests that hierarchical structures create these tensions, especially when those new to homelessness do not recognise the hierarchy already in place, because perplexingly, it is those with the most needs who usually command the highest status in this population. This 'inverse hierarchy' is said by Ravenhill to be reinforced by the homelessness industry, medical professionals, social services, and housing departments. This is because, when applying for social housing, the more problems you have, the more points you get. Furthermore, if you have complex medical needs, you merit more time and support. In other words, for Ravenhill, a culture exists whereby those with the greatest needs have elevated status, and this eminence is reinforced through systems and policies that relate to homelessness. The idea that a superior status is bestowed upon those with the greatest needs is supported by a rough sleeping coordinator who suggests:

> *"There is one chap who is notorious locally. He has been sleeping rough for over a decade and is unable to keep housing when we give it to him. He is a heroin addict, he has very significant mental health difficulties, he is a prolific beggar, and whenever there is antisocial behaviour in town, he is usually involved in some way. All the other rough sleepers look up to him, and while they might on occasions fall out with him, they usually fall back in line. He takes people under his wing, exploits them, but also protects them. A lot of the dominant ideas in the street community originate from him."* (Interview 28).

This thesis therefore accepts that an inverse hierarchy can be found in the population of people who sleep rough but argues that the elevated status will not necessarily be bequeathed by the wider population of people who experience homelessness. Nevertheless, one homelessness support worker acknowledges that *'more time is definitely spent on those with the most complex needs'* (Interview 6), and this might corroborate the notion that homelessness interventions can reinforce inverse hierarchies. Such ideas might indicate that a unique culture exists within the homelessness population, but as mentioned, this is contested. Snow and Anderson (1993) suggest that a homelessness culture

does not exist in the conventional sense because homelessness does not embody a distinctive set of values. Instead, they argue, it embodies a patterned set of behaviours, routines, and orientations that are adaptive responses to the predicament of homelessness itself. Furthermore, they submit that relationships between individuals who experience homelessness are superficial, and whilst this population must sometimes work in partnership to negotiate constraining factors, this does not constitute an overarching homeless culture. This thesis accepts that relationships between individuals experiencing homelessness may be superficial at times but argues that a set of values which are unique to this community nevertheless exists, and this includes the distrust towards mainstream society identified earlier. The causal propensity of a wider culture and subcultures within homeless populations will be subject to further analysis in this chapter. First, further relevant foundation can be laid by considering the poetry offered by Scar, which is a self-chosen pseudonym unrelated to his known alias. His poem is presented in full below:

I liv wiv da ladz in a tent in da yard
we help 1 anova coz we get it, you fink we r scum but we no bout wat goin on.
Da boyz r me crew and I c dem ok u get me?
Like wiv da herb and dey sortz me da coin yeah.
Aint no gaff for us u no so we do fingz r way rite or rong dont matta bruv.
Da fuzz and dat keepz on but we not up da urban so dey scram.
Miss rona getz us da telly but not 4 long u no but ha dat woz da lafz man we run da train on 1 dish.
But it ova and tent we at.
Poem by Scar

The language in Scar's poem seems to draw on a sophisticated register that mixes aspects of Caribbean dialect with rap and English colloquial phrases. This is unconventional and could be indicative of a vocabulary used amongst those who experience homelessness. Language is an important aspect of a community and has even been described as the 'soul' of a culture (Davidson, 1994). However, the other poems collected during this research do not follow this same style, or show any similar use of slang, and there is consequently little evidence to support a unique language stye amongst those who experience homelessness. The use of slang language has however been attributed to urban gangs (Densley, 2012) and it is possible that Scar belongs to a criminal subculture given his wide utilisation of slang expression, although one cannot assert this with any confidence based solely on his language. Nevertheless, there are hints of criminality within Scar's poem with the suggestion 'we do fingz r way rite or rong dont matta bruv' implying that he and his peers are living by their own rules and not following the laws governing the rest of society. It is therefore possible that he belongs to a criminal subgroup, and indeed, the formation of subcultures within the population of people who experience homelessness is widely observed within the collected data. For example, one tweet submits that within homelessness populations *'there are the stoners, the slothful, and of course the transients'* (Tweet 81). A homelessness support worker also implies that *'there are many different groups that*

form within homeless communities' (Interview 21). Therefore, subcultures do seem to be observed, and as mentioned, their causal propensity will be subject to further analysis in this chapter.

There is a lot more that can be unpicked through applying biographical criticism to Scar's poem, but doing so is challenging due to difficulties understanding the meaning of some of his expressions. However, with the help of slang translation tools online, it has been possible to make some sense of his narrative. My take is that he reaffirms the disconnect a homelessness experience can bring about with wider society. His perceived estrangement from the wider world resulted in him forging strong connections with peers, using cannabis, and having regular contact with the police. It is not fully clear what Scar is saying about the police deciding to 'scram', but he does seem to be suggesting that they have remained on his case, which might be a contributing factor in why he and his peers remain suspicious of mainstream society. The poem ends by mentioning how the Covid pandemic led to him, and his peers, being given hotel accommodation. With that came the opportunity for group sex with one girl, before they ended up back in a tent.

Caution needs to be applied when making generalisations about those who experience homelessness from Scar's poem, and this is because there is no evidence to suggest that 'running da train' or sharing a sexual partner with peers is a common trait within the homeless community. However, it is interesting that this occurred when hotel accommodation had been offered, and it is possible that different behaviours might be found in different settings. For example, actions on the street might be different to those found in a day centre, and these might be different again to behaviours found in accommodation such as hostels. The X (formerly Twitter) data offers some supports for the idea that setting has a bearing on behaviour, as is evident in the tweet '*when you put the homeless together in a hotel, they become loud, aggressive, and behave like savages'* (Tweet 21). It seems unlikely that this would be true of most people experiencing homelessness when put in a hotel setting, but it is nevertheless feasible that location affects the conduct of individuals in a group. Consequently, this chapter will give further consideration to whether setting has any relevance to culture or homelessness.

The X (formerly Twitter) data highlights some other themes which are worthy of further exploration in this chapter. For example, one tweet asks, *'why is it always white working class men that you see sleeping on the street?'* (Tweet 73). Again, this tweet is making an unsubstantiated assertion, but it may be based on observations of the author, and it therefore highlights that class, gender, ethnicity, and other demographic features are worthy of consideration to identify if they contribute to homelessness. This has relevance to this culture chapter because the wider culture in UK society may not be favourable to members of these demographic groupings, or alternatively, a culture found

within these demographics may yield causal tendencies. Consequently, some of this chapter will commit to exploring this further. Another tweet also declares that *'different areas and different organisations have different ways of tackling homelessness'* (Tweet 24). Such regional and organisational level variations were themes found in the data, and therefore, practices in different regions and within different agencies, along with the implications of these differences, will also be explored further. Again, this has relevance to culture because there may be cultural ideas in certain regions or within certain agencies that inform the divergent approaches utilised. This chapter will ultimately consider how cultural factors might contribute to a stratified and contextual understanding of homelessness. It will find that subcultures exist at an empirical level and marginalisation occurs at an actual level. These tend to be driven by the deeper real mechanisms of distrust, discrimination, and organisational practices. This will now be explained in more detail by examining further each of the demi-regularities, as well as the wider themes discussed in this section. First, further consideration will be given to homeless culture.

Homeless culture

To identify if cultural level factors have a role in engendering or reducing homelessness, it is worth revisiting whether a homeless culture exists. This section will consider whether a unique set of cultural ideas can be found in the population of people who experience homelessness, while also considering if wider cultural ideas around homelessness seem to have traction in adequately housed communities. An initial position on this has already been discussed, with this being that a culture of suspicion towards mainstream society is found in communities of people experiencing homelessness, and this can be perpetuated by the hostile views expressed in wider society. This is not to say that everyone who experiences homelessness will be influenced by ideas of distrust and suspicion, or that everyone will be hostile towards those who experience homelessness, but that these ideas are common enough to have harmful outcomes. The first priori hypothesis to be explored in this chapter is consequently that a mutual culture of suspicion exists, and that this can have causal consequences for homelessness.

According to Hall (2003), there are good reasons for supposing that a collection of individuals moving around the same grid of streets in the same town and struggling to get to grips with the same difficulties might, in the process, reach some sort of common understanding particular to their lived situation. It is therefore possible that a culture within this community is borne out of a shared sense of how things stand and where that leaves them. However, as previously mentioned, opinion is divided on whether a culture forms because of the sharing of spaces and misfortunes. For example, Waters (1992) suggests that people who experience homelessness spend time with each other simply because it is necessary to get access to housing and community, or because they have no other choice. This

implies that there is not a unique culture that forms within the community of people experiencing homelessness, but rather, this population sticks together through necessity. Within the interview data, opinion was equally divided on whether a homeless culture exists, with one director of a charity stating:

> *"No, I don't think there is a homeless culture. Every individual is different. I guess what unites them is the absence of a home. You might get a few different subgroups. For example, the drinkers stick together, the drug takers stick together, and the people who don't have such complex needs might stay together, but is there a culture that unites all the homeless? I don't think so, no."* (Interview 40).

On the other hand, one Psychiatrist argues that there is a homeless culture, but interestingly, like the charity director, they place emphasis on sub-populations of homelessness, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *"Yes, I would say there is a homeless culture, but in terms of what it looks like, well um, that's difficult to answer because you have different levels of homelessness. There is a street culture which involves taking risks that most of us wouldn't be prepared to take. There is a culture of welfare dependency which you might find in those who live in very poor-quality accommodation, and there is a culture of support dependency, which you find in those who go through repeated cycles of homelessness."* (Interview 14).

This chapter will go on to explore subcultures in more detail, and the case for doing so is already made by the charity director and psychiatrist who both imply that they have observed sub-populations forming within the community of people who experience homelessness. From the psychiatrist account it can also be inferred that cultural conditioning may take place within these subgroups, with agents emerging indoctrinated by the norms they experience within the population they align with. Another psychiatrist explains how finding a bond with others who have similar life stories allows a culture to cultivate, as the quote below shows:

> *"Those who experience homelessness are often forced together either in hostels, support hubs, or while accessing services. When this happens, I think a realisation occurs that they have similar stories. It might be they've gone through similar traumas; it might be they can relate on the basis of losing close relationships, or it might be that they are struggling with similar addictions. The finding of someone you can relate to helps bring a closeness. Once these relationships have been established, they share ideas on how to cope, and generally on how to live, and I think that's where a culture is formed."* (Interview 32).

This implies that those who experience homelessness may be forced together initially, but their similarities soon become apparent leading to close bonds, and ultimately the sharing of cultural ideas on how to survive the tribulations of homelessness. Building trust with peers in similar circumstances might also help perpetuate distrust towards wider society. This is supported by a Housing First coordinator who suggests distrust flows two-ways with it equally being projected back onto those experiencing homelessness by the local community, as the extract below demonstrates:

> *"The most noticeable thing I see in those who are homeless is that they don't trust anyone outside of their circle, but the locals don't trust the homeless either. This is evident by their protests at our project being set up in their neighbourhood"* (Interview 16).

The implication here is that a culture of distrust towards society may exist amongst those who experience homelessness, but this is augmented by the NIMBY culture explained in Chapter Four. Mutual feelings of suspicion between those experiencing homelessness and their wider community therefore prevails. The idea that society does not trust those experiencing homelessness is reinforced by Cowan and Morgan (2009), who like the Housing First coordinator above, suggest that serious concerns are raised by residents when rehousing projects are proposed in their locality. The fear and distrust that is cast back by those experiencing homelessness is also supported, with Williams and Stickley (2011) finding strong distrust is exhibited by those in precarious housing situations towards their wider community. It is therefore submitted that a homeless culture takes the form of a mutual distrust which is propagated between individuals who experience homelessness and the wider society in which they are located. This extends beyond customary in-group and out-group conflict because there can be many groups who share the culture of suspicion towards those who experience homelessness, it may be embedded in items of intelligibilia, and this can act as a barrier in finding suitable spaces to rehouse those with a history of homelessness. There is ultimately some initial support for the priori hypothesis, with a reciprocal culture of distrust identified between those who experience homelessness and their wider community. This will continue to be explored throughout this chapter, with the focus now moving on to consider subcultures in greater detail.

Homeless subcultures

Gelder (2007) defines subcultures as groups of people that are in some way represented as non-normative or marginal through their particular interests and practices. Ravenhill (2008) suggests that such subcultures exist within a wider homelessness culture, evident by the different behaviours exhibited in each of the sub-groups. The interview data has already revealed that a number of sub-populations seem to exist within the community of people who experience homelessness. This section will now explore the nature of these distinct groups and whether their existence has any broader

implications for homelessness. This is important because Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) note that the exploration of such structural divisions within a culture is important for understanding the wider culture itself. It is worth noting that subcultures have been a focus of scholars interested in homelessness for decades. For example, Anderson (1923) aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of 'Hobohemian' culture, within which he identifies four types of sub-population. The first is 'the hobo' which he characterises as a casual labourer who migrates between locations. Next, he identifies 'the tramp' who migrates but is unwilling to work. Then, there is 'the home guard' who he defines as a casual labourer but someone who is stationary in terms of movement. Finally, he identifies 'the bum' who he sees as both stationary in terms of movement, but like the tramp, is someone who is unwilling to work and lives by begging and petty thieving.

Since Anderson's work, there has been continued speculation around which subcultures are established within a wider homeless culture. For example, Ravenhill (2008) suggests a number of subcultures exist including the street-drinking culture, depressive contemplators, clowns, the drug-addicted culture, daycentre groupies, precariously housed individuals, intermittent participants, homeless advocates, and the homeless at heart. The same speculation around which subcultures exist emerges in the interview data, with one outreach worker suggesting:

> "There are many different groups within the homeless community. You have the hardcore homeless who nobody messes with. These are the people who have been homeless for a very long time and often use heavy drugs. You also have those who go through repeated cycles of homelessness after being housed for a short time, and this group often have very complex needs. Then you have those who are relatively new to being homeless, some of whom will eventually join one of these other groups, and some of whom will get housed and never be homeless again. Finally, you have daycentre users who just need some support from peers and staff" (Interview 18).

There is consequently evidence to support the existence of subgroups, although there may be differences of opinion on their nature and extent. This may not matter because ultimately this chapter is interested in whether their existence has wider consequences for homelessness. In considering this, the first thing to note is that the differences between each sub-population is widely noted. For example, the same outreach worker quoted above provides an account of some of the differences, as can be seen below:

> "Generally, the daycentre is used by people who are really vulnerable, but they are people who are not necessarily homeless at the moment; some of them are, but some are not. But what is nice is there's a really respectful culture in the daycentre, that's until you get the hardcore turn

up who just change the dynamic completely. The hardcore, you see, have the complete opposite culture. The culture is one of disrespect, and I've lost count of the number of times I've been told to fuck off by the hardcore. This is a group who don't really want help unless there is something they desperately need, or in an emergency, like if someone in their group has overdosed. Then you have the hostel dwellers where there is a culture of sex and drugs, but unlike in the hardcore, users are not as addicted to class A substances. You also get a few hostel dwellers who manage to keep their heads down and stay away from all the drugs, sex, and other behaviours going on there." (Interview 18).

This outreach worker has provided an account of some of the differences which may be evident in various sub-populations of people experiencing homelessness. Such differences are said to cause tensions, as the narrative of one support worker demonstrates below:

"I do see divisions between the different groups of people I work with. One of the ways these divisions become apparent is when listening to the really harsh judgments made about others in slightly different circumstances. Those passing the judgments see themselves as being much less blameworthy for their housing predicament than those they are passing comment about." (Interview 38).

This testimony is reminiscent of the subcultural tensions identified by Cohen (1972) in his account of Mods and Rockers. Such tensions were perpetuated by media-driven moral panics, and one of the interviewed charity workers implies that the media is responsible for creating unhelpful perceptions about the different homeless sub-groups, as can be seen from their extract below:

"The media stir up unhelpful stereotypes about those who are sleeping rough, but also about those who use drugs, those who sofa surf, and those who live in accommodation designed for people with a history of homelessness" (Interview 42).

It is therefore possible that Cohen's idea of 'folk devil' is being attributed to some of the homeless sub-populations, and this is a driving force of tensions and perceived differences between the subgroups. This could result in some subcultures feeling they are superior to others, and indeed this is found in a study by Cloke, May, and Johnsen (2010) which suggests there are three distinct subcultures consisting of 'drinkers or pissheads', 'smackheads or junkies', and 'straightheads or normals'. The study finds that within these subcultures, hierarchies of deservingness and un-deservingness exist with 'pissheads' seeing themselves as a cut above 'smackheads' and vice versa. Meanwhile, 'straightheads' consider themselves as more upright than both other groups. The

existence of such hierarchy has a function, since there are limited resources which the different subcultures must compete for, as one housing options officer note below:

"I would love to help everyone to the extent needed but there are simply not enough funds and there is definitely not enough accommodation. My colleagues and I therefore still need to make decisions about who to help the most, despite there being a requirement to try and help everyone. Unfortunately, this means some groups get more help than others" (Interview 31).

A possible implication of subculture is therefore the evolution of debates on who is most worthy of limited resources, with some subcultures potentially being perceived as least deserving, including those belonging to subcultures labelled here by various sources as 'the hardcore', 'the smackheads' or 'the bums.' The belonging to certain subcultures may thus prevent exits from homelessness if they are perceived as less deserving, or in some cases, less needy. This account also highlights the interaction between the cultural system and actors, because there is evidence that fixed ideas exist on who is most deserving, and actors thus compete by taking actions to position themselves as being the worthiest of the limited resources that are available. This emphasises that agency can have a role in mitigating homelessness if actors are able to navigate the constraints placed by pre-existing notions of deservingness.

Subcultures are ultimately observed by several commentators, and while there does not appear to be a common definition for these various subcultural categories, they are nevertheless observed at the empirical level, with varying labels used. While only a few examples have been applied to demonstrate this, the idea was supported widely in the empirical data. To provide a few more examples, one X (formerly Twitter) commentator suggests *'some of the homeless belong to criminal gangs, some belong to street drinking clusters, and some belong to groups who seek constant medical assistance'* (Tweet 78), while a homelessness support worker states that *'there are lots of different types of homelessness, and within these different categories, a number of groups form'* (Interview 11). It is therefore submitted that homeless subcultures exist at the empirical level, and their existence can engender homelessness because ideas develop around which sub-populations are most worthy of help. This means some subcultures tend to be systematically denied assistance, although members can take efforts to mitigate this by elevating the status of their group, so they are seen to be more worthy of help. Wider mechanisms driving the formation of these subcultures will be considered throughout this chapter, with analysis now turning to stigmatisation and marginalisation, which represents another demi-regularity found when coding the data.

Stigmatisation and marginalisation

Cultural attitudes towards certain groups may contribute to their stigmatisation and marginalisation, potentially limiting their access to some of the important structures identified in Chapter Four including housing, employment, and social support systems. This has the potential to prolong homelessness in some individuals, and whether this happens or not will be the focus of this section. Ravenhill (2008) suggests that subcultures, as explored in the previous section, often develop from a position of marginalisation and powerlessness within mainstream society. It may therefore be the case that marginalisation represents an actual level occurrence which drives the empirical level subcultures. Ravenhill further submits that these subcultures form to serve specific needs that mainstream society fails to cater for. It is therefore possible that subcultures have a role in maintaining existing structures and cultures in what Archer (2016) calls morphostasis, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter. At T^1 the stigmatisation of homeless communities pre-exists subcultures, with stigmatising concepts embedded in policy and practice documents, as well as in well-read discourses about homelessness. At T^2-T^3, homeless subcultures form to provide belonging which might otherwise be absent because of deeply embedded stigmatisation. Subcultures also provide ideas on how to survive the strains of homelessness, and when acted out, this might be observed as anomie. Finally at T^4, stigmatisation continues to thrive, and structurally, housing is denied to certain groups because they are seen to be worthy of their circumstances. The idea that stigmatising views can lead to subcultures forming, which can then result in morphostasis, is reinforced by a Housing First coordinator who suggests:

> *"It's easier to just blame those who are homeless for their own demise rather than taking a long hard look at society. I work with people who have become reliant on problematic networks because there was literally nobody else, and problematically, this reliance leads to the display of harmful behaviours, and this seems to just fuel continued blame that is directed towards those who are homeless."* (Interview 29).

This practitioner essentially suggests that morphostasis occurs to the extent that pre-existing notions attributing blame to individual actors continue to prosper because the ideas are reaffirmed by atypical activities observed in some subcultures. Ravenhill (2008) supports this to an extent, suggesting there is an oscillation that occurs between blaming the person experiencing homelessness and blaming wider structural factors. Irrespective of which factors society attributes to the causes of homelessness, one interviewed nurse states that the experience is extremely stigmatising, and one which the person experiencing homelessness will go to great lengths to cover up, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *"Homelessness is highly stigmatising. Not everyone who experiences homelessness looks like the stereotype, in fact most go to great lengths to hide their homelessness and will not even tell friends or family they are in this situation."* (Interview 19).

Through the process of abduction, it is possible to infer that this account of homelessness being concealed is a consequence of those experiencing it having the perception that they will be blamed for their circumstances. However, one interviewed support worker submits that the problems run deeper than this, with the suggestion being that many in society harbour feelings of hate towards those who experience homelessness, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *"Throughout history we have always needed someone to hate in society. I think our system operates on the basis that such hate will make us feel better about ourselves. However, as society has changed, it has become less acceptable to hate certain groups such as those from different ethnic backgrounds. The homeless have become one of the few remaining groups where it is still acceptable to exhibit hate towards them."* (Interview 17).

This implies that a culture of hating others exists to provide relief from our own inadequacies, and consequently, those who experience homelessness have become stand-ins for previously hated groups in society. There is some support for this in the literature with Rozado and Goodwin (2022) suggesting that the media, in all its guises, continues to agenda-set so that public opinions are shaped on such issues. They further suggest that a possible overarching objective is to create enough tension towards others as a diversion technique, so that the capitalist system is not challenged in a Marxist style revolution. However, the extent of hate towards those who experience homelessness is disputed by other literature sources. For example, Bunis, Yancik, and Snow (1996) suggest there is a seasonal patterning of sympathy and hate towards those who experience homelessness, with feelings of sympathy dominating in the cold months leading up to Christmas. On the other hand, Joern (2008) suggests that hate is pervasive towards those who experience homelessness, with this hate sometimes leading to violence. On a similar note, Pardo (2020) suggests that widespread hate speech, directed towards those who experience homelessness, is evident on social media posts from the height of the Covid pandemic. This thesis has found some evidence of this in the mined X (formerly Twitter) data, as displayed throughout this body of work, with another example being *'homelessness is a revolting act usually committed by revolting people'* (Tweet 57).

The presence of hate, irrespective of whether it is seasonal, and irrespective of how widespread it is, only serves to create further stigmatisation of an already marginalised population. Another support worker summarises the likely consequences of this in their quoted passage below:

"There are some people who've had awful lives, with experiences you just couldn't imagine, and society hasn't really worked for these people. Then they become homeless and must contend with awful physical and mental assaults because there is a lot of ill feeling towards them. They therefore become fed up, and find others who have similar difficulties, and here they find a place where they finally belong. Trying to then convince them that they should move back into a house, back in the community that has hurt them, can be almost impossible" (Interview 11).

There consequently appears to be widespread hate towards those who experience homelessness stemming from wider society, and this therefore reinforces the earlier assertion that a culture of mutual suspicion exists. This takes the form of a cultural value, and as discussed, its existence leads to stigmatisation and marginalisation at an actual level. Agents interact with this culture by either retreating into inconspicuousness or by joining subcultures which espouse ideas that eventually lead to morphostasis. Clearly not everyone will harbour bad feelings towards those who experience homelessness, and there may be seasons when sympathy dominates, such as when colder months arrive. However, animosity is widespread enough for those who experience homelessness to sometimes be subjected to violence, pushing them to depend on their subcultures, and propagating their marginalisation from wider society. This may also act as a barrier to them rejoining a housed community. It is ultimately submitted that stigmatisation and marginalisation is an actual level occurrence which tends to engender homelessness by forcing those who experience it into subgroups where their alienation from and towards the rest of society flourishes. This chapter will now move on to consider whether homelessness is criminalised, and if so, what the implications of this are.

Criminalisation of homelessness

There is an abundance of research highlighting how certain activities associated with homelessness, such as begging, have become criminalised (Fooks and Pantazis, 1999; Pain and Francis, 2004; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2010; Kiely and Swirak, 2021). At the time of writing, the Vagrancy Act 1824 remains in force despite cross party support for it being repelled, and notwithstanding much exertion by campaign groups to get it scrapped. Furthermore, the recent introduction of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 now criminalises sleeping in a tent or vehicle on private land, an action which was previously a civil matter. In addition, the prime minister Rishi Sunak has, at the time of writing, recently announced plans to take tougher action against rough sleepers who cause a 'nuisance'. It is therefore unsurprising that Archer and Anton (2022) note that people who experience homelessness face a range of situations in which they might be criminalised. This criminalisation provides further evidence of the hostilities society harbours towards those who experience homelessness. However, there is indication within the interview data that some who experience

homelessness exploit police arrest so that they can access sustenance and warmth, with one probation officer suggesting:

> *"There is a young lady who I work with who is on probation and is currently homeless. She keeps getting herself noticed so that she is arrested, moved off the streets, and is therefore provided with warmth and regular meals."* (Interview 23).

This raises a concern about why more help is not being offered to support those who have an offending history to find suitable accommodation, which might prevent the need for arrest and further criminalisation. Such an approach would require housing to be available, with support where necessary, and for probation to work in closer collaboration with housing agencies, perhaps as part of a Housing First Plus model (Boyd and Andell, 2024). Housing is seen as especially important, because as another probation officer highlights below, recidivism can occur in those without stable accommodation:

> *"We work with a lot of ex-offenders who don't have stable housing, and this is absolutely a trigger for reoffending."* (Interview 8).

This narrative has some support in the literature with one study finding that 66 percent of homeless prison leavers re-offend compared to 51 percent in stable accommodation (Brunton-Smith and Hopkins, 2013). However, the implications of not having enough suitable housing may also extend beyond re-offending, with another probation officer re-emphasising that subcultures form, as the extract below demonstrates:

> *"I see it all the time, people who have been inside together, who get released with nowhere to live. They somehow find each other and forge their own group. In an ideal world they would have a stable house upon release, and I would have more time to help them build constructive relationships. Unfortunately, the reality is very different and instead they become accustomed to a damaging set of rules within their group, and it is extremely difficult to remove them from this."* (Interview 25).

It is implied that a subculture concerned with crime forms, and one of the implications of this might be that the alliance created becomes their vehicle for further criminality. Members of the subculture may also become dependent on each other rather than building the healthy relationships advocated for by the probation officer, and co-dependency in these situations is recognised by Ferrell (1997). However, it may not be only those with a history of offending who become vulnerable to crime, as one rough sleeping coordinator acknowledges below:

"I see unhealthy behaviours in lots of people who are living on the streets involving the avoidance of healthcare services, an inclination to remain isolated or within small groups, and engagement in low-level offending such as petty theft, drug use, and anti-social behaviour. I have very big concerns about the direction of travel. We still haven't repelled the vagrancy act despite the best efforts of so many individuals and organisations, and despite the fact we have come very close. We are therefore criminalising the neediest in our society and this is pushing them into a life of crime. I have one guy I have been working with who keeps getting hassled by the police for bedding down in different locations. This constant encounter with the police has made him believe he is criminal, when all he is doing is trying to sleep, and he has since started causing a nuisance in local shops because he knows he will get hassled by the police anyway." (Interview 28).

This account implies that involvement with enforcement agencies can lead an actor to adopt a criminal identity. Labelling, as first introduced by Becker (1963), has therefore once again surfaced as a potential issue. However, this time the suggestion is that the criminalisation of homelessness may be leading to other forms of deviancy and criminal activity. Pain and Francis (2004) argue that people who experience homelessness often find themselves in spaces which increase their risk of being both a victim and perpetrator of crime. It might therefore be the case that a risky environment, rather than labelling is driving involvement with crime. Nevertheless, this section has found some evidence to support ongoing criminalisation of those who experience homelessness, with this being a potential contributor to further criminality. Conversely, a more supportive culture might instead help move individuals away from crime, into accommodation, and towards a reintegration with mainstream society. It is ultimately submitted that the practice of criminalising those who experience homelessness forms part of the culture of suspicion directed towards those who experience homelessness. This can result in further marginalisation and adverse reactions which only serve to create further morphostasis. This chapter will now move on to explore family dynamics, with analysis identifying whether there is a cultural foundation to divergent family configurations. The implications for homelessness can then be duly considered.

Family dynamics

This thesis has already postulated that unsupportive family structures are a real level causal mechanism which can engender homelessness in various contexts, such as when an individual is also experiencing poverty. Conversely, a supportive family structure may meet the psychological needs of an individual by providing a safe place to discuss emotional problems. It may also meet the material needs of an individual by providing a place to sleep or financial assistance to mitigate the risk of homelessness. This section will briefly consider whether culture interacts with family dynamics in

creating these divergent family structures. It can first be noted that one supported housing manager attributes an increased likelihood of homelessness to growing up in a care setting, away from conventional family structures, as the extract below shows:

> *"Without question, those who have grown up in care have a much greater risk of becoming homeless."* (Interview 13).

On a similar note, Sanders, Jones, and Whelen (2021) submit that young people leaving care have high incidences of homelessness because the state has historically assumed parental responsibility, but this ends at the age of eighteen, at which point individuals are left to sustain themselves. Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen (2013) likewise attribute a history in care as a pathway to homelessness. It therefore seems plausible that a history in care is a risk factor for homelessness because upon becoming an adult, individuals are left to fend for themselves, and they may not have a supportive family structure to help in burdensome times. As highlighted in Chapter Three, there are other individuals who find themselves without this support, and the wider question is whether culture has some baring on this. One interviewed town councillor, who is also a portfolio holder for housing, certainly seems to think so, as is highlighted below:

> *"I don't think there is enough value placed on the importance of family in Western cultures. A strong family can absolutely prevent homelessness, but in UK culture we sometimes abandon responsibilities as soon as children flee the nest. In some cases, the caring responsibility was never there in the first place, and in other cases, families break apart too easily. The point I'm essentially making is that Western culture doesn't seem to recognise what families can do for each other over a lifespan. There are other cultures globally, some of whom come to the UK, where generations of family stick together through thick and thin. I don't think we do enough centrally to promote the important function of cohesive families."* (Interview 35).

This offers a credible appraisal on the cultural origins of unsupportive families, and this is supported further by Agllias (2016) who suggests that our culture of family estrangement can been explained by the neoliberal pursuit of individualism. There was also plenty of validation within the interview data to suggest that homelessness results from toxic family environments, with one housing association worker submitting that this breeds a malevolent culture which then continues in families into the future, as can be seen from this extract:

> *"We have too many broken homes, and we see the consequences of this because we house the families that break apart. These are the families that would be on the streets if housing associations like ours didn't exist. Within these broken families you see many parents being*

selfish and putting their own needs before the needs of their children. You also see a lot of difficulties coping and the troublesome ideas on how to function as a family get passed to the next generation. It's a vicious cycle." (Interview 33).

