

2017

# Homelessness in Calgary From the Perspectives of Those Experiencing Homelessness

Edith N. Ahajumobi  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Health Sciences

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Edith Nwadiohanna Ahajumobi

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Abstract

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by

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MPH, Walden University, 2013

MBA, ESUT Nigeria, 2003

PGD, ESUT Nigeria, 2001

B.Sc, Food Science & Tech, Ebony State University, Nigeria, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Health

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September 2017

## Abstract

Since the 1990s, homelessness has increased in Canada. The existing strategies of the government and public health service providers to manage the situation have had limited success. Researchers have noted the lack of including those experiencing homelessness to better understand and find a solution to homelessness. The purpose of this phenomenological study, driven by the social cognitive theory, was to understand homelessness from the perspectives of people who do not have homes. Data were collected from open-ended interviews with a purposeful sample of 15 individuals who are homeless. Summarizing and analyzing the interviews, several themes emerged after interview data were transcribed via hand coding and analyzed using cognitive data analysis. The prominent themes were: lack namely, money, home, privacy, and support; discrimination of all kinds; mental illness and addiction; the need for a review of housing policy that specifically addresses rent, mortgage qualification criteria and house tax, and to create awareness of government support systems and the services that they provide. Public health service providers and designated authorities can use the findings of this study to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of people who are experiencing homelessness, and in turn can use that understanding to influence improved homelessness reduction strategies that could improve the lives of those experiencing homelessness and their communities. Since homelessness is a public health issue, effectively bringing it under control could create a positive impact on the health and safety of the public.

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## Dedication

To all Nigerians who journeyed to their early graves, owing to preventable and modifiable causes, including my beloved father, the late Sir Peter Asika; the homeless in Canada, across the globe; and above all, to Almighty God for His grace.

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## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	2
Problem Statement .....	5
Purpose of the Study .....	9
Research Questions.....	11
Theoretical Foundation.....	11
Nature of the Study.....	13
Definition of Terms.....	15
Assumptions.....	15
Scope and Delimitations .....	17
Limitations.....	18
Significance of the Study .....	19
Chapter Summary .....	22
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	24
Introduction.....	24
Literature Search Strategies .....	25
Theoretical Framework.....	25
Literature Related to Key Variables .....	30
Homelessness.....	30
Those Experiencing Homelessness.....	31

Prevalence.....	34
Economic Burden.....	39
Causes of Homelessness.....	40
Consequences.....	44
Homelessness Service Providers in Calgary.....	48
Interventions .....	52
Chapter Summary.....	71
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	73
Introduction.....	73
Research Design and Rationale.....	73
Role of the Researcher .....	78
Methodology.....	80
Participants Selection Logic .....	81
Instrumentation (Researcher-Developed Instruments).....	83
Procedures for Participant Selection and Data Collection .....	84
Data Analysis .....	88
Issue of Trustwordiness .....	88
Ethical Procedures .....	90
Chapter Summary.....	92
Chapter 4: Results.....	93
Introduction.....	93
Data Reviewing and Analyzing Steps.....	94

Settings.....	95
Demographics.....	96
Data Collection.....	96
Data Analysis.....	97
Table 2 Themes Organization Outline.....	99
Figure 5 Life Event That Lead People Into Homelessness.....	99
Results.....	100
Table 3 Lived Experiences of Those Experiencing Homelessness.....	101
RQ1. What are the Lived Experiences of People in Homeless Situation.....	102
Theme 1. A Situation Where Someone has Nothing, No Money, Home, Privacy, or Support.....	102
Theme 2. A Tough, Difficult, and Unsafe Situation, Where Someone is Subject to Victimization and Abuse.....	104
Theme 3. A Situation of Discrimination of All Kinds.....	104
Theme 4. A Situation of Mental Illness, and Addiction.....	106
Theme 5. A Place of Freedom, and no Freedom.....	107
The Life Events that Led People in Homeless Situation Into Homelessness.....	108
Table 4 Government Related variables That Lead People Into Homelessness.....	108
RQ2. What are the Life Events That Led People in Homeless Situation into Homelessness?.....	110
Description of Government Related Variables.....	110

Overlapping Theme. Discrimination Stand in the Way of People Getting Employment a House, Giving and Receiving Services to Overcome Homelessness.....	111
Theme 6. Child Support (CS) Takes 65% of People’s Income Making it Hard for People to Have Enough Money for Rent and Support Their Live.....	111
Theme 7. Credit Bureau, and Criminal Record Policy Stand in the Way of People Getting Employment, Rent, and mortgage.....	113
Theme 8. Lack of Affordable Housing, Rent and Mortgage Conditions & Qualification Criteria.....	114
Theme 9. Economic Recession, High Cost of Living, Fixed Income, and High Utilities, Taxes and New tax Lead people into Homelessness .....	115
Theme 10. Lack of Government Support System and Discriminatory Support System.....	116
Theme 11. Welfare and Other Benefit Payers to Give Grace Period to the Homeless Before Withholding Payment .....	117
Theme 12. Lack of Awareness of Shelter and Government Support Systems.....	118
Table 5 Domestic Related Variables That Lead People Into Homelessness.....	119
Description of Domestic Related Themes.....	119
Overlapping Theme. A Situation where Someone has Nothing, No Money, Fixed Income, and No Family Support .....	121

Theme 13. Unsafe Environment, Home, and Bad	
Roommate.....	121
Overlapping theme. Addictions and Mental Illness Bad Habit and Bad	
Friends Make People Homeless.....	122
Overlapping Theme. Child Support, Divorce and Separation Render People	
Homeless .....	122
Theme 14. Poor Financial Management and Social Skills.....	122
Theme 15. Eviction Render People Homeless.....	125
Theme 16. Unemployment and Lack of Employment Skill.....	125
Table 6 Shelter Related Variables That Lead People into Homelessness.....	126
Description of Shelter Related Themes.....	128
Theme 17. Caring and People Oriented Professionally Trained Staff Namely, Counsellors, Case workers, Security Staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational Support Workers.....	128
Theme 18. Accommodation and Resources.....	130
Theme 19. Shelter Policy on Addicts and Drunk.....	131
Theme 20. Lack of Categories of Homeless to Serve the Homeless Better and Lack of Shelter for Families.....	132
Theme 21. Too Long Waiting, Too Many Questions and Unnecessary protocols.....	133
Theme 22. Security, Safety, and Privacy at the Shelters.....	134

Overlapping Theme. Lack of Vital Skills Training for job, Financial Management, Behavioral and Social Skills.....	136
Table 7 Shelter that Meets the Needs of the Homeless.....	137
RQ3. How Would You Describe a Shelter That Would Meet Your Shelter Needs?.....	139
Description of Themes about Shelter that Meets Needs.....	139
Theme 23. Hours of Operation.....	139
Overlapping Theme. Accommodation and Resources.....	140
Overlapping Theme. Homeless Needs Privacy, Warm, Safe, and Secure Place.....	140
Overlapping Theme. Caring and People Oriented Professionally Trained Staff namely, Counsellors, Case workers, Security staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational Support Workers.....	141
Theme 24. Lack of Sports, Recreational, and Wellness Programs for the Homeless.....	141
Theme 25. Employment Office is critical at the Shelter.....	143
Theme 26. Information Office is Essential to the Homeless.....	143
Overlapping Theme. Vital Skills Training on Job, Financial Management, Behavior and Social and Anger Management Skills, and Guidance on Spending is Necessary at the Shelter.....	144
Theme 27. Good Maintenance Culture and Hygiene is Necessary at the Shelter.....	145

Table 8 Participants Recommendations on How They can Overcome Homelessness.....	146
RQ4. What are the Recommendations of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness on How They Could Overcome Homelessness.....	151
Description of Themes About Participants’ Recommendations on How to Exit homelessness.....	151
Theme 28. End Homelessness.....	152
Theme 29. Providing Full-Time Employment, and Adequate Financial Support for People with Mental and Physical disabilities is Critical to the Homeless.....	152
Overlapping Theme. Reviewing Housing Policies Including Rent and Mortgage Qualification Criteria, and Tax is Necessary.....	153
Overlapping Theme. Reviewing Policies on Credit Bureau and Criminal Record is Essential.....	154
Overlapping Theme. Lower Utility Bills and Total Cost of Living and Stop New Tax.....	154
Overlapping Theme. Welfare and Other Benefit Payers to Give Homeless Grace Period Before Withholding Payment.....	155
Overlapping Theme. Provide Vital Skills Training on Job, Financial Management, Behavior and Social and Anger Management Skills, and Guidance on Spending is Necessary at the shelter.....	156
Overlapping Theme. Make Government Support System Efficient and End Discriminatory Support System.....	157

Overlapping Theme. Provide Accommodation and Resources for Shelters.....	157
Theme 30. Stop Shelter Privatization and Implement Inclusion Policy.....	157
Overlapping Theme. Caring and People Oriented Professionally Trained Staff, Counsellors, Case workers, Security Staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational Workers.....	158
Overlapping Theme. End Discrimination of All Kinds .....	159
Overlapping Theme. Improve the Hygiene and Maintenance Culture of Shelters.....	159
Overlapping Theme. Improve Security System at the Shelters.....	159
Overlapping Theme. Create Awareness for Shelter and Government Support Systems and the Services They Provide.....	160
Overlapping Theme. Sports, Recreation and Wellness Programs are Necessary at the Shelter.....	160
Overlapping Theme. Review Policy on Child Support and Child Maintenance.....	161
Theme 31. Theme. Conduct More Research to Teach People About Homelessness.....	161
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	162
Summary.....	165
Chapter 5: Discussion and Interpretation of Data.....	168
Introduction.....	168
Interpretation of the Findings.....	169

Major Themes of the Results .....	171
A Situation Where Someone has Nothing, No Money, Home, Privacy, or Support.....	172
A Situation of Discrimination of all Kinds.....	173
A Situation of Mental Illness, and Addiction.....	174
Review Policy on Child Support, Separation and Divorce. ....	175
Review Policy Credit Bureau (CB) and Criminal Record (CR) Policies .....	176
Review Housing Policies and the Housing Tax.....	177
Inefficient Government Support System and Discriminatory Support System.....	179
Create Awareness of Shelter and Government Support Systems and Services they Provide.....	180
Caring and People Oriented Professionally Trained Staff, Counsellors, Case Workers, Security Staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational Workers.....	181
Vital Skills Namely, Job, Financial Management, Behavioral and Social Skills.....	182
Improve Security, Safety, and Privacy at the Shelter.....	183
Provide Sports, Recreation, and Wellness Programs for the Homeless .....	184
Economic Recession, High Cost of Living, Fixed Income and New Taxes increase homelessness.....	185
Welfare and Other Benefit Payers to Give Homeless Grace Period.....	187
Improve the Hygiene and Maintenance Culture of Shelters.....	188
Too Long Waiting, and Too Many Questions and Unnecessary Protocols.....	190
Conduct More research to Teach People About Homelessness.....	191

Limitations of the Study.....	191
Recommendations for Further Studies.....	193
Implications.....	193
Conclusion.....	194
References.....	196
Appendix A: Interview Protocol .....	213

List of Tables

Table 1. Homeless Statistics From 1992-2014 .....	39
Table 2. Outline of Theme Organization .....	100
Table 3. Themes of Lived Experiences of Those in Homeless Situation .....	103
Table 4. Themes of Government Related Variables That Lead People Into Homelessness.. .....	111
Table 5. Themes About Domestic Variables That Lead People Into Homelessness .....	123
Table 6. Themes of Shelter Related Variables That Lead People Into Homelessness ....	130
Table 7. Themes of Shelter that Meets the Needs of the Homeless .....	142
Table 8. Themes of Recommendation of Participants on how to Overcome Homelessness .....	151
Table 9. Prominent and Overlapping Themes Across the Four Research Questions .....	176

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Pie chart of the homeless population from 1992 to 2014.....	37
Figure 2. Pie chart of the homeless population in 1998.....	38
Figure 3. Pie chart of the homeless population in 2014.....	38
Figure 4. Bar chart of the homeless population from 1992 to 2014 .....	39
Figure 5. Organogram of sequence of life events that lead people into homelessness.....	100

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

From 1992 to date, homelessness in Calgary and across Canada has increased (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2012; Hubac & Stroick, 2007; Komarnicki, 2014). Researchers have observed a steady rise in Calgary's homeless population (Osuji, 2009). Existing strategies to manage the situation have met with limited success, possibly due to insufficient research data (Awosoga, Belanger, & Head, 2013), especially from qualitative studies focused on the experience of those affected.

Researchers have conducted many quantitative studies and some qualitative studies to generate evidence to support effective homelessness management and strategy development (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2013) and have theorized that current research and evidence is not sufficient to support efficient policy decision and implementation (Awosoga et al., 2013; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). An understanding of the homelessness phenomenon could assist in the management of the homelessness situation in Calgary (Hubac & Stroick, 2007). In like manner, Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2013) suggested that understanding the breadth and depth of the homelessness phenomenon is the key to efficiently responding to the homelessness problem.

In this study, I explored understandings of the meaning of homelessness from the perspectives of those experiencing the phenomenon. This research was critical because it filled a gap in the literature on homelessness in Canada, specifically in qualitative studies and exploration of factors from the viewpoint of those experiencing homelessness

(Awosoga et al., 2013). I hoped that by seeking out the voices of those experiencing homelessness, I could generate more information that could be useful in developing effective strategies to decrease homelessness. Homelessness is an important public health issue, therefore finding a solution directed at ending homelessness would be an advancement for public health (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013).

This study will have significant social change implications on the homeless, researchers, service providers, and policy makers. This study adds to the body of literature on homelessness in Calgary and provides more information to the homeless, homeless service providers, and designated authorities about the subject. Better comprehension of the problem could support existing homeless strategies, and the new lessons learned could be integrated into policy development. This information could keep more people off the street and place many more in permanent residences. Success in placing people in homeless situation to permanent homes will contribute to the improvement of health and safety of those involved and that of the community (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007). This chapter consists of an introduction, background of the problem, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study. It also contains the research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, significance of the study, and a chapter summary.

### **Background**

Homelessness is steadily rising in the city of Calgary. A point-in-time (PIT) count study conducted by Calgary Homeless Foundation showed a slight drop in the homeless

population in 2012. This PIT count was conducted in one day in the City of Calgary. Before 2008, when the government gave the Calgary Homeless Foundation the mandate to lead the homeless population count, a PIT count was conducted bi-annually (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2015). From 1992 to 2008, the numbers had shown increases in the homeless population from a total of 447 persons in 1992, to as many as 4,060 in 2008. It dropped to 3,190 in 2012, but rose in 2014 to 3,555 (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014).

Further research needs to be conducted to understand the subject of homelessness well. Researchers believe that an in-depth understanding of the root causes of homelessness could result in more efficient strategies geared at lowering average cost of housing, providing service to the affected, and improving all homelessness strategies (Awosoga et al., 2013; Frankish, Hwang, & Quantz, 2009; Hubac & Stroick, 2007; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). The outcomes of further research could support improved homeless strategies that could render people less likely to become homeless (Frankish, Hwang, & Quantz, 2009; Hubac & Stroick, 2007; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013).

The City of Calgary has made several interventions to end homelessness such as the homelessness partnering strategy (HPS), and the Housing First (HF) intervention program (Gaetz, 2013; Gaetz, Donaldson, Guilliver, & Ritcher, 2014). The latest homelessness intervention, sponsored by the government, was a 10-year strategy for having no one sleep outside in Calgary, and for ensuring that no one remained in an emergency shelter more than 7 days without moving to a safe, decent home (Gaetz, 2013;

Gaetz et al., 2013). This intervention achieved some level of success at keeping people off of the street; however, they tested the HF interventions only in small cities in Canada with a small amount of homeless population (Aubry, Chener, Ecker, & Tette, 2014).

A recent study conducted by Komarnicki (2014) indicated a continuous rise in the homeless population in Calgary. Aubry et al. (2014), asserted that most of the HF studies that the researchers have used for interventions were based on HF studies conducted in the United States. If research matters (Gaetz, 2013) and it plays a significant role in learning and understanding a phenomenon and in problem-solving (Polit & Beck, 2014), then more qualitative studies like mine are necessary.

I responded to the suggestions of Awosoga et al. (2013), Aubry et al. (2014), and Komarnicki (2014) that more studies are needed to generate more evidence to support policy decisions and to improve strategies targeted at ending homelessness. Hence, through my study, I produced information and evidence from the perspectives of those in homeless situations. Those experiencing homelessness include men, women without children, women with children, youth, people of the First Nations, and the employed homeless (Gaetz, 2013; Osuji, 2009). This type of qualitative study exploring an understanding of what homeless experience means to those involved is rare. It adds an incremental portion to the homeless literature in Calgary and fills a knowledge gap (Awosoga et al., 2013; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013; Hubac & Stroick, 2007). My research was critical because it addresses the need for more studies on homelessness in Canada, specifically in regards qualitative studies and exploration of factors from the viewpoint of those experiencing it. The factors include how those in homeless situations

became homeless, what they went through in that situation, how they survived, and how they feel about the services that they received from homeless service providers. Also, the factors include what they like about the service they are receiving, what those involved do not like, how their experience affected their life and the lessons they learned from it. I learned from them what they feel they need to get them off of the street and permanently placed into homes.

In this study, I generated evidence that added to existing evidence that service providers and designated authorities can use to consider, assess, and support policy decision and implementations in Calgary and Alberta directed at decreasing the rate of homelessness in these areas. These are necessary public health and safety concerns (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007).

### **Problem Statement**

Currently, more than 3,000 people are homeless in Calgary every night (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014). The individuals who constitute the homeless population include women fleeing from violence (involving 65% of homeless women), people with jobs (representing 40% of the homeless population, or 1,400 persons per night), and the elderly. Others are children under 18 years old (about 300 per night) and people who are homeless because of income-related issues (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013; Hubac & Stroick, 2007).

According to the Calgary Homeless Foundation (2013), between 2008 and 2012, the population of homeless increased from 1,512 to 1,715 in emergency shelters and increased from 1,224 to 1,260 in transitional housing (short-term, supportive housing).

The numbers dropped sharply from 296 to 151, which was a 49% reduction, in the hospital and jail systems, meaning that as the homeless find accommodation in shelters and permanent homes, the tendency for them to get into trouble or be exposed to diseases is lessened. The population of the homeless sleeping outside also dropped sharply from 569 to 64 during this same period, which was an 88% drop (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). The consequence was an increase in the population of the homeless in the shelters, as well as increases in shelter accommodation (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). Thus, the success was a result of providing more shelter to those involved. The population of the homeless in hospital emergency rooms and jails decreased, as did the number of people sleeping outside (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013).

The homeless population estimate conducted in 2012 showed that First Nations people constituted 16% (510) of total Calgary homeless, about 38% (24) of rough sleepers (sleeping outside the building), and 26% (328) of system homeless (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). In a recent count conducted in October of 2014, researchers found that a total of 3,555 people were homeless in Calgary (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014). One-hundred-eighty-two of those homeless individuals were rough sleepers, 434 were children younger than 18 years old, 271 were youth between 18 and 24, 882 were women, 515 were people from the First Nations, and 211 were families (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014). This condition threatens the health and safety of the affected as well as that of the community (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013).

Providing services to those experiencing homelessness is expensive. In Canada,

the cost of homelessness increased from over \$5 billion in 2007, to over \$7 billion in 2013, a 34.3%, or nearly \$2 billion, increase (Sheldom Chumir Foundation 2007; Gaetz et al., 2013). In 3 consecutive years (from 2010 to 2012), Alberta Health Services spent \$5 million each year for mental illness and addiction treatment and addiction in three cities: Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge (Ganesh, 2013). Mental illness is high among those experiencing homelessness, and many manifest psychiatric symptoms. For example, in a homeless shelter called Calgary Drop-In, 60% of the homeless can neither remember whether they were diagnosed or treated or not (Ganesh, 2013).

There is a high prevalence of healthcare needs among the people experiencing homelessness. The health care needs include mental health, addiction, allied health, and social health needs. These health care needs make the living conditions of people in a homeless situation difficult (Campbell, Gibson, O'Neill, & Thurston, 2015). The social health needs of those involved include housing, income, and social support. Researchers have suggested that more innovative solutions that include diverse groups of those in a homeless situation are required to adequately address the healthcare, advocacy, and other needs of those experiencing homelessness (Campbell et al., 2015). A condition like homelessness that affects the social, economic, mental, psychological and physical health of the people is a major public and community health concern (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007).

Research has been key to the Canadian government's work to find a solution to homelessness because study results have been used to positively impact homelessness management and policy (Gaetz, 2013). Future studies could translate to better

understanding, which is the key to more success. Gaetz (2013) joined voice with others in calling for more studies on homelessness. While it may not be possible to eliminate homelessness entirely from the Calgary, in this study, I learned more about this persisting problem from the various perspectives of the participants in homeless situations.

Numerous previous studies have been used to impact homelessness in one way or the other; however, the issue of concern is that the success has been limited, homeless populations continue to increase, and the cost of providing service to them is high.

Awosoga et al. (2013) suggested that more research is necessary for full comprehension of the subject, and to generate more evidence that could support efficient policy decision and implementation. This study may prove useful because it resulted in qualitative data from the viewpoint of those experiencing homelessness (see Awosoga, Belanger & Weasel, 2013).

I gathered evidence that could help public health service providers and homeless designated authorities in considering, assessing, and supporting strategies in Alberta and Calgary directed at reducing rising homelessness in this area. I solicited the participants from a Calgary homeless facility, so the generalizability may be limited to Calgary, but this study could also provide useful information for the larger population of Canada. The authorities in-charge of homelessness in Calgary have developed several strategies and interventions including research studies, policy decisions, and implementations to end the ever-rising population of homelessness in the city (Aubry et al., 2014; Calgary Action Committee on Housing & Homelessness, 2012; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014; Gaetz, 2013; Komarnicki, 2014). However, after over 20 years, recent studies have

shown a persistent rise in the homeless population (Aubry et al., 2014; Calgary Action Committee on Housing & Homelessness, 2012; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014; Gaetz, 2013; Komarnicki, 2014). Researchers have suggested that more studies are needed to understand the homelessness phenomenon well (Aubry et al., 2014; Gaetz, 2013; Komarnicki, 2014). Since studies exploring an understanding of homelessness from the various perspectives of those experiencing homelessness do not exist in the city of Calgary, I worked to develop an understanding of homelessness from the perspectives of those involved. This study was necessary because the problems facing those in homeless situations affect the health and safety of those affected as well as that of the community (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The objective of this study was to explore how people who were experiencing homelessness perceived homelessness and what homelessness meant to them. The purpose was to learn more lessons if there are any to inform all concerned well namely, the homeless, researchers, the policy makers, public health service providers and homeless-designated authorities. I contend that better understanding of homelessness could support improved homeless strategies, and that improved strategies offer hope for more success in ideally ending homelessness in Calgary. I conducted a qualitative research study and took a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is the method that assisted me in understanding how the homeless perceived their homelessness experience (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Throughout, I focused on people's belief systems and worldviews (see Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Through this study, I explored the

meanings that people who are homeless assign to homelessness. I collected data for this phenomenological study using the following research questions:

- What are the lived experiences of people in homeless situation?
- What are the life events that led people in homeless situation into homelessness?
- How would you describe a shelter that would meet your shelter needs?
- What are the recommendations of individuals experiencing homelessness on how they could overcome homelessness?

I conducted interviews using semi-structured, open-ended questions, and a few additional follow-up questions. I used purposeful, criterion-based sampling to recruit participants from Canadian citizens from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds from one primary group of the homeless that I refer to as the *temporarily homeless* (TH) throughout the remainder of this study (see Newton & Rudestam, 2007). TH describes those who's unnecessary barriers prevented them from obtaining a home (Gaetz et al., 2013). The participants were between 18 and 65 years old.

Ending homelessness in the near future is a priority project for the city (State of Homelessness in Canada, 2013). Understanding the viewpoints of those experiencing homelessness, the meaning of homelessness from the perspectives of the homeless population, and the coping experience of the homeless are considered crucial in finding the solution for ending homelessness in the city of Calgary (Calgary Homelessness Foundation, 2013). Gaining knowledge from those experiencing homelessness as they consciously shared it could add to better understanding of the entire phenomenon of

homelessness. My findings could guide homelessness strategies, policies decisions, and implementation and service providing solutions toward ending homelessness in Calgary. This study adds to the volume of homelessness literature and contributes to the knowledge of homelessness in the city. These are significant positive social changes that my study stands to offer to the community.

### **Research Questions**

What are the lived experiences of people in homeless situation?

What are the life events that led people in homeless situation into homelessness?

How would you describe a shelter that would meet your shelter needs?

What are the recommendations of individuals experiencing homelessness on how they could overcome homelessness?

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The theory that I adopted in designing this study is called social cognitive theory (SCT). The proponents of this theory believe that the combination of a person's previous experiences such as observation, reinforcement, expectations, self-efficacy, and expectancies influence an individual's behavior (Bandura, 2001). The proponents of SCT assert that a person is capable of action, and to achieve a healthy outcome that a person needs to know about a behavior and how to behave in like manner. This A behavioral knowledge and ability is called behavioral capability and marks an individual's capacity to think and anticipate an outcome from situations (Mckenzie, Neiger, & Thackeray, 2009). Any value an individual attaches to expectations is called expectancy (Baranowski et al., 2002). Reinforcement is an integral component of SCT, which could be self-

motivated or rewarded (intrinsic). It could be indirect or motivated by an observed support given to another person, or direct reinforcement or verbal feedback (Baranowski et al., 2002, p.173). While self-regulation or control is necessary for individual behavior change, it is necessary that a person monitor and adjust it to exercise control over her or his behavior (Clark et al., 1992).

To alter behavior, an individual requires self-efficacy. Self-efficacy includes the confidence of a person to overcome all associated barriers (Bandura, 1977b). As much as an individual has the will to alter behavior, believing that he or she can achieve a high level of positive outcome motivates them more (Bandura, 2001). Understanding homelessness from the various experiences of the participants involved provides a unified lesson that the homeless, researchers, and service providers can learn to bring a solution to the problem. I learned about the phenomenon of homelessness from those experiencing it (see Bandura, 1977; National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc., 2010; Tolman, 1932). I worked to retrieve and interpret the meaning of homelessness from the perspectives of those experiencing homelessness (Communication Theory, n.d.). The process of retrieving and interpreting information is characteristic of the hermeneutic phenomenological method that I used to conduct this study (see Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This method assisted me in understanding homelessness from the different perspectives experience sharing of the participants who are in homeless situations; this was what Blumer (1969) described as seeing a situation the way the actor sees it. To achieve this goal, I employed social cognitive constructs because they enabled me to address a social problem that threatens community health. Through this study,

which involved interaction between me and those affected by homelessness, I unearthed more lessons from the various perspectives of those in a homeless situation.

I also used the principle of symbolic interaction (SI) in this study. The SI theory holds that facts or symbols are generated through the human interactions, and are usually given meanings based on the perceptions of the people involved. The origin of SI could be traced to the work of Dewey (1859-1952) and Cooley (1864 - 1929). Mead (1863-1931), the founding father of SI (Wiebe, Durpos, & Mills, 2010), held that an individual has two sides-- the *I* and *Me*. He described the *Me* as the attitude of the persons in one's environment that influence the behavior of that individual and the *I* as an aspect of a person that responds to the behavior (Mead, 2009). In this study, I unearthed the *Me* (environmental influences) and the *I* (the self-will or potentials of the individuals) participants called on to overcome their homelessness situation.

