

**“We are all only one pay cheque away from a life like this”:**

**Experiences of unemployment and homelessness  
at a community shelter  
in Somerset West, Western Cape**

by  
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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sociology in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at  
Stellenbosch University*



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**March 2017**

# *Declaration*

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**March 2017**

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# *Abstract*

Within the current economic climate, income and job security concerns are a dominant feature in public policy, day-to-day debates and conversations. The following thesis documents the daily lives of a group of mainly unemployed homeless participants who currently make use of the Somerset West Night Shelter. The thesis began as an investigation into the effects of unemployment, and subsequently the effects of homelessness. The most effective method for this process was to make use of Charmaz's Grounded Theory approach, taking the form of structured but open-ended, flexible interviews. This led to discussions aimed specifically at facilitating the participants' recollection of their life stories and lived experiences (2006). The individuals had an opportunity to express their personal narratives freely, without fear of repercussions or judgement. They were encouraged to share their experiences in a safe and controlled environment (the Skills Room of the Shelter), without time pressure, for as long as they wished. I conducted ten individual interviews, whereby all discussions were voice recorded in a confidential, ethical and responsible manner. Whilst participants preferred to use their given names, in order to comply fully with the Stellenbosch University ethics research policy and agreement, they were each allocated a pseudonym.

These interviews, together with a summary of each participant's experience, were paramount in formulating a number of emergent themes (or "pathways"), similar to that proposed by Chamberlain and Johnson. Such "pathways" may have preceded their current situations of unemployment and current homelessness. The dominant themes provide insight into how the participants have become both unemployed and as a result, homeless (2011). Using the theory, I deduce there is no single pathway that predisposes an individual to a critical incident leading to the dual catastrophe of unemployment and homelessness. Instead, several factors combine as a catalyst for such a drastic life change. As revealed in the conclusion of this thesis, a collection of factors, commencing from early childhood, were experienced before the participants became unemployed and subsequently, homeless. Various themes emerged when deconstructing the interviews and it would appear that certain life pathways predispose an individual to unfavourable outcomes. Such factors are aggravated when there is little or no support for destitute individuals to reposition themselves financially, with their family, socially, and most significantly, gainful employment and autonomy. For many of the participants, a lack of education and parental guidance played a significant role in their life choices, and in their current nomadic and unemployed state. A series of life crises Stinson's theory termed them "critical incidents" that lead to homelessness, characterises most of the participants' circumstances (2010).

# Opsomming

Met die hedendaagse ekonomiese klimaat, is besorgdheid oor inkomste en werksekerheid 'n dominante kenmerk in openbare beleid, daaglikse debatte en gesprekke. Hierdie tesis dokumenteer die daaglikse lewe van 'n groep van meestal werklose hawelose deelnemers wat tans gebruik maak van die Somerset-Wes Nagskooling. Dié tesis het oorspronklik begin as 'n ondersoek na die uitwerking van werkloosheid, en het daarna uitgebrei na die gevolge van haweloosheid. Die mees effektiewe metode vir hierdie proses was om gebruik te maak van Charmaz se gegronde teorie benadering, deur die gebruik van gestruktureerde, maar oop, en buigbare onderhoude. Dit het gelei tot samesprekings wat spesifiek gemik was om die herinnering van deelnemers se lewensverhale en ervarings te fasiliteer (2006). Individue het dus 'n geleentheid gehad om hul persoonlike verhale vrylik uit te druk, sonder vrees vir gevolge of oordeel. Hulle is aangemoedig om hul ervarings te deel in 'n veilige en beheerde omgewing (die "Skills Room" van die skooling), sonder tydbeperking, vir so lank as wat hulle wou. Terwyl deelnemers verkies het om hul eie name te gebruik, is die besluit gemaak dat om ten einde ten volle te voldoen aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch se etiese navorsingsbeleid en -ooreenkoms, elke deelnemer 'n skuilnaam toegeken is.

Hierdie onderhoude, tesame met 'n opsomming van elke deelnemer se ervaring, was uiters belangrik in die formulering van 'n aantal ontluikende temas (of "paaie"), soortgelyk aan dié wat deur Chamberlain en Johnson voorgestel word. Sulke "paaie" kon hul huidige situasies van werkloosheid en haweloosheid voorafgegaan het. Die heersende temas gee insig tot hoe die deelnemers werkloos geword het en as gevolg daarvan, haweloos (2011). Deur gebruik te maak van hierdie teorie, lei ek af dat daar nie slegs 'n enkele pad is wat 'n individu lei na 'n kritieke insident wat aanleiding gee tot die dubbele ramp van werkloosheid en haweloosheid nie. Intendeel, kombineer verskeie faktore as 'n katalisator vir so 'n drastiese lewensverandering. Soos genoem in die gevolgtrekking van hierdie tesis, is verskeie faktore, wat reeds te voorskyn kom in die vroeë kinderjare, deur deelnemers ervaar voordat hulle werkloos, en daarna, haweloos geword het. Verskeie temas het na vore gekom terwyl onderhoude ontleed is en dit wil voorkom asof sekere lewenspaaie 'n individu vatbaar maak tot ongunstige uitkomstes. Sulke faktore vererger wanneer daar min of geen ondersteuning vir behoeftige individue is om hulself finansiëel te vestig nie, asook met hul familie, en sosiaal, en die belangrikste van als, om betaalde werk en outonomie te verkry nie. Vir baie van die deelnemers, speel 'n gebrek aan opvoeding en ouerleiding 'n belangrike rol in hul lewenskeuses asook in hul huidige nomadiese leefwyse en werkloosheid. 'n Reeks lewenskrisisse, volgens Stinson se teorie "kritieke insidente" wat lei tot haweloosheid, is kenmerkend van die meeste deelnemers se omstandighede (2010).

# *Acknowledgements*

I would like to thank my supervisor, Khayaat Fakier for her invaluable guidance and encouragement towards this project, for teaching me to listen intently and to write creatively. In the process, tutoring the Sociology of Work coupled with rigorous academic process fulfilled my passion for lifelong education. Her friendship, advice and moral support, all of which were offered unselfishly throughout the research process, were greatly appreciated.

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I also extend my gratitude to Wayne, Nicolene, Mel and the supervisory staff of the Somerset West Night Shelter. I am additionally; sincerely indebted to the participants, without whose willing contributions this work would not have been possible. May your courage and fortitude deliver you to the personal agency and achievement of life goals that you seek, and expressed so eloquently, in your interview discussions.

I understand that this research would not have been possible without the commitment of those people close to me who have unselfishly given of their time, talent and resources. Many sacrifices were made to ensure I achieve the requirements of this degree. Importantly, their efforts are recognised in a significant way, in the Dedications page that follows.

# Dedications

To contextualise my dedications I would like to quote sixteen year-old Nujeen Mustafa, born with cerebral palsy, who fled to Turkey with her sisters when terror group Isis strengthened its grip on her Syrian town. She risked death by paying smugglers to get to Europe in an overcrowded dinghy. She stated:

***“The year 2015 was when I became a fact, a statistic, a number. A refugee. Much as I like facts, we’re not numbers, we’re human beings and we all have stories.”*** (Mustafa & Lamb, 2016:88).

Unemployment and homelessness is an increasing crisis not only experienced at catastrophic levels by South Africans but globally as well. Evidence of the Syrian crisis, the European ‘immigration crisis’ and the continual migration of people within Africa and closer to home, into and within South Africa demonstrate the scope of the problem.

This thesis is a tribute to the displaced, unemployed and homeless of the world who often lose their name, their nationality, their families, their home, their identity and, frequently, their sense of self. It recognises the Homeless, on World Homeless Day, observed annually for the past six years, on October 10. As a sign of respect for this, no individual’s names are disclosed in my dedications but instead, a selection of a few powerful song lyrics, representative and endorsed by those involved with passion and commitment, in this research:

***“And I’m thinking about home, and I’m thinking about faith, and I’m thinking about work, and I’m thinking about how good it would be, to be here someday, on a ship called Dignity.”***  
Dignity, Deacon Blue (1994).

***“You got a fast car. We go cruising, entertain ourselves. You still ain’t got a job. And I work in a market as a checkout girl. I know things will get better. You’ll find work and I’ll get promoted. We’ll move out of the shelter. Buy a bigger house and live in the suburbs.”***  
Fast Car, Tracy Chapman (1989).

***“And we are homeless, homeless, moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake. Homeless, homeless, moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake. Homeless, homeless, moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake. Somebody sing, Hello, hello, hello. Somebody cry, why, why, why. Somebody sing, hello, hello, hello. Strong wind destroy our home. Many dead, tonight it could be you. Strong wind, strong wind. Many dead tonight it could be you.”***  
Homeless, Ladysmith Black Mambazo & Paul Simon (1987).

***“Seblief meneer, ag se tog weer, is dit die pad wat ons more moet vat? ‘n stukkie le hier en a stukkie le daar. Stukkies van my lewe le deurmekaar. Tel op vir Shorty en vir Pop. Gaan haal vir Apie en hou daai kindjie dop. Pak op jou goedties, pak op jou goedties. Se maar skipskop, skipskop. Se goodbye.”***  
Skipskop, David Kramer (1986).

# Table of Contents

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>OPSOMMING</b> .....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>DEDICATIONS</b> .....	<b>VI</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>VII</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>IX</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>X</b>
<b>LIST OF IMAGES</b> .....	<b>XI</b>
<b>LIST OF ADDENDA</b> .....	<b>XII</b>
<b>EPILOGUE</b> .....	<b>XII</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>XIII</b>
<b>PRELUDE</b> .....	<b>XIV</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 Research Problem .....	5
1.3 Research Objectives .....	6
1.4 Rationale .....	7
1.5 Chapter Outline .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.1 Section A: Unemployment and Homelessness, Defined and Contextualised.....	10
2.1.1 Defining Unemployment .....	11
2.1.2 Defining Homelessness .....	15
2.2 Section B: The Experience of Unemployment and Homelessness .....	19
2.2.1 Gender and Homelessness .....	20
2.2.2 Health.....	21
2.2.3 Family.....	23
2.2.4 Faith.....	24
<b>CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>27</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	27
3.2 Research Approach: a Phenomenological Approach.....	28
3.2.1 Phenomenological Approaches to Unemployment and Homelessness.....	29
3.3 Research Strategy.....	30
3.3.1 Grounded Theory.....	30
3.4 Research Process .....	31
3.4.1 Sampling, Size and Collection Criteria .....	31
3.5 Ethical Considerations .....	33
3.6 Reflections on Possible Limitations of the Research.....	35
<b>CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>38</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	38
4.1.1 Participants .....	38
4.2 Profiles of the Participants .....	41
4.2.1 Jacob Esterhuizen, Night Shelter Interview 12/01/2016: .....	41
4.2.2 Coen Minnaar, Night Shelter Interview 14/01/2016: .....	42

4.2.3 Katrina Slabbert, Night Shelter Interview 15/01/2016: .....	42
4.2.4 Ayesha Oktober, Night Shelter Interview 16/01/2016: .....	43
4.2.5 Hardus Woest, Night Shelter Interview 19/01/2016: .....	44
4.2.6 Lena Woest, Night Shelter Interview 21/01/2016: .....	45
4.2.7 Marius de Klerk Night Shelter Interviews May 2015 and 12/01/2016: .....	46
4.2.8 Handre van Tonder, Night Shelter Interview 12/01/16: .....	46
4.2.9 Dries Malgas, Night Shelter Interviews 12/01/2016 and 21/01/2016: .....	47
4.3 Thematic Discussion of Findings.....	48
4.3.1 Theme 1 – Experiencing Unemployment and Homelessness .....	48
4.3.2 Theme 2 - Health Concerns .....	59
4.3.3 Theme 3 - Family Ties and Gender .....	67
4.3.4 Theme 4 – Religion/Faith and Spiritual Wellness.....	75
<b>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>77</b>
5.1 Thematic Conclusions.....	77
5.1.1 Unemployment and Homelessness .....	77
5.2 Main Conclusions .....	83
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>ADDENDA .....</b>	<b>98</b>
Addendum A: Letter of Consent from the Shelter .....	98
Addendum B: Main Research Questions to Facilitate Interview Discussions.....	100
<b>EPILOGUE: WORK .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>EPILOGUE: HOUSES .....</b>	<b>102</b>

# *List of Tables*

Table 4.1: Participant Table - The Somerset West Night Shelter, January 2016. ....40

# *List of Figures*

Figure 1.1: Graph Depicting Official Unemployment Rate, as per Stats SA, September 2016. (Unemployment figures represented in percentages). .....	2
Figure 1.2: Key Labour Market Indicators, emphasising ‘discouraged job seekers’, as per Stats SA, 2014-2015. ....	8
Figure 2.1: What Do South Africans Spend Their Money On? Stats SA, 2016. ....	12

# *List of Images*

Image 1 (Prelude): Somerset West Night Shelter Traffic Light Campaign, March 2016. Fliers as distributed en-masse at all BP check out points in service centres in the Helderberg Basin. ....	xiv
Image 1.1: Forgotten votes of 7000 homeless, people who live on streets excluded from elections. Picture: David Ritchie – Cape Argus, August 2, 2016. ....	3
Image 2.1: Homelessness in SA, Picture Vivienne Mackie - Die Burger, November 3, 2011. ....	17
Image 2.2: “I am George” (unemployed and homeless for two years): Somerset West. Image and introduction captured with permission, June 2016. ....	26
Image 3.1: Homeless people in Cape Town protest against treatment that infringes on their basic human rights, Picture: Carl Bernado - African News Agency (IOL), July 25, 2016. [Refer 4.3.1.2, Ravenhill, 2012]. ....	37
Image 4.1: The Cardboard Sign, A Familiar Site: sponsor some warmth this winter, Picture: Marizka Coetzer - The Krugersdorp News, June 06, 2016. ....	48
Image 4.2: The now self-employed, homeless woman, managing her informal business, "The Buch Store" outside Circle Square, Caledon Road, Somerset West (Refer Image 5.1). Image and information captured with permission, June 2016.....	50
Image 5.1: Self-created business offers employment opportunity. "The Mobile Buch Boutique". Image captured with permission, September 2016. ....	82
Image 5.2: Danny Oosthuizen: Author of ‘Danny’s Diary’, Cape Argus, 2016. [Refer (1.1); 1.4); and (5.2) for commentary on Danny], published in Cape Argus. ....	85
Image 6 (Addendum A): The shelter management and animal companions. Images and information offered and captured, with permission, May 2015. ....	99

## *List of Addenda*

Addendum A: Letter from Night Shelter. ....	98
Addendum B: Questions in Interview. ....	100

## *Epilogue*

Philosophical Contemplations on the concepts of Work and Home, in the human experience. .....	101-102
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# *Acronyms*

<b>ANC:</b>	African National Congress
<b>DA:</b>	Democratic Alliance
<b>DOL:</b>	Department of Labour
<b>HIV/AIDS:</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>ILO:</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>LFS:</b>	Labour Force Survey
<b>MEC:</b>	Member of Executive Committee, Cape Town Unicity
<b>NGK:</b>	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church)
<b>UK:</b>	United Kingdom
<b>USA:</b>	United States of America

# Prelude

## FRONT OF FLIER

## REVERSE OF FLIER

### TRAFFIC LIGHT CAMPAIGN

Encouraging Responsible Giving ● ● ●

---

 We know you want to help those people who beg on street corners. You can! **But PLEASE don't give them money.** Support Somerset West Night Shelter instead, where those in need are given shelter, counselling, and helped with reintegration. Join our 'give responsibly' campaign and help people get back into society.

 Buy a voucher for R10 and give it to someone in need, instead of money. Encourage a homeless person to visit Somerset West Night Shelter, where they will receive warmth and security, a meal, and where they can enter the programme to be reunited with their family. **For just R10 per night you can give a homeless person a chance to get off the street.** Buy a book of vouchers today and give responsibly.

 *"One of the biggest problems with homelessness in the Helderberg is our streets are paved with gold! I wish caring members of society would rather give to local organisations like the SW Night Shelter who are bringing about a significant change for good in the lives of those who are homeless." - Cllr Stuart Pringle*



**SOMERSET WEST NIGHTSHELTER**






BP Heldervue, BP Broadway, BP Gordon's bay  
 Helderberg Crime Watch, SW Neighbourhood Watch  
 Local Churches: LIFE, BAY, Baptist, United, NG

 Be part of Somerset West Night Shelter, volunteer to sell the vouchers to your friends, contact Mel on 021 851 4984

 LIKE our page on FACEBOOK, follow our updates, share our daily news. Visit our website [www.swnightshelter.org.za](http://www.swnightshelter.org.za)

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 Bank: Standard Bank  
 Account Name: Somerset West Night Shelter  
 Branch: Helderberg  
 Code: 033012  
 Account# : 072340061

 Thank you BP Disa for sponsorship of printing

**Image 1: Somerset West Night Shelter Traffic Light Campaign, March 2016. Fliers as distributed en-masse at all BP check out points in service centres in the Helderberg Basin<sup>1</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup> The Helderberg Basin includes the towns of Somerset West, Strand and Gordon's Bay in the Western Cape, approximately 70 kms from Cape Town.

# Chapter 1

## *Introduction*

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

On the eve of the 2016 Municipal Elections, in their article “Parties attack each other over job creation ‘failures’”, Cape Argus staff reporters Dentlinger & Meyer, describe how the ANC “took one last swipe at the DA over the 90000 jobs that were lost in the Cape Province during the 8 months of 2016” (2016:3). Party Provincial Secretary Faiez Jacobs “slammed the DA in losing more jobs in 2016 than any other province. 49000 jobs were lost in the City of Cape Town compared to Nelson Mandela Bay (21000), Buffalo City (2000) and Mangaung (1000)” (2016:3). Quoting from the latest Quarterly Labour Force survey released by Statistics SA [hereafter referred to as Stats SA] the week before, Jacobs accused the DA of “leading our young people into despair, forcing them onto the streets and towards drugs”. But the ANC did not make mention of other statistics contained in the survey, showing that the Western Cape was “the only province to have created jobs year-on-year, with a 0.4 % increase, with the City of Cape Town having the second lowest unemployment rate (23 %) among the country’s 8 metros after eThekweni (19.7%)”<sup>2</sup>. In the same article, MEC Alan Winde wryly comments on the political jostling above by replying that, “these numbers [actually, are intended to] reflect the end of the season for agriculture”. The parties attacked each other over job creation “failures”, with statistical comparisons for Gauteng (46000 new jobs but with a fall-off of 28000), Mpumalanga (10000) and the Free State (7000). Furthermore, employment gains were recorded in Limpopo (31000), Western Cape (9000) and the Northern Cape (6000) in the past year (2016:3).

*Opinion* journalist Bernstein, of Sunday Times, comments that these attacks represent attempts at point scoring by the political parties concerned, but they do highlight the extent of the unemployment problem that South Africa is facing. The few small gains listed, while creditable, are woefully insufficient to address the extreme nature of South African unemployment. As observed in the article, South Africa’s official unemployment rate is 26.7%<sup>3</sup>. This is of serious concern to policy makers, social scientists and, of course, the citizens of South Africa. Unemployment currently affects significant portions of South Africa’s population with around 7.5 out of 51.8 million jobless (22 May, 2016).

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<sup>2</sup> Dentlinger, L & Meyer, W. (2016:3)

<sup>3</sup> Refer, Figure 1.1

*Opinion* journalist, Isaacs, of Sunday Times states that “South Africa has dire levels of working poverty: 54% of fulltime employees – 5.5 million workers, earned below the working poor line of R4125 a month, and so cannot meet the most basic of needs for themselves and their dependents” (31 July, 2016).



**Figure 1.1: Graph Depicting Official Unemployment Rate, as per Stats SA, September 2016. (Unemployment figures represented in percentages).**

As indicated on the graph, unemployment increased over the last three years and shows no signs of improving. The rate is based on a narrow definition of unemployment. Utilising a broad definition, the unemployment rate is 36.3% (explained in Point 2.1.1), which emphasises the severity of the unemployment crisis (Stats SA, 2016).

Examples of obstacles for homeless people are noted as: “The forgotten votes of 7000 homeless”, featured as a headline article in Cape Argus, August 2, 2016 whereby the homeless in the city bowl are “[not only] fined R3000 for sleeping outdoors without the city’s permission/approval [states Francois Norman who was interviewed], but are left “with the loss of dignity and loss of power [such as] not being able to vote at the municipal elections. A voter needs a fixed address and an Identity document” (Refer, Image 1.1).

TUESDAY AUGUST 02 2016

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## Forgotten votes of 7 000 homeless

People who live on streets excluded from elections



'DISAPPOINTED': Francois Noorman has been fined R3000 for sleeping outside, without the city's 'permission/approval'.

PICTURE: DAVID RITCHIE

**W**HEN you're homeless, you lose more than just a roof over your head.

There is a loss of dignity that goes along with it. And even more so, you lose your power, your franchise.

I was born in the Mother City. Forty-six years later I live on the street.

Who would have ever thought? The scary thing is it can happen to anyone.

The little bit of dignity I had left was taken away from me the day I asked the

**Danny Oosthuizen**  
DIGNITY PROJECT  
CORRESPONDENT



caretaker of a public toilet for some toilet paper and he gave me a piece of old newspaper.

People, you have no idea. I choose not to dwell too much on the past – I might just wish to fall asleep at night, never to wake up again.

There are so many of us homeless people.

So many who feel left out of the day-to-day things other Capetonians take for granted, left out of the decisions being made, just because we live on the streets.

But, that doesn't change the fact that we are Capetonians.

Still, we simply need to take whatever comes our way, and deal with it.

Take tomorrow's municipal elections, for example. I, among about 7 000 others

(by the city's own count) don't have the right to vote.

We have no fixed address and some of us have no ID cards. And so, we could not register.

No political party took the effort to assist us with this.

The last time I voted was in 2009.

I spoke to my friend Francois Noorman.



To page 2

Image 1.1: Forgotten votes of 7000 homeless, people who live on streets excluded from elections. Picture: David Ritchie – Cape Argus, August 2, 2016.

I am acquainted with several homeless and unemployed people living in and around the office park where I have been working in Somerset West, Western Cape, over the course of about fifteen years. In particular, one man and I greeted each other daily. Over time I saw him less often, and heard that he was making use of the Somerset West Night Shelter (hereafter referred to as “the Shelter”), a haven for homeless people in the area. I decided to call in at the Shelter and volunteer over a period of a few months, and re-established the association with the man, who now controls access to the facility as unofficial gatekeeper. He is a happier person on all levels, for two reasons that underscore this thesis: he has work and shelter.

Managed with voluntary donations from local churches, three local BP Service Stations, Helderberg Crime Watch, Somerset West Neighbourhood watch, and supervised by a registered social worker, the Shelter assists people who are a cross-section of the local community. After my initial contact with the other residents and management of the Shelter, I contemplated how these people came to find themselves at the Shelter. Many of them appeared to be working class people, no different from the average citizens of this area. I visited the facility as a volunteer over the course of six months in 2015, and these visits inspired the research captured in this thesis.