This account suggests that children within a family are primed on how to conduct their own future family affairs through primary socialisation. There is some support for the assertions made by this practitioner in research findings from a study carried out in North-West England (Mabhala et al., 2016). This study finds that 'broken homes' are one of the predictors for homelessness, particularly where neglect and abuse is evident. Furthermore, the study posits that a background of family instability can perpetuate trauma, which as discussed previously, also has causal propensity in respect of homelessness. It can ultimately be asserted that the erosion of strong family values can give rise to challenging family dynamics, leading to trauma, erroneous socialisation, and potentially a culture that fails to emphasise the nurturing function of families. All of these can interact in engendering unsupportive family structures, which as emphasised, can ultimately lead to homelessness. From a policy perspective, it is therefore necessary to disseminate the central role supportive families have in mitigating strain over a lifespan. The efforts by various agents in doing so may lead to morphogenesis in the sense that dominant family structures transform as new ideas on the importance of family emerge. Consideration will next be given to the cultural positioning of women, and this has relevancy given patriarchy has already been identified as a real level driver for homelessness.

Cultural positioning of women

There is a growing body of research which has considered the experiences of a once overlooked sub-population, namely women who experience homelessness (Watson and Austerberry, 1986; Casey, Goudie, and Reeve, 2008; Baptista, 2010; Bretherton, 2020). This increasing focus on women is important, because as one homelessness support worker notes, there are specific concerns around women who experience homelessness as is highlighted in their narrative, **'***I really worry about the women. You don't see them for months at a time and you just know they've hitched up in another unhealthy relationship'* (Interview 3). This is supported by the Queen's Nursing Institute (2020) who suggest that more than a quarter of women rough sleepers take an unwanted sexual partner to escape their plight. However, Bretherton (2020) argues that this is overemphasised because women simply take a different trajectory through homelessness, involving resilience and finding practical solutions, without necessarily involving men. Bretherton's view, is reinforced by one homelessness support worker who suggests:

> *"Homeless women are far more resilient than men, and this resilience motivates them to explore all possible options, and to utilise all possible support networks in resolving their housing situation, thereby avoiding the need for sleeping on the streets."* (Interview 21).

However, not everyone agrees, and one psychiatrist suggests that women who experience homelessness have an awful experience, as the extract below highlights:

> *"Some of these women are subjected to degrading treatment at the hands of men. They are beaten, they are sexually abused, and in some cases, they are trafficked between multiple men who use and abuse them because they are vulnerable."* (Interview 9).

It is accepted that not every woman in the homeless population will have this experience, because as the previously mentioned commentators note, the resilience of women should not be underestimated. Many women will therefore be able to navigate their way to a solution, but it is nevertheless my thesis that risk still exists, particularly for those who are unable to find housing. A supporting theoretical position is offered by Hill (2020) who suggests that we still live in a patriarchal society where women are generally seen as subordinate, and consequently, she submits that a culture of sexual violence is directed towards women by men who abuse their perceived power. This is evident in the poetry of Bianca and Sarah, as displayed in Chapter Three, and the wider point reaffirms that patriarchy has causal propensity in respect of homelessness. One director of a charity further suggests that the culture of sexual violence, which stems from patriarchy, is the driving force for women seeking alternatives to the street, as can be seen below:

> *"The streets are a really scary place for anyone to live, but like it or not, women are more vulnerable to things like sexual attacks. They therefore have no choice but to seek alternatives to the street."* (Interview 26).

It might therefore be the case that women who experience homelessness exercise their agency in navigating their way to housing, and they are compelled to do so because of the additional threats they may face on the streets. This highlights the potential interplay between patriarchy and agency, but as emphasised previously, women will still be subjected to violence at the hands of men at an alarming rate. This can precede homelessness, or it can occur while staying off the streets, and agency will be constrained in such situations. It is ultimately postulated that this risk of violence, and the motivation of women to stay off the streets, constitutes the different trajectory women take through homelessness.

A common misconception about women and homelessness was espoused by one homelessness support worker who states, *'women are prioritised for housing over men'* (Interview 30). A similar

narrative was offered by other practitioners, yet being a woman is not one of the statutory characteristics which gives an individual priority for housing, unless they are pregnant. It is therefore surprising that practitioners mentioned this, especially as most will be aware of statutory criteria for prioritisation. However, local authority housing officials have responsibility for making prioritisation decisions, and while there is statutory guidance, some degree of discretion can be applied as one housing options officer notes in their statement below:

> "We no longer prioritise who to offer a service to, but it is still necessary to prioritise who we put forward for housing, and that decision rests with my colleagues in the allocations team, sometimes based on information that I provide to assist them in making this decision. Legal frameworks are followed when making these types of decisions, but ultimately it is down to us to decide." (Interview 31).

The housing options officer does not specifically mention women, but it is possible that some priority is given to them, and this assertion is based on the declarations of other practitioners who say they observe women being prioritised. It may be that housing officials are guided by the view that women face additional risks on the streets, or alternatively, they might be informed by gender scripts which emphasise women as mothers, caregivers, and nurturers. Either way, women might be viewed differently in our culture, and perhaps this is merited given women are disproportionately inhibited by patriarchal forces despite their ability to navigate adverse structures. Indeed, scholars McCormack and Federowicz (2023) acknowledge the need for safe spaces for women who experience homelessness, and this reaffirms the added risks faced by women. Overall, this section posits that a problematic culture of sexual violence towards women, driven by patriarchal forces, means that women are viewed differently culturally, they also face different risks, and this may explain their different trajectory through homelessness. Ultimately, the significance of patriarchy as a driving force has been reasserted, but this also has some relevancy to this culture chapter because the potency of patriarchy may be responsible for how women are viewed and treated culturally, with this in turn having implications for their journey through homelessness. This chapter will next consider cultural attitudes in social classes and the causal implications of this for homelessness.

Culture and class

Social class is the stratification of people into hierarchical categories, with the most common categories used being the working class, middle class, and upper class. Kraus, Piff, and Ketner (2011) extend on this by suggesting that objective resources such as income shape cultural practices and behaviours that reinforce a person's social class. They also suggest that cultural identities among upper and lower-class individuals are rooted in subjective perceptions of their social class position in

comparison to others. It is therefore possible that cultural ideas around different classes have causal implications, and this will now be explored further. The first notable study to draw upon is that of Rex and Moore (1967) who studied the Sparbrook region of Birmingham and found that different housing classes exist. They ultimately draw upon functionalism and see the cause of an open social system as being the varied and sometimes conflating interests of the typical actors in the system. Applying this to their assertion that different housing classes can be found, leads them to suggest that these different classes serve a function in promoting the interests of its population. The ideas that prosper in each class may be functional to the extent that members find belonging, but problematically, prejudicial attitudes towards other classes may be an outcome of this. One such prejudicial attitude might pertain to the much-conversed topic of deservingness, with those in higher housing classes feeling they have worked hard for their status, and accordingly, they might take the view that those in more precarious housing situations deserve their circumstances.

Making prejudicial distinctions between people based on their position in society constitutes discrimination, although class is not a protected characteristic.[33] Nevertheless, discrimination based on housing class seems to occur, and this is likely to have consequences for homelessness. For example, while working in practice, I observed difficulties in securing health appointments based on an individual's housing status, with some medical services refusing to offer appointments on this basis. This level of discrimination was also evident in services designed to support those experiencing homelessness, because as mentioned, some practitioners outwardly espoused their view that at least some homelessness is deserved. The treatment of those perceived to be culpable was clearly different to those who were seen to be victims, and this judgement was often made based on previous housing status. For example, someone who had lost their owner occupier status was perceived more favourably than someone who had lost their council tenancy. This chapter will therefore explore the priori hypothesis that discrimination can engender prolonged homelessness. This is likely to be the case because prejudiced attitudes may drive notions of deservingness and subsequently block paths to being assisted. This priori position will be explored throughout the remainder of this thesis, including on this section vis-à-vis class.

On the topic of class, one of the tweets referred to in the background and context section of this chapter demonstrated that some perceive homelessness to be experienced by mostly white working-class men. The issue of gender has already been explored, racial background will be explored later in this chapter, and class will be the focus of this section. This will help identify if there is any merit in the

---

[33] Protected characteristics are the features against which it is illegal to discriminate. These are age, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or being on maternity leave, disability, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

tweet, but also whether culture and class might interact in the production of homelessness. On this point, Harris (1995) suggests popular culture was abandoned by European elites in 1800, and has since been confined to the lower classes, shaping profound differences in world view between the classes. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a full appraisal of popular culture and how this shapes the views of the lower classes, but a brief exploration into the cultural ideas embedded in lower class thinking may help to determine whether this has implications for homelessness. In the interview data, one housing association worker suggests that part of the culture in lower classes involves acceptance of marginalised circumstances, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *"In the past seventeen years I have worked with a large pool of people from the lower classes in this town. What I've noticed is that when life is shit, and I'm talking about when live is seriously shit, then you get families sort of showing children to accept it. I mean, I guess they have no choice because there is no alternative, and when you've seen your parents and grandparents go through it, this just sort of becomes your way of life."* (Interview 34).

This account has a hint of Marxist thinking whereby the proletariat learns to accept their lot; a way of thinking that would not apply to the bourgeoisie. It may be possible that a culture of acceptance is present in the lower classes, and consequently, there may be little fight against the worst outcomes such as homelessness. Taking class-based cultural ideas further, some narratives within the interview data align with Charles Murray's (1999) revision of his underclass theory. For example, a different housing association worker suggests there is a culture of welfare dependency, particularly in single parent households living on social housing estates, as the extract below highlights:

> *"In some of the social housing estates you see families who have never worked, and they are instead dependent on welfare. In lots of cases, it's single parents. There are deeply defended beliefs in these estates about how to live life and it's really difficult to go in and change these ideas."* (Interview 33).

This housing association worker seems to be implying that part of their role involves working with individuals and families who are welfare dependent. They also seem to be suggesting that, in the course of their duties, attempts are made to move individuals away from this lifestyle, but doing so is difficult. Such an approach might constitute neoliberal governmentality, which has been described by May, Cloke, and Johnsen (2005) as messy. It might also constitute a paternalistic approach which Hennigan (2017) equally describes as problematic. Instead, Stonehouse, Theobald and Threlkeld (2022) advocate for the empowerment of individuals in such situations so that they share responsibility. This ultimately means that any class-based stigma is removed, and people can exercise

some control over their destiny. Such an approach is also advocated more broadly when assisting those who have repeated cycles of homelessness, as one support worker notes below:

"It is very frustrating when I work with people in repeated cycles of homelessness and they keep spending their money on things like alcohol, tobacco, technology they can't afford, or designer clothes they don't need. These items are prioritised over rent payments, it's a way of life they have become accustomed to, and it explains why they remain in a repeated cycle. However, if I go in all guns blazing, it just alienates the people I'm trying to help. Lots of colleagues think a firm approach is best, but from experience it doesn't work in most cases. Instead, I build a relationship with my clients, and from there I can then help them to set their own priorities, which seems to work much better than me imparting my ideas on how they should live." (Interview 39).

This narrative implies that part of the culture in the lowest classes, namely those who experience repeated homelessness, involves excessive spending on unnecessary items. This might be a coping mechanism as mentioned earlier in this thesis, because having accepted their circumstances, these items might be seen as vital to enriching their lives. Popular culture, which as mentioned is favoured by the lower classes, might also be responsible for promoting the necessity of such items. Alternatively, acquiring such items might be an attempt to try and elevate one's status, and this might be perceived by an individual to be a way of averting prejudicial views espoused by those of a higher social standing. This latter argument is supported by a charity worker who suggests:

"The poorest in society, and especially the homeless community, face such discrimination that they try to mask their situation. The popular saying keeping up with the Jones's comes to mind. So, I dare say that the latest consumer goods are purchased so that it appears as if a person is doing better than they really are, but the problem is they can't afford it, and it leads to a worsening of their housing situation. I understand it, I really do, because I have heard so many biases towards this community, and it therefore doesn't surprise me that they would want to disguise their reality." (Interview 45).

This account reasserts that class-based discriminatory forces may be at work, and that individual actors exercise their agency in diverting this by purchasing goods so their status appears to be greater than it would otherwise be perceived. This might also explain the earlier finding that practice involving empowerment is of greater benefit than practice involving judgement, because those on the receiving end may see judgemental practice as a further example of class-based intolerance. This section ultimately posits that a discriminatory culture exists towards those perceived to be of a lower class, and therefore some support for the priori hypothesis has been established. This will continue to be

explored as the thesis progresses. The chapter will now consider another demi-regularity, namely cultural diversity, so that analysis can identify whether the existence of diverse cultures yield wider cultural ideas that are causally pertinent to homelessness.

Cultural diversity

The dominant ethnic background in the UK remains white (ONS, 2022b). However, one interviewed support worker declares that '*we have a rich and diverse culture in the UK*' (Interview 21). This notion is open to interpretation given the ONS data indicates that White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or British identities account for over seventy-four percent of the UK population. However, the data also indicates that there are nineteen different ethnic backgrounds in the UK. Furthermore, the population proportion is reported to be rising in all identities except White English, Scottish, Northern Irish, or British. It is therefore likely that a set of diverse traditions, customs, and ideas can be found in the UK population as the support work infers. This section will therefore explore whether the existence of divergent ethnic and national backgrounds shape cultural ideas, and whether this can form part of the causal explanation for homelessness. Doing so might help understand why the tweet referred to in the previous section implies that being white is one of the characteristics which makes someone more likely to experience homelessness. However, on this point, the support worker quoted above argues that:

> "*The black and ethnic minority communities are more likely to be poor and they are therefore more likely to be homeless from my experience. This isn't their fault, it's just the way it is sadly.*" (Interview 21).

If taking a broad view of homelessness, as this thesis is, then black and ethnic minority groups are around three times more likely to experience homelessness (Bramley et al., 2022). This thereby contradicts the view expressed in the tweet and corroborates the assertion of the support worker. This is further substantiated by Netto (2006) who suggest the reason for this disproportionate impact includes discriminatory allocation policies and procedures which limit the housing options of black and ethnic minority groups. Recent research by Stewart and Sanders (2024) looks specifically at migrant experiences of homelessness, finding they face an increasingly hostile culture and material scarcity, which the authors' attribute to racial capitalism. Therefore, a culture of intolerance and discriminatory practice appears to be evident, and on this topic one policy officer suggests that the widespread dissemination of populist ideas is preventing policy progress, as the quote below demonstrates:

> "*Umm, I probably shouldn't say this, but elected officials don't want to upset those who vote them into office, and it is on this basis that some of the policy decisions are fundamentally flawed. I would never say we live in a xenophobic state, but populist ideas do seem to dominate*

at the moment and it's unquestionably standing in the way of progressive policies." (Interview 43).

There may be value in this account of populist ideas dominating, and in the notion that this results in a lack of progressive policies. However, the work of Flemmen and Savage (2017) instead suggests there is an ambivalence to race related issues in a significant section of the UK population, and because of this, discriminatory policies can continue unchallenged. Whether it is ambivalence or populism that dominates, a discriminatory culture seems to be functioning, and this ostensibly has consequences for homelessness in black and ethnic minority groups, including migrants, who may accordingly be over-represented in the population of people experiencing homelessness. This discriminatory culture was found decades ago through the work of Rex and Moore (1967), as cited in the previous section, who found interracial conflict based on black inhabitants occupying good residential areas. This was because there was a perception that their inhabitation was bringing the area down. Discriminatory views around the black community occupying housing might therefore explain why they are subjected to hostile policies, and subsequently why they are disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness. This section has extended on the priori hypothesis of the previous section, finding that a discriminatory force stretches beyond class, with ethnicity also being vulnerable to its ferocity. As a result, some scholars have called for greater cultural sensitivity in homelessness responses (Netto, 2006; Pudaruth, 2022), and on this point, the chapter will now progress to consider whether cultural competency exists in services, and the causal implications for homelessness.

Cultural competency in services

Earlier in this chapter it was postulated that stigmatisation is an actual level occurrence which can lead to observed subcultures forming. The chapter has also found that discriminatory values and a culture of suspicion can be the real level higher powers which engender this stigmatisation. In the last section, there was a brief discussion on the existence of problematic policies and practices, at least in relation to some groups who experience homelessness. This section will now consider whether there is a wider culture that permeates service provision. This is important because Pilkington (2019) suggests that support services with the right cultural values can counter stigmatisation, while those without appropriate values can reinforce it. Furthermore, some of the lived experience narratives collected for this research emphasise the importance of cultural competency in services. For example, in relation to the ethos of services, David says in his interview, '*you get that many noes over the years and promises which never happen.*' This implies that services are failing to deliver what they are designed to provide, this being an appropriate offer of assistance to individuals who may be in despairing circumstances. Furthermore, Sam's poem contains the line '*services hard to access, so many hoops to jump through*' thus implying that there may be a culture of bureaucracy within services. In contrast,

when working in practice, I sometimes observed positive outcomes, and this tended to be when all staff were committed to the principles of empowerment over judgement. This leads to the next priori hypothesis to be explored, this being that organisational practices can engender or reduce homelessness. It is hypothesised that services with an enabling character can achieve what they were set up to accomplish. In most cases, this is to play some role in reducing homelessness. As a starting point in exploring this, one director of a charity suggests:

> *"There are some services who are very set in their ideas, and they are very resistant to change. The problem is, even if they are doing things well, they still need to be open to new ideas, because it's only then that they can grow and develop."* (interview 40).

This suggests that some agencies working in the field of homelessness may be resistance to change. There was some further evidence of this from the practitioners working in the field, with one support worker stating, *'we have a model that works, and if it isn't broken why fix it?'* (Interview 39). Unquestionably, when services are effective this should be celebrated, but it should not negate the requirement to be open to new ideas, which may enhance their offering even further. In attempting to understand resistance to organisational change, Manning (2012) suggests that it stems out of self-interest. This is reinforced further by Pue (2023) who suggests agencies in England operate in a competitive marketplace, competing for contracts and donations, thereby necessitating endeavours to demonstrate that their utilised approach works. One favoured approach is to bring those experiencing homelessness in line, as one support worker advocates for below:

> *"The best interventions are those that break problematic habits and help the homeless to conform with the basic rules needed to succeed in life such as paying bills in a timely fashion. They need firmness and a good kick up the backside, because some have never had this, and too many support organisations shy away from it. We've become far too woke."* (Interview 1).

This approach is based on the assumption that the agency of those experiencing homelessness is solely responsible for their circumstances, and consequently, the legitimacy of such behavioural change approaches has been disparaged (Walsh et al., 2016). However, it has also been noted that such approaches, which set out to achieve social control, can be useful if a high ethical and empirical bar is met (Watts, Fitzpatrick, and Johnsen, 2018). This thesis takes the view that such approaches might help some people, but that others are likely to feel emasculated by this method even if ethically guided. Indeed, a different support worker acknowledges the need to have a range of approaches in their arsenal, as highlighted in their extract below:

"The homeless population is diverse and what works with some people doesn't work with all people. For example, I have supported homeless women who need you to remain unjudgmental and they often need time to trust you, whereas homeless men tend to appreciate you being more direct and telling them things as they really are from the word go. Then you might have a Bangladeshi person who feels totally ashamed of their situation compared to a native Brit who doesn't seem bothered by it at all. So, when working in this field you need to be sensitive to different needs." (Interview 38).

There is some hint in this account that individuals from different countries of origin might have different cultural views about homelessness. This might explain why the tweet author, as mentioned several times in this chapter, expressed the common view that it is mostly people from a white background who experience homelessness. It is feasible that this is the most observed ethnic group in the homeless population, perhaps because people from other backgrounds feel greater shame and therefore stay hidden. This might explain why several scholars have substantiated the wider recommendations of this support worker, essentially advocating for a wide variety of approaches so that the varying needs of those from different cultural backgrounds can be catered for (Netto, 2006; Johnson and Pleace, 2016). This has led others to call for a wide range of evidence-based approaches (Mackie, Johnsen, and Wood, 2019). However, a director of a charity says this rarely happens, as can be seen from their quote below:

"Homeless services function best when they have a range of interventions to meet varying needs. They also need to be aware of the new evidence emerging all the time so there is some evidential basis to the techniques being used with different groups. Do I think this happens? In some services yes, but unfortunately not in most. It is horrible to say this, but I think many services tend to stick to their favoured methods and will manipulate statistics to show commissioners they are working" (Interview 26).

In seeking further evidence to support this, beyond that presented earlier in this section, there was some reluctance by practitioners to admit that services had this shortcoming. It was nevertheless interesting that two separate charity directors were aware of a reluctance in many services to change their approaches for the better, with the earlier quote from Interview 40 providing the second substantiation of this. Through inductive reasoning, it can therefore be inferred that a culture of resistance to change exists in homelessness services. In addition to the need for services to embrace a range of evidence-based culturally sensitive interventions, there is also a need for services to empower their clients. This assertion is made because, as mentioned earlier, service users can feel alienated and further stigmatised when services over-emphasise agency as a causal factor. Instead,

there is likely to be an interaction between a culturally competent service and the agency of service users in reducing homelessness. This is because services that are open to changing their approach might find they can empower service users to resolve their own circumstances. This section has therefore found some substantiation of the priori hypothesis that organisational practices can engender or reduce homelessness. They may engender homelessness by staying committed to an intervention that does not work for everyone, or alternatively, they can reduce it by changing their ethos and implementing a range of interventions that empower diverse populations that call on their support. The chapter will now consider if cultural resilience exists within those who experience homelessness, and if so, whether this has any implications for their homelessness.

Cultural resilience

For the purposes of this section, resilience can be understood as the capacity of an individual actor to withstand challenging life events and return quickly to how their life was before the events presented. Such resilience might be argued to be inherent in certain personality types, in those with strong will power, or in those who have been socialised with a certain ethic on life. It is also possible that there is a cultural dimension to resilience with certain communities potentially drawing on cultural strengths, traditions, life histories, support networks, and wider social contexts to navigate challenges when they present. Such resilience is likely to enable a person to navigate homelessness quickly, and this section will explore if the existence of cultural resilience seems plausible in those who exit homelessness quickly or manage to avoid it altogether. To commence this exploration, one charity worker seems to imply that the augmentation of homelessness in the UK can be explained by the failure of our society to accept how harmful it can be, as is seen in their quote below:

> *"It's too easy to become homeless in the UK. I mean we don't really appreciate how damaging homelessness is. If we did, we simply wouldn't allow it to happen, and then there wouldn't be a need for so many charitable organisations to exist, and I would probably be working in a different sector."* (Interview 42).

This account also implies that the failure of our society to accept the detrimental nature of homelessness has resulted in the proliferation of charitable organisations, whereas a wider acceptance of the negative consequences would mean the various agents in society would collectively squash the structures which allow it to flourish thereby removing the need for so much charity. One probation officer further submits that '*it's just become part of life, hasn't it? We just accept that in some circumstances homelessness is inevitable*' (Interview 22). This infers that we may have reached a position whereby homelessness is accepted as being inevitable. However, this is not the case in every family, religion, or culture as one policy officer notes:

> *"I think there probably are some families, some religions, some cultures that see homelessness as a stain on society and they would do everything they possibly could to prevent it in their communities."* (Interview 4).

This further emphasises that the actions of agents might be crucial in the prevention of homelessness, and that these actions might be informed by cultural ideas, thereby highlighting a possible interaction between culture and agency. In attempting to understand what type of cultural ideas might exist in different communities to mitigate the risks of homelessness, there are several accounts of Asian communities valuing family within the empirical data. For example, one floating support manager says that *'I think Asian communities value the importance of family far more than the native British people do'* (Interview 10). To further understand how cultural ideas in different communities might be important, the account of one probation officer is useful. They draw on their own faith and assert:

> *"As a Muslim, I rely on the Qur'an for guidance, and there is a passage that quite literally tells us that freeing those who are lying in the dust can bring us closer to God. I think this is why our community is so keen to put an end to homelessness in our communities."* (Interview 8).

Religious texts are likely to form an item of intelligibilia, which as previously mentioned, are seen by Archer (2016) to contain cultural ideas. It is likewise probable that the importance of family, which is said to be culturally significant in Asian families, is embedded in various forms of intelligibilia. These cultural ideas exist within items, and as also discussed, various cultural ideas can contribute to the reduction of homelessness. Using deductive reasoning, it can therefore be asserted that Asian communities may be successful at preventing homelessness because their cultural ideas position family as important, and as previously discussed in this thesis, a supportive family structure is vital in reducing the risk of homelessness. Similarly, Muslim communities may be successful at reducing homelessness because their cultural ideas emphasise the importance of helping those less fortunate, and the exercising of such agency is crucial in reducing the extent of homelessness. These factors might therefore partially explain why fewer people from Asian and Muslim communities are observed in homeless populations in the UK. It is ultimately submitted that having supportive family structures, and a wider community who are willing to help, can make both Asian and Muslim communities more resilient to homelessness. There will of course be other religions and geographical regions with similar ideas, but these are used by way of example because of their presence in the data, to demonstrate how cultural ideas embedded in items of intelligibilia might inspire actors from certain groups to reduce homelessness.

At an individual level, it has been suggested that a breadth of capabilities and resilience exists in people who use homelessness services (Smith, 2010). To help understand why this might be the case,

it is worth considering the narrative of one support worker who suggests that *some people just seem to be better equipped mentally to fight back when life gets difficult'* (Interview 1). It might therefore be the case that resilience is innate rather than having a cultural foundation. However, another support worker implies that there is a culture within the military which helps explain veteran homelessness, as the extract below demonstrates:

> *"I have done a lot of work with military veterans, who seem to outnumber civilians in terms of rough sleepers in my town. I think this is because the military produces a masculine culture, a fending for yourself culture, a culture whereby asking for help is seen as a weakness, and a culture where sleeping in the harshest of conditions is seen as heroic."* (Interview 6).

The cultural ideas found within certain groups, in this case military veterans, might therefore form the foundation of resilience, with the suggestion being that such resilience can engender homelessness rather than prevent it. Evidence from literature instead argues that military homelessness is associated with difficulties finding employment upon leaving the forces, physical and mental injuries, and difficulties with relationships (Fleuty, Cooper, and Almond, 2021). All these factors have already been found to yield causal tendencies in respect of broader homelessness, and the absence of cultural ideas as a further causal factor might be an oversight of this literature. Conversely, this thesis takes the view that it is plausible to assert that some level of cultural ideas form in this group which can prolong veteran homelessness because they are better equipped to withstand it for longer. This section ultimately postulates that innate resilience can aid an individual in exiting homelessness quickly, but there is also a resilience which is cultivated culturally in certain contexts. In religious and geographical based communities, cultural ideas help the entire group to become resilient in overcoming oppressive structures, and therefore a process of morphogenesis occurs. Conversely, in groups like the military, cultural ideas can motivate individual level resilience in withstanding oppressive structures, and therefore a process of morphostasis occurs. Cultural resilience is therefore a factor which can both engender and reduce homelessness. The chapter will now end by considering regional variations, which was the final demi-regularity emerging when seeking trends in the cultural domain. Exploration of regional variations will help determine whether locally distinct cultures can have a role in engendering or reducing homelessness, and this will be the final focus of this chapter.

Regional variations

Homelessness is a phenomenon with observed variation across different nations and cultural contexts, with prevalence and public opinion towards homelessness particularly variable (Toro, 2007). It is therefore possible that variations might also exist across localised regions, with reactions and responses to homelessness possibly having localised variations too. The aim of this final section is to

explore whether such localised variations exist in the UK, the nature of any differences, and to explain what this means for causal approximations of homelessness. As a starting point, Cloke, May, and Johnsen (2010) identify differences between locally distinct cultures of homelessness, especially in relation to service use, suggesting there are culturally significant local scenes of homelessness. However, Huey (2012) argues that even within these local segments of homelessness, individual understandings, experiences, and narratives can differ because those who experience homelessness are not a homogeneous population but are instead communities of individuals with varying status, with different beliefs, and with diverse experiences. This thesis accepts that such divergence exists in the population of people experiencing homelessness, as it does in any population, but this does not preclude the possibility that locally assembled groups of people, who are living on the fringes of society, also share some common ideas despite their individual differences. In exploring this, the account of one outreach worker is a useful foundation because localised variations are said to be based on whether the setting is rural or urban, as the quote below highlights:

> *"There are differences between homelessness in big cities such as London and homelessness in rural villages such as ours. For example, in London and big cities the homeless tend to be more street wise. Here we deal with the more introverted and those who want to stay hidden."* (Interview 15).

It is therefore possible that the nature of the setting can help determine commonality between groups of people in adverse circumstances, with busy spaces necessitating some degree of gregariousness, while quiet spaces allow for inhibition. Moreover, one director of a charity suggests that regional differences can be based on the specific circumstances of that area, as well as locally distinct customs, as the quote below demonstrates:

> *"Yes, there are definitely cultural differences in different parts of the UK. I can say this as someone who has lived and worked in Dover, Manchester, Downham, and now Edinburgh. In Dover you get a lot of migrant homelessness, but you also get a lot of people who are very resistant to employment, and I think this is part of the local culture. In Manchester there is a lot of heavy drug use, and it is by far the most violent of places I have worked in, which I'm sure has some cultural significance. In Downham you tend to get the fallen homeless, and that is people who were successful in life but have now fallen into difficulties, but you also get a lot of people who are very wary of those who are trying to offer support. Again, I think this is a norm which is passed on across the homeless community in Downham. Finally, in Edinburgh there is a lot of alcohol use in the homeless scene, but the culture is quite upbeat and social, and perhaps this reflects wider Scottish traditions."* (Interview 41).

It should be noted that some of the locations have been changed in the above narrative to protect the identity of the participant, but crucially, localised cultures within the population of people experiencing homelessness have been observed. This thereby supports the earlier mentioned assertion of Cloke and colleagues. However, it is possible to build on this account through abduction and submit that localised rituals and ideas can have causal propensity for homelessness. This is because drinking to excess, as discussed in Chapter Three, can be an actual occurrence with causal consequences for homelessness. As pointed out by the charity director, it might be more pronounced in areas where there is already a drinking culture. Similarly, a culture of suspicion may be more pronounced in some local areas, and this chapter has already submitted that such feeling can yield causal consequences. It may therefore be necessary to examine homelessness in distinct regional locations to truly grasp the interacting causal tendencies operating in a specific territory, but it can nevertheless be submitted, for the purposes of this thesis, that localised cultures can have causal consequences in respect of homelessness. By drawing on the interview data, it is also possible to submit that responses to homelessness can be regionally distinct. For example, one psychiatrist explains how a good model operates in her area, but it is not one necessarily adopted in other regions, as highlighted below:

> *"Here we have a specific team who work with the most challenging individuals, and we will keep working with them until their holistic needs are met. They can be a challenging cohort, and it can take time, but we will work with them for as long as is necessary. Does this happen everywhere? No. Are we an example of best practice? We are not perfect, but I would say other areas could learn by looking at what we do."* (Interview 9).