### **Nature of the Study**

In this study, I sought to gain knowledge from the experiences of those who are homelessness. I designed the data collection instrument to prompt the participants to interact freely with the researcher without reservations. I asked them open-ended questions, a hallmark of qualitative study design. The sampling approach was purposeful or criterion-based (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.107). I sampled 15 participants ( $n=15$ ) selected from one homeless facility in Calgary.

I used 15 participants to increase the number of different perspectives of the affected (see Boyce & Neale, 2006, National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc, 2010; Newton & Rudestam, 2007). Resulting data allowed me to

include a wider range of experiences that led to a greater number of emerging themes and further increased the validity of the study (see Creswell, 2011).

The data that the participants provided about their homeless experiences become redundant after 10 interviews and the data is reached a saturation point during the meetings (Boyce & Neale, 2006). I did not know the point of data saturation in advance, and it evolved as the data collection progressed (see Boyce & Neale, 2006; Newton & Rudestam, 2007). Also, since the homeless sometimes experience personality disorders, psychological issues, or mental health problems, there is likelihood that these issues affected some of the answers to the questions by some of the participants (Aschenguru & Seage, 2008). To reduce bias, I chose a sample size of 15 ( $n = 15$ ) people in homeless situations from diverse backgrounds to obtain enough data worthy of credible analysis. I used hand coding and cognitive knowledge for data transcription, sorting, compilation, theme formation, clustering, and analysis. I did not use any software systems because it was not necessary (see Creswell, 2011). I did not enter or include my opinion in data analysis. I only included the participants' experiences, views, and responses in exploring the pathways and individual, social, and systemic factors affecting homelessness. Some variables past researchers have indicated as the cause of homelessness include the family, domestic violence, unemployment, underemployment, discrimination, addiction, and broken homes or relationships (Donahue et al., 2013). In this phenomenological research, I formulated interpretive themes or thematic groupings. I analyzed and synthesized the significant statements or the essence of the participant's descriptions of their experiences (see Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2011), and I drew conclusions from the findings and

outcomes.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Homelessness*: A situation in someone's life where a person has no place to live either by rent or permanent ownership (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, n.d.; England Shelter.org, 2014; Gaetz et al., 2013; Knowlton, 2006; National Centre for Homeless Education; Public Health Service Act 42 U.S.C., 254b).

*Homeless person/person experiencing homelessness/affected/involved*: An individual who has no rented or owned home, or a roof over his or her head for one day or more (Echenberg & Jensen, 2008; Frankish, Hwang & Quartz, 2009).

*Perspectives*: The individuals' points of view, perception, opinion, or feeling about their homeless experience. In sharing a homeless experience as they perceive it, the individuals were expected to discuss the problems that they encountered, and how they responded to the problems (see Floyd, 1955; Bruce, 1980).

*Meaning*: An imaginative structure of a mind or thought, which guides it to understand and reason or make sense of something. It is a description of a reality influenced by human experience within an environment over a period of time (Johnson, 2013).

### **Assumptions**

In this study, I made several assumptions. The main assumptions were that no one can understand homelessness better than those experiencing homelessness. Therefore, my idea of gaining knowledge from those in a homeless situation was basically to generate a useful resource that could guide strategies and policies directed at ending homelessness in

Calgary. There was a likelihood of mental illness among those involved, so I anticipated that some shared experiences may miss the point and contain empty and irrelevant answers. For this reason, I raised the sample size to 15. It gave me room for wider varieties of responses sufficient to support a more credible study and outcome (see Aschenguru & Seage, 2008). I selected my sample purposefully based on the participants' abilities to share experiences and from a fair representation of the various categories of those experiencing homelessness. I selected subjects from Canadian citizens from diverse backgrounds from a participating homeless shelter in Calgary (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.107).

It was my hope to discover the meanings attached to the phenomenon of homelessness by those affected and to interpret why homelessness in the city still persists (see Baumgartner & Hensley, 2006; National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc, 2010). Some of the participants' sharing of their experiences may not have been precise, and it is possible that I may have misunderstood something that could have lead me to a wrong interpretation. On the other hand, I may have wrongly interpreted the precise information shared by the participants, which would constitute a limitation and bias.

I described the homelessness situation in detail using the participants' own language (see Brownson et al., 2003; National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc, 2010). The participants might have used the language incorrectly as a result of their use of slang or owing to low language proficiency. One or two participants might have used words inappropriately in the process of experience-sharing, which could

be a source of error.

Thus, my description involved data reduction, whereby I selected, focused, condensed, and transformed data (processes of data coding and interpretation) for better understanding by readers (National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc., 2010). Data reduction was a potential source of bias in the study because I did not give an account of the eliminated words.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

There are several boundaries or limits that I set that might have affected the outcome of this study. This is a qualitative study and not a quantitative study. I only selected and interviewed the homeless in one facility in Calgary. Only the homeless in a single facility's buildings were allowed to participate. The sample consisted of Canadian citizens from diverse backgrounds who provided an in-depth rich and detailed responses to open-ended questions. I chose not to include the affected that were not in a shelter. Not including them was an extra measure I took to avoid taking advantage of the homeless individuals. This investigation was a qualitative study that took a phenomenological approach because I desired to gain an in-depth understanding of the homelessness phenomenon from the lived experiences of those experiencing homelessness. I only collected and analyzed the participants' experience, and some shared experience could have missed the point of conversation; I did not include my opinion in the study, and I collected data only once. These are boundaries that I set that might have affected the outcome of the investigation. My study is subjective study and not an objective study. I did not count or measure the population of those experiencing homelessness.

### **Limitations**

This study is not a quantitative study; therefore, I did not measure or determine any relationships or associations. I only conducted an interpretational analysis of the interview data that I collected from interviews with those experiencing homelessness. And I am aware that some subjects shared experiences could have missed the focus of a conversation (Kaam, 1966; Moustakas, 1994; Newton & Rudestam, 2007). The results of this study are not broadly generalizable because the sample size was not large enough to support generalization. Its use would depend on the eyes of the beholder and the purpose to be satisfied. I selected the samples purposefully (see Newton & Rudestam, 2007).

This study is not objective, but rather subjective. Biases were likely to have occurred in this study because I obtained my data from individuals' accounts of past experiences. Therefore, the tendency to forget, overstate, or understate information was not ruled out. Also, it is possible that some experience shared by some participants could have been naïve (missing the point or focus of topic). I collected data and reflexively interpreted it, and reflexive interpretation could be a potential source of bias (see Kaam, 1966; Moustakas, 1994; Newton & Rudestam, 2007; Blackwell, 2015). I cross-checked the interview data that I obtained by taking notes and voice recordings with the participants for member checking and correctness before I proceeded with data analysis. An error of interpretation has a chance in this study. It could occur owing to poor wording or a blanket statement by the participants, or due to my inability to understand a clearly worded statement (see Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.107 I performed further

research on all unclear words and determined the best meaning or interpretation of them and adopted reflexive interpretation and triangulation for the participants' words that missed the point.

Given that this phenomenological study involved qualitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation, it is prone to bias by its nature (see National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc, 2010; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Newton & Rudestam, 2007). However, the credibility of this study lies in its consistency in measuring what the study was set to measure and its replicability (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.113). I further strengthened the validity of this study by using detailed information in data description. Additionally, I increased the validity of this study by including negative outcomes. The use of these research findings is subject to the context and its relevance to the user (see Newton & Rudestam, 2007; Creswell, 2011).

### **Significance of the Study**

My study is significant because it helps fill a gap in knowledge about homelessness in Canada, which is a major public health issue. Specifically, it serves as a qualitative study and assessment of factors from the viewpoints of homeless persons. In it, I explored the meaning of homelessness from many categories of those experiencing homelessness in Canada (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013; Frankish et al., 2005; Hubac & Stroick, 2007).. I gathered data that could be useful for considering, assessing, and supporting homelessness solution strategies including policies and their implementation in Alberta and Calgary to bring this public health issue under control (Newton & Rudestam, 2007).

In addition, this study marks a contribution to the existing evidence with supporting evidence that could support homelessness solution strategies including policies in Canada directed at ending the rising cases of homelessness in the country. Perhaps such additional information could be used to help diminish homelessness, lower the health risks associated with homelessness, reduce mental health problems and isolation among the homeless, and increase the number of affordable housing options. These are all important social determinants of health that threaten public health (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007). My study included the different perspectives experience sharing of the participant who are Canadian citizens from various ethno-racial backgrounds in search of a solutions to end homelessness, and it could provide evidence to support efficient homeless facility operation and service provision (see Frankish et al., 2009). Service delivery to those experiencing homelessness involves multidisciplinary services where social, psychological, mental, and physical health meet and public health is a discipline that involves multidisciplinary sectors such as mentioned above; hence, this study is an important public health issue (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007). It could lower the high cost (\$4-6 billion yearly) of providing services to the people in homeless situation in Calgary as well as in Canada (Gaetz et al., 2013; Ganesh, 2013). If the homeless population goes down, the cost of it's maintenance will reduce.

My study could lead to social change for the affected homeless individuals, government agencies, service providers, and society. The findings could assist the affected to understand fully their experience and the experiences of others that led them

to the situation and how to exit it. It could be use by homeless service providers improve service delivery. Through improved service provision, the affected could learn more employment and social skills that could assist them in obtaining and retaining employment and healthy social relationships. The outcome could support an improved strategy geared at lowering crime rates or law enforcement cases, decongesting the jails, and reducing hospital emergencies (Basra et al., 2010; Church et al., 2011; Gilbert at al., 2006). It could prompt the making of more housing available, accessible and affordable for all. It could help by keeping more people off the street. It could support new strategies for lowering the cases of mental illness, and keep the current cases under control. It could decrease the spread of communicable diseases through improved hygiene and sanitary condition that a decent house could provide (Frankish et al., 2005; Gilbert, et al., 2006). All these variables threaten the public health and safety of a community (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007). It could support a new strategy in providing appropriate services to those experiencing homelessness by service providers. It could reduce the cost of providing services to the affected and lower an unnecessary expenditure by the government; because the cost of providing services to the affected is extremely high at the moment (Gaetz et al., 2013; Ganesh, 2013). It could offer more income to the government through the amount saved and amount gained through the tax paid by the decent employment of the affected. The amount saved could be channeled to economic development for a common good of a community. Keeping people out of the street and placing them into homes promotes the health of the affected and community because that will improve the hygienic status of those involved and lower

the rate of disease outbreak (Church, Kellner, McDonald, VanderKooi & Zucol, 2011; Basra et al., 2010). It will improve the safety and mental health of the affected (Ganesh, 2013). It will contribute in lowering health disparity. Again, these factors mentioned are important public health concerns. The outcomes of this study producing clear directions for the future, these benefits are the potential positive social change my study stands to offer.

### **Chapter Summary**

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study, described its background, and noted the problem that it addressed. I also presented the research questions and explained the purpose of the investigation. I described the study's nature and theoretical framework, defined the terms I used, and noted assumptions, the scope, delimitations, limitations and significance.

Further, throughout this introduction, I established that homelessness is a pressing problem in Calgary and Canada by citing the literature. Efforts directed at ending homelessness in Calgary have had limited success (Awosoga et al., 2013; Calgary Homelessness Research Agenda, 2013, Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2013). Researchers suggested that existing evidence is insufficient and homelessness population now takes a diversity toll. I noted that researchers have encouraged others to conduct more studies to understand the phenomenon better and to generate more evidence that could support new strategies and policies to achieve greater success (Awosoga et al., 2013). Therefore, I explored participants' understandings of homelessness as a way of projecting their voices to all who are concerned. In Chapter 2, I

explore the literature published in the past 5 to 10 years on the topic in search of solutions to ending homelessness in Calgary.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In Canada, 30,000 people are homeless every night, and about 200,000 people are homeless every year (Gaetz, 2013). In the past two decades, the homeless population has steadily increased in the City of Calgary (Osuji, 2009). While the population of homeless people is continuously rising, the housing demand in the city is also increasing. From 2010 to 2014, the demand for more housing rose from 8,500 to over 20,000 (Frankish et al., 2009).

Homelessness is costing the Canada between \$4.5 to 6 billion each year (Frankish et al., 2009) due in part to the high cost of maintaining homeless shelters. The existing homelessness strategies and policies were made based on individual risk factors, marginalization, exclusion, and economics (Frankish et al., 2009). Despite these strategies and policies, many researchers have indicated a continuous rise in the homeless population and have called for more studies (Aubry et al., 2014; Gaetz, 2013; Komarnicki, 2014). Frankish et al. (2005) identified gaps in the area of homelessness research, strategies, and policies, while Gaetz (2013) suggested that more research is the key to finding a solution to homelessness in Canada. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how those who are homeless view homelessness and what homelessness means to them.

In this section, I discuss all peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed studies conducted in Calgary and Canada that meet the selection criteria that I established. Specifically, I review studies published within the past 10 years. I used SCT as the

theoretical framework for the study, and used symbolic interaction theory to support it. In this literature review, I follow a thematic approach and define homelessness, describe who is affected by homeless, discuss its prevalence, causes, and consequences, and review the work of homeless service providers and their interventions.

### **Literature Search Strategies**

To search for literature, I used Walden University Library to access academic databases, including CINAHL, MEDLINE, ICPSR, and ProQuest. I also used search engines such as Google and Google Scholar. I included only the relevant articles that meet the set criteria. The criteria that I established for selecting and including literature were that the study must have been conducted not more than 10 years from the date of my study, and that the study must be related to homelessness in Calgary and Canada, but not limited to Calgary and Canada. I included peer-reviewed articles. My search phrase for Google Scholar was *homelessness in Calgary peer-reviewed articles*, and for the Google search, I used the phrase *homelessness in Calgary*. For the CINAHL, MEDLINE, and ICPSR searches, I used the phrase *homelessness in Calgary*. I keyed in homelessness in criterion one, and Calgary in criterion two. Through my searches, I found a total of 3,800 articles; however, I included only 98 items.

### **Theoretical Framework**

I used social cognitive theory (SCT) as the framework for designing this study. The SCT is a useful framework for communicating health information (Bandura, 1997). Researchers use SCT to examine the process of thought, behavior, and emotion, and how they affect an individual's change in behavior (Bandura, 1997). It helps people

understand how an individual learns and retains a particular pattern of behavior (Bandura, 1997). SCT proponents believe that the society and its environment influence human thought and action (Bandura, 1986). SCT theorists posit that people learn lessons from their previous experiences. Learning can occur through the observation, reinforcement, expectations, self-efficacy, and expectancies that influence an individual's behavior (Boston University, 2013).

In observational learning, people learn in an indirect way by watching other peoples' behavior and how it affects the environment. Other modes of learning include verbal and written description, and audio and video information (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Boston University, 2013). In this type of learning, four inter-related skills are needed: attention, retention, production, and motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Boston University, 2013).

Attention is used to describe the fact that the observational learner is required to be present where the learning will occur (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Boston University, 2013). Retention skill is the of a learner ability to comprehend knowledge, reduce it, and transform it into a storable symbol for eventual use when needed. Production is the student's capacity to retrieve the stored symbols and use them to perform or recreate a similar skill, behavior, or action (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Boston University, 2013). However, the motivation or willingness of the learner to produce or reproduce a skill is based on the consequence of doing so. If the impact is positive and favorable, a student is quick to duplicate a behavior; if it is negative, the student may refrain from doing so (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Boston University, 2013). Focusing on consequence-motivated

behavior, proponents of outcomes theory (OT) introduced another important concept of SCT called outcome expectations.

In outcome expectations theory, observational theorists contend that learners reproduce a skill if their experiences with it have a positive consequence; if the impact is negative or unpleasant, they are likely to reframe or suppress such behavior. Therefore, what learners expect to gain from a skill motivates or demotivates them from performing a behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Boston University, 2013). Also, the value an individual attached to the consequences of her or his behavior change further motivates that individual to strive to learn some skills to change behavior (Bandura, 1989; Boston University, 2013). This valuation brings us to an SCT concept called expectancies.

Expectancies are different from expectation. If an individual in need of learning feels that the consequences of a behavior are high, or the incentives that person could receive for changing behavior is considerable, an individual's motivation to learn the skills to change behavior is great. Therefore, a person's expectancies influence that person's desire to change behavior. While expectations and expectancies affect someone's willingness to alter behavior, the level of self-control in a person matters in that person's ability in setting a behavior-change goal (Bandura, 1989; Boston University, 2013). Next, is a description of self-control.

Self-control is a key construct of expectancy theory. Goal setting prompts an individual to control behavior. An individual achieves self-control by way of monitoring oneself and being committed to the goal of altering behavior. To perform an action, a person needs the interplay of skill and the self-will to do so. The volition to carry out

behavior is used to describe another concept in SCT known as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989; Boston University, 2013).

The self-efficacy concept of SCT holds that an individual in need of learning needs to believe that a person can perform a behavior, and adequate personal skill can assist him to achieve a behavior or a goal. Though a learner may have missed achieving a goal before, it does not mean that that person cannot make it tomorrow. To those in homelessness situations, developing self-efficacy can assist them in overcoming their homeless situation (Bandura, 1997). Also, the influence of the environment on a personal response to a need to modify a behavior depends on the level of reinforcement that that a person gets from personal environment. These environmental causes open the door to another concept known as reinforcement (Bandura, 1989; Boston University, 2013).

Reinforcements are responses an individual receives from other people in personal environment. The responses influence how often an individual can perform a behavior. If the reaction is positive, a person has a high tendency to reproduce a behavior because the response is motivating. However, if the response is discouraging, an individual's chance of repeating a skill is less. An individual's ability to respond to the reinforcements depends on how well personal emotions can carry him, dynamic researchers have named it *emotional coping response* (Bandura, 1989; Boston University, 2013). Emotional coping responses mark how well a person can respond to the reinforcements that an individual receives; they are influenced by personal emotional coping skills. If a person is trained to deal with stress and solve problems, that person can develop the tactics to cope (Bandura, 1989; Boston University, 2013). With a brief lesson

about OT next, is a description of another theory that supports this study called reciprocal determinism

Reciprocal determinism (RD): A person's change in behavior impacts the environment in a reciprocal manner. An individual's behavior both influence and are influenced by the environment. The interplay between an individual's ability to acquire skill and that resulting in a desire to alter a behavior depending on his or her expectations and expectancies and a change in behavior impacting on an environment and an environment influencing an individual's behavior is what is described as reciprocal determinism. It is a give and take by a person and an environment, which transforms each in a reciprocal manner (Bandura, 1989; Boston University, 2013). RD recognizes that the environment influences human responses and behavior. Therefore, changing the environment could affect an individual's change of behavior, although this is not always the case (Bandura, 1989; Boston University, 2013).

What is now called the social learning theory (SLT) first started as OT in 1925. Then, Bandura (1977), his students, and colleagues proposed that how a learner feels about a learning environment and what a person expects to gain as a consequence of behavior change matters in his accepting to learn and to alter a behavior (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, the action or behavior of people is regulated by the approval or disapproval of their social environment (Bandura, & Walters, 1959; Sears, Maccoby & Levin, 1957; Bandura, 1989). However, in observational learning, there is a need for a role model who will present a skill or behavior a person in need of education can watch. This role model could be a teacher, classmate, a friend or someone in the learner's social environment.

Bandura (1977) and colleagues expanded the OT to include language and conceptual learning aspects. Language is a means of communication, and it influences the way an individual thinks. Both language and thought give rise to the meaning, symbol, or code an individual gives to live experiences (Bandura, 1998).

### **Literature Related to Key Variables**

#### **Homelessness**

Homelessness is a situation in which an individual has no place to live, either by rent or permanent ownership (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, n.d.; England Shelter.org, 2014; Gaetz et al., 2013; Knowlton, 2006; National Centre for Homeless Education; Public Health Service Act 42 U.S.C., 254b). Those experiencing homelessness situations a lack regular, fixed, and comfortable place to sleep at night, and where they sleep is not secure, stable, or safe and does not allow them any privacy (Knowlton, 2006; Mallet, 2004; National Centre for Homeless Education, 2006). Those involved often sleep on the street, in doorways, or on night buses. They also sleep in missions, shelters, abandoned buildings, single room facilities, and vehicles (England Shelter.org, 2014; Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C., 254b; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

There are three levels of homelessness. *Primary level* is used to describe a situation where people sleep rough on the street or are staying in an improvised dwelling (Mackenzie & Chamberlain, 1992; United Nations, n.d.). The *secondary level* of homelessness describes the people staying in an emergency shelter (they often move from one shelter to another) and those who move from couch to couch in a relation's or

friend's house. It includes refugee youth and people living in a dwelling with no address (Mackenzie & Chamberlain, 1992; United Nations, n.d.). The *tertiary level* of homelessness represents the situations where an individual is living in substandard housing (below public health and safety standards). Examples of tertiary homeless include those living in boarding houses, caravans, parks, and inappropriate dwelling places that have inadequate utility systems. Others include those lacking the immediate and near future prospect, means, or ability to acquire a home (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, n.d.; Gaetz et al., 2013; Mackenzie & Chamberlain, 1992, Sacred Heart Mission, n.d.).

Other researchers have defined homelessness differently. Lancione (2013), for instance, defined it as vagrant living associated with drug abuse. This framing was based on the social stigmatization of homeless persons as drug abusers, which is not fair to all the affected because not all people affected by homelessness abuse drugs. In another scenario, Lancione (2013) defined homelessness based on the characteristics of the poor, drunk, addict, or dispossessed. Again, Lancione definitions of homelessness were neither dignifying nor truthful to all who experience homelessness because not all that have experienced homelessness abuse drug or are drunk. Having discussed the meaning and understanding of homelessness from various perspectives, we can progress to the next level of information about who is affected by homelessness.

### **Those Experiencing Homelessness**

Homelessness knows no race or ethnicity; it is no longer one group of individuals that constitute the population of the homeless. So, it is not homogenous, but, rather

heterogeneous comprising of a diverse population. Just as the population of Calgary increases in diversity, the variety of homelessness increases. The diversity now constitutes First nation, Non-First nation, Caucasian-White, Asians, Black communities, youth, men, women, families, and diverse ethnicities (Donahue et al., 2004, 2013; Schiff, Schiff & Schneider, 2011). Homeless population moving from homogeneous to heterogeneous is an indication that the situation is not entirely understood. To understand it better; research is the key (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Canadian adult men aged 25-55 years have become highly vulnerable to homelessness with a population of nearly half (47.5%) the population of the homeless (Gaetz et al., 2013). The youth aged 18-24 years old constitutes 20% of the Canadian homeless population (Gaetz et al., 2013). Also, it is necessary to give attention to the needs of adult men, and if the homeless service providers can understand the need of the city adult men along with the other groups of those in homelessness situation that will define a road map to help them better.

Researchers traced the remote cause of the First nation's peoples' homelessness situation to the distant causes stemming from colonialism, racism, historical and cultural differences (Gaetz et al., 2013). To assist the First nation's people out of homelessness situation requires making a committed effort to right those wrongs that led them into homelessness.

Also, women and children experience homelessness. In the life of the homeless women and children, poverty and violence are usually visible (Gaetz et al., 2013). Based on the evidence above, more lessons are necessary to understand the homelessness phenomenon

better (Gaetz et al., 2013), and better understanding can prompt better strategies and more success.

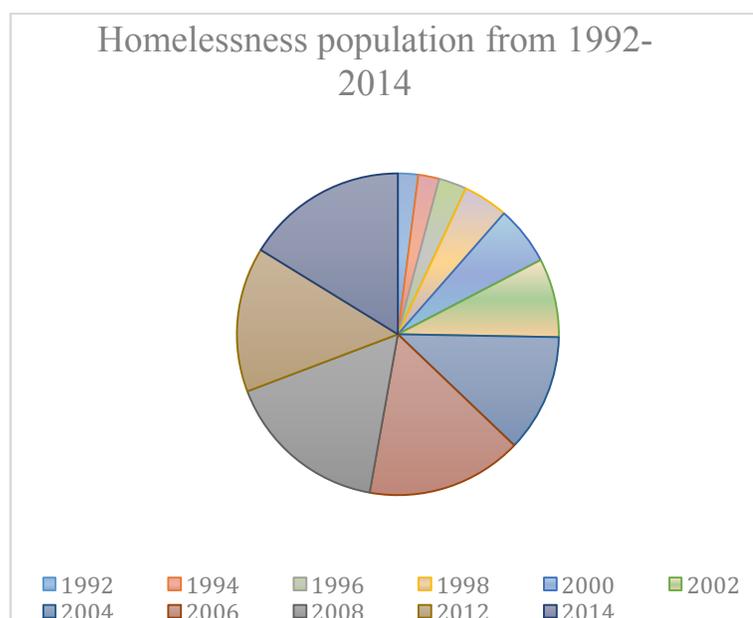
Homelessness involves people with various needs. The people experiencing homelessness often have limited or no rights (freedom or financial authority) as individuals. They are often not able to cope with the situation on their own (Donahue et al., 2004; 2013; England Shelter, n.d.). Among them were young persons who are having the first-time experience of living outside their family homes; persons released from the prison, pregnant women or expectant mothers who have no dwelling place. Others were women raising children, people surviving on benefits or low-income earners. Some have no housing benefit, asylum seekers, refugees or immigrants (England Shelter, n.d.). Warke (2012), also, added that families constitute the population of homelessness, and sad enough, the family population is on the increase.

Some cannot access emergency shelters or accommodation, and they live in places that are unfit for human habitation such as substandard houses, caravan, tents, and vehicles. Homelessness often involves people who are unable to secure permanent housing and low-income earners (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, n.d.). The people experiencing homelessness were abused people with low competency, which arises from unhealthy relationships. The examples, of unhealthy relationships, are deceased, divorced, or substance abuse). Homelessness often results in physical and emotional abuse (Acquaviva, 2000; Belcher et al., 2001; Bloom, Finfgeld-Connect & Johnson, 2012; Carroll & Trull, 1999; Haydon, 2005; Marcus, 2001). Therefore, more studies can lead to better understanding. A better understanding can prompt improved

strategies to achieve more success. With the knowledge of the affected in mind; in the next level of information I discussed the prevalence.

### Prevalence

Homelessness have persisted over the past 20 years. From 1992 to date, the homeless population in Calgary has been on the increase; although, there was a drop in 2012. (Hubac & Stroick,2007; Komarnicki, 2014). See Table 1 and Figures 1-4 for more detail.



*Figure 1.* Calgary homeless population, 1992 to 2014.