Homelessness affects many members of the community at all levels and, not unlike a dreaded disease, it does not discriminate in terms of race, educational level, number of years economically active or willingness to work. Sadly, society generally ‘turns a blind eye’ to the person standing with a placard at the traffic lights, or sleeping under a piece of plastic on the pavement. Civil and local society has attempted to address this chronic problem, with little permanent success in terms of rehoming or rehabilitating individuals who have lapsed into substance abuse or other social ills. Recently, social and mass media raised awareness of the plight. A high-profile example of this awareness is The Dignity Project, launched by the Cape Argus [a local mass-media circulation newspaper] in April (2016:18). The project involves Danny Oosthuizen, a homeless person, being assigned to write a weekly column, “With his unique perspective on being homeless in Cape Town, he has a responsibility as the eyes, ears and voice of the homeless in our city”, says Editor Gasant Abarder (2016:1). Staff Reporter Zodidi Dano adds, “when Danny walked in here, he couldn’t look you in the eye. Now he is brimming with confidence and purpose” (2016:1).

In his first opinion column in the same edition of Cape Argus, “Danny’s Diary”, Oosthuizen states, “In our economic climate, homelessness is sadly on the rise. I see new faces almost every week. Got your attention now? We’ve had many tell their stories, now we will follow them and keep you up to date on their progress” (2016:4). Oosthuizen focuses not only on “people who made it off the street, people who found employment”, but also on “the good, the bad and the ugly” (2016:13).

This thesis, which was conceptualised, proposed and commenced one year and three months *before* the first article by Oosthuizen appeared, illustrates similar themes to those discussed in Oosthuizen's articles, and credited as secondary sources in the research strategy (Point 3.3) and in the reference list. (van Dyk & Coetzee, 2010).

## 1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In her seminal study, on lifelong homelessness, Ravenhill (2012) states that “Home is a feeling of safety, trust, continuity and stability that permits the physical, emotional and psychological well-being necessary for experiencing friendships and relationships. It is a central point in our lives from which other activities like work, friendships and relationships can be experienced and developed. It is also a unique space, place or area, through which individuals define themselves and allow themselves to be their true self; a space, or place, that allows them to feel anchored into their society and equal to or able to mix with their peers”. In summary, Ravenhill continues, “being homeless is more than just not having a place of shelter to call your own, it symbolises security, equality and a social standing” (2012:12).

The experience of homelessness for several individuals in the community, resulting from unemployment, is conveyed in the thesis. Just “one pay cheque from a life like this” [... away from employment, an income, a home, a life, and a spouse], the thesis investigates how individuals who have lost a regular pay cheque experience homelessness and unemployment. The participants describe how they came to find themselves in this position and the chain of events that precipitated unemployment with no place to call ‘home’. The narratives were facilitated by voluntary interviews with local residents of the Shelter. As the stories of their life histories and lived experiences were recorded, transcribed, and analysed, specific themes emerged (Sandelowski, 1991; and Ojermark, 2007). Combined with a review of local and international research, the study aims to demonstrate the daily struggles, coping mechanisms, hopes and aspirations of re-employment and personal agency: the thoughts of ordinary people in an extraordinary situation that, in the experience of being South African, is becoming an unacceptable norm.

Exploring what homeless individuals perceive to be the “critical incidents” that led to their homelessness, and on how help could be offered through shelter access (and other mechanisms), Stinson, in his 2010 work, identified seven themes, with eighteen corresponding categories describing participant responses. The first theme (or “critical incident”) was Employment, Finances and Resources with the categories, Loss of Employment, Resource Problems, Job Search Difficulties, and Financial Problems.

The second theme was Interpersonal Incidents with the categories Isolated from Interpersonal Support, Domestic Dispute, Domestic Abuse and Burdening Interpersonal Support. The third theme was Substance Abuse with the categories Substance Abuse of Participant and Substance Abuse of Other. The fourth theme was Significant Difficult Event with the categories Traumatic Event, Conned/Robbed, and Natural Disaster. The fifth theme was Illness with the categories Psychological Illness and Physical Illness. The sixth theme was Legal problems with the category Legal Incidents. The seventh theme was Choices, with the categories 'I made poor choices' and 'choice to be homeless' (2010). The significance of listing Stinson's "critical incidents" is that the themes and categories resonated closely with the experiences of my research participants. So too did the counselling strategy suggested by participants in the thematic discussion of findings (refer 5.1.1).

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The main question answered through this research was how the individuals at the Shelter in Somerset West described their experiences of unemployment, and thereby adding to the discourse of the consequences of unemployment, namely homelessness. Secondary questions, which arose, included:

- **How did they find themselves unemployed and homeless?**
- **How have they experienced employment (paid or unpaid work) in their life?**
- **Do they have other forms of income or support?**

The research objectives developed from these questions are essentially two-fold:

Firstly, to describe and understand the lived experience and life histories of participants in the research (Sandelowski 1991; and Ojemark, 2007), and to develop a qualitative insight on the research problems of unemployment and homelessness, by means of Charmaz has used grounded theory (2006) in the phenomenological approach (as described in Chapter 3, Methodology). Secondly, in identifying and investigating emergent themes from the interviews, to contribute to the academic debates as to how such individuals are affected - often in a long term manner - by their situation and their ability or inability to be re-integrated back into economic activity in the form of employment at best, or re-united with their families at least. This thesis does not attempt to 'problem solve' or 'troubleshoot' the researched problem(s); on the contrary, the challenges are far too complex and require elucidation in further research to inform appropriate policy. Additional urgent research needs are stated in the Limitations of Research conclusion in 3.6.

## 1.4 RATIONALE

The residents of the Shelter revealed that one of the main reasons they find themselves destitute is the lack of jobs and therefore an income to afford their own homes. Some effects of being unemployed include a lack of confidence and low self-esteem that comes from the expectation that they should earn an income to support themselves and their families (Kingdon & Knight, 2006). This assessment indicates that both categories of the unemployed, searching and non-searching, experience similar levels of distress due to their inability to earn an income. Further, the assessment suggests that the reasons why some are not searching for employment relate to factors such as poverty, lack of opportunities and information as well as discouraging logistical obstacles.

The “problem of unemployment” is premised on the perceived value of its opposite - employment or paid work (Hussman, 2010). Gina & Sullivan argue that work gives people a purpose and is an outlet for “personal creativity and fulfilment”. It forms the “axis of human self-making” because it shapes people and their identities (1987:649). Others add that unemployment in South Africa “leads to lack of structure in people’s lives, to isolation, exclusion from the wider community, and a loss of self-esteem” (Phillip, 2010:18). However, working does not exclude homelessness. Two of the individuals work but do not earn enough or feel secure enough to leave the confines of the Shelter’s night-over accommodation and support. Similarly, being ‘unemployed’ does not necessarily equate to ‘not working’. These differences (or similarities) between participants are discussed in Chapter 4: Theme 1, of the thesis.

As indicated in excerpts from Danny Oosthuizen’s (2016) column, his writing supports the phenomenological approach that I have selected to examine the life histories and lived experiences of the participants (Sandelowski 1991; and Ojermark, 2007). During the initial research for the thesis, I noted that although there have been many macro studies concerning homelessness and unemployment, with the exception of Mosoetsa (2004; 2011; 2014), there appeared to be no local phenomenological research studies accessible for comprehensive and comparative research. This prompted me to investigate using Charmaz’s grounded theory (2006) to approach the study. The research approach is discussed more comprehensively in Chapter 3, the methodology section of the thesis. Casey (2002) provides an example by suggesting that within a “risk society”, individuals who are “well paid and well-educated, have good material and emotional support from family or friends, are buffered against the extreme outcomes of risk taking i.e. a range of exciting opportunities to empower and uplift the individual in life, such as entrepreneurship” (cited in Eardley & Bradley, 2001:79).

Table A: Key labour market indicators

	Jan-Mar 2014	Oct-Dec 2014	*Jan-Mar 2015	Qtr-to-qtr change	Year-on-year change	Qtr-to-qtr change	Year-on-year change
	Thousand			Per cent			
Population aged 15–64 yrs	35 177	35 643	35 799	155	622	0,4	1,8
Labour force	20 122	20 228	20 994	766	872	3,8	4,3
Employed	15 055	15 320	15 459	140	405	0,9	2,7
Formal sector (non-agricultural)	10 780	10 911	10 796	-115	17	-1,1	0,2
Informal sector (non-agricultural)	2 336	2 448	2 483	35	147	1,4	6,3
Agriculture	709	742	891	150	183	20,2	25,8
Private households	1 231	1 219	1 288	89	58	5,7	4,7
Unemployed	5 067	4 909	5 535	626	468	12,8	9,2
Not economically active	15 055	15 415	14 805	-611	-250	-4,0	-1,7
Discouraged job-seekers	2 355	2 403	2 397	-6	42	-0,3	1,8
Other (not economically active)	12 700	13 012	12 408	-605	-292	-4,6	-2,3
Rates (%)							
Unemployment rate	25,2	24,3	26,4	2,1	1,2		
Employment/population ratio (absorption rate)	42,8	43,0	43,2	0,2	0,4		
Labour force participation rate	57,2	56,8	58,6	1,8	1,4		

*Due to rounding, numbers do not necessarily add up to totals.*

*\*Note: Q1:2015 estimates (column Jan-Mar 2015) are from the 2013 master sample.*

**Figure 1.2: Key Labour Market Indicators, emphasising ‘discouraged job seekers’, as per Stats SA, 2014-2015.**

The ‘not economically active figures’ in **Figure 1.2** indicates that 2.4 million people are ‘discouraged job seekers’<sup>4</sup>, indicating a large proportion of people that are no longer willing to look for a job and who, are therefore, long-term unemployable - with important implications for homelessness - and the requirements for shelter living.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Discouraged job-seeker’: is a person who was not employed during the reference period (of Stats SA), wanted to work, was available to work/start a business but did not take active steps to find work during the last four weeks, provided that the main reason given for not seeking work was any of the following: no jobs available in the area; unable to find work requiring his/her skills; lost hope of finding any kind of work. For the first quarter of 2016 the equivalent figure is 2.449 million (Stats SA, March 2016).

## 1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1, the background of this thesis, outlines the research problem, objectives and the rationale that inform this study. Chapter 2 introduces the literature review, defining and contextualising unemployment and homelessness, the experiences of homelessness and subsequently introduces the four main themes as identified by the study. Methodology has formed an integral part of this thesis and Chapter 3 highlights the chosen research approach (i.e. a phenomenological approach via Charmaz's 2006 grounded theory), the research strategy, research process and ultimately all data analysis. Chapter 4 acts as a prelude to the conclusion and presents the analysis and findings of the data that have been recorded and translated. Analysis includes the participant's interviews, the research material and methodology. Lastly, Chapter 5 forms the concluding chapter and will set forth all the main themes as highlighted by the interviews and literature research, and as such, discuss the implications of the study.

# Chapter 2

## *Literature Review*

This chapter, which presents the literature reviewed and used in this thesis, has two sections.

Section A makes use of the literature to define unemployment and homelessness. Further, it briefly outlines the various factors and circumstances that precipitate unemployment and homelessness and the effects that this transition may have on individuals and their families. The study will focus on the South African experience by exploring explanations of these circumstances, as theorised in local and international literature, from various research perspectives. This section examines the broad context of debates that situate vulnerable individuals within the process of unemployment leading to eventual homelessness.

Section B will examine the subjective experience of both unemployment and homelessness, which is the focus of the thesis.

### **2.1 SECTION A: UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOMELESSNESS, DEFINED AND CONTEXTUALISED**

The nature of unemployment and homelessness in South Africa can be contextualised by various studies from international and local perspectives. These studies inform the explanations and causes of the phenomena in a South African context.

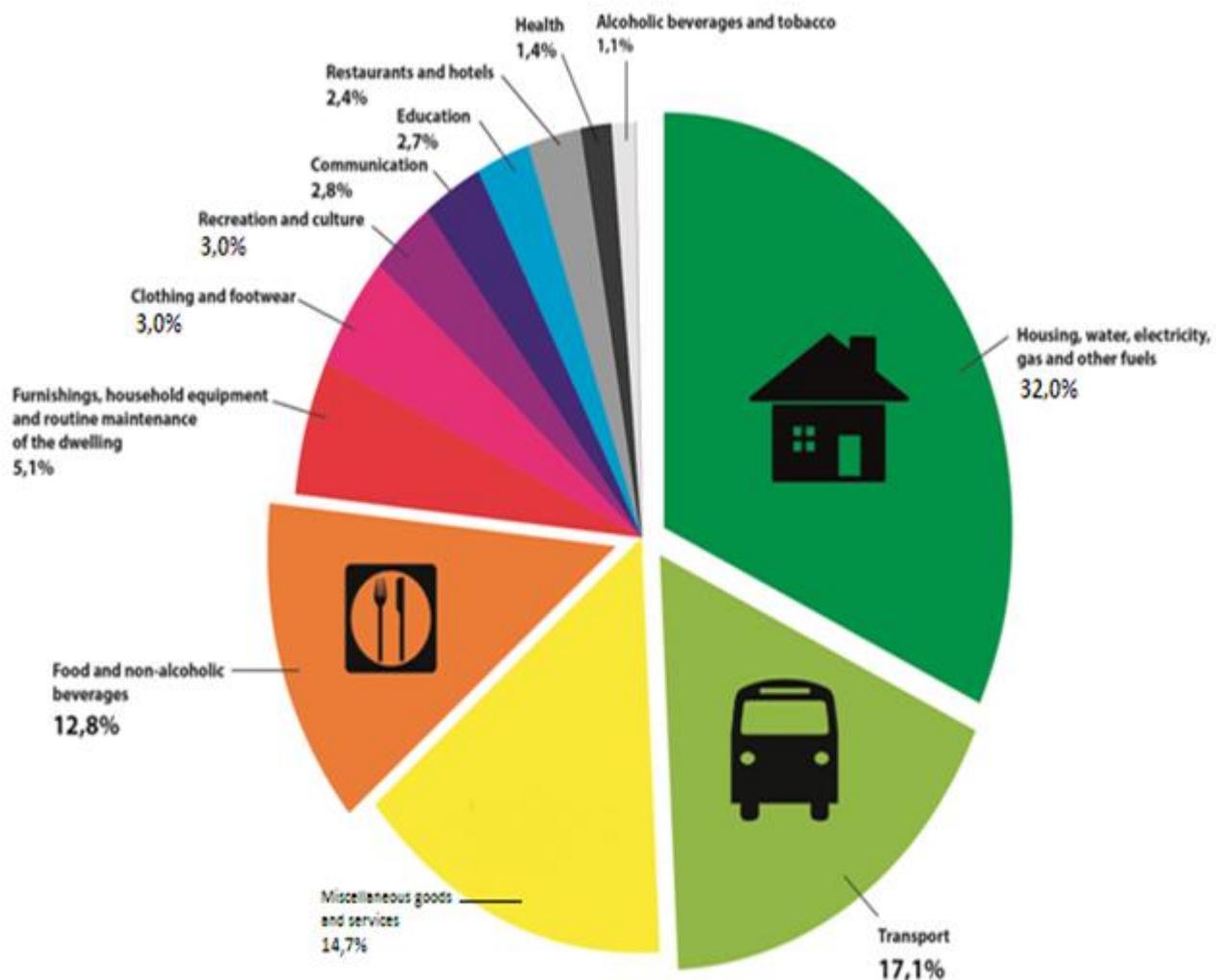
The review of the following articles presents them topically as the debate unfolds. The articles include general public opinion studies, youth perspective research, adult perspective studies, a transition from youth to adult (in a life history and lived experience perspective), via grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), adult male and female studies and finally public policy research on the problem of unemployment and homelessness.

## 2.1.1 DEFINING UNEMPLOYMENT

South Africa's official unemployment rate of 26.7% (Stats SA, 2016) is of serious concern to policy makers, social scientists and, of course, the citizens of South Africa. This rate uses a narrow definition. The broader definition using Stats SA's expanded unemployment rate for the same period is 36.3% (Stats SA, 2016), indicating a much larger problem. Given the enormous economic, societal and personal costs associated with this phenomenon, unemployment currently affects significant portions of South Africa's population with around 7.5 out of 51.8 million, being jobless. This translates to approximately 40% of the economically active population. For many of the unemployed, their situation leads to destitution and habitation of shelters for the homeless.

Kingdon & Knight suggest that there are variations in job-seeking behaviour amongst unemployed people (2012), specified by Stats SA's use of broad and narrow definitions of unemployment. These are two different concepts of unemployment, which are routinely used in South Africa: the strict (narrow) and the expanded (broad) definition. The broad definition includes those who did not search for work in a four-week reference period, but who report being available for work and say they would accept it if a suitable job were available. 'Discouraged' work-seekers are included in this definition (refer Figure 1.2). Although the narrow concept was declared the 'official' definition of unemployment in 1998, this thesis uses the broad definition as more indicative of the general lack of employment for South Africans. Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2016) continues to issue figures for narrow (official) and broad definitions of unemployment.

Most sources of information for unemployment use the narrow definition when publishing figures and the Department of Labour provides information on the narrow definition more frequently than on the broad definition. Stats SA includes in its definition of broad unemployment those job seekers who want to work but are not actively searching because there are no jobs in their area, or no work for their skills (2016). They are at times, referred to as the 'non-searching unemployed'. The strict (narrow) definition of unemployment considers a person to be unemployed if they have "taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview". These are on occasion, referred to as the 'searching unemployed'. The 'official' (i.e. narrow) unemployment rate fluctuated between 26.4 and 25% in the second quarter of 2015 (Stats SA), ending at 26.7% by May 2016 (at the time of writing), while the broad unemployment rate is much higher, closer to 40% (Stats SA). Given that, as depicted in Figure 2.1, the majority of South Africans' income is spent on basic survival items, then this same 40% have no or minimal access to these expenditure items. Regardless of the specific percentage, any economy with roughly one quarter of its economically active population being unemployed poses great challenges and costs.



**Figure 2.1: What Do South Africans Spend Their Money On? Stats SA, 2016.**

As Figure 2.1 illustrates, people spend the largest proportion of income in South Africa on housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels. Therefore being unemployed dramatically affects peoples' ability to provide for this major item of expenditure. The housing crisis in South Africa is thus not just limited to space and logistics, as argued by government, but largely driven by the unemployment crisis, creating a further demand for government-provided housing. When one observes the segments in the above pie chart, note that a significant 61.9% of the average South African's income is expended on basic survival, housing, transport and sustenance. When facing the crisis of being unemployed or severely underpaid, a basic human right, such as affording a home, becomes an impossibility.

Banerjee, Galiani, Levinsohn, McLaren and Woolard (2007–2008) claim they can define unemployment by examining its root causes. Their paper argues either for a decreased supply of work or (as they favour) structural changes in the economy, predisposed by social-political-economic factors.

According to Seekings & Nattrass the standard economic approach defines unemployment as a function of wage, saying “only those looking for work at prevailing wages but cannot find it should be counted as unemployed” (2006:166). Such a definition is difficult to apply in practice and most labour force surveys instead classify people as unemployed if they “do not have a job but want work and are actively seeking it” (International Labour Organisation [hereafter referred to as the ILO], October 1982), yielding different narratives about the rise of unemployment in South Africa. Nattrass states that economic prospects are not promising, and that unemployment is likely to remain a significant feature in the economic landscape (2014).

Barker defines an unemployed individual as one who does not have employment, is presently available to work, and is looking for employment (2007:174). This definition differs from those offered by the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the ILO. They maintain that those without a job, who want a job, have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks, or are out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks, remain unemployed.

Kingdon & Knight discuss the deleterious effects on economic welfare, production, erosion of human capital, social exclusion, crime and social instability and suggest that unemployment is a concern for the nation as a whole as “the most serious threat facing South African society and its governance” (2012). In 2006, they investigated the issue of unemployment using various approaches to distinguish, in conditions of high unemployment, between the searching and non-searching unemployed states. Firstly, they concluded that in South Africa, those who are unemployed and not searching for employment have less access to opportunities than those who are actually searching for work. This is true for the homeless, who, as revealed in the findings chapter of the thesis, find themselves further and further removed from job searching behaviour the longer they stay in the Shelter environment. This also suggests that their lack of searching may be a result of other aspects such as the cost associated with looking for work, particularly those who live in deep rural communities where job opportunities are limited. Second, it noted that those who are unemployed and not searching are not in any manner more content than those who are unemployed and searching for work, although the searching behaviour might in itself provide a measure of focus and purpose.

The researchers reveal that both categories of the unemployed suffer similarly. This includes lack of confidence and self-esteem resulting from an inability to earn an income to support themselves and their families.

Furthermore, Kingdon & Knight indicate that both unemployed categories as stated above experience similar stress levels due to their inability to earn an income and that the reasons for not searching for employment, may be related to factors such as poverty and lack of opportunities and information. They further assert that given the high unemployment rate, these will play a key role in wage determination (2006:813-848). The literature therefore offers no definite solution to the problem of unemployment. In other words, whether they are spending each day searching for employment, or whether they are sitting at home and contemplating their fate, they still suffer the same anxieties and stress factors despite the categories they occupy. Any solution must obviously entail increasing job opportunities derived from a thriving and growing economy. What these definitions indicate is that the lives of the unemployed, whether searching for work or not, are catastrophically affected by their unemployed status.

Understanding of the “problem of unemployment”, says Hussman, is premised on perceived value of its opposite, employment or paid work. However, being “unemployed” does not necessarily equate to “not working” (2010). Webster, Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu (2003) describe work as a “social activity, whereby an individual or group puts in effort during a specific time and space, sometimes, with the expectation of monetary or other kinds of rewards or with no expectation of reward. A sense of obligation to others was observed; implying that work occurs in a social and historical context” (2003:7).

Whereas unemployment is considered to be lacking a paid job, and employment the attainment of paid work, work can involve other types of labour such as volunteer work, domestic work, academic study, subsistence activities (such as gathering wood or water and growing food) or work performed in retirement (Hussmans, 2007; and Webster & von Holdt, 2005). This indicates that, although such people are not paid for their time and/or activities, they are still adding value to the lives of their families and society. Mosoetsa, shares this opinion of work, where unemployed individuals strive to remain useful to their families and communities by maintaining their homes and families, and engaging in social reproduction. Thus, they achieve respect and self-worth (2011: 87-105).

Another alternative view of the officially unemployed is presented in Marais’s (2011) comments on the “real face” of unemployment. Marais exposes some hard truths regarding actual unemployment rates, how they are measured and how the very labour regulations enacted to assist the unemployed, have failed the people that need them the most. While certain reports have shown a decrease in unemployment, Marais points out that these percentages only include a certain sector of the country's unemployed: those who are actively seeking work.

Those who eke out an existence by begging and informal trading are not considered unemployed (2011). An example of this problematic concept is the article by Isa in *Business Times: Opinion* explaining how unemployment figures may drop but the labour force has shrunk, and most “work” is deemed “informal” or “for survival” (2016:10). Reporting in this manner achieves a false positive, which may look better ‘on paper’ but does nothing to understand the experiences of unemployment and consequent homelessness. As well as defining the terms ‘unemployed/unemployment’ for this research, it is essential that the thesis also defines ‘homeless/homelessness’.

## 2.1.2 DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

Defining “homelessness” is imperative, say Wasserman & Clair (2010), particularly “in light of continuing stereotypes of those who are homeless as lazy alcoholics and skid row bums” and “dangerous, mentally ill, drug addicts”. They comment that there is little consensus in available literature on the matter, which often relates directly to the body or organisation defining it. Such definitions, they propose, “do the problem injustice and deter tackling the seriousness of homelessness” (2010:8-10). Farrugia (2011), similarly comments that popular understandings construct those who experience homelessness as “irresponsible, passive and obscene” (2011:73). Young people, who are homeless, are aware of how they are perceived, and this knowledge has consequences for the process of subjectivity by both the researcher, and the researched. Relevant in this context are contributions from Bourdieu and Massumi (in Farrugia, 2011) to theorise the nature of the symbolic burden of homelessness, and reflect on the issues involved in understanding the process of subjectivity.