This notion that there are regional differences in terms of approaches used is re-affirmed by a support worker, who pronounces:

> *"I think we are really lucky locally because we have a really good network of agencies who work together. If I don't know the best way to help someone, there is always another organisation that I can call who will know the answer. Unfortunately, there are other areas, even in this county who do not have such a strong collaborative approach."* (Interview 6).

This narrative reaffirms how multiple agents coming together may collectively stand a better chance of addressing oppressive structures in their community. In this instance, the agents are various professional agencies, and it seems reasonable that their collective endeavour should coincide with the long-term holistic support advocated for by the psychiatrist. The same psychiatrist suggests that such good practice does not happen enough because *'every service has their own ideas on how best to respond'* and that this might be a result of what they call a *'canteen culture within the organisation'*

(Interview 9). Taken together, these accounts imply that some local services have a strong ethos of joined up working and collectively striving for the best outcomes for the individuals they serve. However, not every area utilises such an approach because they have their own fixed ideas on what they should be doing. This therefore supports the priori hypothesis explored earlier in this chapter in respect of organisational practices having the capacity to engender or reduce homelessness. Organisations with a person-centred ethos and collaborative spirit can engender a reduction in homelessness. Conversely, those who are fixed in their ideas are unlikely to see any progress, subsequently leading to morphostasis. The path taken by agencies can be locally determined, because when there is a strong collective endeavour in a region, this can bring the most favourable outcomes. This section ultimately posits that regional variations can engender or reduce homelessness because there may be distinct cultural practices within the community of people experiencing homelessness, but also within the services responding to their needs.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored culture and its implications for homelessness, both in terms of a broad culture which permeates through society, and with regards to specific cultural factors that can shape homelessness. Archer's notion of culture has been kept in mind throughout the chapter, with consideration given to how cultural ideas might be embedded in items of intelligibilia. Temporality was also foregrounded so that the interactions between culture, structure, and especially agency were considered, allowing the emergence of morphogenesis and morphostasis to be foretold, as well as allowing conflation to be avoided. This highlighted that agents can be shaped by culture. For example, the erosion of strong family values in the cultural system has arguably led to some agents needing to navigate adverse structures without the buffer that family can provide, thus limiting their ability to exercise agency in overcoming oppression. Culture can also be shaped by agents. For example, those who experience homelessness might exercise their agency in joining others to change the narrative around homelessness, and in doing so, cultural ideas surrounding the topic can morph from distrust towards a better understanding of those experiencing homelessness.

This chapter has also continued with the pursuit of excavating a stratified approximation of homelessness. In the domain of culture, homeless subcultures were regularly observed at the empirical level, and it has been postulated that their formation is perpetuated by the actual-level stigmatisation of the various groups, resulting in members finding belonging within their adopted subcultures. The chapter has found that the deeper-level real mechanisms driving stigmatisation are a culture of suspicion, discrimination, and organisational practices. In relation to the culture of suspicion, this is understood as being reciprocal. This is because mainstream society tends to portray homelessness as problematic, and therefore feelings towards those experiencing homelessness can

sometimes manifest as hate. The treatment of those experiencing homelessness breads suspicion, and this is directed back at wider society. This can result in the further separation of those experiencing homelessness from their wider community, and consequently, increased feelings of marginalisation.

The higher power of discrimination was found to exist on the grounds of class and ethnicity. This is relevant because the type of housing one inhabits can be a signifier of class. Having no abode may therefore position someone at the bottom of the class structure, with discriminatory views from higher classes then engendering further stigmatisation and marginalisation. As mentioned, organisational practices were also identified as a real-level mechanism. Culturally sensitive, person-centred, collaborative, and reflective practices were found to be important for reducing homelessness. Conversely, a culture of reluctance to change can result in morphostasis. This is perhaps driven by the need to sell utilised approaches to funders so that donations can be secured, but it is argued that a reduction in homelessness can only occur when there is a willingness to enhance practice. Other real-level powers identified earlier in this thesis were reinforced as significant through the analysis of this chapter. For example, the culture of sexual violence observed towards women was attributed to the earlier identified mechanism of patriarchy. Several stratified factors have ultimately been identified throughout this thesis, and while they provide a solid foundation, there is scope for future research to build upon the ontology presented. New causal factors might be identified through such endeavour, and those offered within this chapter, as well as the wider thesis can be solidified through a more detailed analysis. A lot of ground has been covered in this thesis, sometimes at the expense of detailed analysis, but the findings of this chapter and the wider thesis ultimately provide a foundation from which to expand.

The identification of stratified cultural factors formed part of this chapter, but so too did consideration of wider context. Although this will not form part of the eventual framework offered by this thesis, context is important for understanding how and when causal tendencies might activate. This chapter, like the two before it, have provided some of the context. However, it is likely that wider contextual conditions can activate or inhibit the causal power of factors offered within this thesis. An example of context discussed in this chapter relates to cultural resilience, with this found to be embedded in certain religious groups, giving them the ability to overcome oppressive forces such as discrimination. Cultural resilience is also found in individuals, such as military veterans, who can conversely withstand cultural forces such as suspicion, thereby highlighting how forces can be enabled and constrained by the presence of various elements. This chapter also identified how localised context is important. This is because regional cultural variations can shape the actions of individuals and agencies. For example, some local areas might have a drinking culture, while some agencies might be embedded in a localised

culture of collaboration. The actions of various agents are ultimately important for engendering or reducing homelessness, but it is submitted that their agency is shaped by the localised scene. For example, agents might feel more inclined to drink heavily if embedded in a culture where this is the norm, and similarly, agencies are more likely to collaborate if they are based in a region where this is standard practice. As with all the domains explored, it is important to recognise that cultural factors form just part of a multifaceted causal framework. As has been extensively discussed, culture, structure, and agency interact to produce social events such as homelessness in various contexts. However, the stratified factors from each domain can also be exemplification in a framework of causal tendencies, and this will now be assembled in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 - A causal framework for homelessness from a critical realist perspective

The purpose of this chapter is to set out an explanatory framework for homelessness, accepting that the proposed model will not always explain why it occurs, but it will nevertheless provide some indication of the factors that can intertwine to cause the phenomenon. As is central to critical realism, the framework offered does not represent the factors that always interact to produce homelessness, and as such it should not be seen as a law on why homelessness happens on every occasion. Instead, the proposed model contributes to existing knowledge by encapsulating the mechanisms that tend to interplay in the production of homelessness, thereby offering a model that can inform policy responses and interventions in the future. This is important because such pursuits by critical realists are not just academic exercises, essentially because there are wider policy implications that can be understood. As with the previous chapters, the lived experience voice will be considered first. David opted to be interviewed as an alternative to poetry and the extract below represents his narrative:

> "When homeless you don't live a normal life, you're just trying to survive day and night. Eventually, when you become homeless, you just take it that this is the way it is. I'm homeless, this is my life. You constantly live in fear. You never sleep, properly sleep, it's impossible, you always sleep with your mind switched on, because you're on the street, and bad things happen. I was clever enough in the situation not to have anything major happen, but it was bad. It becomes a battle, but once in it, you get strong. People have been homeless for ten or twenty years and they will tell you every day is a difficult day, and every night is a difficult night. You don't switch off, ever, you never switch off. You're like an animal really and constantly trying to survive. You're just existing, there's no structure, your situation seven days a week is find something to eat, make sure you have somewhere safe to sleep, that's dry and warm. That's constant and after a while you get used to doing it. You get offered hostels, but they are not nice places. There is no hope in these places, and we need to offer places which do offer hope, and not in a fortnight after an interview, it needs to be straightaway. The hostel was very violent, because there were people with addictions, and fights break out, and you don't know what people have in their pocket. I would rather be on the street than sleep in one."

Due to the length of David's interview, this time it was not feasible to provide the full lived experience narrative within the main body of this thesis. However, this can be found in its entirety in Appendix Eight and I urge readers to look at the full account because it provides a powerful insight into the realities of homelessness from someone who has experienced all aspects of this phenomenon over the past few decades. Indeed, his interview provides much useful content which has been analysed

and critiqued in detail throughout this thesis to support some of the key assertions, and they will continue to be of value to this chapter. The first point to note is that David states *'it was my decisions that made me homeless, other people didn't make me homeless, it was my decisions and how I reacted to certain things.'* He is thereby acknowledging how his own decisions and agency contributed to his homelessness. He also notes *'the problem is there isn't enough service, there isn't enough funding, and services are stretched, but when you literally have nowhere, you should be prioritised for housing.'* He is thus acknowledging that structure also has a role in prolonging homelessness. In addition, he notes that *'when homeless you don't live a normal life, you're just trying to survive day and night.'* He is therefore offering a narrative that can be inferred to imply that those who experience homelessness live by a different set of cultural norms. One possible consequence of this might be that they become entrenched in a culture that perpetuates their homelessness, and this is an idea offered within the interview data by one rough sleeping coordinator who states:

> *"Sleeping rough is just one of the behaviours that most of us would call unusual. I have also seen many of the people I work with go to great lengths to remain isolated, some who ingest really harmful substances, and quite a few who have other odd rituals like begging, scavenging, and soliciting. These behaviours, while unusual to most of us, are quite normal within the homeless community. Becoming rooted in this type of lifestyle makes it very difficult for them to return to some form of normality."* (Interview 28).

This extract supports the existence of a cultural dimension to homelessness, and ultimately it can be advanced that David's narrative, when considered concurrently with other data, hints at a particular intersection of agency, structure, and culture as contributing to homelessness. Specifically, it suggests that the decisions and reactions of the human agent can result in entries into homelessness, which is then sustained due to inadequate service provision and a lack of urgency in housing those without shelter. This can then result in the human agent becoming accustomed to a new set of rules, values, and behaviours, making the exiting of homelessness challenging. It is this kind of interplay between agency, structure, and culture that is advanced further in this chapter. The previous chapters focused on each of these domains in isolation, albeit acknowledging at various junctures that factors from other spheres can create wider contextual conditions for causal tendencies to be activated. This chapter will now progress this further so that various factors within these realms are brought together into an explanatory framework. As Elder-Vass (2006) notes, it is only by combining causal mechanisms from a number of different levels that we can provide an adequate causal account of a stratified event.

Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) have already reconciled various factors into a theoretical framework to an extent, using what they refer to as evidence-based theorising rather than ideological inclination.

However, their framework positions structural factors such as poverty as central, and there is scope to build on this to identify deeper-level causal mechanisms, to explore what mix of other factors should be part of the model, and to investigate how these powers combine to produce the stratified event of homelessness. Bramley and Fitzpatrick acknowledge that individualistic factors can sometimes lead to homelessness, but they are not explicitly embedded into their framework. Conversely, this chapter will write agency and culture back into a framework, highlighting the interaction between factors from each domain, and at every level. Doing so enables this thesis to offer an original contribution to the field. The specific nature of the proposed model will be determined by considering the findings already uncovered in previous chapters, but also by continuing to triangulate the data to enable further theorising on which factors are worthy of inclusion. The analysis contained within the chapter will start by giving further consideration to current critical realist views concerning homelessness. It will then consider the specific empirical, actual, and real factors that should be included in a framework based on the findings of the previous chapters. Finally, a model will be advanced to explain what mix of factors can explain homelessness.

Current critical realist position

As has been emphasised throughout this thesis, critical realism has been adopted previously by academics seeking to enhance knowledge of homelessness, but there nevertheless remains scope to build on existing ideas. This section clarifies the current position while also setting out the specific gaps and opportunities for this chapter of the thesis to address. To commence this account, the realist Willaims (2005) describes how constructivists have reduced homelessness to a series of categorical constructs, which he says, they justify based on the discrete definitions applied to the phenomenon. However, he argues that these constructs refer to real phenomena because people do live in hostels, on the streets, or in squats, and people will experience this. Fitzpatrick (2005) has meanwhile made a significant contribution towards a realist understanding of homelessness and suggests that the causes of homelessness operate on at least four levels. These are said to be economic, housing, interpersonal, and individual. She further suggests that they interact with each other through a series of feedback loops and the emergent outcome can be homelessness. In addition, she implies that economic or housing structures may be all-important in many cases of homelessness, but individual and interpersonal factors may nevertheless be significant in some cases of homelessness. She further acknowledges that the underlying causal factors can vary between groups and between countries. In this respect, Stephens and Fitzpatrick (2007) suggest that countries with well-functioning housing markets and social security systems will have a higher proportion of people experiencing homelessness with personal problems. This is because the structural conditions in such countries enable the avoidance of homelessness for most people, and it is usually when an individual has personal

afflictions that their vulnerability to homelessness activates due to their inability to cope within the confines of these structures. Fitzpatrick and Pleace (2012) later suggest that structural factors are a far more significant driver in statutory family homelessness than in single homelessness. This may be because having a family to support necessitates the attenuation of personal inadequacies, but families will have little power in overcoming the wider structural demise that can engender their homelessness. Consequently, when considering broad homelessness, it is necessary to fully embed individual and structural factors since they are both currently understood to have varying significance depending on the type of homelessness experienced, and the place in which it occurs.

So far, this section has discussed how critical realism has contributed to academic notions of homelessness by arguing that it is a real phenomenon, by also emphasising that factors interact through a series of feedback loops with the resulting outcome sometimes being homelessness, and by acknowledging that the significance of structural or individual factors will depend on the specific category of homelessness as well as the location in which the homelessness occurs. Scholars adopting a critical realist approach have also taken some steps towards advancing a framework to explain the specific factors that have causal tendencies. For example, Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen (2013) use critical realism as a means to explain multiple exclusions in homelessness, which they define as homelessness plus one or more other needs. This might include a history in institutional care, substance misuse, or engagement in street cultural activities such as begging, street drinking, survival shoplifting, or sex work. They suggest that the most significant predictors of multiple exclusion homelessness are childhood trauma and deprivation. They also go on to consider context, explaining that homelessness frequently exacerbates substance misuse as people will self-medicate to cope, and this they suggest occurs early in the pathway. Homeless street lifestyles, they suggest, occur later in the pathway and are thus positioned as consequences of deep exclusion rather than causes of homelessness. Finally, they suggest that certain factors increase the risk of experiencing multiple exclusion homelessness, and these are said to include having no qualifications, having served time in prison, having experienced sexual assault, or having been a victim of violent crime. Therefore, this work provides a comprehensive account of the factors that may drive multiple exclusion homelessness, thereby highlighting the usefulness of critical realism in exploring this field.

The later work of Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) implies that homelessness is not as highly complex as many assume it to be, nor is it something we are all equally likely to experience. They suggest that the presence of many causal factors is unnecessary for homelessness to occur, and their critical realist-informed explanation positions poverty, especially childhood poverty, as being central. Their conclusion is reached following multivariate analysis of three quantitative data sets including the UK-wide poverty and social exclusion survey. They utilise qualitative literature to provide the theoretical

foundation for their analysis and suggest that a strength of their largely quantitative methodology is that it affords an appreciation of the frequency in which particular combinations or sequences are found in a homeless population. However, in their earlier work with a colleague, they accept that a more qualitative-driven methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of nuanced information about the nature of individual experiences and perceptions (Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen, 2013). This thesis adopts such a qualitative-driven methodology as a means to build upon the ideas offered by Bramley and Fitzpatrick's largely quantitative design.

A possible limitation of Bramley and Fitzpatrick's work is that it essentially positions homelessness as being structurally determined for the most part, although they do accept that individual factors can still be wholly the cause of homelessness in some instances. Nevertheless, agency is particularly noted to be absent from their model. This might be because, as Pleace (2000) notes, engagement with agency carries political sensitivities and it is sometimes avoided to prevent adding to the stigmatising pathology of homelessness whilst simultaneously limiting the possibilities of some interventions to assist. The inclusion of agency has however been called for in some circles. Somerville and Bengtsson (2002) advocate for a contextualised rational action approach to exploring agency, suggesting that this is a substantive theory within a critical realist perspective because it allows for actors to be seen as acting for a reason, but not with perfect rationality. This approach has since been adopted by McNaughton Nicholls (2009) who like this thesis, acknowledges that agency needs to be written into causal understandings of homelessness so that the motivations and actions of those experiencing it are taken seriously. Her work ultimately suggests that factors such as a refusal to engage in support, alcohol misuse, and street sex work are rational actions, but they carry a thin rationality because the context in which they occur needs to be considered. She further suggests that such context is not just materially or structurally experienced, because the cognition aspects of an individual are also real and can have actual effects. This thesis agrees and this section will consequently include features of agency and individualism in the causal framework presented.

Finally, culture is also notably absent from Bramley and Fitzpatrick's proposition. This thesis will conversely write specific cultural factors into the framework offered, and these will be largely informed by the analysis in Chapter Five. In doing so, this thesis offers an original framework including constituents that are either absent or under-emphasised in existing causal models, as well as those factors already noted to be significant. Before the framework is pieced together, this chapter will first revisit the components of significance, as identified in the three previous chapters, organising them into those factors which constitute the empirical, those factors which constitute the actual, and those factors which constitute the real, thereby structuring them in a way that aligns with Bhaskar's (1975)

conception of a stratified ontology, as well as other notable critical realists in more recent times (Archer, 2003; Elder-Vass, 2010).

The empirical, the actual, and the real

Generating factors within each of these domains requires data-driven coding, deductive thinking, and inductive thinking, as well as abductive and retroductive thinking. These procedures have been deployed in the previous chapters, and the emergent themes will now be explicitly attributed to each domain before a framework is constructed to reconcile the mixture of factors that have a tendency to produce homelessness. For the avoidance of doubt, the empirical domain consists of those factors which are directly observed or experienced by actors such as a lack of suitable housing. The actual domain consists of those factors representing events or actions that human agents might not always experience, but they can reasonably be inferred to exist. Examples include domestic violence and poverty. The real domain consists of those factors which represent the unobservable deeper-level causal powers such as patriarchy. In determining a stratified approximation of homelessness, this thesis drew upon observations, inferences, and assertions made by participants. The coding process enabled participant data to be separated into experiential, inferential, and dispositional themes to account for this. Critical realist theorising within the preceding chapters then solidified these themes into stratified factors, and these will be reasserted in this chapter before a framework is constructed. However, it should first be noted that not every theme is worthy of inclusion in a framework. This chapter will focus on those factors which have causal tendencies in relation to homelessness, not discounting that other components might activate homelessness on occasions either in isolation, or as part of a combination of interacting elements.

When structuring ontology in a stratified way, there are some crucial considerations according to Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021). Firstly, they suggest it is necessary to be mindful of whether factors have empirical adequacy, meaning that they should be adequately supported by data. Next, it is necessary to consider whether factors have descriptive validity, meaning that they should accurately describe factual information. It is also necessary to consider if factors have interpretive validity, meaning that they should closely represent participants' experiences. The previous chapters have rigorously examined themes in the context of data findings, particularly from the interview data. As such, they are likely to have empirical adequacy. They have also been formulated based on lived narratives borne out in the poetry, as well as in experiences captured through the other data streams, and as such, they are likely to have both descriptive and interpretive validity. For example, a lack of suitable housing is positioned by this thesis to be an empirical level factor because it is something observed by human agents in homeless populations, as well as by practitioners who support them. It has empirical adequacy because thirty-seven separate respondents referred to it in their data, right

across all data streams. It also has descriptive validity because a lack of suitable housing is a fact that is rigorously supported by the data and literature. In addition, it has interpretive validity because it closely represents the experiences of those in homeless populations. This is supported by Jim's poem which asserts that when he went for help to find suitable accommodation, they kept him waiting before declaring '*there's nothing to give*'. It is also supported by David's narrative which gives an account of moving through unsuitable accommodation and experiencing difficulties in finding something adequate. The data therefore meets the tests described above.

Wiltshire and Ronkainen also suggest that it is necessary to be mindful of whether factors have ontological plausibility, meaning that they should represent plausible reflections of what occurs in the world. On this point, incomplete observations have been redescribed as best predictions in the preceding three chapters, referred to in critical realist language as abduction. As such, it can be argued that the factors have ontological plausibility. On a final note, Wiltshire and Ronkainen suggest it is necessary to be mindful of whether factors have a sound logical basis, and whether they have explanatory power for the other factors revealed to be significant within the analysis. Once again, the previous three chapters ensured these criteria were met, firstly by using judgement rationality to ensure a sound logical basis, and secondly through retroduction to check the explanatory power of the factors. It can ultimately be said that the empirical, actual, and real factors to be presented in this chapter have gone through a rigorous process, and one which has been advocated for by critical realist scholars. The factors of significance for homelessness within the individual, structural, and cultural spheres will therefore now be presented in terms of which constitute the empirical (highlighted in <mark style="background-color: yellow">yellow</mark>), which constitutes the actual (highlighted in <mark style="background-color: #00ff00">green</mark>), and which constitutes the real (highlighted in <mark style="background-color: red">red</mark>). A brief explanation will follow, but a more detailed appraisal of why these factors have significance can be found by referring to the previous writings in chapters three to five.

Stratified individual factors

Chapter Three analysed the individual-level domain to find factors associated with homelessness. The empirical, actual, and real mechanisms of significance are highlighted below:

<mark style="background-color: yellow">Poor decision making.</mark>

<mark style="background-color: #00ff00">Survival activities</mark>

<mark style="background-color: #00ff00">Substance misuse.</mark>

<mark style="background-color: #00ff00">Mental illness.</mark>

<mark style="background-color: #00ff00">Domestic violence.</mark>

<mark style="background-color: red">Trauma.</mark>

Poor decision-making is an individual-level factor that was observed by research respondents across all three domains, and this replicates practice experiences where such decisions were often attributed to homelessness. This therefore represents an empirical level factor of value from the individual domain. Survival activities, substance misuse, mental illness, and domestic violence represent actual-level events from the individual domain that have noteworthy consequences for homelessness. Not everyone observes these events, but they can reasonably be inferred to exist and to have implications for homelessness, as was discussed in Chapter Three. For example, events of substance misuse are often hidden, but they still exist, and they can have an impact on the observed factor of poor decision-making. Trauma, family structures, and patriarchy are deeper unseen causal powers that can activate or inhibit these other factors. For example, family structures can leave an individual without support, and this can lead to actual survival events such as sex work, and this is then observed as poor decision-making. Similarly, patriarchy can drive domestic violence, and people in this situation can also be observed to be making poor decisions. The presence of these stratified factors can result in homelessness as was discussed in Chapter Three. Now that individual-level factors have been considered, attention will next be directed to mechanisms from within the structural domain.

Stratified structural factors

Chapter Four analysed the structural level domain to find factors associated with homelessness. The empirical, actual, and real mechanisms of significance are highlighted below:

Lack of suitable housing.

Poverty.

Proliferation of expensive or poor-quality housing.

Lack of employment opportunities.

Political will.

Economic conditions.

A lack of suitable housing is universally accepted to be a significant factor for homelessness, and many research respondents hinted that this had been directly observed by them. This therefore represents an empirical level factor of value from the structural domain. Poverty, the proliferation of expensive or poor-quality housing, and a lack of employment opportunities represent actual-level events from the structural domain that have noteworthy consequences for homelessness. Not everyone observes

these events, but they can reasonably be inferred to exist and to yield implications for homelessness, as was discussed in Chapter Four. For example, actual occurrences of poverty may not be experienced or acknowledged by everyone, but they can still be surmised to exist, and events of poverty will only exacerbate an individual's inability to source suitable accommodation. The final factors of note in the structural domain are political will and economic conditions. These are the deeper unseen causal powers that can activate or inhibit the other factors, and although clues can point to the existence of these real factors, they are not usually directly observed. To illustrate this further, when new legislation is introduced which successfully addresses an issue, the underlying causal power can be a political willingness to address the particular problem, although this political inclination itself is never directly observed. A recent example relates to the issue of some landlords prioritising the renting of their accommodation through the website Airbnb because such short-term lettings carry tax breaks. However, legislation is due to come into effect in April 2025, and this will end these tax benefits thereby incentivising landlords to make accommodation available to local people again. Such willingness to take action may address the issue of suitable housing availability, and although greater availability might later be observed, the underlying political will which drove this might not be recognised despite it being a fundamental driver.

The deep mechanisms of political will and economic conditions can also entwine in the production of homelessness. For example, the proposed introduction of an infrastructure levy is a political decision designed under levelling up reforms to enable local authorities to levy a charge on new developers so that funds generated can be used to meet the needs of the local community. This political volition addresses challenging financial circumstances faced by some local authorities at a time of precarious economic conditions. However, the Chartered Institute for Housing (2023) argues that the introduction of this levy risks reducing the quantity of newly built affordable houses because the policy is designed to replace section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This older legislation set restrictions on how much houses could be sold for in a local area, thereby making sure they were affordable. The introduction of the levy might therefore benefit local councils while simultaneously reducing the availability of affordable housing in a community. There are many other examples of the government exercising political will during challenging economic conditions, with the emergent outcome being homelessness. The obvious example is the introduction of austerity measures, and further examples were given in Chapter Four, but essentially it is posited that by exercising political will at a time of economic turbulence there will always be winners and losers. Interventions that can reduce homelessness have been particularly vulnerable, and thus, political will can have both positive and negative consequences for homelessness. This is because, by exercising the will to address one issue, the government can inadvertently make another issue worse, as has been highlighted. Now that

structural factors have been duly considered, attention will next turn to mechanisms from within the cultural domain.

Stratified cultural factors

Chapter Five analysed the cultural level domain to find factors associated with homelessness. The empirical, actual, and real mechanisms of significance are highlighted below:

<mark>Homelessness subcultures.</mark>

<mark>Marginalisation.</mark>

<mark>Culture of distrust.</mark>

<mark>Organisational practices.</mark>

<mark>Discrimination.</mark>

Homelessness subcultures represent an empirical level factor in the cultural domain given there was evidence of practitioners observing the formation and maintenance of subcultures in their everyday working practices, as was described in Chapter Five. Marginalisation is an actual occurrence, whether or not it is observed, and its manifestation can reinforce homelessness subcultures. This is because a sense of belonging can be found in subcultural groups from mutually stigmatised members, and this was again described in Chapter Five. The final factors in the cultural domain are a culture of distrust, organisational practices, and discrimination. These represent the deeper unseen causal powers that can activate or inhibit some of the other factors. For example, discrimination is not always seen but its effects might be. In the case of homelessness, discrimination can be the underlying causal power that tends to drive actual events of marginalisation, and this, in turn, can reinforce the subcultures. Chapter Five described how the media, and in particular new forms of media, provide a vehicle for discriminatory views around homelessness to proliferate. Some were even observed in the mined X (formerly Twitter) data mined for this research, and a relevant example is the earlier presented tweet '*to all homeless people I say get a job you lazy bastards*' (Tweet 31). Although experiencing homelessness is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, a prejudicial attitude towards this group is apparent, thereby justifying the inclusion of discrimination as a casual power. Agency will next be considered in isolation, because it is a factor which noticeably has its own distinctive features.

Agency

This thesis has shown how agency, in all its guises, is a unique factor that can be found in the individual, structural, and cultural domains while permeating the empirical, actual, and real spheres. There is consequently justification for viewing agency as a separate causal entity that transcends all stratums.

However, it should be noted that Elder-Vass (2010) explains the need to keep the actual and real-level factors distinctive. This thesis has done so, as is evident from the separation of these spheres earlier in this chapter, but I argue that agency is a force that is interactive at all levels, and it should therefore be exemplified this way in any framework for homelessness. This aligns with the ideas of Archer (2003) who posits that structure is synchronically emergent from agency in the sense that structure gains unique causal powers as a result of the particular arrangement of its constituent parts, and that these causal powers can only ever be exercised through the actions of agents. Therefore, in this ontological conception, there may be a distinction between structure and agency but the two are intertwined to such a degree that each can only exist as a consequence of the other. This perspective underscores the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between structure and agency, whereby structure shapes agency and vice versa, all within a temporally evolving context.

To provide some examples of how agency functions at all levels, a useful starting point is to consider the agency of those with lived experience of homelessness. Chapter Three described how human actors with lived experience should not be seen as passive victims because they can exercise agency, albeit to a thin degree. After all, a lack of affordable accommodation and the judgments of practitioners can result in constrained choices. Trauma and patriarchy were also explicated to be forces that can impair agency but will clearly be mechanisms that are simultaneously established through the deeds of human actors over time. Agency was also rationalised to be a significant force in the exiting of homelessness; however, it was explained how structures such as plentiful suitable accommodation must coexist. In addition, Chapter Four described how agency exists in government policies, the practices of the housing market, and the actions of service practitioners. This agency collectively shapes the structural context of homelessness. Chapter Five highlighted how culture too can shape and be shaped by agency. For example, discriminatory views will be shaped by agents, but this power can also lead to the stigmatisation of those who experience homelessness, in turn leading to the formation of homeless subcultures within which human agents can find belonging.

Agency has been revealed to be a factor that is present at every level, shaping and being shaped by the various mechanisms. Consequently, it must be viewed as a factor that coincides with the presence of other causal tendencies in the production of homelessness. Ultimately, this chapter has so far re-examined the factors with causal tendencies for homelessness, as identified in the previous chapters, explicitly grouping them into empirical, actual, and real mechanisms. It was then argued that agency should be treated separately as a factor that has an inter-relationship with the factors in the empirical, actual, and real domains. The next focus of this chapter will be to create a framework for broad homelessness by re-describing why various factors are worthy of inclusion.

Justifying a framework

In the previous chapters, a number of factors have been shown, in varying circumstances, to be causal tendencies for homelessness. This section will now embed these factors into a framework of causal tendencies, will the resulting model explaining why homelessness tends to occur. Critical realism accepts that no model can be perfect, but the framework should provide a representation of the circumstances that are usually present for homelessness to be initiated and to prosper. This will build upon ideas offered by other critical realist scholars in the field of homelessness who either position structural factors as central (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018) or accept that agency must be factored in (McNaughton Nicholls, 2009). One of the purposes of reworking existing ideas is because new discernments may be of significance to policy and practice considerations. The framework to be offered in this chapter recognises that agency, structure, and culture are entwined, but the objective is to illustrate how factors may sit together in the production of homelessness. The formation of the framework will be informed by a reconsideration of the triangulated data but will also be informed by morphogenesis principles so that the retrodiction analysis can explain how the combination of factors promulgated combine in the production of homelessness. As well as having policy implications, this framework is principally concerned with causation, and on this topic, the interviewed academic with expertise in homelessness asserts:

> *"I have to be honest, causation has already been debated rigorously, and unless you are offering something new, such as a paradigm which explains how various influences come together to instigate homelessness, then it might be a bit of a lost cause I'm afraid."* (Interview 27)

By this stage of the thesis, it should be clear that I agree with the academic, and the focus of this project is not to add to the already extensive debate on singular factors that can have causal influences for homelessness, nor is it to supplement the debate on whether individualistic or structural causes carry greater predilection. The objective is to identify what the academic suggests offers something new, namely 'a paradigm which explains how various influences come together to instigate homelessness'. On re-examining the data obtained during the research phase of this thesis, so that such a paradigm can be formulated, one notable omission so far is the presence of an activating episode. For example, one support worker states:

> *"There is always some kind of event that precedes homelessness, such as a relationship breakdown."* (Interview 6).

