

2011-9

Looking Through the Eyes of a Homeless Prisoner, Exploring Homeless Offender's Perspectives on their Transition from Custody to Community.

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Looking through the eyes of a homeless prisoner', Exploring homeless offender's perspectives on their transition from custody to community.

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in part fulfillment of the requirements for award of Masters in Child, Family & Community Studies

By

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September 2011

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Declaration

I hereby certify that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards the award of the **Masters in** Child, Family & Community Studies is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfillment of the award named above.

Signature of candidate:

Date:

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Matt Bowden for dedicating his time, patience, expertise and guidance in the right direction throughout the past year, it was greatly appreciated.

I would like to express a sincere thank you to the participants who gave so freely of their time to contribute to the study through their unique and captivating stories, disclosing personal and at times difficult information, their contribution was greatly valued.

I would also like to thank Focus Ireland for allowing me to undertake my research study within their organization. To my work colleagues for their tremendous support and time they generously gave up to listen to my problems. Also to my managers for allowing me to conduct the interviews within their project and providing me with huge support and assistance through this past year. The ongoing interest, advice, immense experience and practical support provided are hugely appreciated and will not be forgotten.

I would like to acknowledge my understanding friends and family in particular my two wonderful house mates who listened to my consistent moans and groans over the past year relentlessly, your support helped me cross the finish line.

I would also like to give an enormous thank you to my long suffering boyfriend Darren whose encouragement, patience, support and advice will never be forgotten.

Abstract

The research study provides a phenomenological approach to investigate individual's experiences of their journey through homelessness and examining it within the concept of homeless identity. The study was concerned with exploring and acquiring a rich description on what is homeless offenders/prisoner's perception of their transition from custody to the community and the pathways they endure. The study examined pathways into, through and out of homelessness through available literature and by conducting five interviews with individuals who are currently or have a history of homelessness and offending. Similarly the researcher sought to highlight and develop issues that drew individuals back into homeless and reoffending, or in contrast pathways that draw people away from homelessness and reoffending. Research labeled homeless people as one of the most marginalized groups in society (Wills 2004) as the study plans to examine this along with barriers and difficulties they encountered when integrating back into mainstream society. The researcher used qualitative research methods and conducted semi structured interviews. The researcher's aim was to establish as closely as possible the schemas or cognitions held by participants and carefully analyze the narratives provided, where further thematic analysis led to explication of main themes, each with a number of sub themes.

The study concludes by discussing relevant findings in which crime and addiction prevailed as inter connected relationship immersed within the homeless community. The researcher identified common barrier experience by homeless offenders in personal and social construct. Identity emerged as a common pattern for individuals residing in homelessness long-term and affected their capability of exiting. Coping mechanism employed by participant's involved adopting to extraordinary situations and often used as a source of survival. However drug use became a common self medicating and evidently leading to offending behavior. These high risk solutions consequently resulted in more damaging behavior and subsequently incarceration.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this study the researcher will challenge pre-existing literature about homelessness and offending as a recurring cycle, through an in-depth analysis of individual pathways through homelessness. The researcher will describe the complexity of the pathways and identify factors contributing to their unrelenting existence in this sub-culture, especially their failure to exit homelessness.

The purpose of this study is to provide a description of pathways into homelessness, individuals' experiences of homelessness and routes out of homelessness. The researcher will explore causal and risk factors leading to homelessness as well as experiences, interactions, constraints and behaviour demonstrated through participants' narratives. The study aims to investigate the structure of the homeless cycle along with dependency on emergency accommodation, criminal involvement and custody. However, the researcher felt the study is limited by both word count and sample size of participants. A core aim was to generate an in-depth analysis of individual trajectories into homelessness, their involvement into crime and eventually, prison and establish gaps through which they return to homeless services and, undoubtedly, re-engage in offending behaviour. The study used a qualitative approach documenting pathways through five personal experiences, each distinctive yet sharing similar experiences as will be identified in chapter four.

Rationale for Research

Extensive research literature has confirmed how offenders who are homeless are more likely to re-offend than those who have secure accommodation (Seymour & Costello, 2005). Similarly, a significant proportion of people experiencing homelessness endorse substance dependencies which contribute to offending behaviour and inhibit them exiting. There are a variety of complex links between homelessness and offending behaviour, and between release from prison and becoming homeless and re-offending behaviour (Focus Ireland, 2009).

The Mayock and O'Sullivan (2007) study that explored the homeless experience of forty young people in Dublin city found that the stability of these young people's living situation and their perceptions of what they required to survive were key factors shaping their

involvement in crime. In Ireland conditions surrounding homelessness are presenting more negative risks and consequences to young people particularly for those who have longer homeless 'careers' rendering them vulnerable to being immersed in a homeless 'subculture' (Mayock & O'Sullivan, 2007). Snow and Anderson (1987) similarly accounted for the extreme difficulties the long-term homeless encounter while attempting to leave their situation. Traditionally homeless research, emphasised individuals' experiences were essentially criminogenic, engaging in crimes to ensure survival such as shop lifting, begging, larceny and in many instances resulting in imprisonment (Mayock, Corr & O'Sullivan, 2008). Later research, examining experiences of imprisonment, viewed homelessness as contributing to incarceration; increasingly being detained in custody can also lead to homelessness.

In 2009, the Irish Prison Service released a report in which 241 prisoners were surveyed and it found 54% had at least one experience of homelessness prior to imprisonment and 25% of the total sample was homeless on committal to prison. Correspondingly, 59% of homeless prisoners stated they had been arrested 20 times or more in five year period prior to imprisonment and 64% had been in prison more than twice during this same period. Seymour and Costello completed extensive research identifying the high rate of re-conviction among homeless offenders as opposed to those in stable accommodation; equally the risk factors associated homelessness increase prospect of offending behaviour. Although the rate of offending among homeless individuals was high (Ballintyne, 1999), motivation for offending was necessity as opposed to personal gain or, as Carlen (1996) described it, survival strategies. Identification of homeless pathways ideally should be derived from an individual's experiences of homelessness over a significant amount of time (Mayock et al., 2008) which will be demonstrated in rich and compelling accounts in chapter four. The literature review will generate a more precise display of further underdevelopments in this area. High rates of recidivism among the homeless population suggest prison systems are struggling in their mission to support and rehabilitate offenders to lead crime-free lives (McCann, 2003). The study aims to examine barriers which prevent homeless ex-offenders from reintegrating into society and what contributes to their re-offending behaviour.

Summary of Chapters

The dissertation consists of six chapters. Following on from this chapter, which introduces the research topic, is the rationale behind the choice, in conjunction with the research question. Chapter two incorporates literature focusing on issues concerning homeless offenders. A detailed description of methodology, processes and procedures for collecting and analysing data is undertaken in chapter three. Chapter four presents the main findings that arose from narratives of five participants. A discussion of findings is provided in chapter five; the focus of this discussion was based on homeless offenders' rationale for committing crimes and the obstacles they experience while trying to integrate back into communities. Chapter six is a concluding chapter, summarising the study and suggesting recommendations for future research.

Research Objectives

- Explore components leading individuals into a homeless cycle.
- Explore individual motives for offending and whether it was a cause or consequence of homelessness.
- Examine coping mechanisms employed by individuals whilst homeless.
- Explore homeless individuals' experience inside prison and accommodation options available to them upon release.
- Identify gaps and challenges ex-prisoners face leaving prison and elements that result in their re-entry to homelessness.
- Examine models of identity and social groupings within homelessness.
- Examine the challenges individuals' experience when trying to exit homelessness and reintegrate back into communities.
- Identify potential blocks and barriers which may inhibit homeless people accessing appropriate accommodation and services in communities.

Research Question

What are homeless offenders' perspectives on their transition from custody to community?

- (i) What are the pathways/issues that draw people back into offending?
- (ii) In contrast, what are the pathways/issues that draw people away from re-offending?
- (iii) Examine what are individual's perceptions on homelessness identity within study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The topic the researcher has chosen to investigate is homeless ex-prisoners' perceptions of their transition from custody to community and the pathways that contribute to their persistent deviant lifestyle or their reform from criminal behaviour. Although many researchers have tackled the issue of prisoners being released from prison and focused on their reintegration (Martynowicz & Quigley, 2010), few have amalgamated the two social constructs and analysed how homeless prisoners combat society on their release and the different scale of events they endure and follow. The academic attention usually drawn to homelessness in the past concentrated on causal factors and determinants. Here the researcher's inquiry is focused on the recurring cycle of imprisonment amongst homeless offenders and examining it through the model of self concept and social identity.

Entry into Homelessness

Homelessness can also be seen as a process with individuals moving in and out depending on circumstances (Willis & Makkai, 2009). The concept of 'pathways' has developed more fluently as a useful framework in understanding the transition into homelessness (Mayock & O'Sullivan, 2007; Theobald & Johnston, 2006). Seymour and Costello's (2005) study found homelessness to be a complex interaction of personal, economic and social factors, with no standard equation or definite list of components leading to it. In the literature it is argued that homelessness should be viewed as a process, one that is complex and not easily quantified. Theobald and Johnston (2006) developed and analysed five main pathways they believed lead into homelessness: "housing crisis pathway, youth pathway, mental illness, a family breakdown pathway and substance use pathway" were characterised as elements leading to homelessness. Hagan and McCarthy (1997) also recognised incarceration as contributing to individuals becoming homeless or homelessness leading to incarceration. Other research focused on *structural* and *individual* models as causal factors when discussing homelessness (Mallet, Rosenthal, Keys & Averill, 2010). Structural factors for homelessness was analysed under macro social and economic determinants whereas individual accounts focused on personal or familial characteristics, such as the person's subjectivity, identity, family engagement and their overall temperament.

Homeless individuals are typically portrayed as leading chaotic, risky lives trapped in a downward spiral of drug use, along with mental and other health problems and expected to remain in long-term homelessness (Mallet et al., 2010). Across all studies there remains a strong relationship between substance use and homelessness. Previous research indicates homeless individuals engage more frequently in drug related behaviour in comparison to their home-based peers (Mallett et al., 2010). Drug and alcohol use are widely recognised as associated with homelessness but the deliberation continues on whether drug and alcohol can be determined as a cause or consequence of homelessness (Pathways, 2001). Homeless individuals with alcohol, drug addictions or mental illness are one of the most vulnerable and underprivileged groups in society (Coumans & Spreen, 2003). High exposure and contact with substances in homeless settings with peers invariably result in heavier drugs and alcohol consumption (Mayock et al., 2008; Mayock & Carr, 2008). Mayock and O'Sullivan's (2007) research on young people's pathways through homelessness indicated that while drug and alcohol use contributed to premature home-leaving for a minority, practically all participants reported an escalation in their substance misuse subsequent to leaving home. What is clear is drug and alcohol use among young homeless people is prevalent and becoming an increasing problem (Mayock & Carr, 2008). Irish research suggests individuals' drug use strength and frequency escalates following a period of homelessness as they attempt to conform to an inner city subculture (Mayock & O'Sullivan, 2007).

Alternative findings from studies reported family conflict, if not family breakdown or family violence, predominantly relating to why younger people leave home and enter homelessness (Cockett & Tripp, 1995). Young adults often find themselves in situations where they cannot live at home or the family is unable to cope with the individual's behaviour. Wills and Makkai (2009) recorded divorce and single parent households and financial problems as contributing to homelessness. Additionally, Carlisle's (1996) findings indicated 40% of prisoners expected to be homeless on release; a number of prisoners from the study were unsure of where they were staying on release as well as having difficulties finding and maintaining accommodation. This demonstrated further risk of homelessness for homeless ex-prisoners unable to reintegrate.

McCann's (2003) research on offending and homelessness identified how the vast majority of the homeless were trapped in deprivation and a cycle of poverty, often suffering from additional problems such as drug/alcohol addiction, and mental illness. She believed the "absence of personal income and lack of services required to address these issues, has

resulted in many homeless people becoming involved in crime” (p.12). On another scale Hickey (2002) discovered the patterns of crime committed by offenders were generally of a non-violent nature and respondents claimed it was a merely in order to survive on the streets. Cox’s (1995) study on homeless drug users reported similar findings with activities such as robbing, begging and prostitution providing most common source of income. It has become apparent that homeless individual’s involvement in crime is lifestyle related as a mean of basic survival or to finance addictions they have succumbed to. Recognising and responding to the link between offending, getting released from prison and homelessness are crucial in addressing the needs of those enmeshed in homeless population (Willis, 2009).