Casey suggests that within a risk society, individuals who are “well paid and well-educated, have good material and emotional support from family or friends, are buffered against the extreme outcomes of risk taking i.e. a range of exciting opportunities to empower and uplift the individual in life, such as entrepreneurship” (cited in Eardley & Bradley, 2002:79). For those without buffers such uncertainty of employment, housing or family and social relationships can “very easily lead to insecurity, loss of opportunity and, ultimately, homelessness, creating a ‘risk society’ ” continues Casey together with Beck, 1992; and Winter & Stone, 1999 [cited in Eardley & Bradbury] (2002:75). In this context, poverty and homelessness are “the endpoint that comes about following a temporal chain of events, conditions and other stressors that push individuals into areas of risk or aggravate their social marginalisation by making it a permanent condition”.

This statement, suggests a life history of the ‘problem’, as explored in the research design of the thesis, suggests Casey together with Mingione & Morlicchio, 1993; and Milburn & Dercole, 1991, [cited in Eardley & Bradbury] (2002:75-90).

The pivotal work by Ravenhill (2012) detailing the life histories and lived experience of 150 people, will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The work presents social and economic factors underlying management of homelessness. It discusses identification of “risk factors” and “expertise in helping individuals to settle, by tracking people over time: essential for understanding the roots of homelessness - and to provide context for policy and specific interventions” (2012:95-143).

The work of Lee, Tyler and Wright (2010), deals with homelessness, homeless demographics, life chances, coping strategies, causes of homelessness, public and media views, and taking action. In their work, the term “new homelessness” has drawn sustained attention from scholars over the past three decades. Definitional inconsistencies and data limitations rendered early work during this period as largely speculative in nature. With conceptual, theoretical, and methodological progress, however, the research literature available now provides a fuller understanding of homelessness (Lee *et al*, 2010:501).

Contributions by sociologists and demographic estimates in the USA demonstrate how being homeless affects a person’s life chances and coping strategies. Agreement exists about the main macro-level and micro-level causes of homelessness: essentially unemployment and lack of resources. Active lines of enquiry examine public, media, and governmental responses to the problem as well as homeless people’s own efforts to mobilise on their behalf. Despite the obstacles faced when studying a stigmatised population marked by high turnover and weak anchors to place, recent investigations have significantly influenced homelessness policy by advancing the knowledge and understanding of the phenomenological causes and origins (this study was conducted in Pennsylvania, Nebraska and Florida).

Morrow’s (2010) article puts homelessness in South Africa in a historical context, relating contemporary homelessness to changing political, economic, agrarian, domestic and gender matters, and suggests that homelessness is more a manifestation of problems in these areas than an issue in its own right. Research for his argument is based on interviews in rural, small town and urban environments in the provinces of Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Gauteng. The interviews highlight the isolation and lack of social networks among the homeless people interviewed, and the extensive presence of homelessness, not just in cities but also in small rural centres (2010:51-62).

Olufemi (2002) discusses the definition of ‘home’ and ‘homelessness’ based on theoretical constructs as well as homeless street people’s perspectives. His paper discusses the barriers that make homelessness difficult to interpret, such as negative perceptions or positive perceptions. The article argues that the meaning and definition of ‘home’ or ‘homelessness’ should be contextualised within the broader issues of poverty, deprivation, socio-economic exclusion and, more recently, HIV/Aids. Furthermore, breaking down the barriers of labelling and stigmatisation of homeless people will allow for a ‘real’ meaning of the terms home and homelessness, and any intervention with regard to homelessness must take cognisance of homeless people’s perceptions (2002:454-466).



**Image 2.1: Homelessness in SA, Picture Vivienne Mackie - Die Burger, November 3, 2011.**

Many disciplines speak to this homelessness and therefore research requires an interdisciplinary approach. As stated in the introduction, the emphasis of my thesis is on a sociological approach, although the multidisciplinary lens creates a well-balanced researcher and well-researched outcome. I found the following reading to be valuable in highlighting the intersectionality of perspectives.

Christian's (2003) work, highlights and examines how the intersectionality of the primary social disciplines of sociology, psychology and others such as geography and policy studies, can be effective research mediums to evaluate and understand issues. This speaks to the multidisciplinary approach alluded to by Chamberlain & Johnson (2011). Such divergent approaches create different perspectives in addressing the 'problem' of unemployment and homelessness. This piece proved valuable in orientating the study, as the multiplicity of factors influencing the phenomena needs to be recognised.

Preceding significant South African studies by more than twenty-six years, McChesney stated that homelessness, although an age-old problem had evolved into a more serious economic problem affecting a wider demographic, as well as a much younger set of homeless than before (1990). Research in South Africa at that time, was directed at resolving the crisis of apartheid, and indeed, 1990 was the year the ANC was unbanned and Nelson Mandela released. In his international study, McChesney narrows down the focus to three pertinent homeless issues: housing, income and health. This research indicates that the homeless problem derives, in the main, from economic conditions. Although psychology plays a role, economic redirection may be the first step in addressing the problem of homelessness (1990:191-205).

Similarly, a study conducted in a first world context reviewed public policy issues related to homelessness and their priorities some twenty-five years ago. Kiesler (1991) also argued that the three most important policy issues are housing, income, and health. Cutting across these priority areas are the special problems of homeless children and youth, both in families and alone (1991: 1245-1252). Alcohol, drug abuse, and mental health services, although needed and effective, will neither stop nor slow the rate of homelessness experienced in the USA during this period. The authors strongly urge homelessness and affordability of home ownership to be priority policy at all levels of governance.

Chamberlain & Johnson (2011), make use of a large administrative database to outline five predisposed pathways into adult homelessness. These "pathways" are 'housing crisis'; 'family breakdown'; 'substance abuse'; 'mental health' and 'youth to adult'. The study explores why people on some pathways, remain homeless longer than others. People in a 'housing crisis' or 'family breakdown' pathway do not form strong friendships in the homeless subculture or accept homelessness as a way of life. Their homelessness is shorter than those individuals involved in 'substance abuse' and 'youth to adult' pathways. With a life history of homelessness, such people engage in a deeper homeless subculture, indulging in social practices that make it difficult to exit from homelessness, creating long-term homelessness (2011:60-77).

People on Chamberlain & Johnson's 'mental health' "pathway" also experience this profile of long-term homelessness. Such individuals do not endorse homelessness as a way of life but remain homeless because they have few exit options. Such is the case for most of the participants interviewed in this study, one of whom wanted to help his girlfriend in the Shelter who struggles with long term 'mental path' health issues (offered spontaneously as an issue of concern and dissent by the majority of interviews). The issues of 'family breakdown' and 'ill health' are "pathways" of note, and they feature as emergent themes in this thesis. The 'housing crisis' and 'youth to adult' "pathways" similarly remain pertinent features of the life histories of many of the participants in this study as well, and warrant investigation (2011:60-77).

## **2.2 SECTION B: THE EXPERIENCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOMELESSNESS**

To emphasise the common misunderstandings spoken of by Wassermann & Clair (2010) and Farrugia (2011) at the outset of the section and to confirm Olufemi's point that intervention with regard to homelessness must take cognisance of homeless people's perceptions (2002), Section B focuses on the literature that guided the research on subjective experiences of shelter-dwellers. In agreement with Olufemi (2002), Chard, Faulkner and Chugg (2009), concur that too few studies have been conducted that address homelessness from the perspective of those who have experienced it. Studies tend to focus on services for homeless people, with little description of the occupational engagement and the experiences of the homeless people themselves, say Chard *et al* in their 2009 study [in which they explored the lived experiences of adult men in an inner-city shelter]. Their inductive, narrative analysis revealed four themes: keeping busy, street-life environment, loss, and revelation and sharing of self (2009:116-124). These themes corresponded with much of the narrative in the research interviews and outcomes of this study.

Discussing employment issues, Cross, Erasmus, Ward and O'Donovan note that prevailing economic conditions provide a platform for examining both objective and subjective approaches to homelessness, globally and locally (2010:5-20). Gina & Sullivan argue that work gives people a purpose, that it is an outlet for "personal creativity and fulfilment and forms the axis of human self-making because it shapes people and their identities" (1987:649). Others suggest that unemployment in South Africa "leads to lack of structure in people's lives, to isolation, exclusion from the wider community, and a loss of self-esteem", (Philip, 2010:18). Barchiesi's 2009 research argues that paid work and meaningful employment hold the promise of full citizenship, implying that employment is seen as valued by society, providing a pivotal social role and service to family and country (2009:2-5).

Given the labour movement's prominence in the struggle against Apartheid - but also nostalgia about employment as the conduit of rights - he argues that development and social inclusion would create the ideal employee in order to achieve true "patriotic citizenship" (2009:2-5).

In the interviews, I explored what Barchiesi (2011) and Gina & Sullivan (1987) proposed, that when people are employed – that is, earning money and engaging with society – they are considered to experience and contribute to personal and societal prosperity and growth. When considering unemployment, the opposite is true. Even when employed, but in a position that is menial or underpaying, the opposite effects are visible, says Barchiesi (2009). Furthermore, he argues that [even] for those who do work, the "promise of liberation" is precarious and does not hold merit as low wages and insecurity reduces citizenship for many of the working poor" (2009:249). Barchiesi's argument has important implications for the sociological meanings of work and unemployment. The most significant implication is that while a large number of previously unemployed now fall into the employed category, they receive dismally low wages. Does this imply that poorly paid work is not socially valuable to the individual and society? If so, what is the value of unpaid work?

Nattrass asserts that present inequality is largely an inheritance from the Apartheid years (2013:96). Seekings & Nattrass declare that at the beginning of 1994, "more than a third of the workforce was searching for employment, resulting in unemployment becoming the identifying feature of the South African political economy" (2006:96). Immediately after the fall of apartheid, it seemed that unemployment rates reduced and the economy appeared to grow. In reality, those who had stable positions maintained these and thrived whilst the economy was still growing in an economic phenomenon called jobless growth. Those who were unemployed, however, suffered in the new economic climate, especially as interest rates and the cost of living rose (2010). As a result, many – even those who did have jobs – found themselves homeless. A number of themes emerge when looking at the existing literature on the experience of homelessness. These themes, which include gender, family, health and faith, are discussed in 2.2.1 below.

### **2.2.1 GENDER AND HOMELESSNESS**

During the interviews and subsequent research, it became apparent that many of the participants felt that a need to provide for their families formed a direct link to their own internal happiness, demonstrating how social expectations on gender performance and limitations and homelessness, are intertwined.

Olufemi indicates that homelessness and absolute poverty are aggravated by a lack of education, limited access to support, ill health and no opportunity for employment (2000:221-234). Olufemi's (2002) observation was evident when examining the lived histories and backgrounds of the participants that I interviewed. While Olufemi's paper raises many interesting and valid points, her theory suggests a primary focus on the feminine side of homelessness. This view limits insight into how homelessness affects the general population (2002).

Gender differences in abilities and experiences of coping with unemployment are likely, considering that a larger proportion of women participate in unpaid volunteer work than men in all age groups (Rosenberg-Russell, 1995). This anomaly implies that although women are managing to eke out an existence on very little, they are not considered unemployed as determined by the official definition. In contrast to Olufemi's (2000) focus on the feminisation of poverty, Strier (2014) discusses hegemonic representations of masculinity and dominant images of fatherhood amongst the unemployed Palestinian fathers in Israel. The study examines three areas of interest: perceptions of fatherhood, the experience of unemployment and the impact of unemployment on the construction of fatherhood. On a theoretical level, the article conceptualises the relationship between unemployment and fatherhood. Strier argues that, in order to generalise the impact of unemployment on fatherhood, the researcher must first examine the context in which gendered and cultural perceptions of fatherhood are embedded (2014:395-410).

In Willot & Griffin's (1997) paper "Wham Bam, am I a man?" unemployed British men talk about masculinities. In contemporary society, being powerful is typically associated with being male, middle class and employed. They claim that "cultural ascendancy of these characteristics is supported by specific structural and discursive patterns". However, there are a number of ways to challenge these cultural yardsticks. Situated in the English West-midlands region, this particular group of working class men talked about conflict between discourses concerning domestic provision and public consumption, leading to a sense of disempowerment and emasculation. Willot & Griffin found that, despite the challenge posed by long-term unemployment to traditional versions of masculinity, these men retained their positions within hegemonic discourses of masculinity (1997:107-128).

### **2.2.2 HEALTH**

The theme of health featured strongly in the interviews, and is explored in Chapter 4. Dunleavy, Kennedy and Vaandrager conducted a qualitative study in the UK using interviews to explore the subjective lived experiences of homeless people (2012).

It relates primarily to “the ‘properties of a person’; a collective or a situation that facilitates successful coping against the inherent stressors of human existence such that participants manage and maintain their own wellbeing” (2012). They developed an approach to health where attrition or nomadic tendency was likely in the participant group. Single interviews were held over a time-limited period. The researchers concluded that homelessness affects a considerable portion of the population and arises from poverty and social exclusion. Dunleavy et al describe the experience as “traumatic, disempowering and socially isolating”, (2012:2-4), no different to the adjectives used by my participants. Based on the Salutogenic approach (which the researchers devised), a “positive orientation on health” is called for. Accounts of “renewed self-confidence, perceived resourcefulness and continual personal participation” support an intended wellbeing of the homeless, as well as a strong belief and sense of coherence (in internal and external general resistance resources), as “a critical enabling factor” (2012:2-4).

Under the Salutogenic approach, wellbeing links with social and formal activities, keeping occupied and having a strong sense of purpose. Dunleavy *et al* maintain that this approach demonstrates how context and meaning of health actions can improve understanding of the factors influencing wellbeing in dire circumstances (2012:2-4). Liu, Stinson, Shepard and Haag deal with significant health and wellness strategies for individuals in a pre-homeless state and those currently homeless, documenting their hopes of avoiding a homeless state in the future (2009:131-148). Liu *et al* (2009), point out that all the male participants in the thesis stated that they were “honest, good, hardworking men”. Their role as primary providers and breadwinners had been lost, leading to “feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness and depression. These feelings led to a pattern of mental illness, substance and alcohol abuse and often violence and anger” (2009:131-148). In Fortin, Jackson, Mather and Moravac, the women who experience homelessness - in contrast to the general population - have a disproportionate predisposition to chronic disease, depression, anxiety, respiratory illness, food insecurity and violence (2015).

Moyo, Patel & Ross’s (2015) study is noteworthy in that the approach to homelessness is holistic. They explored the social situation of homeless people with mental illness living on the streets of Hillbrow, Johannesburg, with a view to facilitating action in terms of support services. They collected data via interviews and observations from three groups: homeless persons with suspected mental illness, homeless people in general and service providers. The research focused on factors of homelessness: health, living conditions, relationships between homeless persons and those with mental illness, survival strategies, and services utilised. Results were presented to all stakeholders and a forum was established to enable the findings to be actioned (2015:1-21).

It is imperative to note that, although this thesis does not involve any participants formally diagnosed with a mental illness or disability, many of Moyo *et al's* (2015) foci (and findings), were expressed in the majority of the participants' interviews. In voluntary comments offered on a fellow resident [that they believed should be admitted to a mental facility] for her well-being, eight of the participants declared they were concerned for her safety and that the Shelter environment did not bode well for her health and psychological wellness. Klitzing's 2004 study, too sought to understand the stress experienced by women [who lived in a transitional homeless shelter] to explore how women coped with their stress, and ultimately identify the role that enforced leisure played in helping these women cope. Her results revealed, similar to this study's reported experiences, that "women experienced a variety of stresses (such as chronic and negative event stresses) as well as daily stresses". Coping strategies included diversionary activities, ambivalent talk about job seeking, getting away from the Shelter, and social support. At times, this enforced leisure was a coping strategy, while at others it was a context for coping (2004:483-512).

### **2.2.3 FAMILY**

Trella & Hilton explore individual and family reliance on non-homeless family members in coping with homelessness in a rural area (2014). Drawing on 114 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with homeless adults and families in Michigan USA, almost all participants relied on non-homeless family members for assistance, but with varying amounts of help sought and received. Some individuals displayed high thresholds for help seeking, only relying on family under extreme circumstances and generally only asking for modest assistance. This reliance was common among childless single homeless adults. Other individuals displayed low thresholds for help seeking, common among homeless persons with children (2014:16-39).

Casey posits that lack of family support has significant negative effects on single homeless women who struggle to find a way out of their homeless situation (cited in Eardley & Bradbury, 2002:81). Additionally, they conclude that being homeless is frequently the final consequence of a series of "critical events" (cited in Eardley & Bradbury, 2002:83). Casey's reasoning is similar to Stinson's "critical incidents" theory (2010) as well as Chamberlain & Johnson's (2011) theory of a chain of events leading to homelessness. Referring to the "paths of adult homelessness" in their paper, Chamberlain & Johnson confirm such findings in this thesis, in that participants experienced problems involving social, psychological, political, economic and other factors. Beyond these factors, family and other social support systems are imperative in regaining a sense of self (2011:60-77).

In his Cape Argus, April 2016 article “We may be the black sheep, but we are part of your family” Oosthuizen speaks about the homeless’ need for family and a “hunger to return to real society”. He writes of the dynamics of people living on the street as “complex”. He categorically states, “We belong. Never mind whether you are an addict, sex-worker, have a criminal record, straight or gay, black or white. Our fights can be spectacular, but when need be, we stand united. We are part of your extended family (the black sheep, LOL!) and all we need is a warm smile and a kind word. OK! OK! Any small change?!” (2016:4).

#### **2.2.4 FAITH**

Hurlbut, Robbins and Hoke’s (2011) study examined the relationship between spirituality and health-promoting behaviours in a convenience sample of nine sheltered homeless women using the Health Promotion Lifestyle Profile II, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, and a demographic questionnaire. The results, including the subscales of physical activity, nutrition, spiritual growth, interpersonal relations and stress management, support the importance of spirituality among sheltered homeless women. These results correspond with the women’s comments in the interviews of this study (2011:81-91).

While most research to date has found that the majority of people believe that homelessness is a serious issue, perceptions of homeless individuals vary, says Dhanani (2011). The study explores how religion, being an important area of research to explore, affects people’s perceptions of homelessness since a significant number of homeless service agencies are faith-based. The Night Shelter (a group of community shelters in Cape Town and surrounds), which uses the Cross in its signage and lists church sponsors in printed handout fliers, promotes religiosity in residents, supplies transport to church services and invites various churches to preach to the residents on site.

Dhanani’s study found that although all major religions encourage compassion for the poor and homeless, little is known about the relationship between religious faith and perceptions of homeless individuals. Results of a telephone survey indicate that the influence of religion on perceptions of the homeless is neither consistent nor predictable (2011:52-61). Dhanani’s article unmask what Stivers & Nixon (2011) consider “the futile assumptions of our present approaches to homelessness” who suggest ways, in which Christians and Christian communities can create a prophetic social movement to end poverty and homelessness. According to these authors, “The American Dream” as conveyed by the media includes owning a home. Increasingly people are homeless or precariously housed because of joblessness, foreclosure or dislocation. Furthermore, Ecclesial responses to homelessness and housing vary, they say.

Some Christian organisations focus on ‘fixing’ the person and the behaviours that contribute towards homelessness while others promote home ownership for low-income households”, Stivers & Nixon (2011). Such an advocacy approach to help address the multiple causes of homelessness is similarly vocalised by Snodgrass (2014) and Dhanani (2011).

Snodgrass’s (2014) paper predominantly deals with the positive effect that spirituality (not necessarily just religion) can have on those who find themselves in the situation of homelessness. Of interest in the paper, is that most of the research on spirituality and homelessness was conducted by interviewers who were in the position of offering the spiritual guidance/support or care, as opposed to the homeless themselves. Snodgrass divides his findings into three basic themes, Hope, Motivation, Coping (with not feeling 'human'), and how spirituality influences these themes. Availability of spiritual and emotional support is paramount in assisting the homeless and found in places not necessarily traditional, i.e. a church (2014:307-317).

Sections A and B of this chapter deal with the macro and micro understandings of unemployment and homelessness. Section A situated the literature in a global and local context with emphasis on the main themes and definitions of Unemployment and Homelessness (theme 1). Section B developed the themes of Gender and Homelessness (1), Health (2), Family (3) and Faith (4) that emerged from the research literature, with basic overviews of findings included to contextualise each theme. [Personal experiences were cited in specific instances, where lived experienced and life history dictated a direct first person narrative of the event]. The Methodology chapter to follow will animate these literatures in the participants’ interviews.



**Image 2.2: “I am George” (unemployed and homeless for two years): Somerset West. Image and introduction captured with permission, June 2016.**

# Chapter 3

## *Methodology*

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

While Image 2.1 is familiar to many South Africans, this chapter discusses methods used to present the other view of homelessness and unemployment from the perspective of homeless people. This chapter also explains why the phenomenological approach, supported by grounded theory, was deemed an appropriate research strategy for this thesis. Bryman's (2012) description of phenomenology is concerned with "how individuals make sense of, and interpret, the world around them". Furthermore, Bryman suggests the researcher "should bracket out preconceptions on his or her grasp of that world ... and take an interpretive stance, considering double or triple interpretations in terms of the concepts, literatures and theories before arriving at findings". This approach attempts to "see things from that person's point of view" (2012:30). Complementary to phenomenologists, grounded theorists advocate the development of theory from interaction with their research participants (Charmaz, 2006; and Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In order to more fully describe the research approach, 3.2 outlines the phenomenological research method. After the manager and social worker received completed consent forms, submitted voluntarily, individual interview discussions were held with a group of participants who made use of the Shelter. Each interview, led by the participant (under their chosen pseudonym)<sup>5</sup> lasted several hours, with appointments set over the course of several evenings. As experts on their own life histories and experiences, the primary objective was to describe and understand the participants' accounts of unemployment and homelessness (Sandelowski 1991; and Ojermark, 2007).

The research strategy and the role of grounded theory, is discussed in 3.3, followed by the research process and design of the study in 3.4. Ethical considerations are detailed in 3.5. Finally, 3.6 contemplates reflections on possible limitations in the research - as anticipated in the proposal phase - suggesting further investigation into the research problem.

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<sup>5</sup> Pseudonyms were used for all participants.

### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

During the fifteen years that I was acquainted with him, Marius<sup>6</sup> was homeless and unemployed, living as a street person in and around the office park where I worked in Somerset West, Western Cape. We greeted each other daily. Over time, I saw him less often, and heard that he was making use of The Night Shelter, a haven for homeless people in the area. I decided to call in at the Shelter and volunteer over a period of a few months (mid-2015), and re-established the association with Marius, who now controls access to the facility as unofficial gatekeeper. In the Shelter, individuals sign in for a shower, a meal and a safe place to sleep overnight (from 5pm to 7am). Managed with voluntary donations and supervised by a management team, with a registered social worker, the Shelter assists people that represent a cross-section of the unemployed and homeless in the local community. I developed the idea for a thesis by listening to the life histories and lived experiences of some of the residents, based on theories such as Sandelowski 1991; and Ojermark, 2007. Like Marius, they revealed that one of the main reasons they found themselves destitute is because they did not have jobs. No income meant no home, a transition that is often swift and catastrophic.