This notion of an activating episode is reinforced by another support worker who notes:

"There are factors that make someone at risk of homelessness such as being poor or lacking family help, but the actual triggers for homelessness are usually life circumstances such as losing a job or being evicted." (Interview 38).

The idea that a trigger event precedes homelessness is highly prevalent in the data. For example, in David's lived experience interview, he mentions that his trigger was job loss, and he says '*I lost my job because I had a heart condition. I therefore couldn't pay my rent, so that was it, I was back on the street.*' This highlights that he may have been vulnerable due to his health condition, but he ultimately attributes the trigger event of job loss to his returning to the streets. The idea that there is a trigger is also evident in much of the poetry. For example, the poems from Sarah and Bianca clearly highlight domestic violence as their trigger events. Furthermore, the X (formerly Twitter) data also supports the presence of a trigger event as can be seen from the tweet below:

"Your situation changes and suddenly you are out in the cold." (Tweet 12).

The idea that a sudden change or trigger precedes homelessness has some presence in the literature with Crane et al. (2005) stating that personal crises such as bereavement are understood to have an activating role in homelessness. It is therefore my thesis that any framework for homelessness should acknowledge the importance of a trigger episode. I argue that these events align with the actual domain in a critical realist stratified ontology, because they occur whether they are observed or not, and will likely have deeper unseen causes. The crucial point is that some life event occurs, and this creates an entry point into homelessness. However, it must be noted that most people will go through difficult life events, yet most will not experience homelessness. It is therefore necessary to continue exploring the other factors that need to be present for these triggers to activate homelessness. The first point to note in this regard is that everyone will react differently when significant life events occur, and this was captured in the interview data. For example, one support worker discussed their experience of supporting people and noted:

"When major events happen in life, some people show great resilience and ride out the difficult times, while those I work with tend to turn to alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism, but this just creates a whole new set of problems." (Interview 6).

This proclamation that we all have different coping mechanisms is exemplified by a nurse who infers that some people with difficult lives use up their reserves, and this makes coping more challenging as the quote below demonstrates:

"You and I will probably find ways to cope when life gets difficult, but not everyone has had the same comfortable lives, and when life has dealt a repeated cycle of problems, then the mechanism to cope get diminished." (Interview 19).

The poetry data also hints at difficulties coping when significant events occur. For example, Sam says that *'we need an escape, so we turn to drugs and drink'* while Jim declares *'eventually I ended in a mental health crisis.'* This empirical evidence therefore implies that some people might turn to drinking or drugs as a mechanism to cope, while others do not cope at all, and consequently they end up in a state of mental ill health. These outcomes might make someone vulnerable to homelessness, and this is emphasised by one psychiatrist who notes:

"When someone experiences an addiction or mental health condition, their ability to access employment, housing, support, etcetera becomes impaired, and this absolutely affects their ability to retain accommodation." (Interview 32).

Evidence has accordingly been presented to support the reactions to trigger events being included in a framework for homelessness. I suggest that these reactions are likely to be experienced or observed, and consequently, they aptly sit in the empirical domain of a critical realist framework. So far, it has thus been acknowledged that trigger events and induced reactions are important for homelessness, but as was noted earlier, these will have wider causal powers. These will be subject to ongoing speculation in this chapter, but for now, it should be noted that trigger events and reactions are insufficient to explain homelessness. This is because individuals who have various structures around them will manage to avoid homelessness during a triggering episode unless their reaction is so adverse that it leads to a squandering away of their resources. This is unlikely to happen in most cases, so attention must therefore be turned towards a wider structure to identify which factors from this domain are worthy of inclusion in the framework. As was noted in Chapter Four, poverty is a likely contender, since those who have sufficient wealth will likely be able to avoid homelessness in most cases. In contrast, those without material prosperity will be less able to circumvent homelessness because they may not have the financial means to evade it. Furthermore, as was also previously noted, poverty is already positioned as a central causal factor for homelessness in the contribution of Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018). As this thesis does not intend to dispute their findings, but rather, it intends to build upon their model, poverty should thus be included in the framework. The challenge instead is to identify which other factors carry merit for inclusion. On this issue, the testimony of one housing first coordinator stresses the importance of family, as can be noted from the quote below:

"A lot of the people on our housing first project don't have family support and you end up taking on this role. It's a fundamental part of the housing first model, without which it wouldn't

work, so I would say a lack of family and other support is a key reason for homelessness." (Interview 16).

Consequently, there is merit in including family structures, as referred to in Chapter Three, as part of the framework. This is because a family structure that comes with support at the time of a trigger event, or indeed during times of financial hardship, usually means that an individual can navigate their way to accommodation. Moreover, the importance of family has been recognised in the literature with a supportive family structure being positioned as an important buffer (Mayock, Corr, and O'Sullivan, 2011; Rea, 2023). Furthermore, there is verification within the lived experience voice of family being important. For example, in David's interview he says *'I was married for thirty years, had kids, and when it broke up, I was heartbroken and didn't really deal with it. That was the start of all of this.'* He then later says *'some people lose the spark because they are not around those who can give them confidence and hope. If you're in an environment where you can see stuff happening, and people are working with you, then you can get back on your feet.'* While David is referring to support in general terms, the heartbreak he faced from losing his family, as well as his inference that comfort and hope is required, aligns with the need for a supportive family structure. The wider poetry data also recognises this with Kevin suggesting that *'family helped me get through.'* This therefore further emphasises the need for a supportive family structure to counteract the risk of homelessness, and as such, family structure should be included in the framework.

There is a structural issue that is widely regarded by the literature to yield consequences for homelessness, and this is the inadequate housing provision available in the UK (Anderson, 2004; Fitzpatrick, Mackie, and Wood, 2019; Fitzpatrick, Watts, and Perry, 2021). Given that the defectiveness of the UK housing market has been widely positioned as a driver for homelessness, it seems likely that any framework for homelessness should include it. Chapter Four discussed how at an empirical level, various human agents observe a lack of suitable housing, and this is driven by the actual proliferation of expensive and poor-quality housing. In the mined X (formerly Twitter) data there were a number of assertions on this theme, ranging from *'Temporary accommodation is being overused* (Tweet 15) to *'Private rents are poor quality, expensive, and don't get me started on exempt accommodation[34]'* (Tweet 71). Many of tweets also refer to the lack of social provision to meet demand as is demonstrated in the tweet *'There are simply not enough social homes to meet demand'* (Tweet 39). There is an irrefutable need for more social housing as this tweet highlights, but the inadequacies of

---

[34] Exempt accommodation, as referred to in Chapter Four, is designed to come with care and support for tenants, and as such, they are exempt from the benefit cap. However, some providers have been criticised for using the scheme as a lucrative way to make money, while the care and support provided is inadequate (Inside Housing, 2024).

housing provision run deeper, and this is emphasised by one charity director who suggests homelessness can be eradicated by addressing wider inadequacies in the housing market, as the extract below demonstrates:

> "If there were to be a range of long-term affordable accommodation options available to suit different budgets, requirements, and tastes, then I think you would find little to no homelessness. This has been proven in Finland" (Interview 40).

It can therefore reasonably be inferred that the empirical theme of the lack of suitable housing, and the actual theme of the proliferation of expensive and poor-quality housing, are worthy of inclusion in the framework. This is further supported by the lived experience account, as is evident in David's narrative, an extract from which is given below:

> "You also need to remove the referral system. If someone turns up with no food and no home, they should bring you in. The problem is there isn't enough service, there isn't enough funding, and services are stretched, but when you literally have nowhere, you should be prioritised for housing. If there isn't enough council housing, then there should be a department in local government who works with private landlords to get housing for those who are on the streets. Rooms at a sensible rate, which are well maintained, is what they need to find. When you get a house, you get an address, you get a post-box, so now you can go and get benefits, and eventually you can go and get a job."

In this testimony, David points to several inadequacies including a referral system that he says needs to be removed, a lack of prioritisation for those in absolute need, and a requirement for greater collaboration with the private sector to find accommodation that meets the needs of those without housing. The inadequacies are highlighted further in Jim's poem whereby he declares that *'you go to the council and think they will assist. Instead, they do all that they can to resist. They send you to a shelter and say you'll be fine, but there you share a room with at least another nine. You feel like a dog in a kennel while there, except in this place there's not as much care.'* Jim is implying that the accommodation offered is worse than kennels, and he thereby makes the inadequacy of housing provision plain. Based on the strong evidence in support of inadequate housing, it is tempting to conclude that this tends to cause homelessness in isolation. However, while it is important to consider factors independently to check their causal potential, making such assertions based on empirical findings is what critical realists refer to as naïve realism. Instead, this thesis is building a picture of a combination of factors that interact in the production of homelessness, for which a lack of suitable housing and the proliferation of expensive and poor-quality housing has been shown to merit

inclusion. When combined with a trigger event, an adverse reaction, wider poverty, and little family support, suddenly the likelihood of homelessness emerging becomes greater.

A framework of relevant factors is starting to emerge, but it must be stressed again that this thesis accepts that other factors, in particular those absent from the model, can produce homelessness on occasion. However, this framework is not seeking to explain why homelessness occurs on every occasion, because critical realism recognises that doing so is an unachievable task. Nevertheless, a framework of relevant factors is taking shape, which when combined tends to explain homelessness. One notable area that is still missing from the framework is agency, and as emphasised throughout this thesis, I intend to integrate this into the model. However, for entries into homelessness, agency was found to be thin, constrained by a number of other factors which must also be written in. For example, Chapter Three found that mental illness, substance misuse, and domestic violence constrain agency. These factors can lead to 'poor decision making' being observed, or at least what some actors deem to be so. Chapter Four then found that a lack of employment opportunities yields a similar constraining role in relation to agency. Finally, Chapter Five found that marginalisation and survival activities can result in homelessness subcultures emerging, with this too having causal consequences for homelessness. As such, all these factors are worthy of inclusion in the framework alongside agency. Certain other factors were found to limit the actions of human agents too, including a lack of suitable housing, but a case has already been made for these factors to be included in the framework.

In addition to there being a thin degree of agency for entries into homelessness, Chapter Three also noted it to be a significant factor for exits. Further consideration will now be given to factors that enable and inhibit exits, because neglecting to do so might mean the paradigm can be accused of considering short-term homelessness only. Clearly some people experience homelessness for long periods, as David notes in his narrative when he says '*some people have been homeless for ten or twenty years*', and consequently there is justification for considering this. The first thing to note is that exits from homelessness will be dependent on there being adequate housing provision, and this emphasises again the importance of this being included in the framework. To elicit the other factors that have significance for exiting homelessness, it is worth returning to David's narrative. In relation to exiting homelessness, he says '*I found the help myself; you can't just sit down and wait; you need to swallow your pride and say I'm going to work with these people. I'll see where it takes me because I've got nothing to lose.*' He then later says '*you have to try and find that natural instinct of self-preservation. I don't know where the spark within me came from, I was bogged down every day, but I found a reason to continue. I had faith, and that was enough.*' He is thus implying that his own agency was central to his exit. This notion is supported in the wider poetry too with Jenny saying, '*I knew I had to try and sort myself out, but it was nearly impossible, filled with self-doubt.*' Her poem then later says

'some days it's still hard but it's a battle I'm winning.' She is therefore acknowledging that despite it not being easy, it is possible to successfully move away from previous circumstances, including homelessness, when one exercises their agency. The importance of agency in exiting homelessness was also recognised in the practitioner narratives. For example, one supported housing coordinator indicates:

> *"We offer a suitable option to those who need it, but we can't force people to accept our offer, and you will be surprised at how many people turn down our accommodation."* (Interview 5).

In this case, the rejection might be because the specific accommodation on offer is not suited to everyone, but an outreach worker also notes how an offer of assistance can get rejected before the exact proposition is even known, as can be seen from the following quote:

> *"There have been so many times when I've reached out to someone in the direst of circumstances, and they tell me to fuck off before I've even had a chance to explain what we can offer."* (Interview 15).

It might be the case that those who decline the assistance of the outreach worker are experiencing some of the impairments that can constrain agency, but there is nevertheless evidence to support the notion that human agents who experience homelessness can exercise agency. The aspiration of this thesis to write agency back into the framework is therefore justified. Adding this to the pre-existing framework not only acknowledges that agency, structure, and culture are entwined, but it also recognises that they all have causal properties by encapsulating them into a model which has a tendency to explain homelessness. To complete the model, it is now necessary to write in the deeper real mechanisms identified in chapters three to five. As these mechanisms are unseen, the retroductive analysis undertaken in the previous chapters becomes of paramount importance. In the individual domain, trauma and patriarchy are the remaining causal powers worthy of inclusion, since they have been shown to drive the other integrated factors from this sphere. In the structural domain, political will and economic conditions were found to be mechanisms that induced the structural factors of significance, and these causal powers should therefore constitute part of the framework.

Finally, real mechanisms from the cultural domain should be written in, because by doing so, the aspiration of this thesis to integrate culture can be met. Organisational practices, discrimination, and a culture of distrust were found to be the real-level cultural mechanisms driving the other integrated factors from this sphere. To justify this further, retroductive analysis in Chapter Five resulted in these powers being excavated. For example, a culture of mutual distrust was exhumed; this being fear and distrust which are both put upon and espoused by those who experience homelessness. The presence

of this distrust might reasonably explain the profanities experienced by the outreach worker as described earlier. To provide another example of why this power is worthy of inclusion, one support worker emphasises that homelessness can be a product of this power, as the extract below demonstrates:

> *"The people I support usually say they feel badly let down by society. It therefore takes a long time to build trust, and sometimes I'm unable to do so. I try not to be judgemental, but as a reflective person I must admit that I sometimes am judgemental. My colleagues can be too, and this is because our views are naturally sometimes reflective of those found in wider society. This creates an obvious tension, which can then lead to those we support forming new alliances on the fringes because this is where they feel resemblance. However, these relationships are usually not positive, and this can have a huge bearing on why people remain homeless."* (Interview 6).

Although the support worker does not directly refer to the deeper power exhibited as a culture of distrust, it is possible to infer that this is the force of significance based on the retroductive analysis from Chapter Five. This culture of distrust appears to be mutually reinforcing, destabilising, and ultimately capable of fuelling homelessness. The inclusion of this factor is therefore justified, and along with the other real mechanisms, its inclusion completes the framework of causal tendencies for broad homelessness.

A framework of causal tendencies for broad homelessness

The analysis in this chapter has highlighted that a trigger event is likely to occur before homelessness. This trigger event can include any number of factors that sit aptly in the actual domain. After the trigger event has occurred, there will be some kind of reaction, and this will be experienced in the empirical realm. However, the trigger event and the reaction combined are insufficient to have causal tendencies for homelessness and must coincide with the presence of several factors including poverty, lack of family support, and inadequate housing provision. Even with the presence of these factors, human agents can still exercise agency, although this will be constrained by mental illness, substance misuse, domestic violence, stigmatisation, employment opportunities, and the need for survival. Finally, the framework offered by this thesis incorporates a number of unobservable causal powers which drive these factors including trauma, patriarchy, political will, economic conditions, organisational practices, a culture of distrust, and discrimination. These factors combined constitute the framework of causal tendencies for broad homelessness offered by this thesis. A visual representation of the model is provided at the bottom of this chapter in Figure One. In isolation, other individual, structural, and cultural mechanisms can yield an element of causal proficiency in respect of homelessness, but the

framework offered here is designed to explain the combination of factors that tends to explain most homelessness.

A framework for different types of homelessness

As previously noted, this thesis considers homelessness in its broadest sense, and the framework proposed is therefore intended to offer a causal model for a wide range of circumstances that constitute homelessness. However, I accept that it can sometimes be beneficial to consider a narrower set of circumstances, for example, when working with a particular sub-population. As a result, a brief consideration will now be given to different types of homelessness. While the model should universally apply to each of these narrow groups, certain features of the model may be more prominent for each of the narrower categories. For example, with rough sleepers, the interview data places a lot of emphasis on agency to exit being constrained, with the culture of distrust and past traumas often seen as the factors that restrict agency. For example, the influence of trauma on agency to exit was highlighted in seven different interviews, with the quote from a rough sleeping coordinator below highlighting a common view:

> *"It can be really frustrating when you find a home for someone who has been rough sleeping, but they don't want to take it. But then you must remember that past abuses and difficult memories occurred in previous accommodation, and maybe living on the streets is the first time they've felt free."* (Interview 28).

There was also some emphasis on the culture of distrust being a factor that constrains agency to exit, with this judgement appearing in six separate interviews. The below quote from the same rough sleeping coordinator demonstrates the opinion held by some of these practitioners:

> *"It takes a very long time to build trust within this community. They don't trust you because they are told not to trust you by others in the rough sleeping population, and many have been let down so there is no trust to start with. They therefore refuse to engage with the help you offer"* (Interview 28).

While the model offered by this thesis is intended to provide a framework of causal tendencies for all homelessness, including rough sleeping, it is possible to infer from these narratives that those who sleep rough may have particular difficulties exiting homelessness because their agency is constrained by trauma and distrust. These factors are already embedded in the framework, but the argument is that they may be especially prominent for those who sleep rough. However, it should again be noted that critical realism allows for individual differences, and as such, these factors will not always dictate when rough sleeping occurs. Next, consideration can be given to multiple exclusion homelessness, and as mentioned earlier, Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen (2013) note that childhood trauma and

deprivation are pivotal in this population. Poverty and trauma have been included in the framework offered by this thesis, and these factors broadly align with the offering by Fitzpatrick and colleagues, although this thesis does not give specific prominence to early-year events. Nevertheless, these particular factors may as Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen note, be more significant for those facing multiple exclusion homelessness, and analogous factors have been encapsulated into the model advanced here.

The inadequately housed population can also be considered independently, with this group constituting those whose accommodation is so deplorable that they are effectively homeless. The very nature of this homelessness might mean that the proliferation of expensive and poor-quality accommodation has particular significance to those within this category of homelessness. Next, those classified as statutory homeless can be considered, and the interview data stresses factors of particular significance to this population. For example, three respondents emphasised that those owed a legal housing duty are generally poor, five participants emphasised that the availability of housing is a particular problem, and one housing options officer emphasised both, as can be seen in the quote below:

> "One thing those owed a housing duty have in common is that they are generally deprived and they therefore can't afford the private sector, but unfortunately we simply don't have adequate levels of social housing to be able to offer immediate solutions to everyone who presents to us." (Interview 31).

It might therefore be the case that poverty, as well as the proliferation of expensive and poor-quality accommodation, are factors of particular significance to those who face statutory homelessness. Finally, consideration can be given to those who are at risk of homelessness, and for this population, it seems probable that trigger events have not yet been experienced, but the other factors may nonetheless be creating risk to the extent that homelessness becomes very likely once a trigger event occurs. It has ultimately been highlighted that the framework of causal tendencies should have application to discrete categories of homelessness, but specific features of the model may have greater significance to certain groups, without causing their homelessness on every occasion. Similarly, attention can now be turned to different homeless demographics, all of whom will have unique attributes, meaning certain mechanisms are again likely to have greater significance, but the model should nevertheless fit.

A framework for different homeless demographics

The focus of much of the previous research into homelessness has been on single men, but women are known to take a different trajectory through homelessness (Reeve, Casey, and Goudie, 2006;

Bretherton, 2017). As has been asserted, the model offered in this thesis is designed to offer a framework of causal tendencies for broad homelessness. As such, consideration will now be given to whether it fits different demographics who experience homelessness including women, men, families, young people, ethnic minorities, and migrants. As women are considered to take this different trajectory from men, it is worth comparing which features of the model might apply specifically to each gender. On this point, some interview participants directly compared the men and women encountered in their work, including one support worker who suggests:

> *"Quite a few of the men I work with become homeless once their relationship breaks down, and it's the same for the women I work with, but the difference is women more regularly report being in a violent household. For both men and women, having no money or support when leaving these relationships means homelessness is the final result, but I guess you could say men can leave freely whereas women often can't."* (Interview 6).

This narrative seems to suggest relationship breakdown is a key trigger event for homelessness in both men and women. It then implies that poverty and lack of support can bring about homelessness for both, but that agency in women is more constrained because of the presence of violence. This is a plausible assertion when considering the repugnant consequences that come from being in an abusive home. However, the literature suggests that women do have a high degree of agency to navigate their way through homelessness (Bretherton and Maycock, 2021), and as is asserted in Chapter Three, it might therefore be the case that once women have managed to elope from their problematic domestic environments, they are better able to exercise agency in exiting homelessness. This could be because women fleeing violence are prioritised for housing, or it might be because, as Bretherton (2017) notes, women are both resourceful and resilient. However, the point emphasised throughout the data is that a history of domestic violence is significant in women who become homeless, alongside poverty, and this is accentuated by one policy official below:

> *"A history of violence is a big issue for homeless women. Apart from this, they are similar to homeless men, with the same scarcity of resources."* (Interview 43).

While women might therefore take a different trajectory through homelessness, the model still seems to fit, with a trigger event and poverty seen as central to both genders. The differentiating factor is that domestic violence might be more pronounced in women. This might ultimately mean that patriarchy too has greater relevance to women, especially given the association between domestic abuse and patriarchy (Hoyle, 2012). However, as noted in Chapter Three, this does not discount patriarchy from adversely affecting men too because of the connotations associated with the

stereotypical notion of maleness (Kruger, Fisher, and Wright, 2014). Overall, it is reasonable to suggest that the framework offered by this thesis has application to both men and women.

Consideration can next be given to families who experience homelessness, and on this topic, Gaubatz (2001) suggests it is often defined solely as a housing issue. However, she asserts that family homelessness is a more complex problem with economic, political, personal, and social factors playing significant roles. She further asserts that the widespread failure to recognise the broad range of needs and problems experienced by homeless families seriously limits vision and creativity in developing potential solutions in the UK. Conversely, the framework offered by this thesis incorporates the various factors Gaubatz positions to be significant, and the model therefore seems to have application to families who experience homelessness. Next, it is worth considering young people who can sometimes find themselves estranged from their families. In these circumstances, the state of England has a statutory obligation to take into care any person found to be experiencing homelessness who is under eighteen. However, Sanders, Jones, and Whelan (2021) suggest that a history in care is a significant predictor of homelessness. This, they assert, is because support from the state reduces as the child reaches certain age milestones, whereas support does not necessarily discontinue when a young person has been living with their parents. An exception is when the family structures described in Chapter Three do not support an individual upon them reaching adulthood. Consequently, it is not necessary to consider children distinct from families because they will usually be taken into care if found without a home, but it is very possible for young adults to find themselves in situations of homelessness. This is likely to result from a lack of political will to intervene once a young care leaver has reached adulthood, but also when suitable family structures are not in place to support other young people who are vulnerable to homelessness. Ultimately, these factors seem to be the most pronounced drivers for homelessness in young people, both of which are already incorporated into the framework offered by this thesis.

It is worth noting that a policy implication comes from this assertion about homelessness in young people. Essentially, there should be political will to continue supporting care leavers once they turn eighteen. I do not doubt that in some cases provision will be available, but it needs to be universal. This support should extend to any young person who finds themselves without family structures to support them during hardship. Having said all of this, it is reasonable to argue that other aspects of the model such as poverty and inadequate housing provision will equally apply, but that political will and family structures are the factors with greatest significance for young people. Ultimately, the model encapsulates the factors of significance to homelessness in young people too, albeit recognising that the most prominent factors in the paradigm will once again be fundamentally different to the pronounced features in other demographic groups.

Consideration can next be given to ethnic minorities who experience homelessness, and for this group, it is worth noting that Bramley et al. (2022) suggest that black and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately affected by certain types of homelessness such as statutory homelessness. Their analysis on this topic attributes discrimination as being a significant factor, which then increases exposure to other risks such as poverty. The work of Bramley and his colleagues therefore gives rise to the discrimination aspect of the framework being of particular significance to those from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, with poverty also potentially being significant. When consideration is given specifically to migrants, many of whom will be from minority backgrounds, then poverty is likely to be a significant feature. This is because nine separate interviews mention how migrants who end up experiencing homelessness, usually do so because they have 'no recourse to public funds.' This will clearly lead to absolute poverty and destitution, with literally nothing that can be done for them. Six of the interviewed practitioners also mention that it 'does not have to be this way', perhaps implying that political will is another significant factor from the model. Indeed, Boobis, Jacob, and Sanders (2019) note that politicians should show more willingness to help migrants who become homeless. While this assertion will be controversial to some, this ultimately highlights once again that varying features of this model have particular significance to different populations. However, the overall model has widespread application, and it therefore meets the objective of explaining broad homelessness. There are of course other groups who have not been considered in this section such as military veterans and the LGBTQ+ community. It has not been within the scope of this thesis to consider every different homeless population, or to explore different groups in any depth, but this section has nevertheless shown how the model may have broad application, albeit that different factors might activate more strongly for different groups. The framework is however something that can be refined over time as further research explores particular aspects of homelessness in greater detail using a critical realist methodology. Such research has the potential to offer insights that can enhance this foundational concept.

Morphogenesis

Now that a framework has taken shape, and it has been shown to have broad application, influence will next be taken from the morphogenetic approach offered by Archer (1995). This is because doing so offers a way to consider how structure, culture, and agency interplay over time. Archer's work, as noted previously, suggests that while structures pre-exist agents, they are also shaped and reshaped by agents' actions. This dialectical relationship implies that structure and agency are analytically separable but mutually influential. Archer's assertion that structure is synchronically emergent from agency will now be applied to the findings of this thesis so that the relationship between structure and agency becomes clearer with respect to homelessness. It can first be asserted that the various

structural aspects of homelessness such as poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and the proliferation of expensive accommodation emerge from the interactions and arrangements of various agents, including individuals experiencing homelessness, government agencies, charitable organisations, housing markets, and the broader socio-economic system. As such, agency must be positioned in a framework as a factor that transcends domains, given it interacts with various structures at different levels. However, these structures will simultaneously have unique powers that influence the experiences and actions of individuals, as has been shown throughout this thesis. For example, poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and the proliferation of expensive accommodation constrains the agency of those who experience homelessness. This reciprocal influence reinforces the value of encapsulating agency as a factor that interplays at every level.

The morphogenetic approach also views relational properties within structure to have effects. For example, the interaction between political will and economic conditions creates emergent properties including the proliferation of expensive housing, poverty, and a lack of employment opportunities, all of which have been shown in Chapter Four to have causal consequences for homelessness. These emergent factors don't just constrain agency; they are also shaped through the actions of agents. For example, the proliferation of expensive housing might be overcome through the coordinated actions of various agents, such as policymakers, landlords, local authority planners, construction companies, and housing practitioners. The absence of this coordinated effort gives rise to the proliferation of expensive housing. Similarly, poverty can be alleviated for some through the collective actions of charitable workers, donors, policymakers, families, and those experiencing poverty. Therefore, causal tendencies are not reducible to the actions of any single agent but arise from the configuration of all the agents involved. Furthermore, the specific arrangement of all agents, and not just those who experience homelessness, can create conditions that either exacerbate or mitigate homelessness. For example, homelessness can be reduced through a political will to implement effective welfare policies, when this coincides with a commitment from housing associations to go back to their origins, in addition to there being an allegiance by media executives to address the stigmatisation of those who experience homelessness within their platforms. Together, these actions can collectively shape the structural context of homelessness and thus determine factors such as levels of poverty experienced, access to housing, and wider societal attitudes towards homelessness. Ultimately, the reduction of homelessness requires the coordinated actions of multiple agents, with the above example representing just a small segment of the effort required.

The application of Archer's analytical dualism also helps provide a distinction between the structural conditions that influence homelessness and the agency working within or against these conditions. Essentially, an appreciation of this dualism has been applied throughout this thesis thereby facilitating

a consideration of how structures constrain or enable the actions of agents, while also reflecting on how agents can transform these structures over time. For example, tempestuous economic conditions represent a real-level structural factor with causal powers for homelessness in their own right. The presentation of these conditions will limit the choices available to policymakers. For instance, they will not be able to provide significant funding to all public services when economic conditions are tough, and they will therefore be left with a decision on whether they should introduce austerity across the public sector, or prioritise services for those in poverty, so they can withstand the turbulence. Policymakers can exercise their agency, and by deciding to implement austerity they may be able to fundamentally reshape the economic conditions, but this will likely lead to a rise in homelessness because funding is not available to prevent it. Alternatively, policymakers may decide to prioritise funding for those experiencing poverty, including for service providers. This may mean the economic conditions take longer to recover but those worst hit can be supported to avoid situations such as homelessness. Either way, the emergent outcome will constrain or enable the actions of agents going forward.

By considering Archer's morphogenesis, this chapter has explained how the stratified factors encapsulated into the framework offered by this thesis interplay over time. This is useful because Elder-Vass (2006) notes a failure by some critical realists to consider both stratification and emergence. Conversely, this thesis has now offered both a stratified explanation for homelessness, as well as an explanation for how these stratified factors emerge over time. Essentially, it has been emphasised that agency emerges from the arrangement of structures, yet simultaneously, structures are shaped by the arrangement of agents. This ultimately means that agency must be incorporated into a framework for homelessness as a factor that can interact with the various other mechanisms embedded in the model. It should also be noted that the framework offered may therefore be subject to change as the interaction between agency and other factors transforms the inherent nature of these mechanisms over time.