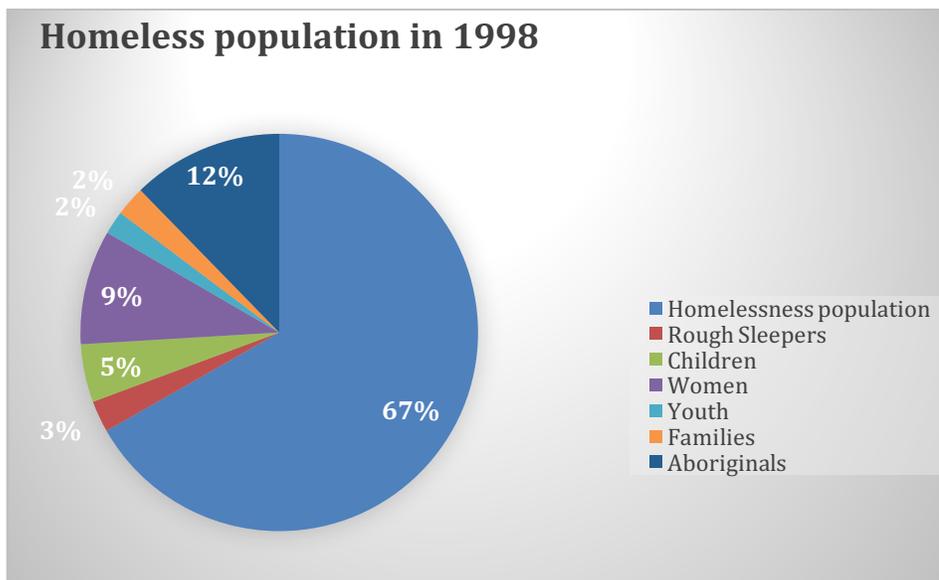


Figure 2. Pie chart of homeless population in 1998.

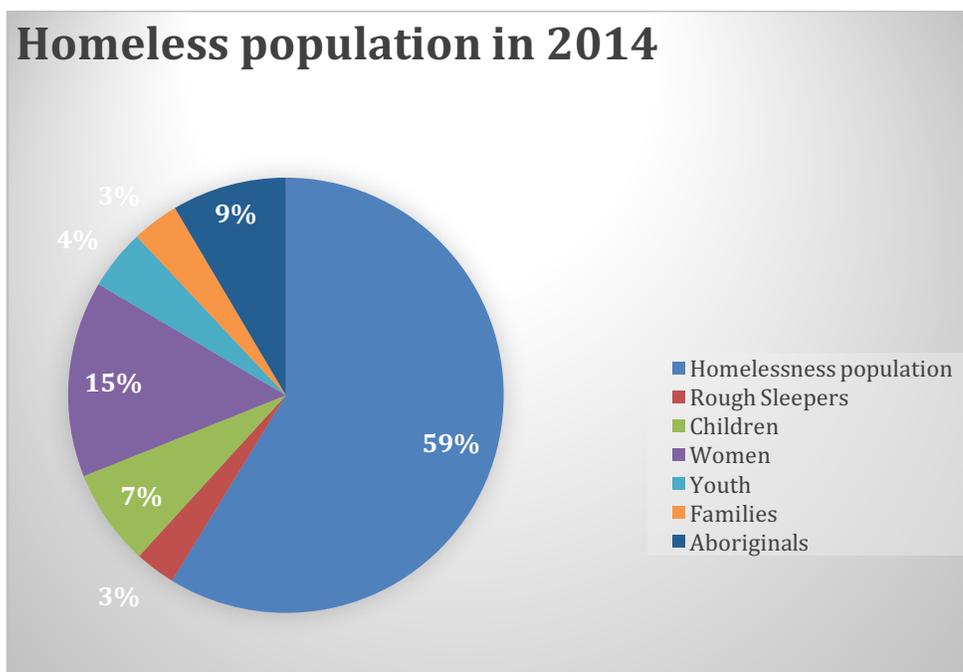


Figure 3. Homeless population in 2014.

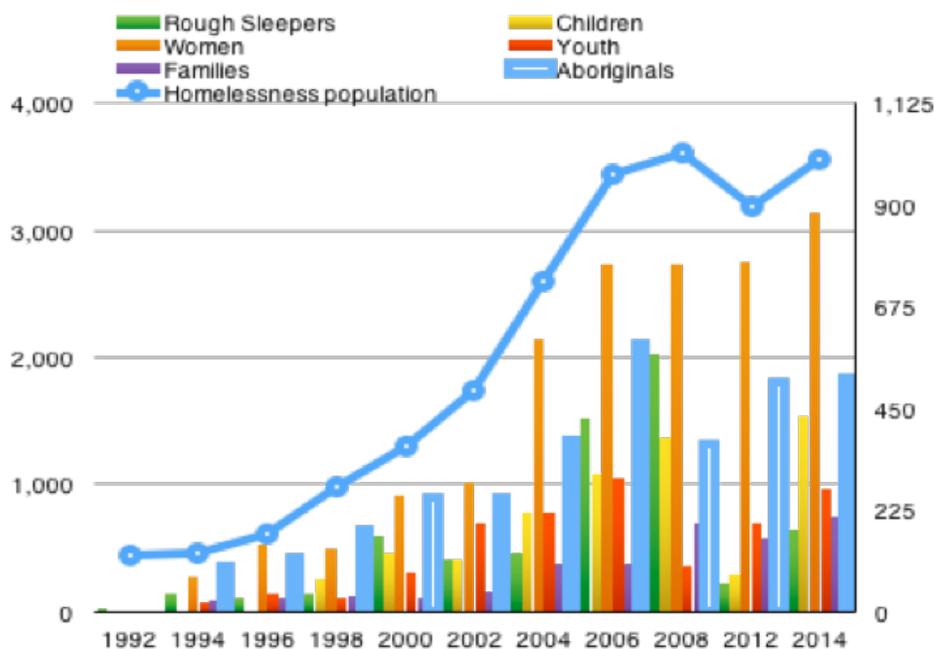


Figure 4. Homeless population, 1992 to 2014

Table 1

*Homeless Statistics from 1992 to 2014*

Year	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2012	2014
<b>Homelessness population</b>	447	461	615	988	1,296	1,737	2,597	3436	3601	3190	3555
<b>Rough Sleepers</b>	5	41	30	38	168	117	127	429	569	64	182
<b>Children</b>				70	129	115	218	304	384	81	434
<b>Women</b>		75	147	138	256	286	602	766	770	773	882
<b>Youth</b>		20	37	28	85	196	219	296	100	195	271
<b>Families</b>		25	28	36	30	42	104	104	197	160	211
<b>First nation</b>		101	121	182	251	252	382	593	371	509	515

Note. Adapted from Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2012; Hubac & Stroick, 2007; Komarnicki, 2014.

The data above indicates that in 1992, the homeless population in Calgary increased

from 447 to 3555 in 2014. The researchers indicated that the count was not complete because it only counted the homeless in downtown Calgary. It was an increase of 343 persons from 2012 to 2014 (Komarnicki, 2014). The population of the First nations who lived on the street rose from 101 (21%) in 1994 to 515 in 2014 (Hubac & Stroick,2007; Komarnicki, 2014). For families, the population that lived on the street was 25 in 1994, and in 2006 increased to 304 (8.8%) (Hubac & Stroick,2007). Based on this evidence, the fact that the problem is persisting and the population increasing is an indication that the problem is yet to be fully understood. For all concerned to comprehend the phenomenon well, research is essential, and the outcome of research is necessary for forming the basis for developing new and improved strategies necessary to achieve more success.

Many people are in various needs, and some are living in core housing need in Calgary. Researchers have considered the minimum wage as a concern. For the City of Calgary community profile, a total of 1,214,839 people lived in the City of Calgary in 2011 (Homeless Hub, 2013). An estimation of 23,165 people lived in housing need in 2011 (Homeless Hub, 2013). On September 1, 2012, the minimum wage went up to \$9.75/hr. In 2012, a total of 64 students were living on the street (Homeless Hub, 2013). A total of 136,153 individuals received assistance from the Food Bank, and single individuals received the sum of \$583 income support each. In March 2013, the unemployment rate in Calgary was 5.1% (Homeless Hub, 2013).

Calgary has a total of 15,151 subsidized housing units. A total of 3,200 clients were on the waiting list, and the average cost of renting a one-bedroom apartment is \$950 per month (Homeless Hub, 2013). A total of 132 homeless died between 2007 and 2009 in

cases related to alcohol and drug abuse. From the ongoing discussion, those experiencing homelessness are facing various needs and to help them out of their situations, all concerned need to understand the needs. Good understanding of these needs makes way for improved strategies to achieve more success; hence the need for more studies.

There was a staggering population of homelessness every night and every year. The Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2013), estimated that as many as 1.3 million Canadians have experienced homelessness in the past five years (2008 – 2012). A minimum of 2,880 was unsheltered (without a roof over their heads), 14,400 stayed in emergency shelters. About 7,350 stayed in violence against women shelters, 4,464 stayed in institutional accommodation, and up to 50,000 stayed in hidden homelessness (the homeless staying with relatives and friends are not accounted for) every night (Gaetz et al., 2009). Based on the evidence above, the nightly and annual homelessness population is staggering and calls for concern and action such as research to understand the phenomenon better for an appropriate solution.

The population of families at -risk was high. A sum of 380,600 families was on the verge of becoming homeless due to poverty. They spend over 50% of their income on rent (Gaetz et al., 2009). The number of houses for rent is decreasing, income was either stagnant or falling and benefits were decreasing; these factors increase poverty (Gaetz et al., 2009). About 10% of Canadians live below the Canadian Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO), and LICO varies among the provinces. The Canadian Market Basket Measure (MBM), which is the Canadian threshold or borderline for poverty, was estimated at 10%. MBM means that people in this category cannot meet their most basic needs. About

8.2% of households in Canada were experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity in 2013 (Gaetz et al., 2009). The evidence above indicated that the homelessness prevalence was high in Calgary; hence need to learn more lessons about it to understand the subject better and develop better strategies for more success. Having described the prevalence of homelessness, next I explained the level of economic burden homelessness placed on the city and the nation.

### **Economic Burden**

It is very expensive to provide services for the homeless, and costly not to give attention to the societal problem of homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2009). The Sheldon Chumir Foundation (2007), estimated the cost of homelessness in Canada to range between 4 and 6 billion dollars each year. The amount was the total cost of emergency shelters, health care, and social services provided to the homeless population. The cost increased from above \$5 billion dollars in 2007 to slightly above \$7 billion dollars in 2013, an increase of nearly \$2 billion (34.3%) per annum (Gaetz et al., 2009). Alberta Health spent \$5 million dollars yearly for three consecutive years (2010-2012) to treat mental illness and addiction in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge (Ganesh, 2013). A large amount of those treated was homeless (Ganesh, 2013). The amount spent on providing services to those experiencing homelessness is the taxpayer's money, which could be channeled to other developmental projects of the government that could foster economic growth and the common good (Gaetz et al., 2009; Boudarbat, Lemieux & Riddell, 2010). Some of the homeless were persons who ideally can work, earn a living and pay tax to the government; instead, they are often seen taking away from government

revenue (Gaetz et al., 2009; Boudarbat, Lemieux, & Riddell, 2010). In 2015, the government raised the minimum wage from fewer than \$10 per hour in 2012 to \$11.20 per hour in 2015 (Work Alberta, 2015). A new rise in the minimum wage can help the individuals and families meet their basic needs in a dignified manner (Boudarbat, Lemieux & Riddell, 2010). However, since, there were concerns other than income affecting the homeless, and diversity also, indicated; more lessons about homelessness phenomenon is worthwhile. And qualitative research remains a tool for better understanding of human experience (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Researchers believed that employers use unemployment as a weapon of discrimination Gaetz et al. (2013), challenged the government to give attention to permanent solutions to homelessness. The authors stated that the government can achieve a permanent solution to homelessness if it could make the judicious use of human, material, and government economic resources Gaetz et al. (2013). A recent Canadian government study indicated that not much progress was made in lowering the number of people who asked for emergency shelter from 2005 to 2009 (Gaetz et al., 2013). To achieve more success in the homelessness struggle, the homelessness need to be fully understood and research is a scientific way of learning and problem solving (Polit & Beck, 2014). Moreover, research outcome ought to form the foundation for all processes of solving a problem of this magnitude (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014); hence, the need for my study. Having gained some insights about the economic burden of homelessness to the government, next, I discussed the causes of homelessness.

### **Causes of Homelessness**

Homelessness arises from an accumulation of factors that affect the persons experiencing it. No single factor causes homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013). The factors fall into three broad categories:

- ❖ Structural.
- ❖ Systems failure.
- ❖ Individual and relationship.

These factors interplay in diverse forms to subject people to homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013). The interplay is what Bandura (2010) identified as the interaction between an individual's internal factors and the environment. In this context, the environment was represented by structural causes and system failure, which Bandura (2010) described as reinforcement and punishment the environment give to an individual by an environment. Bandura explained that the meaning the persons experiencing a phenomenon attaches to his or her experience with the environment is often dictated by an individual's internal and relationship factors made up of beliefs, perceptions, values, and emotions.

There are structural causes of homelessness. These are mainly economic and societal reasons, which influence the environment to deny an individual the opportunity to gain economic and social autonomy and stability that could prevent homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013; Bloom, Finfgeld-Connect & Johnson, 2012). These causes include low income, an absence of affordable housing or health support, and discrimination. A minimum wage of less than \$10 per hour in 2012, and \$11.20 per hour in 2015 (Work Alberta, 2015) is not enough to meet an individual's basic needs including housing. The state of the national, regional, and local market economy could pose some challenges in obtaining or

retaining employment. While affordable housing was argued to be a principal factor in the structural cause of homelessness, discrimination was identified as a major obstacle to obtaining employment (Gaetz et al., 2013). It was also a barrier to receiving justice and other supporting services, affecting minorities the most (Gaetz et al., 2013). To overcome homelessness in the city, service providers need to address the structural cause of homelessness, and achieving that is possible only when the phenomenon is fully comprehended.

The homelessness system failure is a barrier to ending homelessness. The system failure results from a lack of adequate planning that can allow persons discharged from the hospital, correctional facility, and addiction and mental treatment centers sufficient support in all areas of their needs. Full support can prevent them from returning to old habits that might ultimately send them back to homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013). An excellent professional training and improved strategic planning is achievable, but only when based on the evidence from the appropriate studies (Gaetz, et al., 2013).

Also, individual and relationship factors contribute to homelessness. Bandura (2010) called individual and relationship factors internal factors, such as belief, perception, values, emotions, and meanings. In the principles of this school of thought, it was stated that the environment affects a person's behavior and thoughts (cognitive), which in turn affects the way one behaves (Bandura, 2010). The type of environment in which one stays influences his or her behavior. In turn, the human behavior shapes the environment, which again influences someone's thoughts (Bandura, 2010). The individual and relationship factors that could lead to homelessness such as trauma, which could result

from a house catching fire, loss of employment, unemployment, or personal crisis. Further examples of causes of trauma are the family break-up or domestic violence, mental illness, addiction, substance abuse and brain injury (Statistics Canada, 2011). To understand fully the contribution of an environment to homelessness situations, the affected need to be involved in finding the solution (Donahue et al., 2013). A study involving all groups of the affected is a good way to begin the process of solving this kind of human problem because research is the best way to address a problem (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Substance abuse and mental illness could also be a cause of homelessness, as well as a consequence (Bloom, Finfgeld-Connect & Johnson, 2012; Gaetz et al., 2013; HRSDC, 2010; NCH, 2009). Giving attention to the mental state of individual counts in planning homelessness strategy (Gaetz et al., 2013). Factors traced to be the remote causes of mental illness, and homelessness were the individual's problems that could result from disability and physical health issues (Gaetz et al., 2013). Relationship issues can spring from family violence, addiction, extreme poverty, and mental illness of household (Statistics Canada, 2011). In a situation of domestic violence where the male acts violently, the youth and women often leave the house unprepared to live on their own; worse, sometimes the women have young children (Gaetz et al., 2013). Other relationship factors are cultural differences, such as unemployment, exclusion, the impact of colonialism, and exclusion of First nation people (Gaetz et al., 2013). Understanding these variables occurring among those experiencing homelessness is necessary for achieving more success towards ending homelessness in the city (Gaetz et al., 2013).

Involving all categories of those hit by the problem in research is a way of getting a proper understanding of the phenomenon (seeing the problem from the angle of those experiencing it), which is part of the homelessness solution process.

The individual and relationship factors described in details above affect the skills needed for employment to increase the economy of the affected. (Bandura, 2010). Through research, the development of skill acquisition program for those experiencing homelessness is possible. With the knowledge of the causes of homelessness in mind, let's review what the existing literature explains as the consequences of homelessness.

### **Consequences**

Certain health issues were prevalent among those experiencing homelessness in Toronto. For example, schizophrenia accounted for 6% of illnesses (Frankish et al., 2009). The rates of disorders were as follows: affective disorder 20% to 40%; alcohol abuse 60%, and HIV infection 0-21% (Frankish et al., 2009). Additionally, many homeless experience assault 40%, and 21% of women reported being raped. However, causality between the diseases and traumas and homelessness is yet to be established (Frankish et al., 2009). Frankish et al. suggested that there are gaps in the areas of biomedical and environmental causes, policy strategies, and research. Therefore, there is a need for more studies.

Also, there is a high rate of a community-acquired strain of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) among the homeless population. There are concerns about diseases include the fact that there is a high prevalence of a community-acquired strain of MRSA. In a study, fourteen (35%) of the 40 participants, and eighteen (64%)

among the incarcerated population, the homeless, and people with the history of drug abuse in Canada (Gilbert et al., 2006). If homelessness could be a cause as well as a consequence of drug abuse, then any research directed at understanding homelessness well is worthwhile and should be encouraged. The reason is that full understanding can lead to improved strategies that could assist to keep those experiencing homelessness away from an MRSA exposure.

Also, homeless people were susceptible to the outbreak of invasive pneumococcal disease. Thirty-nine studies have indicated 42 disease outbreaks among residents in the open community in Calgary in 2011 (Church, Kellner, McDonald, VanderKooi & Zucol, 2011; Basra et al., 2010). To keep the community away from a possible threat from a homeless disease outbreak, researchers need to apprehend the phenomenon fully and then come up with improved strategies to end homelessness.

The rate of undiagnosed and untreated psychiatric illness among the homeless population in Calgary is very high. About 93% of the homeless exhibit the symptoms of a mental disorder (Ganesh, 2013) and as many as 60% could barely remember whether have been examined for any mental illness or not (Ganesh, 2013). My interpretation of the evidence above is that those affected by homelessness are at the risk of the disease epidemics, and mental disorder. Researchers indicated substance abuse, and mental illness as contributing variables to homelessness among women in Calgary (NCH, 2009; HRSDC, 2010; Bloom et al., 2012). Researchers indicated that poor skills, mental illness, and substance abuse were barriers to employment and better economic status. Therefore, controlling these setbacks could provide a chance for a better economy for the affected.

Also, it could contribute to keeping them out of the street (Bloom et al., 2012).

For the barriers to be sustainably eliminated, they have to be understood, and better understanding offers hope for appropriate strategies to achieve more success (Polit & Beck, 2014). I hope to learn more lessons about the phenomenon through my study. Therefore, keeping people out of homelessness is a way of protecting them from the health risks and mental disorder. More knowledge about the phenomenon is essential for better strategies that could keep people out of the street (Ganesh, 2013).

Those affected by homelessness exhibit poor living and health conditions. Often, the affected individuals experience inadequate or substandard of living and limited or no access to healthcare. They have no access to standard housing, are unemployed or earn low wages, and have no, poor, or restricted access to essential support services (Hulchanski, 2009). With this evidence in mind, ending homelessness would mean eliminating those barriers and more. Through my study, I hope to learn more lessons if there is any, to enable all concerned comprehend the subject better; to prompt developing improved strategies that could achieve more success.

The increases in a poor economic status of a community rise with homelessness. Homelessness could worsen if poverty increases, if less attention is given to public priorities, and if the social support system is weak or inefficient (Hulchanski, 2009). Osuji (2009) stated that researchers recognized that homelessness is steadily rising, as is the population of homeless women and families. Also, inadequate skills among the affected was a barrier to employment and good economic status (Acquaviva, 2000; Bloom et al., 2012; Carroll & Trull, 1999; Hayden, 2005; Marcus, 2001; Trickett &

Cgung, 2007). Often, the abusive environment deprives the homeless of the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills that could support their sustaining good working and social relationships (Belcher et al., 2001).

Some of those experiencing homelessness have identified that they have individual drawbacks; however, the excessive bureaucracy by the service providers was even seen as a greater setback. Often, some women experiencing homelessness face additional setbacks such as perceptions of low self-confidence, weak competency, and a small personal sense of control of their lives (Bloom et al., 2012). Some have a poor understanding of their decision-making capability and were without a structured, and supportive environment (Bloom et al., 2012). They felt that their not being able to effect some positive changes in their lives might be due to some setbacks from excessive bureaucracy, or for some economic reasons (Acquaviva, 2000; Bloom et al., 2012; Brink, 2001; Carroll & Trull, 2002; Linberger, 2009; Wouldiam, 2003).

Helping the homeless overcome these setbacks signals a necessary positive change, which could bring the affected home. (Bloom et al., 2012). When those concerned about the phenomenon understand it fully, it could assist them to develop better strategies to achieve more success. Therefore, because research is a standard problem-solving process (Boyce & Neale, 2006), my study is necessary.

Often, people abuse those experiencing homelessness, and the consequences of ill-treatment on those experiencing homelessness are incompetency and poor working relationship. A relationship problem or an unhealthy relationship described above was linked to the perception of low or high competency (Trickett & Cgung, 2007). It deprives

them of an opportunity to develop interpersonal skills that could support them retaining the appropriate working relationship (Belcher et al., 2001). With the evidence above, and a new trend in diversity indicated among the affected, involving them in a study such as mine, could provide room for more lesson from the diverse cultural perspectives of those facing homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013).

Substance abuse, mental illness, and economic predicaments were indicated as the contributing variables to homelessness among women (HRSDC, 2010; NCH, 2009). Many of those experiencing homelessness engage in risky behavior and dangerous situations (Caputo & Kelly, 2007). Keeping people out of homelessness can be a way of discouraging risky behavior and dangerous activities, and that could decrease the crime rate and lower government expenditure (Caputo & Kelly, 2007; Gaetz et al., 2009). With the evidence above in mind, a better understanding of the homelessness phenomenon will hopefully suggest a foundation for better strategies and better plans offers hope for more success. Next, I discussed the homelessness service providers.

### **Homelessness Service Providers in Calgary**

For several decades, the governments of Canada, the provinces, territories, regions, municipalities, and First nation have exerted much effort towards ending homelessness in Canada. Nevertheless, the homelessness situation continues to be of great concern to Canada as a nation. All concerned bodies have made some progress in finding solutions to the phenomenon; however, more still needs to be done given that not much success has been achieved in ending homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013). Therefore, conducting more studies on the subject offers hope for greater success (Polit & Beck, 2014). Among the

homeless agencies providing services to those in homelessness situation in Calgary are Mustard Seed Shelter, the YWCA King Shelter and Calgary Drop In. The mission of Calgary Mustard Seed Shelter is to imitate Jesus Christ and partner with the community to provide positive social change for the less privileged in the community. It provides shelter, food, clothing, employment, health and wellness, and spiritual care for those in desperate need of help (Mustard Seed Shelter, n.d.). YWCA King Sheriff Home provides emergency shelter, basic needs, and counseling to the families, women and children experiencing homelessness. YWCA goals are to ensure the safety and security of the people it serves. Also, YWCA provides education, and legal support for its clients (YWCA King Sheriff Home, n.d.). Calgary Drop In (DI) provides many levels of care to the chronically homeless people; services include community support, counseling, resources provision, housing and advocacy. DI works in collaboration with other homeless stakeholders as a lead service provider in Calgary (Calgary Drop In, n.d.).

The Canadian government has continued to make effort towards improving its strategies on ending homelessness in Canada. In March 2013, the Government of Canada renewed its financial commitment to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) for five years, at \$119 million. HPS encourages the initiative that considers housing as a top priority in homelessness intervention. Homelessness service providers need intervention for the area of life skills, education and training, development, management, and treatment of mental health and substance abuse or addiction. These variables have been indicated in many studies. From 2013 to date is three years since this new initiative was renewed; the most recent studies by Aubry et al. (2014) and Komarnicki (2014) yet found

homelessness population to be continuously rising. The persistence of this problem baring all interventions and strategies geared at a solution to this phenomenon could be argued that the homelessness phenomenon is yet to be fully understood.

The pilot study of At Home/Chez Soi of Housing First, which was tested in five Canadian cities, showed some progress. It requests all homelessness service providers to adopt and adapt a strategy that considers housing as priority one in finding the solution to homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013). AHCS researchers indicated Alberta government as taking the lead in looking for a solution to end homelessness in the city. It established an Interagency Council on Homelessness. The government charged the Interagency with a duty to plan, coordinate, and integrate services for the homeless (Gaetz et al., 2013). The interagency council encouraged placing housing as a top priority in homelessness intervention. Alberta has made some progress in some of its principal Cities-Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Mental Health Commissioner of Canada, 2013). The Alberta political leadership is investing in affordable housing in the province (Gaetz et al., 2013). However, it is disturbing to read that homelessness population continued to increase (Audbury et al., 2014; Komarnicki, 2014). Over 20 years stretch of evidence testifying that homelessness population has continued to rise, and many suggested conducting more studies (Gaetz et al., 2013). Gaetz's invitation and others are what prompted my proposed study. Hence, I seek to learn more lessons from the affected if there is any in a search for more understanding of the homelessness phenomenon in the city; hoping to give room for improved strategies to achieve more success.

In a Canada-wide homelessness intervention performed across some Canadian Provinces did not make much progress yet; however, there was success in homelessness in some provinces. At Home/Chez Soi of Housing First Intervention is a Canadian four-year research project designed to determine the best approach among all available options to sustainably ending homelessness and helping people with mental illness in Canada secure homes (Mental Health Commissioner of Canada, 2013). The researchers compared the existing housing and support services for those in homelessness situation and people with mental illness. At Home/Chez Soi (AHCS) project was tested in five cities across Canada excluding Alberta (Mental Health Commissioner of Canada, 2012). In HF intervention, AHCS researchers recognized Alberta as taking a lead in the solution-directed deliberate actions discussed above in search of a solution to ending homelessness in Calgary, and it has shown remarkable progress towards ending homelessness (Mental Health Commissioner of Canada, 2013). Canada as a nation has made only small progress in ending homelessness; much remains undone (Mental Health Commissioner of Canada, 2013). HF achieved some success; however, the success is limited. In Vancouver in British Columbia, the success rate was 66%, and there was some progress in New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario, and British Columbia indicated some progress (Mental Health Commissioner of Canada, 2013). Not having a regular steady home threatens the health of those experiencing homelessness (Mental Health Commissioner of Canada, 2012). Although, this intervention rated Alberta, as taking a lead in the solution-directed deliberate actions mentioned above, and it has shown remarkable progress towards ending homelessness; although a rise in homeless population persists. However,

Canada as a nation has made only small progress in this regard (Mental Health Commissioner of Canada, 2013); much remains undone (Gaetz et al., 2013). Sadly, it is disappointing that the population of the homeless is yet on a continuous rise in the city of Calgary (Aubry, 2014; Komarnicki, 2014).

Having described the homelessness service providers in Calgary. Next, I discussed the interventions already made to end homelessness in the city.