Offending

We all acquire certain coping mechanisms throughout our lives. The immense daily challenges individuals encounter within a homeless existence ensure they must learn to adjust to the adversity associated with life on the streets (Bender, Thompson, McManus, Lantry, & Flynn, 2007, p.26). Research has also acknowledged the difficulties associated with unstable living conditions along with innate capabilities of resilience enabling individuals to overcome the adverse effects and hardship (Laursen & Birmingham, 2003). Living within homeless services can be dangerous and young people often learn to develop coping mechanisms by adapting to social structures and the culture, developing street smarts and establishing who to trust (Lankenau, Clatts, Welle, Goldsamt & Gwadz, 2005). In addition, Bender et al. (2007) suggested, they must obtain skills through observation and experiences while homeless to protect themselves. These are not pro-social behaviours but competencies to endure daily existence. Homelessness requires extraordinary coping skills and they must learn to adjust to oppression associated with being on the streets. This implies young people may have to protect themselves by carrying weapons, networking with streetwise peers, avoiding certain places or people and connecting with other long-term homeless people for an increased sense of security and belonging. However, this can all be very harmful to the individual and lead into criminal behaviour. McCarthy and Hagan (1991) recorded high levels of arrest and incarceration in the homeless community in comparison to the general population. As documented by Willis (2004), homeless individuals are much more likely to find themselves in situations where they need to offend to survive, to satisfy drug habits, and pay for hostels or where negative influences from other people can lead to criminal offending.

High level of drug use among homeless individuals increases the likelihood of offending behaviour. Similarly, Ballintyne (1999) argued the high rates of offending found among homeless people, particularly rough sleepers, were motivated by necessity as opposed to personal gain. Correspondingly, Carlen (1996) described motives for offending in homelessness as 'strategies for survival'. A question the researcher will investigate is whether criminal activity is brought on by homelessness or if it was already a factor before becoming homeless. Young people are believed to be more likely to commit crimes after becoming homeless, and living on the streets has contributed to their arrest and imprisonment (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).

The Homeless Prevention Strategy (2002) demonstrated evidence surrounding the link between homelessness and prison, suggesting time spent in prison increases one's risk of becoming homeless. Research suggested homelessness is both a cause and a consequence of imprisonment, with some offenders becoming homeless as a consequence of their imprisonment while others identifying their homeless status as a cause of their criminal activity and subsequent incarceration (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2003). Seymour and Costello's (2005) work highlights causal factors of homelessness; they found incarceration to increase a person's chance of being homeless, and indicated 40% of prisoners expected to be homeless on release. On the other hand, some studies have concluded homelessness does, in fact, lead to crime while others claim homelessness does not lead to crime, rather crime leads to homelessness (McCarthy & Hagan, 1991). Seymour (2004) made the assumption that crime is potentially both a cause and effect of homelessness. In addition, a significant body of research suggests lack of stable accommodation can be a direct cause of high risk re-offending (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002) as well as an obstruction to desisting from crime.

Prison and Offending

Several studies have made strong links between imprisonment and homelessness and the challenges that render ex-prisoners vulnerable to becoming homeless when trying to return to their communities. Rodriguez and Brown (2003) noted some contributing factors to risk of homelessness among ex-prisoners:

- Ex-prisoners face the same social and economic conditions that lead to homelessness among the general population.

- Ex-prisoners returning to the community confront barriers to housing associated with their involvement in criminal justice system.

It is apparent that ex-prisoners are susceptible to homelessness as they face additional challenges such as losing accommodation while in custody; repeat offenders have an increase likelihood of further imprisonment that can exacerbate accommodation options. Also on release there can be a period of social isolation or a return to pro-criminal associations and activities, reducing chances of reintegrating fruitfully.

Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris and Fisher (2005) conducted a study examining how ex-offenders readjust post prison. It was found when the prisoners are released there are concerns about going from the highly structured environment of a prison into the unstructured society where they must learn to care for themselves and make decisions regarding their welfare. Laub and Sampson (2001) develop the life course perspective with two key concepts of trajectories and transitions. In theory, they assist in examining possibly reasons for recidivism amongst homeless through significant life events or altercations embedded as possible causal risk factors determining why a person continues to re-offend. Leaving institutional facilities such as prisons can affect individuals' ability to adjust and live in non-institutional situations (Willis, 2004) rendering them vulnerable to living back on the streets or in more controlled and rigid environments such as emergency accommodation. Willis (2004) described the institutionalisation of prisoners as a process in which they must learn to adjust and cope with life in the unnatural environment through their emotions, behaviours and cognition.

However, Willis emphasises that not all prisoners experience this institutionalisation to the same extent, but does imply many will make psychological adjustments to the prison environment as a coping strategy. Nevertheless, prisoners who become immersed in an institutional structure are increasingly more vulnerable to being unable to make basic decisions needed for daily living in communities. Research has shown how ex-offenders seem to lack necessary life skills or are incapable of making life decisions on release whether through an effect of being incarcerated or deficits that exist regardless. While adapting behaviour and emotions to life in prison is seen as necessary by some, it can also cause damaging effects on ex-prisoners' social interaction and problem solving techniques outside prison. Confusion and conflict may arise when prisoners adopt behaviours or interaction

techniques from life in prison, impacting on their ability to secure employment, social relationships or accommodation (Willis, 2004).

Researchers have accumulated vast knowledge around prisoners, reintegration and recidivism and through this an understanding the nature of homelessness has become more prevalent and how ex-prisoners as a social group are increasingly at risk of becoming homeless due to the barriers they face trying to access stable accommodation. The literature details that a large number of homeless ex-prisoners appear to experience family breakdown seemingly caused from strained relationships due to recidivism by that family member. Seymour made the assumption in her 2005 study that “crime is both the cause and effect of homelessness” (Seymour & Costello, 2005, p.4). Martynowicz and Quigley (2010) demonstrate how losing contact with family, employment and social or community services even for a short period of time can have long lasting effects. It carries with it a profound negative social impact and usually the only way to feel accepted when released is to be back in the company of the criminals that lead to the imprisonment.

Getting Released

The transition from prison back into society is one of difficulty according to Maruna and Immarigeon (2004). They identified social supports as the most prevalent factor in retaining a desisting life. Classified by Maruna and Immarigeon as *intimate* or *confiding* relationships, they were believed to potentially act as a preventative or rehabilitative factor from engaging in future criminal activity. The quality of such *social* relationships and the sources of support determined the success of reintegration back into communities.

According to Visher and Travis (2003), an individual returning to life outside prison must focus on the complex dynamics facing them in that moment of being released. The complexities of re-establishing life after prison in the days and weeks after release include: finding accommodation, securing formal identification, finding employment with a new criminal record, rebuilding family ties and returning to high-risk places and situations (Visher & Travis, 2003). Visher and Travis (2003) did a review exploring individuals’ transitions from prison to community and attempted to understand their pathways of reintegration. The study examined four dimensions which they felt enhance the successful transition from prison back into the community: (a) individual characteristics, (b) family relationships, (c)

community contexts and (d) state policies. The researcher compared this study with the different pathways homeless ex-prisoners embark on when trying to reintegrate themselves back into society, while Visher and Travis described four elements are embedded in an ex-prisoners life experience long after incarceration.

They believe family is important to understanding the reintegration process of ex-prisoners but as critical as this element may seem, regrettably, many homeless ex-offenders fail to mass that level of support. Essentially, research considers family supports as a critical factor in identifying individual pathways on release from prison (Visher & Travis, 2003). Although this may be influenced by the type of support offered and whether it will hinder the individual more, for example returning to a family or neighbourhood where crime and drugs are accessible while they are in recovery or trying to stabilise themselves.

Martynowicz and Quigley's (2010) report focused on the reintegration of Irish prisoners and looked at the connection between crime and homelessness, stating prisoners released back into this environment without stable accommodation are more likely to reoffend. They argued that exposing individuals to similar situations by re-entering homelessness after getting released renders them vulnerable (Martynowicz & Quigley, 2010). They also suggested even those wishing to desist from criminal behaviour could find themselves in situations with limited sets of opportunities to change.

Reintegration

Resettlement of homeless ex-offenders back into communities is an essential part of the reintegration but often can be seen as a difficult one. Many homeless ex-offenders seek stability in accommodation available to them in the inner city because it is too complex to try resettle in original communities. Ethically, homeless ex-offenders must gain a level of control over their deviant behaviour to be prepared and capable of reintegrating back into the community regime, along with resettling permanently from their once chaotic lifestyle. Unfortunately for many, the stigmatisation that is embedded in their identity is too overwhelming to resettle contentedly. However, homeless ex-offenders looking to resettle into communities, risk facing elements of bias labelling and stigmatisation from the existing residents, something which can be inevitable.

In addition, research has shown that “homelessness leads to a loss of both social and personal self identity, self worth and self efficacy” (Buckner, Bassuk & Zima, 1993, p.388). Seymour and Costello (2005) demonstrated how externally labelling an individual as homeless negatively affected their ability to address their homeless status and found initial experiences of homelessness on an individual can cause a decline in their self esteem. Similarly, Boydell, Goering and Morrell-Bella (2000) implied loss of identity can be caused by homelessness. The study indicated the lack of a permanent address established a loss of identity as well as the psychological impact of having no address leading to loss of prosocial identity. Mental illness may stem from this initial decline in self esteem and build over time into a more harmful concern. Research has indicated a concentration of homeless service exist within the inner city subculture rendering individuals more vulnerable (Focus Ireland, 2009; Mayock & O’Sullivan, 2007).

Ireland has a high rate of recidivism (60%) among ex-offenders and over half of ex-offenders return to prison cells within three years of being released (Langan & Levin, 2002). Understandably this may arouse fear and suspicion in civilians living in these communities and can prevent resettlement amongst this group. A lack of community-based interventions is an increasing obstacle faced by people working in probation services when trying to reintegrate homeless ex-prisoners. Maruna and Immarigeon (2004) believe the causal factor for poor community-based projects were policy makers’ reluctance to reintroduce ex-homeless offenders back into communities for fear of appearing ‘soft’ on crime, preventing them from experimenting with innovations which may improve opportunities for offenders.

Studies conducted with ex-prisoners by Bahr et al. (2005) manifested several conclusions mainly in the form of social bonds. It was felt those who had developed family bonds and obtained employment were successful in remaining crime free. However, it also showed that those unemployed and involved in poor family connections and conflicting relationships had difficulty changing criminal trajectory and remained at a lower stake of conformity. Social supports appear to be the crucial factor in stabilising ex-prisoners and shifting their criminal trajectories along with reintegrating homeless individuals. Bahr et al.’s (2005) findings suggested sometimes individuals have the desire to change, believe they can change but do not have adequate social supports in place to make desired changes.

Having supports available is crucial to the successful transition from prison back into the community and a return to independent living (Martynowicz & Quigley, 2010). However,

adequate support and provisions are sometimes not available to homeless individuals and prevent any form of stability occurring.

Identity

Each person has a self narrative and these narratives provide a sense of identity to the individual accounting for past, present and future goals. Veysey, Christian and Martinez (2009) proposed daily activities completed by individuals prescribe one's self perception of roles and normative behaviours associated with these roles. They believe "*self concept*" and behaviour are reinforced by a person's social network, a component study investigated within the study. Burger and Guadagno (2003) demonstrated how individuals fluctuate in the degree to which they have a clear idea of their self concept. They believed that individuals not only alter the way they think internally but also how they store and structure information in their memories (Burger & Guadagno, 2003).

Research has proposed that pathways made into and through homelessness involve transitional stages of developing a homeless identity, and imply the identity is constructed through discourse and social interaction with other individuals within that setting (Clapham, 2003). Mayock and O'Sullivan (2007) identified 'careers' formed within homelessness and believed the process of identity formation could also be characterised as a 'career' within this concept. Farrington and Robinson (1999) investigated *identity maintenance* amongst residents in a shelter for homeless individuals and reflected similar thoughts around self concept and self identity that related to that of homeless offenders. They show how having an identity of low status amongst this stigmatised group can have demoralising effects on successfully leaving the homeless cycle.

Amongst homeless young people offending it has been demonstrated how pragmatic social groupings form instantaneously and contribute to future behaviour. Tajifek (1982) defined social identity as:

The part of the individual's self concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (p.2).

Similarly, Farrington and Robinson (1999) believe successful individuals who are able to maintain positive concepts throughout their experience as homeless do so by identifying with the homeless role within a supportive group; however, this strategy may also inhibit their departure. In contrast, it was argued those whose identity was firmly situated within a social group could threaten their sense of self worth by leaving that situation suggesting why many continue to reside in that population, allowing their self perception to deteriorate while strengthening new identities. Farrington and Robinson (1999) discovered within their study that long-term homeless individuals identified themselves within the homeless label and members of social groups. On the other hand, they found short-term homeless people were more likely to maintain identity and supported this through attempts to leave their social or 'in-group' categorisation. Their model provides an insightful analysis by suggesting the probability of an individual escaping this path diminishes the longer one remains in homelessness. Additionally, it was hypothesised eloping was more likely if the individual does not identify with others in homelessness. However, considering the multiple disadvantages and low status of homeless offenders it creates a poor self concept which results in negative identity and may result in substances misuse as a defence mechanism. Previous to this, Snow and Anderson (1987) completed similar work and concluded that participants who experienced homelessness for longer periods of time were more likely to embrace their identity as opposed to participants who had shorter experiences and who declined such conformity. This was noted when participants referred to experiences by suggesting "I, us or we" as opposed to "them".