Conclusion

This chapter has built upon the findings of the previous three chapters to provide an explanation for homelessness using critical realism. Firstly, a brief discussion outlined how the significant factors for homelessness, as presented throughout this thesis have empirical adequacy, descriptive validity, interpretive validity, ontological plausibility, rationality, and explanatory power. The factors found to be most significant in the previous chapters were then organised into the empirical, actual, and real. Analysis then took place to identify the mix of factors that have a tendency to produce homelessness, with the application of morphogenesis explaining how factors interact. From this process, it can be

concluded that the following model represents a framework of factors which collectively tend to explain broad homelessness in the UK:
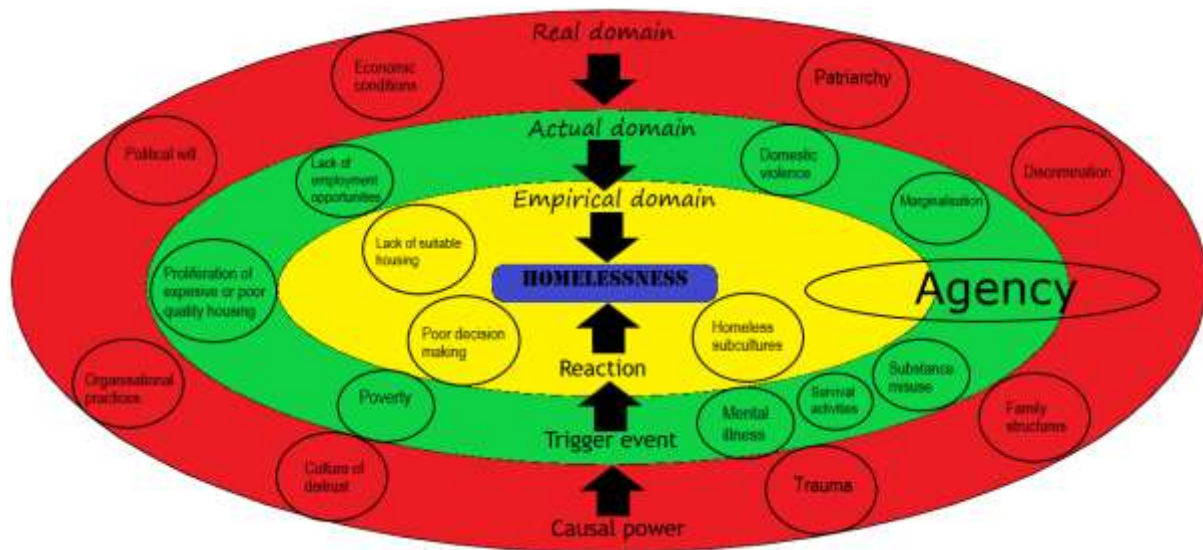

Figure One: A framework of casual tendencies for homelessness.

It should be noted that critical realism acknowledges the fallibility of causal models, and as such, the factors embedded in this framework will not always explain why homelessness occurs. Instead, this model offers a framework of factors that collectively tend to cause homelessness. It is still feasible, for example, for some instances of homelessness to be wholly caused by individual factors, as was acknowledged by Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) when offering their largely structural explanation. It is likewise probable that some instances of homelessness will be wholly caused entirely by structural factors. However, as discussed in this chapter, agency is likely to always have an interactive role in the creation and proliferation of homelessness.

While this framework is intended to explain the causes of homelessness in its broadest sense, this chapter has also discussed how specific aspects of the model might have greater significance for different types of homelessness and for different demographics within the population of people who experience homelessness. However, there is scope for future research to explore this in more detail using a critical realist methodology, and furthermore, there is scope for future research to test the framework offered here so that its foundations are eventually strengthened. Ultimately, this model is intended to offer a framework for homelessness in the UK, noting that different nations will have different cultural and political practices which might fundamentally change the model. Like with the other findings of this thesis, the outcome of this chapter carries policy implications. Firstly, this framework emphasises that a number of factors are involved in the creation and proliferation of homelessness. This justifies the need for a comprehensive homelessness strategy which can then respond to these various elements of significance. The specific policies that should form part of this

strategy have already been discussed at relevant junctures of this thesis. However, for homelessness to be reduced to the lowest level possible, it will require a serious endeavour to address the wide-ranging recommendations set out by this thesis in Chapter Seven. Secondly, the acknowledgement that agency interacts with the various factors in the framework means there is a need for all agents to be empowered, so that they can take the collective action needed. This likely means giving greater choice to those who experience homelessness and increased funding to the agencies who support them so that they are truly empowered. Thirdly, the stratified nature of homelessness means that policy should respond to all causal factors and not just those that are observed. In particular, policy should address the real-level mechanisms driving homelessness, with policy suggestions once again set out in this thesis. Finally, the suggestion that there is a trigger event preceding homelessness means that policy should respond to common triggers. For example, relationship breakdown seems to be one such common event. Policy should therefore be designed so that anyone subjected to these triggers without appropriate resources are given extra support in locating suitable accommodation. This will of course require more suitable accommodation to be made available in the first instance. The final chapter of this thesis will now provide an overview of all recommendations based on the central findings of this thesis. It will also evaluate the methodology deployed and provide an overall conclusion.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion, recommendations, and policy implications

Looked down on, ignored, systematically oppressed
I don't think life should be this must of a test
We live in this system through no fault of our own
Forgotten and silenced because we don't have a home
Don't you think we deserve a seat at the table
You stick us in a box and then you label
Complex needs, hard to reach, go on run another
How would you feel if I was your little brother
Services hard to access, so many hoops to jump through
Those in charge haven't lived this, they don't have a clue
How these decisions affect us, but we're not given a say
Just wait to be told where we will be sleeping today
Spending every day feeling defeated and worthless
All the stuff you can't do without an address
Can't open a bank account or claim Universal Credit
The problems are systemic, so deeply embedded
You listen, but you don't really hear what we are saying
You focus on the problematic behaviour that we are displaying
I'm the problem, is what we start to think
We need an escape, so we turn to drugs and drink
But the people aren't the problem, the problems in the system
We would be here all day if I tried to start and list them
It becomes an endless cycle because there is no one we can trust
Homeless in the 21st century is so fucking unjust
We should be treated like individuals, none of us are the same
But the main focus of the system is always personal blame
You dehumanise us, and you kill our creativity
Why don't you just hold us in caged captivity
Unless things change soon, you're going to have to fight us
Because I think our anger is super fucking righteous

Poem by Sam

The above poem from Sam highlights that homelessness is multifaceted with agency, structure, and culture all playing a role. For example, Sam talks about 'systemic' and 'deeply embedded' problems, which can reasonably be inferred as empirical support for structural-level causes. They also talk about turning to 'drugs and drink' as a mechanism to escape, thus emphasising that a thin degree of agency exists insofar that they can exercise the choice to take substances, but that they do so to cope within the confines of their wider circumstances. Finally, Sam talks about the focus of the system being on 'personal blame', thereby supporting the finding of this thesis that there is a culture of blame directed toward those who experience homelessness in the UK. There is a whole lot more that could be taken from this powerful narrative, some of which has been unpicked in the preceding chapters, but ultimately Sam aptly demonstrates how structural, cultural, and individual factors combine in generating homelessness. A final conclusion will now be given in relation to the specific research

questions this thesis set out to address. Firstly, this thesis asked which individual, structural, and cultural factors have a tendency to cause homelessness. This has been extensively addressed in chapters three to five, but the headlines will now be reasserted. From an in-depth exploration of the individual domain, it was found that a thin degree of agency shapes decisions to engage in harmful activities such as excessive drug use, and this can have causal consequences for homelessness. Agency, as a causal factor, was found to be most profound when it comes to exiting homelessness. This is because structures were found to be more favourable in assisting individuals to move away from homelessness than they are in preventing it. The presence of such structures in facilitating exits from homelessness thus highlights that agency has a more pronounced role when it comes to exiting. In the detailed exploration of the structural domain, poverty was found to be a central causal structure, along with an absence of adequate housing provision. However, the wider context in which homelessness results was found to be an absence of both family support and political will to tackle these structural deficits. Finally, from a cultural perspective, it was posited that a culture of mutual distrust exists in UK society. This was found to be constraining the agency of those who experience homelessness as well as the organisational practices of support agencies, thereby yielding causal consequences for homelessness.

The second research question concerned how agency, structure, and culture interact in driving homelessness. This was addressed in Chapter Six where a model of interacting factors was offered, and this highlights factors which have a combined tendency to produce broad homelessness. They include trauma, patriarchy, political will, inadequate housing, poverty, lack of family support, culture, agency, and organisational practices. The significance of a trigger event and reactions to this were also encapsulated within the model. The chapter then considered the interplay of factors from a morphogenesis perspective finding that it is possible to analyse the structure of homelessness as synchronically emergent from the dynamic interactions of various agents, including policymakers, market participants, service providers, and individuals affected. The causal powers of structures mean homelessness can be created or alleviated, and this arises from the specific arrangement and relationships of these agents. The powers themselves can only be exercised through the actions of agents, and this reflects the ongoing interplay between structure and agency in shaping homelessness. Consequently, the agency of all actors was seen as a crucial part of the framework, interacting at all levels. The final research question asked how policy and practice should respond to homelessness. Recommendations have been offered throughout this thesis, but they will now be grouped together in the next section of this chapter.

Policy and practice recommendations

From the insights imparted throughout this thesis it is possible to make a number of policy and practice recommendations. These will be revisited in this section and set out in bullet point format to make them easily identifiable as points of action. First, several useful proposals emerged from the literature review, and these are set out below:

- There is a need for public and practice education to remove harmful stereotypes around homelessness. Stereotypes are driving policy fallacy and are resulting in a limited focus on rough sleepers, single men, or those perceived to have statutory priority. This type of education might also break down the culture of distrust which was found to have causal power in respect of homelessness.

- Various stakeholders, including academics, need to push for government intervention. Such endeavour can persuade the government to act.

- There is a need for innovation and versatility when pushing for action. Expert opinion has come under increased scrutiny, and innovative approaches are therefore necessary to get the message heard.

- There is a need to build relationships with the various agents involved in policy creation, thereby creating trust and respect, and this means proposed policy ideas will be looked upon more favourably.

- There is a need for best practice to be shared across multi-agencies nationally.

- There is a need for a person-centred approach where harmful labels are avoided, and the service user is empowered to reach their self-determined goals. The wider thesis supports empowerment of all agents, including those who support the homeless population. This can be achieved partially through increased funding provision but also by encouraging reflective and progressive practice within service providers.

- There is a need for an expansive house building project, and this should include a wide range of innovative options to meet varying needs. Such innovation can include modular housing, but there is a need for an extensive range of options to meet varying needs and demands.

- There is a need to incentivise the voluntary housing sector to refocus its services on the most marginalised. Incentives can also be offered to private-sector investors to provide a range of solutions. This has happened with social housing REITs[35]. However, some have fallen into administration, thus emphasising the need for impact to be prioritised over financial rewards,

---

[35] REITs refers to real estate investment trusts. They have been used in the UK as a means to give investors the opportunity to finance affordable homes for those who need them, thereby creating social impact.

and for wraparound support to form part of these housing projects (Better Society Capital, 2023).

- Due to its success in reducing homelessness in entrenched rough sleepers, there is a need for the commissioning of Housing First to be continued. This can be expanded into Housing First Plus whereby the needs of additional homeless populations are embedded into the model. However, this should be part of a comprehensive strategy as outlined in this chapter.

The broad homelessness strategy advocated for by this thesis should build upon the proposals offered by charitable organisations such as St Mungo's (2020a) as well as the academic propositions described in Chapter One (Randall and Brown, 1999; Somerville, 2013). As mentioned in Chapter Six, this strategy should address real-level causal mechanisms as well as actual and empirical level factors. The specific strategy recommended by this thesis is informed by the causal tendencies advanced throughout this body of work, thereby removing the guesswork (Quilgars, Fitzpatrick, and Pleace, 2011). The recommendations below form part of this comprehensive strategy:

- It is submitted that patriarchy is a real-level causal mechanism that tends to produce homelessness when combined with other factors. Consequently, there is a need for policies that combat toxic masculinity. Some support for domestic abuse victims already exists, as do policies to counteract oppression, but patriarchy continues to exist. It can be harmful to men as well as women, creating a detrimental sense of what maleness should be, and this can lead to barriers in accessing support provision. To address patriarchy, first and foremost, there needs to be acceptance that it still exists. Secondary to this, there is a need for education to dispel myths about gender expectations. Furthermore, there is a need for continued endeavour to eradicate oppression it all its guises thereby creating a more equitable society.

- Trauma is also submitted to be a real-level causal mechanism that tends to produce homelessness when combined with other factors. One way to address this is for policy to recognise the need for early intervention when someone has experienced traumatic life events. Early intervention can include intensive psychological support. However, trauma is another factor that needs to be more readily recognised. Its unseen nature can mean practitioners deny its presence, thereby explaining some of the observed undesirable practice. Practitioners should be trained to leave judgements aside on who is most worthy of support, because this can create significant barriers in accessing services. The remit of service providers may mean that help cannot be extended to everyone, but access should be determined on clearly set eligibility criteria. Furthermore, all service provision should be trauma-informed.

- Economic conditions represent another real-level causal mechanism that tends to produce homelessness when combined with other factors. During economic downturns, policymakers will be conscious of the need to constrain public expenditure, but doing so can reduce important provisions for those vulnerable to homelessness. It is consequently submitted that provision for those most at risk needs to remain fully funded and fully supported even during the most turbulent of conditions. People experiencing poverty without supportive family structures have been found to be particularly vulnerable. Consequently, welfare and support provision need to be prioritised, and while welfare may be a controversial topic, its endowment is a necessary measure to safeguard communities who are most vulnerable during economic downturns.

- Political agency more generally is submitted to be a real-level causal mechanism that tends to produce homelessness when combined with other factors. There needs to be a willingness from policymakers to implement the measures that help reduce homelessness. For example, this thesis has highlighted the need for policymakers to maintain funding for supportive housing, Housing First projects, and floating support schemes, all of which have seen funding cuts. It has also been emphasised that support needs to be extended for care leavers upon reaching eighteen, and for young people more generally who do not have supportive family structures. Indeed, political willingness to provide support for everyone without a supportive family has been highlighted to be necessary. Political will to extend welfare to those without recourse to public funds is also essential, and although this will be unpopular in some communities, it is a necessary measure for the reduction of homelessness. As has been emphasised throughout this thesis, political will to significantly increase the availability of long-term, affordable, and quality homes to meet a variety of needs is also crucial.

- Organisational practice is proposed to be another real-level causal mechanism that tends to produce homelessness when combined with other factors. This is because poor practice can lead to the proliferation of homelessness, whereas good practice can help reduce it. As already recommended, there is a need for service providers to move away from judging service users, because doing so can perpetuate continued notions of deserving poor. Instead, service providers should attempt to treat everyone equally irrespective of how they present, with this being a key principle of trauma-informed support. Service providers should also engage in highly reflective activities and exercise a willingness to do things differently where necessary. Enhanced practice has also been highlighted to include cross-agency collaboration. Furthermore, service providers should reach out to the various communities they serve to ensure they have sufficient cultural awareness to meet the needs of everyone. Doing so, can

help bring about progress in the adoption of anti-discrimination practices. Discrimination has been advanced to be a real-level causal mechanism, and furthermore, a culture of distrust is submitted to be a driver of homelessness. Service providers are fundamental to progress in these areas, firstly by moving away from harmful labels, and more generally by committing to the enhancement of practice through the adoption of these recommendations and those of other authoritative bodies.

- Trigger events have been tendered by this thesis to be an important factor that precedes homelessness. Consequently, there is a need for policy to respond to common initiating outcomes. One such trigger event noted within this body of work is the breakdown of a relationship. Such episodes were found to have causal tendencies for homelessness when combined with other factors such as poverty, a lack of suitable of housing, and an absence of wider family support. Consequently, policy should respond by guaranteeing the availability of suitable accommodation to those vacating a relationship who do not have financial provision or appropriate family structures to cushion the termination of the union. Another trigger event presented in this thesis is bereavement, and similarly, accommodation should be available to those bereaved with nowhere to go. The accommodation should be accompanied by appropriate support for those who need it. This policy offering can potentially mitigate adverse reactions to the trigger events, which were shown by this thesis to increase the risk of homelessness further.

- The significance of agency is emphasised within this thesis, with various agents recognised to have collective responsibility for reducing homelessness, including service providers, local authority officials, policymakers, family, and indeed those who experience homelessness. Consequently, practice should aim to empower all actors so that a cohesive approach to overcoming oppressive structures can be taken. As noted throughout this thesis, agency is constrained by such factors, but it can simultaneously reduce the causal potential of oppressive mechanisms. It is argued that collective action by the various agents can enhance the neutralisation of these oppressive factors if agents are empowered to work cohesively. Furthermore, support organisations can be empowered through increased funding, improved training, delegation of responsibility, and reinforcing the need for reflection. Those experiencing homelessness can likewise be empowered by involving them in decision-making. This can be about their own needs, but also about the future constitution of policy and practice. Ultimately, the removal of oppressive structures and the empowerment of agents represent a potentially momentous policy intervention in respect of homelessness.

These recommendations constitute a complete homelessness strategy when they are embedded within existing proposals. As mentioned in Chapter One, the existing recommendations of note include the need for additional rehabilitation provision for those who misuse substances, the need for women-only spaces, and the need for provision to consider the holistic needs of those who experience homelessness by offering places of safety, comfort, and opportunities for leisurely pursuits. It is acknowledged that policymakers work with restricted budgets, and furthermore, they encounter pressure from numerous stakeholders to increase or maintain provision. Similarly, service providers operate in a challenging funding milieu. These recommendations represent the comprehensive strategy needed to significantly reduce homelessness, but it is accepted that feasibility in light of restricted budgets is a separate issue. Implementation of some of these recommendations is therefore a useful starting point, with opportunities for researchers to then evaluate the effectiveness of their implementation. Now that these recommendations have been outlined, an evaluation of the methods used to inform these outcomes will next be conveyed.

Evaluation of methods and methodology

The methods used in this thesis provided a lot of data, and as is optimistically evident, this has facilitated a robust critical realist informed analysis. However, as is common in all research, there were some limitations to the methods deployed, and furthermore, a range of methodological challenges arose during the process of this research which will now be set out. Starting with the poetry data, it can first be said that I regret not affording the participant who requested to be named in this thesis the opportunity to have their poetry accredited to them. Had I not feared the prospect of failing my studies due to an ethical misdemeanour, which would have put five years of hard work to waste, then I would have taken some bolder decisions. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this thesis takes the view that participants should be afforded the opportunity to waive their anonymity if they wish, and as was also pointed out, there has been some wider acceptance of this within the literature (Scarth, 2016). In future research, I would therefore go through the process of seeking additional clearance to afford the participant their wish. In terms of the quality of data yielded by the poetry, it is my genuine opinion that it was excellent, and I enjoyed reading the work of every participant. However, it is nevertheless acknowledged that great poems did not necessarily translate into material that answered all the questions any curious researcher would have. If stating again I would therefore consider adopting the more collaborative approach advocated for by Liamputtong and Rice (2022), because this would allow me to guide participants in a more structured way, to ensure output corresponded with what I needed whilst still empowering participants to take ownership of the narrative. This is not to say that the poetry had no use to the analysis, but instead that their offering could potentially be enhanced with some closer guidance from the researcher. I anticipate that such collaboration would essentially mean

coproduction of the poetry, with the participant imparting their knowledge, and the researcher guiding them on various aspects of the production. This might include asking them to give examples of situations or challenging them on why they hold certain views. However, it is noted that this might risk the creative freedom of participants and impair their confidence in disclosing sensitive narratives. A collaborative approach would therefore need to culminate in a stage where the researcher becomes hands-off and the participant is afforded free reign to disclose anything else of note.

As has already been emphasised in this thesis, the interview data was the most useful source to analyse. This is partly because of the sheer quantity of data obtained, but also because I had some control over the direction of the output through the semi-structured nature of the questioning. However, the process of conducting and then transcribing forty-five interviews was extremely time-consuming, thereby causing some delays to the progress of this thesis, especially in light of the other data collection challenges. If starting again, I would therefore limit this to thirty participants, which as noted in Chapter Two, is still considered a sufficient sample for a research project of this nature. This said, I am grateful for the contribution of all practitioners, I enjoyed interviewing them, and their contribution has been extremely valuable. One way the interview data could have been enhanced further was through improved implementation of a critical realist interviewing technique. A limitation of this research is my own unique style of interviewing, but if starting again, I would be more conscious of the need to adapt to a critical realist approach. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Smith and Elger (2012) suggest this involves asking participants to give specific contexts in place of generalities, raising inconsistencies with participants, and challenging them on the adequacy of their accounts. While I did these things to an extent, there was definite scope for improvement, and greater conformity to these principles may have enhanced the data, thus enriching the critical realist analysis.

Moving next to the X (formerly Twitter) data, the first point to emphasise is that the lack of ethical consensus on mining tweets caused a real dilemma for this thesis. Consequently, I agree with Webb et al. (2017) that a consensus is needed, and this thesis argues that it is essential for future researchers, even if there are difficulties in reaching this. Specifically, this thesis calls on bodies such as the British Psychological Society and the British Society of Criminology to update their guidance on whether informed consent is necessary when mining data from social media platforms. For example, the British Society of Criminology currently makes a blanket statement about the need for informed consent, but they do not provide guidance on whether this is necessary in a changing landscape where social media data is often readily accessible to a researcher. To air on the side of caution, again not wanting to be pulled up on an ethical misdemeanour, this thesis went through the time-consuming task of obtaining consent from all contributors of the X (formerly Twitter) data mined into the analysis platform. This significantly reduced the quantity of tweets available for use in this research because many

contributors failed to respond to my request. The data that did receive consent included some divergent and controversial views, and this was useful, particularly in highlighting a culture of suspicion towards those who experience homelessness. However, if starting again, I would see social media as a novel means to gather data rather than a necessary means to mine data. I would instead survey users of X (formerly Twitter) to gather their views, and this would mean that consent could be dealt with in a more conventional sense, and it would potentially avoid bringing in spam or other data that went off-topic.

Finally, consideration must be given to the philosophical approach which underpins this thesis. Critical realism was an entirely alien philosophy to me when I commenced this research, and it is one I have spent many hours getting to grips with, including attending training put on by the Critical Realist Network. However, the greater my delve into critical realism, the more deeply invested I have become. First and foremost, I am a realist because I fully subscribe to the idea that my own homelessness experience was a real event in my life. Secondly, I subscribe to Bhaskar's notion of a stratified ontology and the idea that we can get closer to understanding the multiple layers of reality through intellectual endeavour. I hope readers of this thesis will agree that I have gone some way to identifying the multiple layers of homelessness, and in doing so, I have offered some original contribution to the discipline. Although I now consider myself a critical realist, I want to emphasise again that I do not dismiss the important contribution that other philosophical standpoints can bring to the field of homelessness and other social phenomena. I have therefore stated at suitable junctures of this thesis that a range of approaches is desirable to advance debates, particularly if each brings something original to the field.

In evaluating my application of critical realism, it is acknowledged that scope for development exists. For example, Elder-Vass (2006) notes the importance of identifying the entities involved in actual causation and their characteristic emergent causal powers. While consideration has been applied to emergence, particularly in the latter stages of this thesis, the primary focus has been on advancing a stratified framework for homelessness. Elder-Vass suggests there is a tension within critical realism concerning the need to balance stratification with the need to also consider emergence over time. It is accepted that my work has the scope to further enhance appreciation of emergence and reductionism in a stratified ontological vision of homelessness. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter Three, this thesis has yielded a lot of data that has been utilised as a means of identifying multiple causal factors to incorporate into the stratified framework for homelessness. It is accepted that an enhanced approach might involve using the expansive data to offer a greater explanation of fewer causal influences. Nevertheless, now that a framework has been developed, an opportunity exists for future work to refine it and explain its constituent elements further.

Overall Conclusion

When writing most of the chapters in this thesis, the UK had a Conservative government who had been in power from 2010 through to 2024. Therefore, many of the chapters refer to an incumbent Conservative administration. However, the time of this conclusion coincides with a recent general election win for the Labour Party. It is my view that every government should be subject to scrutiny, and indeed, a significant portion of this thesis has critiqued aspects of the previous administration. At the time of writing, the Labour administration has not yet held the reins of power for long enough to offer the same level of scrutiny, but with any change comes optimism. The early mutterings of the new government show signs of promise that some of the proposals set out in this thesis will be addressed. For example, the newly installed Labour government has already committed to an extensive housebuilding programme, whereby the government will reign supreme over planning decisions in the hope that this will get Britain building again. This thesis does not pretend to take credit for this Labour commitment, because as noted in Chapter One, many commentators have been calling for such action for decades. In any case, whether the early promises of the new government transpire into action remains to be seen. It must also be emphasised again that homelessness is not solely a housing issue, with other important influences offered by this body of work. Moreover, it is submitted that broad homelessness has multiple stratified factors that interact with various agents, and the emergent outcome tends to be homelessness.

The framework offered by this thesis encompasses several experiential, actual, and real factors. The real mechanisms include trauma, patriarchy, discrimination, economic conditions, political will, a culture of distrust, organisational practices, and family structures. These powers can create actual-level events that put human agents at risk of homelessness. These events include poverty, the proliferation of expensive or poor-quality housing, a lack of employment opportunities, marginalisation, substance misuse, survival activities, and domestic abuse. These factors are seen to be actual-level events because they are real occurrences whether they are observed or not. They can result in observed experiential outcomes including a lack of suitable housing, poor decision-making, and homelessness subcultures. Agency transcends all three domains, with the actions of human agents interacting with factors at all levels in the creation and reduction of homelessness. Together this constitutes a framework of interacting stratified elements that have a tendency to explain why broad homelessness occurs. A visual representation of the framework is offered by Figure One in Chapter Six.

Homelessness is likely to still occur for reasons outside of this framework, and as such, some fallibility in the offering is probable. Nevertheless, this thesis concludes that the causes of most homelessness can be understood through the lens of the proposed framework, although specific aspects of the

model may have more relevance to certain forms of homelessness, as identified in Chapter Six. This thesis makes a contribution to causation debates, but in addition, the outcomes also have policy and practice implications. The specific recommendations were set out earlier in this chapter, with a central proposal being the need for recognition that unseen powers have causal consequences for homelessness, and consequently, there is a need for actions that can plausibly help counteract the identified powers. Specific recommendations include a call for practice to be trauma-informed, policy to overthrow toxic masculinity, and for a serious commitment to extensive housebuilding. Furthermore, the need for society to reframe how homelessness is depicted was advocated, with the suggested course of action being the empowerment of all actors so they can collectively do their part in overcoming homelessness.

The furnishing of policy and practice recommendations by this thesis affords a comprehensive homelessness strategy to be offered, ultimately enhancing knowledge on how to address oppressive forces that exhibit causal tendencies for homelessness. The recommendations highlight that policy demands on the new government are significant in addressing homelessness alone, but as discussed, the collective agency of actors can help counteract the oppressive forces. Action is ultimately needed on at least some of the proposed areas, particularly if the new administration is committed to resolving homelessness. My objective upon completion of this thesis is to push for such a commitment using some of the policy levers identified within this thesis, and by enhancing my conclusions through further research on this topic. On a final note, three poems have informed the analysis of this thesis but have not yet been displayed within it. A fitting way to conclude this thesis is to give the final word to those with lived experience, and consequently, the remaining three poems will now be presented with a brief literary overview provided to introduce each. The first poem is from Kevin, and his narrative shows that his homelessness was preceded by a trigger event, which in his case was job loss. He also emphasises the importance of family structures, with him clearly asserting that his family helped him to cope with the lack of suitable accommodation offered after he was evicted. His poem can be found below:

<div align="center">

I lost my job
Couldn't pay my rent
Landlord took me to court, and I got evicted
Got put in a hostel
Horrible place
Went to street
Horrible place
Family helped me get through
But they had no room for me
Tried friends
It didn't work

</div>

Tried street again
Tried hostel too
Even tried friends again
I just wanted my own place
Finally, I got if after too much strive
I couldn't have got through without the important people in my life
Hopefully now I can move forward
Poem by Kevin

The next poem comes from Mike and his narrative emphasises the stigmatisation he feels because of judgements from others. His poem also highlights the significance of absolutely poverty, with him clearly asserting that he does not receive benefits, presumably because he has no recourse to public funds. His emerging poverty perpetuates the way he feels he is perceived by others, thus emphasising the interaction between factors. His poem can be found below:

Sat on the edge of society
Wondering why I'm not a priority
What's come of my life and come of me
My life is in tatters can't you see
Begging at the bank every day
Get a job, get a life, people say
I get no benefits, just what people give
To buy food and drink to help me live
I live on the streets, a doorway's my bed
People think I am thick in the head
It's just me, myself, and I
Nobody wants me, do you know why
Don't I deserve to live with a smile
To make my life worth the while
Poem by Mike

The poems clearly support various features within the framework offered by this thesis, and confidence is therefore growing that it will have application to most people who experience homelessness. Many of the chapters within this thesis have opened with a lived experience narrative. The final document in this thesis is Appendix Eight and this is David's narrative in full. This conclusion will now sign off with Eric's narrative, thus meaning that the lived experience voice is central throughout this thesis. Eric's narrative again supports the importance of various factors in the framework. For example, he again emphasises the significance of judgements from others, which as mentioned in Chapter Five, culminates from a culture of distrust. Eric therefore finds cultural belonging within the homeless community, but he acknowledges that the relationships formed are not helping him. Finally, his narrative lends support to trauma being fundamental in his prolonged journey through homelessness. Eric's poem can be found below:

I am screaming but cant be heard
They just call me a homeless bastard
They think I chose this I did make mistakes but didnt expect this to happen

I am pushed to be with others in the same boat
They are the only ones who listen to me
But they can be unkind or even dangrous
They also plant bad things in my mind
My past is full of horors and the street is no better
Yet I cant seem to find it in me to accept a house
The last one they gave me sent me insane
But the street is doing the same
I hope one day we find a solution
Poem by Eric

References

Adams, J., Greig, M. and McQuaid, R.W. (2000) 'Mismatch unemployment and local labour-market efficiency: the role of employer and vacancy characteristics', *Environment and Planning*, 32(10), pp.1841-1856.

Agllias, K. (2016) *Family estrangement: A matter of perspective*. London: Routledge.

Ahmed, W., Bath, P.A. and Demartini, G. (2017) 'Using Twitter as a data source: An overview of ethical, legal, and methodological challenges', *The ethics of online research*, 2, pp.79-107.

Alakeson, V. and Cory, G. (2013) *Home Truths: How affordable is housing for Britain's ordinary working families.* London: Resolution Foundation.

Alden, S. (2015) 'On the frontline: the gatekeeper in statutory homelessness services', *Housing Studies*, 30(6), pp. 924-941.

Aldridge, S. (2020) 'Data and evidence: what is possible in public policy?' *Using evidence to end homelessness*, pp. 161-180. Bristol: Policy Press.

Allen, R.E. and Wiles, J.L. (2016) 'A rose by any other name: Participants choosing research pseudonyms', *Qualitative research in psychology*, 13(2), pp. 149-165.

Anderson, N. (1923). *The hobo: The sociology of the homeless man.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Anderson, I. (2004) 'Housing, homelessness and the welfare state in the UK', *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 4(3), pp.369-389.

Anderson, I. and Christian, J. (2003) 'Causes of homelessness in the UK: A dynamic analysis', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 13(2), pp.105-118.

Archer, B. and Anton, R. (2022) 'Co-productive approaches to homelessness in England and Wales beyond the vagrancy act 1824 and public spaces protection orders', *British Journal of Community Justice*, 18(1), pp. 4-20.

Archer, M.S. (1995) *Realist social theory: The morphogenetic approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M.S. (1996) *Culture and agency: The place of culture in social theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M.S. (2002) 'Realism and the problem of agency', *Alethia*, 5(1), pp. 11-20.

Archer, M.S. (2003) *Structure, agency and the internal conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M. S. (2007) *Making Our Way Through the World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M. S. (2016). Reconstructing Sociology: The Critical Realist Approach. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 15(4), pp. 425-431.