### **Interventions**

Stroick and Hubac (2007) compiled a high-level synthesis of research, both within and outside of Canada, related to homelessness to better inform those seeking to end homelessness in Calgary. The research studies Stroick and Hubac included in their report all addressed

Who are the homeless?; What are the routes into homelessness?; What is the cost of homelessness? And What are the paths out of homelessness? (Stroick & Hubac, 2007) Also, Stroick and Hubac's report included quantitative and qualitative studies, the major studies performed by the National Alliance to End Homelessness in the United States, 2002 on Homelessness in Calgary, and the 2006 count of the homeless population in Calgary. They also analyzed the report of the 10-year plan to end homelessness in Red Deer, Canada, and a blueprint to end homelessness in Toronto. Other materials they reviewed were solution-directed reports of interventions, such as the strategic initiatives created to develop an organized path out of homelessness in Calgary (Stroick & Hubac, 2007). None of the studies upon which the 10-year plan was drawn explored the homeless situation from the viewpoint of the homeless person (Stroick & Hubac, 2007).

Some authors tried to understand homelessness from the perspectives of a few fractions of the affected in different studies, but none had obtained the views of all groups experiencing homelessness in one study. My study gave voice to many groups of people experiencing homelessness.

Many of those experiencing homelessness engage in risky behavior (Caputo & Kelly, 2007; Gaetz et al., 2013). The aim of many programs is to discourage those involved from risky behavior and dangerous activities by providing housing for the homeless. Also, living on the street could increase the crime rate and raise unnecessary spending by the government (Gaetz et al., 2013).

In a qualitative study, Walsh, Rutherford, and Kuzmak (2009) explored an understanding of the characteristics of an ideal home for the women in homelessness situations. The women's perspectives indicated that the provision of a band-aid solution (shelter) was only a relief to the affected, but not a permanent solution (Walsh et al., 2009). The authors stated that the solution requires more attention other than merely providing a shelter to the affected (Lard, 2007; Walsh et al., 2009). Attention is at investigating what the affected women regarded as a real home (Lard, 2007; Walsh et al., 2009); however, there is more to learn about homelessness other than what they regard as an ideal home (Gaetz, et al., 2013). Moreover, the Gaetz et al. study was conducted over six years ago, and with the new trend indicating a diversity among those experiencing it, conducting more studies was considered a worthwhile effort for learning more lessons (Gaetz et al., 2013). The pattern of my qualitative research is phenomenological. I studied only the experiences of those affected, and I did not include any other data in my data

analysis. In my investigation, I collected, analyzed, and reported data without revealing the identity of the participants. The reason is to encourage the subjects to share information freely without fear of authority at the shelter that is housing them (Stroick & Hubac, 2007; Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Providing a shelter is only necessary for temporary relief, in a time of emergency; however, housing service providers need to make shelter accommodation suitable to those experiencing homelessness. Also, the government should design homes capable of satisfying the residence requirements of the homeless (Walsh, et al., 2009). Also, allowing them some reasonable degree of freedom and autonomy could make shelters more attractive to those in dire need of home assistance (Walsh, et al., 2009). Thus, making homes accessible to all should be the goal of solving the problem of homelessness (Walsh, et al., 2009). However, achieving that would mean gaining a better understanding of the homelessness phenomenon (Gaetz, et al., 2013), especially from the viewpoint of those affected. I employed that approach of allowing many groups of those involved in my study, to obtain the meaning those involved attach to their experience.

Before 2009, the authorities concerned made homeless decisions based on homeless experts and service providers thought, and not on evidence based on the perspectives of those experiencing homelessness (Frankish et al., 2009). Frankish et al. (2009) believed that the existing evidence upon which homelessness decisions were made previously was based on individual risk factors, marginalization, exclusion, and economic forces, and sometimes could be politicized. The authors further stated that the homes need be not only accessible but also affordable; they encouraged more studies on homelessness to

understand the phenomenon better (Frankish et al., 2009). Therefore, conducting more studies such as mine is a necessary solution in the right direction.

While researchers recognized that providing shelter to those experiencing homelessness is a temporary solution that is necessary, those experiencing homelessness require home for a dignified living. Holloway (2012) stated that for sustainability, for rediscovering those involved (bringing them home and assisting them to have dignified living), and for full integration into society, the Path ways-To-Housing (PTH) approach to homelessness is impressive. It is an integrated approach that places into consideration various needs of those in a homeless situation and is a particularly tailored approach to homelessness solution. Having said that, if the PTH service providers could review the conditions for accepting those affected into PTH, and including the diverse population of the affected currently not included in the PTH, acceptance requirement could lead to more success. Similarly, including seven groups of those in a homeless situation in my study might offer hope for a more sustainable solution Hulchanski (2009), suggested that finding a solution or solutions to homelessness may not be impossible. Because, when they eliminate the barriers to getting a home, more people will secure homes and exit homelessness.

In a homeless situation, often the affected persons experience inadequate or substandard living, no or limited access to health care, and no access to standard housing (Hulchanski, 2009). These are necessities that are within reach. However, the barriers such as lack of employment skills, unemployment, or poor wages, and no, poor, or limited access to essential support are hindrances to those necessities (Hulchanski, 2009).

If the concerned authorities do not give adequate attention to public priorities, and if the social support system is weak or inefficient; the homeless population might continue to rise (Hulchanski, 2009). More lessons are essential for a better understanding, and better understanding signals hope for more success (Boyce & Neale, 2006); hence, the need for more studies such as mine.

Homelessness is steadily rising, with women and family populations also increasing. In some cases, women were underrepresented in homelessness interventions, despite the fact that they experience homelessness in a peculiar manner, different from men. A few studies focused on women with children, and Osuji's (2009) study was of women without children. It could be argued that Osuji recognized the need to include all the affected in finding a solution to homelessness; hence, the reason for seeking an understanding of exiting homelessness from the perspectives of women without children (Osuji, 2009). The author's approach was narrative, and he used the interview for the data collection of the experience of the homeless childless women. He analyzed all data obtained from interviews and existing data (journal entries and his personal experience). So, Osuji included both his opinion and the experience of the participants in his heuristic phenomenology study. Osuji summarized the result findings in five themes:

- A loss of self at home described as the trigger.
- were not feeling at home caused by detachment from home
- Disconnection, and aloneness he used to describe an isolation.
- Simulating home, which he used to describe a transitional living in a shelter, and
- Finding oneself, which means hopefulness (Osuji, 2009).

The results showed that for women without children securing a home means hope, re-connection with self and society, and rediscovering their personality (Osuji, 2009). From the evidence above, seeking a perspective of a fraction of those experiencing homelessness is worthwhile in the search for a solution to this subject. Then, including a diverse group of the affected could be crucial for a better understanding of the phenomenon, and it could form a basis for developing improved strategies, and hope for more success.

The rising cases of the homeless population in Calgary and Canada regardless of all studies, interventions, and policies directed at ending homelessness; still, the city of Calgary and Canada are not relenting in the quest to finding a solution to an embarrassing ever rising population of homelessness in the country. In search of a solution to the ever increasing homelessness population in the city, a second Canadian national conference on homelessness was organized in Calgary in 2009, and it involved 700 people (Graham & Schiff, 2010). The conference participants included the homeless, homeless families, policy analysts, political activists, politicians, professionals, and scholars (Graham & Schiff, 2010). The conference featured more than 140 academic papers and workshops by top researchers and those providing service to the homeless (Graham & Schiff, 2010). Researchers believed that the population of homelessness in Canada is huge involving 150,000 to 300,000 people (Graham & Schiff, 2010). The authors said that Various governments of Canada had spent between three and six billion dollars on homelessness. The conference identified some structural issues such as risk variables: unemployment, inadequate assistance for the physically challenged and seniors, lack of social housing,

and no rent supports (Graham & Schiff, 2010). Other issues were a scarcity of affordable housing, a high level of precarious jobs such as insecure jobs, too low wages, and unsafe or risky jobs (Graham & Schiff, 2010). As thorough as this conference was, and yet, it is nearly seven years ago since this remarkable event took place. However, it is disturbing that the most recent studies by Calgary Homeless Foundation (2013); Aubry et al. (2014) and Komarnicki (2014), yet indicated that homelessness is continuously rising.

Therefore, my study feels a gap in homelessness in the city because, researchers have called for more studies (Gaetz, et al., 2013).

In Calgary, there are homelessness intervention strategies developed to reduce the use of emergency services. Althaus, et al. (2011), encouraged service providers to pay attention to frequent shelter users. Many randomized controlled trials that directed effort to frequent users of emergency services showed significant improvement in the use of emergency services (Althaus, et al., 2011). The above suggestion makes sense because frequent shelter users signal the people with a high vulnerability to homelessness. In my proposed study, I intend to learn from the experience of seven groups the homeless to include their collective viewpoint in generating a solution. It is a way of directing effort towards getting the input of those affected (Althaus, et al., 2011). For the authorities in-charge to assist regular shelter users to obtain permanent homes, more studies are necessary.

Researchers have indicated a diversity among those in a homeless situation and suggested that service providers should be aware of it. Developing a culturally sensitive service and care is necessary to meet the particular racial/ethnic need of those involved

(Althaus, et al., 2011). It is another indication that more lessons need to be learned, and research still holds the key to an understanding of the details about the homelessness phenomenon and its diversity (see Polit & Beck, 2014).

Housing was indicated a top priority in finding the solution to the mental and physical health. The author of a Pathway to Housing (PTH) intervention program considered the house a top priority in seeking physical and mental health. (Holloway, 2012). However, not every homeless person is qualified to receive assistance from the PTH. It only accepts the homeless who have experienced repeated homelessness for not less than six months, who suffer mental illness, who are older than 18 years, and who are prepared to commit 30% of their income to a housing (Holloway, 2012). Additionally, only those who would accept a weekly PTH staff visit were qualified to be in the program (Holloway, 2012). PTH was integrated with a health service and support system called Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) that provided a broad range of clinical treatment and support services to the clients of PTH. These treatments and support services include giving injections for hepatitis C, seizure, diabetes, infectious diseases, cardiac and pulmonary diseases, addiction therapy, and psychotherapeutic treatment (Holloway, 2012). In this intervention, not all people in a homeless situation were acceptable into the system; suggesting a gap that requires more lesson to be learned to improve the delivery service policy. PTH is a well-designed program; however, if it is without a gap, the recent studies in 2013 and 2014 could not have indicated an increase in the homeless population in the city, and may not have invited for more studies. Therefore, since, diversity was implicated among those involved; more studies seem relevant to understand the situation

better and feel the gap. My study approach will focus on gaining an understanding of the subject from the various perspectives of those affected.

The PTH was a successful intervention. Two years of data collection showed a tremendous success: clients' contact with the police reduced by 67%, and emergency medical hospital visits reduced by 32% (Holloway, 2012). Also, 87% were still home occupants, 49% went through vocational and educational training, 14% became employed (Holloway, 2012), and 14% now have their apartments outside PTH. It was laudable, and doubtless a sustainable approach. The social change implications are enormous. The PTH would positively affect the client, law enforcement, taxpayers, and the healthcare system. As noble as this strategy is, there is yet a noticeable gap in this intervention. It did not accept all homeless populations. It could be the only shortcoming of PTH. From the evidence above extending these services to include all categories of the homeless might be highly beneficial. Additionally, partnering with entrepreneurs, educational, and vocational training bodies could add more value to the PTH approach (Holloway, 2012). PTH intervention seemed critical and thorough; however, more studies could teach all concerned more lessons that are necessary to achieve more success because, the homelessness persists, and its population keeps increasing.

In Calgary, there is lack of coordination of services provided to those in homelessness situation. Jakubec, Tomaszewski, Powell & Osuji (2012), argued that Homelessness service and management in the city lacked coordination. The authors suggested that coordinating the homeless management is necessary and that coordination is essential in the existing homeless services and management (Jakubec et al., 2012). Coordinating of

all homelessness services was believed to bridge the gap of coordination in homelessness service delivery. Coordination needs to bring together various sectors providing services to the affected. Also, providing tailored service based on a person's particular case was recommended (Jakubec et al., 2012). With the evidence above in mind, coordination will eliminate service duplication, reduce cost, and increase efficiency. Therefore, adequate coordination could contribute to more success.

The participants of this study were the hard-to-house (HTH) group of the homeless. The HTH are the category of the homeless living and sleeping on the street. So, if the ethics of conducting this study is not in question; then, the lesson learned from these researchers is worthwhile. It could be argued that the level of the participants' vulnerability is no doubt high; because they are desperate and helpless group living alone on the street. The participants have no authority to protect their interest; except the conscience of the researchers. I found it an interesting study because I excluded them from my participants simply because of their level of vulnerability. My study involved only those in a shelter.

Many vulnerable and the homeless are living with health issues that were unattended. The barriers to their unattended health issues are: not having a medical insurance number or card, discrimination, failing to meet a schedule due to conflicting concerns. Another issue of concern among people in homelessness situation was that the mentally ill cannot understand their personal health needs, and the vulnerability of those experiencing homelessness is high among those with mental illness (Argintaru, et al., 2012; Aubry, Dilley, McNeil & Guirguis-Younger, 2012). Having trained professionals run and

provide service to those in homelessness situation could assist in providing service to meet the health needs of the homeless (Milaney, 2012). A good training requires an appropriate knowledge, and better knowledge stems from the right research, which informs all concerned better. Therefore, a good reason for my research.

Also, some of the affected women with low competency indicated some setbacks in their struggle to exit homelessness. Their primary concern was gaining control over their lives and being able to stand alone and make decisions without having a structured or supportive environment. Some attributed their setbacks to some man-made factors such as excessive bureaucracy. The women regard these man-made variables as a big barrier to their success (Acquaviva, 2000; Bloom, Finfgeld-Connect & Johnson, 2012; Brink, 2001; Carroll & Trull, 2002; Linberger, 2009; Wouldiam, 2003). The feeling of low or high competency was a consequence of unhealthy relationships described on page 48 of the complete proposal (Acquaviva, 2000; Bloom, et al., 2012; Carroll & Trull, 1999; Haydon, 2005; Marcus, 2001). They lost an opportunity to develop interpersonal skills that could support retaining a healthy relationship at home and work to the period of abuse (Belcher et al., 2001). Women in homelessness situation are often experiencing substance abuse, mental illness, and economic predicaments (Bloom et al., 2012; HRSDC, 2010; NCH, 2009). Having professionally trained service providers that could provide easy access to a critical or tailored support for those involved is necessary. Learning the right lesson that could support appropriate training is rooted to research. (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Homelessness is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Researchers have

indicated some racially related variables. Examples of the variables are mental illness, co-morbidity, culture, ethnicity, domestic abuse, motherhood, and transgender status (Apfel, 2007; Bloom, Finfgeld-Connect & Johnson, 2012; Bridgman, 2003; Flores, 2006; Magee & Huriaux, 2008; Urbanoski, 2001; Woods-Brown, 2001; Wouldiams, 2003). For all concerned to understand these culturally relevant variables well, more qualitative studies are necessary; hence, the need for my research.

Bloom et al. (2012), suggested that the level of self-efficacy and perceived competence is yet to be determined among those in homelessness situation, which implies a need for further investigation. Self-efficacy was on a continuum of low, and high; those on the low end require substantial support (Bloom et al., 2012). It was an indication that better understanding of this phenomenon could open a door for improved strategies, and tailor to suit the particular need of those involved.

The City of Calgary's management has a laudable plan called Housing First Save Money (HFSM) directed at keeping housing as a top priority. However, the plan was not without some gaps. For example, they recognized that directing attention to satisfy the needs of the vulnerable in Calgary such as the youth, women, families, and First nation people was necessary. However, in its strategic plans, it suggested a need to involve the First nation people in the management of homelessness in Calgary (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013), which was also a good idea. However, it could be debated that involving all groups of those in a homeless situation at all stages of the processes targeted at ending homelessness in Calgary is necessary. It mapped out some strategies to end homelessness in Calgary and that include conducting further research and developing

policies to end homelessness among the First nation people (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). Also, it encouraged community training. While HFSM recognized many vulnerable groups affected by homelessness, the effort to find a solution was directed only to a portion of the homeless population (the First nation) (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). Based on the discussion above, involving as many groups of the affected as possible in finding the solution is essential. In my study, I included many categories of the homeless population in my effort to understand the homelessness phenomenon from their point of view. Stroick (2007), believed that allowing a better understanding of the phenomenon offers hope for more success (Hubac & Stroick, 2007). Because research is an efficient tool for learning, and problem-solving (Polit & Beck, 2014), my seeking for more study is an effort in the right direction.

In exploring the pathways to homelessness, researchers identified the roommate factor as a route in and out of homelessness in Calgary (Jone, Shier & Graham, 2012). There were few existing standards or guidelines for the homeless facility service providers for effective case management of the homeless population (Milaney, 2012). Facility service providers need professional training to provide appropriate (tailored) service or prescription to an individual's case (Milaney, 2012). While some instances may require permanent housing support, some do not. Promoting sector collaboration and running homeless facility by trained professionals could reduce barriers to success (Milaney, 2012). Based on the evidence discussed above, providing service by trained professionals could contribute to success, and through further research, more lessons could be learned. Any additional knowledge learned could support the basis for

appropriate training.

Milaney (2012), believed that adopting six dimensions of practice could increase success in homelessness service provision. The six dimensions are:

- Cooperation and collaboration of related sectors in homelessness service provision.
- Tailoring service delivery to person-centered to meet an individual need (Milaney, 2012).
- Flexibility and accommodating culture or culture-sensitive.
- Advocates to establish a close relationship with the homeless to provide adequately an appropriate advocacy.
- Effective, ethical facility management, and communication (Milaney, 2012).
- Strategy for outcome evaluation, adequate provision of support services and staff training (Milaney, 2012).

Although, this researcher may have contributed to more knowledge; however, the amount of knowledge gained could be limited because, homelessness population has not ceased to rise in the city and nation. Having learned from this study that adopting six dimensions described above and tailoring might help; in my study, I learned more lessons, and I found that my results aligned with some of these claims above.

To improve the health situation of those experiencing homelessness; service providers adopted an idea of a student-run clinic (SRC) to provide health care for the homeless (Campbell, Gibson, O'Neill & Thurston, 2013). SRC had many drawbacks. Some of the setbacks were the lack of continuity of the clinic because SRC was not always open to provide health care for the homeless. The clinic was only open once a week; so service-

time was not sufficient to provide adequate care (Campbell et al., 2013). Moreover, some homeless persons were excluded from care because of their locations and distance from the clinic. Students may be inexperienced and therefore, possess limited knowledge (Campbell et al., 2013). Therefore, the quality of service provided may not be adequate; unless experienced medical practitioners supervise them. However, having an SRC provide service to those in a homeless situation is better than not having care at all (Campbell et al., 2013). But, it makes sense to say, if a student-run clinic was not good enough for a population living in homes; then, it might not be sufficient for the homeless population either. Having SRC services supervised by experienced practitioners could improve the quality of care (Campbell et al., 2013). Therefore, realizing a gap in the SRC effort offers hope for better homeless strategies including research, and this could provide a solution to better homeless facility care.

In the process of ensuring that all are safe and healthy, housing remains priority one. Researchers indicated that research has already impacted housing policy as well as the health practice, although the rise in homelessness continues. Research yet matters, and it holds the key to a Canadian legislative solution to homelessness (Gaetz, 2013). Canadian First nation population living in urban areas are increasingly becoming homeless (Awosoga et al., 2013). While there is a staggering figure of nightly homelessness in Canada, it is alarming that nearly seven percent of the homeless are of the First nations when the national population of First nation is 0.78%. Researchers and homeless agencies were invited to direct their research energy towards finding the solution to the issues surrounding homelessness in Canada (Awosoga et al., 2013). Gaetz (2013), encouraged

and many other researchers called for more research studies, and these invitations prompted my future study. Research is necessary because, a lingering homelessness phenomenon regardless of all policies, strategies and efforts invested towards ending it is a suggestion that more lessons are essential to achieving more success. Through my study, I hope to learn more lesson by sharing the experience of the participating groups of those affected by a qualitative study. It is logical to say if learning lessons from the experience of a portion of those experiencing homelessness offers hope for a good understanding of the situation (Aubry, et al., 2014; Donahue et al., 2013; Osuji, 2009). Then, learning a lesson from the diverse participating groups of those involved offers more hope for better understanding. This logic is mainly argued this way because homelessness is taking a diversity toll (Donahue et al., 2013; Aubry, et al., 2014).

There is a continuous rising trend of homeless population in Calgary and Canada daily and annually. A research study and data on national homelessness published in 2013 indicated that. The details of this fact are located in the Introduction There was an acute shortage of affordable houses in Canada/Calgary before 2013, and while housing prices are continually rising, affordable homes are scarce (Gaetz, 2013). Some of those experiencing homelessness were hard to house; however; Gaetz suggested that even the most chronically homeless individual, when placed in housing or facility with the necessary support, will not opt to quit living in a house. Based on this evidence, more knowledge could lead to a better understanding, and that could contribute to the solution process.

Also, adequate housing usually improves the health of those affected. When a person

experiencing homelessness are housed, if other issues are associated with the person, such as addiction, he or she will not refuse correction, and reconnection (re-integrate) with the community (Gaetz, 2013). With the thoughts above in mind, keeping people out of homelessness situation offers hope to keep more people out of substance abuse, and better health. Therefore, understanding the homelessness phenomenon well could lead to better strategies to solve the homelessness problem, which could help in keeping people out of addictions. If more knowledge is necessary, then research holds the key to increasing the knowledge and understanding, as a standard problem-solving tool (Polit & Beck, 2014). Through my study, I sought to get to the root of homelessness in Calgary by gaining an understanding of homelessness from the viewpoint of as many as those involved as possible. The aim is to see if new lessons are there to be learned that could add to the body of homelessness literature in the city to assist in keeping people out of the street, improve the homelessness service delivery, and other strategies geared at ending homelessness in Calgary. These are the significant positive social changes my study could provide.

Opinion polls survey suggested that Canadians are becoming comfortable with homelessness in their midst. (Gaetz, 2013). The non-research national opinion poll conducted by the Salvation Army in 2011 suggested that the public believe that people who are homeless chose to be so. This belief has made many people to no longer care (Gaetz, 2013). Although, I do not entirely agree with the statement that Canadians were becoming comfortable with homelessness because the evidence discussed in my proposal testified that significant efforts have been made in attempts to solve the problem of

homelessness in Calgary. And discouragingly, there has been a limited success. However, gaining more knowledge about the phenomenon through research and sharing it is a way of informing all concerned better. And a better understanding could lead to more successful strategies.

In all the studies reviewed, only a few attempted to get the perspective of some fractions of the homeless population about how they become homeless people. The qualitative studies of Aubry et al. (2014), explored the understanding of homelessness from the perspective of youth. Graham, Jones, and Shier (2011) explored an understanding of homelessness from the perspectives of the employed people in a homeless situation. The authors found that the homeless service providers are helping those involved in advocacy and in connecting to services. Graham et al. (2011) suggested further exploratory studies on the relationship between the homeless service providers and service receivers. Also, the authors encouraged further studies on the homeless social relationships and its contributions to those in a homeless situation. They indicated a need for more studies to access the service delivery of the homeless service providers. Additionally, Graham et al. (2011) suggested more studies to discover other social pathways into homelessness. Osuji (2009), explored the understanding of the meaning of existing homelessness among women without children. While quantitative studies or estimates are necessary aspects of the solution process, it also requires the involvement of all groups of those experiencing homelessness in research for more lessons to be learned. A qualitative intervention such as my proposed study is deemed necessary.

There is diversity in homelessness. Aubry et al. (2014), identified diversity in

homelessness and explored how youth ended up homeless. While Osuji (2009), obtained data on understanding the experience of the existing homelessness among women without children. Through my study, I obtained many categories of the homeless population viewpoints; especially those whose voices are yet to be heard in the homelessness research (Aubry et al., 2014). I wondered whether there are lessons yet to be learned, especially from the homeless persons whose voices require being heard. My goal is to see if learning more lessons about homelessness in Canada/Calgary could be useful in designing more appropriate strategies that could assist in achieving more success. I considered my study worthwhile because, it included many groups of those in homelessness situation to be part of the solution, which Aubry et al. (2014), encouraged. Researchers have indicated a need to develop an improved homeless service delivery system. An appropriate homeless service delivery system such as, building the capacity of the community and the organization, providing the right support services and technical assistance, plays a decisive role in homeless service delivery (Aubry et al., 2014). Aubry et al. believed that scarce housing, failing to include recent homeless individuals in the program service delivery, absence of homeless services within some communities are setbacks to success in ending homelessness in Canada (Aubry et al., 2014). With the thought above in mind, if these drawbacks were affecting success in ending homelessness, then eliminating them might contribute to its success. Through research, more lessons are possible (Aubry et al., 2014). In my study, I analyzed the results in the synthesis of the existing studies to see if there is any alignment with these claims, or if diversity in homelessness has new lessons to teach all concerned.

In a space of five years (from 2009 to 2013), the demand for more houses increased, moving from 8,500 to above 20,000. It was a 135% increase. The number of housing units requiring renovation rose from 16,878 to 23,568, a 40% increase, in the same period in Canada (Gaetze et al., 2014). This trend could be interpreted to mean that while many are yet to find homes in Calgary, the number of decent homes also are reducing. And this could decrease the number of affordable houses further, which could result in success delay at ending homelessness in the city.

The studies of Aubry et al. (2014), Graham et al. (2011), and Osuji (2009) involved some fractions of the homeless individuals in finding a solution to homelessness to add to the host of quantitative studies and estimates on the homelessness phenomenon. In my research, I involved the homeless described in pages three, 10, and 14 of this document (giving voice to as many of the affected as possible), to learn more lessons if they are there to be learned.