An issue for many professionals in this sector is getting homeless individuals to move on, back into mainstream society successfully, and acquire skills necessary for independent living. Many encounter internal and external barriers and challenges when returning to communities such as addictions, social withdrawal from living this afflicting living style, stigma and identity complications which can prevent them successfully reintegrating. A problem facing many homeless ex-prisoners is the stigma attached to their identity when reintroduced back to old communities. According to Bender et al. (2007), homeless individuals often experience negative labelling and stigmatisation by service providers, law enforcers and society in general. It was argued that by characterising a homeless person in terms of deficiencies it potentially limits the internal and external resources available to them, allowing them to consider themselves as lacking sufficient future choices (McCollum & Trepper, 2001). Maruna and Lebel (2004) outlined blocks and barriers faced by homeless

offenders through stigmatisation and excessive labelling whilst trying to return to communities.

Veysey, Christian and Martinez (2009) developed a study concentrating on the transformation offenders endure whilst desisting from past behaviour and forming new identities. Research has suggested that forming a new identity, and creating a new life story is essential in rehabilitating people with a history of offending from homelessness, and drug addiction (Veysey, Christian & Martinez, 2009). Earlier research demonstrated that, in order to successfully desist and tackle their deviant behaviour, the individual needs to establish a new identity through new social roles and social support, and lifestyle transformation through motivating events (Laub & Sampson, 2001).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will outline and discuss the methodology used to identify responses to the research question presented. It will illustrate the research design, ethical considerations, the process of selecting and interviewing participants, data collection and data analysis process. The researcher distinguishes potential benefits of having attainable access to participants for completion of the study. The researcher will aim to establish homeless prisoners' perspectives on their transition from custody to community. Secondly, what are the pathways/issues that draw people back into offending and, in contrast, what are the pathways/issues that draw people away from re-offending? Perceptions of participants' social identity will also be investigated within the study.

The study was concerned with exploring and acquiring a rich description on homeless prisoners' perceptions of their transition from custody to the community and the pathways they endure. The study applied a qualitative approach. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies do not look to statistically confirm or disprove predictions made by existing theories, or to discover causal relationships between phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Instead, these studies aim to explore, describe and gain an understanding of the personal perspectives and experiences of individuals who are directly familiar with a phenomenon of interest (Gelo, Braakmann & Benetka, 2008). Furthermore, Creswell (2007) recognised the qualitative approach necessitates the inclusion of multiple perspectives across participants, and the identification of complex interactions in a given situation, which combine to develop a wide and detailed picture of phenomenon under study.

The researcher in this case was engaging with people whose homelessness led them into chaotic lifestyles through a low threshold service wherein she became intrigued about the factors that contribute to this. The researcher is at an advantage when dealing with the complexity of work situations because of having an in-depth knowledge of the many complex issues. The researcher is in a prime position to investigate and make changes to a practice situation along with easy access and information that can enhance further knowledge (Costley, Elliott & Gibbs, 2010).

Research Design

The researcher adopted a phenomenological approach in identifying experiences of pathways through homelessness through a selection of narratives. A phenomenological approach enables researchers to present a more prominent interpretation into participants' subjective experiences, motivations and actions while cutting through the clutter of assumption (Costley et al., 2001). As noted by many theorists, the most common research design for a phenomenological approach is qualitative method. Drawing on its significance in identifying homeless individuals' motives to offend incessantly and the reasoning for their actions and is a theory often associated with interviews. Of course, the advantage of employing qualitative methods is its ability to extract richness and meaning from data, while providing a much more insightful view of how the homeless ex-offenders perceive such experiences.

Triangulation has become a common method employed by many social researchers in the last number of years. The researcher has adopted this approach to create a deeper understanding of the study phenomenon (Olsen, 2004). Triangulation involves combining research methods, mainly qualitative and quantitative, in studying the phenomenon for the purpose of increasing study credibility (Jick, 1979). Many have argued triangulation increases the study's accuracy and validity as researchers look to multiple sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Creswell, 2003). Methodological triangulation was the approach used in collecting the data which entailed using two methods in studying the same phenomenon under investigation (Mitchell, 1986) and is widely used in social research.

The current study will utilise a mixed approach of both qualitative and quantitative by means of interviews and questionnaires. It was felt this method will facilitate the researcher in acquiring in-depth experiences of homeless ex-offenders' transitions back into the community. It was felt focus groups could deter participants from answering questions comfortably and may prevent them exploring their own individual experiences or interpretations due to lack of anonymity. The questionnaire facilitated in establishing basic facts needed before designing interview questions allowing more interpretation. It is important to acknowledge the potential changes in the relationship between the researcher as a worker and the participants as service users once the research has concluded.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as an interpretative approach to analysing data. IPA puts emphasis on people's abilities to reflect on and give meaning to their lives (Dallos & Vetre, 2005). The approach is phenomenological and focuses primarily on individuals' experiences associated with the study and evaluates how they make sense of events within the subject matter. IPA allows the researcher to illustrate a full understanding of participants' point of view and represent them as main issues and themes. The researcher modelled the themes and issues by connecting the themes to existing literature as recommended by Dallos and Vetre (2005).

IPA assumes individuals hold relatively stable cognitions, beliefs or schemas that are accessed through interviews or other methods. The researcher's aim was to establish as closely as possible the schemas or cognitions held by participants and carefully analyse the accounts provided (Dallos & Vetre, 2005). The researcher was cautious that the interviews may lead to generalisation of existing theory therefore she combined the use of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires deliberately for a small group of individuals representing the area of experience to interpret their views of experiences at a particular point in time.

Interview/Triangulation

Kvale (1996) described qualitative research interviewing as a construction site of knowledge. "An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale, 1996, p.2). Kvale further suggested that qualitative research interviews allow a researcher to understand substance from a participant's point of view and to uncover meaning of their experiences in their own words. Interview was perceived as the most powerful and effective technique in understanding individuals' perspectives and obtaining relevant data for this study. They have proved to be a greater source of in-depth experiences witnessed by ex-prisoners within Irish prisons according to research completed by Seymour and Costello (2005).

The researcher chose to use the interview method of data collection. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with ex-offenders living in homeless services; each lasted between 30-40 minutes and took place in a neutral environment. The interviews were recorded using a dictaphone and were transcribed by the researcher..

It was suggested research interviews are based on the conversation of everyday life, purposeful and structured which are controlled and defined by interviewer (Kvale, 1996). The researcher wanted participants to contribute to the study in a natural, conversational manner and to avoid the formal structure. The researcher also felt that a semi-structured interview allows participants an opportunity to explore different perceptions but also keeps control of how the interview evolves. Therefore, questions were formulated in a manner so participants could reflect on their personal experiences and illustrate difficulties they encounter while homeless or barriers they overcame in making their transition back into the community. Questions were rearranged to suit the profile and suitability of the stages of each participant in order to obtain most representative data.

Participants

The researcher compiled a work-based study and invited participants from her organisation. The organisation in question is a homeless drop-in service for under 26 year old males and females and has facilitated many service users with a long history of offending, incarceration and the use of homeless services such as accommodation. Selection was based on the participants who have a history of being imprisoned along with candidates who have desisted from a life of crime and those who are still immersed in one. Participants selected were chosen because it felt they met the researcher's criteria to draw upon relevant data suggested about homeless offenders and identify and answer the research question. Participants ranged in age from 18-26 years old and were selected from homeless projects for the reason of accessibility, established rapport with participants, and creating a familiar non-judgemental environment, allowing them to describe their experiences at their own comfort level.

Ethical Issues

Participants were given written and verbal information outlining the purpose of the study, and the researcher obtained the signed consent of each of the participants in the study. The study was conducted with homeless ex-prisoners over the age of eighteen using services within Dublin catchment. Participants were reassured of utmost anonymity and confidentiality within the study through name changes in the data and destruction of any audio material.

Participants were allowed to withdraw at any stage of the interview or take breaks in recording if necessary. Participants were assured that the data received would only be used for research purposes and would not be given to any third party.

As a condition of access, ethical approval had to be requested from the Director of Services within the homeless organisation of choice through submitting the research proposal and a letter requesting permission. Gatekeepers present challenges and barriers to successful completion of research. The request was granted on the condition that all transcripts were examined and checked by the researcher's sectional manager to ensure client safety and protection. In the unfortunate event of a participant disclosing intimate and potentially damaging details that could risk the participant's safety, the data collected would be discarded at the sectional manager's discretion. Each participant was expected to sign a consent form which outlined the purpose of the study and which identified what was expected of them.

Ethical issues arising throughout the research may have culminated from it being a socially sensitive topic which was approached cautiously to prevent or inhibit ethical concerns such as harboured emotions from traumatic experiences. Substance abuse has been proven to contribute to individuals entering homelessness/prisons indefinitely and can cause difficulties in assessing aftercare drug treatment programmes and exert a range of other issues that the participant may not already have accepted or worked through and this can cause ethical difficulties within the interview stage. A request was made by the researcher that a designated key-worker be made available during or after the interviews. Considering the threat sensitive topics pose, difficulties can arise causing methodological and technical problems (Lee, 1999). Access is problematic; conceptualisation can be inhibited, affecting availability and quality of data. However, sensitive topics allow studies to build on theory because they challenge assumptive schema of society and they introduce contingencies less commonly found in other topics. In general, sensitive research is important as it illuminates concealed and complex concerns of society. The researcher was required to deliberately create questions objectively while being aware of the risk of it becoming a counselling session. In order to achieve this, the researcher was required to consider pausing the interview or changing direction of questions if participant became distressed or looked to be seeking advice.

Data Collection

The duration of interviews was approximately 30-45 minutes as any longer would risk the participant becoming repetitive or disinterested. Considering a small amount of participants leading chaotic lifestyles, access to them may be impinged and cause delays. Similarly, full consent was not assumed to have been granted if any participants arrived for interviews substance affected. Interviews were conducted within the organisation setting and a room was designated to allow for complete privacy and anonymity. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, participants' confidentiality is paramount and the location reflected this along with non-disclosure of it. The researcher also took additional notes and memos throughout the interviews to record any significant tones, and body language that can sometimes be lost in recordings. Microsoft Excel was used to analyse the data from questionnaires. Thematic analysis was used to interpret open-ended questions. Information was displayed using graphs and tables as seen in Appendix I. .

Data Analysis

Essentially, analysis is the collection and summarising of raw data and in a manner that reflects and represents accurately the subjective experience of the participant as meaningful information.

“The process of analysis is essentially about taking the captured raw data and summarising into a form that is both accurately representative and provides meaningful information” (Costley et al., 2001). In doing this, the researcher concentrated on interpretations applied and chose challenges and difficulties expressed by participants which were grouped into themes and provided analysis of how situations were perceived. Patterns in perception were also sought as well as similar feelings on leaving the prison environment back into the community or, in most cases, back into homeless services. Phenomenological theory approach to qualitative research provides guidelines for analysing data through the research process rather than at a final analysis stage (Charmaz, 2001). In light of this, the researcher began the analysis after the first interview, and each interview was analysed before subsequent interviews were conducted. This allowed the researcher to become aware of any possible areas that needed altering or exploring to ensure successful cooperation. IPA

analysis was used in identifying themes that emerged or that are held in common with members of the group (Dallos & Vetre, 2005).

The advantage of this process is that gaps can be identified early, and comparisons can be made across data in order to ensure the research outcome fits the purpose being explored (Charmaz, 2001). A further method of coding was employed to ensure accurate recording of data and grouping key categories that sum up what was being said. Coding involves using categories that suits the purpose and interpretations best and striking a careful balance between comparing texts and remaining faithful to individual accounts (Costley et al., 2001). Eventually, key themes emerge from strands within the data. “The main requirement for qualitative analysis is to be able to examine the body of data by theme” (Costley et al., 2001, p.98).

A limitation found whilst completing the study was the over-representation of male participants to female (ratio of 4:1). Also, as some of the participants remained in chaotic homeless lifestyles, it inhibited the researcher’s correspondence about undertaking an interview session with them. For example, of three interviews, two were postponed and rescheduled as participants were too substance affected while another participant had to be changed as he was too vulnerable to partake.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter the researcher will outline the results of the analysis of the interviews conducted with five participants. The themes investigate the pathway the researcher anticipated homeless individuals make into a life of crime and imprisonment, while also portraying the participants' perceptions of their journey as a homeless offender.

The data will be presented thematically relating to each participant's life course of events as a homeless offender while categorising similar perceptions. The main themes examine whether homelessness is a cause or consequence of offending and some will contain a number of sub-headings.