Archer, M.S., Decoteau, C., Gorski, P., Little, D., Porpora, D., Rutzou, T., Smith, C., Steinmetz, G., and Vandenberghe, F. (2016) "What is Critical Realism?" *Perspectives: A Newsletter from ASA Theory*, 39(4).

Asencio, E.K. and Burke, P.J. (2011) 'Does incarceration change the criminal identity? A synthesis of labeling and identity theory perspectives on identity change', *Sociological Perspectives*, 54(2), pp. 163-182.

Atherton, I. and McNaughton Nicholls, C. (2008) 'Housing First' as a means of addressing multiple needs and homelessness, *European Journal of Homelessness*, 2, pp. 289-303.

Avramov, D. (2018) *Coping with homelessness: Issues to be tackled and best practices in Europe*. London: Routledge.

Baldwin, T. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Ball, M. (2020) 'Classifying housing regimes. Is it worth doing? What are the alternatives?' *Critical Housing Analysis*, 7(1), pp. 36-48.

Banfield, G. (2015) *Critical realism for Marxist sociology of education*. London: Routledge.

Bans-Akutey, A. and Tiimub, B.M. (2021) 'Triangulation in research', *Academia Letters*, 2, pp. 1-6.

Baptista, I. (2010) 'Women and homelessness', *Homelessness research in Europe*, 4(1), pp. 163-185.

Barbier, G. and Liu, H. (2011) 'Data mining in social media', *Social network data analytics*, pp.327-352.

Barker, C. (2003) *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Barker, S.L., Maguire, N., Bishop, F.L. and Stopa, L. (2018) 'Peer support critical elements and experiences in supporting the homeless: a qualitative study', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 28(4), pp. 213-229.

Bartholomew, K., Henderson, A. J. Z., and Marcia, J. E. (2000). 'Coded semi structured interviews in social psychological research', In H. T. Reis & C. M. Judd (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology*, pp. 286–312. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bauman, K.J. (2002) 'Welfare, work and material hardship in single parent and other households', *Journal of Poverty*, 6(1), pp. 21-40.

BBC (2020) *Homelessness: Rough sleeping figures 'unacceptable' says Boris Johnson.* Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-51646254 (Accessed 3 June 2020).

BBC (2023a) *English councils spend £1.7bn on housing homeless people.* Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-67099656 (Accessed 17 November 2023).

BBC (2023b) *Cost of living: Food banks used by 3% of UK families.* Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-65050920 (Accessed 17 November 2023).

Beatty, C., Cole, I., Powell, R., Kemp, P., Brewer, M., Browne, J., Emmerson, C., Hood, A. and Joyce, R. (2014) *The impact of recent reforms to Local Housing Allowances: Summary of key findings*. London: Department for Work and Pensions.

Becker, H.S. (1963) 'Relativism: Labelling theory', *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context, and interactions*, pp. 41-45.

Belcher, J.R. and DeForge, B.R. (2012) 'Social stigma and homelessness: The limits of social change', *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 22(8), pp .929-946.

Benjaminsen, L. and Andrade, S.B. (2015) 'Testing a typology of homelessness across welfare regimes: Shelter use in Denmark and the USA', *Housing Studies*, 30(6), pp. 858-876.

Bennett, F. (2014) 'The 'living wage', low pay and in work poverty: Rethinking the relationships', *Critical Social Policy*, 34(1), pp. 46-65.

Benton, E., Karlsson, J., Pinter, I., Provan, B., Scanlon, K. and Whitehead, C.M. (2022) *Social Cost Benefit Analysis of the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) policy in London*. London: London School of Economics.

Berry, C. (2016) *Austerity politics and UK economic policy*. London: Springer.

Better Society Capital (2023) *What can we learn from the social housing REITs?* Available at: https://bettersocietycapital.com/latest/what-can-we-learn-from-the-social-housing-reits/ (Accessed 28 August 2024).

Bhaskar, R. (1975) *A Realist Theory of Science.* London: Verso Books.

Bhaskar, R. (1979) *The Possibility of Naturalism*. Sussex: Harvester Press.

Bimpson, E. and Goulding, R. (2020) 'Housing crisis, austerity and the production of precarious lives', *Urban Crisis, Urban Hope: A Policy Agenda for UK Cities*, pp. 23-28. London: Anthem.

Birkland, T.A. (2019) *An introduction to the policy process: Theories, concepts, and models of public policy making*. London: Routledge.

Blood, I., Goldup, M., Peters, L. and Dulson, S. (2018) *Implementing Housing First across England, Scotland and Wales*. Manchester: Imogen Blood & Associates.

Blood, I. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Boobis, S., Jacob, R. and Sanders, B. (2019) *A home for all: understanding migrant homelessness in Great Britain*. London: Crisis.

Bourdieu, P. (2005) *The social structures of the economy*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bowpitt, G. (2020) 'Choosing to be homeless? Persistent rough sleeping and the perverse incentives of social policy in England', *Housing, Care and Support*, 23(3/4), pp. 135-147.

Boyd, C. and Andell, P. (2024) 'Reinventing the Resettlement of Prison Leavers in the UK: Housing First, Rehabilitation Last', *Holistic Responses to Reducing Reoffending*, pp. 19-37. London: Routledge.

Bramley, G. (2013) 'Housing market models and planning', *Town Planning Review*, 84(1), pp. 9-35.

Bramley, G. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) 'Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?', *Housing studies,* 33(1), pp. 96–116.

Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., McIntyre, J. and Johnsen, S. (2022) *Homelessness amongst Black and minoritised ethnic communities in the UK: A statistical report on the state of the nation*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University.

Braun, V., Clarke, V. and Weate, P. (2016) 'Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research', *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*, pp. 213-227. London: Routledge.

Bremner, A.J., Duke, P.J., Nelson, H.E., Pantelis, C. and Barnes, T.R. (1996) 'Cognitive function and duration of rooflessness in entrants to a hostel for homeless men', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 169(4), pp. 434-439.

Bretherton, J. (2017) 'Reconsidering gender in homelessness', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 11(1).

Bretherton, J. (2020) 'Women's experiences of homelessness: A longitudinal study', *Social Policy and Society*, 19(2), pp. 255-270.

Bretherton, J., and Maycock, P. (2021) *A strategy for ending women's homelessness in London.* London: Women's Development Unit.

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2019) 'Is work an answer to homelessness? Evaluating an employment programme for homeless adults', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 13(1), pp.59-83.

Brewer, M.B. (2001) 'Ingroup identification and intergroup conflict', *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction*, 3, pp.17-41.

Brewer, M. (2008) 'Welfare reform in the UK: 1997-2007', *Working Paper*, 12.

British Psychological Society (2021) *Code of Ethics and Conduct.* Available at: https://www.bps.org.uk/guideline/code-ethics-and-conduct (Accessed 12 December 2021).

British Society of Criminology (2015) *Statement of Ethics.* Available at: https://www.britsoccrim.org/documents/BSCEthics2015.pdf (Accessed 12 December 2021).

Brown, A. (2002) *Critical realism, value and capital*. PhD thesis: Middlesex University.

Brown, R., Kalafsky, R.V., Mawson, S. and Davies, L. (2020) 'Shocks, uncertainty and regional resilience: The case of Brexit and Scottish SMEs', *Local Economy*, 35(7), pp. 655-675.

Bruns, A. and Stieglitz, S. (2014) 'Metrics for understanding communication on Twitter', *Twitter and society: Digital Formations,* 89, pp.69-82.

Brunton-Smith, I. and Hopkins, K. (2013) 'The factors associated with proven re-offending following release from prison: findings from Waves 1 to 3 of SPCR', *Results from the surveying prisoner crime reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners*.

Burns, A.P. (2020) *Journeys through homelessness: an ethnographic investigation into the lived experiences of homelessness in Glasgow*. PhD thesis: University of Glasgow.

Buck, A.M. and Ralston, D.F. (2021) 'I didn't sign up for your research study: The ethics of using "public" data', *Computers and Composition*, 61, p.102655.

Bunis, W.K., Yancik, A. and Snow, D.A. (1996) 'The cultural patterning of sympathy toward the homeless and other victims of misfortune', *Social Problems*, 43(4), pp.387-402.

Busch-Geertsema, V., Edgar, W., O'Sullivan, E. and Pleace, N. (2010) 'Homelessness and homeless policies in Europe: Lessons from research', *Conference on homelessness*, 9(1), p. 10.

Butler, C. (2022) 'Policy: Energy Demand and Welfare in the UK', *Energy Poverty, Practice, and Policy*, pp. 55-58. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Buzzeo, J., Byford, M., Martin, A. and Newton, B. (2019) *Experiences of homeless young people in precarious employment*. Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies.

Byrne, M. (2020) 'Generation rent and the financialization of housing: A comparative exploration of the growth of the private rental sector in Ireland, the UK and Spain', *Housing Studies*, *35*(4), pp. 743-765.

Camic, P.M. (2024) 'But it makes me uncomfortable: the challenges and opportunities of research poetry', *Arts & Health*, pp. 1-6.

Carlen, P. (1996) *Jigsaw: A political criminology of youth homelessness*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Casey, R., Goudie, R. and Reeve, K. (2008) 'Homeless Women in Public Spaces: Strategies of Resistance', *Housing Studies*, 23(6), pp. 899–916.

Chamberlain, C. and Johnson, G. (2001) 'The debate about homelessness', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 36(1), pp. 35-50.

Chamberlain, C. and MacKenzie, D. (2006) 'Homeless Careers: A Framework for Intervention', *Australian Social Work*, 59(2), pp. 198–212.

Chard, G., Faulkner, T. and Chugg, A. (2009) 'Exploring occupation and its meaning among homeless men', *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 72(3), pp. 116-124.

Charted Institute for Housing (2023) *CIH submission to the Infrastructure Levy Consultation.* Available at: https://www.cih.org/news/cih-submission-to-the-infrastructure-levy-consultation (Accessed 11 November 2023).

Cheshire, P. and Hilber, C.A. (2024) *Housing and planning* (No. 061). London: Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics.

Clair, A. (2022) 'The effect of local housing allowance reductions on overcrowding in the private rented sector in England', *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 22(1), pp. 119-137.

Clapham, D. (2003) 'Pathways approaches to homelessness research', *Journal of community & applied social psychology*, 13(2), pp. 119-127.

Clapham, D. (2007) 'Homelessness and social exclusion', *Multidisciplinary handbook of social exclusion research*, pp. 79-94.

Clapham, D. (2018) 'Housing theory, housing research and housing policy', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 35(2), pp. 163-177.

Clark, S. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Clark, T. (2011) 'Gaining and maintaining access: Exploring the mechanisms that support and challenge the relationship between gatekeepers and researchers', *Qualitative Social Work*, 10(4), pp. 485-502.

Clarke, A. (2010) 'Work as a route out of homelessness: Work as a route out of homelessness: a case study of case study of case study of Emmaus Communities', *People, Place & Policy Online*, 4(3), pp. 89-102.

Cloke, P., May, J. and Johnsen, S. (2010) *Swept Up Lives? Re-envisioning the Homeless City*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cloke, P., Milbourne, P. and Widdowfield, R. (2001) 'Making the homeless count? Enumerating rough sleepers and the distortion of homelessness', *Policy & Politics,* 29(3), pp. 259–279.

Cohen, S. (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics.* London: Macgibbon & Kee.

Colenutt, B. (2020) 'Financing housing investment', *The Property Lobby*, pp. 47-56. Bristol: Policy Press.

Colombo, F. and Saruis, T. (2015) 'Housing first and the City: How do innovative projects affect local policies and urban space.' *RC21 International Conference, Urbino, Italy*, pp. 27-29.

Connell, A., Martin, S. and St Denny, E. (2017) 'How can subnational governments deliver their policy objectives in the age of austerity? Reshaping homelessness policy in Wales', *The Political Quarterly*, 88(3), pp. 443-451.

Cowan, D. (2019) *Homelessness: The (in) appropriate applicant*. London: Routledge.

Cowan, D. and Morgan, K. (2009) 'Trust, distrust and betrayal: a social housing case study', *The Modern Law Review*, 72(2), pp. 157-181.

Cowell, R. (2017) 'The EU referendum, planning and the environment: where now for the UK?' *Town Planning Review*, *88*(2), pp.153-171.

Crane, M., Byrne, K., Fu, R., Lipmann, B., Mirabelli, F., Rota-Bartelink, A., Ryan, M., Shea, R., Watt, H. and Warnes, A.M. (2005) 'The causes of homelessness in later life: Findings from a 3-nation study', *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 60(3), pp. 152-159.

Cresswell, J. (2013) *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed). London: Sage.

Crinall, K. (2001) 'Representing the invisible: Images of women among the 'new' faces of homelessness', *Parity* 14(1).

Crisis (2019) *One Year Closer to Ending Homelessness.* Available at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/241347/cri0217_impact_report_2019_aw_web.pdf (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Crisis (2023) *Homelessness and Mental Health.* Available at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health/ (Accessed 16 November 2023).

Critical Realism Network (2016) *What are the Criteria of Judgmental Rationality?* Available at: https://criticalrealismnetwork.org/2016/07/13/rationality/ (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Cross, S., Bywaters, P., Brown, P. and Featherstone, B. (2022) 'Housing, homelessness and children's social care: Towards an urgent research agenda', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 52(4), pp. 1988-2007.

Crowson, N.J. (2013) 'Revisiting the 1977 housing (homeless persons) act: Westminster, Whitehall, and the homelessness lobby', *Twentieth Century British History*, 24(3), pp. 424-447.

Cubbon, S. (2000) 'The Dismantling of Patriarchy', *UCL Jurisprudence Rev.*, p.253.

Culhane, D.P. (2008) 'The Costs of Homelessness: A Perspective from the United States', *European Journal of Homelessness,* 2(1), pp. 97-114.

Culhane, D.P. and Metraux, S. (2008) Rearranging the deck chairs or reallocating the lifeboats? Homelessness assistance and its alternatives, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *74*(1), pp. 111-121.

Curtis, E.A. and O'Connell, R. (2013) 'Recruiting samples from vulnerable populations', *Quantitative health research: Issues and methods*, pp. 106-127.

Curwen, P. (1997) 'Income and Wealth', *Understanding the UK Economy*, pp. 45-78.

Daly, G. (2013) *Homeless: Policies, strategies and lives on the streets*. London: Routledge.

Danermark, B., Ekstrom, M. and Karlsson, J.C. (2019) *Explaining society: Critical realism in the social sciences*. London: Routledge.

Davidson, D. (1994) 'The social aspect of language', *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett*, pp. 1-16. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

De Leeuw, E. (2008) 'Self-administered questionnaires and standardized interviews', *Handbook of social research methods*, pp. 313-327.

Dennis, D., Locke, G. and Khadduri, J. (2007) *Toward understanding homelessness: The 2007 national symposium on homelessness research.*

Densley, J.A. (2012) 'The organisation of London's street gangs', *Global crime*, 13(1), pp. 42-64.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2011) *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. New York: Sage.

Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City.* New York: Crown.

De Souza, D.E. (2014) 'Culture, context and society–The underexplored potential of critical realism as a philosophical framework for theory and practice', *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 17(2), pp. 141-151.

Devereux, E. (2015) 'Thinking outside the charity box: Media coverage of homelessness', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 9(2).

DeVerteuil, G., May, J. and von Mahs, J. (2009) 'Complexity not collapse: recasting the 342 geographies of homelessness in a "punitive" age', *Progress in Human Geography*, 33(5), pp. 646–666.

Dobson, R. (2019) Policy responses to 'Rough Sleepers': opportunities & barriers for homeless adults in England. *Critical Social Policy* 39(2), pp. 309-321.

Dobson, R. (2022) 'Complex needs in homelessness practice: a review of 'new markets of vulnerability', *Housing Studies*, 37(7), pp. 1147-1173.

Drew, C. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Drummond (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Duke, B. (2023) 'UK squatters' social movement's crystal ball: the future of UK squatting during the post-UK Brexit and post-COVID19 recovery period', *Interface: A Journal on Social Movements*, 14(1).

Dwyer, P., Bowpitt, G., Sundin, E. and Weinstein, M. (2015) 'Rights, responsibilities and refusals: Homelessness policy and the exclusion of single homeless people with complex needs', *Critical Social Policy*, 35(1), pp.3-23.

Eastwood, D. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Edgar, B., Doherty, J. and Meert, H. (2002) *European Observatory on Homelessness*. Brussels: Feantsa.

Efebeh, V.E. (2020) 'The political economy of COVID-19 and its effects on global economy', *International Journal of New Economics and Social Sciences*, 11(1), pp.11-24.

Eisner, E.W. (1997) 'The promise and perils of alternative forms of data representation', *Educational researcher*, 26(6), pp.4-10.

Elder-Vass, D. (2006) 'Re-examining Bhaskar's three ontological domains: the lessons from emergence'. In C. Lawson, J. Latsis & N. Martins (Eds.), *Contributions to Social Ontology*, pp. 160-176. London: Routledge.

Elder-Vass, D. (2010) *The causal power of social structures: Emergence, structure and agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elder-Vass, D. (2015) 'Developing social theory using critical realism', *Journal of Critical Realism*, 14(1), pp.80-92.

Evans, J. and Baker, T. (2021) 'Breaking through the epistemic impasse: Ending homelessness with the invention of 'functional zero' in the Anglo-American world', *Futures*, 129, p.102730.

Fahmy, E. and Williamson, E. (2018) 'Poverty and domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in the UK', *Journal of gender-based violence*, 2(3), pp. 481-501.

Fairclough, N. (2013) 'Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies', *Critical policy studies*, 7(2), pp.177-197.

Farmer, N. (2021) 'I never felt like an illegal immigrant until social work turned up at the hospital': No recourse to public funds as necropolitical exception. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 51(8), pp .3301-3318.

Fazel, S., Geddes, J.R. and Kushel, M. (2014) 'The health of homeless people in high-income countries: descriptive epidemiology, health consequences, and clinical and policy recommendations', *The Lancet*, 384(9953), pp. 1529-1540.

FEANTSA (2001) *The need for resettlement experts.* Available at: https://www.feantsa.org_the_need_for_resettlement_experts/ (Accessed 3 June 2020).

FEANTSA (2002) *State intervention in Homelessness.* Available at: https://www.feantsa.org_state_intervention_in_homelessness (Accessed 3 June 2020).

FEANTSA (2007) *ETHOS - European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion.* Available at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/en-16822651433655843804.pdf (Accessed 3 June 2020).

FEANTSA (2011) *Impact of anti-crisis austerity measures on homeless services across the EU.* Brussels: Feantsa Policy Paper.

Ferrell, J. (1997) 'Youth, crime, and cultural space', *Social Justice*, 24(70), pp. 21-38.

Ferber, M. (2019) *Poetry and language: the linguistics of verse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ferdous, W., Bai, Y., Ngo, T.D., Manalo, A. and Mendis, P. (2019) 'New advancements, challenges and opportunities of multi-storey modular buildings–A state-of-the-art review', *Engineering structures*, 183, pp. 883-893.

Fetzer, T., Sen, S. and Souza, P.C. (2019) *Housing insecurity, homelessness and populism: Evidence from the UK.* Warwick: Warwick Economic Research Papers.

Fitzpatrick, S. (1997) *Pathways to Independence: The Experience of Young Homeless People,* PhD thesis: University of Glasgow.

Fitzpatrick, S. (2005) 'Explaining Homelessness: a Critical Realist Perspective', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 22(1), pp. 1–17.

Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G. and Johnsen, S. (2013) 'Pathways into multiple exclusion homelessness in seven UK cities', *Urban studies*, 50(1), pp. 148-168.

Fitzpatrick, S., Kemp, P. and Klinker, S. (2000) *Single homelessness. An overview of research in Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Fitzpatrick, S., Mackie, P. and Wood, J. (2019) *Homelessness prevention in the UK: policy briefing.* UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Excellence.

Fitzpatrick, S., Pleace, N., Stephens, M. and Quilgars, D. (2009) 'Introduction: An overview of homelessness in the UK', In Fitzpatrick, S., Quilgars, D., and Pleace, N. (eds.), *Homelessness in the UK: Problems and solutions*, Coventry: The Chartered Institute of Housing, pp. 1–20.

Fitzpatrick, S. and Pleace, N. (2012) 'The statutory homelessness system in England: a fair and effective rights-based model?' *Housing Studies*, 27(2), pp. 232-251.

Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H.N., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., Watts, B. and Wood, J. (2017) *The homelessness monitor: Wales 2017*. London: Crisis.

Fitzpatrick, S., Watts, B. and Perry, J. (2021) 'Homelessness, housing needs and lettings', *UK Housing Review*, pp. 87-97.

Flemmen, M. and Savage, M. (2017) 'The politics of nationalism and white racism in the UK', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68, pp. 233-264.

Fletcher, A.J. (2017) 'Applying critical realism in qualitative research: methodology meets method', *International journal of social research methodology*, 20(2), pp. 181-194.

Fleuty, K., Cooper, A. and Almond, M.K. (2021) 'Armed forces and veteran housing policies: the United Kingdom 2021 vision', *Journal of Veteran Studies*, 7, pp. 232-40.

Flick, U., von Kardorff, E. and Steinke, I. (2004) 'What is Qualitative Research? An Introduction to the Field', In Flick, U., von Kardorff, E., and Steinke, I. (eds.), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, pp. 3-11. London: Sage.

Fooks, G. and Pantazis, C. (1999) 'The criminalisation of homelessness, begging and street living', *Homelessness*, pp. 123-160. Bristol: Policy Press.

Fopp, R. (2009) Metaphors in homelessness discourse and research: exploring "pathways","careers" and "safety nets", *Housing, Theory and Society*, 26(4), pp. 271-291.

Forrest, R (1999) 'The new landscape of precariousness', *Homelessness*, pp. 17-36. Bristol: Policy Press.

Fountain, J., Howes, S., Marsden, J., Taylor, C. and Strang, J. (2003) 'Drug and alcohol use and the link with homelessness: results from a survey of homeless people in London', *Addiction Research & Theory*, 11(4), pp. 245-256.

Freeman, M.D.A. (1982) 'Legal systems, patriarchal ideologies and domestic violence: A case study of the English legal system', *Rsch. L. Deviance & Soc. Control*, 4, p.131.

Fyfe, N.R. and Bannister, J. (1996) 'City watching: closed circuit television surveillance in public spaces', *Area*, pp. 37-46.

Gamson, W.A. (2004). Bystanders, public opinion and the media. In D.A. Snow, S.A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. London: Blackwell.

Gaubatz, K.T. (2001) 'Family homelessness in Britain: More than just a housing issue', *Journal of Children and Poverty,* 7(1), pp. 3-22.

Gelder, K. (2007) *Subcultures: Cultural histories and social practice*. London: Routledge.

Gibb, K. (2021) *Housing markets and Policy in Scotland.* Glasgow: UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence.

Gibbons, A., Madoc-Jones, I., Ahmed, A., Jones, K., Rogers, M. and Wilding, M. (2020) 'Rural homelessness: prevention practices in Wales', *Social Policy and Society*, 19(1), pp. 133-144.

Gibson, D. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Gioia, D.A. (1999) 'Practicability, paradigms, and problems in stakeholder theorizing', *Academy of Management Review*, 24(2), pp. 228-232.

Gkotsis, G., Mueller, C., Dobson, R.J., Hubbard, T.J. and Dutta, R. (2020) 'Mining social media data to study the consequences of dementia diagnosis on caregivers and relatives', *Dementia and geriatric cognitive disorders*, 49(3), pp. 295-302.

Godfrey-Faussett, T. (2022) 'Participatory research and the ethics of anonymisation', *Education Sciences*, 12(4), p.260.

Goodacre, K. and Sumner, E. (2021) 'Overcoming the hurdles: Understanding motivation and supporting adult learners with poor literacy and dyslexia in the homelessness sector', *Dyslexia*, 27(1), pp. 79-93.

Gorski, P.S. (2013) 'What is critical realism? And why should you care?' *Contemporary Sociology,* 42(5).

Gowan, T. (2010) *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco, Minneapolis*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gray, T. (2020) *Employment and homelessness in the context of the new economy following Covid-19*. London: Centre for Homelessness Impact.

Green, J., Hellwig, T. and Fieldhouse, E. (2022) 'Who gets what: The economy, relative gains and Brexit', *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(1), pp. 320-338.

Greve, J. (1997) 'Preface: Homelessness then and now', In Burrows, R., Pleace, N., and Quilgars, D. (eds.), *Homelessness and Social Policy,* pp. xi-xvii. London: Routledge.

Griffiths, M., and Yeo, C. (2021). 'The UK's hostile environment: Deputising immigration control', *Critical Social Policy*, 41(4), pp. 521-544.

Grundmann, R. (2017) 'The problem of expertise in knowledge societies', *Minerva*, 55(1), pp. 25-48.

Hall, E. (1976) *Beyond Culture.* Cranleigh: Anchor Books.

Hall, S. (2013) 'The Work of Representation', In Hall, S., Evans, J., and Nixon, S. (eds.), *Representation* (2nd ed), pp. 1-47. London: Sage.

Hall, T. (2003) *Better Times Than This: Youth Homelessness in Britain*. London: Pluto Press.

Hammersley, M. (2009) 'Why critical realism fails to justify critical social research', *Methodological Innovations Online*, 4(2), pp. 1-11.

Harding, J., Irving, A. and Whowell, M. (2011) *Homelessness, pathways to exclusion and opportunities for intervention*. Northumbria: Arts and Social Sciences Academic Press.

Harris, T. (1995) 'Problematising popular culture', *Popular culture in England 1500–1850*, pp. 1-27.

Hartman, C. (1998) 'The case for a right to housing', *Housing Policy Debate*, 9(2), pp. 223-246.

Harvey, D. (2012) *Rebel cities: From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. London: Verso books.

Hashemi, A. (2013) 'Review of the UK housing history in relation to system building', *International Journal of Sustainable Tropical Design Research and Practice*, 6(1), pp. 47-58.

Hastings, C. (2021) 'A critical realist methodology in empirical research: foundations, process, and payoffs', *Journal of critical realism*, 20(5), pp. 458-473.

Hay, C. (2009) 'Good inflation, bad inflation: The housing boom, economic growth and the disaggregation of inflationary preferences in the UK and Ireland', *The British journal of politics and international relations*, 11(3), pp. 461-478.

Hennigan, B. (2017) 'House broken: Homelessness, housing first, and neoliberal poverty governance', *Urban Geography*, 38(9), pp. 1418-1440.

Hermans, K. and Pleace, N. (2020) 'Counting all homelessness in Europe: The case for ending separate enumeration of 'hidden homelessness', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 14(3), pp. 35-62.

Hilber, C. and Schoni, O. (2022) *Housing policy and affordable housing*. London: Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Hibbert, S.A., Hogg, G. and Quinn, T. (2002) 'Consumer response to social entrepreneurship: The case of the Big Issue in Scotland', *International journal of nonprofit and voluntary sector marketing*, 7(3), pp. 288-301.

Hill, J. (2020) *See what you made me do: Power, control and domestic abuse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hodgetts, D., Hodgetts, A. and Radley, A. (2006) 'Life in the shadow of the media: Imaging street homelessness in London', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9(4), pp. 497-516.

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2000) *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method*. London: Sage.

Homeless Hub (2019) *Housing First in Europe.* Available at: https://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/homelessness-101/housing-first (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Homeless Link (2019) *About Housing First.* Available at: https://homeless.org.uk/areas-of-expertise/housing-first/ (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Hornsby, A. (2018) *Homelessness: a multifaceted epidemic–can we create a better system?*

House of Commons (2020) *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2019/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2019 (Accessed 3 June 2020).

House of Commons (2023) *The end of 'no fault' section 21 evictions.* Available at: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8658/ (Accessed 16 January 2024).

Houston, S. (2010) 'Prising open the black box: Critical realism, action research and social work', *Qualitative Social Work*, 9(1), pp. 73-91.

Hoyle, C. (2012) 'Feminism, victimology and domestic violence', *Handbook of victims and victimology*, pp. 162-190. Cambridge: Willan.

Huey, L. (2012) Invisible Victims: *Homelessness and the Growing Security Gap*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hughes, E. C. (1945) 'Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status', *American Journal of Sociology*, 50(5), pp. 353–359.

Hutson, S. and Clapham, D. (1999) 'Homelessness: Public policies and private troubles', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 18(3-4), pp. 178-180.

Inside Housing (2021) *Everyone In scheme began excluding rough sleepers from May 2020, government tells court.* Available at: https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/everyone-in-scheme-began-excluding-rough-sleepers-from-may-2020-government-tells-court-73716 (Accessed 15 January 2022).

Inside Housing (2023) *Former rough sleeping minister 'sceptical' of case for Housing First*. Available at: https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/former-rough-sleeping-minister-sceptical-of-case-for-housing-first-82071 (Accessed 11 March 2024).

Inside Housing (2024) *Alarming amount of exempt accommodation in Birmingham falls below local council standards*. Available at: https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/alarming-amount-of-

exempt-accommodation-in-birmingham-falls-below-local-council-standards-85898 (Accessed 23 August 2024).

Jacobs, K., Kemeny, J. and Manzi, T. (1999) 'The struggle to define homelessness: A constructivist approach', *Homelessness: Public policies and private troubles,* pp. 11–28.

Jamieson, J. (2000) 'Negotiating Danger in Fieldwork on Crime: A Researcher's Tale', In Lee-Treweek, G. and Linkogle, S. (eds.), *Danger in the Field: Risk and Ethics in Social Research*, pp. 61-71. Abingdon: Routledge.

Jarrett, C. (2010) 'Helping the Homeless' *The Psychologist* 23(4), pp. 284-287.

Jerome, K., Heffernan, M., Adkins, B., Greenhalgh, E., & Minnery, J. (2003). *Women, housing and transitions out of homelessness—Stage 2 Report*. Report to the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women.

Joern, R. (2008) 'Mean streets: Violence against the homeless and the makings of a hate crime', *Hastings Race & Poverty*, 6, p.305.

Johnsen, S. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2007) *The impact of enforcement on street users in England*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Johnsen, S. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2010) 'Revanchist Sanitisation or Coercive Care? The Use of Enforcement to Combat Begging, Street Drinking and Rough Sleeping in England', *Urban Studies*, 47(8), pp. 1703–1723.

Johnsen, S., Fitzpatrick, S. and Watts, B. (2018) 'Homelessness and social control: a typology', *Housing Studies*, 33(7), pp. 1106-1126.

Johnsen, S. and Teixeira, L. (2010) *Staircases, elevators and cycles of change: 'Housing First' and other housing models for homeless people with complex support needs*. London: Crisis.

Johnsen, S. and Watts, B. (2014) *Homelessness and poverty: reviewing the links*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University

Johnson, G. and Chamberlain, C. (2008) 'Homelessness and substance abuse: Which comes first?' *Australian Social Work*, 61(4), pp. 342-356.