### **Chapter Summary**

In the literature synthesis, I have described the meaning and definition of homelessness, the population experiencing homelessness, and the economic burden of homelessness to the government. I discussed the prevalence of homelessness, its causes, consequence, and service providers. Also, I explained the intervention made in the attempts to end homelessness by way of research, practice, and management. It can be argued that it is pertinent and appropriate that the academia, government, civic organizations, and communities take more collaborative actions to address the gaps in the existing literature (Jakubec et al., 2012). In my review of the homeless literature I found

that homelessness is an issue of huge concern to the city and nation because of its impact on the government revenue, people involved and the community at large. The economic burden of homelessness in Calgary is high, and an average cost of providing service to those in a homeless situation is 5 billion dollars each year (Gaetz et al., 2009; Gaetz et al., 2013). Those in homeless situation experience a high prevalence of health issues Such as community-acquired strain of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), disease outbreak, alcohol abuse (Basra et al., 2010; Church et al., 2011; Gilbert et al., 2006; Frankish et al., 2005, 2009). About 93% of those experiencing homelessness manifest symptoms of mental illness (Ganesh, 2013). Homeless service providers have made more success at lowering the population of people sleeping rough on the street; however, getting those involved into permanent homes has not been as successful (Holloway, 2012). Recent researchers on the phenomenon have indicated a continuous increase in the population of those in homelessness situation. One of the gaps noted by researchers was the need to conduct more research (Aubry et al., 2014; Awosoga et al., 2013; Gaetz, 2013; Jakubec, et al., 2012; Komarnicki, 2014). More investigation, especially qualitative research that would include the problem (i.e., the voices of those affected) in finding the solution (Blumer, 1969, p. 56). Therefore, I explored the meaning of homelessness from the eyes of those in homeless situations in Calgary; in search of a solution to homelessness, which threatens the safety and health of those involved and that of the community. Next, I discussed the method that I used to perform this study in chapter three.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

Authorities in charge of homelessness have performed many studies and adopted many strategies to end homelessness in Calgary. However, the population of the homeless continues to rise. The most recent studies conducted by Aubry et al. (2014) and Komarnicki (2014) have shown that homelessness has grown continuously for over two decades. Aubry et al. (2014) stated that most studies of HF interventions have been conducted in the United States, and that more studies are needed of HF interventions in Canada. Homelessness is a public health issue, and its variables such as mental illness and addiction are huge public health challenges (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry, & Patel, 2007). Therefore, homelessness is a public health problem of concern that requires more studies to understand the phenomenon better. The purpose of this study was to explore how diverse groups of those in homelessness situations view homelessness and what homelessness means to them. In this study, I involved Canadian citizens from diverse backgrounds who are in homeless situation in finding ways to end homelessness in Calgary, and I tapped knowledge from the participants' homelessness experiences. I used a qualitative design and took a phenomenological approach. In this chapter, I present the methods, procedures for data collection, sampling method, and sampling rationale. I also give account of the ethical protections I put in place, discuss the participants, and present measures, study validity, and verification of findings.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

Many interventions, policies, and strategies have been geared at ending

homelessness in Calgary, but all researchers have indicated a continuous rise in the population of the homeless in the city for over two decades (Awosoga et al., 2013; Aubry, et al., 2014; Gaetz, 2013; Komarnicki, 2014). Researchers, therefore, have called for more research studies to understand the phenomenon better (Awosoga et al., 2013; Aubry, et al., 2014; Gaetz, 2013; Komarnicki, 2014). I undertook this study out of curiosity about the lived experiences of people in homeless situation. I asked: What are the life events that led people in homeless situations into homelessness? What are the recommendations of individuals experiencing homelessness on how they could overcome homelessness? I chose to use a phenomenological approach to perform this study because it assisted me in gaining an understanding of homelessness from the perspectives of different demographics of those experiencing homelessness. I used the experiences and responses of the participants only as data and information for analysis, and did not include my experiences or viewpoints. The timeframe for data collection was relatively long, with interviews lasting 30 to 90 minutes per participant (see Cresswell, 2011; Newton & Rudestam, 2007). Phenomenological studies offer the researcher an opportunity to understand the experiences and the way things presents themselves to study participants. The phenomenological method allows a researcher to provide an account of the subject's perspectives of an experience (Sokolowski, 2000). Such a study highlights what Holstein and Gubrium (1984) described as person's lived experience. The authors described the phenomenological study as involving the description, interpretation, and critical self-reflection of the world as it is (Manen, 1990). I expected to discover the intentional notion, and conscious homelessness experiencing sharing of

the participants and the meaning they attached to homelessness, which is the essence of my investigation (Holstein & Gubrium, 1984). Crotty (1998), declared that phenomenology returns researchers “back to the things themselves” because it makes sense out of the phenomenon or subject directly and immediately from the person that experiences it (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.39).

My objective in this study was to comprehend homelessness from the diverse perspectives of the participants experiencing homelessness. Since the phenomenological method permits a researcher to achieve that, I determined it was the most appropriate approach for this study. The method assisted me in understanding the meanings those experiencing homelessness gave to their experiences (Schwandt, 2000).

Phenomenology offers two approaches: empirical and heuristic. In empirical phenomenology, the researcher uses open-ended interview questions to collect data from respondents. In this study, the respondents were those experiencing homelessness in a shelter facility. Some of the participants’ responses were naïve (responses missing accuracy or point), but I used a reflexive interpretation of the participants’ shared experience for the description of the structure of their experiences (see Kaam, 1966; Moustakas, 1994; Newton & Rudestam, 2007) And used triangulation to further understand meaning of such expression. When those experiencing homelessness feel that their voices matter in solving this problem and that they have been heard, they are most likely to cooperate (motivated) with the service providers in strategies directed at assisting them out of their homelessness. Through my research, I hoped to gather data

that could add to existing data in order to address a current gap in the qualitative literature on this issue (see Awosoga et al., 2013).

Phenomenology is the study of a phenomenon or a subject; it is a theory of mind that identifies the difference between descriptive psychology and genetic psychology (Brentano, 1995; Smith, 2013). Phenomenological information provides the analytical description of the mental phenomena, whereas neuroscience provides the biological and physical causes of mental phenomena (Brentano, 1995; Smith, 2013). Cultural may affect a phenomenological study because culture influences an individual's experience by way of language, thought, and motivation (Brentano, 1995; Smith, 2013). Ontology or philosophy of the mind involves the study of the mental activities of the mind, which includes perception, thought, imagination, meaning, emotion, volition, and action of how environmental causes led to experience (Smith, 2013). I gained knowledge by inquiring into the perception of those experiencing homelessness, the meaning they attached to their experiences, how they survived these experiences, and their volition. I explored the environmental causes that led to their situation, and how they felt when those concerned provide them sustainable help. Also, my goal was to share with them the lessons they learned from their experience.

In phenomenological study, a researcher obtains the conscious experience or the intentions of an individual as she or he experiences it, analyzes the varieties of the experiences, examines the meaning and the forms of expectation (what the homeless believe that can be the solution). To ensure that participants shared their experiences freely and fully, I tried to be as dynamic as possible to provoke the participants'

perception, thought, imagination, emotion, volition, and action (see Smith, 2013).

*Intentionality* and *consciousness* describe the mental state of an individual; therefore, the mindset of a participant at the time of interview becomes the center of phenomenological study (Searle, 1983; Mind, 1991). In modern times, consciousness is considered a statement or proposition or an individual's opinion (Husserl, 1970), and intentionality means the satisfaction derived from the declaration (Searle, 1993). Searle (1993) recognized consciousness manifested in attitude, beliefs, sensitivity (seeing, feeling, hearing, thinking, perception) and characteristic or identity of a person as a natural science (neuroscience); however, other philosophers have framed phenomenology as going beyond the science of nature to include bracketing. Bracketing principle demands that the researcher be as neutral as possible in providing honest, philosophical, logical interpretation of the participants' lived experiences as they were shared (Heidegger, 1982.; Sartre, n.d.; Merleau-Ponty, n.d.). Bracketing makes room for the evolution of other theories about how individuals gain their experiences based on how their brain functions (Heidegger, 1982; Sartre, n.d.; Merleau-Ponty, n.d.). In my study, I used bracketing to ensure that my opinion would not be included in the data analysis and phenomenology to form the methodology of this study. Next is a discussion about phenomenological study pioneers and contributors

Many philosophers have made great contributions to phenomenological theory. Among the founding fathers of phenomenology are Heidegger, Husserl, Gottlob, Russell, Wittgenstein, and Ryle. Heidegger identified the concept of mind as the theory of phenomenology in language theory; the relationship between the mind and the body was

Husserl's idea (Husserl, 1913, 1920). Husserl was the first to suggest that phenomenology involves not just the mind, but also the body. He argued that the mind and the body have a relationship because they cannot exist separately without each other. Initially, phenomenological researchers argued that the mind and the body were two distinct subjects; the body being the physical properties of an individual and mind consisting mainly of thought, seeing and feeling (Descartes, 1641). While researchers have described the mental state as a consciousness and intentionality, natural science consists of mass, forces, and physical objects. An example of force is gravity. Later on, Modern researchers argued that phenomenological study is neither the study of just the mind nor body; but rather a study of the mind and body problem; the two cannot be separated because they exist together (Bretano, 1995; Husserl, 1913, 1920). From the theoretical background of phenomenology, it is clear that my study followed empirical phenomenology, including bracketing, as the study approach. I only obtained the experience of the participants as they shared them, and reflexively interpreted the participants' experience to describe the structure of their lived experiences. I did not include my opinions. I was as neutral as possible in collecting and analyzing the data (see Kaam, 1966; Moustakas, 1994; Newton & Rudestam, 2007; Blackwell, 2015).

### **Role of the Researcher**

I performed this study, collected my data through in-depth interviews, and did not include my opinions or experience in my data analysis. I gathered data from those who stay in a shelter because, in a shelter, they are better protected than when they are on the street by themselves. In this way, I did not take advantage of the situation of the subjects

(see Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006). I had no kind of relationship with any of my participants, and I was neither a supervisor nor an instructor to any. It was part of my obligation to create a conducive environment for the interview, and I ensured that the place where I conducted the interviews was airy and warm enough for a comfortable meeting (see Boyce & Neale, 2006). Also, I ensured that there were no obstructions, and that the technical systems were pretested in advance and before the start of the interview to avoid distractions. I approached the interviews with positive mind and attitude, and was as friendly as I could (see Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006). I used many modes of verification such as crosschecking or triangulation, voice recording, and member checking to clarify information that appeared unclear or incorrect. One colleague who is knowledgeable in qualitative methodology and one external mentor reviewed my study (see Creswell, 2011). I also went further and obtained the help of an external professor who checked further for biases and pitfalls. I provided a detailed presentation of the data transcription in the study (see Creswell, 2011). No single entity or agency sponsored my research, and I have no conflicting interests in this study. Because my participants spent between 30 and 90 minutes in this meeting with me, I planned to give an agency staff \$10 to provide water for the participant, but in the end, they preferred to drink water from the agency water fountain. The reason for using an agency staff to get the water was to further guarantee the participants' safety (see Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006). I also gave each participant a \$10 Subway gift card after the interview. I ensured that I avoided questions that would lead to *yes* or *no* answers, and rather used open-ended questions such as asking *how* or *what*. I avoided stimulus comments to prevent

putting words into the mouth of the interviewees (see Boyce & Neale, 2006). Also, I ensured that I used a facility that has a client counselling treatment system in case any of the participants needed additional emotional support after the meetings (see Boyce & Neale, 2006; Blackwell, 2015).

### **Methodology**

I followed a phenomenological approach to perform this study, and every step took to conduct this study was clearly written with everyday language in the proposal and methodology section. Also, I cited all materials that I used for conducting this study in the text and referenced them appropriately following APA style in the bibliography section.

I adopted both the principles of retrieving, analyzing and interpreting of the subjects' homelessness experience from the perspectives of those experiencing homelessness (see Communication Theory, n.d.). The principles of retrieving, and interpreting describe the theory of hermeneutics (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and the phenomenological method defines the process of conducting this study (Creswell, 2007, p.112). It assisted me to understand homelessness from the perspectives of the participants in homeless situation; this was what Blumer (1969), described as seeing a situation the way the actor sees it (Blumer, 1969, p. 56). To achieve this goal and its objective, I employed social cognitive constructs because this study is more a social problem that threatens the community health. Through this study, which involves an interaction between the affected and the researcher, I unearthed more lessons from the various perspectives of those in a homeless situation.

### **Participants Selection Logic**

Given that random sampling is not the best method for a qualitative study, to ensure that I interview the samples of relevant categories, I used a purposeful or criterion method of sampling to include diverse populations of those experiencing homelessness for my samples. I selected participants who can provide sufficient information worthy of a satisfactory outcome. I recruited participants through poster announcement that I placed at strategic places where those experiencing homelessness can see. They must be adult 18 years old and above and not older than 65 years old. The subjects were willing to participate voluntarily, without any force and no penalty was given to any who is not interested in participating. I used the four research questions to form the lead themes of the results, discussion, and the study analysis. The themes that emerged under each research question represent the sub-themes (Katz, 1995; Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.107). I used 15 participants Sample size was 15 ( $n=15$ ). I used a criterion sampling method for selecting a site and for recruiting the participants. I collected data through in-person interviews with participants (Creswell, 2011, p. 178), in a natural environment (shelter).

I recruited 15 participants instead of the standard of 10, or fewer typical for a phenomenological study (Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006). The sample size of phenomenological study can vary depending on the subject under study (Creswell, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2013; Thomas, 2016). Duke (1984) stated that in phenomenological studies, samples sizes could range between three and 300 in number based on the phenomenon of investigation. Also, Harper (2015) informed that the sample size of a

phenomenological study is not the most important concern about a phenomenological study. My sample size also gave a room for triangulation (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.115).

It is usually not the best to determine the sample size of a phenomenological study in advance. I continued the data collection until I hit a saturation point, which evolved as the data collection progressed (Boyce & Neale, 2006). A saturation point is a point at which the data started repeating. Thus, the actual sample size of the subjects was 15 ( $n=15$ ) (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.107; Thomas, 2016). These data allowed room for a wider experience perspective, that justified the emerging themes and increased the validity of the study (Creswell, 2011, p. 191). The information, ideas, or opinions the participants will generate about their homelessness experience started repeating after 10 interviews.

I did not know the point of data redundancy in advance, and it unfolded as the data collection progressed (Creswell, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2013; Thomas, 2016; Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.108). Therefore, I determine the point of redundancy or saturation during the meetings, and that formed actual sample size ( $n=15$ ) of this study (Creswell, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2013; Thomas, 2016). Also, since the homeless sometimes experience some personality disorders, psychological issues, or mental health problems, that could affect the answers to the questions by the participants (Aschenguru & Seage, 2008, p.272). I used a sample size of 15 ( $n=15$ ) to obtain enough data worthy of sound analysis and to reduce bias. I validated the emerging themes further using Member-checking to reduce bias. For this reason, if it is feasible, I sent the emerging ideas and the

analyzed information to the participants for accuracy checking (Creswell, 2011, p. 191). I used hand coding and cognitive knowledge for data sorting, thematic grouping, categories assembling, and analysis of the data transcription. The use of data analysis software was not necessary. I analyzed only the significant statements of the participants that were prominent among the themes were, to generate meaning from the data that I collected (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2011, p. 184). I chose my samples purposefully or I selected samples based on a criterion that reflected the homeless participants from diverse backgrounds who can provide sufficient information that can allow me an excellent data analysis that can help me to generate a significant outcome. This kind of sampling is economical, convenient, flexible, easy, and quick to use.

#### **Instrumentation (Researcher-Developed Instruments)**

I used an open-ended interview for data collection. I started with a few central questions, followed by sub-questions that evolved as the interview progressed, depending on the participants' response. My open-ended semi-structured questions are located in the interview questions in appendix A. I collected data from one primary group of the homeless described above as homeless, selected from a major homeless agency in the city. I sampled participants from the people in homeless situation from a diverse group. Following a systematic process, I collected, presented, discussed, analyzed and concluded my study using the data that I collected from participant only. I ensured that I made the data collection environment-friendly and conducive for the subjects to achieve positive feeling and open experience sharing (Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006). I ensured that my data gathering tools such as voice recording and power system (socket and power

plug) are in good working condition before the interview session. Yet, I ran out of battery on one occasion and memory space of the voice recorder on two occasions. In addition to voice recording, I took notes during the interview, to ensure completeness and accuracy (Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006). Additionally, I ensured that I crosscheck correctness with the participants before leaving or come back to participants to verify the transcribed data. (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Through in-person interviews only, I gathered information on the participants' past homelessness experience. Also, it offered me the flexibility that I needed to ask open-ended questions and to focus or steer the line of questioning (Creswell, 2011, p. 179). It was possible that my presence could have biased the participants' responses to the questions; thereby, reducing the accuracy of the data. I considered the use of reflexivity as important in this study because it is about gaining an understanding of the participant's mind or perception about their homelessness experience. There are chances that some shared experience may not be accurate, reminding us that accuracy is not the focus of a phenomenological study; rather, the focus is to understand the meaning the participants attached to their experience (Kaam, 1966; Moustakas, 1994; Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.40). Also, through triangulation, I got to gain an understanding of words from one participant that missed the point from other participants.

### **Procedures for Participant Selection and Data Collection**

The first thing that I did before collecting data at the site was to send a mail request for data collection, and follow it up with telephone call to make an appointment

Next I scheduled an appointment with the officer/s in-charge delivered the proposal

in person, and seized the opportunity to explain the study, and its goal, and answered their questions directly, and inquire about the procedure for meeting clients, the ‘do’s and don’ts” and the acceptable time duration and date. On acceptance of an agency to partner with me, I presented my poster to agency representative and ask for permission and direction to post it to strategic places that are accessible to the community and actually, posted it there. Also, I requested for a permission to use a volunteer room and secure room for meetings with participants on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 9hr.00 to 16hr.00. Some days I arrived early and some days I arrived a bit late because, I have to travel 250km to get to the site. Some days it was dark, and too windy, some days it as too windy and too foggy, or snowed.

I visited the site on Mondays and Wednesday and other days that suited the participants. I stayed in the volunteer room, and secure room and spoke with the interested participants directly. My prior meetings with the subjects before the interview provided room for interactive questions, familiarization with the participants: I explained to them what the study was all about, what was involved, the activities that took place, such as, audio recording, voluntary participation, and voluntary withdrawal any time they want to withdraw from participating. I assured them that no harm or risk is meant, or involved, except emotional feeling that could occur during experience sharing. A counselor was available on the days of our meeting to assist any member that might need counseling during or after meetings. I informed them the days that I was present at the site Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from 900hr. to 1600hr. to meet with participants. I informed the subjects to indicate by hand waving during interviews whenever they wish to stop for

a break or to end the interview and immediately seek for counseling in the counseling office if they need to, and to come back after counseling to collect the \$10 subway gift card that I promised. During meetings, interested participants were informed to submit their initials and date and times they would come for interview and to collect and initial informed consent. I made up names (pseudonym, A for Abe) for the subjects during presentation to further protect participants' privacy and confidentiality.

I was on site on the days of meeting with participants from 9hr.00 to 16hr.00. My prior meetings with the participants before the interview created opportunities for researcher and the subjects to get familiar with each other. Interested participants who returned for interview received a letter of informed consent form. I issued the documents to the subjects, read and explained the content and requested them to ask questions if they have any. I used one agency only as my partner.

I used the interviews for data collection, using open-ended and semi-structured questions to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' view of their experiences. The interviews occurred in a natural setting (in the shelter). I conducted the interviews at the participants' choice of date and time, and I was as appropriate and feasible as possible. I provided this flexibility to the participants to further re-assure them that participation is voluntary and the study is for a peaceful purpose that would benefit them. The study took a worldview because I sought to know the entire homelessness experience of the participants in a holistic way. The participants' view about their homeless experience is the focus of my data gathering technique. I collected data once from each participant, and I took the note of the interviews. Also, I recorded it with voice recorder,

to increase accuracy. The transcript of the interview, was cross-checked with the participants immediately after the interview and when I return for validation. I transcribed verbatim audio-taped data.

A maximum of three participants were interviewed each day of data collection. There were four central questions followed with three to four interview questions that evolved depending on each participant's response. And following the format of "what and how." The format offers room for open-ended responses, the initial response determining the follow-up question to be asked.

The data was verified with the participants immediately after the interview and when I returned at a later date. Also, I obtained triangulation from colleagues, external expert, my Chair and Committee for my writing and for understanding the words that one participant could not clearly express, using other participants' clear expressions of same or similar experience (Creswell, 2011, p.191).

I transcribed audio-taped data verbatim, and analyzed it using hand coding and text analyzing software system, as necessary I analyzed the data using hand coding and cognitive only. The use of software text analyzing system was not necessary. Using hand coding worked better so. I used only hand coding, and no software was used.

I transported raw data and all data collection notes and voice recorder in a safe box locked with key, then, in a private room and cabinet with lock, where I have absolute control. My personal computer is locked with password, which I alone can access. I kept the data that I collected in a locked and secured place, and I will keep it for five years before I destroy it. I used safe box to securely move or transport data from site to

my home and at home it remains securely lock in a safe in a private room.

### **Data Analysis**

I took notes during the interview and recorded it with a voice recorder to increase accuracy. I transcribed the transcript verbatim, and I sorted, coded assembled and analyzed the data using the hand, reflexive, and cognitive method. I did not use the HyperResearch or NVIVO for data analysis because, it was not essential. I had colleagues and an external expert/advisor who assisted me in making sure that I maintain accuracy in data transcription, synthesis, analysis, and discussion (Creswell, 2011, p.189).

In situations where some experience of the participants was naive, I collected the data and reflexively interpreted it to identify the structure of the pattern, which is a potential source of bias (Kaam, 1966; Moustakas, 1994; Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.40).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

I understood that validity and reliability in a qualitative study are rated differently from quantitative validity and reliability. A qualitative study may be valid, but not reliable (inconsistent response) (Creswell, 2011, p.190). The focus of my qualitative research is to ensure that it is credible, transferable, dependable, and able to be confirmed (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.112). To conduct a reliable study, it is a requirement that the researcher ensures that another person could replicate the study under similar conditions. I was trained to collect data via interviewing, and I received, recorded and translated information in a systematic manner. Another researcher can generate the same themes and arrive at the same conclusion if the approach is replicated in conducting the

same research (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.113).

This investigation being a qualitative study, the generalizability of the survey is not guaranteed; rather, the findings of this study may be relevant depending on the perspective of the person who wants to use the result (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.102). However, generalizability could be limited on the grounds that participants were a representation of Canadian citizens who are experiencing homelessness in Calgary who held from diverse ethno-racial descent. Externally valid outcome means that the findings can be generalizable. The participants' in-depth, detailed responses made the study more transferable to other settings. However, moderate generalizability is possible with the result of this study, but any such generalizability must be based on the individual's context and the intended use by the user (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.112). To help me increase the validity of this study, I used rich or full texts to describe my findings (Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006; Creswell, 2011, p.191).

I used my proposal and dissertation class discussions to form a database that I used to document all steps that I took in conducting this study (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2011, p.190). I used a procedure that is similar to those utilized in the past by other researchers, to increase reliability (Creswell, 2011, p.190; Gibbs, 2007). Other actions that I took to support the validity of this study were using triangulation or crosschecking, and member checking to increase accuracy. I further used pattern and theme for the study analysis and I described the research result in full (Blackwell, 2015; Boyce, & Neale, 2006). Additionally, I included discrepant and negative information that I obtained from the themes of the result to increase the trustworthiness of the study. I tried as much as

possible to spend time with the study participants in the study environment, interacted and mingled with them. It was useful for a familiarization purposes (getting to know them), and I used other researchers to scrutinize my study (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Creswell, 2011, p.190). I crosschecked the interview transcription with the participants for correction, and I requested them for approval to ensure agreement on the information that I utilized for the analysis.

I used many dimensions of verification processes such as crosschecking or triangulation, voice recording, and member checking to clarify information that appeared unclear or incorrect. I had one colleague who is knowledgeable in the qualitative study and one external mentor review my study (Creswell, 2011, p.191). I secured the help of an external professor checking further for biases and pitfalls. I provided a detailed presentation of the data transcription in the study (Creswell, 2011, p.190).

### **Ethical Procedures**

The ethics of conducting research involving the human subjects demand that all ethical protocols and guidelines be followed to the letter. I was open to the participants, and I welcomed the participants warmly when meeting them. I prepared a written consent form in everyday language, read and interpreted it to the subjects, and ensured that they understood it completely. I encouraged them to ask questions if there are. I informed them that participation was voluntary and that they could quit at any time they wish, without explanation. I assured them that the study is for a peaceful purpose, and no harm was intended or anticipated; although, sharing their experiences could arouse painful emotional feeling (Creswell, 2013, p.89). Since, a painful emotional feeling is a minor

risk that is way too small compared to the benefit of this study; ethical guideline allows that (Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006; Drumond, 2009;). The facility partner that have counselling sections or counselling referrals to assist any member that needs counselling during and after our meeting. I informed them from the beginning that only the participants will receive a treat. I chose to travel to meet them in their natural environment (facility) than to have them move to increase their safety and reduce risks. I let the participants know when the study will commence, the duration of the interview, and what I expected of them. Moreover, I informed them about my plan to record their conversation with a voice recorder, and to take notes. I promised the participants that I will not use the transcript for analysis without confirming with them that the information is correct. Additionally, I assured and promised the participants that I cannot reveal their identity in the discussion or reporting (confidential) because, I do not know it and they can only use initials as identity in all meetings and for interview. and I kept all data under lock and key to protect the participants' confidentiality in a safe. I followed APA style in reporting, and ensured that I referenced and correctly cited all books, videos, and articles that I consulted (Creswell, 2013, p.92). I ensured that the data are accurate and I interpreted the data accurately as much as possible (Creswell, 2013, p.91). Before embarking on this study, I sent a copy of the survey proposal to the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) to request for and obtained an approval of my research since it involves primary data collection from vulnerable human subjects (Creswell, 2013, p.91). In November 2015, I renewed my training on research on a human subject and certificate with the National Institute of Health. I requested the participants not to disclose their '

identities to me (participants used initials only in all meetings and communications). I kept the data that I collected in a secured safe and I will keep it for five years before destroying it.

### **Chapter Summary**

In Chapter 3, I have stated clearly the method I used to ethically and credibly conduct this homelessness study that is an important public health concern. I described the process fully in the research methods, design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and participant selection logic. Also, I discussed that in the instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection sections. I further delineated the procedure in the data analysis plan, issue of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. The next action after the University Research Review (URR) approved this study was that I scheduled for an oral defense of my proposal and I successfully defended it. Then, I sought the Walden University Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval and obtained it before proceeding with the data collection. I presented a detailed result of the data that I collected in Chapter 4. I provided the discussion, interpretation and conclusion of this study in Chapter five.

## Chapter 4

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore how those experiencing homelessness view homelessness and what homelessness means to them. I gathered data from interviews with participants in homeless situations about their lived experiences. My objective was to follow four research questions to learn from the perspectives of those in homeless situation and to gain knowledge about the homelessness phenomenon. The research questions that supported the objectives of this study were:

- ❖ RQ1. What are the lived experiences of people in homeless situation?
- ❖ RQ2. What are the life events that led people in homeless situation into homelessness?
- ❖ RQ3. How would you describe a shelter that would meet your shelter needs?
- ❖ RQ4. What are the recommendations of individuals experiencing homelessness on how they could overcome homelessness?

My aim was to see whether there are new or additional lessons to learn from the perspectives of those experiencing homelessness that can be used to better inform the concerned authorities. I contend that better understanding could prompt improved strategies and policy decisions geared at ending homelessness (see Awosoga et al., 2013; Frankish, Hwang & Quantz, 2009; Hubac & Stroick, 2007; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013). Involving those experiencing homelessness in finding a solution to homelessness is crucial in understanding the phenomenon well (Awosoga et al., 2013;

Gaetz, 2013). While there is no single variable that leads people into homelessness, discrimination, money issues, housing policies, environmental or structural deterrents, and domestic variables all play a role. In what follows, I present the results of the study using tables, figures, and text.

In this chapter, I provide an explanation of the steps that I used for data review and analysis. I described the setting, demography of the participants, and responses to the semi-structured questions. I also discuss data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

### **Data Review and Analysis Steps**

Using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis modified by Moustaka (1994), I performed data analysis and review. In the following subsections, I have described all processes employed for data analysis. I labeled participant responses A to L, and assigned each participant a pseudonym that started with their associated letter. For example, I assigned the pseudonym Abel for participant A and Bold for participant B.

When reviewing the data, I:

1. Considered all participants' statements based on their significance in relation to experience.
2. Noted and voice recorded participants' statements.
3. Made a list of all non-repetitive, non-overlapping invariant statements of the meaning or invariant horizon for all participants' experience responses and formed them into small units.

4. Organized closely-related invariant responses into clusters before placing into themes.
5. Described each participant, synthesized invariant units of meaning, and placed them in themes with some verbatim quotes from the participants' responses.
6. Developed the structure of the text with imaginative variation and reflection of the subjects' responses. Verbatim quotations from the participants' responses were included to support some statements.
7. Described participants' lived experiences and meanings using a composite text and structure pattern. By composite textural-structure, all participants' textural descriptions were integrated into groups or universal textural description.