All participants currently or with a history of homelessness came from economically deprived areas and grew up in low income families. Family breakdown, drug addiction, imprisonment, challenging behaviour, instability and being in state care was described as causative factors in first becoming homeless. For a full breakdown of participants' profile and demographic factors see graphs in Appendix I.

Table 1: Profile of Participants

	Gender	Age	History of Homelessness	Addictions	History of Prison	Longest Length in Prison	Currently Offending
Participant 1	male	24	2 years	Yes/drug	4 times	4 mths	Yes
Participant 2	male	23	3 years	Yes/drug	6 times	6 mths	Yes
Participant 3	male	25	13 years	Yes/drug	7 times	1 year	Yes
Participant 4	female	35	16 years	Yes/reformed drug addict	20+ times	1+ year	Desisted
Participant 5	male	28	15 years	Yes/reformed drug addict	13+ times	3 years	Desisted

Entry into Homelessness

The most common themes identified by participants as leading into homelessness in the first instances were family breakdown and drug use. However, it emerged from the narratives that all participants started offending prior to their entry to homelessness.

Family Breakdown

From the findings, most of participants described family breakdown as one of the causal factors in determining their pathway to homelessness but it became apparent the conflict materialised from their excessive drug taking and chaotic behaviour.

P.1 Am by taking drugs mainly led to me getting out of the family home like, my father didn't want me there anymore... he won't let me back to the house still to this day.

Other experiences related to difficulties they brought to the family home.

P.4 Became homeless about 15 or 16 years old. Am it would have been over bringing trouble to the house, me ma's house... Ah sometimes I'd leave meself and sometimes I'd get kicked out, I was a handful.

Participant 4 portrayed herself as troublesome but she also disclosed her mother was a chronic alcoholic conceivably contributing to her uncontrollable behaviour.

Drug Addiction

All participants described drug induced behaviour which led to their eviction from their family home. Participant 1 became addicted to heroin around the time he became homeless whilst participant 4 mentioned she had tried her first substance at the tender age of twelve.

History of Care

As the literature has discussed the majority of children leaving care institutions are increasingly vulnerable to becoming homeless (Focus Ireland, 2010). Of the participants,

only one had a history of being in care, which he felt was the outstanding factor that led to his incriminating behaviour.

P.3 I was in foster care and with various foster families, like 14 foster families for the first year.

Coping while Homeless

From the data analysis and the interpretation of narratives it emerged that all participants developed coping mechanisms to deal with such feelings of insecurity, uncertainty, as well as making conscious decisions on their drug intake and offending.

Social Groups/Support

While participants suggested that they need group contact, either through services or peers, relationships are often of an instrumental nature where friends are more like associates. Several participants spoke about the significance of professional supports; however, those currently enmeshed in homelessness talked more wholly of social groupings as a means of coping as suggested below

P.3 I have nothing to do with my family, I reared myself, I have to be in a group, I feel I need to be in a group.

Unfortunately it became clear very quickly that there was lack of family support available to participants, which also acted as a contributor towards their emotional base. However, participants did acknowledge social groups as a causing factor of their criminal activity. Predominately, a theme developing from participants' perception was the inability to trust other service users in the homeless setting, as one participant claimed his 'friends' were more associates, based on an illusion of friendship designed purely to benefit them when necessary, i.e., prison, 'jobs', drugs.

P.3 Well they're more associates, but you have people that you call friends but you can't trust anyone, especially with drugs, you can't trust anyone. Frenemies is what we call them. Friends who became enemies.

For other participants who had no practical level of support, isolation was a common factor while coping in this environment. Elements of loneliness stemmed from being unable to trust others and gradually led isolation

P.2: No I stick to myself; I don't rely on anybody... I have Trust issues I suppose, I just like to do me own thing, nobody knowing anything about what I'm doing or anything.

Offending to Survive on the Streets

Another common factor associated with homelessness was offending on the streets to provide support for oneself and one's addiction. Four of the participants attempted to rationalise their behaviour in favour of their status [homeless addict]:

P.3 They have to survive like rob, beg, steal, you do what you have to do to survive, ya know like jump over's, whatever ya can to get money. You're homeless you've no choice, ya can't live off that scabby money they are giving out now, you can't live off that.

Another participant conveyed a nonchalant attitude towards getting caught and convicted. It may be perceived that he subconsciously chose to offend to get arrested and be put in a setting that offers more security and stability.

P.5: I didn't give a shit if I was caught because I'd say, what can they do put me in jail and give me a bed

Participants illustrated the magnitude of remaining 'street wise' to ensure one's survival, undoubtedly another way of coping as part of this inner city subculture formed within homelessness according to (Mayock & O'Sullivan, 2007).

Early Offending

Contrasting with previous literature by Mayock & O'Sullivan (2007) suggesting homelessness is a cause of crime, the participants recorded themselves as offending before they had become homeless, some as young as twelve years old. However, participants did claim the offending developed progressively worse as a result of entering homelessness.

P.1 Yeah I offended before I became homeless...Criminal damage, things like that.

P.3 I started offending when I got put into care [age 11] robbing to try and live.

However, it became clear from two participants that they were introduced to a life of crime by influential gang members from an early age, aspiring for a lifestyle of money and power.

P.2 See I grew up in an area where the [names Dublin gangster] and he was just up the road from me. I used to work for him and I grew up looking at him and all his big cars, fancy clothes so that's what I wanted to be like, cause all I ever wanted to be was rich.

Communities undoubtedly impacted on young offender's level of crime and they hunger for recognition. It was almost like a rite of passage, or a pass down of generation's entry into criminal activity.

P.3 We looked up to the older fellas, doing robberies, and obviously we copied them, then six years down the line, new younger fellas come in and they would all be looking up to us.

Addiction

One of the strongest and most consistent themes to arise from the data was the relationship between offending and substance dependency. For example, when participants were questioned on motives for their offending it often reflected a need to support their 'habit'. All participants stated their crimes were either materialistic, that is to pay for their drugs, or as a result of their actions while under the influence of drugs.

P.3 You have to rob to support your habit.

P.5 The only reason I done a serious crime when I was older was because of my addiction.

While many described substances misuse as their motives for offending, the level of dependency on drugs was so immense; it became apparent how reliant each participant became.

P.2 I'd wake up suicidal every morning, until I go to my clinic and collect my methadone and tablets.

Drug taking has undoubtedly overshadowed all of the participants' decision making at one stage or another and blocked their minds from making a clear and concise judgment over their lives. Criminal records can also impinge on opportunities made available to individuals

P.4 I think because I was addicted to drugs and I'd no stability in my life... as an addict I couldn't maintain anything never mind a home like. It just takes over.

Adapting to Prison Life

Accepting their situation was paramount to successful adaption according to participants. Interestingly, most of the participants felt prison offered a better social structure and secure environment than emergency accommodation.

P.1: They wouldn't prepare you for living on the outside no, but they are good in a way, they get you off drugs, you become drug free. You feel it in yourself like when you're in there, you become an awful lot healthier, and you can see it in your face yeah there is a positive thing, well there is a guaranteed bed and no sleeping rough.

Participants emphasised on several occasions that a level of offending committed within the homeless population was purposefully to be incarcerated; however, all participants denied they did this.

P.3: You have your guaranteed bed, your dinner, you have your gym, I know people who have been institutionalised that cannot survive on the outside, that go out intentionally robbing and committing crimes just to go back into jail.

An observation made from the narratives was how each participant coped differently but all knew the regime to fit into within the social barriers, reputation, gangs, contacts/supports and how they can facilitate them or make it an unpleasant transition. Here an aggressive and diligent approach is demonstrated as protecting credibility and reputation.

P.3: When you're on your own they see you as vulnerable or a target and they try bully you the first day you're in there and if they know they can they'll do it for the rest of your sentence, for every single day. When you go in there and the first person that's says something to you, you whack him out of it, to show your not an idiot especially for the first while you're in there...but if people know who you are and know you're not an idiot you'll get along a lot better inside.

The majority of participants spoke positively of their time spent in prisons and how prisons stimulated further involvement in criminal gangs on the outside generating more offending behaviour and instigating the recurring cycle within homelessness and prison.

P.5: You learn a lot more in jail and ya get in with harder criminals and then ya come out and you're being offered any amounts of drugs to sell.

Getting released

All of the participants stated they went straight back into emergency accommodation once released.

P.2: When I was over 18 I didn't have anywhere to go when I got out of prison, I usually went straight back into hostels.

One narrative portrays the participant's embedded memory of the pain and anguish he suffered in the past as a result of getting released without having alternative accommodation arranged.

P.5 I was always just being kicked out and told where to collect the cheque, and you book yourself onto the free phone. I remember used to walk the town with blisters on my feet waiting on that bus, it never leaves me.

Re-entry into Homelessness

Emergency Accommodation

All the participants, at some stage, returned to live in hostels after their time in prison was complete and continued with past behaviours re-entering the homeless cycle.

P.2 No I was straight back into homeless services. I would be released that day and would have to stay in a hostel, like I had nowhere else to go.

Family Breakdown

On the other hand, returning to the family home was also a challenge as participants experienced a breakdown leading them back into homeless services after a short period. The important role families play in reintegrating individuals is reiterated throughout literature. On the other hand, one participant disclosed her family environment was too unstable, as another confirmed his family were under-resourced to support him.

P.1 She [mother] would take me home and then once she seen me messing around with drugs I was straight back into homelessness then.

In a dramatic turn of events, participant 4 would leave voluntarily at times as she felt her family home was too unstable and in contrast, felt emergency accommodation offered more security.

Normalisation

Normalising their behaviour within the subculture of homelessness became noticeable very promptly drawing on statements relating to rationalising and justification. Drawing on Mayock and O'Sullivan's (2007) work signifying careers and subcultures, individuals become accustomed to homelessness, evidently allowing them to rationalise their behaviour

P.3 That's the life I'm used to, it's my norm.

P.1 But I'm used to me life now the way it is ya know what I mean? I am used to the way my life is now.

Participant 2's attempts to rationalise his inability to desist were noted along with his conscious decision to accept it as his vocation.

P.2 Yeah definitely that's the hardest thing to do [desist], I can't get away from it like, I still sell drugs and that's what I do.

Supports

Another theme was how each narrator criticised the degree of supports offered by prisons which theoretically contributed to their return to homelessness.

P.2 You get released and given your bag of clothes and say 'there ya go', ya don't even get the bus fare or anything.

They felt they had no choice but to return to hostels due to poor family connections and expressed annoyance towards prisons during the transition back into society.

P.5 But there was no help when I was getting out, it was just getting out into the worst hostels going sure you'd be back addicted within a few weeks.

Relapse

Predictably, the majority of participants re-entered homeless services after detoxing in prison and relapsed a short period following being released, partly due to environment they were exposed to instantly considering their vulnerability and the accessibility of substances.

P.3 Oh yeah every time I'd say "I won't touch it this time" and then I was with people who was on it every time I'd get out so then I went back on it.

P.5: Ah just up on an hour, I used to be like just get me out [prison] so I can get me bag, and then I would get into a hostel.

Stable accommodation proved essential for those leaving institutions [prison, treatment] in order to prevent relapse.

P.4 The first time I had no accommodation coming out of the treatment centre and I went back to me ma's and fell into that cycle again where as this time when I come out I came here [supported accommodation] and it gave me that foundations.

Social Barriers

Stigma

A re-occurring theme and common concern emerging from the data was the notion of stigmatisation, particularly the negative impact it enforced on all of the participants. Stigmatisation can cause difficulties and challenges for reformed individuals looking to integrate back into communities. Goffman (1963), recognised for his work on stigmatisation, indicated “stigma involves both extreme negative perception and social rejection” of an individual. Ideally, it describes exactly how participants and countless people within homelessness are susceptible to stigmatisation indefinitely.

Participant 1 gave a very poignant account of experiencing stigma through the public on attempts to make money for his accommodation that night.

P.1 Yeah only there recently I experienced it, only because I was begging. People were just jumping at me, they were nearly going to kill me, saying “would you get up off the ground” and “don't be doing that”. But like I shouldn't have been doing it in the first place but still that's just the way people are, they don't see it from your perspective, they don't have a clue what's going on through your head or anything they don't know, they just don't care either it's just the way it is. I shouldn't have been doing it in the first place but I had to do it because I owed money to my hostel because if I didn't pay it, they would throw me out.

Unavoidably, this was a bone of contention for the majority of participants in homelessness and also when trying to resettle. As the only participant to reintegrate successfully, participant 4 gives a descriptive account of a time she was subjected to stigmatisation following denial while attempting to access housing in her local area.

P.4 I applied for accommodation and because of my anti-social behaviour, I was barred out of Clondalkin and I wanted a place up in Clondalkin and they told me they couldn't

house me and to go back to them in two years and they'd looked at me again. I was trying to explain the situation that I'm in recovery and I fought it and I appealed it and with all my supports that I had I won the appeal.