The phenomenological approach to examine the research problem - that of addressing unemployment and homelessness in a research context – provided the best means to explore the daily activities of these participants, deconstructing and critically engaging with the experience of being unemployed and homeless. Sandelowski speaks of a narrative approach, in telling one's life history (of events) to “create order and meaning to the individual” (1991:161). Ojermark refers to “the collection and interpretation of personal histories or oral testimonies, collected during the interview process, for the purpose of understanding their past, present and future” (2007:1). The primary objective was to describe and understand the participants, as led by themselves, as experts on their own life histories and lived experiences (Sandelowski, 1991; and Ojermark, 2007).

In contrast to the structural approaches of Barchiesi (2011); Marais (2011) and Nattrass (2013), - which were discussed in the literature review - Desjarlais & Throop (2011) also use a phenomenological approach to unemployment. They explore how dramatically people's lives are affected in daily struggles, be this with health, politics, social interactions, religion, death and other everyday life experiences, creating a complex reaction to the problem of unemployment and homelessness. Their responses often reveal a life history of such struggles (Ravenhill, 2012).

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<sup>6</sup> Marius would have preferred his given name to be used, but was persuaded to agree to the ethics and consent conditions of the research agreement and select a suitable pseudonym.

As outlined by Desjarlais (1997), the lived experience approach achieved the desired qualitative analysis and description of the participants. Life history can be interpreted in various ways, but as a researcher, I was particularly interested in how each individual found themselves to be unemployed, how they pass their time each day, and their expectations and activities for finding future employment.

### **3.2.1 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOMELESSNESS**

Fitzpatrick, Kemp and Klinker (2000) surveyed the body of literature relating to the phenomenon of unemployment and homelessness, exploring the growing interest in the underlying social and economic factors, increasing sophistication in the identification of “risk” factors, and evolving expertise in helping resettlement. However, they noticed a real absence of research tracking homeless people over time, which is essential for understanding the roots of homelessness and providing a context for policy and specific interventions (2000:18).

Although a review, of the literature, relating to such interventions was necessary to contextualise my research, my focus was not primarily on the macro level of the research problem, but how individuals at the micro-level understand their trajectory to the Shelter, and their daily experiences. The phenomenological method is appropriate because the transition from unemployment into homelessness is never an isolated incident but rather, as Ravenhill suggests, the result of several critical life, and indeed, often lifelong, incidents that lead to the event (2012). Ravenhill’s seminal work on the culture of homelessness, was based on long, intensive interviews, with almost one hundred and fifty homeless and formerly homeless people, homelessness workers and policy makers. Always focusing on the lived experience and life history of the individuals, her research allowed a broad and deep approach, offering a full exploration of the routes into and out of homelessness. The book presents as a story: telling the beginning, middle and sometimes end of the plight of the homeless (2012).

Mosoetsa's research in Kwa-Zulu Natal is relevant to the work that I did with the Shelter as the households spoken about in her paper have a similar experience to my participants. They also have a history that has led to them being in the current situation of unemployment (2004). Mosoetsa illustrates how the narration of life histories reveals the emergence - and eventual collapse - of the footwear industry in the province. Such experiences reveal how, as a result of trade liberalisation and political unrest - which directly led to the downsizing and/or eradication of factory work forces - families were forced to band together to maintain their survival (2004).

It was interesting to note that, as the households that Mosoetsa's research refers to, the participants [in my research] followed distinct "pathways" that led to their current homeless state (refer Chamberlain & Johnson, 2011). In contrast to Mosoeta's findings, however, they did not band together with their families, but rather disassociated with them, due to the shame that they experienced arising from their situation of unemployment and homelessness. This suggests that different people and indeed different communities will react differently to similar conditions, and policy formulation must likewise consider these differences.

### **3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

This section addresses the realisation of the research strategy, namely a grounded theory approach. Through this approach, the study proceeded by examining the lived experience and life histories of my participants, as led by themselves as experts on their research subject, during the interviews (Sandelowski 1991; and Ojermark, 2007). As recommended by Bryman (2012), after the interviews, suggested processes and outcomes were observed, with detailed verbatim notes and recordings transcribed and analysed to create codes, concepts, categories, hypotheses and theories. During the process, comparisons were made in the concepts and categories, exploring the relationship between the two and testing the findings (2012:571). Newspaper articles were used as part of the research strategy and formed secondary resources to the primary processes, as indicated. The authors of such articles have been properly credited and listed according to the recommended layout as stipulated by Stellenbosch University (van Dyk and Coetzee, 2010).

#### **3.3.1 GROUNDED THEORY**

##### **Researching the experience of unemployment and homelessness at 'The Shelter'.**

Bryman discusses the outcomes of the different phases of grounded theory and their relationship to the phenomenological approach. Grounded theory speaks to the "labels given to phenomena; concepts [that are] referred to as "the building blocks of theory", with the 11 steps observed in the research strategy eventually creating formal theories, that may lead to more abstract categories (2012:570-571). He confirms that the grounded theory approach represents the "most influential general strategy for conducting qualitative data analysis [and that] many software programmes have been written with grounded theory in mind (2012:575).

According to Charmaz (2006), staying close to the data while developing concepts that synthesize and explain collected data, is best achieved by observing the participants directly and suggests that the researcher “build levels of abstraction from themes gleaned directly from the data, forming a conceptual analysis of the empirical problem”. In this way, a grounded theory strategy demystifies qualitative enquiry, because the coding of each segment provides a “short-hand label” of the theme (2006:57-58).

Patterned relationships within conceptual themes emerge. Furthermore, memo writing refines the themes and creates a link between data collection and the writing of the draft. Charmaz suggests that the final literature review should be delayed until formation of the analysis is complete, and then adjusted to that of the research proposal (2006:82-83). Furthermore, Charmaz (as cited in Bryman, 2012) adds that “social reality does not exist independent of human action”, confirming her recommendation regarding the literature review (2012:575).

I endeavoured to understand the meanings that these individuals attached to their personal constructions of their lived experience and life history. Through interviews, which sometimes lasted for many hours, following the themes suggested by the participants, each participant constructed himself or herself by narrating how they ended up in the Shelter, because of their personal journey of unemployment leading to homelessness. The interview facilitated a social encounter whereby language became understood not only as a descriptive tool, but also as something which works to produce realities, Hall (2000) proposes.

According to Hall (2000), identity must be understood not as something people have (which makes them behave in pre-determined ways) but as a verb, something which the individual does, as constructed and performed. Hall argues that the concept of identity “cannot be erased altogether” (or ‘wished away’, as evidenced in the personal regrets of many of the participants). Without a concept of identity, key questions of how people experience and make sense of themselves in various contexts “cannot be processed” (2000:15-30).

### **3.4 RESEARCH PROCESS**

#### **3.4.1 SAMPLING, SIZE AND COLLECTION CRITERIA**

I developed a good relationship with the manager and the social worker of the Shelter, prompting me to approach them in May 2015 with my research idea. The management team (including recovered addicts, who announce themselves in this way as a matter of shelter policy and transparency) discussed the research.

They agreed it would make an interesting and valuable study, and gave me permission to proceed with the construction of the consent form, which received management's approval. The management team approached the residents with the proposal during assigned dinner periods, over a period of about three months. The purpose of the study, as well as the content and implications of the informed consent form, were explained in detail by the social worker, with question and answer sessions scheduled. Volunteers were required to complete the consent form and arrange an interview appointment time with the Manager.

This occurred individually, so that their identity was not revealed to other shelter users and staff, unless they did so voluntarily, which eventually, during the interview process, they did. They enjoyed discussing their individual experiences amongst themselves. As elaborated in Point 3.3 the life histories and lived experience approach was used in my research. I interviewed nine voluntary participants (with a tenth giving consent to his statements) on site, at the Shelter, in order to understand how their unemployment and homelessness affected them. These interviews were primarily conversational, in that I did not know how long they would take or how the participant would respond and interpret the basic questions. In all, twelve discussions occurred.

The consent form indicated that the interview would take between three and five hours and would (possibly), therefore be conducted in stages. The interviews did indeed consume such amount of time. The intention, as illustrated via grounded theory was to let the individual lead the experience and discussion. The individuals who volunteered for interviews are listed in Table 4.1, detailed in Chapter 4. The same chapter discusses their personal interviews as a prelude to the analysis and findings.

The participants were interviewed individually in the formal setting of the skills room at the Shelter. A key concern of mine was to facilitate conversations with them on broad, open-ended questions relating to their reasons for being unemployed and how the chain of events of unemployment led to their seeking assistance from the Shelter: assistance for accommodation, food, limited skills acquisition, support, job seeking and the ultimate goal of employment and independence. I was particularly concerned with how they coped once at the Shelter and how they viewed the future beyond it if the interview led to their expressing it.

Rather than referring to the interviews as an 'instrument', as often described in methods texts in the social sciences, viewing them as an ethnographic encounter involving the participants, myself and the research strategy, was preferred (Bryman, 2012:574-575).

For example, I used the opportunity of the interviews to explore their life histories as a whole, allowing them to tell their stories from an early age to finding themselves seeking refuge at a night shelter. As a result, I could explore insights about the nature of the friendships and relationships derived from the Shelter experience, and about their engagement with their selected friends and with me in the research encounter (in the approaches formulated by Sandelowski 1991; and Ojermark, 2007). Research proceeded by engaging with them as authorities on their lives and identifications as particular kinds, or categories, of unemployed individuals. These interviews were conducted over a period of several evenings, as my time and the participant's availability allowed.

The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission, and then transcribed. These transcriptions were then broken down into various themes and categories. I then proceeded to cross-reference the dominant themes with that of my research material.

As Charmaz (2006) proposed, patterned relationships within conceptual themes emerged. Further, the detailed transcription refined the emergent themes and created a link between data collection and the writing of the draft. As mentioned in 3.3.1, the final literature review was delayed until formation of the analysis was complete. It was adjusted considerably to fit the research proposal (2006:82-83). The research material used in the literature review therefore underpinned the links established during the interviews and the transcription process. The analysis and the findings of my research and interviews are discussed in Chapter 4.

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study was guided by the standard ethical principles of Stellenbosch University's research ethics policy, which upholds the principle that no harm should befall research participants. Informed consent was received from all study participants, verbally and in writing, at the commencement of the study. Both management and participants gave informed consent to use the name of the facility (as attached in the research proposal and ethics clearance form). Although the Shelter participants suggested having their names published, I adhered strictly to the Stellenbosch University ethical guidelines, in that all the interviews and participant names were anonymised using pseudonyms. Participation was voluntary with freedom to withdraw at any stage of the research process, as noted in writing, and at the outset of all interviews. Despite some of the participants feeling levels of discomfort when reliving painful moments from their past during their interviews, none of them chose to withdraw or mentioned feeling any regret at participating.

Many of the participants found it cathartic to discuss their histories and, although some struggled with verbalising painful stories from their past, they felt safe in the discussion environment and comfortable enough to reveal the pathways that led them to their current situation. In one instance, the participant responded to my suggestion to take a water break and resume the interview when s/he felt more composed and able to talk without crying. I suggested another date or time to resume the discussion, but s/he preferred to continue, and complimented the interview forum as being “very therapeutic”.

The consent form also informed participants that they had the right to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw at any stage of the research, or to interrupt the interview if they felt emotional and needed time to gather their thoughts (which happened with at least one participant). Management of the Shelter were asked whether they wanted the Somerset West Night Shelter, as a site and the name, to be anonymous.

The participants were also consulted about the wording and construction of the Informed Consent Form. The name and the site were included in the study by request (see Addendum A), but the confidentiality of the interview process and the anonymity of the participants was ensured by not discussing the interviews with any other participant, or with the staff of the facility. Additionally, I assigned a suitable pseudonym for each participant. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with any participant, will be disclosed only with the participant's permission or as required by law.

As stated in the consent form, it is important to note that, due to the circumstantial vulnerability of the participants, an ethical and sensitive approach was of utmost importance and concern. Importantly, the manager and social worker considered the research to be low risk (Addendum A). It was imperative to gain trust and adhere strictly to the confidentiality of which the participants had been assured. Cooper's (1999) assertion that vulnerable participants experience distress when talking about their painful past applied to some of the interviews. In consideration of the participants' emotional wellbeing, constant monitoring of their needs and requirements was maintained throughout the interviews. This included mindfulness of my own state of mind and reactions (Cooper 1999:467-475).

This view is reiterated by Munro, Holmes and Ward who state, “although researchers, policy makers and local authorities may all work to enhance the well-being of vulnerable groups, they may well have different perspectives which frequently affect and occasionally undermine the research process” (2005:1025).

As implied earlier, some participants experienced a sense of agency during the research, in that their story was being heard and documented on permanent record in a dignified piece of research. This experience does problematise the notion of the unemployed and homeless as being vulnerable and pitiful, but amplifies the therapeutic effect all participants felt the process achieved, validating the Manager's letter (in the proposal) stating he and the social worker of the Shelter felt the research process was considered low risk research (See Addendum A).

### **3.6 REFLECTIONS ON POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

Descriptions of race in this section are capitalised and categorised according to South African legislation. My situation in the research, as a White middle-class woman, would possibly have had a similar effect to that described by Zufferey (2014), as no African or Indian resident volunteered to participate in the study. This happened in spite of my non-involvement in the volunteer and selection process until arriving on site. At the scheduled interview time, with the agreed protocol, I arrived on foot, dressed very casually (as would a possible resident), carrying only a small satchel. Socialising in an unassuming, low profile manner in the dining area, I waited until the supervisor on duty led the participant and I to the Skills Room of the Shelter for the interviews.

With the exception of Marius and Dries, who are Coloured, all the other participants are White. As a researcher, my Whiteness may have influenced the decision of Black residents not to volunteer for an interview. Zufferey's 2014 study, reflecting on her own experience as a White social worker in an Aboriginal field, revealed how she became conscious of the intersecting discriminatory influences of class, gender and racial background on social work responses to homelessness. While interrogating how experiences and perceptions of home and homelessness were influenced by diverse, racialised, classed and gendered social identities, she debated how these social categories of disadvantage are embodied, interactional, relational, and embedded in social structures. I felt this (possible) 'otherness' when seated in the communal dining area, and in social interactions with the residents, as if my whiteness was viewed with suspicion. It may have been linked to a 'them and us' response based on the fact that the manager of the facility, the administration manager and most of the supervisors are White, and are all men with the exception of the administration manager who is a woman.

Although the staff explained to the participants that there was no research connection between them and myself, I may have been received with hesitation, regardless. The social worker is Coloured and female, and she and I were seen to work and socialise well.

Thus a ‘disconnect’ from theory to in-situ research reality may have existed. Zufferey discovered this, despite the central aim of social work, which was to be inclusive of diverse client groups and diverse providers working in the field of homelessness. Thus, as a White, western, middle-class social worker exploring other people’s lives, Zufferey became conscious of the intersecting discriminatory influences of class, gender and racial background on social work responses to homelessness (2014).

In addition, the research was conducted at only one site and the experiences may not represent the wide scope of unemployed South Africans. A wider study in the community including other individuals such as professionals who have been retrenched or early retired, as identified in the research proposal, will add greater diversity to the meaning and experience of unemployment. Elements such as social standing, shifts in family dynamics due to income and power changes in marriages, for example, as well as matters of class and culture change could be factored into such wider experiences of unemployment that would exclude homelessness. Further, if homelessness becomes the primary research problem, consideration of a Phase 2 study of the initial research at the Shelter would also be a possibility. Because demographics of the Shelter residents change regularly, I would like to examine the social, economic and racial profiles of those who make use of the Shelter over a six-month to a year period.

There are also several other night shelters situated around the Cape Peninsula, and studies comparing the differences in dynamics, if any, between these potential research sites may well provide some valuable and more broadly applicable insights on the research problem.

This is the first study of this nature conducted at Stellenbosch University and, as it deals with pressing sociological issues in the local, broader and global communities, it should be followed up with additional research.



**Image 3.1: Homeless people in Cape Town protest against treatment that infringes on their basic human rights, Picture: Carl Bernado - African News Agency (IOL), July 25, 2016.**

# Chapter 4

## *Analysis and findings*

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how unemployment affects the lives of ordinary South Africans. Often leading to destitution, poverty, substance abuse and finally homelessness, the lived experiences of those residing at the Shelter, a facility for homeless people in Somerset West, follow the trajectory of unemployment. Interviews with ten participants are discussed in this chapter. With a qualitative approach, I examined the life history of each participant, hence the ‘storytelling’ evidenced in the narrative. Although I employ an academic commentary in achieving an overview of the main themes, I do not use quantitative comparisons.

This chapter presents an analysis of the findings from the interviews, organised in themes for greater clarity. Whilst the overarching premise regarding motivation for seeking the services of The Night Shelter is unemployment and homelessness, additional themes of health, family and faith emerged from the interviews.

I precede the discussion of the themes of a table with basic information about the participants, followed by a brief profile of each participant before presenting a thematic discussion of the participants’ experiences.

#### **4.1.1 PARTICIPANTS**

Nine residents of The Night Shelter were interviewed and one (Johannes) permitted his basic information and a brief conversation held after dinner to be used, totalling ten. The participants’ ages ranged from ages thirty-seven to sixty years of age, with seven men and three women participating. All are Afrikaans mother tongue speaking, but competently bilingual. With the exception of Lena, interviews were conducted in English (see Table 4.1). Life has taken a toll on the features and postures of residents of the Shelter. Cowering is frequently observed in body language. Sadly, treatment for medical ailments and personal aesthetics is not priority - nor accessible - when basic needs are unfulfilled.

Ravenhill speaks of the stereotypical image of a homeless person as “dirty, smelly, alcoholic, obnoxious and loud” (2012:5), and whilst this may be true for some individuals, my personal observations and findings from the participants I interviewed revealed, in most cases, the precise opposite. I did not necessarily experience this group as entirely “irresponsible, passive and obscene” either (according to Farrugia, 2011:71-87), although some patterns of irresponsibility and passivity appeared.

The participants interviewed represent a good overview of the dominant race range of residents at the shelter as listed in Table 4.1. The main group are White men in early to middle age (between ages 35 and 55). The majority of participants have some education, with Dries having completed an N3 level apprenticeship and Coen an NQF diploma and various warehousing certificates. Jacob has Matric and “many years” experience in installing and maintaining fire extinguishers” (Interview: 12 January 2016). Hardus (the oldest male, aged 55) has Matric, while his wife, Lena, (the oldest female, aged 60) has a teaching diploma.

Neither Marius nor his wife finished school. Handre and Johannes did not state their qualifications, although Johannes trades for a local company, implying that he has some knowledge of the property market. Ayesha, in her late forties, has Matric, while the most qualified woman, Katrina (at age 53) has earned two degrees, has many years of business ownership and has offered entrepreneurial experience in various community projects during her career.

By far the majority of the participants felt competent, capable, willing and able to work, especially the men, who felt happiest being busy and providing for their loved ones.

**Table 4.1: Participant Table - The (Somerset West) Night Shelter: January 2016**

Volunteers as selected by completed consent forms arranged between management and residents

<b><u>Name:</u></b>	<b><u>Interview:</u></b>	<b><u>Marital Status:</u></b>	<b><u>Age:</u></b>	<b><u>Sex:</u></b>	<b><u>1st Language:</u></b>	<b><u>Race:</u></b>
Marius de Klerk	May 2015 and again 12/01/16	Married	40's	Male	Afrikaans (Semi-Bilingual)	Coloured
		(Wife a staff member at Shelter)				
Handre van Tonder	12/01/2016	Separated	49	Male	Afrikaans (Bilingual)	White
Dries Malgas	12 & 21/01/2016	Not married	39	Male	Afrikaans (Bilingual)	Coloured
Johannes de Beer	Commented at dinner, permission given 12/01/2016	Not stated	40's	Male	Afrikaans (Bilingual)	White
Jacob Esterhuizen	12/01/2016	Divorced	38	Male	Afrikaans (Bilingual)	White
Coen Minnaar	14/01/2016	Not married	37	Male	Afrikaans (Bilingual)	White
Katrina Slabbert	15/01/2016	Divorced	53	Female	Afrikaans (Bilingual)	White
Ayesha Oktober	16/01/2016	Twice divorced	47	Female	Afrikaans (Bilingual)	White
Hardus Woest	19/01/2016	Married	55	Male	Afrikaans (Bilingual)	White
Lena Woest	21/01/2016	Divorced and re-married	60	Female	Afrikaans	White
10 participants* *Pseudonyms used	12 interviews					

## 4.2 PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

### 4.2.1 JACOB ESTERHUIZEN, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEW 12/01/2016:

**(White male, aged 38, home language Afrikaans: bilingual).**

Throughout the interview, it appears that Jacob strongly identifies with being a provider and struggles with the ripple effects that being unemployed and homeless present. He was raised believing that, to be respected as a man, one needs a stable job, a good income and to be head of a family unit. He has lost all. He has been severely affected by the death of his mother and siblings and by the betrayal of his father (upon his passing) regarding securing his financial future, as an inheritance due to him was not in place. He has lived at the Shelter for three months. Jacob is an earnest, sensitive and friendly man, revealing a caring nature. Smiling often, his body language is easy going and he communicates in a warm, soft manner.

Although he has been married and had several relationships, infidelity by Jacob's partners has prompted him to search for a "pure" partner. Despite betrayal on many levels by both family and career, Jacob still appears to trust and rely heavily on other people. This is very apparent in his close friendship with Coen, a fellow resident, as well as longing to help his love-interest at the Shelter "get better and work through her problems".

Coen objects vehemently to the budding romance, and harmony in the Shelter friendship group is restored when, during the first interview week, the woman concerned is under psychiatric observation in hospital. Harmony is lost in the next week upon her return to the Shelter, where she causes dissension amongst the residents. The lack of local psychiatric wellness facilities is mentioned by most of the residents, and will be addressed further under 2.2. Jacob spends much of the interview revealing how happy he feels when he "can get up and go to work" in the mornings, as it instils pride and self-respect. He enjoyed working hard and earning well for most his adult life. He "loves the feeling of putting in twelve hours and making a difference". (Interview: Jacob, 12/01/2016).

#### **4.2.2 COEN MINNAAR, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEW 14/01/2016:**

**(White male, aged 37, home language Afrikaans: bilingual).**

Like Jacob, Coen also relates to the role of provider. He had to leave his mother in the care of his older brother, but he has provided money and daily requirements for her wellbeing in his absence. So determined is Coen to fulfil his role as a responsible son that he has left his mother with the last of his resources whilst he has taken up residence in the Shelter (now approaching three months).

A source of frustration to him is that his brother cannot be trusted to care for their mother, or keep Coen's motorcycle (which is in storage) safe. Coen is educated and, like Jacob, expresses a strong, driven work ethic and a keen sense of pride in any work related task. He is the obvious leader in the group and has an easy, amiable command over the men in the Shelter friendship circle. He commands his discussion as if in a job interview, with skill and poise, often cracking appropriate and timely jokes to ease any tension when his subject matter is sensitive or serious.

Coen is adamant about maintaining his personal ethics and the role of ambitious provider, both for his family and for the women (and their children) with whom he has had relationships. This ambition defines him as a man. For Coen, not having a steady income, or a work position that he can be proud of, has led to his feeling unworthy and that he cannot offer any social or financial benefit to his family and significant others (with reference to Liu *et al*, 2009). Most of the interview (of several hours), is filled with proud details of Coen's work history, stretching over twenty years in his life. He is happiest when working and earning. It defines him. (Interview: Coen, 14/01/2016).