I also employed a blend of epistemological theories to analyze this data well. This involved line-by-line scrutiny, proofreading and highlighting the texts. Further, I sorted and cut text for coding, identified categories in relation to themes, and compared and contrasted themes (see Bernard, & Ryan, n.d.).

### **Setting**

Owing to ethical considerations, I took the safety, wellbeing, and vulnerability of the participants into primary consideration when determining a safe setting for the interview and data collection. For this reason, the natural setting (shelter) was chosen as the most appropriate environment to conduct this kind of interview. Aside to it being safe and secure, the shelter offered participants safe drinking water, a wash room, a familiar environment, and opportunity for consulting a counsellor if these needs arose during the

interview. No participants desired to talk to a counsellor during or after the interview; however, some of the participants needed water and access to the wash room during the interview. There was no change in personnel as I was the one person that conducted the interviews. There was no change in the office staff arrangement, and no budget cuts or trauma occurred during the interview sessions.

### **Demographics**

All participants were between the ages of 20 and 64. The newest person at the shelter has spent only two days there, while the oldest person at the shelter has spent 21 years being homeless. The projected sample size was 12-18, and I ultimately interviewed 15 participants. The participants were Canadians from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds, namely Caucasians, Africans, members of the First Nations, and Asians. The employed, seniors, family, pregnant woman, adult men and women were among the participants interviewed. I interviewed three participants daily, and the interviews lasted a maximum of 90 minutes and not less than 60 minutes. I asked open-ended interview questions. Interviews took place in the participants' natural environment (shelter). I recorded interviews with a voice recorder and took notes. On one occasion during the interviews, the batteries powering the voice recorder ran out, and on two occasions, the memory space of the recorder got full when the conversation had not ended. On those occasions, I paid more detailed attention to note taking to ensure that no information was missed.

### **Data Collection**

I collected the open-ended interview data using paper notes and a voice recorder. The notes and the voice recorded data were later transcribed into a personal computer

before I hand coded and clustered them into themes. Most interview data were member-checked by the participants immediately after the interviews when I returned to the site at a later day. However, two participants could not be located after many visits to the site to have them complete the member-checking of the transcriptions. It was also necessary to mention that out of the 16 participants I interviewed, one participant did not complete his interview. He was one of the two participants that were not found to member-check the data transcript at a later day. The incomplete interview data was excluded from data analysis. All interview data from 15 participants were included in the data analysis. The time of poster distribution and participants' recruitment offered opportunities for me to develop familiarity with participants. The subjects felt respected that after each interview, and greeted me in a friendly manner with some smiles. Some expressed that they were happy to talk to me and that they would like more studies to be conducted on homelessness to teach people about homelessness because not many people know about homelessness.

### **Data Analysis**

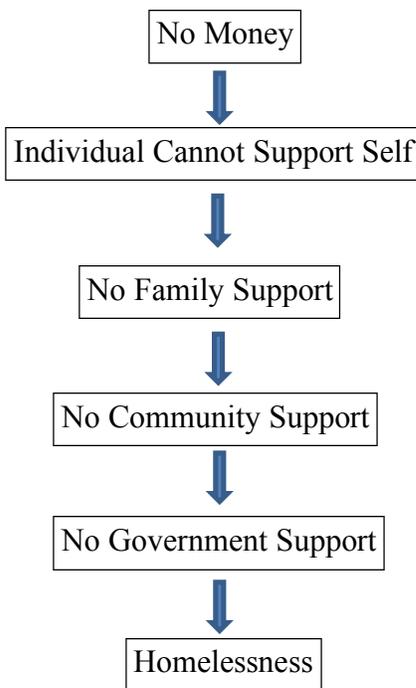
I used a hand coding process for data coding. Cognitive process was used for data sorting to identify significant variables from the interview, coding, themes assembling, category placement, theme clustering, data analysis, and synthesis. And reflexive interpretational approach adopted where necessary. Many themes were developed and organized following the four research questions using table presentation and textural-structural description. However, the themes about the life events or variables contributing to participants' homelessness are shown in Figure 5 as a summary of all the themes. The

prominent themes were: lack of money, home, privacy, and support; discrimination of all kinds; mental illness and addiction; and the need for a review of housing policy that specifically addresses rent and mortgage qualification criteria and house tax and to create awareness of government support systems and the services that they provide. I further sub-grouped the detailed themes and categories, and have presented them using tables and textural-structural pattern in accordance with the principal figures the factors should be addressed to the Alberta government, individuals and families, and service providers. The highlights of the themes organization are located in Table 2.

Table 2

*Themes Organization Outline*

Items	Theme Organization
Row1	Lived Experiences Variables to Homelessness
Row 2	Life Event that Lead People to Homelessness
Row 2a	Government Related Variables
Row 2b	Domestic Related Variables
Row 2c	Shelter Related Variables
Row 3	Shelter that Meets Needs
Row 4	Recommendations



*Figure 5.* Life events that lead people into homelessness.

### **Results**

The homeless experience of the participants was diverse and unique as the participants were unique and different and from diverse backgrounds. There was no single variable that led people into homelessness. Everyone's experience and story was different. And there was no one solution to all their problems. Each problem was unique, so, it requires a tailored solution to get at it appropriately. The participants usually need a lot more than just money, food, and shelter to stand on their feet again. They are in their lowest ebb of self-esteem, hopelessness, and helplessness. Several themes emerged from the data analysis. They were organized into six groups as shown on the tables below. In this analysis, there was no theme that was more important or less important than another because, if it was big enough to put people into homelessness, it is a crucial problem that needs to be solved to get people out of unpleasant situation of homelessness.

Following the four research questions investigated in this study, several themes emerged from the composite participants' perspectives about what their lived experiences were, the variables that led them into homelessness, a shelter that meets the needs of the homeless, and the recommendations of the subjects on how they can overcome homelessness. I organized the themes in four major groups namely, the lived experiences of those experiencing homelessness, life events or variables that lead people into homelessness, which were further sub-grouped into the government, domestic, and shelter related variables; a shelter that meets needs of the participants, and the recommendations of the participants on how they can overcome homelessness. In this

section, there was one figure and seven tables numbered from 2-8. Aside from table 2 that outlined the themes organization, tables 3-8 consist of themes described and supported with verbatim statements of the participants. Table 3 contains the themes of the lived experiences of those experiencing homelessness; table 4 shows the government related variables, table 5 shows the domestic related variables, and table 6 is the shelter related. On table 7, the theme about a shelter that meets the needs of the participants were itemized, and recommendations were displayed on table 8.

Figure 5 displays the life events that led people into homelessness.

Table 3

Lived Experiences of those Experiencing Homelessness

	Government Related Variables	Examples of Participants Statements Quotes that Supported the Variables
Row 1	A Situation Where Someone has Nothing, No Money, Home, Privacy, or Support.	<p>"...having nowhere you call your home"            "It takes away your privacy, you never get your privacy" "It means that you don't have your own place, privacy, it is like running bad luck at that time of your life."</p> <p>"...no job, financial problem, unemployment and underemployment, temporary jobs, no money for bus, food, and everything that you need to live. insufficient income or no income or irregular income to sustain a life, unable to work. palm handling (arms asking), eating from the garbage bin or picking up bottle to survive."            "Left alone "            "...no family, no friend by your side, no support from anywhere"</p>
Row 2	Tough, Difficult Unsafe Situation that subjects Someone to Victimization and Abuse	<p>"Tough, difficulty to get all that you need to live, clothing, housing and anything that you need, not good, very stressful, drive somebody over the edge, hard situations, A situation that is difficult to get out of, something that you don't like, being in helpless situation." "Prone to run into danger and problems"            "subject to misjudge, and name calling, subject to police and society abuse and victimization, disrespected"            "living with some friends, but, it was like a poison, Drug house, the escort (prostitute) the whole environment was poison."</p>
Row 3	A situation of Discrimination	<p>"Racial tension, ...Facing discrimination including racial"            "...why is there a large population of homelessness in your country? there is problem here. there is a real issue, racism, sexism, etc..."</p> <p>"If you have three kids, one of them a doctor, one of them a pilot, one of them a thief, you talk to the one that is a thief, he will not listen because you attitude to him was not right, you can't change him. people are different, and</p>

		<p>need to be treated differently. Your attitude need to be right before he can listen.” “Police sometimes, pick up on a lot of people. they put you into trouble, our color, we get regular abuse for nothing. ...they pay them to give ticket on people, and if you get one ticket, you need a lawyer, jury to help you. All these need money”</p> <p>”If you have a problem with a white guy, they gone pick you up, even if it was the other person who started the problem. Surviving as a black man in Western world is tough. ...discrimination, it is like a food chain.”</p> <p>“... one person will do it and it is okay but, another does it you get kicked out. Some of the staff, if they don’t like you they can make your life hell.”</p> <p>“...government targeting people... it is the government that make people to commit crime”</p> <p>“...there is really, not anything for white women in need of home. ...this place, they don’t want women down here. they don’t want intoxicated women here. There is segregation because, they are women.”</p>
Row 4	Place of Freedom, and no Freedom	<p>“re-gaining your freedom from abusive person and from dangerous environment,”</p> <p>“...whoever that pushed me into homelessness made me to be free”</p> <p>“...rediscovering oneself, new birth, fresh start after losing everything”</p> <p>“left alone” “It is like a jail but, you never committed a crime”</p> <p>“No visitor allowed to keep you company”</p> <p>“There is limited power in the shelter. freedom for people to make best use of their abilities and talents”</p> <p>“It is like jail or military, I have been told many times to go to bed when”</p> <p>“It is like an isolated place. It keeps people isolated from the community.”</p>
Row 5	A Situation of Mental illness, and Addiction	<p>“Lots of schizophrenia, not having medication for Psychiatric problem. Alcoholism and addiction of all kinds, depression, becoming drunk”</p>

### **RQ1. What are the lived experiences of people in homeless situation?**

Many themes were prominent about the lived experiences of the people in homeless situation. The themes are listed as follows: Have nothing: no money, home, privacy, or support; tough, difficult unsafe situation, subject to victimization and abuse; place of freedom and no freedom; mental illness, and addiction, and a situation of discrimination. Each of these themes are described as below, starting with having nothing.

#### **Theme 1. A Situation Where Someone has Nothing, No Money, Home, Privacy, or Support.**

A perspective experience of all participants clearly expressed that in homeless situation someone has nothing. He has no money, home, privacy, and support from anywhere. In situation of homelessness, somebody was not able to support self because, he lacks the capacity in terms of not able to cope with life without a support, money, job, or income. Sometimes, the income was available but, it was not enough to meet the basic needs of an individual including house. He was left alone, had no family or friend by the person's side. Some people experiencing homelessness can work and want to work but, they do not have jobs to work and sustain a living. Some were unable to work because of physical, and mental disability, and old age. Some have zero income and some have a kind of income or benefit, which most times was not sufficient to sustain a living. On the street, a person experiencing homelessness has no privacy where he could do his own thing. He does everything in the open (public). The words listed below were some quotes from participants' own words supporting the expressions above:

“It takes away your privacy, you never get your privacy” “It means that you don't have your own place, privacy, it is like running bad luck at that time of your life.”

“...no job, financial problem, unemployment and underemployment, temporary jobs, no money for bus, food, and everything that you need to live. For more examples of the participants own words in all descriptive texts, please, refer to the table preceding the descriptive texts.

From the perspective experience of the participants, money issue was a prominent theme that cut across all the four research questions. There was no member that started and ended experience sharing without mentioning money issue. Some people have fixed

income, which can no longer support independent living because of high cost of living, and the consequence was homelessness.

The subjects specified that a homeless person has lost everything in life, and he was just left alone in a helpless situation. To the participants, homelessness was a bitter and painful experience, where people have nowhere to call a home, and have nobody or thing to support Life. Whether the source of the money was from an individual, family, community or government or benefit received, if it is not there at all or not sufficient, an individual will become homeless.

### **Theme 2. A Tough, Difficult, and Unsafe Situation, that Subjects someone to Victimization and Abuse**

All participants specified that the taste of homelessness was bitter and painful. They stated that homelessness was a tough, difficult, and unsafe situation where an individual was a subject to victimization, and abuse from everyone including the police. A situation where people frequently run into all kinds of troubles including street fighting, and being recruited into a gang. A person who has no permanent home is exposed to all kinds of danger including alcoholism, drugs, and prostitution. People in homeless situation were often misjudged, and called names. Participants stated that it was a very stressful situation, and worse of all in that situation, overcoming homelessness was difficult. Here are some participants' words that supported the statement above:

“Tough, difficulty to get all that you need to live, clothing, housing and anything that you need, not good, very stressful, drive somebody over the edge, hard situations, ... being in

helpless situation.” The subjects stated that homelessness was a difficult situation that someone can hardly depart from without some kinds of support from another person.

### **Theme 3. A Situation of Discrimination of All kinds**

It was prominent among the participants’ statements that those experiencing homelessness were subject to all kinds of discrimination. The participants expressed that some people in homeless situation were being targeted and treated neither right nor fair by people that were not homeless including, the police. All participants clearly expressed that they have being treated unjustly by people who have homes or, that they have witnessed a person who has no home being treated unruly. People in homeless situation face discrimination anywhere they found themselves including at the shelters. Some women specified that they were being treated not fair because of their color, and sex even at the shelters. While blacks, and first nation in homeless situation clearly and painfully expressed that color, and origin was the major cause of discrimination. Also, one white lady specified that there was not much support for the white women in homeless situation, and that they also face segregation at the shelter for being women. To the participants, homelessness was a moment of discrimination of all kinds from people that have their own homes. This theme overlapped with other research questions. The subjects’ verbatim words supporting statements above are listed below:

“Racial tension, ...Facing discrimination including racial”

“...why is there a large population of homelessness in your country? there is problem here. There is a real issue, racism, sexism, etc...”

Homelessness put people in a situation of being a target of discrimination, and discrimination stand in the way of people getting homes, jobs, giving and receiving services and justice. According to the subjects, to assist people to remain in permanent homes and avoid homelessness and to help those already homeless to depart homelessness, it is critical to put an end to all kinds of discrimination.

Having described the lived experiences of homelessness, next, is the discussion of life events or variables that lead people into homelessness.

#### **Theme 4. A Situation of Mental Illness, and Addiction**

There was no one member that did not mention mental illness, or addiction during the interview. Some have depression, all kinds of addictions including drug, alcohol, and gambling. Some picked the habit shortly before becoming homeless in the process of dealing with their threatening financial situation like loss of job, home and in attempts to deal with their abusive spouses or unsafe environment. Others developed depression and addiction after becoming homeless. Participants stated that keeping bad friends, addictions of all kinds including gambling, drug, and alcohol, and mental illness make people to become homeless. People get addictions through keeping bad friends, and people develop addiction when they are faced with problems, often financial and sometimes domestic and sometimes both to the point that their capacity cannot contain. Some pick up addiction, before becoming homeless or after becoming homeless. Also, persons with mental illness become homeless because, it was either that he has money but, lacks the capacity to manage well to meet needs or he cannot get money at all to support living. The consequence was homelessness. All participants acknowledged that

there are lots of mental disorders among people in homeless situation. They pointed out that there are lots of cases of schizophrenia, and not having medications for Psychiatric problem was also a big concern among the people experiencing homelessness. Some quotes from participants' conversation are as follows:

It was one lady who is an addict, she got me into it "...it has to be addiction"

"mental problems, ...lots of schizophrenia, not having medications for Psychiatric problem. Alcoholism, addiction of all kinds..."

"Bad habit and keeping bad friends. That is the only one that led me to homelessness"

Participants suggested that there was high level of mental illness and addictions among those experiencing homelessness. Many were not diagnosed yet, and some with diagnosis have no medications for treatments. Participants pointed out that Keeping bad friends, addictions and mental illness cause people to become homeless. Effective treatment of mental illnesses and addiction was suggested by the subjects to be vital to people exiting homelessness.

### **Theme 5. A Place of Freedom, and no Freedom**

There was a discrepancy about the way freedom was seen by participants. Some clearly expressed that being homeless offered them a freedom they never enjoyed in their abusive home and environment. Conversely, other participants specified that being homeless stripped them of their freedom, and privacy. The big question was, how free is a person living on the street? Inasmuch as, living on the street and at the shelter denies participants their freedom, in the eyes of someone who was experiencing homelessness that escaped abusive, and unsafe environment to become homeless, homelessness offered

him an opportunity to be free. In the later context, homelessness means freedom to him. However, for someone who became homeless due to financial difficulty, homelessness means lack of freedom for him to live a normal life, which living on the street, or in a shelter restrict. On the street, someone has a kind of freedom but, at the shelter, some rules and regulations limits the freedom of the participants to do what they like when they want. The following verbatim words from the participants supported the statements above:

“re-gaining your freedom from abusive person and from dangerous environment,”

“...whoever that pushed me into homelessness made me to be free”

“It is like a jail but, you never committed a crime”

“No visitor allowed to keep you company”

*“There is limited power in the shelter. No freedom for people to make best use of their abilities and talents.” The subjects clearly expressed that homelessness could mean lack of an individual’s freedom, or freedom for an individual, depending on the contexts they expressed above.*

### ***The Life Events that Led People in Homeless Situation into Homelessness***

Table 4

#### Government Related variables that Lead People into Homeless

Government Related Variables	Examples of Participants Statements Quotes that Supported the Variables
Row 1 Discrimination, Racism, Sexism Stand in the way of employment, getting a house, giving and receiving services	<p>“...why is there a large population of homelessness in your country? there is problem here. there is a real issue, racism, sexism, etc...”</p> <p>“If you have three kids, one of them a doctor, one of them a pilot, one of them a thief, you talk to the one that is a thief, he will not listen because you attitude to him was not right, you can’t change him. people are different, and need to be treated differently. Your attitude need to be right before he can listen” “Police sometimes, pick up on a lot of people. they put you into</p>

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	trouble, our color, we get regular abuse for nothing. ...they pay them to give ticket on people, and if you get one ticket, you need a lawyer, jury to help you. All these need money”
	“If you have a problem with a white guy, they gone pick you up, even if it was the other person who started the problem. Surviving as a black man in Western world is tough. ...discrimination, it is like a food chain.”
	“... one person will do it and it is okay but, another does it you get kicked out. Some of the staff, if they don't like you they can make your life hell.”
	“...government targeting people... it is the government that make people to commit crime” “...there is really, not anything for white women in need of home. ...this place, they don't want women down here. they don't want intoxicated women here. There is segregation because, they are women”
Row 2	<p>Child Support Takes 65% of People's income making it hard for to have enough money for rent and live</p> <p>“Payment of child maintenance and child support, I have a job that I was paying child maintenance (CM) for \$900 for three children and my income was \$1400. After CM, I was left with only \$500. I can't afford my own place.”</p> <p>“I am on Canada pension plan (CPP). It is worth \$370 per month. I pay CM of \$240, I am left with a total of \$130. he sighs...”</p>
Row 3	<p>Credit Bureau, and Criminal Record Policy stand in the way of employment, rent and mortgage</p> <p>“...if you cannot pay your rent and bills, they send your name to credit bureau (CB), you cannot get a job, rent or get mortgage and even though you eventually get a job, you cannot rent or get a mortgage because, your name is already with CB”</p> <p>” They send your name to collection, or CB” “I have no income, homeless, and cannot pay my bill, they send your name to CB, and I cannot rent or get mortgage. It is government policy on CB that makes a lot of people to come to DI” “If you don't pay a cell phone bill, you cannot rent a place in Alberta Works, the ministry and Boardwalks. Is that right?”</p> <p>“some people have bad credit for small reason like phone bills. they send your name to collection, and CB” “Some people have criminal record so they can't get a job. ...the government is pressing people too hard, bills, they tell you, you owe this, you owe that. They give you criminal record and you can't get a job, rent, or mortgage”</p>
Row 4	<p>Lack of Affordable Housing, Rent and Mortgage Qualification Criteria and House Tax</p> <p>“... qualifications to get rent, or mortgage, to get references, high rent, ...high rent and mortgage conditions, criteria, and taxes. you can't get Alberta Works rent if you don't have any address They can repair those buildings for shelter and low cost housing, and affordable housing”</p> <p>“If the government can open up abandoned buildings and buildings not being in use for the homeless. And abandoned properties, and turn them into low income houses, and homeless shelters. There are 30,000 empty properties in Calgary right now, not infuse. They could be used for homeless people and low income housing”</p> <p>“...the rental price went very high and cost of living continued rising. When you are on limited income, it is hard to live. It is either you pay rent or eat” ...high rent, and mortgage conditions, criteria, and taxes.”</p> <p>“With the economy not doing well, the price, cost of living increasing, new taxes coming up like carbon taxes, we cannot afford a house”</p> <p>“Rent seem to be going down now because nobody is renting and no one is working.”</p> <p>“...high rent and mortgage conditions, criteria, and taxes”</p>
Row 5	<p>Lack of Government Support System Discriminatory Support System</p> <p>“There should be a government help for someone on the street. There should be a help for someone in need without having to be asked a thousand</p>

		questions. For these questions, 75% of the homeless give up on themselves”
		“...if I lost that job, my wife is gone kick me out, she gone apply for Calgary housing, and she gone get it. But, I cannot get it, if I apply. . And if I visit her and the kids, she won’t let me stay there because, that was one of the conditions for getting the place.”
		“... I lost my job and welfare denied me and employment insurance (EI) won’t provide any help, and no family support,”
Row 6	Economic Recession, High Cost of Living and Fixed Income and Stop New Taxes	“Recession is a problem, people lose their homes. Bank gave away loan to investors, and mortgages that worth nothing. They government should regulate the banks, Mortgage and rental regulation should be right, and also, people oriented.”
		“... the economy not doing well, the price, cost of living increasing.”
		“When everything, cost of living is going up our checks is still the same amount. They should also increase our checks”
		“high rent and high cost of living.”
Row 7	Welfare and Other Benefit Payers to Give Grace Period to the Homeless Before Withholding Payment	“Get welfare whether you are here or not and give you time to find a home.”
		“Because, shelter gives clients food and shelter, you don’t get income support from Alberta Works”
Row 8	Lack of Awareness of Shelter and Government Support Systems	“No government tells anybody about the shelters. They tell you how to help yourself and not what to do when you are homeless. No one tells you about being homeless, the shelters, and services they offer. They tell you about food bank, and job fair. Like I said in my own case, i am not entitled to work. If I can’t work, what is the need of the job fair? I am on continued long term disability...”

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## **What are the Life Events that Led People in Homeless Situation into Homelessness?**

### **(RQ2)**

In answering the question about the life events, or variables, or how people become homeless, several themes emerged. To make it simple, themes were organized based on who the factors should be directed to; namely, the government, domestic, and shelter. The government related variables themes were described first, followed by the domestic, then, shelter related variables.

### **Description of Government Related Variables.**

Seven themes appeared as government variables that lead people into homelessness. They are listed below: discrimination, racism, sexism stand in the way of employment, getting a house, giving and receiving services; child support takes 65% of

people's income making it hard for them to have enough money for rent and to live; credit bureau and criminal record policy stand in the way of employment, rent and mortgage; lack of affordable housing, rent and mortgage qualification criteria and house tax; lack of government support system and discriminatory support system; economic recession, high cost of living and fixed income and new taxes; lack of awareness of shelter and government support systems.

**Overlapping Theme Discrimination Stands in the Way of People Getting Employment, a House, Giving and Receiving Services to Overcome Homelessness.**

There are several words, phrases, comments and sentences that supported that discrimination, racism, sexism, hatred is a barrier to people securing a job, a house, or in giving and receiving services to overcome homelessness. All participants but, one mentioned one or more of these words, discrimination, racism, sex, hatred, segregation, not fair, color, rude, not right during the interview. Participants stated that discrimination have cost them employment, obtaining a house, and prevented them from receiving services that would help them overcome homelessness.

The participants believe that the government has a hand in discrimination, and holds the capacity to stop and bring discrimination under control. Aside from the Asian participant who did not mention discriminatory experience, the rest of the participants that I interviewed mentioned having being discriminated against owing to color, sex, or hate, or having witnessed someone being treated unfairly or unjustly. Please, refer to theme 3 for a detailed information about racism.

**Theme 6. Child Support (CS) Takes 65% of People's Income Making it Hard for People to have Enough Money for Rent and to Support their Lives.**

All participants mentioned that separation and divorce leads people into homelessness, and when that occurs, if children are involved the issue of child support (CS) and child maintenance (CM) comes in. Five out of 15 participants (33%) are paying child support or child maintenance (CM), and that, plus loss of job, temporary jobs they could not afford a rent and enough income to sustain their live. This population represents 67% of all homeless men with children. Only one participant (6.7%) of all men with children experiencing homelessness did not mention whether he paid child support, or not. CS and CM take 65% of the people at the shelter, and that makes it impossible for people to overcome homelessness, because, there was no way 35% of their income can be enough for rent and meet other basic needs for someone to live an independent life. The following are examples of the subjects' statements supporting theme: "Payment of child maintenance and child support, I have a job that I was paying child maintenance (CM) for \$900 for three children and my income was \$1400. After CM, I was left with only \$500. I can't afford my own place."

"I am on Canada pension plan (CPP). It is worth \$370 per month. I pay CM of \$240, I am left with a total of \$130. he sighs..."

All participants mentioned that divorce is a big factor to homelessness and the 31% who pay CS or CM made the picture clear with facts on how much income they get and how much they pay towards CS and CM, which prevented them from having enough money for house and for daily sustenance.

Separation and divorce, child maintenance and child support in participants' opinion led people into homelessness; so, they indicated that a review on that policy was necessary to assist people go out of homelessness.

**Theme 7. Credit Bureau, and Criminal Record Policy Stand in the Way of People Getting Employment, Rent, and Mortgage.**

Two of the participants (13%) stated that criminal record, and credit bureau are barriers to people securing employment, qualifying for a house for rent, or a mortgage. The participants stated that issues as small as phone bill can fetch someone a bad credit record in Canada that will prevent someone from getting employment or qualifying for a house for rent, or a mortgage. Participants stated that even if, somebody with such record escapes and get a job eventually, he can never qualify for a rent, or a mortgage. They stated that some people are homeless just because, they cannot get a house for rent, or a mortgage. Although, only two participants mentioned that during interview but, house and employment was a big issue for everyone. Without them no one can survive. Here are examples of verbatim statements of participants that supported this theme:

“...if you cannot pay your rent and bills, they send your name to credit bureau (CB), you cannot get a job, rent or get mortgage and even though you eventually get a job, you cannot rent or get a mortgage because, your name was already with CB”

” They send your name to collection, or CB”

”I have no income, homeless, and cannot pay my bill, they send your name to CB, and I cannot rent or get mortgage. It is government policy on CB that makes a lot of people to come to shelter”

They give you criminal record and you can't get a job, rent, or mortgage”

Government policy on CB and CR needs to be reviewed to help prevent placing people in a situation that will prevent them from qualifying for employment, rent and mortgage expressed the participants. That render people homeless. So, to support people leave homelessness, the policy on CS and Cm need to be reviewed.