Johnson, R., Gilchrist, E., Beech, A.R., Weston, S., Takriti, R. and Freeman, R. (2006) 'A psychometric typology of UK domestic violence offenders', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 21(10), pp. 1270-1285.

Johnson, G. and Pleace, N. (2016) 'How do we measure success in homelessness services? Critically assessing the rise of the homelessness outcomes star', *European Journal of Homelessness*, pp. 31-51.

Johnson, G., Scutella, R., Tseng, Y.P. and Wood, G. (2015) *Entries and exits from homelessness: a dynamic analysis of the relationship between structural conditions and individual characteristics*.

Jolly, A., Singh, J. and Lobo, S. (2022) 'No recourse to public funds: a qualitative evidence synthesis', *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*, 18(1), pp. 107-123.

Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010*. London: Crisis.

Joyce, R., Mitchell, M. and Keiller, A.N. (2017) *The cost of housing for low-income renters* (No. R132). IFS Report.

Kaufman, M. (1994) 'Men, feminism, and men's contradictory experiences of power', *Theorizing masculinities*, 5, p.142.

Kemp, S. and Holmwood, J. (2003) 'Realism, regularity and social explanation', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 33(2), pp. 165-187.

Kemp, P.A., Neale, J. and Robertson, M. (2006) 'Homelessness among problem drug users: prevalence, risk factors and trigger events', *Health & social care in the community*, 14(4), pp. 319-328.

Kiely, E. and Swirak, K. (2021) 'Criminalising Homelessness and Poverty through Urban Policy', *The Criminalisation of Social Policy in Neoliberal Societies*, pp. 90-115. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Kingdon, J. W. (1984) *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Krasner, S.D. (1982) 'Regimes and the limits of realism: regimes as autonomous variables', *International Organization*, 36(2), pp. 497-510.

Kraus, M.W., Piff, P.K., and Keltner, D. (2011) 'Social Class as Culture: The Convergence of Resources and Rank in the Social Realm', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20(4), pp. 246-250.

Kruger, D.J., Fisher, M.L. and Wright, P. (2014) 'Patriarchy, male competition, and excess male mortality', *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, 8(1), p.3.

Ksir, C. and Hart, C.L. (2016) 'Correlation still does not imply causation', *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 3(5), p.401.

Kuhn, R. and Culhane, D.P. (1998) 'Applying cluster analysis to test a typology of homelessness by pattern of shelter utilization: Results from the analysis of administrative data', *American journal of community psychology*, 26(2), pp. 207-232.

Lawson, T. (1998) 'Developments in economics as realist social theory', *Critical realism in economics*, pp. 17-34. London: Routledge.

Lee, R. M. (1993) *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*. London: Sage.

Lee, B.A., Tyler, K.A. and Wright, J.D. (2010) 'The new homelessness revisited', *Annual review of sociology,* 36(1), pp. 501–521.

Leighton, K., Kardong-Edgren, S., Schneidereith, T. and Foisy-Doll, C. (2021) 'Using social media and snowball sampling as an alternative recruitment strategy for research', *Clinical simulation in nursing*, 55, pp .37-42.

Leishman, C. and Rowley, S. (2012) 'Affordable housing', *The Sage Handbook of Housing Studies*, pp.379-96. London: Sage.

Leyshon, A., and French, S. (2009) 'We all live in a Robbie Fowler house': The geographies of the buy to let market in the UK, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 11(3), pp.438-460.

Liamputtong, P. (2006) *Researching the vulnerable: A guide to sensitive research methods*. London: Sage.

Liamputtong, P. and Rice, Z.S. (2022) 'Participatory research: coproduction of knowledge research as inclusive research', *Handbook of social inclusion: research and practices in health and social sciences*, pp. 1-17. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Liu, Y., Xu, C., Kuai, X., Deng, H., Wang, K. and Luo, Q. (2022) 'Analysis of the causes of inferiority feelings based on social media data with Word2Vec', *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), p.5218.

Lloyd, M. (2018) 'Domestic violence and education: Examining the impact of domestic violence on young children, children, and young people and the potential role of schools', *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, p.2094.

Long, N. (1992) 'From paradigm lost to paradigm regained', In Long, N. and Long, A. (eds.), *Battlefields of Knowledge: The Interlocking of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development*. London: Routledge, pp. 16–43.

Loopstra, R., Reeves, A., Barr, B., Taylor-Robinson, D., McKee, M. and Stuckler, D. (2016) 'The impact of economic downturns and budget cuts on homelessness claim rates across 323 local authorities in England, 2004–12', *Journal of Public Health*, 38(3), pp. 417-425.

Lovell, H. and Smith, S.J. (2010) 'Agencement in housing markets: The case of the UK construction industry', *Geoforum*, 41(3), pp.457-468.

Luckhurst, R. (2013) *The trauma question*. London: Routledge.

Mabhala, M.A., Ellahi, B., Massey, A. and Kingston, P. (2016) *Understanding the determinants of homelessness through examining the life stories of homeless people and those who work with them: a qualitative research protocol*. Chester: University of Chester Open Repository.

MacEwen, M. (1990) Homelessness, race and law, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 16(4), pp. 505-521.

Mackie, P., Johnsen, S. and Wood, J. (2019) 'Ending street homelessness: what works and why we don't do it', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 13(1), pp. 85-96.

Maguire, N. (2022) 'The role of debt in the maintenance of homelessness', *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, p.810064.

Mallett, S., Rosenthal, D. and Keys, D. (2005) 'Young people, drug use and family conflict: pathways into homelessness', *Journal of adolescence*, 28(2), pp. 185–99.

Malpass, P. (20050 Housing in an 'opportunity society'. *Social Policy Review* 17, pp. 69-84. Bristol: Policy Press.

Malprass, P. (2010) 'The rise (and rise?) of housing associations', *Housing, markets and policy*, pp.101-121.

Manning, T. (2012) 'Managing change in hard times', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 44(5), pp. 259-267.

Marsh, A., Gibb, K. and Soaita, A.M. (2023) 'Rent regulation: unpacking the debates', *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 23(4), pp. 734-757.

Marsh, A. and Kennett, P. (1999) 'Exploring the new terrain', *Homelessness*, pp. 1-16. Bristol: Policy Press.

Marvasti, A. (2003) *Qualitative Research in Sociology*. London: Sage.

Maslow, A.H. (1943) 'A theory of human motivation', *Psychological review*, 50(4), p.370.

Matthews, R. (2014) *Realist Criminology.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

May, J., Cloke, P. and Johnsen, S. (2005) 'Re-phasing neoliberalism: New Labour and Britain's crisis of street homelessness', *Antipode*, *37*(4), pp. 703-730.

Mayock, P., Corr, M.L. and O'Sullivan, E. (2011) 'Homeless young people, families and change: Family support as a facilitator to exiting homelessness', *Child & Family Social Work*, 16(4), pp. 391-401.

McConnell, A. (2010) 'Policy success, policy failure and grey areas in-between', *Journal of public policy*, 30(3), pp. 345-362.

McCormack, F. and Fedorowicz, S. (2022) 'Women, homelessness and multiple disadvantage in Stoke-on-Trent: The need for safe places in the context of wider health and social inequalities', *Local Economy*, 37(8), pp. 655-675.

McCulloch, D.C. (2015) *Analysing understandings of 'rough sleeping': managing, becoming and being homeless*. PhD thesis: Open University.

McDonald, M., Townsend, A., Cox, S.M., Paterson, N.D. and Lafrenière, D. (2008) 'Trust in health research relationships: accounts of human subjects', *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, 3(4), pp. 35-47.

McGovern, P., Hill, S., Mills, C. and White, M. (2007) *Market, class, and employment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McKendrick, J.H. (2020) 'Of a time and place: Glasgow and its quality of life geographies', *Space and Polity*, *24*(2), pp. 233-251.

McKenzie, K., Murray, G., Wilson, H. and Delahunty, L. (2019) 'Homelessness - It will crumble men: The views of staff and service users about facilitating the identification and support of people with an intellectual disability in homeless services', *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 27(4), pp. 514-521.

McNaughton, C. (2006) 'Agency, Structure and Biography: Charting Transitions Through Homelessness in Late Modernity', *Auto/Biography*, 14(2), pp. 134–152.

McNaughton, C. (2008) 'Being a Homeless Person. *Transitions Through Homelessness: Lives on the Edge*, pp. 87-109.

McNaughton Nicholls, C. (2009) 'Agency, Transgression and the Causation of Homelessness: A Contextualised Rational Action Analysis', *International Journal of Housing*, 9(1), pp. 69–84.

McNaughton Nicholls, C. (2010) 'Housing, homelessness and capabilities', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 27(1), pp. 23-41.

Meanwell, E. (2013) 'Profaning the past to salvage the present: The symbolically reconstructed pasts of homeless shelter residents', *Symbolic Interaction*, 36(4), pp. 439-456.

Mental Health Foundation (2023) *Homelessness: statistics.* Available at: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/statistics/homelessness-statistics (Accessed 11 November 2023).

Merriam, S. B. (2009) *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Milbourne, P. and Cloke, P. (2006) 'Rural homelessness in the UK: A national overview', *International perspectives on rural homelessness*, pp. 79-96. London: Routledge.

MIND (2020) *Mental health problems – an introduction.* Available at:
https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/mental-health-problems-introduction/about-mental-health-problems/ (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2018) *Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee*, 639. Available at: https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-04-19/debates/FB067280-0831-41CD-B2AE-73D1BEFDDE22/HousingCommunitiesAndLocalGovernmentCommittee (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) *Government announces £100 million plan to end homelessness by 2027.* Available at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-100-million-plan-to-end-rough-sleeping-by-2027 (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report.* Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f68c436d3bf7f723618781c/Evaluation_of_the_Implementation_of_the_Homelessness_Reduction_Act_Final_Report.pdf (Accessed 11 November 2021).

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *Investigation into the housing of rough sleepers during the COVID-19 pandemic.* London: National Audit Office.

Minnery, J. and Greenhalgh, E. (2007) 'Approaches to homelessness policy in Europe, the United States, and Australia', *Journal of Social Issues*, 63(3), pp .641-655.

Moore, T. (2018) 'Replication through partnership: the evolution of partnerships between community land trusts and housing associations in England', *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 18(1), pp. 82-102.

Morgan, B. (2022) 'What fresh hell? UK policies targeting homeless migrants for deportation after Brexit and Covid-19', *Critical Social Policy*, 42(1), pp. 150-159.

Morton, A. (2010) *Making housing affordable*. London: Policy Exchange*.*

Mullins, D. (2010) Housing associations, *Working paper.* University of Birmingham.

Murphy, A. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Murray, C.A. (1999) *The underclass revisited*. Washington: American Enterprise Institute.

National Audit Office (2021*) Investigation into the housing of rough sleepers during the COVID-19 pandemic.* Available at: https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-housing-of-rough-sleepers-during-the-covid19-pandemic/ (Accessed 11 November 2021).

Nazir, F., Edwards, D.J., Shelbourn, M., Martek, I., Thwala, W.D.D. and El-Gohary, H. (2021) 'Comparison of modular and traditional UK housing construction: A bibliometric analysis', *Journal of Engineering, Design and Technology*, 19(1), pp. 164-186.

Neale, J. (1997) 'Homelessness and theory reconsidered', *Housing Studies*, Routledge, 12(1), pp. 47–61.

Neale, J., Brobbin, E., Bowen, A., Craft, S., Drummond, C., Dwyer, G.-J., Finch, E., Henderson, J., Hermann, L., Kelleher, M., Kuester, L., McDonald, R., Metrebian, N., Parkin, S., Radcliffe, P., Roberts, E., Robson, D., Strang, J., & Turner, R. (2020) *Experiences of being housed in a London hotel as part of the 'Everyone In' initiative. Part 1: Life in the Hotel*. London: National Addiction Centre, King's College London.

Neate, P. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Nelson, K (2004) 'Mechanisms of Poverty Alleviation in the Welfare State. A Comparative Study of Anti-poverty Effects of Non Means-tested and Means-tested Benefits in Five Countries in the 1990s', *Journal of European Social Policy,* 14(4), pp. 371-390.

Netto, G. (2006) 'Vulnerability to homelessness, use of services and homelessness prevention in black and minority ethnic communities', *Housing Studies*, 21(4), pp. 581-601.

Netto, G., Pawson, H. and Sharp, C. (2009) 'Preventing homelessness due to domestic violence: providing a safe space or closing the door to new possibilities?' *Social Policy & Administration*, 43(7), pp. 719-735.

Newburn, T. (2002) 'Atlantic crossings: 'Policy transfer' and crime control in the USA and Britain', *Punishment & Society,* 4(2).

Newman, J. (2017) 'Re-addressing the cultural system: problems and solutions in Margaret Archer's theory of culture', *Political Sciences Conference*, pp. 1-22.

Nowicki, M. (2018) 'A Britain that everyone is proud to call home? The bedroom tax, political rhetoric and home unmaking in UK housing policy', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 19(5), pp.647-667.

Oakes, P.M. and Davies, R.C. (2008) 'Intellectual disability in homeless adults: A prevalence study', *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 12(4), pp. 325-334.

O'Connell, M.E. (2003) 'Responding to homelessness: An overview of US and UK policy interventions', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 13(2), pp. 158-170.

O'Connell Davidson, J., and Layder, D. (1994) *Methods: Sex and Madness*. London: Routledge

Oddy, M., Moir, J.F., Fortescue, D. and Chadwick, S. (2012) 'The prevalence of traumatic brain injury in the homeless community in a UK city', *Brain injury*, 26(9), pp. 1058-1064.

O'Flaherty, B. (2019) 'Research on Homelessness: A Guide for Economists (and Friends)', *Journal of Housing Economics*, 44, pp. 1-25.

Okamoto, Y. (2007) 'Homelessness and Residential Policy in Japan', *The Routledge Handbook of Global Perspectives on Homelessness, Law & Policy*, pp. 387-404. London: Routledge.

O'Leary, C. and Simcock, T. (2022) 'Policy failure or f*** up: Homelessness and welfare reform in England', *Housing Studies*, 37(8), pp. 1379-1395.

ONS (2022a) *Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2022.* Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuse inenglandandwalesoverview/november2022 (Accessed 15 March 2023).

ONS (2022b) Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethni cgroupenglandandwales/census2021 (Accessed 16 September 2022).

O'Sullivan, E. (2010) 'Welfare states and homelessness', *Homeless Research in Europe,* pp. 65-84. Brussels: Feantsa.

O'Sullivan, E., Pleace, N., Busch-Geertsema, V. and Hrast, M.F. (2020) 'Distorting tendencies in understanding homelessness in Europe', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 14(3), pp. 109-135.

Owton, H. (2017) *Doing poetic inquiry*. New York: Springer.

Paccoud, A. (2017) 'Buy-to-let gentrification: Extending social change through tenure shifts', *Environment and Planning*, 49(4), pp. 839-856.

Padgett, D.K. (2013). 'Choices, Consequences and Context: Housing First and its Critics' *European Journal of Homelessness* 7(2) pp. 341-347.

Padgett, D.K., Henwood, B.F. and Tsemberis, S.J. (2016) *Housing First: Ending homelessness, transforming systems, and changing lives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Padgett, D.K., Smith, B.T., Derejko, K.S., Henwood, B.F. and Tiderington, E. (2013) 'A picture is worth...? Photo elicitation interviewing with formerly homeless adults', *Qualitative health research*, 23(11), pp. 1435-1444.

Pain, R. and Francis, P. (2004) 'Living with crime: Spaces of risk for homeless young people', *Children's geographies*, 2(1), pp. 95-110.

Pardo, M.L. (2020) 'Violence and hate speech against the homeless in social media during the Covid-19 pandemic', *Multicultural Discourses in Turbulent Times,* pp. 191-210.

Parsell, C. (2010) '"Homeless is What I Am, Not Who I Am": Insights from an Inner-City Brisbane Study', *Urban Policy and Research*, 28(2), pp. 181–194.

Parsell, C. and Marston, G. (2016) 'Supportive housing: justifiable paternalism?' *Housing, Theory and Society*, 33(2), pp. 195-216.

Parsell, C. and Parsell, M. (2012) 'Homelessness as a Choice', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 29(4), 351 pp. 420–434.

Parsell, C., Tomaszewski, W. and Phillips, R. (2014) 'Exiting unsheltered homelessness and sustaining housing: A human agency perspective', *Social Service Review*, 88(2), pp. 295-321.

Pattison, B. and McCarthy, L. (2022) 'The role of mental health in multiple exclusion homelessness', *Social Policy and Society*, 21(3), pp. 405-421.

Pawson, H. and Davidson, E. (2006) 'Fit for purpose? Official measures of homelessness in the era of the activist state', *Radical Statistics,* 93, p.7.

Pawson, R. (1996) 'Theorising the interview', *British Journal of Sociology*, pp. 295-314.

Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (2004) *Realist evaluation*. London: Sage.

Payne, S., Serin, B., James, G. and Adams, D. (2019) *How does the land supply system affect the business of UK speculative housebuilding? An evidence review*.

Pearce, J. and Vine, J. (2014) 'Quantifying residualisation: the changing nature of social housing in the UK', *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 29, pp. 657-675.

Phelan, J., Link, B.G., Moore, R.E. and Stueve, A. (1997) 'The stigma of homelessness: The impact of the label" homeless" on attitudes toward poor persons', *Social psychology quarterly*, pp. 323-337.

Pilkington, N. (2019) *How are themes of support realised in services for women experiencing homelessness? A small-scale qualitative study.* PhD thesis: University of Huddersfield.

Pleace, N. (1998) Single homelessness as social exclusion: The unique and the extreme, *Social Policy & Administration*, 32(1), pp. 46-59.

Pleace, N. (2000) 'The New Consensus, the Old Consensus and the Provision of Services for People Sleeping Rough', *Housing Studies*, 15(4), pp. 581–594.

Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2012) 'Will paradigm drift stop Housing First from ending homelessness? Categorising and critically assessing the Housing First movement from a social policy perspective.' In *Social Policy in an Unequal World: Joint annual conference of the East Asian Social Policy Research Network and the UK Social Policy Association*.

Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) 'The case for Housing First in the European Union: A critical evaluation of concerns about effectiveness', *European Journal of homelessness*, 7(2).

Pleace, N. (2017) 'The Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016-2019: The culmination of an integrated strategy to end homelessness?', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 11(2).

Pleace, N. (2018) *Using Housing First in integrated homelessness strategies: A review of the evidence*. York: Centre for Housing Policy.

Pleace, N. (2019) *Preventing homelessness: A review of the international evidence.* York: Centre for Housing Policy.

Pluck, G., Lee, K.H., David, R., Spence, S.A. and Parks, R.W. (2012) 'Neuropsychological and cognitive performance of homeless adults', *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science,* 44(1), p.9.

Policy Exchange (2020) *Rethinking the Planning System for the 21st Century.* Available at: https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/rethinking-the-planning-system-for-the-21st-century/ (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Poremski, D. and Hwang, S.W. (2016) 'Willingness of housing first participants to consider supported-employment services', *Psychiatric Services*, 67(6), pp. 667-670.

Prather, S.M. (2010) *The criminalization of homelessness*. Las Vegas: University of Nevada.

Pryke, M. and Whitehead, C. (1995) 'Private sector criteria and the radical change in provision of social housing in England', *Environment and Planning: Government and Policy*, 13(2), pp. 217-252.

Pudaruth, A. (2022) *The experiences of seeking and receiving psychological support of homeless people who are from a minority ethnic background: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.* PhD thesis: University of East London.

Pue, K. (2023) 'Comparing government social welfare service acquisition regimes: Marketisation and bases for competition in Canadian and English homelessness', *Journal of Social Policy*, 52(3), pp. 581-601.

Queen, A.B., Lowrie, R., Richardson, J. and Williamson, A.E. (2017) 'Multimorbidity, disadvantage, and patient engagement within a specialist homeless health service in the UK: an in-depth study of general practice data', *BJGP open*, 1(3).

Quilgars, D., Fitzpatrick, S., and Pleace, N. (2011). *Ending Youth Homelessness: possibilities, challenges and practical solutions*. London: Centrepoint.

Quilgars, D., Johnsen, S. and Pleace, N. (2008) *Youth homelessness in the UK: A decade of progress?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Rae, B.E. and Rees, S. (2015) 'The perceptions of homeless people regarding their healthcare needs and experiences of receiving health care', *Journal of advanced nursing*, 71(9), pp. 2096-2107.

Randell, G. and Brown, S. (1999) *Prevention is better than cure: New solutions to street homelessness from Crisis*. London: Crisis.

Ravenhill, M. (2008) *The Culture of Homelessness*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Rayburn, R.L. and Guittar, N.A. (2013) "This is where you are supposed to be": how homeless individuals cope with stigma. *Sociological Spectrum*, 33(2), pp. 159-174.

Rea, J. (2023) 'Social relationships, stigma, and wellbeing through experiences of homelessness in the United Kingdom', *Journal of Social Issues*, 79(1), pp. 465-493.

Reeves, P. (1996) *An Introduction to Social Housing.* London: Arnold.

Reeve, K. (2017) 'Welfare conditionality, benefit sanctions and homelessness in the UK: ending the 'something for nothing culture' or punishing the poor?' *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 25(1), pp. 65-78.

Reeve, K., & Batty, E. (2011) *The hidden truth about homelessness.* London: Crisis and Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research.

Reeve, K., Casey, R. and Goudie, R. (2006) *Homeless women: Still being failed yet striving to survive*. London: Crisis.

Reilly, J., Ho, I. and Williamson, A. (2022) 'A systematic review of the effect of stigma on the health of people experiencing homelessness', *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 30(6), pp. 2128-2141.

Reinprecht, C. (2022) 'The local dimension of housing policies', *Handbook on Urban Social Policies*, pp. 170-186. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Rex, J., and Moore, R. (1967) *Race, Community, and Conflict: A Study of Starbrook.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Richards, K. (2009) 'Trends in qualitative research in language teaching since 2000', *Language teaching*, 42(2), pp. 147-180.

Richardson, L. (2000) 'New writing practices in qualitative research', *Sociology of sport journal*, 17(1), pp. 5-20.

Riley, S., Schouten, W. and Cahill, S. (2003) 'Exploring the dynamics of subjectivity and power between researcher and researched', *Qualitative Social Research Forum*, 4(2).

Roberts, J.M. (2014) 'Critical realism, dialectics, and qualitative research methods', *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 44(1), pp. 1-23.

Robinson, C. (2008) 'Felt Homelessness: The Contribution of Qualitative Approaches to Homelessness Research', In Maginn, P. J., Thompson, S., and Tonts, M. (eds.), *Qualitative Housing Analysis: An International Perspective*, pp. 91-111. Bingley: Emerald.

Roche, S. (2015) 'The salvaging of identities among homeless men: Reflections for social work', *Australian Social Work*, 68(2), pp. 228-243.

Rosenthal, R. (2000) 'Imaging Homelessness and Homeless People: Visions and Strategies Within the Movement(s)', *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 9(2), pp. 111–126.

Rozado, D. and Goodwin, M. (2022) 'The Increasing Prominence of Prejudice and Social Justice Rhetoric in UK News Media', *Rozado's Visual Analytics*, 2.

Rugg, J.J. and Rhodes, D.J. (2018) *The evolving private rented sector: Its contribution and potential*. York: Centre for Housing Policy.

Sachs, J.D. (2002) 'Resolving the debt crisis of low-income countries', *Brookings papers on economic activity*, 1, pp. 257-286.

Sanders, B. and Albanese, F. (2016) 'It's no life at all', *Rough sleepers' experiences of violence and abuse on the streets of England and Wales*, pp. 11-12.

Sanders, M., Jones, L. and Whelan, E. (2021) 'Homelessness and children's social care in England', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 15(3).

Saunders, P. (2021) *A nation of home owners*. London: Routledge.

Saxunova, D., le Roux, C.L. and Oster, M. (2022) 'Financial and Economic Impact of Brexit and COVID-19 in the United Kingdom', *IBIMA Business Review*, pp. 1-19.

Sayer, A. (1997) 'Critical realism and the limits to critical social science. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour'*, 27(4), pp. 473-488.

Sayer, A. (2004) 'Why critical realism', *Critical realist applications in organisation and management studies*, 11(6).

Scarth, B.J. (2016) 'Bereaved participants' reasons for wanting their real names used in thanatology research', *Research Ethics*, 12(2), pp. 80-96.

Schon, D.A. (2017) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. London: Routledge.

Seal, M. (2005) *Resettling Homeless People: Theory and Practice*, Lyme Regis: Rusell House.

Shaheen, G. and Rio, J. (2007) 'Recognizing work as a priority in preventing or ending homelessness', *The journal of primary prevention*, 28, pp. 341-358.

Sharman, S., Dreyer, J., Clark, L. and Bowden-Jones, H. (2016) 'Down and out in London: Addictive behaviours in homelessness', *Journal of behavioural addictions*, 5(2), pp. 318-324.

Shildrick, T. and MacDonald, R. (2006) 'In defence of subculture: young people, leisure and social divisions', *Journal of youth studies*, 9(2), pp. 125-140.

Shelter (2018) *320,000 people in Britain are now homeless, as numbers keep rising*. Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/320,000_people_in_britain_are_now_homeless,_as_numbers_keep_rising (Accessed 3 June 2020).

Shelter (2019) *Home advantage: why the Housing First model benefits all.* Available at: https://blog.shelter.org.uk/home-advantage-why-the-housing-first-model-benefits-all/ (Accessed 11 March 2024).

Shelter (2023) *Loss of social housing*. Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/support_us/campaigns/social_housing_deficit (Accessed 11 March 2024).

Shelter (2024) *Section 21 eviction*. Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/eviction/section_21_eviction (Accessed 11 March 2024)

Shinn, M. (2010) 'Homelessness, poverty and social exclusion in the United States and Europe', *European Journal on Homelessness*.

Shucksmith, M., Glass, J., Atterton, J. and Chapman, P. (2023) *Rural poverty today: experiences of social exclusion in rural Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Skeggs, B. (2005) 'The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation', *Sociology*, 39(5), pp. 965–982.

Sloan, L. (2017) 'Who tweets in the United Kingdom? Profiling the Twitter population using the British social attitudes survey 2015', *Social Media and Society*, 3(1), p.2056305117698981.

Smartt, C., Prince, M., Frissa, S., Eaton, J., Fekadu, A. and Hanlon, C. (2019) 'Homelessness and severe mental illness in low-and middle-income countries: scoping review', *British Journal of Psychology open*, 5(4), p.e57.

Smith, J. (2010) 'Capabilities and resilience among people using homeless services', *Housing, Care and Support*, 13(1), pp. 9-18.

Smith, C. and Elger, T. (2014) 'Critical realism and interviewing subjects', *Studying organisations using critical realism: A practical guide*, pp.109-131. London: Royal Holloway.

Smith, R.J. and Hall, T. (2018) 'Everyday territories: Homelessness, outreach work and city space', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 69(2), pp. 372-390.

Snow, D.A. and Anderson, L. (1993) *Down on their luck: A study of homeless street people*. California: University of California Press.

Snow, D.A., Baker, S.G., Anderson, L. and Martin, M. (1986) 'The myth of pervasive mental illness among the homeless', *Social Problems*, 33(5), pp. 407-423.

Somerville, P. (1994) 'Homelessness policy in Britain', *Policy & Politics*, 22(3), pp. 163-178.

Somerville, P. (1999) 'The Making and Unmaking of Homelessness Legislation', In Hutson, S. and Clapham, D. (eds.), *Homelessness: Public Policies and Private Troubles*, London: Cassell, pp. 29–57.

Somerville, P. and Bengtsson, B. (2002) 'Constructionism, Realism and Housing Theory', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 19(3-4), pp. 121–136.

Somerville, P. (2013) 'Understanding homelessness', *Housing, theory and society*, *30*(4), pp. 384-415.

Sparkes, J. and Downie, M. (2020) 'A new approach to ending homelessness', *Using Evidence to End Homelessness*, pp. 21-36. Bristol: Policy Press.

Speak, S. (2019) 'The state of homelessness in developing countries' *United Nations expert group meeting on "Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness", May*, pp. 22-24.

Speer, J. (2021) 'Subalternity as displacement: Memoirs of homelessness and the struggle to be heard', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 39(4), pp. 627-644.

Spence, S.A. (2009) 'Roofless in a steel city: Learning from the homeless mentally ill', *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 33(2), pp. 64-69.

Stablein, G.W., Hill, B.S., Keshavarz, S. and Llorente, M.D. (2021) 'Homelessness and substance use disorders', In *Clinical Management of the Homeless Patient: Social, Psychiatric, and Medical Issues*, pp. 179-194. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Stanhope, V. and Dunn, K. (2011) 'The curious case of Housing First: The limits of evidence based policy', *International journal of law and psychiatry*, 34(4), pp. 275-282.

Steinhardt, D.A. and Manley, K. (2016) 'Adoption of prefabricated housing–the role of country context', *Sustainable cities and society*, 22, pp. 126-135.

Stephens, M. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2007) 'Welfare regimes, housing systems and homelessness: How are they linked?' *European Journal of Homelessness*, 1, pp. 201–212.

Stewart, J. (2020) *Policy conference: reducing homelessness and rough sleeping – policy implementation, progress and next steps.* Westminster Social Policy Forum, February 28. London: The Caledonian Club.

Stewart, S. and Sanders, C. (2024) 'Enduring borders: Precarity, swift falls and stretched time in the lives of migrants experiencing homelessness in the UK', *Sociology*, 58(2), pp. 403-419.

St Mungo's (2020a) *Comprehensive Spending Review 2020.* Available at: https://www.mungos.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/St-Mungos-submission-to-CSR-September-2020.pdf (Accessed 9 October 2020).

St Mungo's (2020b) *When we work together: Innovation and collaboration in a time of national emergency.* London: St Mungo's.

Stommel, W. and Rijk, L.D. (2021) 'Ethical approval: None sought. How discourse analysts report ethical issues around publicly available online data', *Research Ethics*, 17(3), pp. 275-297.

Stonehouse, D., Theobald, J. and Threlkeld, G. (2022) 'Responsibility for homelessness: Lived experience perspectives and their alignment with neoliberal discourse', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), pp. 356-371.

Stuckler, D., Reeves, A., Loopstra, R., Karanikolos, M. and McKee, M. (2017) 'Austerity and health: the impact in the UK and Europe', *The European Journal of Public Health*, 27(4), pp. 18-21.

Sturges, J.E. and Hanrahan, K.J. (2004) 'Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: a research note', *Qualitative research*, 4(1), pp. 107-118.

Tanekenov, A., Fitzpatrick, S. and Johnsen, S. (2018) 'Empowerment, capabilities and homelessness: The limitations of employment-focused social enterprises in addressing complex needs', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 35(1), pp. 137-155.

Taylor, J. and Pagliari, C. (2018) 'Mining social media data: How are research sponsors and researchers addressing the ethical challenges?' *Research Ethics*, 14(2), pp. 1-39.