#### **4.2.3 KATRINA SLABBERT, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEW 15/01/2016:**

**(White female, aged 53, home language Afrikaans: fully bilingual).**

Katrina is an attractive, immaculately groomed and well-educated woman who has spent her life dedicated to "improving the lives of others". While she has always thrived on control and procedures, she has battled with severe depression and anxiety. She is proud of always having been capable of "making a plan".

Despite her parents' early decisions about how she should be educated (as a librarian or teacher) and live her young adult life, after a divorce and two small children, Katrina made use of her own judgement, leading to a long and very successful entrepreneurial career.

Her accent is plummy and ‘Queen’s English’, revealing a privately schooled childhood, whilst her mother tongue (Afrikaans) is as eloquent (all the residents speak both languages to each other, depending on the occasion).

Changes in employment and economic practises in the mid-1990's to mid-2000's, coupled with an extreme anxiety disorder, led to Katrina finding herself with no income. Over the space of a year, she lost all her financial power and her home. Although she attempted to find distraction by caring for her widowed father, her pride prevented her from being honest with him regarding her joblessness (and homelessness). Similarly, with her two adult sons, Katrina has not disclosed her destitute situation, aggravating her depression and anxiety further (see Mosoetsa, 2014, on the micro-politics of poverty and inequality). She was dropped at the Shelter one Sunday afternoon, “now almost four months ago”.

Despite finding herself at the Shelter, Katrina chooses to benefit from the strict routines and systems in place to give her some security. She is using the opportunity to re-invent her life. Katrina maintains vague and generalised contact with her family (sons and father), but has only approached her eldest son for support at an isolated visit to hospital to source chronic medication for her condition. Living with lifelong depression and anxiety, Katrina has often found herself ostracised by the effects of her condition and is of the opinion that it is “not taken seriously enough on a diagnostic and therapeutic level both in society and by the state”. While Katrina reaches out to help others at the Shelter (“worthy candidates who need help with their CV’s”) she has also been using the time to speculate on her life and mistakes made, expressing positive feelings about personal changes and growth experienced with the time she has had to learn about herself. (Interview: Katrina: 15/01/2016).

#### **4.2.4 AYESHA OKTOBER, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEW 16/01/2016:**

**(White female, aged 47, home language Afrikaans: fully bilingual).**

Ayesha has been married twice, first to a Pakistani man, for whom she converted to Islam, who returned to his homeland after their business failed, and then to a South African, after reverting to Christianity. She gave up her work as a bookkeeper in the retail sector when she and her second husband moved towns in the Cape *platteland* (rural farming region). Her now ex-husband abandoned her at the Malmesbury Night Shelter about two years ago. Ayesha now finds herself at the Somerset West shelter, for “going on six to eight months”, totalling over two years in shelter life.

Articulate and elegant in her body language, Ayesha tends to weep copiously and uses the interview as a therapeutic release, which she finds comforting. She apologises for her shorter hair (to deal with the summer heat and “no access to her hair drier and flatiron, which were given away” while she was in hospital). Ayesha presents as well-groomed and very refined, but is agitated easily.

Much like Katrina, Ayesha has suffered from depression and anxiety her entire life, with the condition aggravated by feeling confused about her personal identity. She has maintained her Muslim name, struggling to come to terms with “what is in her name” (a song she is composing, but has to complete). This lack of 'belonging', leaves her feeling lost and without direction, manifesting itself in a myriad of emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual ailments.

Ayesha has a good basic education (Matric), but she has only held menial work positions, relying mostly on her husbands to support her, both financially and emotionally. She cannot come to terms with “why her last husband left her” although she states it was his relationship with his ex-wife and child that she could not tolerate, confessing that her personal pain drives people away. She has yet to resolve Jandre’s abandonment of her and never fetching her, as he had told her he would. (Interview: Ayesha, 16/01/2016).

#### **4.2.5 HARDUS WOEST, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEW 19/01/2016:**

**(White male, aged 55, home language Afrikaans: bilingual).**

Hardus presents as the loveable gentle giant leader of the men, who takes pride in himself, his possessions (like Dries, he carries a rucksack with coffee, sugar, milk and supplies), and particularly his wife. Although he does not mention having any tertiary education after Matric, besides the military, his conversation reveals a deep intelligence, with philosophical interests in the religious and political issues that surround him. His personality is that of a ‘worldly wise’ and sophisticated man, when talking generalities, but when responding to the deeper issues raised in the basic research questions, he becomes emotional, revealing the deep hurts of a fractured childhood.

Like Coen and Jacob, Hardus had a close bond with his mother and he admits to missing the love and support of his parents. Although he only spent a few years in the military, he expresses a strong desire to return, he felt that the regimental structure was preferable to his chaotic home circumstances.

Hardus describes his wife as a “pure and clean” woman who he adores and protects fiercely. He enjoys her maternal affection towards him and reflects on the pride he takes in caring for her. He and his wife have been at the Shelter for over two and a half years. (Interview: Hardus, 19/01/2016).

#### **4.2.6 LENA WOEST, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEW 21/01/2016:**

**(White female, aged 60, home language Afrikaans: conducted her discussion in Afrikaans. I will not be quoting Lena but attempt to translate her conversation as literally/verbatim as possible).**

Although Lena is the oldest of all the participants, she describes herself as healthy and happily declares that she does not suffer from depression or any health ailments. She declares herself to be of pensionable age as is satisfied with her life history and current circumstances. She is married to Hardus, and she confirms that they have a strong and happy marriage built on trust and love. She is a qualified schoolteacher but has worked for decades at Hardus’ side in their business ventures for many years. Lena sees the Shelter as a stepping-stone toward a brighter future, and although she has some issues with the management and rules, she adopts a positive attitude towards her circumstances.

Having been raised by loving parents, free of any abuse or violence, perhaps contributes to her positive outlook on life. Similar to Ayesha, Lena prefers the submissive role as wife in the relationship by maintaining traditional masculinities quite specific to the Afrikaans *platteland* (rural farming) culture in which she was raised. This ‘Boer Tradition’ is voiced by Walker (1979), where she verbalises, “Marriage and submissions to the authority of their husbands, the supervision of the household, the bearing of children and the inculcation of the norms and values of their society into the next generation – these were the unquestioned duties of white women” (1979:3).

Although Lena enjoyed a very brief period of school teaching and appeared to be successful at it, she feels that the current education system is no longer viable for her to be of positive use and prefers to work at Hardus’ side. They have been together for 23 years, but only married once they became homeless. She is supportive of her husband and the manner in which he is planning to bring them back to financial freedom. Lena has no interest in technology or modern day conveniences and would rather spend her time browsing the library for items that would improve her knowledge and role as a supportive and domesticated wife (such as sourcing recipes for the time she has her own kitchen again).

Her opinions on formal work, are not entirely unjustified for a woman of her age. Lena dislikes not being able to share a marital conjugal bond with her husband, as life at the Shelter does not permit this privilege, but, optimistically, she does the best she can. She also finds satisfaction in helping the other women at the Shelter by teaching them about daily grooming, cleanliness and restoring their faith. Lena declares her primary role is to support her husband in his goals and dreams. (Interview: Lena, 21/01/2016).

#### **4.2.7 MARIUS DE KLERK, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEWS MAY 2015 AND 12/01/2016:**

**(Coloured male: age not stated, estimated late forties, semi-bilingual).**

Marius lived on the streets of Somerset West as a homeless man for many years and was well-known by local residents. Until recently, he felt that he held no place in society and, living as a homeless and unemployed person, felt invisible and insignificant (Liu *et al*, 2009). In recent times, however, with casual employment as gatekeeper and on-site security guard at the Shelter, he now demonstrates a purpose, displaying pride as a contributing member of society. Now married, with a roof over his head, relative sobriety and drastically reduced substance abuse, his persona has changed from aggression to joviality, with the development of banter and humour, in his conversation.

He takes his job seriously, as access to and from the facility are governed by strict rules, which he enforces. He shows no tolerance for late departures in the morning or early arrivals in the evening. He was previously known by his street name in the community, but now prefers to be addressed by his given name or surname only, as sign of respect to his status and restored self-respect. Marius recently married a fellow resident in the Shelter. He and his wife share the same rules as the other couples in the Shelter. (Interviews: Marius, May 2015 and 12/01/2016).

#### **4.2.8 HANDRE VAN TONDER, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEW 12/01/16:**

**(White male, aged 49, bilingual).**

Handre's situation is a stark reminder that unemployment and homelessness can strike anyone, at any time and that very often it affects people that one would least expect.

The crisis goes hand in hand with the demise of a marriage, in many cases. This man is visibly devastated that he lost his job, home and wife within a matter of months. He is well dressed, well groomed, and work-ready. He describes himself as “out of place” in the setting in which he finds himself. Handre never expected to have to seek the refuge of a shelter. He is struggling to come to terms with this recent position in his life, having only been at the Shelter ‘since New Year’. As Handre surveys the people around him, he offers the only explanation that he can currently come to terms with ... “we are all only one pay cheque away from a normal life to this; just one pay cheque”. The estate agent, Johannes, commiserates and agrees with this remark. (Interview: Handre, 12/01/2016).

Both men indeed do appear completely ‘out of place’ in the Shelter dining area, demarcating a specific divide and social categorisation of what it means to be ‘unemployed and homeless’ and yet retain a ‘keeping up of appearances’. I find myself questioning the sociological significance of why, as a female researcher, the visible differences of keeping up appearances would matter to me? Katrina too conforms to the ‘working woman’ image in her appearance every time I see her during the two weeks spent on site.

#### **4.2.9 DRIES MALGAS, NIGHT SHELTER INTERVIEWS 12/01/2016 AND 21/01/2016:**

**(Coloured male, aged 39, home language Afrikaans: fully bilingual).**

Dries is the ‘street-smart bad boy’ persona in the group and is remarkably confident and charming. He is a joyful person and is popular in the group. People go to Dries for extra coffee, sugar and milk, when the kitchen is closed, as he keeps a spare supply in his rucksack.

Dries shares a similar void to Ayesha; both struggle to fit into society. Like Ayesha, Dries struggled to find his identity from a young age. Although classified as Coloured, he found that he was not accepted by the Coloured community in Cape Town (having moved from Gauteng province) and subsequently formed new friendships with “English speaking Coloureds” and White people to whom he related. These relationships led to his creating informal employment, forming a car guard business in the local community. Unfortunately, this employment came at a cost, resulting in Dries being badly assaulted and left for dead in a “turf war”. Although he managed to survive the ordeal, he has had to spend extensive time in hospital, and in recovery at the Shelter, now for “about six months”. (Interviews: Dries, 12/01/2016 and 21/01/2016).

The estate agent at the next table, Johannes, expressed similar views. Using his company vehicle, laptop, sales talk and dress to convey independence and industry in spite of “slow sales during the festive season”. (Informal Interview, Johannes: 12/01/2016).

#### 4.3 THEMATIC DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The main themes that emerged during the interview process to examine the lived and subjective experience of unemployment and homelessness with the participants were; Unemployment and Homelessness, Health Concerns, Family, Gender; and Faith. The next section discusses the experience of unemployment as described by residents of the Shelter, out of which the themes emerged.



**Image 4.1: The Cardboard Sign, A Familiar Site: sponsor some warmth this winter, Picture: Marizka Coetzer - The Krugersdorp News, June 06, 2016. This image collectively represents the emergent themes discussed below.**

##### 4.3.1 THEME 1 – EXPERIENCING UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOMELESSNESS

The participants viewed unemployment as the overarching reason for their precarious position in life, leading them to seek shelter facilities.

Their life histories, and indeed lived experiences, are re-shaped by unemployment. It has affected their lives and perceptions of themselves. This assessment indicates that both categories of the unemployed (searching and non-searching) experience similar levels of distress. Reasons why some participants are not searching for work, may be related to the very factors caused by unemployment: namely poverty, lack of opportunities and information as well as discouragement due to logistical obstacles, such as not having a fixed abode from which to live and function, constituting homelessness.

As I sat at the dining table during an evening meal Dries and Handre spoke with me in casual conversation, as they would with a fellow resident, fitting into my ideal conception of a grounded theory approach (allowing the participant to lead the discussion). They defined themselves as working men, although currently unemployed, as they spend their days searching for work - and that is as good as paid work. The 8am departure and 4pm return (to the Shelter) perpetuates the notion of a working day. Thus, while unemployed, shelter dwellers yearn to overcome “the lack of structure in people’s lives, [to] isolation, exclusion from the wider community, and a loss of self-esteem” which Phillip (2010:18) argues characterise the life of the unemployed.

This approach to work indicates the intrinsic value of work for these men’s self-respect, spoken of by Hussman (2010) and Webster & von Holdt (2005). The agent’s luxury work motor vehicle (decorated with advertising stickers branding his image, contact details and the name of the realtor he represents) is parked behind the Shelter, together with another resident’s (new) work utility vehicle.

Noteworthy, in Japan, responding to the shame of not leaving the house fully suited, briefcase in hand, a specific coping mechanism (named Hikikomori) has developed among many unemployed men, whereby they leave their homes - as if to head to work - and meet in support groups to cope with the daily anxieties, returning home in the evenings to their none-the-wiser families. Keeping up appearances is important to these men as well as Katrina, with her professional background in selection and recruitment. (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/216). Such is the humiliation of unemployment that these support groups also offer advice on suicide avoiding behaviours (Kremer & Hammond, 2013).

The face and race profile of many unemployed individuals in the area is white and male, as evidenced in my participant group, (although race bias by ‘othering’ of myself as researcher, as discussed by Zufferey, 2014, may have played a role). This point is debated in the Methodology section in Chapter 3.

The ‘visible’ homeless people in the area (at traffic intersections and outside shopping centres) are indeed, white and mainly male, although at three prominent begging points I regularly observe white women, who take turns and rotate their position every week or two. One resourceful woman, in particular, has set up a second-hand bookstand outside a shopping centre, whilst prominently displaying her ‘No work, no home’ sign. Charice has earned deep respect and trade from passers-by and the community.



**Image 4.2: The self-employed, homeless woman, managing her informal business, "The Buch Store" outside Circle Square, Caledon Road, Somerset West (Refer Image 5.1). Image and information captured with permission June 2016<sup>7</sup>.**

<sup>7</sup> "The Buch Store" found sponsorship and support in the form of temporary accommodation for its owner, mobility, free storage of the cart at The Circle parking lot, and an assistant, evolving into "The Mobile Buch Boutique" within four months of capturing this image. Refer Image 5.1.

Wasserman & Clair (2010) and Farrugia (2011) conclude that homelessness, (and the 'symbolic burden' of its connotation) is often linked to race. The literature suggests that predominantly black people that suffer from unemployment and homelessness, but the thesis aims to provide a snap shot into the lived experiences of the local (Somerset West) community and this suggests that all racial groups have to confront unemployment and homelessness.

The preponderance of white homeless people (particularly in the research group of participants that formed part of this study), on the streets of Somerset West may have more to do with the town's apartheid history. Bannerjee *et al* concur that while race has always been a significant and widely debated subject where employment and unemployment is concerned, when current statistics show a definite increase in unemployment rates across all race groups. Significantly, however, these increases are not all at the same rates (2007-8: 715-740).

In addition to unemployment, Chamberlain & Johnson's five "ideal pathways" into adult homelessness, corresponded closely to the themes that emerged in the group of people I interviewed. Such "pathways" are 'housing crisis; 'family breakdown'; 'substance abuse'; 'mental health' and 'youth to adult' (2011). They explore why people on some pathways, remain homeless for longer than people on other pathways do. The issues of 'family breakdown' and the two issues of ill health are particularly important pathways, as they feature as emergent themes in my research discussed under themes 2 (health) and 3 (family). People in a 'housing crisis' or 'family breakdown' pathway do not form strong friendships in the homeless subculture or accept homelessness as a way of life. Their homelessness is shorter than those individuals involved in 'substance abuse' and 'youth to adult' pathways (2011:60-77).

Residents such as Dries and Marius have experienced all five pathways, with Jacob, Coen and Hardus each identifying at least three in their interviews. Katrina and Ayesha both experienced ill health. Some of these aspects of homelessness, will be discussed further in subsequent themes. Those with a life history of homelessness engage in a deeper homeless subculture, indulging in social practices that make it difficult to exit from homelessness, creating long-term homelessness. The profile of long-term homelessness, is also experienced by people on the 'mental health' pathway (Chamberlain & Johnson [2011]). Homeless individuals do not endorse homelessness as a way of life but they remain homeless as they have few exit options. Such is the case for most of the participants interviewed, one of whom wanted to help his girlfriend in the Shelter (who struggles with long term 'mental path' health issues).

Marius lived on the streets of Somerset West, as a homeless man for many years, and he was well known. Until recently, he felt that he held no place in society and, living as a homeless and unemployed person, felt “invisible and insignificant” (Liu *et al*, 2009). Marius’s life history brings to mind Lee *et al*’s (2010) findings that being homeless affects a person’s life chances and coping strategies. Agreement exists, in this article, about the main macro-level and micro-level causes of homelessness.

In Dries’ case, the research by Casey (cited Eardley & Bradbury) applies, whereby homelessness is premised on economic disadvantage caused by low income and inadequate housing, thus creating the “manufactured risk and uncertainty” they speak of (2002:79). Life in an orphanage from childhood creates the pathway spoken of by Chamberlain & Johnson with all five identified “pathways” applying to Dries’ life history (2011).

Some of the participants felt political and economic circumstances led to their personal demise. Similar to Katrina, Hardus believes that political changes triggered his (and for other white males his age), current state of homelessness. Both Katrina and Hardus worked as employees but both preferred the entrepreneurial route and were successful at running their own businesses. Hardus aspires to do this again soon, manifesting a boyish coyness about the steps he is taking to achieve his goals (enjoying the secrecy of 'the plans' that only he and his wife are privy to). He and his wife, Lena, lost all their money and home “in the risky business of diamond dealing”. He lights his pipe and smokes reflectively during this phase of the interview. (Interviews, Katrina: 15/01/2016); Hardus: 19/01/2016).

Although he has recently secured employment as a building site materials supplier, Hardus claims that he has learnt from his past and is not in a hurry to leave the safety net that he and Lena have found in living at the Shelter. Hardus views the current economic situation as unfavourable and is wary of making any rash movements out of the Shelter. His strong views on economic empowerment and religion, as barometers of the negative decline of South African quality of life “since 1994”, are referred to in his interview. (Interview, Hardus: 19/01/2016).

Their opinions are voiced in Marais' (2011) work, where he articulates, “[The] South African state has rolled out a social welfare system which is the largest in Africa, and considerable by the standards of any developing or indeed middle-income country. This system has done more to provide relief from poverty than ‘any other’ policy. However, it consists of grants, which are targeted and means-tested. Able-bodied people, capable of work are given nothing, although they cannot work, because there are no jobs.

The implicit assumption is that they are choosing not to work. A basic income, grant even at extremely low levels has been rejected as encouraging a state of dependency” (Marius, 2011:193). As Barchiesi (2011) argues, “The seeming contradictions of post-apartheid social policy ultimately fit the government’s view of the poor as a Janus-faced creature, constantly lured into laziness and sloth, but also in possession of a natural economic ambition that the state has a duty to nurture and guide” (2011:143).

Hardus believes that people should make their own choices and “stop allowing themselves to be suffocated by mass manipulation”. This is in direct contrast to the rigid uniformity of the military (that he has such an affinity for). Hardus makes broad unsubstantiated statements on the political-economic situation, that still need to be noted, as, McChesney theorises, because although the “three most pertinent homeless issues are housing, income and health” (all three applicable to Hardus), the homeless problem is caused, “in the main, by economic conditions” (1990). McChesney continues that although “psychology plays a role” (1990:191-205), he concurs with Moyo *et al* when they conclude that, “economic redirection may be the first step in addressing the problem of homelessness” (2015). (Interview, Hardus: 19/0/2016).

Ayesha has aspirations for finding employment, but severe health and psychological wellness issues continually hamper her. She uses these subjective reasons (Kingdon & Knight, 2006) to avoid job searching. Klitzing speaks of the coping mechanisms devised by women in enforced leisure situations (2004). Conforming to the literature, Ayesha struggles with the impersonal atmosphere and regulations at the Shelter, as she believes that they prevent her from progressing towards employment and independence but, those regulations also create an ambivalence of safety and security for her. Ravenhill’s (2012) theory on problematic childhoods, with a life history leading to troubled adulthood in a ‘road map’ leading to homelessness resonates with the crises of this participant.

Ayesha’s feminine needs (such as personal grooming and an appropriate wardrobe) are unmet in this environment. These are very real issues for Ayesha and they strongly resonate with what Casey refers as “manufactured uncertainty in a risk society” and alludes to in Chamberlain & Johnson’s “more universal homelessness, career specific adults” (Chamberlain, 1990); [both cited in Eardley & Bradbury, 2002:75]. (Interview, Ayesha: 16/01/2016).

#### 4.3.1.1 “I LOST MY JOB, HOME, WIFE AND LIFE. I NEVER THOUGHT I’D END UP IN A PLACE LIKE THIS”<sup>8</sup>: UNEMPLOYMENT AS A LEADING CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

As Handre surveys the people around him, he offers the only explanation that he can currently come to terms with: “we are all only one pay cheque away from a normal life to this, just one pay cheque”. Together with the estate agent, Johannes, these men echo the findings spoken of by Wasserman & Clair (2010) and Farrugia (2011) in that, stereotypes in this crisis should be challenged.

Handre’s situation is a stark reminder that unemployment and homelessness can strike anyone, at any time and that very often it affects people that one would least expect. In many cases, they go hand in hand with the breakdown of family bonds and or the demise of a marriage, as expressed in Handre’s poignant statement. This is echoed by Morrow who notes that “... although it would be wrong to romanticise extended families in any historical context, in modern times they have certainly come under increasing pressure from changes in social relationships, work and housing (2010:59). When examining the comment made by Handre, (still in shock at finding himself at a shelter), “I lost my job, home, wife and life. I never thought I’d end up in a place like this”, it is evident that for the majority of these men and women, losing their income is integrally linked to life trauma.

Unemployment has meant not only a loss of income, but inevitably precipitated homelessness, divorce or marital breakdown, a disintegration of family life, ill health and/or substance abuse and dependency - and finally - a crisis in personal faith. Unemployment is thus catastrophic to the individual and the community in which they live. In her work, Mosoetsa speaks about women having to deal with the “stress of abuse by discouraged and depressed spouses who cannot find meaningful employment”, contextualising the significance of the global problem, reduced to the local, embodied by ordinary men like Handre. Handre’s situation is typical of these societal assumptions, as identified by Mosoetsa, in that the three crises that befell him in quick succession affect the people that we would least expect” (2011:87-105).

Johannes, who, having arrived at the Shelter from ‘work’, joins Handre, saying that, “sales were down during the festive season”, confirming the narrow margin between solvency and poverty. “I need to save money on rent so I can pay for my car instalments”. The estate agent and Handre thus see themselves as working or in between work, which implies a very definite resistance to the term unemployed. (Interview, Handre: 12/01/2016 and comment consented by Johannes, 12/10/2016).