She provided the first piece of evidence for the data surrounding stigmatisation around reintegrating back into communities and accessing Local Authority accommodation.

Yet currently homeless participants avoided applying for housing or employment to avoid the stigma as they felt it was indefinite.

P.2 If I went to try get a job and they ask about your background, what am I meant to say, I've 35 previous convictions, but if I had a house I'd probably look for a job, I can't work if I'm staying in a night shelter like.

Participant 2 identified his criminal record as an obstacle while another participant chose undisputedly not to demean himself to the labour market and was satisfied in the ways he earned his living, suggesting further homeless identification. Within stigmatisation comes the term labelling which is regularly inflicted on the homeless population, more often than not it is used in negative light. Excessive labelling can also deter individuals from moving forward in their lives and integrating. One participant's response in relation to negative labelling was:

P.3 I couldn't give a rat's, I've learned to live with that, I don't care what anybody thinks and learned not to care what other people think.

Returning to Prison

On the other hand, participants who are currently homeless felt they can only start afresh and concentrate on leaving homelessness once their charges are dealt with when they return to prison which they saw as inevitable.

P. 3 Well I'm getting locked up soon, or when I get caught, so when I get that sentence out of the way then that's it I'll knock it on the head, I'll try [drug use] because my charges will be dealt with, I'll have a chance at least and I won't be looking over my shoulder

Participant 1 became so concerned and clouded by the thoughts of returning to prison he was unable to focus on anything remotely positive for his future and visibly struggled emotionally coming to terms with it

P.1 I have nothing that I can plan in life, I can't plan cause I'm looking at another sentence in prison now again, I can't see my future, I don't know what I am going to do...

all I can see from here is a big downfall, I can't think of anything I can do, just waiting to go back to prison.

Personal Barriers

Identity

Identity can inhibit one from leaving the homeless cycle, as confirmed by those long-term currently entrenched in it and become a barrier to integrating back into communities. From data interpreted it emphasised participants currently engaging in homeless services such as hostels for a prolonged period of time failed to identify themselves back into mainstream society as they believed themselves to be a part of a inner city subculture within the homeless in Dublin which accepted their irrational behaviour and encouraged explicit drug taking.

All participants reported that they did not understand the term '*identity*', therefore an explanation was provided by the researcher. Two of the participants who are currently ingrained in homelessness felt available accommodation on release could still not deter them; they had accepted it was their way of living now. However, one participant suggested initially he wanted to leave the homeless cycle but after a while felt unable and eventually came to terms with it and accepted it as his future. The remaining two participants described new identities they formulated during their recovery process.

P.2: I'd identify myself as homeless... definitely yeah, like when I first became homeless it was scary like but now it's just like the norm, it's almost like my role now, that's who I am anyways I don't think I'm ever gonna get out of it.

P.3 That's the life I'm used, the life I'm reared on, it's a part of my identity, it's my norm. It's natural to do things like that.

Normalisation sets in and many are so accustomed to the norms and beliefs within the homeless culture that it often preventing them from departing. Even when they are dissatisfied with their lives they feel they are still unable to leave.

P.2: Yeah cause it's all just a merry-go-round that's what I think, it's just like you get out of prison and you just do the same thing, go back to prison and do the same thing, you don't really care like if you go to prison or not, ya don't really care if ya live or die...that's who I am anyways I don't think I'm ever gonna get out of it.

Unfortunately, within the inner city subculture created within homelessness, individuals can become entrapped while others stand in limbo unaware of where they belong. Identity

complication can evolve when someone lives half their life in their communities and the other half in unstable accommodation with no security or support network to trust.

P.1 Ah I have struggled sometimes, yeah of course I have cause I don't know who I am at the minute, I have nothing that I can plan in life.

P.4 I had it all my life I've struggled with it; I didn't know where I fitted in all my life until I come into recovery two years ago. I needed to find who I really was.

Desistence versus Persistence Offending

From the data it emerged prisons appear to generate a significant amount of criminal networking from the inside. Participants described 'job' opportunities they encountered while imprisoned spurring a continuous cycle of criminal activity and preventing them from returning to communities. Participants demonstrate how the behaviour can become persistent within homelessness.

P.3 From jail I learned a hundred different ways how to make money for when I got out, it wises you up.

P.5 you learn a lot more in jail and you get in with more harder criminals and then you come out and your being offered any amount of drugs to sell and then.. Ya it becomes more a cycle.

Only two participants have successfully desisted from criminal activity and addictions. Participant 5 illustrates how he managed to substitute his drug dependencies for more normalised behaviour and experiences establishing further stability.

P.5 Having a stable room, stable accommodation and the gym, the gym is my high; I get a buzz from the gym. What I find is anyone who's off drugs they always have something, like I have the gym, somebody else has computers there has to be something, you can't just sit here all day, I mean there has to be something.

Participant 4's antidote was clear and precise, once she had conquered her substance dependency.

P.4 For re-offending I think it was my drug use, I needed to stay clean I made that decision in myself and that was it I just had to do it. I haven't robbed a thing since I got off drugs.

A characteristic of successful desistance is the evolution of a new identity, as participants 4 and 5 displayed how reforming from a homeless offender and addict to an ex-offender and recovered drug addict. This new script emerged as they demonstrated an understanding of their past behaviour, how they experience their current lives and the view they hold of their future.

P.4 Right, no I couldn't blame anybody for it, I was the one that offended and it doesn't matter what group of friends that I was in like.

Cognitive Distortions

A theme which developed from several of the narratives was the attitudes and beliefs they attain as offenders that allowed themselves to deny, minimise, rationalise and justify their behaviour (Maruna & Mann, 2006). Rationalising behaviour and victim blaming also presented strongly in this category as participants poor self worth and quality prevailed. Of the participants, two incessantly blamed their offending behaviour and situations on external bodies such as the care system and the government. Unfortunately poor quality of life resulted in reckless behaviour with little concern for the consequences.

P.3 You're homeless you've no choice you have to rob, you have to sell drugs, that's how I get by anyways.

P.2 You just don't care if you get arrested and you go in and rob places.

Victim Blaming

Identifying external sources as the fundamental factor for their behaviour has been acknowledged by researchers as the process of victim blaming. Participants' inadequacies that led them into homelessness were directed at alternative parties.

P.3: It's just came from a fit of rage I had for years, I blame the social workers for that. Social workers tore my life upside down. So I started offending when I was put into care. That's was it's built up from, the first time I offended.

Participant 5 continues to justify his relapse on the conditions of the emergency accommodation he stayed in after he was released from prison.

P.5 I was taking drugs just to get through being in the place do ya know what I mean, sending me right back into that.

Self Assessment /Statement

Several participants were observed making self statements in regards their experience within the homeless sphere. Interestingly, when participant 1 was asked a general question around homelessness, he manifested a response using social commentary or self statement angled at his own situation.

P.1 I think that because basically they're homeless, they have nobody else in their life really Ya know, they are just really out there on the long one, and they are either on drugs or they have a lot of problems going on in their family and it just messes with their head and yours, they just don't be thinking of things and they go off and get themselves into all sorts of trouble.

Similarly, participant 4 spoke about acknowledging past recklessness and addressing negligence of her behaviour, while also illustrating impressive self awareness.

P.4: I don't know about other people but I know I wasn't able to handle it [private accommodation] I needed to look at the problem.

Equally, self realisation developed as another core concept around self perception.

P.5 I said I don't wanna go through it all again you have to hit a point where you don't want to do it anymore.

Self empowerment and control rose as strong characteristics of those trying to reform. Additional this narrative illustrated the importance of capacity to change and control their own space within external pressures of hostel environments.

P.5 The most important thing is your own room if you can lock that door and feel that your clothes are safe or that you're safe and there's a dinner there or even if it's your own flat. There are drugs where I am but you have your own room and you can go in and lock the door after ya.

Emotional Pressure

A wave of emotions stimulated from the interviews allowing the researcher to analyse them in accordance with their demographic factors and concluded the majority of participants have unresolved issues that possibly arise from concerns over chronic neglect.

Reflecting on his past, participant 3 gave an unflinching account of events the night he was separated from his siblings. The wave of emotion displayed proves the foundation for further shortcomings in his life. He continued to describe feelings of loss, anger, detachment from his family, identifying it as the cause that led to his chaotic behaviour and entry into homelessness. It seems likely the rejection felt by him contributed to general rage and disregard for attempts by service providers to provide support, result from issues relating to attachment.

P.3: they took me away from my family, we were all separated, and I was only attached to my little sister that tore me apart when she was crying when she was taken.

Dealing with suppressed emotions after a chronic addiction or within homelessness was a concern and more so for these participants who could not find ways to release them.

P.5: After that it's the loneliness because you start to get back your emotions and all that stuff you haven't dealt with in about, ten years, and ya start crying about something at 3.00am o'clock in the morning, maybe something ya done, ya know what I mean cause ya haven't got the drugs in ya.

Crane and Brannock (1996) defined homelessness not only to be understood as the absence of shelter but also the absence of caring, love, belonging and security.

Reintegration

Reforming

A common characteristic of successful desistance in recovery is an evolution of the identity and self assurance as demonstrated in narratives below. Both participants attempting to reform explained in their narratives how they consciously made the decision to disassociate themselves from friends and acquaintances with whom they were involved with during their time as a homeless offender and drug addict otherwise known as the “knifing off” period

P.5 Like my cousin is back on gear...I've nothing to do with him ya know but ah it's nothing to do with him being me cousin his back on heroin now so I can't mix with him cause I'd be a risk.

An essential determinant in desisting from crime suggested by participants was abstaining from all drug use. Once their addiction was under control they could successfully desist from criminal behaviour; however, that was not always uncomplicated.

P.4 I haven't robbed a thing since I got off drugs... I needed to put a lot of work in and change everything about it.

As part of a recovery plan to allow someone to desist from criminal behaviour and drugs dependencies, individuals are expected to create a new identity including a new network of friends, a new social role and new supports away from that past chaotic lifestyle. Recovery is a lengthy progression and requires an individual to be capable as well as competent.

Resettling back into communities and living independently remained a struggle for one of the participants. Daily tasks performed by the general population proved much more complex for this group and require a lot more support.

P.4: It needs to be built up gradually I think. When I came out of recovery and I didn't have a clue about running my own place like bills or responsibility nothing like that. And I was lucky when I came out, I got a key worker and support that taught me how to pay my bills, shopping and taking on a bit of responsibility a bit at each time like, it was baby steps definitely like.

Redemption

For two participants the importance of giving back to society or making amends for harm they caused was clear from the data.

P.4 Like I do a lot in my area I give a lot back to my area ya know and I do clean up days, do stuff for the kids ya know.

P.5 When I'm off the drugs I'm always trying to get the younger fellas off them.

It was identified as a way to feel creditable, to be considered part of society again, to earn back their place, and achieve self worth. The researcher did not think it was about approval from society but more about feeling worthy again.

P.5 Like when I'm not on drugs like now, I feel like shit over some of the stuff I done, but ah its stuff that you can never take back but ah at the end of the day you learn from your mistakes.

In both narratives about recovery and reforming, support from service providers emerged as most influential factors contributing to their resettlement.

P.4 *I think for me it was from places like here [homeless organisations], it was all the supports that were very important 'cause my family couldn't help me in the areas that I needed to be helped in.*

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will aim to discuss the interpretations of the findings in relation to the research question and draw on theoretical developments in the area by corresponding researchers. Following this, the findings and corresponding studies will be discussed in comparison to the general homeless population drawing on commonalities and differences. They will be based on the interpretation of the narratives of five homeless offenders and a reflection of their experiences at present. Through applying an IPA model where participants reflect on past experiences associated with the study, the researcher attempted to ensure each participant interviewed portrays their unique experience faced through singular life situations, while allowing for common characteristics and themes shared by interviewees for analysis.

Life on the Streets

A recurring theme identified within the study, similar to that of Seymour and Costello's (2005) work, was the level of family breakdown among the participants and how several felt a lack of a secure family base to return to after prison was associated with high risk of homelessness. It became evident from the transcriptions that the substantial reason for family conflict arose from early drug use and antisocial behaviour. All five participants had begun to engage in drug misuse before they became homeless but evidence suggests it appeared to get progressively worse the longer they remained in homeless services by using stronger and more addictive drugs such as heroin. A recurrent theme that emerged from the data was the devastating effects of drugs on the lives of those entrenched in homelessness. It served as a motivating internal force for offending, offences often committed to maintain one's "*habit*". Drug dependency developed as a sequence that seemed to structure and shape the pathways to homelessness. While the majority of participants admitted they offended before they became homeless, they also claimed their involvement in crime increased while living in homeless settings, as their addiction developed and became more expensive.