**Theme 8. Lack of Affordable Housing, Rent and Mortgage Conditions & Qualification Criteria.**

All participants mentioned one or more of the words listed below during the interview namely, affordable housing, high rent, rent references, rent and mortgage conditions, criteria and high mortgage tax as factors that led people into homelessness. One participant mentioned that rent seem to be coming down (\$1000 per a month) because, no one was renting owing to high rate of unemployment. Participants specified that there was small or no affordable housing in the city and that makes it hard for people to get permanent homes and overcome homelessness. According to the subjects, the process, condition and qualification criteria to secure a rent or obtain a mortgage made it difficult for people to get own homes and depart homelessness. Participants also, stated that there was high tax on homes, and these conditions are standing in the way for people to get own homes and exit homelessness. The subjects specified that reviewing policies on housing including rent and mortgage will assist people to get own homes and leave homelessness. Here are some examples of quotes from participants' own words about how cost of housing, housing conditions and qualifications criteria was standing in the way of people getting permanent homes:

“... qualifications to get rent, or mortgage, to get references, high rent, ...high rent and mortgage conditions, criteria, and taxes. You can’t get Alberta Works rent if you don’t have any address. They can repair those buildings for shelter and low cost housing, and affordable housing” “If the government can open up abandoned buildings and buildings not being in use for the homeless. And abandoned properties, and turn them into low income houses, and homeless shelters. There are 30,000 empty properties in Calgary right now, not in use.

Participants specified that the entire housing policies including rent, and mortgage and tax need to be revised downward to help more people to afford a house, remain in permanent homes and help those already homeless to leave homelessness. It will lower the rate of homelessness.

**Theme 9. Economic Recession, High Cost of Living and Fixed Income, High Utilities, Taxes and New Tax Lead People into Homelessness.**

All but two Participants stated that there was an economic recession, increase in the cost of living, high utility bills, taxes, and new taxes, and some people who receive benefits with fixed income are left behind. Because they cannot afford the cost of living and a house they became homeless due to economic recession. It was worse if the benefit recipient was unable to work. The following supporting quotes are from participants’ own words:

“where we were living, the rental price went very high and cost of living continued rising. When you are on limited income, it is hard to live. It is either you pay rent or eat.”  
 “high rent and high cost of living,”

“Recession is a problem, people lose their homes. “With the economy not doing well, the price, cost of living increasing, new taxes coming up like carbon taxes, we cannot afford a house” “high rent and high cost of living”

Participant believe that government should adjust the checks of people with fixed income in line with the current reality of the cost of living, or stop bringing new taxes, lower the existing taxes, the cost of utilities and the general cost of living in city. There was a discrepant statement from one of the subjects, he was not in support of the banks giving out loans and mortgages that cannot be repaid. At the same time, he simply wants fair loans given out to investors, and for mortgages, in that way the economy is not negatively affected. Participants expressed that economic recession causes unemployment and makes the cost of living high thus, it cause people not to afford the cost of independent living and the consequence is homelessness.

**Theme 10. Lack of Government Support System and Discriminatory Support System.**

Every member during the interview mentioned not getting support from anywhere including family, community, and government when in dire need of home and financial support as the reason they became homeless. Participants stated that if someone has no money or income or has a fixed income, if there was no support from family, community or government, the person will end up in homeless situation. But, if there was support from family, community and government, someone can escape being homeless. Here are examples of verbatim words from participants during the interview: “There should be a government help for someone on the street. There should be a help for someone in need without

having to be asked a thousand questions. For these questions, 75% of the homeless give up on themselves”

“No support system, no true friends, no money, no jobs, no income, tax, lack of awareness, not knowing who to turn to, when in serious need.”

The subjects stated that when people lose the power to help themselves, and there was no family, community, or government support system to fall back on, then, they became homeless. Participants indicated that effective support system was critical to people remaining in permanent homes, as well as for exiting homelessness. This theme also, emerged as a recommendation on how people could overcome homelessness.

**Theme 11. Welfare and Other Benefit Payers to Give Grace Period to the Homeless Before Withholding Payment.**

The participants stated that when they end up at the shelter, it means that their income at that time was not enough to support an independent life, so if the welfare withholds payment of benefit, it made life a lot tougher for them. In the participants’ opinion, the welfare and other benefit payers should allow the homeless two to three months’ grace period to secure a home before withholding benefit. In that way, the homeless can save some money for two months’ payment of a rent (one month for down payment); making it easy for them to depart homelessness. If not, there is no other way they can exit homelessness if they cannot get full time employment that can pay above minimum wage. Some examples of the subjects’ verbatim words supporting the expression above are listed below:

“Get welfare whether you are here or not and give you time to find a home.” “Because, shelter gives clients food and shelter, you don’t get income support from Alberta Works” Participants suggested that allowing two to three months’ grace period for the people in homeless situation that are receiving benefits will assist them to exit homelessness.

### **Theme 12. Lack of Awareness of Shelter and Government Support Systems**

From the participants’ perspectives, lack of awareness of shelters and other government support systems such as CUPs, Sheldon Chumir, Broadwalk, Alberta works, and the services they offer to the community was part of the reasons why people become homeless. This was supported by the listed participants’ statements below:

“...not knowing who to turn to, when in serious need.” There is not a lot of people that know a lot about any of these services. That is why there is more need for information pamphlets and awareness, for people.”

“Not knowing where to go and seek for help when in serious need has led many into homelessness.”

From the participants’ perspectives, because, not many people know about shelters and other government support service providers and the services that they offer, when they were in desperate need of support of all kinds, they could not go and seek for the help that they needed. Participants stated that awareness was a big thing to someone becoming homeless. Zero of the people in homeless situation ever thought that they would one day become homeless but, it happened to them. They encouraged those who are not yet homeless to go out and explore, and know what the government or community offers to the people in helpless situations to be self-aware. The subjects clearly expressed

that lack of awareness of existing support services and shelter services cause people to become homeless. Some slept in a car or on the street for one year before, someone told them about the shelter. Participants specified that awareness creation of the shelter and government support service providers will assist people to know where to go when they need support. This theme occurred in all research questions except in lived experiences so, it is a notable theme in homelessness phenomenon.

Table 5

#### Domestic Related Variables that Lead People into Homelessness

	Domestic Related variables	Examples of Participants Statements Quotes that Supported the Variables
Row 1	No Money, Fixed Income and No Family Support	<p>“If you don’t have a job, or family how you gona support yourself? So, I ended up at the shelter. “</p> <p>“lose of job, unemployment, underemployment, temporary employment, working four hours per week could not pay for my transit so, I quit, I was laid off”, “Lose of job, loss of income, financial situation,”</p> <p>“...where we were living, the rental price went very high and cost of living continued rising. When you are on limited income, it is hard to live. It is either you pay rent or eat. We only get 1200 per month per a month. rent is \$1000, and \$200 is not enough to feed three mouths, hence, our daughter lives with her grandparents, my parents. Our daughter is only six years old”</p> <p>“The amount of money given to us by the government cannot sustain us. For somebody like me that is not able to work, my wife is my home care worker, so, she cannot work too...”</p>
Row 2	Unsafe Environment and Home, Bad Roommate	<p>“ I had a bad roommate that stole and cashed my check”</p> <p>“I was living with some friends but, it was like poison, drug house, the escort (prostitute), the whole environment was poison. You are making a small amount with your small job of \$12 per hour and you see escort making \$1000 per night. Then, because of negative influence, you begin to ask yourself, what am I doing? Why can’t you do the same and make more money? Due to lack of support from anywhere, you may be tempted to fall. I left and I came here”</p> <p>“All my exes abused me. I lost my kids, my home, which brought me here. I have a bad roommate, that stole and cashed my check</p>
Row 3	Addictions and Mental Illness Bad Habit and Bad Friends make people Homeless	<p>“It was one lady who is an addict, she got me into it” “...it has to be addiction”</p> <p>“ mental problems, ...lots of schizophrenia, not having medications for Psychiatric problem. Alcoholism, addiction of all kinds</p> <p>“Bad habit and keeping bad friends. That is the only one that led me to</p>

		homelessness” “I made wrong choices too in the past. I spoke to some elders in this place. They have shown me how to turn my anger and negative feeling into positive.” “My exes are bad, they can’t come here.”
Row 4	Divorce and Separation Render People Homeless	“I have my owned my own home three to four times and divorced and divorced for two times. After each divorce, I sold the house and bought another one, left the house eventually, I moved in with a girlfriend before getting the last old guy that used his cane on me from where I ended up in a shelter...”  “...see divorce, eviction, separations, I think majority of people will fall into one of them”
Row 5	Poor Financial Management and Social Skills	“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes. money management courses” “I made wrong choices too in the past. I spoke to some elders in this place. They have shown me how to turn my anger and negative feeling into positive.”  “... some homeless get welfare , and AISH, and yet, they have addiction and are homeless. They collect their benefits and spend it on drugs, alcohol, and gambling, and all kinds of addiction. they need help with rehabilitation, and with supervised spending of their income to avoid wasting the money, and placing themselves at higher risks” “Money is going wasted, its shouldn’t go that way, people need to figure out the right places to direct their money. Harnessing these money could help. Financial advise, guide on how they can spend their money in order to get out of homelessness. Make everybody donate \$1 to further homelessness”  “ Setting goals, and teaching people how to set goals, conduct themselves well, anger management...”
Row 6	Eviction Render People Homeless	“see, divorce, eviction, separations. I think majority of the people will fall into one of them” ”you cannot pay rent” “I lose my home,” “ I lost my house” “But, then, how do you get a house, when you cannot work or don’t have an income?” “You need a home to find a job.” “After I lose my home, I became depressed and started drinking. Due to drinking and depression, I lose my job.”
Row 7	Unemployment and Lack of Employment Skill	“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes, menu management courses..” “Lack of more job skills” “..lose in your job”, “Lose of job”
Row 8	Lack of Awareness Shelters and Government Support Systems	“lack of awareness, not knowing who to turn to, when in serious need.”

### Description of Domestic Related Themes

Several themes emerged from the domestic variables that lead people into homelessness namely: no money, fixed income and no family support; unsafe environment, and home, and bad roommate; addictions, mental illness, bad habit and bad

friends; separation, and divorce; poor or lack of financial management skills, and social skills; eviction; unemployment and lack of employment skills, and lack of awareness of shelter, and government support systems.

**Overlapping Theme. A Situation where Someone has nothing, No Money, Fixed Income, and No Family Support**

Participants clearly expressed that when people have fixed income, their ability to meet financial needs in an economy with ever rising cost of living without family support was limited, so certain kinds of support including family, community, and or, government support are necessary to prevent them from being homeless. Whether the money was from an individual, benefit, family, community or government, if it is not there at all or not sufficient, an individual will become homeless. Please, refer to theme 1 for more information about this theme.

**Theme 13. Unsafe Environment, Home, and Bad Roommate**

The subjects stated that when a person lives in an incompatible, uncondusive and unsafe home or environment he was at a risk of becoming homeless, especially when he has no options. Participants specified that a person in a situation described above can either get stuck to the place and get corrupted, or escape from the danger and become homeless. In situations like that, two options are left for the person. Either to become like their environment or become homeless. Participants have own words that supported these statements and they are listed below:

“ I had a bad roommate that stole and cashed my check”

“I was living with some friends but, it was like poison, drug house, the escort (prostitute), the whole environment was poison. You are making a small amount with your small job of \$12 per hour and you see escort making \$1000 per night. Then, because of negative influence... Due to lack of support from anywhere, you may be tempted to fall. I left and I came here” “All my exes abused me.

The subjects of this study stated that they left their unsafe homes or environments for their freedom and safety. However, the question remains, how safe can someone on the street be? In their opinion, living in unsafe environment, or home, or with bad roommates is worse than becoming homeless, so they chose to be in homeless situation and to live on the street.

**Overlapping Theme. Addictions, Mental Illness, Bad Habit, and Bad Friends make people Homeless.**

Participants stated that keeping bad friends, addictions of all kinds including gambling, drug, and alcohol, and mental illness make people to become homeless. People get addictions through keeping bad friends, and people develop addiction when they are faced with problems, often financial and sometimes domestic and sometimes both to the point that their capacity cannot contain stated the subjects. Please, refer to theme 4 for details.

**Overlapping Theme. Divorce and Separation Render People Homeless**

According to the participants’ opinion, many reasons make a person to become homeless after separation or divorce. It was either that his income was not enough to sustain a single independent living or if children are involved, it involves paying Child

Maintenance (CM) or Child Support (CS). Even if an individual's income was not too bad, after paying CM or CS, his income can no longer sustain his life because, after paying CM or CS, he will be left with a small amount (35%) of his income that cannot sustain an independent living. These statements were supported by the participants' own words, for example, "...I have a job that I was paying child maintenance (CM) for \$900 for three children and my income was \$1400."

"I am on Canada pension plan (CPP). It is worth \$370 per month. I pay CM of \$240, I am left with a total of \$130. he sighs..."

Additionally, participants opined that people usually sell their homes after divorce and if they are not careful they could end up not having a home to live in and eventually, end up on the street. Please, direct attention to theme 6 for more information about this theme.

#### **Theme 14. Poor Financial Management and Social Skills**

Participants' clearly expressed that aside, not having money, there were other reasons why people were homeless. Some have limited job skills so, if not one or two skills that they have, they cannot get another opportunity for employment. In situations like that, somebody could remain unemployed for a long time making it harder for someone to exit homelessness. Others have behavior and social skill issues. Lacking those skills have cost them separation, or divorce, which would have offered them more financial protection. Because, it is more economical for families to live together than when they live apart. When living separately, house, utilities and more are duplicated, which costs more and makes it harder for someone to afford a home. This theme is also

leading among why people are homeless. It emerged in all four research questions. Additionally, some people get regular income but, they lack the capacity to spend the money wisely to afford a house and sustain a living. People in this category required financial management training as well as spending guidance. In that way, they do not waste the scarce resources, or worse, spend it on drugs or alcohol to place them at greater risk. The subjects also suggested that having everyone including the homeless donate \$1 monthly into future homelessness could assist the homeless who have zero income to exit homelessness. Some verbatim examples of the participants' words supporting the statements above are as listed:

“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes, money management courses.”

“ Setting goals, and teaching people how to set goals, conduct themselves well, anger management...” ”... some homeless get welfare, and AISH, and yet, they have addiction and are homeless. They collect their benefits and spend it on drugs, alcohol, and gambling, and all kinds of addiction. They need help with rehabilitation, and with supervised spending of their income to avoid wasting the money, and placing themselves at higher risks” “Money is going wasted,... Harnessing these money could help. Make everybody donate \$1 to future homelessness”

In the participants' view, providing a wide range of training on job skills, financial management, behavioral and social skills will help the people in homeless situation to exit homelessness. Also, a strategic plan for future homelessness was encouraged by the subjects. The participants specified that the governments should make everyone including

a person in homeless situation donate \$1 monthly for future homelessness. In that way, people can get the immediate financial support they need when they are at the point of becoming homeless. They think that this will help prevent more people from becoming homeless and assist those already homeless to depart homelessness. This theme was distinguished among four research questions but, one, the lived experiences of those in homeless situation.

### **Theme 15. Eviction Render People Homeless**

Approximately, 88% of all participants (14) stated that they became homeless when they were evicted, lose home, rent was too high separated or divorced. Only fewer than 13% (2) participants did not mention that they were evicted in one way or the other. These factors point at eviction. From the participant's perspectives, eviction render people homeless. Here are examples of the participants' supporting verbatim words: "see, divorce, eviction, separations. I think majority of the people will fall into one of them" "you cannot pay rent" "I lose my home," " I lost my house" "But, then, how do you get a house, when you cannot work or don't have an income?" "After I lose my home, I became depressed and started drinking.

The subjects stated that people become homeless, when they were evicted and do not have money to get another home for them.

### **Theme 16. Unemployment and Lack of Employment Skill**

Participants stated that people became homeless because of unemployment or lose of job. When they were laid off from job, or when their income was not sufficient to sustain a living, lack of new job skills to increase opportunities to get more job to escape

homelessness is a problem. The subjects believe that with more job skills, people will get higher chances of securing more jobs and more jobs, will get them more money they need to stay in permanent homes instead of becoming homeless. Those experiencing homelessness stated that they need fulltime employment, as well as new job skills to exit homelessness. Some supporting quotes from the participants' conversations are as follows:

“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes, menu management courses.”

“Lack of more job skills” “..lose in your job”, “Lose of job”

Participants suggested that fulltime employment and training for new job skills will give them more job opportunities necessary to get sufficient income to depart homelessness.

Next, is shelter related variables that lead people into homelessness.

Table 6

#### Shelter Related Variables that Lead People into Homelessness

Shelter Related variables	Examples of Participants Statements Quotes that Supported the Variables
Row 1 Caring and people Oriented Professionally Trained Staff namely, counsellors, case workers, security staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational Support Workers	<p>“If you don’t have a job, or family how you gona support yourself? So, I ended up at the shelter. “</p> <p>“lose of job, unemployment, underemployment, temporary employment, working four hours per week could not pay for my transit so, I quit, I was laid off”, “Lose of job, loss of income, financial situation,”</p> <p>“...where we were living, the rental price went very high and cost of living continued rising. When you are on limited income, it is hard to live. It is either you pay rent or eat. We only get 1200 per month per a month. rent is \$1000, and \$200 is not enough to feed three mouths, hence, our daughter lives with her grandparents, my parents. Our daughter is only six years old”</p> <p>“The amount of money given to us by the government cannot sustain us. For somebody like me that is not able to work, my wife is my home care worker, so, she cannot work too...”</p>

Row 2 Accommodation and Resources	<p>“ I had a bad roommate that stole and cashed my check”</p> <p>“I was living with some friends but, it was like poison, drug house, the escort (prostitute), the whole environment was poison. You are making a small amount with your small job of \$12 per hour and you see escort making \$1000 per night. Then, because of negative influence, you begin to ask yourself, what am I doing? Why can't you do the same and make more money? Due to lack of support from anywhere, you may be tempted to fall. I left and I came here”</p> <p>“All my exes abused me. I lost my kids, my home, which brought me here. I have a bad roommate, that stole and cashed my check</p>
Row 3 Agency Policy on Addicts and Drunk	<p>“It was one lady who is an addict, she got me into it” “...it has to be addiction”</p> <p>“ mental problems, ...lots of schizophrenia, not having medications for Psychiatric problem. Alcoholism, addiction of all kinds</p> <p>“Bad habit and keeping bad friends. That is the only one that led me to homelessness”</p> <p>“I made wrong choices too in the past. I spoke to some elders in this place. They have shown me how to turn my anger and negative feeling into positive.”</p> <p>“My exes are bad, they can't come here.”</p>
Row 4 Lack of Categories of Homeless to Serve the Homeless Better and Lack of Shelter for Families	<p>“I have my owned my own home three to four times and divorced and divorced for two times. After each divorce, I sold the house and bought another one, left the house eventually, I moved in with a girlfriend before getting the last old guy that used his cane on me from where I ended up in a shelter...”</p> <p>“...see divorce, eviction, separations, I think majority of people will fall into one of them”</p>
Row 5 Long Waiting, Too Many Questions and Unnecessary protocols	<p>“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes. money management courses”</p> <p>“I made wrong choices too in the past. I spoke to some elders in this place. They have shown me how to turn my anger and negative feeling into positive.”</p> <p>“... some homeless get welfare , and AISH, and yet, they have addiction and are homeless. They collect their benefits and spend it on drugs, alcohol, and gambling, and all kinds of addiction. they need help with rehabilitation, and with supervised spending of their income to avoid wasting the money, and placing themselves at higher risks”</p> <p>“Money is going wasted, its shouldn't go that way, people need to figure out the right places to direct their money. Harnessing these money could help. Financial advise, guide on how they can spend their money in order to get out of homelessness. Make everybody donate \$1 to further homelessness”</p> <p>“ Setting goals, and teaching people how to set goals, conduct themselves well, anger management...”</p>
Row 6 Security, Safety, and Privacy	<p>“see, divorce, eviction, separations. I think majority of the people will fall into one of them”</p> <p>”you cannot pay rent”</p> <p>“I lose my home,” “ I lost my house”</p> <p>“But, then, how do you get a house, when you cannot work or don't have an income?” “You need a home to find a job.”</p> <p>“After I lose my home, I became depressed and started drinking. Due to drinking and depression, I lose my job.”</p>

Row 7	Lack Vital Skills Training for job skills, Financial Management, Behavioral and Social Skills	“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes, menu management courses.” “Lack of more job skills” “..lose in your job”, “Lose of job”
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### **Description of Shelter Related Themes**

Many themes were developed about Shelter-related reasons why people became homeless. The themes that emerged as variables or life event, or how people become homeless that were shelter related are as listed below:

caring and people oriented staff who are professionally trained namely, counsellors, case workers, security staff, motivational speakers and motivational support workers; insufficient space and resources; agency policy on addicts and drunk; lack of categories of homelessness to serve them better and lack of shelter for family; wait time, security, and lack of wide range of training for job skills, financial management, behavioral and social skills. Next is the description of each theme.

#### **Theme 17. Caring and People Oriented Professionally Trained Staff Namely, Counsellors, Case workers, Security Staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational Support Workers.**

The subjects’ perspectives suggested that when people get to a point of becoming homeless, they have lost all hopes of surviving, and were ready to give up on selves, if they have not given up on themselves already. So, attitude of workers could make them pick up their pieces, and keep pushing their way through to do what they can to rise again. But, if the opposite happens, they have already fallen and will remain where they fell and will never make effort to get better in life, or out of homelessness. They were wearing the shoes so, they know where it pinches most. In their thoughts, all staff need to

be professionally trained on how to handle people with fragile emotions, helpless people and above all, staff trained to know how to tailor service to meet the unique needs of each person from diverse backgrounds. Participants stated that positive attitude from staff and knowing that staff cares and really, want to help people overcome homelessness was a huge source of strength to them and it was critically needed for them to pick selves up and continue the struggle. They want fair and equitable treatment for all people that were in the shelter. The subjects' own words that supported this statements are as follows:

“...they are not qualified. they should be better trained”

“staff are really good and helpful, helping you in the right way. They push you in the right direction, and not pushing you in a circle”

“They should professionally train workers to the government standard,””

“great staff”, “Updating the staff”

“...each individual is different, they need case workers who are able to determine the different needs of the people. Different people need different needs...”

“I think they should hire more counsellors” “if we have one-on-one discussion with counsellors. It is hard to get one, more counsellors are needed, so that people could get help,....”

“They should have motivational speakers and motivational support”

“...getting motivational speakers and people to motivate you.”

”...they want you to do this and do that. This person tells you to do this, another tells you not to do it, and when you do that, you get shit for doing that for the first time,“ “... they

bar people, you can be barred from minor infractions like swell, or being rude, or even defending yourself when beaten up, you can be kicked out...”

” I have seen somebody that took a drug by mistake and become very paranoid but, was not harming anyone or himself. And five staff grabbed him and seized him. I told them, leave him alone, you can do what you did if, he is harming himself, or somebody.”

“It is about the atmosphere, Attitude from some staff and not all of the staff”

“...it depends on who is working that day, in all services,..there are some good people and some bad people.” “ some truly are here to help you, some are not”

Participants acknowledged that some staff truly cared to assist them and some did not. In their opinion, they need more staff that truly care to help them out of homelessness than those who do not. Participants suggested that training staff to a professional level can help in meeting the needs of people at the shelter. If that happens, the people at the shelter can overcome homelessness.

### **Theme 18. Accommodation and Resources**

From the perspectives of the participants, there were not enough resources and space (accommodation) to meet the numerous needs of the homeless. A shelter needs more space or expansion and more money is crucial to effectively handle the supply of the basic needs of the homeless including, cleaning supplies, food, wears, medicals, dining tables and chairs, rooms, beds, beddings, marts, bed bugs extinguishers, and so forth.

Here are participants’ words that supported the statements:

“...no enough tables and chairs. Every morning, there is a fight about tables and chairs. No enough tables and chairs, they need to build a bigger shelter, no enough spaces, more accommodation” “more spaces, nutrition, beds, beddings, marts”  
 “Transportation, we don’t have money for transport most of us”  
 “more food and more nutritious food, more portion of meals. We get 3 small ration of meals daily”. “Medical help resource,” “...they need a bigger shelter, a swimming pool, more nurses and doctors” More resources are needed to help the homeless people. So much we need.”

From the subjects’ perspectives, sufficient resources were important at shelter for the service providers to meet the needs of the people in homeless situation. Sufficient fund and adequate resources at the shelter was necessary to help people at the shelter exit homelessness. This theme showed up as a recommendation also.

### **Theme 19. Shelter Policy on Addicts and Drunk**

In the opinion of the participants, the people in homeless situations were not happy with the way the addict and drunk were treated when they came to the shelter intoxicated. Participants believe that intoxicated people were helpless and seriously need help. They did not like that the shelter did not accept the addict and drunk when they were intoxicated because, it was against the shelter policy. They clearly expressed that turning them down in extreme weather conditions like in winter when it was -46C or more endangered their live and many died out of exposure to extreme cold weather conditions. The subjects suggested that the intoxicated addict and drunk should be accepted into a shelter. And instead, keep them in a separate room where they can receive

some warm heat. Below is a list of some verbatim statements or phrases from the participants that supported the expression above:

It was one lady who is an addict, she got me into it” “...it has to be addiction”

“ mental problems, ...lots of schizophrenia, not having medications for Psychiatric problem. Alcoholism, addiction of all kinds

“They bother people. Some people. Do you know, some people uses drug such as medical marijuana but, it is not accepted here. that is a problem for people with that medical condition. They die in the cold at -46C”.

The subjects specified that shelter policy on the addicts and drunk needs to be reviewed because, rejecting them in a situation of intoxication especially, in an extreme weather condition of -46C have endangered many live, and many have died of cold as a result of that.

**Theme 20. Lack of Categories of Homeless to Serve the Homeless Better, and Lack of Shelter for Families.**

The Perspectives experience of the participants stated that there was a need for dividing shelter into categories that it was not the best idea putting all homeless into one shelter. In the subjects’ opinion, the homeless with severe mental disorders should have a separate shelter, and those who do not, should be in another. In that way, those in homeless situation will receive better services and help that they need. Also, the family participant of this study, stated that the shelter was not designed to accommodate families as they were not allowed to hug or kiss or do things couple do at the shelter because, it

made others jealous, and that they asked whether there was any shelter for families, and no was the answer.

The following examples are some of the participants' verbatim words that supported the statements above:

"There should be two types off shelter, namely, one for people that has severe mental disorders, and another for people that don't. Right now they are putting both in one shelter, it does not work."

"Being a married couple on the street, it is hard. You can't be together in the evenings as married couple do. you can't hold hands, you can't hug, kiss, hold hands and show love at shelter It is frowned upon here because, others get jealous. You can't do many things that married couple do here. ...I asked if they have shelter for families, or couples, there is non like that" "People who can't walk, immobility people, I thought that was not right. That they shall be somewhere else where they can get better help."

Participants think that making a grouping or category of homelessness and having each group remain in a separate shelter designed to suit its needs will serve the people at the shelter better and help them overcome homelessness. The subjects suggested having a separate shelter that serve only people with severe mental disorders, another that serve families and another that serve people with no severe mental disorders. In that way, the service providers can meet the needs of the people at the shelter better.

**Theme 21. Too Long Waiting, Too many Questions and unnecessary Protocols.**

The participants were not happy that they wait for too long to receive the help that they needed to get out of homelessness. The participants want their needs to be met

as quickly as possible, and reduce the waiting period. Too long waiting neither help nor motivate the people experiencing homelessness. It rather discouraged them much more.