Teasdale, S. (2012) 'Negotiating tensions: how do social enterprises in the homelessness field balance social and commercial considerations?' *Housing Studies*, 27(4), pp. 514-532.

Teixeira, L. (2017) 'Why we need to change the way we talk about homelessness', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 11(2).

Teixeira, L. (2020) 'The Impact Manifesto: doing the right things to end homelessness for good', *Using Evidence to End Homelessness*, pp. 1-20. Bristol: Policy Press.

Terui, S. and Hsieh, E. (2016) "Not homeless yet. I'm kind of couch surfing": Finding identities for people at a homeless shelter. *Social Work in Public Health*, 31(7), pp. 688-699.

The Guardian (2015) *Welfare reforms are main cause of homelessness in England, study finds.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/feb/04/homelessness-study-welfare-reforms-crisis (Accessed 3 June 2020).

The Guardian (2023) *Rishi Sunak has little to celebrate as cost of living crisis enters a new phase.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/dec/17/rishi-sunak-has-little-to-celebrate-as-cost-of-living-crisis-enters-a-new-phase (Accessed 17 December 2023).

The Queen's Nursing Institute (2020) *Homelessness and the Criminal Justice System.* Available at: https://qni.org.uk/resources/homelessness-criminal-justice-system-2/ (Accessed 11 November 2021).

Tipple, G. and Speak, S. (2004) 'Attitudes to and interventions in Homelessness: Insights from an International Study', *International Conference on Adequate and Affordable Housing for all: Research, Policy, Practice*, pp. 24-27.

Toro, P.A. (2007) 'Toward an international understanding of homelessness', *Journal of social issues*, 63(3), pp. 461-481.

Treglia, D. and Culhane, D. (2023) 'Defining and counting homelessness', *The Routledge Handbook of Homelessness*, pp. 35-47. London: Routledge.

Tsemberis, S. (2010) 'Housing First: ending homelessness, promoting recovery and reducing costs', *How to house the homeless*, pp. 37-56.

Tunstall, R., Bevan, M., Bradshaw, J., Croucher, K., Duffy, S., Hunter, C., Jones, A., Rugg, J., Wallace, A. and Wilcox, S. (2013) *The links between housing and poverty: an evidence review*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Twitter (2020) *Privacy Policy.* Available at: https://cdn.cms-twdigitalassets.com/content/dam/legal-twitter/site-assets/privacy-june-18th-2020/Twitter_Privacy_Policy_EN.pdf (Accessed 11 November 2021).

Vandenberghe, F. (2022) 'Critical realist hermeneutics', *Journal of Critical Realism*, 21(5), pp. 552-570.

Van Dijk, J. (2009) 'Free the victim: A critique of the western conception of victimhood', *International Review of Victimology*, 16(1), pp. 1-33.

Van Laere, I.R., de Wit, M.A. and Klazinga, N.S. (2009) 'Pathways into homelessness: recently homeless adults problems and service use before and after becoming homeless in Amsterdam', *BMC public health*, 9, pp. 1-9.

Veasey, K. and Parker, J. (2022) 'Welfare conditionality, sanctions and homelessness: meanings made by homeless support workers', *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, 4(4), pp. 275-291.

Vorspan, R. (1977) 'Vagrancy and the new poor law in late-Victorian and Edwardian England' *The English historical review*, 92(362), pp. 59-81.

Wagner, J., Jones, S., Tsaroucha, A. and Cumbers, H. (2019) 'Intergenerational transmission of domestic violence: practitioners' perceptions and experiences of working with adult victims and perpetrators in the UK', *Child abuse review*, 28(1), pp. 39-51.

Wakeman, B.E. (2015) 'Poetry as Research and as Therapy', *Transformation*, 32(1), pp. 50-68.

Walker, R. (2019) 'Measuring absolute poverty: shame is all you need', *Absolute Poverty in Europe*, pp. 97-118. Bristol: Policy Press.

Wallace, A. and Quilgars, D. (2005) *Homelessness and financial exclusion: A literature review*. York: Centre for Housing Policy.

Walsh, C.A., Lorenzetti, L., St-Denis, N., Murwisi, P. and Lewis, T. (2016) 'Community voices: Insights on social and human services from people with lived experiences of homelessness', *Review of Social Sciences*, 1(2), pp. 27-41.

Wang, S., Ramdani, J.M., Sun, S., Bose, P. and Gao, X. (2024) 'Naming research participants in qualitative language learning research: Numbers, pseudonyms, or real names?' *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, pp. 1-14.

Waters, J. (1992) *Community or Ghetto? An Analysis of Day Centres for Single Homeless People* London: CHAR.

Watson, S. and Austerberry, H. (1986) *Housing and Homelessness*. London: Routledge.

Watt, P. (2021) *Estate regeneration and its discontents: Public housing, place and inequality in London*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Watts, B. (2014) 'Homelessness, empowerment and self-reliance in Scotland and Ireland: the impact of legal rights to housing for homeless people', *Journal of Social Policy*, 43(4), pp. 793-810.

Watts, B. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2018) *Welfare conditionality*. London: Routledge.

Watts, B. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2020) 'Capabilities, value pluralism and homelessness', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 37(3), pp. 295-299.

Watts, B., Fitzpatrick, S. and Johnsen, S. (2018) 'Controlling homeless people? Power, interventionism and legitimacy', *Journal of Social Policy*, 47(2), pp. 235-252.

Webb, H., Jirotka, M., Stahl, B.C., Housley, W., Edwards, A., Williams, M., Procter, R., Rana, O. and Burnap, P. (2017) 'The ethical challenges of publishing Twitter data for research dissemination' *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM on Web Science Conference*, pp. 339-348.

Webb, W.A., Mitchell, T., Snelling, P. and Nyatanga, B. (2020) 'Life's hard and then you die: the end-of-life priorities of people experiencing homelessness in the UK', *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, 26(3), pp. 120-132.

Wengraf, T. (2001) *Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage.

Whiteford, M. and Simpson, G. (2016) "There is still a perception that homelessness is a housing problem": devolution, homelessness and health in the UK, *Housing, Care and Support*, 19(2), pp. 33-44.

Whitehead, C. (2018) 'Housing policy and the changing tenure mix', *National Institute Economic Review*, 245(1).

Whitehead, C., Scanlon, K., Edge, A., Holman, N., Rotolo, M. and Blanc, F. (2021) *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the Time of COVID-19*. London: London School of Economics.

Whitehead, C. and Williams, P. (2019) 'From ideas to reality: longer term tenancies and rent stabilisation–principles and practical considerations' *A report for the RLA*. London: Residential Landlords Association.

Whitfield, G. and Dearden, C. (2012) 'Low income households: casualties of the boom, casualties of the bust?' *Social Policy and Society*, 11(1), pp. 81-91.

Williams, M. (2005) 'What Counts? Definition, Measurement, and Legitimacy in Studies of Homelessness.', In Romero, M. and Margolis, E. (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Inequalities*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Williams, R.D. (2016) "We're not allowed": Public librarians' perspectives on providing health information to library users experiencing homelessness, *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 53(1), pp. 1-10.

Williams, S. and Stickley, T. (2011) 'Stories from the streets: people's experiences of homelessness', *Journal of psychiatric and mental health nursing*, 18(5), pp.432-439.

Willis, P.E. (1990). *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Willse, C. (2015) *The value of homelessness: Managing surplus life in the United States*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Wilson, W. and Barton, C (2023) *Tackling the under-supply of housing in England.* London: House of Commons Research Briefing.

Wiltshire, G. (2018) 'A case for critical realism in the pursuit of interdisciplinarity and impact', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10(5), pp. 525-542.

Wiltshire, G. and Ronkainen, N. (2021) 'A realist approach to thematic analysis: making sense of qualitative data through experiential, inferential and dispositional themes', *Journal of Critical Realism*, 20(2), pp. 159-180.

Women's Aid (2023) *What is domestic abuse?* Available at: https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/ (Accessed 11 November 2023).

Wong, G., Westhorp, G., Manzano, A., Greenhalgh, J., Jagosh, J., and Greenhalgh, T. (2016) 'Reporting Standards for Realist Evaluations', *BMC Medicine,* 14(1), pp. 96–114.

Wright, T. (1997) *Out of place: Homeless mobilizations, subcities, and contested landscapes*. New York: Suny Press.

Yanos, P.T., Barrow, S.M. and Tsemberis, S. (2004) 'Community integration in the early phase of housing among homeless persons diagnosed with severe mental illness: Successes and challenges', *Community Mental Health Journal*, 40, pp. 133-150.

Zarse, E.M., Neff, M.R., Yoder, R., Hulvershorn, L., Chambers, J.E. and Chambers, R.A. (2019) 'The adverse childhood experiences questionnaire: Two decades of research on childhood trauma as a primary cause of adult mental illness, addiction, and medical diseases', *Cogent Medicine*, 6(1), p.1581447.

Zhang, T. (2023) 'Critical realism: A critical evaluation', *Social Epistemology*, 37(1), pp. 15-29.

Appendices

Make sure the participant is comfortable and ready to take part. Confirm receipt of informed consent form and see if they have any questions before commencement. Switch on recording and thank the participant for agreeing to take part.

Follow this schedule for each participant. Challenge or ask for expansion where necessary. Use the prompts below in brackets if needed.

1. Firstly, can you please tell me about your role and how long you have been working in the homelessness sector? (Explain that this question is a warmup question, and any identifiable information will not be used in the final report).
2. What are the main challenges you face in your role? (How do you overcome these?)
3. What do you understand homelessness to be? (Why? What factors have influenced your understanding of homelessness? Are there different views? Why?)
4. From your experience of working with the homeless, what do you think are the main reasons why people become homeless? (Please explain why you think these factors cause homelessness. Others have suggested… Do you agree? Why?)
5. Thinking about very recent times, do you think the reasons why people become homeless have changed? (If so, what factors have changed? Why do you think they have changed?)
6. From your experience of working in the homeless sector, is there a particular kind of person who you think is more likely to become homeless? (If so, please describe this person.)
7. Thinking about very recent times, have you noticed any changes in the kind of people who have become homeless? (e.g., more women, more EU citizens. If so, why do you think this change has occurred?)
8. Do you think there is anything that unites everyone who becomes homeless? (Does this present any challenges in responding to homelessness?)
9. What factors prevent exits from homelessness? (Why? What can be done?)
10. To what extent is an individual responsible for their own homelessness? (Why? Others have said… Do you agree? Why?)
11. Are there any aspects of UK culture that you think has implications for homelessness? (Why?)
12. Can you think of any policies that have been helpful in tackling homelessness? (If so, please explain how they were helpful.)
13. Can you think of any policies that have hindered progress in addressing homelessness? (If so, please explain how they hindered progress.)
14. What implications, if any, do you think the government response during the Covid-19 lockdown period has had on homelessness? (Why?)
15. What implications, if any, do you think the government response post lockdown restrictions has had on homelessness? (Why?)
16. What implications, if any, do you think the UK leaving the European Union has had for homelessness? (Why?)

17. Can you think of any other political events or social changes that have impacted on homelessness? (If so, please describe the event and the impact it has had?)
18. Now, thinking about the future, do you think homelessness will become more or less abundant? (Please explain why you think this.)
19. What, if anything, can be done to help the government reach its target of eradicating homelessness completely by 2027? (Can this target ever be achieved? Why/why not?)
20. What are your main hopes and fears for the homeless sector in the future?
21. Can you give an example of good practice you have seen in the homeless sector? (If so, how, and why was this practice effective? Do you think this practice could be rolled out more widely?)
22. Can you give an example of bad practice you have observed? (Why is the practice problematic? What have been the implications?)
23. What factors do you think influence policy and practice responses to homelessness?
24. If you were tasked with solving homelessness, what would you do and why? (Why do you think this would be effective? What would be the main challenges?)
25. Is there anything else you think is relevant that I've not asked you about?

Check if the participant has any questions. Thank them for their involvement and explain that the recording is being switched off.

Appendix Two – Consent message sent on X (formerly Twitter)

Good afternoon, my name is Colin Boyd, and I am currently undertaking a PhD project at the University of Suffolk exploring homelessness. As part of this research, I have mined data from Twitter. This means I have been able to access tweets which have some relevance to the topic of homelessness. As part of this mining, I was able to access a tweet you posted on this topic between 1 January 2021 and 30 June 2021. However, I will only use this tweet in my research if you reply within one week to consent. I simply need you to reply to this message with the following statement "I consent to my tweet being used in your research". There is no obligation for you to consent, and I will delete any tweets from my research if you ask me to do so, or if you don't reply within one week. If you consent for me to use your tweet, I will not use your name, and I will disguise the tweet to minimise the risk of you being identified as the contributor. However, as tweets are on an open social media platform, I cannot guarantee anonymity. Thanks for considering my request. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Appendix Three – Demi-regularities (initial and final)

Initial (All demi-regularities at start of analysis)

Agency	Money	Socialisation
Choice	Poverty	Culture
Depression	High bills	Subculture
Anxiety	High rent	Stigmatisation
Paranoia	Denied benefits	Marginalisation
Psychosis	Not enough benefits	Criminalisation
Serious mental illness	Inadequate benefit provision	Sexism
Mental breakdown	Unhelpful benefit advisors	Class
Trauma	Discrimination	Family dynamics
Poor physical health	Council housing	Abuse
Drugs	Private housing	Labelling
Alcohol	Housing association housing	Punishment
Overdose	Temporary housing	Justice
Parents	No housing	Vulnerability
Education	Policy	Deviancy
Domestic violence	No job	Power
Hope	No opportunities	Patriarchy
Fear	General cost of living	Inequality
Survival	Low wages	Stereotyping
Empowerment	Dependency	Misinformation
Bad decisions	Covid	Ideology
Risk taking	Brexit	Agency collaboration
Self-esteem	Other socio-political events	Oppression
Friends	Resource constraints	Hatred
Partners	Funding	Judgement
Idleness	Migration	Racism
Intelligence	Planning	Integration
Motivation	Eviction	Media
Personality	Economy	Local governance
Desensitised	Debt	Communication between agencies
Rejection	House building restrictions	Multi agency working
Disappointment	Lack of support	Postcode
Let down	Austerity	

Final

Green = Experiential themes

Red = Inferential themes

Blue = Dispositional themes

Individual Level	**Structural Level**	**Cultural Level**
Trauma	Policy	Cultural competency in services
Agency	House building restrictions	Homeless culture
Mental illness	Inadequate welfare	Subculture
Domestic violence	Austerity	Regional variations
Drug and Alcohol use	Covid	Criminalisation
Lack of family support	Poverty	Family dynamics
Self-esteem	Employment opportunities	Cultural position of women
Hope	Private rentals	Culture and class
Survival	Brexit	Cultural diversity
Empowerment	Eviction	Stigmatisation and Marginalisation
Risk taking	Lack of affordable housing	
	Low wages	
	Lack of support	
	Labelling	
	Debt	
	General living costs	

This research has been approved by the University of Suffolk Research Ethics Committee.

Should you have any concerns about the Ethics of this research, please feel free to contact the Chair of the Ethics Panel, Professor Emma Bond e.bond@uos.ac.uk (01473 338564) or the Research Development Manager, Andreea Tocca a.tocca@uos.ac.uk (01473 338656).

Study Title: Re-examining the homelessness crisis

Research Lead: Colin Boyd c.boyd@uos.ac.uk

Academic Supervisor (for Student Led Research): Isabella Boyce i.boyce@uos.ac.uk (01473 338520)

You are invited to take part in a study examining homelessness.

This Participant Information Form will help you decide if you would like to take part. It sets out why I am doing this study, what your participation will involve, what the benefits and risks to you might be, and what will happen after the study ends. I will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have. You do not have to decide today whether you will participate in this study. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Informed Consent Form. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Form and the Informed Consent Form to keep. Please make sure you have read and understood all the pages of the Participant Information Form.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

This study forms part of a PhD research project being conducted at the University of Suffolk.

The purpose is to examine homelessness, including causes, and how it should be responded to.

2. What will my participation in the study involve?

Your participation will involve writing a poem about your experience of homelessness.

3. What are the possible risks and benefits of this study?

Your participation will involve thinking about your experience of homelessness, and there is a risk that you will find this upsetting. You should let me know immediately if you feel distressed

so that appropriate support can be offered. The benefit of taking part is that you might provide useful insights into the realities of homelessness, and this could potentially advance academic knowledge on the subject.

4. What if I feel uncomfortable with an aspect of the study?

Your involvement is entirely voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable with any aspect of the study, you can decline to participate in the research. Should you wish to discuss your concerns further, you can use the contact details at the top of this form or speak to me directly if you feel able.

5. What are my rights?

You have the right to decide whether you want to be involved in this research. You also have the right to withdraw up to two months after taking part. You have the right to remain anonymous, the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and the right to have any personal information collected to be held confidentially. To maintain your anonymity, your name will not be attributed to any data you provide. Instead, a self-chosen or assigned pseudonym (pretend name) will be used when referring to your data, and nobody apart from you and me will know your pseudonym. To further maintain anonymity, you will be asked to avoid giving any names, locations or characteristics in your poem which might later be identified back to you or another person. Please note that a duty of care supersedes your right to anonymity, and therefore the only circumstance where anonymity will be rescinded is when you disclose a risk of harm to yourself or someone else. In these circumstances, the researcher has a duty to report the disclosure to a relevant safeguarding agency.

6. What happens if I change my mind?

During your involvement in this research, you can withdraw by simply telling the researcher that you no longer wish to be involved. This is your right and there will be no negative consequences for changing your mind. You can also withdraw from the research up to 2 months after taking part. You can do this by emailing the researcher and simply stating that you request to withdraw. If you do not have access to email, you can call the Academic Supervisor on the number given above or tell one of your support workers who will be instructed to pass the message on to me.

7. What happens after the study?

All data collected will be analysed. Findings will then form part of a PhD research thesis and may also be used in publication. Great care will be taken to ensure individual participants cannot be personally identified in any such report.

8. Who do I contact for more information if I have concerns?

Should you have any concerns, you can discuss these using the contact details given at the top of this form. Please contact the Academic Supervisor in the first instance at i.boyce@uos.ac.uk or 01473 338520. You can also discuss your concerns directly with me should you feel comfortable doing so.

9. How will my data be stored and for how long?

In research reports you will be referred to by your pseudonym and some discrete background information which does not reveal your identity. The only identifiable information held will be that collected on the informed consent form. This will not be linked to your research poem in any way. Your poem, and extracts from it, may be used in a research report and this could be published in due course, but identifiable information will not be used in such report. The informed consent form will be kept in a password protected file on my laptop. It will only be shared within the University of Suffolk or the University of East Anglia if required for compliance purposes. The file will be deleted upon PhD Graduation.

10. How do I get support if I become distressed?

If your involvement in this research causes you to become distressed, you should talk to me, and I will then put you in direct contact with appropriate support. You can also use the organisations below.

Free support is offered by Samaritans for anyone in distress. This support is available for 24 hours every day.

Suffolk Mind offer a range of services to those experiencing mental or emotional health needs. To find out more about the services offered you can contact their free helpline Monday-Friday from 9am to 3.30pm. The number to call is **0300 111 6000.**

Shelter offers free expert housing advice to anyone experiencing housing issues or homelessness. The helpline is open every day from 8am to 8pm (weekdays) and 9am to 5pm (weekends). The number to call is **0808 800 4444**.

You can also receive support locally through ihag/the Chapman Centre. Please speak to me or your support worker if you require additional support.

Appendix Five – Consent Form (Poetry contributors)

This research has been approved by the University of Suffolk Research Ethics Committee.

Should you have any concerns about the Ethics of this research, please feel free to contact the Chair of the Ethics Panel, Professor Emma Bond e.bond@uos.ac.uk (01473 338564) or the Research Development Manager, Andreea Tocca a.tocca@uos.ac.uk (01473 338656).

Study Title: Re-examining the homelessness crisis

Research Lead: Colin Boyd c.boyd@uos.ac.uk

Academic Supervisor (for Student Led Research): Isabella Boyce i.boyce@uos.ac.uk (01473 338520)

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw within 2 months of my participation, without giving any reason and without there being any consequences.	☐
I understand that my poetry will be attributed to my pseudonym and care will be taken to make sure I am not personally identified.	☐
I give permission for the researcher to analyse my poetry for their PhD project	☐

I understand that the data I provide will be used solely for the purposes of the research study outlined, and it will not be used for any other purpose. I also understand how long my data will be stored for.	☐
I agree to take part in the above research project.	☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

 Researcher   Date   Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:
Once this form has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form and the participant information sheet.

A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record, which must be kept in a secure location. All other copies will be destroyed.

This research has been approved by the University of Suffolk Research Ethics Committee.

Should you have any concerns about the Ethics of this research, please feel free to contact the Chair of the Ethics Panel, Professor Emma Bond e.bond@uos.ac.uk (01473 338564) or the Research Development Manager, Andreea Tocca a.tocca@uos.ac.uk (01473 338656).

Study Title: Re-examining the homelessness crisis

Research Lead: Colin Boyd c.boyd@uea.ac.uk

Academic Supervisor: Dr Isabella Boyce i.boyce@uos.ac.uk (01473 338520)

Thanks for agreeing to take part in a study examining homelessness. This Participant Information Form sets out why this study is being carried out, what your participation will involve, what the benefits and risks to you might be, and what will happen after the study ends.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

This study forms part of a PhD research project being conducted at the University of Suffolk. The purpose is to examine homelessness, including causes, and how it should be responded to.

2. What will my participation in the study involve?

Your participation will involve answering a series of questions about your professional experience of working in the homelessness/housing sector. It is anticipated that the interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes. It will be recorded and later transcribed.

3. What are the possible benefits and risks of this study?

The only perceived risk is that you might be asked to express an opinion that differs to the official position held by your organisation. However, it is unlikely that anything particularly controversial will arise during questioning. Furthermore, you will not personally be identified in any research report, and your professional integrity will be protected. The benefit of taking part

is that you might provide useful insights into the realities of homelessness, and this could potentially advance academic knowledge on the subject.

4. What if I feel uncomfortable with an aspect of the study?

Your involvement is entirely voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable with any aspect of the study, you can decline to participate in the research. Should you wish to discuss your concerns further, you can use the contact details at the top of this form or speak to me directly if you feel comfortable doing so.

5. What if I do not want to answer a question being asked of me?

If you do not want to answer a question, for whatever reason, simply tell the researcher who will move on to the next question. If you find the interview is causing you to feel stressed, please tell the researcher immediately so that the interview can be terminated.

6. What are my rights?

You have the right to decide whether you want to be involved in this research. You also have the right to withdraw up to two months after taking part. You have the right to have your information held securely, and the right to be treated with dignity and respect. To maintain your anonymity, your name will not be used in any research report. To further maintain anonymity, any names, locations, or characteristics disclosed in your answers will be omitted from the final research report. Please note that a duty of care supersedes your right to anonymity, and therefore the only circumstance where anonymity will be rescinded is when you disclose a risk of harm to yourself or someone else. In these circumstances, I will have a duty to report the disclosure to a relevant safeguarding agency.

7. What happens if I change my mind?

During your involvement in this research, you can withdraw by simply telling me that you no longer wish to be involved. This is your right and there will be no negative consequences for changing your mind. You can also withdraw from the research up to 2 months after taking part. You can do this by emailing me your request to withdraw.

8. What happens after the study?

All data collected will be analysed. Findings will then form part of a PhD research thesis and may also be used for publication. Great care will be taken to ensure individual participants cannot be personally identified in any such report.

9. Who do I contact for more information if I have concerns?

Should you have any concerns, you can discuss these using the contact details given at the top of this form. Please contact the Academic Supervisor in the first instance at i.boyce@uos.ac.uk or 01473 338520. You can also discuss your concerns directly with the researcher should you feel comfortable doing so.

10. How will my data be stored and for how long?

Personal information will be stored in accordance with the latest GDPR guidelines and destroyed upon completion of the PhD. This information will be held securely by the researcher and shared only within the University of Suffolk or the University of East Anglia if it is required for compliance purposes. Extracts from your interview may be used in a research report and this could be published in due course, and therefore this data could be in the public domain. However, no personal information will be used in such report.

Appendix Seven – Consent Form (Practitioners)

This research has been approved by the University of Suffolk Research Ethics Committee.

Should you have any concerns about the Ethics of this research, please feel free to contact the Chair of the Ethics Panel, Professor Emma Bond e.bond@uos.ac.uk (01473 338564) or the Research Development Manager, Andreea Tocca a.tocca@uos.ac.uk (01473 338656).

Study Title: Re-examining the homelessness crisis

Research Lead: Colin Boyd c.boyd@uos.ac.uk

Academic Supervisor (for Student Led Research): Isabella Boyce i.boyce@uos.ac.uk (01473 338520)

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw within 2 months of my participation, without giving any reason and without there being any consequences.	☐
I understand that my responses will be anonymised and any personal or identifying information removed from published materials	☐

I give permission for the researcher to analyse my anonymised responses.	☐
I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	☐
I understand that the data I provide will be used solely for the purposes of the research study outlined, and it will not be used for any other purpose. I also understand how long my data will be stored for.	☐
I agree to take part in the above research project.	☐

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
 Researcher   Date   Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:
Once this form has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form and the participant information sheet.

A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main folder, which must be kept in a secure location. Any other copies will be deleted.

Appendix Eight – David's interview in full

Can you tell me a little about your experience of homelessness?

"When homeless you don't live a normal life, you're just trying to survive day and night. Eventually, when you become homeless, you just take it that this is the way it is. I'm homeless, this is my life. You constantly live in fear. You never sleep, properly sleep, it's impossible, you always sleep with your mind switched on, because you're on the street, and bad things happen. I was clever enough in the situation not to have anything major happen, but it was bad. It becomes a battle, but once in it, you get strong. People have been homeless for ten or twenty years and they will tell you every day is a difficult day, and every night is a difficult night. You don't switch off, ever, you never switch off. You're like an animal really and constantly trying to survive. You're just existing, there's no structure, your situation seven days a week is find something to eat, make sure you have somewhere safe to sleep, that's dry and warm. That's constant and after a while you get used to doing it. You get offered hostels, but they are not nice places. There is no hope in these places, and we need to offer places which do offer hope, and not in a fortnight after an interview, it needs to be straightaway. The hostel was very violent, because there were people with addictions, and fights break out, and you don't know what people have in their pocket. I would rather be on the street than sleep in one."

Can you tell me how you became homeless?

"Where do I start? I lost my job because I had a heart condition. I therefore couldn't pay my rent, so that was it, I was back on the street. It starts to get into your psyche, and you think this is it; there is no point trying to fight this now. This is your life, so make it the best you can until the end. I was successful many years ago, never in trouble with the police. I was married for thirty years, had kids, and when it broke up, I was heartbroken and didn't really deal with it. That was the start of all of this. I had a lot of anger, made bad decisions, lost friends, and then lost my way. Before you know it, you have no family, no friends, nothing. It's you, and you alone, and that's not a nice place to be. At the end of the day, it was my decisions that made me homeless, other people didn't make me homeless, it was my decisions and how I reacted to certain things. But you have to accept you got this wrong and listen to those who genuinely do care."

So how did you get off the streets?

"I was lucky to find a charity that does a lot of good work. I found the help myself; you can't just sit down and wait; you need to swallow your pride and say I'm going to work with these people. I'll see where it takes me because I've got nothing to lose. Since living with them, I've got structure

back, and my confidence is back up. It's all down to these guys, and me having the sense to use what they had on offer. They can bridge that gap from homelessness into independent living. It's not pushed enough. Some people lose the spark because they are not around those who can give them confidence and hope. If you're in an environment where you can see stuff happening, and people are working with you, then you can get back on your feet. You want to do this because it's the beginning of the end, and in the end, I was very lucky to find the right people. You don't know where to begin when you have no money. You have to try and find that natural instinct of self-preservation. I don't know where the spark within me came from, I was bogged down every day, but I found a reason to continue. I had faith, and that was enough. You've just got to keep focused, but I'm only thinking this way now because an organisation had faith in me. They put the support in place and said let's work on this."

What do you think needs to be done to address homelessness?

"Something needs to be done. People are not getting a chance to move away from homelessness. I know there are night shelters, and various organisations, but these guys don't know the reality. I had enough spirit I suppose to say this is not going to be my story for the rest of my life. Something can be done, I'm sure. The homeless need a voice, but not to start demanding things. They need some guidance, and an opportunity to get into a healthy environment, and settled into a local community, and the chance to do the normal things like look for a doctor and employment. Then homelessness can be tackled. People feel stuck and don't know where to go. There is help out there, but it's not enough, and I was one of the lucky ones. You get that many noes over the years and promises which never happen. You need someone to work with homeless people, to empower them, and then you will see the problem start to disappear. The core of the problem is that people don't know how to get out of being homeless. You have no home, no job, no money, and eventually you have no hope. There are 4 major noes there, and you have to start by offering hope. The people have to know what is available and what can be done, how it can be done, and when it will be done. You may still be homeless, but then you will have something to look forward to."

Is there anything else you want to say?

"You need organisations to keep plugging away until they get what is really needed for the homeless. You can't get a job without a home; you can't get a home without a job; so, where do you start? Giving homeless people a voice is a start. Then, eventually you will get yourself into a position where you think right, I'm in with a chance here now. I've learnt a lot of lessons, and I'm not going back there. You will move forward. You also need to remove the referral system. If

someone turns up with no food and no home, they should bring you in. The problem is there isn't enough service, there isn't enough funding, and services are stretched, but when you literally have nowhere, you should be prioritised for housing. If there isn't enough council housing, then there should be a department in local government who works with private landlords to get housing for those who are on the streets. Rooms at a sensible rate, which are well maintained, is what they need to find. When you get a house, you get an address, you get a post-box, so now you can go and get benefits, and eventually you can go and get a job. There are a lot of people out there who want to help, but wouldn't it be good if they could speak directly to the homeless person. They give their money to a charity without ever speaking to a homeless person. But how good would it make the sponsor feel, and how good would it make the homeless person feel, if they got to speak to each other? The sponsor might realise how they have made a difference inspiring them to continue helping, and the homeless person would feel somebody cares. Perhaps the sponsor would eventually see that the homeless person got themselves a job. They've therefore helped to build the person again. They are now dignified and clean, part of a community and mainstream society again. I make it sound easy, sat here with a cup of coffee in my hand, but when you are out there on the streets, it's not that easy. However, if we work together, we can do something about this. We are human beings, pull us off the streets, and help set us up. Give people some help for a few months and then feel pride when you see them collecting their own wage every month. But it's down to the homeless person too. If a support worker tells you to do something, then do it, and more doors will then open. You will get stronger, you will get your confidence back, and soon you're a part of society again and it's good. Trust me it's good, and you forget this when you are homeless. You're nothing, you're not nothing, but in your mind, you are nothing. If you keep going, and you keep speaking to sensible people, you can turn it around."