As demonstrated in the literature review by Bender et al. (2007), work on coping mechanisms within homelessness involves adapting extraordinary coping skills in their struggle for survival. Drug addiction and survival were the two characteristics for offending and both were a consequence of being homeless according to participants. They consistently face

immense challenges on a daily basis and must quickly learn and adapt to the hardship associated with life on the streets. It became apparent from the interviews that the dangerously chaotic lifestyle they now, or did, endure affected the coping mechanisms such as self-esteem, ability to trust others and form relationships, or decision making. The majority of participants portrayed a poor level of self worth, and repeatedly emphasised their inability to trust other homeless individuals leading to isolation and loneliness. However, others found solidarity, security and attachment in social groups which, unfortunately, also negatively resulted in influencing criminal behaviour and possible drug taking. Bender et al. (2007) developed this theme by recognising that many form surrogate families through connecting with other homeless individuals offering an increased sense of security and belonging to all parties involved.

Offending

Participants survived the streets by committing such acts as robbing, drug dealing, and muggings depending on drug intake, through which they rationalised their behaviour. Supporting a drug habit became the most decisive factor in determining one's criminal behaviour and establishing a role as to why so many are caught in this uncontrollable cycle. Zamble and Quinsey (1997) argued that serious substance abuse is so entangled with repeat offending that they saw the two processes as inseparable. Desisting from criminal offending raises no great mystery, the benefits such as material possessions are minuscule, risks are high and imprisonment results in the dark end to one's chaotic lifestyle (Maruna, 2001). Unsurprisingly, the data presented slightly different determinants. Persistent homeless offenders articulated no desire to seek employment and described easier access to finances through illegal means such as drug dealing. A growing body of evidence has suggested correctional interventions such as drug treatment programmes are effective in reducing overall rates of recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 1998). Overall, it emerged that the majority of participants experience a particularly strong association between offending and drug use. Likewise, Seymour and Costello (2005) identified similar results where they recorded that interviewees associated their lifestyles as homeless individuals which were described as chaotic, unstable and insecure, as a casual factor in offending behaviour.

Prison was not viewed as a place of punishment or incarceration; instead it was seen as a place of respite. Prison was viewed as an opportunity to detox from substances and revitalise health (put on weight), while also building up criminal networks resulting in recidivism. Prison offered more social structure although the problematic issues when getting released was poor access to stable accommodation, the return to chaotic emergency accommodation along with being susceptible to substances after a long detox while incarcerated.

Mallet et al.'s (2010) structural and individual models of analysing antecedents among homeless people were developed slightly within the study. Participants criticised the structural model (i.e. the role social, political and economic determinants played in influencing their situation) whereas the researcher felt the individual model (such as personal/familial characteristics like drug use, poor contact or interaction with family, demographic factors and youth homelessness) served as a stronger factor in determining antecedents within homelessness.

Personal and Social Blocks

As outlined in previous chapters the theme surrounding homeless identity developed within the data as a concern which potentially inhibits individuals leaving homelessness. The length an individual remained in homelessness determined how much they associate with homelessness as an identity as suggested by Farrington and Robinson (1999). They become immersed in a subculture facilitated through drug use and criminal 'careers' (Mayock et al., 2008, p.140) altering their beliefs and attitudes whilst offering false sense of support inhibiting their departure from this recurring cycle. Interestingly, a majority of participants were more willing to identify themselves as 'homeless' rather than 'criminals or addicts'.

From completing this small scale study, the researcher concluded that long-term homeless individuals became enmeshed in a culture which pulls them into all sorts of damaging behaviours. Illegal substances, criminal activity, prison, unstable accommodation are all components of the homeless cycle. Factors like chronic addiction, criminality, and periods spent in custody enabled individuals to become fully fledged into this culture. Not all individuals entering homeless services arrived through these pathways but of the five participants interviewed, their experiences demonstrated the difficulties they encounter moving through and out of this transition. Due to this being a small-scale study the

researcher is careful not to generalise but to demonstrate the insightful narratives of five individuals with a history of, or who are currently in, homelessness and the pathway they encountered. Concept of normalisation developed as participants cited it as a difficulty in moving through and out of homelessness. Pressure comes within our society from both internal and external sources making individuals comply with values and cultural norms (Ravenhill, 2008, p.34). Several of the participants believed the homelessness community to be their 'norm' conforming to cultural values and beliefs, identifying the struggle they experience when trying to reintegrate back into communities after getting released from prison.

Similarly, in conjunction with the findings and literature another theme to evolve as a challenge for the marginalised individuals was the social exclusion of stigmatisation. Theorists have contested on several occasions the stigma experienced by homeless individuals is unavoidable especially for individuals returning to communities after being imprisoned. The resounding question is how ex-offenders cope with the aftermath in society through social exclusions, social stigma and limited career opportunities (Maruna, 2001). As noted in a previous chapter, homeless individuals often experience negative labelling and stigmatisation by service providers, law enforcers and society in general (Bender et al., 2007).

Participants listed emergency accommodation as primary sources of supports used within homeless service and upon release from prison. Unfortunately for them establishments like emergency accommodation provide more formal practical supports like food, showers, shelter and individuals may struggle to form social ties and connect through a lack of emotional support. This reinforced speculation around inner city subculture and how participants are reintroduced to risky behaviour among their peers which can facilitate and support relapse and criminal behaviour jeopardising their safety and well being (Mayock et al., 2008) as highlighted within the findings. Even though the repeated cycle of imprisonment among participants homeless 'careers' was welcome as a relief from street life (Mayock et al., 2008), returning to city centre environments had a negative impact on their drug consumption and criminal activity in which they stated they would often use drugs to mediate from being in certain hostels. Correspondingly, Mayock et al. (2008) suggested increased level of drug consumption and criminal behaviour negatively impacted on their housing pathways as well as the state of homelessness impacting on an individual's ability to abstain from drug use and therefore crime. A notable discrepancy among participants was

the level of support post release and the identified needs of the prisoners. Homeless offenders in custody require higher level of support and significantly more engagement to attain stable accommodation upon release. The study appears to establish the link between lack of appropriate accommodation from prison, re-entry to homelessness and the increased risk of re-offending. Seymour and Costello (2005) suggested that the difficulties for individuals who return to homelessness and offending were exacerbated when accompanied by factors such as substance abuse and mental health problems.

Attitudes and Perceptions

Attitudes participants held of homelessness and offending was studied extensively under the term cognitive distortions explaining their involvement in criminal behaviour. Participants “attribute a cause to their behaviour by describing what they believe brought about the behaviour” (Buss, 1978, p.1315). Maruna and Mann (2006) described this process as *excuse making* in shifting casual attribution for negative personal outcomes central to the person’s sense of self. This invokes excuses and justifications when accounting for criminal delinquency through blaming external sources or minimising behaviour as confirmed through the findings. However, homelessness, although not an excuse, creates an additional equation in the theory surrounding criminology, which actualises many individual struggles allowing participants the chance to justify their actions, as distinguished from the findings. Within criminology there is a theory of moral disengagement techniques including displacement of responsibility, denial and assuming role of victim of self. (Bandura, 1990; Sykes & Matza, 1957). Participants 4 and 5, who had already entered recovery processes, chose to eliminate external and internal explanations and admit responsibility and the seriousness of past behaviour. In actual fact, evidence proves a reduction in recidivism is linked to taking responsibility over actions (Maruna & Mann, 2006). The theoretical propositions all point towards the need for further studies on this problematic topic of homeless offending.

Participants with a history of, or currently in, homelessness held a number of attitudes and beliefs in comparison to mainstream society. Cognition distortion measures an attitude scale consisting of items reflecting general beliefs including excuses and denial. Theorists saw that distortions reduce subjective shame and guilt around offending allowing for repeated episodes or re-offending (Maruna & Mann, 2006). Cognitions have a role in maintaining this

value and attitude within homeless offenders' minds, deflecting their shame as they commit antisocial acts for survival as was accepted and justified within narratives encased in this study. Participants demonstrated internal or external factors such as upbringing, emotional pressure, drug dependency along with contextual circumstances as influential over their actions but this still does not justify why participants behave in various ways (Maruna & Mann, 2006). Narratives conveyed the importance of reputation within homelessness and how it defined their behaviour and identity. Research shows the issues of schemas for processing events need further consideration through research with this group of homeless offenders (Maruna & Mann, 2006).

Ravenhill (2008) developed the theory 'Victim Blaming' when looking at homelessness, noting the tendency to blame the victim for what happened to them. It became evident from the study how participants learn to play the victim as suggested and deflect the blame on external factors such as society. Inadvertently, this contributes to barriers homeless people set up against themselves in refusing to return to mainstream society for fear they may be labelled or they chose to victim-blame. It suggests it is easier to remain a victim as against taking responsibility and finding an internal solution to the situation. Construction of self, identity, and narratives are not something a person has but rather how they actively shape or makes sense of one's life (Maruna & Ramsden, 2004). This reinforces how homelessness can become ingrained in people after a prolonged period of time.

Remorse

The sheer poignancy displayed by the participants throughout was overwhelming and paved unique and stimulating narratives allowing for rich and descriptive data. A common theme investigated and observed from participants was the build-up of chronic neglect and suppressed emotions. Many encounter negative life events that changed their perception, and furthered their involvement in crime. However, not all participants expressed remorse over their actions, some continued to justify their irrational behaviour through victimising or minimising. Justification and rationalisation revealed how current homeless offenders

excused their behaviour and shipped the blame onto past negative events and external factors. The government's poor social welfare scheme, social workers, poor support from prisons, inadequate accommodation, poor referral process and being placed back in emergency accommodation with other addict and offenders were believed to be the root cause of many of their behaviours.

On the other hand, participants appeared to reveal numerous defences to deflect feelings of possible shame, through justification and rationalisation for their behaviour. "Individuals who commit socially disapproved acts seek some means of maintaining their own sense of pride and self respect in the face of personal and public stigmatisation (Maruna & Ramsden, 2004, p.131). Externalising feelings of anger or escaping shame through escapism, in this instance drug consumption and violent offending, stood as prime routes of deflection within the narratives. Through continuously deflecting the '*compass of shame*', it can become a never ending cycle. Interestingly, only participants who currently reside in homeless services unveiled a host of deflecting defences in moral misconduct committed, in comparison to those who left homeless 'careers'.

Assimilation

Redemption and self worth were two important factors according to Maruna's (2001) sample study, where respondents employed new life stories and without this 'story' it can be easy to interpret the "brick wall" facing them as reason enough to cease and return to the old life (p.55) of chaos and uncertainty. Both participants in recovery described nurturing a new life through replacing past acquaintances with new association of friends, activities, and behaviours. Desisting from a life of substance dependency and offending behaviour involved abstaining long term from past negative associations whilst also substituting previous misconduct with more desirable actions, i.e., the gym or volunteering. A crucial ingredient for abstaining from a life of crime, homelessness and addiction was gaining an understanding of the past. The researcher felt gaining a deeper insight into their past motivation, and how their actions affected themselves and others, was important for recognising pathways in and out of the homeless culture (Braithwaite & Braithwaite, 2001). Both participants in recovery identified professional supports they received as essential in '*knifing out*' their past and transforming. The theme surrounding recovery and redemption focused on participants''

perceptions of taking control and responsibility in righting past wrongs rather than looking back and blaming oneself (Braithwaite & Braithwaite, 2001).

As suggested by Ravenhill (2008) no single theory adequately encapsulates the entire crisis of homelessness. She recommended that “a combination of existing social theories examining the phenomenon of homelessness to try to gain a holistic viewpoint of the social problem, the individual problem and the impact of society structures” (p.31) would offer more insight. The aim of the research was to provide an exploratory study on individual pathways into, through and out of homelessness along with the transition of leaving custody and attempting to return to communities. Additionally, gaining a deeper insight into participants’ past motivation, and how their actions affected themselves and others, was important for recognising pathways in and out of the homeless culture.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study are based on the perceptions and experiences of five individuals who are currently, or have a history as, a homeless offender. Findings from this study and previous research indicates obstacles and barriers disrupting people exiting homelessness including poor access to stable and affordable accommodation, lack of contact and support from family networks, negative peer associations and social groupings, drug dependency, subsequently involvement in crime, incarceration and assuming an identity within the subculture of homelessness. Similarly, in reference to the part (i) of the research question, previous research indicates in order to successful desist individuals must create new identities and life stories (Maruna & Ramsden, 2004) as exhibited throughout the text by two of the participants. It was established that the majority of participants returned to emergency accommodation immediately after being released from prisons. However, returning to their families after imprisonment was not always successful and participants confirmed they re-entered homeless services after a number of weeks.