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<sup>8</sup> Interview: Handre, 12/01/2016

Jacob expressed how “happy” he felt about the work he had done for many years, and becomes unhappy when he is unemployed. For Jacob, being employed means that he is a respectable provider for his family, “All I need is to find work and provide for my family, then I will be happy”, he states. Anticipating an inheritance of his father’s shares in a business, Jacob admitted he “gave away his earnings as quickly as I earned”. After finding himself without his expected inheritance and no work, he came to Cape Town from Gauteng, (in pursuit of a woman he met on the internet) and an income. After a few months, the relationship fell apart, and he found himself homeless and on the streets, ending in a three-month stay at the Shelter. In deep shock at how quickly it all happened (Interview, Jacob: 12/01/2016). Like Jacob, Coen also, had been in his field of choice for many years and is well educated with “a diploma in logistics, an NQF level diploma in warehousing, outbound experience and ten years’ experience in management”.

This type of resume is no longer considered unusual in the ranks of job-seekers, where the need for ‘previous experience’ facilitated regular employment opportunities, albeit in the form of Fixed Term Contracts without the stability of permanent benefits (The South African Labour Guide: 2016). Originating from the Vaal Triangle he moved to the Cape after experiencing a “two week break-down” after being retrenched “for the fourth time” at the end of July 2015. Without the offered employment materialising, he has found himself at the Shelter for the past three months. Like Handre, Coen feels that he would never have associated himself with “a place like this” when he was financially stable (Interview, Coen: 14/01/2016).

Katrina made use of her own judgement and business acumen, leading her to a long and very successful entrepreneurial career. An extreme anxiety disorder, coupled with what Katrina believed to be changes in the economic and employment practises in the mid 1990’s and mid 2000’s, led to her loss of income. Over the space of a year, she lost all her financial power and a home to call her own. Katrina’s life history is one of independence and pride, wanting to provide for and protect her children as a single mother, as well as her aging parents, “never thinking to save for or provide adequately for myself”. Primarily though (as with Ayesha) the precipitating event of her eventual unemployment and accommodation at the Shelter, was anxiety and depression. (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016).

#### 4.3.1.2 “I WANT TO GET OUT SOON AND START STANDING ON MY OWN TWO FEET, BUT NOT UNTIL THIS JOB BECOMES PERMANENT!”<sup>9</sup>: FINDING A JOB IS NOT ALL THAT DETERMINES THE LENGTH OF STAY AT THE SHELTER

In the Literature Review, Ravenhill proposes five routes to homelessness and expands on the ambivalence felt by shelter dwellers towards the Shelter as either haven or home (2012). This ambivalence was also observed during my interviews. Although, unemployment is one of the main reasons why the participants have ended up at the Shelter, finding work does not mean a hasty exit from shelter life. As observed with Hardus and Lena Woest, Marius and Mrs de Klerk, Ayesha and Dries, finding employment and an income is only part of their daily struggle to leave the confines of shelter life and rebuild their lives again.

Despite all the participants stating their wish to leave the Shelter and regain a space in broader society, they still feel a certain amount of safety while under the care of the Shelter. Ayesha states she “is alone in the world” and as a result, she is extremely vulnerable to poverty and homelessness. Deeply unhappy, she can find no inspiration to move past her current situation, stating her bad health and depression as reasons she cannot leave the Shelter anytime in the foreseeable future. In reality, she has no choices. (Interview, Ayesha: 16/01/2016).

Unlike the conception of homeless individuals in Ravenhill’s study that “conjure up images of dirty, smelly, obnoxious and loud individuals” (2012:5).<sup>10</sup> All the participants interviewed present both individually, and as group the opposite of this stereotype. This stereotyping reinforces the fear that my participants have of being categorised in this manner. None of my participants wished to be associated with the stigma of homelessness however, they are also well aware that they need to take steps to relieve themselves of their current homeless state. Consequently, while they express the need to prioritise suitable, long-term employment, they are aware of certain limitations in rising above their current circumstances to achieve this. It also confirms the findings by Lee *et al*, where contributions by various sociologists and other demographic estimates demonstrate how being homeless affects a person’s life chances and coping strategies (2010). Chamberlain & Johnson’s, (2011) “pathways” theory determines the speed at which the individual will either, manage to exit this homeless state, or remain in this destitute position. Their study concludes that these individuals do not endorse homelessness as a way of life, but often they are restricted to this state due to having no resources to change their situation.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview: Hardus, 19/01/2015

<sup>10</sup> Image 3.1: Homeless people in Cape Town protest against treatment that infringes on their basic human rights, refers to this point.

The participants interviewed by me all expressed a desire to leave the Shelter as soon as possible, but as with Chamberlain & Johnson's findings, beside sourcing employment, there are other contributing factors to their remaining at the Shelter (2011). When exploring the comments made by Coen, Katrina and Hardus, it becomes apparent that having both education, coupled with an employment history to reflect on, certainly inspires the will and drive to regain a place in what they consider to be (but have not defined) 'acceptable' society. All three of these participants view their fellow residents with disdain and are loathe to be placed in the same social category as those alluded to Wasserman & Clair's study on the 'typical' stereotypes of the homeless (2010).

Residents of the Shelter are expected to relocate out, within a month of starting work after they find employment. However, this seldom happens as Coen points out that "they (the Woest and de Klerk families) have been at the Shelter for more than a year". Coen agrees with the Shelter's policy of treating people as independent adults, with free will and not being enabled or mollycoddled into dependency by the Shelter. Along with a R10/day compulsory fee, residents are encouraged to find work, upon which their fee goes up to R15. More than just a physical shelter, the Shelter provides the opportunity for residents to "re-establish themselves". Coen is adamant in maintaining his personal ethics and the role of ambitious provider, both for his family and for the women (and their children) with whom he has been in past relationships. This ambition defines Coen: as advocated in Gina & Sullivan (1987) and Barchiesi (2011). Employment equals personal, social, fiscal and prosperous growth (Interview, Coen: 14 January 2016).

Jacob is adamant that he wants to get out of the Shelter and "back on his feet as soon as possible". Living in the Shelter is currently a refuge for him, but he longs for the stability and promise that an income and a family can provide. Through the interview, it appears that Jacob strongly identifies with being a provider and struggles with the crippling effects that being unemployed and homeless present (similarly the British men in Willot & Griffin's (1997) paper, who maintain their positions within hegemonic discourses of masculinity). Similar to the ambivalence of the haven versus home debate raised by Ravenhill (2012) Jacob seeks his idealised life. He wants to marry his "lady", run his own fire extinguisher maintenance business, and live at the Strand (near the beach), but until he finds work, the Shelter is his home. (Interview, Jacob: 12/01/2016).

Katrina states that staying at the Shelter represents a "time-out" or "hiatus" for the research participants. The Shelter provides them with housing while they attempt to find employment or more secure employment for those who have already found jobs but are still unable to earn enough to rent a home.

Katrina has also discovered that she “cannot work with people anymore” (in the form of her own business) and she needs to “reskill and reinvent myself” to find purpose, although describing herself as “unemployable” at present. She candidly describes most of her fellow residents as “sadly unemployable” too, as “like me, they have now been out the system too long, and have lost their marketability” (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016).

This declaration conforms to Kingdon & Knight's (2006) study, in that, as witnessed with all three female participants – each with her own set of reasons - job searching behaviour decreases dramatically the longer an individual makes use of a shelter. Katrina has no immediate plans as she is dealing with the treatment for depression and anxiety, is stabilizing on her medication and is enjoying the time “to learn about herself beyond the role of a career woman” and Ayesha is “taking it a day at a time, her first priority being her health”. (Interviews: Katrina, 15/01/2016; Ayesha, 16/01/2016). Lena prefers to adopt the role of support and stability for her husband Hardus, preferring not to learn and engage in modern conveniences such as the internet and other computer skills. She feels that her time is better spent preparing for the home that they hope to have in the future. As she happily says, “My role is to support my husband in his goals and dreams!” (Interview: Lena, 21/01/2016).

Hardus (the oldest and longest-staying male resident at the Shelter, together with his wife) differs from the other participants in that he has recently found employment and he is married. Both he and his wife, Lena, have lived at the Shelter for over two and a half years yet find it a daily challenge to live as a normal married couple due to the rules and codes. He is open and honest about mistakes he made that led to him being unemployed and homeless, including reckless living, a bad temper, disrespect for authority and neglect of his health. At the same time, he also blames the government and economy. Lena also considers herself of retirement age and will consider applying for state pension with “Hardus’s help”.

These adaptations and justifications for staying on in the Shelter, make it easier for Lena to reconcile with the semi-permanent nature of shelter life, even though she is not permitted to live with Hardus as a traditional married wife. They complain about the strict rules and lack of freedom in many areas (they sleep in separate dormitories and are not permitted any private time to be intimate). This puts strain on their relationship, yet, they are not in a hurry to leave the safety of the Shelter and fend for themselves. After mistakes in the past, they are both aware that Hardus’s current employment status could change very quickly. It remains unlikely that this couple will leave the Shelter in the foreseeable future (Interviews with Hardus: 19/01/2016 and Lena: 21/01/2016).

Jacob and Coen have both been in trouble for breaking the rules and realize that if they do not abide by the rules, they will find themselves living on the streets, a fate they do not wish for, which is in contrast to Wasserman & Clair (2010) who state some homeless have opted for street life in favour to shelter life. Such individuals find the constraints of the Shelter living restrictive and prefer the freedom of surviving on the streets. The rules and regulations of shelter life, implemented to assist the dwellers, may in fact affect such individuals on a social and emotional level, whereby a “freer” existence on the streets is preferred. Jacob and Coen have put their own strategies in place in order to survive each day, stating they can achieve more, live better and have “more freedom” on the street, but neither of them want to take that risk.

Ayesha too states that the rules are unfair and, that she is not respected by either the staff, or the other women in the Shelter, yet she has been seeking refuge at various shelters for some time. Ultimately the homeless who are participating in my research find preference in having some kind of foundation (in the form of the Shelter) to attempt to rebuild their lives, and although some have given themselves time periods in which to vacate, most prefer the security of their current situation rather than being left to fend entirely for themselves. In reflecting on Ravehill’s debate, it appears that the participants see the Shelter as a temporary haven with the long-term aim of making a home once they leave the Shelter (2012).

The Shelter provides a meal, personal hygiene facilities and a bed to sleep in, but beyond that, it also provides a stable environment for some to deal with health and emotional concerns. Many of the participants interviewed deal with various forms of health issues, some of which have caused some problems in past employment and job stability and some have health issues so debilitating that it prevents them from actively seeking employment. This leads to a discussion of the second theme identified, that of the influence of health and holistic health and wellness on unemployment and homelessness.

## **4.3.2 THEME 2 - HEALTH CONCERNS**

### **4.3.2.1 “I’M STILL UNABLE TO WORK PROPERLY AND FEEL VERY DEPRESSED, BUT I AM GETTING BETTER NOW AND I WILL SOON JOIN MY MATES BACK IN OUR BUSINESS”<sup>11</sup>: HEALTH ISSUES CONTRIBUTING TO UNEMPLOYMENT/HOMELESSNESS**

In the daily struggle to survive and improve their lives by seeking employment, one of the biggest obstacles that many participants seem to face is their health.

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<sup>11</sup> Interview: Dries, 12 /01/2016

Attempting to manage it with limited resources and often an unwillingness to adhere to medications - with negative side effects - exacerbates the dilemma, such as the cases of Hardus and Dries. (Interviews: Hardus, 19/01/2016; Dries, 21/01/2016; 16/01/2016). By staying in the Shelter, Dries is able to recover from his injuries before he resumes his car guard duties. Hardus and Lena have a safe base until Hardus' epilepsy is stable and employment is secure, whilst Katrina and Ayesha have a platform to focus on their multiple ill-health issues before focusing on employment.

Illness and health issues are emphasised by many of the participants in the interviews, but most residents remain positive about the future in spite of little or no resources to treat their ailments, relying on incompetent and inadequate state facilities in the interim. Depression, anxiety and substance abuse as a coping strategy often manifest as a precipitating or consequential event to unemployment and homelessness. The participants are also very frank about not only their own prospects of the future, but also how they foresee many of the current shelter dwellers' prospects and the future that may lie ahead for them.

The Shelter is neither equipped nor able to supply medical facilities. At most, the participants have access to some counselling of limited means at their own request. Thus, when afflicted with severe medical conditions such as epilepsy, anxiety and depression, and other debilitating conditions, the participants struggle to access the correct medication, take it compliantly, and in the doses required. This condition leads to inconsistencies in looking for and retaining work. Being homeless and unemployed, or even employed at a minimal daily rate, leaves these citizens vulnerable to the mercy of state facilities. These involve queuing for long hours and often, not receiving the medications and medical care they so desperately need. Thus a cycle of ill health and an inability to work or obtain work leads to prolonged periods of unemployment and resultant homelessness.

The love interest of Jacob requires attention under this theme. Her case conforms to the mental health crisis "pathway" formulated by Chamberlain & Johnson and she has few exit options (2011). Her presence at the Shelter is regarded with both sympathy and derision, as her influence is divisive and abrasive to the residents, and she actually requires attention in a specialised facility (as dealt with by Moyo *et al*, in their 2015 study). Not only Jacob's love interest suffers with the issue of mental health, but also Katrina and Ayesha. As stated in their personal profiles, in living with lifelong depression and anxiety, both Katrina and Ayesha often found themselves ostracised by the effects of the condition and are of the opinion that it is not taken seriously enough on a diagnostic and therapeutic level both in society and by the state. Fortin, Jackson, Maher and Morovac share this opinion (2015). The women experience homelessness as a source of depressions and anxiety.

Katrina maintains vague and generalised contact with her family (sons and father), but has only approached her eldest son for support at an isolated visit to hospital to source chronic medication (2015: 8-20). Interviews, Katrina: 15/01/2016; Ayesha: 16/01/2016).

Dunleavy *et al* call for positive orientation on health, with wellbeing linked to both social and formal activities (such as basic skill workshops offered at the Shelter) and occupational activity with a sense of purpose, demonstrating how such health actions can improve personal insights in dire circumstances (2012:2-4). Katrina has highly developed sense of coherence and intelligence (in internal and external resistance resources) is the critical enabling factor in this theory, and testament to her success. Ayesha's intelligence too responds favourably to this approach to a large degree, but is less successful than in Katrina's case, in that her health issues dominate her ability to focus, so the understandings needed for this approach are not entirely successful. As mentioned in their personal profiles, the Shelter environment aggravates these conditions, more so for Ayesha and to a lesser extent, Katrina, conforming to Klitzing's study which found that a variety of stresses such as chronic and negative event stresses as well as daily stresses, were amplified by the enforced leisure that unemployment and homelessness brings (2004).

Coping strategies included diversionary activities (such as Ayesha's maintaining a Facebook relationship with a Norwegian man who is unaware of her situation) and ambivalent talk about job seeking, getting away from the Shelter, and social support. At times, says Klitzing - and supported by the interviews with these two women - the enforced leisure is a 'coping strategy' (both women enjoy attending church and visiting the library in order to learn more about themselves) while at others, it was a 'context for coping', but generally it forms an exacerbating factor in their depression and anxiety (2004).

Katrina stated that she had always struggled with depression and anxiety, but over the years, her intense working hours and the need to function at high levels, "buffered" her, allowing her to keep it under control. However, when her life and financial independence started spiralling downward, she lost her emotional control. During a trip to stay with friends in Hong Kong, she finally suffered a complete breakdown. Upon her eventual return to South Africa, she was greeted with news of her father's severe medical crisis, so she chose to ignore her own. The main theme of Katrina's narrative relates to health issues, as a consequence of factors that "could no longer be ignored over a 3-year period (or so)". (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016). Katrina was prescribed inappropriate medication in the past (from a state facility) which precipitated a regression of her condition.

Recently however, with the help of her son, she consulted a doctor who prescribed a chronic medication that has proved therapeutic and has facilitated an improvement in her depression and anxiety since her time at the Shelter. She has also discovered that she can be dispensed the same script from larger, branded pharmacies at R83 per month, a fraction of what she was charged at the hospital. This in itself is an important aspect when considering that her ability to function goes hand in hand with her ability to afford her medication. She is very happy with her new medication because it allows her to experience normal emotions such as “being able to laugh, cry, feel anger or stress but limiting the extent of it”. Although the anxiety still occasionally paralyses her, Katrina senses her rational thought is starting to come back and she can ‘feel healing is happening. I am starting to think creatively and to formulate possible business plans’ (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016).

Ayesha would like to admit herself to the “therapeutic ward” at Stikland Psychiatric Hospital to process her lifelong depression, but the situation she finds herself in now is “just making it worse”. She is currently taking medication for depression and other ailments but cannot sleep well due to the side effects of the medication. The doctors have changed her medication several times without counselling her and she feels as if she “doesn’t even know herself anymore because of the side effects”. She is “more exhausted from trying to get well instead of focusing on other important issues”. Chamberlain & Johnson (2011), who explore why people on some “pathways” remain homeless for longer than others, express this phenomenon vividly.

The issues of family breakdown, substance abuse and mental health are particularly important pathways, and as reiterated, particularly by Ayesha, a loss of family combined by a breakdown in mental health, keeps her trapped in this state of homelessness and unemployment. (Interview, Ayesha: 16/01/2016). Moyo *et al* (2015) investigate themes that are most relevant to my study, such as living conditions and vulnerability to health and other social problems (expressed by Katrina and Ayesha). Survival strategies for the homeless and homeless persons with suspected mental illness, reasons for being homeless (both Katrina and Ayesha state that their prime precipitating event leading to homelessness was their fragile health) and strategies for overcoming homelessness are included in their themes (debated in Point 2.1.2).

Hardus and Dries suffer from epilepsy and complain about the side effects of their medications. They both state that they have limited access to (the prescribed) state medical care and find the state facilities overwhelming, inefficient and unapproachable, “especially the local clinics” (says Hardus). Both concede that they find excuses to be reckless and irresponsible with the support and medications offered.

After suffering a seizure whilst driving his company vehicle - in which his wife was travelling with him (without company permission), Hardus acknowledges that he needs to be compliant with his medication and be responsible for his actions. He was almost fired by his employer, and admits to flouting his employer's kindness. He "misses his wife, so wanted to take her on a joyride", but coupled with a default in his medication, he endangered his entire employment security. (Interview, Hardus: 19/01/2016).

Dries bit his lip during a recent seizure and a painful ulcer is apparent when I see him for the second time. He says he "tries" but is not always compliant with his medication as it is "expensive" and he has to queue for hours at government hospitals. (Interview, Dries: 12/01/2016). Moyo *et al* investigate the perceptions of and challenges associated with health service delivery to homeless and homeless mentally ill persons (2015). Despite the existence of progressive social policies and legislation, "the rights of many homeless and homeless mentally ill persons are violated as implementation in mental health lags behind policy and legislation", (Freeman [2013], as cited in Moyo *et al* 2015:1-20). When combining Moyo *et al* and the stories relayed by the participants, it would appear that health accessibility becomes a daily struggle for the participants. Hardus too, reveals the skin condition on his hands where blisters have broken out and sighs, saying 'the cortisone creams and pills are not good for the system but I must take them and I have found an excellent pharmacist in town, which has helped a lot. Before that I used to go to all the useless state clinics and get given creams that never worked' (Interview, Hardus: 19/01/2016).

As disclosed in his interview, Dries has a history of substance abuse and depression and tends to fall back on his old habits when times get hard. Following her participants from early, troubled childhoods, Ravenhill examines "trigger events" from childhood, to adolescence (each event about nine years apart), to a lapse every two years or so as adults: institutionalisation, drug and alcohol abuse, the breakdown of adult relationships leading to depression, and anti-social behaviour. Dries revealed a similar history, with all the features of the theory present in his lived experience and life history (2012:95-143). Whilst Dries was treated at a state hospital for injuries sustained in his job he felt "depressed" at "not working" and looked forward to "getting back on the beat" with his team of car-guards (Interview, Dries: 12/01/2016).

When exploring Dries, Hardus, Katrina and Ayesha's health, it becomes apparent that despite finding themselves in a place of safety – from which they are able to search for employment whilst being sheltered - the ability and opportunity to maintain their health, obtain much needed medication and receive regular medical attention, remain obstacles and disempowers them from attaining any real personal agency.

As emphasised earlier, when dealing with chronic issues such as epilepsy, anxiety disorder or depression, correct diagnosis and compliance with prescriptions are of utmost importance. Faced with the choice of queuing for hours at a state hospital or going to look for work, often the wait or effort just does not seem worthwhile and these individuals abandon both the search for health and employment as too overwhelming and exhausting (especially when charged an amount they cannot afford for both transport and medications).

With Ayesha, a feeling of “no one cares anyway” sanctions an abandonment of self-autonomy. Participants already feel as if they are a burden to society and for many, their families too. As a result, they are met with a lack of interest and/or caring by those they should be able to turn to for support. The notion of not being recognised as someone of value leaves them feeling even more powerless and loathe dealing with the challenges that they face on a daily basis.

#### **4.3.2.2 "VERY FEW [OF US] WILL MAKE IT IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD...SOME MIGHT GET OUT BUT THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL INSTABILITY, ALCOHOL, AND DRUGS MIGHT DRAG THEM BACK DOWN AGAIN"<sup>12</sup>: HEALTH CONCERNS IN ASSESSING POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS AND RE-INTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY**

Despite many participants being in a very similar financial and or medical situation, it is apparent that strict boundaries are in place at the Shelter. Besides Jacob and Coen, few seem to share any visibly close bonds or friendships, although every night after supper, there are social circles of residents engaging in polite chitchat and, more often, banter and laughter. The need for social normality is very high, and an appearance of coping is very important to these individuals. The need to remain separate may be due to the strict rules of living in the Shelter, or it may be as simple as a way to protect themselves from further emotional trauma and humiliation. Health and wellness, and being fit and able to leave the Shelter by foot every morning, venture into town, and back in the evening, are issues of frequent conversation and concern in the interviews. Residents are not permitted sick leave nor day ‘sick care’ facilities on site. Competence related to fitness and mobility is a perceived essential in the journey back to employment and independence. The women, in particular, complain about not being able to rest and recover from their recent injuries and health issues during the day.

Coen states that he does not want to be “labelled as a night shelter person, as they’re mainly lazy addicts who don’t want to work. There are losers here who see this place as permanent accommodation. No way...that’s not for me, hey”.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview: Katrina, 15/01/16

Comments such as Coen's, indicate his pride and determination to rebuild his life away from the Shelter, and from the stigma that he believes is attached to being a resident there. He is very aware of being branded or "labelled" as he puts it, and has no interest in staying longer than is required. (Interview, Coen: 14/01/2016).

In her interview, Katrina volunteers "Very few [of us] will make it in the outside world...Some might get out but their psychological instability, alcohol, and drugs might drag them back down again". She stated that "there are a few who are mentally challenged and will not make it back into society but need care at [a mental facility], not the Shelter". With regard to her own situation, she feels "I do not belong in a mental facility, but I am rediscovering myself now and am excited to start over". With this rediscovery, she has come to realise that "I cannot work with people anymore and I need to reskill and reinvent myself". She continues by stating that in learning to manage one's own environment, people in the Shelter become territorial – "my space is mine – as they have not worked and therefore do not understand sharing or compromise". She understands this and accepts it to "keep the peace". (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016).

Ayesha on the other hand, acknowledges the 'conflict and confusion inside her about the two different people inside – she needs to come to terms with it, and find her true self'. She accepts the "limbo" scenario within the Shelter, as difficult as it is. She concludes by commenting that, to her, leaving the Shelter in the morning feels "both intimidating and comforting". Most days, "I feel very tired and ill and I do not want to leave the Shelter but being forced to do so does help me, especially the walk and the fresh air into town". (Interview, Ayesha: 16/01/2016).