For several, offending behaviour and drug use played a large role in their initial experience of homelessness, after which followed being incarcerated and returning to emergency accommodation with no alternation accommodation assigned. Each aspect of the data collection formed a distinctive feature within the study as a combination, producing a multi-dimensional perspective on pathways through homelessness, along with contributing factors and transition of returning back to communities. These findings contribute to early theoretical research in particular Maruna's extensive studies (2001, 2004) providing a contemporary and meaningful account of the complex issues associated with individuals' experience of homelessness and the controversial lifestyle that accompanies it.

Imprisonment proved inevitable across all narratives as they portrayed high levels of drug dependency subsequently leading to further offending with little concern for the consequences. It is difficult to ascertain if prison had any direct impact on participants as it was sometimes viewed in a positive light. This was partly participants viewing prison more as a respite to suspend drug use and take a break from the streets and hostels.

It became apparent throughout the data how substance dependency developed as the most incriminating factor in affecting participants' ability to exit homelessness and return to independent living. The association between substance misuse and homelessness has been widely recognised with the debate centering on whether drugs and alcohol are a cause or

consequence of homeless. The study's findings recognised drug misuse was not a major factor in precipitating their homelessness but high exposure did present as a consequence, resulting in chronic addictions and increasing involvement in crime whilst homeless as suggested also by Mayock and O'Sullivan (2007). The high rate of drug use among participants was substantial as each narrator admitted to using heroin.

Participants limited contact with family or friends in their communities may have sourced feelings of isolation, alienation, rejection and identity complications as suggested in from their accounts. As a consequence participants' drug use may have been instigated as a coping strategy to relieve existing difficulties in the absence of more positive and constructive styles of coping (Bender et al., 2003). Substance use appeared to centre on the need to counteract negative feelings, experiences and emotions almost as a form of self medicating (Mayock & Carr, 2008). These high risk solutions consequently impacted on the frequency and intensity of crimes committed to try support their dependency. However, it was accepted other motives for drug use among homeless individuals derived from peer pressure, curiosity and high level of exposure in emergency hostels. Their homeless lifestyles were characterised by drug use and, as their homeless 'careers' progressed and they became more immersed, they sought help and support from other individuals in similar situation.

Recommendations

Studies completed by organisations or other researchers are paramount in producing figures and trends occurring in this marginalised population.

- It is recommended that researchers acknowledge the reconfigured and enhanced role of community projects and identify potential challenges and barriers and ways of re-introducing homeless individuals back into communities.
- Drug addiction was clearly identified as a consequence relating to both crime and homelessness. Building up referrals and accessibility for introducing individuals back into communities through drug treatment programs is essential.
- Many participants expressed concerns over the level of preparation and support they received on leaving the prison environment. A housing needs assessment conducted post release paves way for better preventative strategies for individuals falling back into the homeless cycle.
- Incorporating contemporary drug maintenance programmes in custody could be viewed as positive opportunities to address drug use in prisons.

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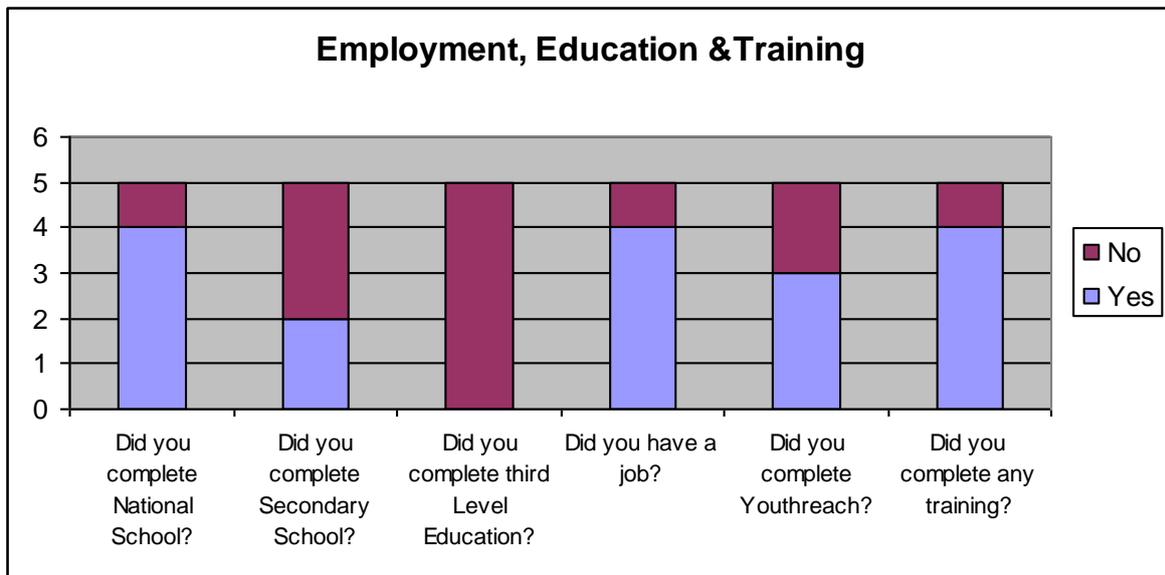
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Appendix I

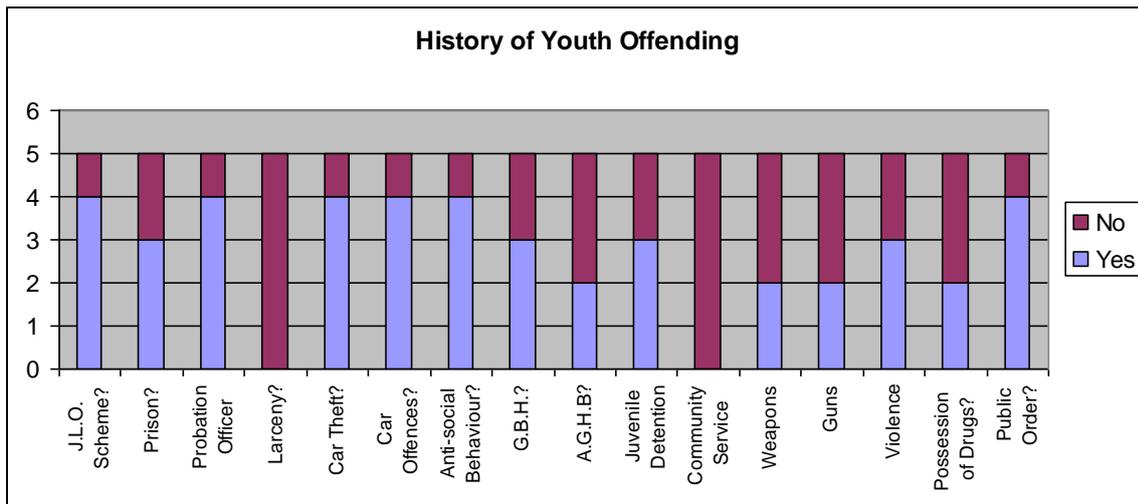
As part of creating a interpersonal narrative analysis of participants experiences with in homelessness, the researcher chose to illustrate a number of background factors along with demographic factors possibly contributing to their situation and aim to establish basic account in their history in prison, homeless service and level of offending while in homelessness.

In this section the results from questionnaires are presented in text and statistical form. Qualitative data was interpreted using thematic analysis. Quantitative data was evaluated using Microsoft Excel. Tables and graphs will be used to illustrate the data.

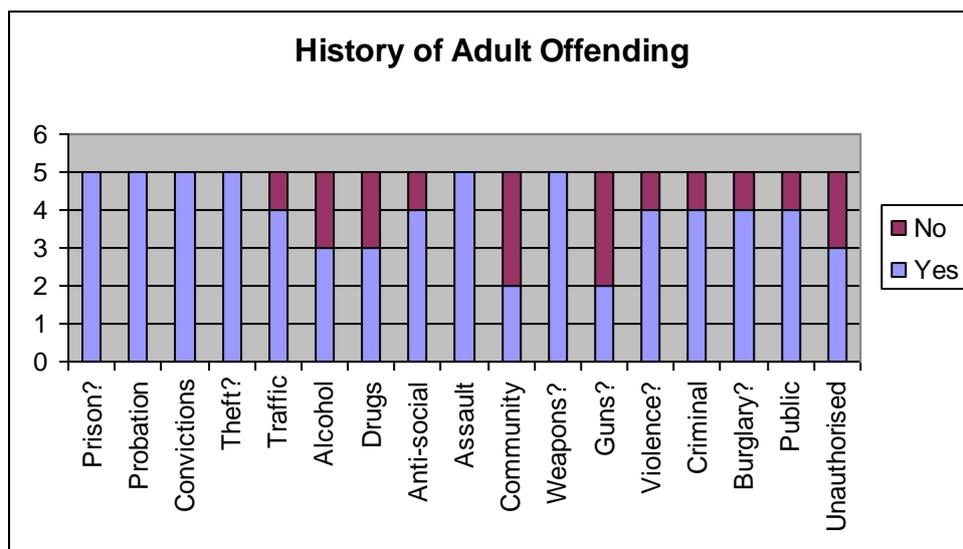


All five participants attended national school; however it remained to be the only form of education they achieved in their lifespan. A devastatingly low 40% (N=2) attended second level education but both fail to make it past junior cert.

Collectively all training 80% (N= 4) and youth reach 60% (N=3) attended was completed within prisons or referred through homeless organization.

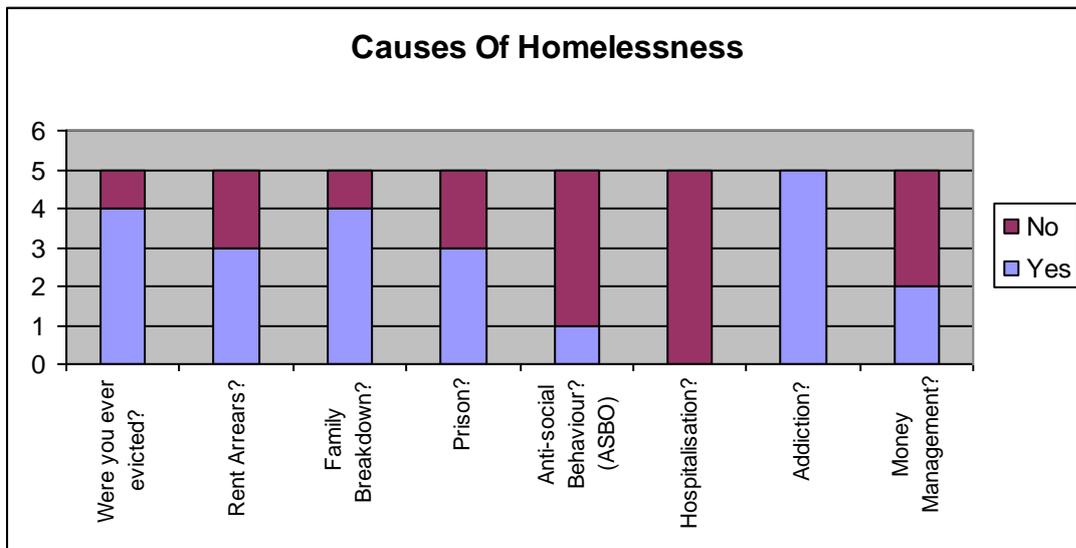


On average 80% of participants had committed numerous offenses and were in contact with probation officers before they turned 18. A staggering 60% (N=3) were incarcerated as youths, a further 80% (N=4) were allocated a probation officer or J.LO Scheme, and 60% (N=3) were detained in juvenile detention centers. Majority of crimes committed were anti-social behavior 80% (N=4), general car offences 80% (N=4) and 40% (N=2) were caught with weapons, guns and drugs in the adolescence.