Although Hardus has made the conscious decision for him and Lena to remain at the Shelter until they are financially fluid and viable, he (still) views the surroundings and residents with disdain, stating emphatically "the people inside the Shelter don't really think for themselves, just accept, and go with the flow...". Behind his back Hardus is scorned for this opinion. Coen mentions that, "Hardus and his wife have been there the longest of all of us, for two and a half years, and they have no plans to leave". (Interview, Coen: 14/01/2016). Hardus' most common excuse for not leaving, however, is his uncontrolled epilepsy, which "could result in me crashing my vehicle and losing my job". Lena on the other hand "is not depressed at all" and is very positive, solid, steadfast and content with her situation. Lena says she accepts that life at the Shelter and the awkward position they are in is not easy (as a married couple and the oldest residents in age and in length of stay), but takes it one-step at a time, one day at a time, with their faith carrying them through. Being at the Shelter was a "saving grace" when she fell off her bunk bed and broke her hip, ending up in hospital and rehabilitation for three months last year (2015).

Lena says they at least had a “place they could go back to when she was discharged from hospital”. (Interviews, Hardus: 19/01/2016; Lena: 21/01/2016).

As a couple, both Hardus and Lena rely heavily on each other for emotional support and despite their desire to find a home of their own, they have come to accept the current shelter rules and abide by the conditions while they have nowhere else to call home. The same is true of Marius and Mrs de Klerk, as well as Dries, who still returns to substance abuse whenever life becomes challenging. This instability perpetuates the haven that the Shelter has become to them, implying that they will never leave unless the social worker “kicks them out” if she observes certain repeated behaviours.

The social worker is a busy woman, and after-hours her staff often tacitly approve and enable behaviours that should not be rewarded say the residents in their interviews. Dries’ history of substance abuse and depression inclines him to fall back on his old habits when times get hard, behaviour that is reported in research on the “culture of homelessness” and similar to the findings of Ravenhill (2012). As with Coen and Jacob, Dries has never been married, but has been in serious relationships, one with a woman whose child he treated like his own. When that relationship failed, he relapsed to substance abuse to dull the pain and sense of failure. This profile creates a reality in terms of Dries’ health-prospects and personal agency in terms of being able to leave the Shelter and live independently (Interview, Dries: 12/01/2016).

For the most part, participants have adapted to shelter life and found alternative ways of using the time they have to search for work or tend to their health, but do little to benefit their personal autonomy. Klitzing (2004) discusses women in similar states who suffered from various daily stresses and took on various forms of ‘leisure’ (a term somewhat inappropriate to the crisis of unemployment and homelessness) to assist them in coping with these stresses. There are crafts and life skills classes offered to new residents. Klitzing’s findings on ways to improve mental health and wellbeing through recreational activities are an important step in regaining some form of control and normality for these women. Enforced leisure, as discussed in both Katrina and Ayesha’s interviews, was deemed by both to be challenging and, as Katrina mentioned, “she could no longer run away and work and hide from myself” (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016).

Chamberlain & Johnson also highlight issues of family breakdown and ill health that are particularly important “pathways” into adult homelessness. Interviews have confirmed those pathways, since with the majority of my participants, an early path of disconnected families, substance or alcohol abuse and general insecurity, leads to great difficulty in exiting from their current homeless state.

Without having any family to rely or depend on, these participants find themselves struggling to regain a place in society where they believe that they will be accepted (2011:60-77).

### **4.3.3 THEME 3 - FAMILY TIES AND GENDER**

All the participants have mentioned family and loved ones that they miss deeply, yet, although they are destitute and in poor health, they are deeply ashamed of the positions that they find themselves in and feel unable to reach out and ask for help from their own families, minimising their prospects for attaining their optimal wellness and eventual independence. They feel they are no longer able to rely on their families. Having been ostracised or separated, either by circumstance or by death, leaving them feeling alone and desperate with no lifeline to pull them from this situation of homelessness and ill health.

#### **4.3.3.1 “WHEN I ASKED MY FATHER IF I COULD VISIT, HE DECLINED; I COULD NEVER TELL MY FATHER, BROTHERS OR SONS THE TRUTH OF MY HOMELESSNESS”<sup>13</sup>: FACING LIFE WITHOUT FAMILY SUPPORT**

Issues of family ties, whilst experiencing homelessness, are addressed in Trella & Hilton’s (2014) work that looks at reliance on family in such a crisis. As revealed by all the participants interviewed during my research, family assistance is minimal if not completely absent. In contrast, Trella & Hilton found in their study that almost all participants relied on non-homeless family members for assistance, but with variation in the amount of help sought and received. They argue that some individuals displayed high thresholds for help seeking, only relying on family under extreme circumstances and generally only asking for modest assistance. This was common among childless single homeless adults, similar to the participants in my research (2014:16-39).

Some of them sought emotional support elsewhere, such as Ayesha who currently spends much of her time using the internet to maintain her Facebook profile and continue an internet dating relationship with a man who lives in Norway and does not know she is homeless and unemployed. All the participants expressed a need or desire to be committed and share a bond and future with someone that will be there to support them. Beside the married couples Hardus and Lena, and recently, Marius and his wife, none of the participants’ past partners or direct families have been there to offer the help and encouragement that they require. Marius and his wife also live at the Shelter, but are subject to the same rules as Hardus and Lena.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview: Katrina, 15/01/2016

These include, separate sleeping arrangements, limited alone time and strict curfews. These conditions make it difficult to build a family life with other homeless people.

Handre, who was married until recently, did not disclose whether he is now legally divorced or separated. Losing his home and family, for Handre, equates to losing his identity and indeed “life”. (Interview, Handre: 12/01/2016). Relationships like Handre’s do not last, ending due to a lack of employment or infidelity by their partners. However most men still long for relationships, and to be part of a loving, caring family in the future.

Magruder speaks of the disadvantages for men who are ‘father figures’ or biological fathers to children, in that the relationship collapses under the strain of unemployment and separation for job-searching purposes (2007). Specific to inequalities and persistent unemployment and homelessness in South Africa, Jacob, Coen and Dries come to mind with this research as all three lost their family connection as father figures during the crisis of unemployment.

Katrina and Coen, have made personal choices to not disclose or expose their loved ones to their current situation. Given their pride and intense need to succeed as providers, this rationale makes sense to them. Katrina explained that she did not want her children to know about her unemployment and homelessness, as she would then have to tell them about her depression and anxiety. She enjoys being single and would never marry again, especially not for financial security. Katrina took her role as primary provider to her parents very seriously, although like Coen, she had two other siblings who distanced themselves from the responsibility. (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016). Coen has “no [current] interest in marriage or children and will not consider being in a relationship again” until he is financially stable. (Interview, Coen: 14/01//2016).

Families or spouses of Handre, Ayesha and Lena have severed ties with them and left them to fend for themselves. One realises that for someone as proud and determined as Katrina, she would rather face struggling this mountain alone than risking the sheer agony of being ostracised from her father and sons. Pride and fear of rejection become monumental not only in maintaining current relationships, but also in building future partnerships as can be seen in both Dries and Ayesha’s situation. Like Hardus and many of the other participants, Lena misses her elderly parents immensely but has no contact with them or her siblings, whom she claims have disowned her, as they are wealthy and privileged, and ashamed to be associated with her and Hardus.

All participants have been affected by the death of close family members, particularly the men in the group. The majority of them also had absent or ‘angry’ fathers who raised them to believe that as a man, one needed to provide for one’s family, but none of them truly provided for these men.

All participants mention that they miss their deceased families, despite the conditions that they experienced as children and young adults. Katrina only misses her mother “now I have the luxury of time to think about her” (at the Shelter), but even after her mother’s death, she cannot draw closer to her father or brothers, as she is the perpetual caretaker in the family (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016). From the interviews, it appears that the majority of the participants were expected to care for their mothers and siblings from an early age. Dries and Coen both lost their fathers at a very young age and were abandoned to fend for themselves. Jacob and Hardus also lost all their siblings, both under traumatic circumstances, which both of them mentioned several times. Neither of them has come to terms with these deaths.

When examining many of the participants’ lives, and then comparing their stories of early childhood and upbringing, I observed themes similar to those of Ravenhill’s work (2012). She takes the reader from her participants’ early troubled/problematic childhoods through the culture of homelessness in previous generations of the individual’s life, to the state of homelessness and the problems that people face after finding homes. Participants such as Dries, Marius, Hardus and Coen, all grew up in broken homes, the majority suffering at the hands of alcohol and physical abuse. During their interviews, they indicated that they were expected to find their own way in the world at an early age. As a continuation of their earliest circumstances, they are now middle-aged adults who once again find themselves in a position of insecurity and uncertainty. Substance or alcohol abuse, a continued feature of their lives as they continue on the same path that their parents once travelled, frequently aggravates these circumstances.

Many of the men stated that they found certain periods (such as the festive season) very lonely without a family or a home of their own. For these men, they only see one issue, the source of all happiness lies in taking care of and providing for their family. Losing their livelihoods and homes, the source of their stability, and for many their families too, leaves them feeling alone and despondent, uncertain of the future (and for many) afraid of failing in the future again.

The loss of loved ones at an early stage played a significant role in how they grew up, perhaps much faster than someone who has not experienced loss of a loved one, thus influencing their future relationships. Jacob’s mother, brothers and a sister have all died. He is troubled by the fact that one brother died two weeks after the death of his first brother (and on his birthday, too). (Interview, Jacob: 12/01/2016). Dries was fourteen years old when his father died. He had nowhere else to go, and was sent to a boys’ orphanage/technical school where he studied to qualify as an electrician. He began smoking dagga and using drugs; this resulted in his expulsion from the college and truly being on his own. (Interview, Dries: 12/01/2016).

Coen went to live with his brother after he and his fiancée broke up. He had hoped that this would be the time that his brother would finally do something for him, by showing him the support that he so desperately needed. Sadly, Coen left again soon after, no longer able to tolerate the disrespect and loss of support that he needed his brother to give him, “that didn’t last long as we couldn’t get along”. (Interview, Coen: 14/01/2016).

Katrina’s parents were proud of her achievements and when she enrolled into University, suggested she get married and become a librarian or similar. After a short marriage, Katrina divorced, working long hours to ensure that her two sons and her parents were well provided for. Even when her mother died, Katrina took responsibility for the funeral arrangements (although her two brothers were able to assist). She loved her parents and brothers, but felt that they had used her for their own gain and, when she needed her father, he showed no interest in having her around. Her pride and shame prevents her from sharing her dire circumstances and medical condition with her father, brothers and both sons. (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016).

Like Jacob, Ayesha “is the only one left in the world” and does not have any family she can contact or approach for help, assistance or guidance. She said she “doesn’t have any friends but does have acquaintances” and the reason for this is “by choice and self-protection”. She feels alone and desires to be loved and cared for. When she is ill, she feels like the people at the Shelter are her family although they often neglect and hurt her “when she is in hospital” (Interview, Ayesha: 16/01/2016). Hardus explains that being young and remembering the death of his young brother and his parents’ descent into alcoholism, made him feel that “he had time to fix all the hurt and pain”, but he explains “how time moves so quickly” and now he is in the Shelter, and he is “still not over the loss”, over 40 years later. (Interview, Hardus: 19/01/2016). Lena has a brother and sister. She has no contact with them, and misses them. Her brother in Monte Vista wants nothing to do with her; he is wealthy and has a stable and high profile career. He is married with children and is already a grandfather. They know she is living at the Shelter and Lena’s believes that she embarrasses them. Lena does not have children of her own, and misses the resident dogs (of the Shelter) - that were confiscated some time ago. (Interview: Lena, 20/01/2016).

Trella and Hilton (2014), state that, “understanding family contact and help received does not explain the entire dynamic between the homeless and their non-homeless relatives. It is important to understand the homeless person’s perspective, specifically, when and how frequently they ask for help from relatives. The homeless are active and strategic agents in their own coping. They make choices rationally within unique contexts, evaluating the costs associated with asking for and receiving help” (2014:16-39).

This is observed with Coen, Katrina and Hardus, all of whom have stated that they prefer to see to themselves and their family, without asking for help from their relatives. Retaining a semblance of pride and autonomy is an additional factor in ensuring that they seek an exit from their homeless situation.

#### **4.3.3.2 “I DO NOT WANT HER [HIS WIFE] TEACHING IN MANENBERG, IT IS TOO DANGEROUS; I WANT HER TO BE A HOUSEWIFE”<sup>14</sup>: GENDER AND MASCULINITIES AT PLAY**

It is interesting to note that most of the men had been in serious relationships in the past, and in some cases, played a ‘father-figure’ role to the women’s children, taking the responsibility on themselves in treating them as their own. As identified in the paper by Willott & Griffin, masculinity, for the participants interviewed, corresponds with their ability to provide and earn. That is, in contemporary society, being powerful is typically associated with being male, middle class and employed (1997). As with Coen and Jacob, Hardus wishes to provide for his wife, but he is also fiercely protective over her and prefers that she does not take up employment in the profession in which she has qualified (perhaps he would feel vulnerable at her independence and his loss of control over her movement). Hardus stated that he “recruited Lena to work for him about twenty-five years ago”. The interviews with Dries, Jacob, Coen and Hardus demonstrated the connection between unemployment and masculinities. These four men assigned themselves the role of family head, prioritising ‘providing’ for their partners and families, before saving and planning for the future. Overt masculinities, in the demonstration of specific patriarchal behaviour, were evident in their sense of self, as observed in the interviews.

Liu *et al*’s paper echoes the alienation, inadequacy and fear of non-existence (2009:138-148) experienced by homeless men. Hardus laments not being able to enjoy the married life he yearns for while living in the Shelter, so does not endorse shelter life, yet hesitates to find alternative accommodation, expressing the same ambivalence as the majority of participants (per Chamberlain & Johnson, 2011). (Interview, Hardus: 19/01/2016). Dries longs for respect as a man and a valued part of society and this is apparent when he mentions his girlfriend. He equates employment with being able to “be a man and provide”. His ill health prevents regular work from being possible and thus, an indefinite stay at the Shelter is likely. (Interview, Dries: 12/01/2016).

Ayesha felt the Shelter facilities disrespected her health and feminine grooming – in readiness for work-seeking opportunities, whereas Lena’s complaints related to, ironically, “not enough time” with her husband, due to the Shelter policies on marital/conjugal contact.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview: Hardus, 19/01/2016

At the same time the women find shelter life liberating, with all three enjoying the time to pursue personal enrichment, hobbies, skills and strengthening their spiritual wellness, conforming to the Salutogenic approach as discussed under the emergent theme of Health (refer 2.2.2). Lena spends time browsing the library for recipes and other homely items and articles, visualising the future that she and Hardus are working towards. She maintains this domestic persona by helping the other women in the Shelter, teaching them about hygiene and other feminine requirements.

As evidenced in Strier's article, which examines gender and culture relating to unemployment and masculinities (fatherhood in particular), Coen feels that when taking care of his partner and her offspring (although not biologically his), he is fulfilling his role as a complete man (2014). He cannot face the humiliation of being a man who cannot provide for his family. For Coen, not having a steady income or work position that he can be proud of has led to his feeling unworthy and that he cannot be of social and financial benefit to his family and significant others (refer Liu *et al*, 2009). (Interview, Coen: 14/01/2016).

Jacob stated that he was once married but it unfortunately ended. He believes he can still make a success and turn his life around as a family man. He dislikes being alone and longs for a partner to share his life. He wants a woman who will respect him for who he is (inside) and not judge him on how he looks or dresses. Jacob pondered the future and stated that he would like to get married and have children, once "I am on my feet again". He feels a man has a purpose once he has a family to look after. He suggests that he would only be happy when he had a job and was able to provide for his family. Jacob's anger, at finding that his father had sold his shares in the family business before he died, left him feeling unprotected and disappointed. In direct contrast to his personal belief that a man must provide...and in his death, his father failed to provide for him. (Interview, Jacob: 12/01/2016).

All the men who participated express similar sentiments to that of Coen, in that it is "the man's role to provide for his family". The male participants interviewed all stated a strong need to be seen as providers for their families. This may stem from being raised to believe that their roles as husband and fathers are defined by their ability to feed and take financial care of their families. They all also revealed that they had been close to their mothers and sisters, perhaps explaining their need to keep the women in their lives happy and protected. When faced with no longer earning an income and being unable to provide for their families in the way that was expected, all their romantic relationships ended, and they were left feeling even more despondent.

In this vein, Dries longs to be respected as a man and a valued part of society when he mentions his girlfriend. He cares for her, but feels that he cannot commit until he can offer her a stable home and income, caring for her, as she deserves. (Interview, Dries: 12/01/2016). As with Coen and Jacob, Dries has never been married, but has been in serious relationships, one with a woman whose child he treated like his own. When that relationship failed, he relapsed to substance abuse to dull the pain and sense of failure. Strier situates the same dilemma experienced by these three men in a global context with research conducted in Palestine, Israel (2014: 395-410), a dilemma that plays out significantly in the lives of my participants.

Dries currently has a girlfriend who relies on him for support. He states that she is presently not working but she stays with her family, which is satisfactory until he can give her a home and take care of all her needs: because he believes that, “it is a man’s job to look after their woman”. He believes in marriage and in “settling down” but he will not be able to if he cannot, “offer his girl anything” as he feels that a man needs a “good job”. (Interview, Dries: 12/01/2016).

#### **4.3.3.3 “I NEED TO CARE FOR JACOB TO KEEP HIM ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW, AND WON’T LEAVE THIS PLACE WITHOUT HIM”<sup>15</sup>: HAVEN VERSUS HOME**

Olufemi (2002) explores the question of what the homeless consider ‘home’. She reveals that people who find themselves in this situation consider issues other than a permanent structure or abode as a home. For her participants, a home is associated as a place where you feel safety, a feeling of belonging, family and general contentment. Similarly, these sentiments are corroborated as cited by Lenz-Romeiss (as cited in Olufemi, 2002) that “home falls under area (a defined space), place of abode, belonging, contentment, public spirit, haven and freedom, while the opposite of home is expulsion, debility and poverty” (1973:18).

Coen, speaking about Jacob, says, “I need to care for Jacob to keep him on the straight and narrow, and won’t leave this place without him”. Considering the bond that Coen shares with Jacob, one can understand the sentiments reported by Olufemi (2002) when discussing what the participants feel to be home. Jacob is ‘family’, and as such, he associates the bond that they share with safety and family, a sense of home. This demonstrates that, despite being thrust into a situation of destitution, the participants feel the need for familial bonds to provide comfort and companionship. In the context of the Shelter, where a bed and two meals a day is adequate but no moral support or guidance is offered, mutual support and comfort are essential.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview: Coen, 14/01/2016

Examples of these bonds have seen some helping others in searching for job opportunities, setting up and distributing of CV's and in keeping each other "strong" (Interview, Coen: 14/01/2016).

Katrina experiences her stay at the Shelter differently, although she says, "it has done me so good and I really need this experience to open my eyes. There are only eight women in the Shelter and many men, the women stay separately from the men in their own dormitory. The women do not mix and mingle as easily as the men do". Married couples are not permitted to live together or engage in public displays of affection. Katrina explains how the men form brotherly relationships with each other whilst the women tend to isolate themselves.

Although Katrina, Lena and Ayesha have all mentioned that the women in the Shelter tend to keep to themselves, both Katrina and Lena are proud to say that they encourage and share their life experiences with the women who share their dorm. Katrina also mentioned that she shares prayer time with some of the women, something that many Christian families partake in to bond and strengthen their family homes. Ayesha believes that keeping to herself and not sharing anything personal protects her, as she feels that there is no privacy or protection at the Shelter. When she returned from a stay in the hospital, she discovered that a few of her possessions had been thrown away, as the Shelter did not think she was returning. She felt hurt and that there was no respect for her privacy or property. She felt the social worker or women in the Shelter could and should have defended her absence. (Interview, Ayesha: 16/01/2016).

For the married couples, being apart is difficult, and they long for couple time, which is not permitted at the Shelter (as stated in Hardus' interview). Hardus longs for privacy with his wife and misses her during the day when he is working. He does not get to spend much time with Lena, having to comply with the structure of the Shelter, leaving minimal time to talk to her or share in any conjugal marriage behaviour. Lena complains about the many rules that prohibit them from being together, holding hands and being alone. They feel trapped, as they are "not allowed around the corner in the bushes" due to previous misbehaviour, nor are they allowed out after 6pm. Even though they experience frustration, the inevitable rules and regulations in such a facility do not encourage comfort or familial security and permanence. (Interviews, Hardus and Lena: 19 and 21/01/2016).

Another area where the participants find some form of support is in religious affiliation, which is the fourth emergent theme.

#### 4.3.4 THEME 4 – RELIGION/FAITH AND SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

##### 4.3.4.1 “IF YOU HAVE EVERYTHING THEN YOU FEEL THAT YOU DON’T NEED GOD”<sup>16</sup>: TURNING TO FAITH WHEN UNEMPLOYED

Faith and religion remain integral to the participant’s lives. They believe that even though many bad things have happened to them in the past, they could not turn their backs on their religion and faith. What stood out is that they all believe in a higher authority and that their faith will ensure that their lives will improve. Jacob felt that God had a reason for saving him and for him to live longer than his family in order to find a new family again. (Interview, Jacob: 12/01/2016). Coen practices his faith steadily as he reads his Bible regularly, and says that, “if you have everything then you feel that you don’t need God”. When his father died, he stopped going to church; he had had a difficult childhood and “felt angry with life”. He said one day he was sitting in his lounge and he opened the Bible and since then, when times are tough, he opens the Bible and starts reading. He sees that moment as the turning point in his life because he was “not on the right road and had turned to alcohol as a relief”. (Interview, Coen: 14/01/2016).

Coen stated he believes his faith carried him through all of his bad experiences and he “prays a lot”. He said he believes God put this experience on his path for a reason and that He would not have done so if he could not deal with it. He said he does not have any excuses for what he did in the past. His ex-fiancée used to have Bible studies with him and the children and they would read and pray together. He said he has learned a lot from his experiences, and is very thankful that the Shelter had provided him with a safe haven. It has given him time to “find himself” again. He was also thankful that Oom Hannes from the NGK [Dutch Reformed Church] in Gordon’s Bay had counselled him and dropped him off at the Shelter (Interview, Coen: 14/01/2016).

When she leaves the Shelter in the morning Katrina visits the Catholic Church for mass and this uplifts her. She feels it helps her to cope, spending 30 minutes in church, then praying with the other women in church as part of a group for another hour (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016). Ayesha feels that the confusion about her ambi-dexterity as a child caused her “brain to be jumbled”. By means of an example she refers again to how when she interacts with Muslim people, she is completely Muslim, but when she is in a charismatic Christian Church, she praises God freely. She feels more authentic as a Christian however, and says she will not revert to Islam. Ayesha said she feels welcome when she goes to the Life Church, sees it is a haven and “love[s] it”.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview: Coen, 14/01/2016

She said she sits at the back of the hall because she feels comfortable there and does not want to engage with others just yet. Even though she had not interacted with anyone at the church, she feels part of something and comfortable being there. It strengthens her faith and belief and gives her hope for the future. (Interview, Ayesha: 16/01/2016).

Hardus mentions that many shelter members attend church daily and form part of prayers groups to strengthen and encourage them. These prayer groups meet at the various churches they attend, because Bible studies are not allowed in the Shelter. He feels that the church should be allowed into the Shelter as faith and religious instruction would be good for them all. He says that someone came to see them and he was good but because he upset some of the people at the Shelter, he never returned. (Interview, Hardus: 19/01/2016). Lena said she accepts life is not always easy at the Shelter, with the position they are in, but takes it one-step at a time, one day at a time. She said their faith is carrying them through this and she sees it as their core and centre point. She also confirms Ayesha and Hardus' statements that they are not allowed to pray together or have Bible studies in the Shelter. (Interview, Lena: 20/01/2016). When they leave the Shelter in the morning, many of the participants go immediately to the church to pray and attend prayer and study groups, before they head out onto the streets or library, searching for jobs and updating their CV's.

As Snodgrass points out, spirituality, not necessarily simply religion, can have a very positive effect on those that find themselves in the situation of homelessness (2014). Interestingly, the paper notes that most of the research done previously on spirituality and homelessness was conducted with participants who were in a position of offering the spiritual guidance or care, rather than with the homeless themselves. He argues that the availability of spiritual and emotional support is paramount in assisting the homeless and can be found in places not necessarily only seen as traditional, i.e. a church. Amongst the participants this can be seen by the manner in which they indicate that attending church or prayer groups gives them strength and guidance.

For many of the interviewed participants, religion or spirituality was insignificant in their lives until they became homeless. As Katrina mentioned when reflecting on her pre homeless condition, "I felt guilty at times, but my life became so busy that I just couldn't find the time to attend church". (Interview, Katrina: 15/01/2016). These sentiments may indicate a pragmatic approach to religion, but still supports the argument that religious involvement and church attendance provides much needed comfort and support.

# Chapter 5

## *Conclusions*

This concluding chapter sets out the main themes that emerged from the interviews and literature research, and discusses the implications of the study.

When I began volunteering at the Shelter, I was moved by the trauma that these participants experienced upon finding themselves in this homeless and mostly unemployed situation. After many months of transcription and analysis and consultation of the relevant literature, significant themes came into focus. The implications of the research developed from four themes that emerged from the amalgamation of the interviews and the Literature review (see Chapter 2).

The study initially focused on the participants' lived experience of homelessness and the ways they managed to pass the day without a home of their own. As the interviews unfolded and the participants had an opportunity to voice their lived experience through discussing their life history (in Sandelowski 1991; and Ojermark, 2007). It became clear that their homelessness was only one of the daily struggles that these participants had to face

### **5.1 THEMATIC CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1.1 UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOMELESSNESS**

As both Ravenhill (2012) and Chamberlain & Johnson's (2011) works have revealed, significant crises or life paths, or further critical incidents, have been proven to dictate the situation in which people find themselves later in life. The participants that were interviewed and are currently seeking overnight refuge at the Shelter, are all unemployed except for two: the oldest male in the group has recently acquired paid work but cannot afford the financial burden of paid housing and one other male does estate agent work when he can and when it is available. In their narratives, the majority of participants recite a history of traumatic childhood crises and sporadic work patterns. Although all the participants were employed prior to finding themselves at the Shelter, most were now unable to secure new employment. Many of them have several years' experience in their fields and some, such as Kay, Lena and Coen have post matric qualifications. With the exception of Lena, all participants expressed a great sense of frustration at not being able to secure employment. For all of these participants, their homeless state is a direct result of being unemployed, or for some like Hardus, directly linked to not earning a salary substantial or secure enough to afford a home.

Again, the biggest obstacle standing between them and a home of their own is their lack of employment. The majority of participants have had steady work in the past, but due to private or economic labour market factors (in some cases self-sabotage, others retrenchment), they now find themselves unemployed and financially unable to sustain payment for a roof over their head. Financial loss extends beyond the simple matter of having a house; it leaves an almost tangible air of shame, which has far-reaching effects on the participant's intimate relationships. This leaves them feeling vulnerable as they [say] they have no emotional support and no one that they can turn to for help. Being unemployed and homeless, many feel that, as non-functioning members of society, they are pariahs and outcasts. That feeling results in some of the participants hiding their homeless position from acquaintances and family members.

Stinson's counselling themes and categories correspond with the needs and rehabilitation mandates of the participants (as stated in their interview discussions) and outlined in the flier in Image 1.1 (it must be stressed – the staff were not interviewed). He identified the various counselling themes as follows: “The first theme was Types of Counselling with the categories Substance Abuse Counselling, Employment Counselling, Family Counselling, Supportive Counselling, and Other Types of Counselling”. The second theme was Counselling Not Enough, with categories Counsellor Not Helpful, Spirituality Component Needed, Counselling for Other Needed, and Personal Responsibility. The third theme was Counsellor Characteristics/knowledge, with categories of Familiarisation with Population and Understanding at Aetiology of the Problem. The fourth theme was Resources, with categories Resource Problem, Accessibility of Services, Shelter Service is Helpful, and – finally – approach Clientele” (2010).

A few of the participants felt despair that - in spite of their education, training and experience – they would struggle to find permanent work in the current economic climate and, also, with the personal scars of their experience of unemployment and homelessness. In his article in Sunday Times: News, Skiti speaks of “degrees of despair, with graduates who fail to find jobs wonder[ing] if their expensive and difficult education was worth it”. He speaks of how “our potential workforce should drive the economy at a ferocious pace”, but this is not happening. Those interviewed (of varying ages) armed with technical diplomas and degrees are “knocking on a door that never seems to open”. The problem is that “there are 859000 vacancies in the private sector”, he says (2016:6), but goodness of fit from qualification to job requirement was not evident. This, it seems, has nothing to do with those individuals' willingness and ability - such as those interviewed - to work.

Both the skilled and unskilled are suffering, according to Dentlinger (Cape Argus), as employment opportunity is bleak, with the “largest percentage decrease in the last quarter [being experienced] in trade, followed by transport and mining” she states in her article: Tough Outlook for job seekers in SA (5 July, 2016). Dentlinger comments that, “at least 15000 jobs were lost in the formal sector between the last quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016”. This does not bode well for those that seek work on a daily pay basis, such as many in the Shelter.

The population statistics, alone, make employment prospects in the Western Cape unfavourable. The “population is up, significantly, as thousands of people from other provinces flock to it [the Western Cape] in search of educational and job opportunities” according to Sokanile in Weekend Argus: News. In his article: Record numbers come to city in search of a better life, he mentions that “according to Stats SA data handed to Acting Premier Bonginkosi Madikizela [the day before publication], the 2016 Community Survey showed the population of the Western Cape had increased to 6.3 million in this year, up from 5.8 million in 2011, making it the fourth most populated province in South Africa. The number of households was also up, from 1.6 million in 2011, to 1.9 million this year” (9 July, 2016). Madikizela, quoted in the article, states “if we don’t create jobs we are a nation that is about to perish, that is why job creation is at the top of our strategy [but] to fight back the scourge of poverty and unemployment, the country has to ensure a national improvement” (2016:6). This article echoes the facts mentioned in 1.1 and 1.2., and by the participants themselves in Chapter 4.

Expanding on Isaacs (2016) cited in section 1.1 of this thesis, he argues that, “poverty and inequality could be reduced and growth boosted”. In his article: How minimum wage deal will benefit us all, he speaks about “in the international literature, the effect on employment is marginally negative or neutral” where a minimum wage has been set. He states “a national minimum wage, if set at a meaningful level, can reduce working poverty and support economic growth. South Africa has dire levels of working poverty: 54% of full-time employees – 5.5 million workers – earn below the working-poor line of R4125 per month, and so cannot meet the most basic needs of themselves and their dependants. High dependency ratios mean that wages in South Africa stretch to cover many dependents” (2016:9). These sentiments are echoed by participants in the interviews, in that their families became fragmented when they could no longer support them and disassociated themselves from the shame of unemployment.

### 5.1.1.1 HEALTH CONCERNS

Physical and emotional illness plague the majority of the participants, and due to financial constraints, correct and accessible medical care is a struggle to obtain. Medical assistance is limited and as a result, many of the participants do not receive the necessary medications or correct medical diagnosis that they require to assist in improving their health. This too has far-reaching consequences for the participants and often leads to a cycle of ill health, resulting in continued unemployment and an extended state of homelessness. It is not only their physical health that is neglected, but also their mental health, with substance abuse complicating both problems.

Even when participants are able to source medication, they are often unable to obtain a correct diagnosis or follow through on medical requirements, and then, more often than not, they fail to comply with medical protocols. This is a particular problem for the participants who suffer from chronic illness such as epilepsy. One of the biggest obstacles faced by these participants, which is often historical, is substance abuse. Whilst there are strict rules, regarding substance abuse whilst residing in the Shelter, for many of the participants, substance abuse is an ongoing struggle.

Medication and substance abuse are not the only medical issues that plague the participants. Emotional and mental health implications feature amongst many of those interviewed. While the social worker at the Shelter is available for the residents, she is not equipped or qualified to support them in the manner they require. As also noted by Liu *et al*, when these participants feel neglected by health care workers, medical institutions and other so-called support systems, they tend to feel alienated, and as though their positions as primary providers and bread winners had been stripped from them (2009). This sense of being alone leaves them open to feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness and depression. These feelings led to a pattern of mental illness, substance and alcohol abuse and often violence and anger (2009:131-148).

### 5.1.1.2 FAMILY TIES AND GENDER

Casey has discussed that when people have the support of friends and family, they have better emotional and or financial outcomes when facing a crisis. None of the participants in this study has any family support and as a result, there is no buffer to help them face their life crisis. For some of the participants, the shame of their financial downfall is too much to deal with and they cannot face the humiliation of sharing this with their families (cited in Eardley & Bradley, 2002:83-87). A lack of self-esteem and loss of self-worth affects many of the participants on an emotional level, as they believe it is their duty to be able to provide for their families.

Many stated during their interviews that they felt as if they had failed as heads of their families by not being able to provide an income and a place to call home.

As discussed in Chapter 2, loss of family members at a very young age, and in some instances very traumatic and severe circumstances, caused these individuals to grow up in ways not considered ideal for family life. In some, this caused rebellion, delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse. A life history of losing a parent or sibling at a young age had a significant influence on the lived experience of finding a stable working environment (and relationship) for these participants. Some of them have experienced companionship and close friendship or even ‘family’ in the environment of the Shelter. For many of the participants there appears to be a sense of obligation to be a provider while struggling to come to terms with no solid future prospects. Many of the participants were raised in homes without suitable role models or opportunity and they still long to be part of a family, to have a home that they can call their own.

While none of the participants embraces the rigid rules of the Shelter, they use that limited support structure and their fellow inhabitants to form a kind of community, an extended family of sorts. Particularly the men have found ways of bonding and sharing each other’s space, forming a kind of support structure, albeit with exaggerated stories of conquests and long days looking for employment. While this extended family may suffice for the time being, the majority of participants expressed a desire to find employment and make a home of their own, away from the Shelter.

#### **5.1.1.3 RELIGION/FAITH AND SPIRITUAL WELLNESS**

Religion and Faith featured in all of the interviews. Some of the participants attended churches or groups and some preferred to seek spiritual guidance on their own. For many of the participants interviewed, their worship has become part of their daily routine and they find themselves feeling more positive and comforted by maintaining their Religion/Faith. It is interesting to note that religious instruction or demonstrations are seldom allowed at the Shelter (as a respect to all religions). A vehicle does transport interested residents to and from the Life Church, but this occurs under the watch of the Manager of the shelter, who is a member. As a result, all the participants interviewed practise the faith of their own choice in their own way. Ultimately, despite the dire situation these participants find themselves in, having some form of belief helps them to maintain a semblance of normality.

The participants indicated in their interviews that society deems ‘The Homeless’ as unsavoury characters that are unworthy and embarrassing, and as such many of them are loath to be associated with the label.

This results in a lonely existence and many are left to fend for themselves with no hope of exiting their current state. Forming bonds becomes difficult, and even at the Shelter they distance themselves and prefer not to become involved in one another's lives.

Under difficult circumstances, faith and spirituality become an important coping mechanism enabling them to find a sense of purpose or belonging. As they are not permitted to remain in the Shelter during the day, some of the participants start their day at local places of worship. It is during these times of reflection and worship, that the participants state, they are able to gather emotional strength and comfort, collect their thoughts and take some time away from the noise of the Shelter.



**Image 5.1: Self-created business offers employment opportunity for a fellow homeless man. "The Mobile Buch Boutique". Image captured with permission, September 2016.<sup>17</sup>**

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<sup>17</sup> Refer Image 4.2: The self-unemployed, homeless woman, managing her informal business, "The Buch Store" outside Circle Square, Caledon Road, Somerset West, has evolved into "The Mobile Buch Boutique". Employment opportunity and community support has led to the man (asleep in the foreground of Image 4.2), to becoming her assistant (above). Images and personal information captured with permission, June and September 2016.

## 5.2 MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Of the participants interviewed that have managed to secure recent employment, the fear of losing their income is very real. None of them is ready to leave the safety of the Shelter, despite conditions that they dislike, as their fear of unemployment is stronger than their fragile confidence.

The participants all mentioned that it would be a mistake to try venture out on their own too soon although they plan on leaving. Although the Shelter expects residents to leave as soon as they are able, they prefer to wait a while longer. For these participants and some of the other people who make use of the facilities, having an income is not enough to survive on their own. All participants interviewed expressed a longing for a place that was their own, somewhere that they could come home to each day, a place where they were safe and where they did not have to share living quarters. The men interviewed all expressed a need to offer a safe home to their families and struggled with the emotional impact of being unable to provide presently, as husbands or fathers.

Each morning these individuals have to leave the Shelter and may not return until the early evening. Some spend the day at the library sending out CV's or searching for work, some divide their day between places of worship and then searching for work and others spend the day trying to earn some money. What this indicates is that there is a need for more concentrated focus on the plight of the homeless, and, importantly that the actual experience of homelessness has to be understood in order to develop adequate policies to assist and support this category of low risk but vulnerable individuals.

It would be far more helpful to these individuals if programmes were in place to improve their chances of employment, or train them in a trade for example. Another area that needs attention is providing more resources and access for proper counselling and guidance. Assistance should be directed at helping prevent traumas experienced in earlier life leading to current issues such as substance abuse and psychological disorders.

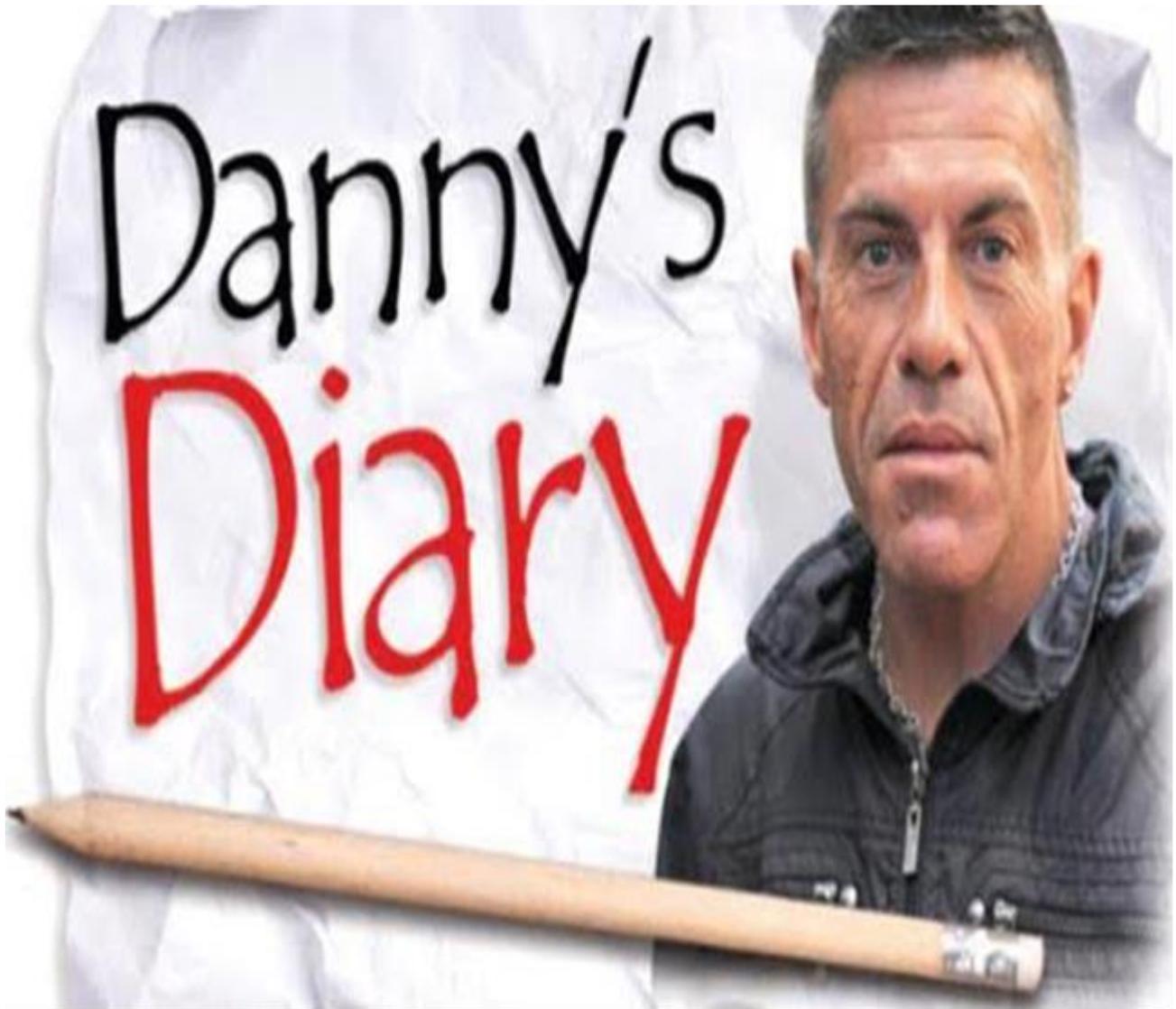
There are many paths to unemployment and homelessness, with all the attendant ills associated therewith. Having an economy that provides greater levels of employment for those who want it must surely be an important imperative. The triad of unemployment, inequality and poverty is linked to the problem of homelessness. Ultimately, the chain of events that has led to these participants finding themselves homeless needs to be broken. This is the appeal of desperation by Danny Oosthuizen in the Cape Argus of 12 July (2016), as follows:

*“Can the Police not open empty cells at night to give the homeless shelter? What about empty undercover car parks? Empty school halls? Can't we be provided with tents pitched on rugby fields like they do with refugees? People, it is bitterly cold. And wet... How are we going to stay dry in this weather? I am running out of ideas here. I am stressed. I am begging you all. Don't forsake us”* (Oosthuizen 2016:13).

As mentioned before, homelessness affects us all. It is easy to ignore the person standing at the traffic light or sleeping in an alcove somewhere when we refuse to consider that one day we may find ourselves in a similar position. As a society, we do not stop to consider how many of these people never expected that they could find themselves in such a predicament. One seldom actively considers the implications or possibility of losing one's home and becoming destitute with no place to go. This thesis has given participants an opportunity to describe the experience of such loss. For many, being unemployed and homeless is not their only struggle; health, a lack of family and emotional support, crises of spiritual faith and a jagged past are all obstacles on their journey.

In summary, the homeless are the product of the “pathways” that have led them to be mostly unemployed and without a haven where they can feel safe (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2011). For the majority, life started on unequal footing because a lack of familial support and often a poor education forced them to seek alternative support from an early age. As the interviews and substantiating literature have shown, substance abuse and reckless living have led to many of the participants finding themselves alone with no exit options. Although the participants in this study have chosen to make use of the services offered by the Shelter, they still battle each day to secure an income. For these participants and many others in the same position, not having a steady income to rely on means that as long as they are unemployed, they will remain in a state of homelessness and dependency. Some, as seen in Images 4.2 and 5.1 (“The Buch Store/Mobile Buch Boutique” woman and her assistant), have sought to empower themselves as there is no other alternative. Such personal agency (both financially and emotionally) has led to the empowerment of other homeless and unemployed South Africans.

The simple reality is this. Any one of us could find ourselves unemployed without warning, and the effects can be devastating. Dealing with health, social exclusion and other effects of being unemployed are dramatic, but when facing the additional burden of no roof over one's head, no safe haven, one is not only destitute, but will also have become just another statistic in the ever growing mass of unemployed and homeless.



**Image 5.2: Danny Oosthuizen: Author of 'Danny's Diary', Cape Argus, 2016.**

**[Refer (1.1), (1.4) and (5.2) for commentary on Danny's journey], as chronicled and published in Cape Argus Newspaper.**

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**SOMERSET WEST  
NIGHTSHELTER**

Image 6: The shelter management and animal companions.

Images and information offered and captured, with permission: May 2015.

## **ADDENDUM B: MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE INTERVIEW DISCUSSIONS**

The main question to be answered through this research is how individuals at the Somerset West Night Shelter describe their experiences of unemployment and homelessness, and thereby add to the discourse of what it means to be unemployed, homeless and their consequences. Thus, there is no one specific leading question as this approach takes the form of an interview discussion i.e. an informal setting with an exchange of information from participant to interviewer.

Other than this primary objective, to establish a lived histories and life experience account, which had no limits with respect to interview time, participants were free to add to their personal narratives by expanding on their experiences through the following secondary questions, which could arise:

- **How did they find themselves unemployed and homeless,**
- **How have they experienced employment (paid or unpaid work) in their life?**
- **Do they have other forms of income or support?**

## *Epilogue: Work*

“Then a ploughman said, **Speak to us of Work.**

And he answered, saying:

You work that you may keep pace with the earth.

For to be idle is to become a stranger unto the seasons, and to step out life’s procession that marches in majesty and proud submission towards the infinite.

When you work you are a flute through whose heart the whispering of the hours turns into music. Which of you would be a reed, dumb and silent, when all else sings together in unison?

Always you have been told that work is a curse and labour a misfortune. But I say to you that when you work you fulfil a part of earth’s furthest dream, assigned to you when that dream was born, and in keeping yourself with labour you are in truth loving life, And to love life through labour is to be intimate with life’s most inmost secret.

... And all work is empty save when there is love; and when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God.

And what is to work with love?

It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as your beloved were to wear that cloth. It is to build a house with affection, even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house. It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.

It is to charge all things you fashion with a breath of your own spirit, and to know that all the blessed dead are standing about you and watching.

... He who works in marble, finds the shape of his own soul.

Work is love made visible.

And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

For if you bake bread with indifference, you bake a bitter bread that feeds but half a man’s hunger.

THE PROPHET: KHALIL GIBRAN (1883-1931)

## *Epilogue: Houses*

Then a mason came forth and said, **Speak to us of Houses.**

And he answered and said:

Build of your imaginings a bower in the wilderness ere you build a house within the city walls,

Your house is your larger body.

It grows in the sun and sleeps in the stillness of the night as it is not dreamless. Does not your house dream? and dreaming, leave the city for the grove or hilltop?

Would that I could gather your houses into my hand, and like a sower scatter them in forest and meadow.

... But these things are not [yet] to be.

And tell me ... what have you in these houses?

Have you peace, the quiet urge that reveals your power?

... Your house shall be not an anchor but a mast.

... Your house shall not hold your secret nor shelter your longing.

For that which is boundless in you abides in the mansion in the sky, whose door is the morning mist, and whose windows are the songs and the silences of the night.

THE PROPHET: KHALIL GIBRAN (1883-1931)