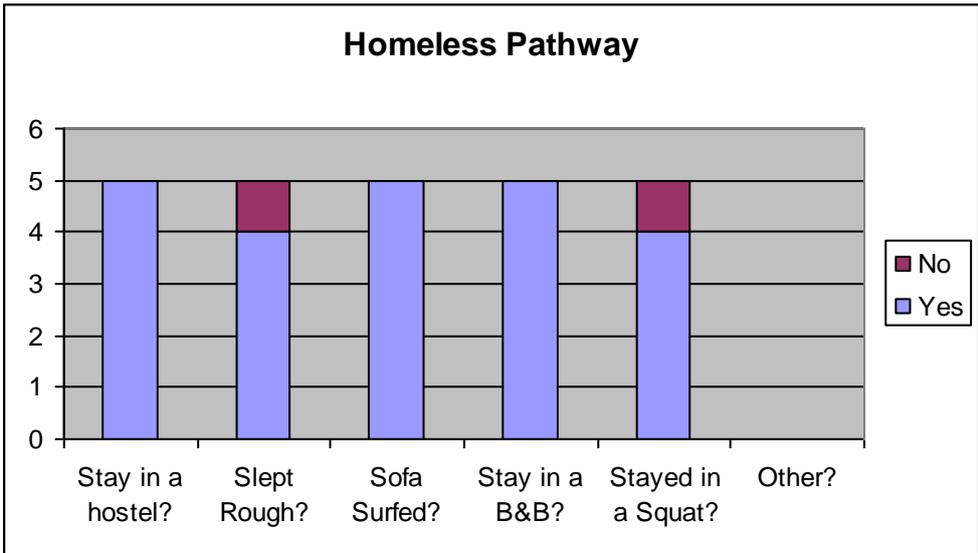


The findings were particularly alarming suggesting majority of youth offenders progressed into adulthood and the level of crimes became more serious. All participants were incarcerated on

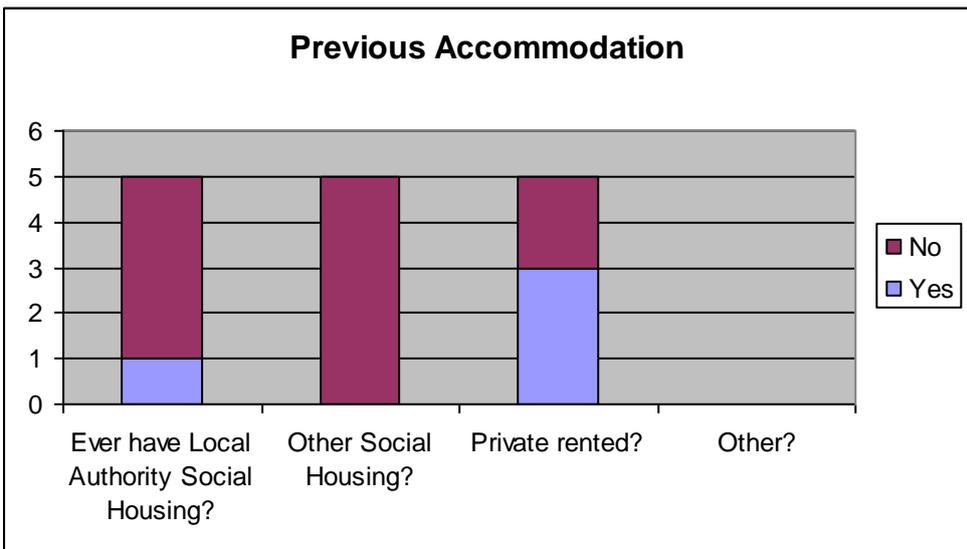
several occasions, lowest being 4 and highest being 20 or more times, this dependent on duration one remained in homelessness. Burglary, violence, theft, public orders presented as most common crimes at 80% (N=4). This was not surprising as participants detailed how they regularly stole to support themselves and pick up various charges for beginning, shop lifting etc... interestingly only 60% (N=3) were charges with possession of drugs, considering all participants had a chronic addiction to heroin. Violence, 80% anti-social 80% and assaults 100% remained quiet high suggesting the robberies were probably aggravated.



Three most common reasons for leading them into homelessness was drug addiction 100% (N=5), family breakdown 80% (N=4) and eviction 80% (N=4). Other common reasons noted by participants were prison 60% (N=3), rent arrears 60% (N=3) and money management 40% (N=2). Participants later revealed a lot of their financial difficulties were caused by their drug dependencies as was the reasons for their eviction.



Participants were asked to cumulate the diverse range of accommodation they resided in throughout their duration as homeless. Unsurprisingly 100% (N=5) principle dwelling, consisted of hostels. B& B's and also sleeping between friends couch's [sofa surfing]. Worryingly 80% (N=4) had stayed in a squat or slept rough on the streets intensifying low level of supportive accommodation. Regardless of accommodation type they all stand to pose high risk as well as instability and uncertainty.



Astonishingly 20% (N=1) participants availed of local authority housing while a further 60% (N=3) occupied private rented accommodation. However all 3 participants indicated they were evicted from their dwellings after they squandered their rent money to support their addictions.

Appendix II

Introduction to Focus Ireland

Focus Ireland a housing and homeless charity was established in 1985 by Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy. In 2010 Focus Ireland had 6,000 customers nationally (Focus Ireland,2010). Focus Ireland provides a variety of services, including a range of emergency, transitional and long-term accommodation, as well as after-care services, crisis services, settlement services, education programmes, outreach services and child-care facilities. Focus Ireland aims to advance the right of people-out-of-home to live in a place they call home through quality services, research and advocacy. The target group of Focus Ireland as an organisation is young people leaving care or experiencing homelessness, single men and women, families and children experiencing homelessness. Focus Ireland is also strongly committed to providing a campaigning and lobbying voice for families and youth.

Appendix III

Letter of Consent

My Name is Louise Rowland I am currently doing my masters in Child Family & Community studies at Dublin Institute of Technology. As part of my course we must design and complete a research project. I am conducting a study on homeless offenders and investigating their experiences within the cycle whilst analyzing it from the social identity model. Participants will be required to complete a brief questionnaire to establish some basic facts and later contribute to a recorded interview discussing in detail your experience of being a homeless offender.

Firstly I would like to provide you with a definition of homelessness under the Housing Act, 1988:

- A) *If there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the local authority, he together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation.*
- B) *He is living in hospital, night shelter, other such institutions, and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph (a) and he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources.*

Participation is completely voluntary but respondents will be expected to contribute in a truthful and genuine manner towards the study. All information received completely confidential. You do not need to provide your name and your response will be used purely for research purposes. The information collected from these questionnaires and interviews will be put onto transcript and I will be removing details which may identify the participant. Focus Ireland have asked to review my transcripts on completion to ensure anonymity on behalf of the participant.

Partaking in this questionnaire/interview is completed at your own discretion and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any stage.

I greatly appreciate your contribution and would also like to thank you for your co operation.

(Signed)_____

(Participant)

(Researcher)

Questionnaires

Education and Training					
Did you complete National School?	Yes	No	Did you have a job?	Yes	No
Did you complete Secondary School?	Yes	No	Did you complete Youthreach?	Yes	No
Did you complete third Level Education?	Yes	No	Did you complete any training?	Yes	No
Please describe			Please specify?		
Care History					
Did you have a social Worker as a child?	Yes	No	Special Care	Yes	No
Where you in Foster Care?	Yes	No	Residential care	Yes	No
With Family?	Yes	No	How many placements?		
How many placements?			Where you ever Youth Homeless?	Yes	No
High Support Unit?	Yes	No	How many placements		
Youth Offending					
J.L.O. Scheme?	Yes	No	Juvenile Detention	Yes	No
Prison?	Yes	No	How many placements		
Probation Officer	Yes	No	Community Service	Yes	No
Convictions	Yes	No			
Larceny?	Yes	No	Weapons	Yes	No
Car Theft?	Yes	No	Guns	Yes	No
Car Offences?	Yes	No	Violence	Yes	No
Please specify?			Please specify		
Anti-social Behaviour? (ASBO)	Yes	No	Possession of Drugs?	Yes	No
G.B.H.	Yes	No	Possession and Supply of	Yes	No

			Drugs?		
A.G.H.B?	Yes	No	Public Order?	Yes	No
Adult Offending Behaviour					
Prison?	Yes	No	How many placements		
Probation Officer	Yes	No	Community Service	Yes	No
Convictions	Yes	No			
Theft?	Yes	No	Weapons?	Yes	No
Traffic Offences?	Yes	No	Guns?	Yes	No
Alcohol related?	Yes	No	Violence?	Yes	No
Drugs possession?	Yes	No	Criminal Damage?	Yes	No
Anti-social Behaviour? (ASBO)	Yes	No	Burglary?	Yes	No
Assault (minor)?	Yes	No	Public Order?	Yes	No
Other?	Yes	No	Unauthorised takings?	Yes	No

Adult Housing and Homelessness					
Were you ever evicted?	Yes	No			
How many Occasions?					
Please tick reason (s)?			Frequency		
Rent Arrears?	Yes	No			
Family Breakdown?	Yes	No			
Prison?	Yes	No			
Anti-social Behaviour? (ASBO)	Yes	No			
Hospitalisation?	Yes	No			
Addiction?	Yes	No			
Money Management?	Yes	No			
Have you ever?	Yes	No			
Stay in a hostel?	Yes	No			
Slept Rough?	Yes	No			

Sofa Surfing?	Yes	No	
Stay in a B&B?	Yes	No	
Stayed in a Squat?	Yes	No	
Other?	Yes	No	
Ever have Local Authority Social Housing?	Yes	No	
Other Social Housing?	Yes	No	
Private rented?	Yes	No	
Other?	Yes	No	
Please describe			

Interview Questions 1

- 1) When did you first become homeless?
- 2) In your opinion what are the main reasons for being homeless?
- 3) Did you start offending before you became homeless or did it occur while you were homeless?
- 4) What led to your involvement in criminal behaviour?
- 5) On average what was the time lengths you spent in prison?
- 6) When released from prison, did you have alternative accommodation or were you immediately re-entering homeless services [stable environment {Family, Friends etc...}]

If you did return to stable accommodation, can you specify why and how it broke down?
- 7) Do you feel a lack of stable accommodation has contributed poorly to your reintegration?
- 8) Through your continuous return to homeless services do you feel it contributed to your involvement in crime?
- 9) Do you think it is fair to say homeless people have a higher rate of re-offending than the general population? If so why?
- 10) What sort of challenges have you faced when being released from prison and how has it impacted on your situation...I.e. housing, stigma refusal??
- 11) Do you feel prisons prepare you for living independently?
- 12) Do you feel prisons offer a more structured environment as opposed to emergency accommodation (hostels)?
- 13) Do you identify/associate yourself as being a homeless individual as well as an offender?

- 14) Did you rely on support from social groups (friends, acquaintances) while imprisoned? Did you continue these relationships once released from prison?
- 15) From the relationships formed within prison, did they impact on future criminal activity or were they just a means of support or coping strategy?
- 16) Did you feel there was much stigma (bias attitude, labelling) attached to being a homeless offender when trying to reintegrate into society?
- 17) If yes how do you feel about being labelled as a homeless offender?
- 18) Have you ever belonged to a social group during your time as a homeless offender (in prison or in homeless services)
- 19) If no, have you always offended alone, or is there a reason for isolating oneself, is there more risk as a group?
- 20) Have you struggled to form a social identity in society while in community, homeless services, prisons, etc...? (do they differ from the social group you had outside prison)
- 21) Do you feel membership of a group is significant to survival or can it inhibit leaving the homeless cycle?
- 22) Have you associated with other offenders using these services or does being around these people alter how you think?
- 23) Do you feel under pressure to offend to fit in/be part of the group
- 24) How difficult can it be to desist from criminal activity, (case of survival, profit)?
- 25) Would you feel you suffer from identity complications from repeated institutionalisation, or living in structured and unstructured environments?
- 26) Have you had to alter the way you think, behave from the different environments you have been in?
- 27) How important do you think it is to maintain a positive frame of mind during this experience?

28) How important it is to have adequate supports available, and what kind of supports are you able to avail of?

29) What could be done for you to help you move out of this stage in your life and into a more stable living environment

30) If you were offered the chance to move to a new county where a new way of life would be offered to you, in the form of a fresh start, would you accept?

Interview Questions 2

Explain to me about the time when you first became homeless?

- 1) In your opinion what were the main factors that contributed to you becoming homeless?
- 2) Had you started to offend before you became homeless or after?
- 3) What were the contributing factors that lead to your involvement in crime?
- 4) What were the main factors that made you re-offend?
- 5) Were you easily influenced back then by groups or certain individuals? Was there much pressure to offend?
- 6) Did you offend in groups or alone?
- 7) How many/long were you in prison for?
- 8) Would you say, the length you stayed in homeless services contributed to your involvement in crime?
- 9) Do you feel prisons prepare people for coming out and living independently?
- 10) When released from prison, did you have alternative accommodation or were you immediately re-entering homeless services?
- 11) Do you feel this was an important factor in determining reintegration?
- 12) How difficult was it to reintegrate back into the communities?
- 13) Did you experience much stigma when you tried to reintegrate?
- 14) Were you ever victim to stigma or discrimination by the general public, if so how did that make you feel?
- 15) Did you ever identify yourself as a homeless individual, or as an offender or as both in the past?
- 16) Did you struggle with your identity when trying to rebuild your life at first?

- 17) Have you ever experienced identity crisis in the past?
- 18) Did you find it hard to shake off labels at first of being ex homeless offender or addict, or how do you feel about labels in general?
- 19) So far drug addiction has proven to be a route cause of homelessness and criminal activity what's your view on this?
- 20) What was the definite part in your life when you decided enough was an enough?
- 21) What were the main factors that prevented you from re-offending?
- 22) Were you able you able to successfully desist from criminal behaviour on first attempt?
- 23) What advice would you give to someone that is in a similar situation now as you were X amount of years ago?
- 24) In your opinion is there enough help out there to facilitate reintegration and allow homeless people leave a life of crime?
- 25) What do you feel was the best means of support?