These are participant's words that supported the statement about long waiting:

"...get people help they need as quickly as you can. Stop wasting people's time, and your own time" "...it is like, okay, we are going to get you into a place but, it took 24 months to get you a place" "make a daily list of client to handle on daily basis, and get the list completed on daily, in that way, people don't have to wait longer and longer."

"Determine the needs of the clients and work on to assist that client, ...speed up the process to get client out of homelessness." "The wheels are very slow"

The perspectives opinion of the participants desired that a shelter provides help to the people in homeless situation as quickly as possible. They suggested eliminating unnecessary delays or too long waiting because, that brings down the morale of the people at the shelter. Most importantly, many of them were at the lowest emotional ebbs, that prompt help could rekindle to keep them pushing on to overcome their situations but, too long waiting demoralized them. The people experiencing homelessness want service providers to go right away, and provide the services or help without delays. They proposed action to assist people at the shelter to commence within one week, and be completed as quickly as possible depending on individual's need.

## **Theme 22. Security, Safety and Privacy at the Shelters.**

There was a need to improve the security system at the shelter. Participants want the room to be comfortably heated, with reasonable level of privacy, and they want to be safe when staying at the shelter. The subjects were particularly opposed to having 300

guys in an open space where everyone is dirty in one way, or the other. And all inhaled, and exhaled all the odors including diseases hence, many participants stated that there were lots of lung diseases at the shelter. Also, the latter kind of arrangement did not offer privacy to people at the shelter so, participants did not like the idea of not having privacy, and being over crowded in a room or an open space. They want shelter to offer some privacy, warm heat, security and safety. The subjects believed that some items not allowed into the shelter still found its way into the shelter. Participants specified that searching by the security at the entrance of the shelters was not sufficient to ensure that items banned from the shelter did not get into the shelter. Also, participants stated that shelter did not have sufficient personal lockers for everyone at the shelter for securing personal valuable items. This condition made people to lose their personal valuable items within the shelter, when they went out for work and other appointments. There was a discrepant expression about security from the participants. While, some specified that more security was needed, some stated that shelter offers them higher security than living in own house because of harassments from exes (ex-spouses, boy/girl friends). Here are what the subjects said in their own words about the security and poor security at the shelter:

“...better searchers and tight security about stuffs coming into the shelter, so that what is not allowed by policy doesn't find its way into the place.”

”I lost a jacket here, and cell phone. There are security issues here. The security checked and said that they didn't see anything. Now, I have a locker to secure my stuff that makes

me feel better” “...controlled environment with trained staff on how to handle street people, and their security”

“...this place is better than what I have before.” “My exes, cannot come here”

Participants thought that shelter security should get tighter than what it was so that banned items do not get into the shelter. Also, the people experiencing homelessness needed private lockers where they could secure their valuable items. In that way, they do not need to carry them about everywhere they go, or loss it within the shelter. On the other hand, to some, shelter offers them security from those harassing them because, the security at the shelter provided adequate protection to the people at the shelter, and did not allow external harm on the homeless. The security and safety here overlapped with the security discussed about shelter related variables that led people into homelessness and the security talked about in recommendations. A shelter that offers some privacy, warm, safe and secure met the shelter needs of people at the shelter in need of homes.

**Overlapping theme. Lack of Vital Skills Training for job, Financial Management, Behavioral and Social Skills is necessary at the shelters.**

Participants’ perspectives stated that other than having enough money to live and maintain a home, individuals needed money management skills, financial guidance, good behavioral and social skills to escape homelessness. Acquiring these skills will help to protect people from placing their live at risk with their own money and to depart homelessness. Please, refer to theme 14

Having described the themes about life events that led people into homelessness, next, is the description of the themes about a shelter that met the needs of the homeless.

Table 7

## Shelter that Meets the Needs of the Homeless

	A Shelter that Meets Shelter needs of Homeless	Examples of Participants Statements Quotes that Supported the Variables
Row 1	Hours of Operation	<p>“it is about the shelter that opens-up all day 24-seven.”</p> <p>“...they brought us in, showed us around and made us feel welcome, and told us that we can come, and go whenever we want.”</p> <p>“Interviewed me and get me in right away.”</p> <p>“...it is not difficult to get in here”</p>
Row 2	Accommodation and More Resources	<p>“I like that they have everything when you need them. You shower, find nicer cloths, keep clean, food, some meals are good.”</p> <p>“...no enough tables and chairs. Every morning, there is a fight about tables and chairs. No enough tables and chairs, they need to build a bigger shelter, no enough spaces, more accommodation” “more spaces, nutrition, beds, beddings, marts”</p> <p>“...they need a bigger shelter, a swimming pool, more nurses and doctors”</p> <p>“Transportation, we don’t have money for transport most of us”</p> <p>“...Medical help resource, job information, and placement”</p> <p>“...transportation, we don’t get money or transportation for most of us, for doctors appoints and others. “</p> <p>“more food and more nutritious food, more portion of meals. We get 3 small ration of meals daily. Good meal and good food.”</p> <p>“...in fourth floor and fifth floor, you have some privacy. Fourth floor you stay three persons in a room but, on fifth floor, you can stay two persons in a room. “</p> <p>“Having bed and it is warm”</p> <p>“..controlled environment with trained staff on how to handle street people, and their security”</p>
Row 3	Homeless need Privacy, Warm, Safe, and Secure Place	<p>”I lost a jacket here, and cell phone. there are security issues here. The security checked and said that they didn’t see anything. Now, I have a locker to secure my stuff. that makes me feel better”</p> <p>“...better searchers and tight security about stuffs coming into the shelter, so that what is not allowed by policy doesn’t find its way into the place.”</p> <p>“... it is about the shelter that opens up all day 24-seven. You don’t have to stay out in the cold, if you meet their conditions”</p> <p>very dirty here, there is a lot of lung issues, 300 guys in a room exhaling and inhaling, body odor, filthy and dirty cloths, stinky shoes, stinking work boots, bed bugs, light problem, air quality is just bad, not good maintenance culture.”</p> <p>“ It takes away your privacy, you never get your privacy. It is like a jail but, you never committed a crime. I don’t like it.”</p>
Row 4	Caring and People Oriented Professionally Trained Staff, counsellors, case workers, security staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational workers	<p>“...talking to the counsellors,” “...they make you to see that you need to fight a bit harder to get out of here.”</p> <p>“it depends on who is working that day. There are some good people and some bad people. Some are Samaritans, some are Gentiles, or Jews.”</p> <p>“great staff”</p> <p>staff are really good and helpful, helping you in the right way. They push you in the right direction, and not pushing you in a circle”</p>

		<p>“Updating the staff” each individual is different, they need case workers who are able to determine the different needs of the people. Different people need different needs. More resources are needed to help the homeless people. So much we need.”</p> <p>“I think they should hire more counsellors” “if we have one-on-one discussion with counsellors. It is hard to get one, more counsellors are needed, so that people could get help, and resources from the community when they need one</p> <p>“They should have motivational speakers and motivational support” “...getting motivational speakers and people to motivate you” “...75% of the homeless give up on themselves</p>
Row 5	Lack of Sports, Recreational, and Wellness Programs for the homeless	<p>“recreation facilities, going for an hour work, play volley ball etc...” “...the wellness classes, and gardening group because, it is peaceful.” “ There is homeless games, soccer and sports for the world homeless. They should promote homeless sporting activities in the shelters in Alberta, and Canada. Another world homeless soccer and sport for female and male with addictions is coming up in Scotland in 2017.</p> <p>They should participate by promoting and training to participate in these games and sporting activities. I am a homeless soccer player. I really, prefer to get up and go and play soccer than to go and drink. This will help them to discover the talents among the homeless addicts” “Today, has been a pretty good day, there was chiropractor here, acupuncture, hair dresser”</p>
Row 6	Employment Office is Critical at the Homeless Shelter	<p>I like that they have office here where you can get out and work “Sometimes, you are looking for work, and things but, you don’t get it.” “I am capable of employment, but there is just no work, opportunity for advancement.” “It was not that I cannot work but, because, I cannot get a job. If you don’t have a job, or family how you gona support yourself? So, I ended up at the shelter. Not working as I used to and when you have bills to pay and can’t pay it. It will keep going on and on.</p>
Row 7	Information Office is Essential to the Homeless.	<p>“CUPS (Help people with damage deposits, identification same as Alberta works, Red Cross. They help with identification, medical treatment and sometimes they health with transportation. Do you think everyone knows about these helps. I don’t think everyone knows all these, I just recently find out that I can get identification and store my ID with Sheldon Chumir hospital building (MR) There is not a lot of people that know a lot about any of these services. That is why there is more need for information pamphlets and awareness, for people. “</p> <p>”... some homeless get welfare , and AISH, and yet, they have addiction and are homeless. They collect their benefits and spend it on drugs, alcohol, and gambling, and all kinds of addiction. they need help with rehabilitation, and with supervised spending of their income to avoid wasting the money, and placing themselves at higher risks”</p> <p>“Money is going wasted, its shouldn’t go that way, people need to figure out the right places to direct their money. Harnessing these money could help. Financial advise, guide on how they can spend their money in order to get out of homelessness. Make everybody donate \$1 to further homelessness”</p> <p>“ Setting goals, and teaching people how to set goals, conduct themselves well, anger management...”</p>

Row 8	Vital Skills Training on Job, Financial Management, Behavior and Social and anger management skills, and Guidance on Spending is Necessary at the Shelter.	<p>“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes. money management courses”</p> <p>“Nobody want to train you to get skills. It is hypocrisy, the system is about hypocrisy. The system has just failed everybody. If no one wants to teach you, how would you learn?”</p> <p>“Bed bugs, maintenance, they need to update things inside the building, maintenance should take place every six months to two years. Maintenance culture should be a routine from 6months to two years. regularly”</p> <p>“ More exterminator for bugs (hygiene), we have bed bug problem in this building, cleaner showers, cleaner hygiene area, place to go to, the shower is full of corrosion. It needs to be updated. Cleaning supplies. The maintenance need to be updated like less than two years. Like in my eyes, this place is filthy.</p>
Row 9	Hygiene and Maintenance Culture of Shelters	<p>“Bed bugs, maintenance, they need to update things inside the building, maintenance should take place every six months to two years. Maintenance culture should be a routine from 6months to two years. regularly”</p> <p>“ More exterminator for bugs (hygiene), we have bed bug problem in this building, cleaner showers, cleaner hygiene area, place to go to, the shower is full of corrosion. It needs to be updated. Cleaning supplies. The maintenance need to be updated like less than two years. Like in my eyes, this place is filthy.”</p>

### **RQ3. How would you describe a shelter that would meet your shelter needs?**

#### **Description of Themes about Shelter that Meets Needs.**

A total of nine themes became prominent about the shelter that met the needs of participants. The themes are listed as: hours of operation; sufficient space and more resources; privacy, warm, safe and secure place; caring and people oriented staff who are professionally trained namely, counsellor, case workers, security staff, motivational speakers and motivational support worker; sport, recreation and wellness activities; employment office; information office, vital skills training for job, financial management, behavior, social and anger management, and guidance on spending. Next, is the description and interpretation of the themes.

#### **Theme 23. Hours of Operation.**

The participants clearly expressed that they were happy that the shelter is open 24 hours, so the homeless want the shelter to be open 24 hours daily. People can be stranded

anytime, day or night so, all participants were happy that the shelter is open 24 hours seven days a week. And that people can be accepted into the shelter anytime. Verbatim words that supported these expressions are:

“they brought us in, showed us around and made us feel welcome, and told us that we can come, and go whenever we want.” “Interviewed me and get me in right away.” “it is about the shelter that opens 24-seven” “...it is not difficult to get in here”

Having 24 hours of operation was specified by the subjects as an important thing that make them happy about a shelter.

#### **Overlapping Theme. Accommodation and Resources**

All participants clearly expressed that having a bigger shelter and more resources at the shelter was necessary because, that will alleviate the financial burden of the people in homeless situation. Offering the shelter management sufficient resources was necessary for the shelters to meet the basic needs of participants at the shelter. May you be directed to theme 18 for information about this theme.

#### **Overlapping Theme. Homeless Needs Privacy, Warm, Safe, and Secure Place.**

The participants specified that a shelter offers people some privacy, warm, safety and security met the needs of people at the shelter. The action point of the participants was to provide some privacy like a room for maximum of three people per room with a locker for each person to keep valuable items secure. They want the room to be comfortably heated, and to offer personal safety when staying at the shelter. The participants were particularly opposed to having 300 guys in an open space where everyone's personal hygiene is poor in a poorly air circulated building where people

inhaled, and exhaled all kinds of odors from the body, work shoes, including diseases. Hence, many participants stated that there are lots of lungs diseases at the shelter. May you be directed to theme 22 for details about this theme.

**Overlapping Theme. Caring and people Oriented Professionally Trained Staff namely, Counsellors, Case workers, Security staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational Support Workers.**

This theme overlapped with same theme that occurred among the shelter related variable that lead people into homelessness. The interpretation of this was same as that and the supporting words were the same. When people get to the level of becoming homeless, they believe that they have fallen, and might never make it again in life. And they are at their most fragile emotional level and at the brink of the worst so, attitude of staff could make or mar their ability to summon courage and keep pushing or to get worse than what they were. Please, refer to theme 17 above for more details, and examples of supporting words from participants about what caring and people oriented staff means to the people in homeless situation.

**Theme 24. Lack of Sports, Recreational, and Wellness Programs for the homeless.**

Participants specified that sports, recreation, and wellness programs will be beneficial to those experiencing homelessness. Some stated that any day they participated in walking, acupuncture, chiropractor, volley ball, soccer, or, wellness program including gardening, they felt a lot better. Some stated that they preferred to go and play soccer than to go and drink, or do drug. They Felt happy and positive about life and desired to get better. The subjects stated that this theme motivated them to do something positive as

opposed to negative habit and behavior. It was a very vital individual variable that caused people to succeed in achieving life goal. The participants' goal was to exit homelessness, so, engaging people at the shelter in recreation, wellness, and sporting activities signals a way of pushing people at the shelter through a process of leaving homelessness. The people in homeless situation identified that they felt better when involved in sports, wellness, or recreational activities. Participants suggested that including and promoting recreation, wellness, and sporting activities at the shelter is necessary to encourage positive feeling among the people at the shelter to boost their interest in achieving own goals including making effort to depart homelessness. Some verbatim words from participants that supported the expression above are as listed below:

“recreation facilities, going for an hour work, play volley ball etc...”

“ There is homeless games, soccer and sports for the world homeless. They should promote homeless sporting activities in the shelters in Alberta, and Canada. Another world homeless soccer and sport for female and male with addictions is coming up in Scotland in 2017.

They should participate by promoting and training to participate in these games and sporting activities. I am a homeless soccer player. I really, prefer to get up and go and play soccer than to go and drink. This will help them to discover the talents among the homeless addicts”

“Today, has been a pretty good day, there was chiropractor here, acupuncture, hair dresser

Participants indicated that sports, recreational and wellness activities were beneficial morale booster for the people at the shelter, which will support them to go out of homelessness.

**Theme 25. Employment Office is Critical at the Homeless Shelter**

All participants that were ready for employment expressed their happiness about the employment office and being able to go out sometimes and work; however, they desired more regular employment than temporary employment because, with regular full time employment, they can overcome homelessness but, with temporary jobs, they cannot leave homelessness. Participants like employment office at the shelter; however, they stated that they may be happier if the office would provide them regular full time or part time employment. In that way, they can go out of homelessness. Verbatim participants' supporting words to the statements above are:

I like that they have office here where you can get out and work

“I am capable of employment, but there is just no work, opportunity for advancement.”

The perspectives experience of people at the shelter specified that having an employment office at the shelter met the needs of the people at the shelter; however, they will be happier if the office would offer them regular part time and full time employment. In that way, they will have a prospect to leave homelessness.

**Theme 26. Information Office is Essential to the Homeless.**

All participants specified that lack of awareness of the shelter, and other government support systems and the services that they provide were part of the reasons why they became homeless. The clearly expressed that having an information office

where people could go to get information about all government support services and resources that the people at the shelter could tap from to overcome homelessness is an essential tool that the people at the shelter need to exit homelessness. Here are some of the supporting statements of the participants' own words:

“CUPS (Help people with damage deposits, identification same as Alberta works, Red Cross. They help with identification, medical treatment and sometimes they help with transportation. Do you think everyone knows about these helps? I don't think everyone knows all these, I just recently find out that I can get identification and store my ID with Sheldon Chumir hospital building (MR) There is not a lot of people that know a lot about any of these services. That is why there is more need for information pamphlets and awareness, for people. “

According to participants, to go out of homelessness, people need information on where to go to get the help that they need to leave homelessness. Participants stated that having an information office at the shelter met the shelter need of the people at the shelter. And it is vital to aid people to depart homelessness.

**An Overlapping Theme. Vital Skills Training on Job, Financial Management, Behavior and Social and Anger Management Skills, and Guidance on Spending is Necessary at the Shelter.**

The subjects expressed that having a shelter that offers a wide range of trainings for employment, financial management, behavior and social and anger management skills was crucial at the shelters. In their opinion, having this kind of service will play a major

role at assisting the people at the shelter to depart homeless situation. May you be directed to theme 14 for more information about this theme.

**Theme 27. Good Maintenance Culture and Hygiene is Necessary at the Shelter.**

The perspective experience of the Participants identified good maintenance culture and hygiene as an important tool to meet the need of the people at the shelter, which was also a crucial public health concern. It was a public health issue because, when the hygiene at the shelter becomes too poor and disease breaks out, once one person from the shelter steps out to the larger community of the city, the disease will be shared with the city of Calgary. So, whatever that affects the health and safety of the homeless community also threatens the health and safety of the larger community. Participants did not like that there were bed bugs at the shelter, poor lighting issue at the shelter, just one shower for a very large population of people (75 female). Also, the quality of air they breathe at the shelter was poor because of poor ventilation. Hence, all participants stated that there were lots of lungs disease at the shelter, and in fact, researcher observed that all participants but, three coughed during the interview. Participants suggested that having a good maintenance culture at the shelters as well as improved hygiene is vital. The participants believe that keeping the shelters clean will reduce and eliminate bedbugs, improve the air circulation and quality of air at the shelter, and reduce disease outbreak at the shelter. Also, improving the lighting of the shelter, providing more cleaning supplies, showers, and servicing of the existing showers, and keeping the washrooms and the entire shelter building clean were essential to meeting the need of the people at the shelters.

Some verbatim statements of participants that supported the expressions above are as outlined below:

“Bed bugs, maintenance, they need to update things inside the building, maintenance should take place every six months to two years. Maintenance culture should be a routine from 6months to two years. regularly”

“ More exterminator for bugs (hygiene), we have bed bug problem in this building, cleaner showers, cleaner hygiene area, place to go to, the shower is full of corrosion. It needs to be updated. Cleaning supplies. The maintenance need to be updated like less than two years. Like in my eyes, this place is filthy.”

The subjects indicated that a clean shelter met the need of the people at the shelter because, it helps them to keep clean too and stay away from getting diseases, and rather focus on how to exit homelessness instead of focusing on disease treatments. Having described the lived experiences of people in homeless situation; the life events that lead people into homelessness; unearthed the shelter that met the need of people experiencing homelessness; next, is the discussion of the participants’ recommendation on how they can overcome homelessness.

Table 8

Participants Recommendations on How they can Overcome Homelessness

Recommendations	Examples of Participants Statements Quotes that Supported the Variables
Row 1    End Homelessness	“...end homelessness as quickly as possible. People die every single day out of homelessness. People should stand up, and fight. It is time to stand up, and fight homelessness. It is time to end homelessness.”

Row 2	Full-Time Employment, and Adequate Financial Support for People with Mental and Physical disabilities	<p>"...back to minimum wage, and if they would drop process of rent, and maybe a person can get out of homelessness. ... I have to find a full-time job that pays \$17-\$18 per hour and not \$12 per hour." "... but there is just no work"</p> <p>"lose in your job", "Lose of job</p> <p>"raise the minimum wage because, no one can survive on \$12 per hour. By the time you pay tax, you are making about \$10 boxes, take home and you cannot survive on \$10 per hour, with prices of things being as high as it is, you cannot survive."</p> <p>"People who can't walk, immobility people, I thought that was not right. That they shall be somewhere else where they can get better help. "</p>
Row 3	Review Housing Policies Including rent and mortgage qualification criteria, and house Tax	<p>"...housing is the most important...affordable housing, subsidized housing, ... make it easier to get a mortgage, and rent a place to live" " If you are not employed you can't get a mortgage, and it is hard to rent, even, with fixed regular income."</p> <p>"...the need to start making rent affordable, better funding for people that want to get into their own houses for rent and mortgage."</p> <p>"... if there was more like low-income houses available, and if there is availability, where is it? I wish I can find one"</p> <p>"If the government can open-up abandoned buildings, and building not in use for the homeless. And abandoned properties, ...turn them into low-income housing and homeless shelters. there are 30,000 empty properties in Calgary right now, not used. They can be used for homeless shelters and low-income housing"</p> <p>"...there are buildings that is not in good condition for use, they can repair and turn them into homeless shelters and low cost housing, and build more for affordable housing"</p> <p>"...back to minimum wage, and if they would drop process of rent, and maybe a person can get out of homelessness. ... I have to find a full-time job that pays \$17-\$18 per hour and not \$12 per hour." "... but there is just no work"</p> <p>"raise the minimum wage because, no one can survive on \$12 per hour. By the time you pay tax, you are making about \$10 boxes, take home and you cannot survive on \$10 per hour, with prices of things being as high as it is, you cannot survive."</p> <p>"Lack of subsidized housing, taxes on houses are high. It affects the number of people that can't get a home. Rent is too high in the city"</p> <p>"Losing my apartment, I didn't have Alberta works (government assistant) it makes it harder to pay rent when you do not work every day"</p>
Row 4	Review Policies on Credit Bureau and Criminal Record	<p>"When I have no income, homeless and cannot pay my bill, they send my name to CB and I cannot rent or get a mortgage. Government policy on CB that make a lot of people to come to DI. If you don't pay your cell phone bill, you cannot rent a place in Alberta, is that right? because my name is at CB. Sometimes it is not about money, it is about CB"</p> <p>"Some people have criminal record so they can't get a job. Police sometimes pick up on a lot of people. They put you into trouble, our color, we get regular abuse for nothing. if you get one ticket, you need a lawyer, jury to help and all these, need money "</p>
Row 5	Lower Utility Bills and Total Cost of Living and Stop New Tax	<p>"There is a lot of reasons why many people are here. High rent, high utilities, unemployment and underemployment"</p>

		<p>“...they need to start making rent affordable, better funding for people that want to get into their own places for rent and mortgage, and utilities, they should be charging such high.</p> <p>“raise the minimum wage because, no one can survive on \$12 per hour. By the time you pay tax, you are making about \$10 boxes, take home and you cannot survive on \$10 per hour, with prices of things being as high as it is, you cannot survive.”</p> <p>“...utilities, they shouldn’t be charging such high.” “stop carbon taxes”</p>
Row 6	Welfare and Other Benefit Payers to Give Homeless Grace Period before withholding payment	<p>“Get welfare whether you are here or not and give you time to find a home.” “Because, shelter gives clients food and shelter, you don’t get income support from Alberta Works”</p> <p>“I can apply for AISH. AISH is a disability allowance, if I get a house but, then, how do you get a house when you cannot work or don’t have an income?”</p>
Row 7	Vital Skills Training on Job, Financial Management, Behavior and Social and anger management skills, and Guidance on Spending is Necessary at the Shelter.	<p>“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes, menu management courses.” “Lack of more job skills” “...need new job skills”</p> <p>“...by getting more training to help me obtain more employment. I am ready for the skill that I have been trained for but, getting more skills would give me more opportunities. I am ready for work, and I can still learn something else to do better.”</p> <p>”... some homeless get welfare , and AISH, and yet, they have addiction and are homeless. They collect their benefits and spend it on drugs, alcohol, and gambling, and all kinds of addiction. they need help with rehabilitation, and with supervised spending of their income to avoid wasting the money, and placing themselves at higher risks”</p> <p>“Money is going wasted, its shouldn’t go that way, people need to figure out the right places to direct their money. Harnessing these money could help. Financial advise, guide on how they can spend their money in order to get out of homelessness. Make everybody donate \$1 to further homelessness”</p> <p>“Setting goals, and teaching people how to set goals, conduct themselves well, anger management...”</p>
Row 8	Make Government Support System to be Efficient and End Discriminatory Support System	<p>“People who can’t walk, immobility people, I thought that was not right. That they shall be somewhere else where they can get better help. “</p> <p>“There should be a government help for someone on the street. There should be a help for someone in need without having to be asked a thousand questions. For these questions, 75% of the homeless give up on themselves”</p> <p>“...if I lost that job, my wife is gone kick me out, she gone apply for Calgary housing, and she gone get it. But, I cannot get it, if I apply. . And if I visit her and the kids, she won’t let me stay there because, that was one of the conditions for getting the place.”</p>
Row 9	Accommodation and Resources for Shelters	<p>“More Funding for the Shelter,” ..”they need to build a bigger shelter, no enough space, no enough accommodation.”</p> <p>”...they need a bigger facility, a swimming pool, more nurses and doctors” “...so much that we need” “We need new beddings, new marts”</p>

Row 10	Stop Shelter Privatization and Implement Inclusion Policy	<p>“Exterminator for bugs (hygiene), we have bed bug problem in this building, cleaner showers, cleaner hygiene area, place to go to, the shower is full of corrosion. It needs to be updated”</p> <p>”..in Ontario, Homeless agency is under the government. But, here, it is privatized whoever that runs this place follows their own policies and not the government policies, ...stop privatization of shelters to apply government legislations into it, the inclusion policies.”</p>
Row 11	Caring and People Oriented Professionally Trained Staff, counsellors, case workers, security staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational workers	<p>“...talking to the counsellors,” “...they make you to see that you need to fight a bit harder to get out of here.”</p> <p>“it depends on who is working that day. There are some good people and some bad people. Some are Samaritans, some are Gentiles, or Jews.”</p> <p>“great staff”</p> <p>staff are really good and helpful, helping you in the right way. They push you in the right direction, and not pushing you in a circle”</p> <p>“Updating the staff” each individual is different, they need case workers who are able to determine the different needs of the people. Different people need different needs. More resources are needed to help the homeless people. So much we need.”</p> <p>“I think they should hire more counsellors” “if we have one-on-one discussion with counsellors. It is hard to get one, more counsellors are needed, so that people could get help, and resources from the community when they need one</p> <p>“They should have motivational speakers and motivational support” “...getting motivational speakers and people to motivate you” “...75% of the homeless give up on themselves</p>
Row 12	End Discrimination of All Kinds	<p>“...hatred, discrimination, or what? People sleep outside, which is not right... but, some staff make it difficult for some people and people sleep outside, which is not right. They treat people not fair.”</p> <p>“...why is there a large population of homelessness in your country? there is problem here. there is a real issue, racism, sexism, etc...”</p> <p>“If you have three kids, one of them a doctor, one of them a pilot, one of them a thief, you talk to the one that is a thief, he will not listen because you attitude to him was not right, you can’t change him. people are different, and need to be treated differently. Your attitude need to be right before he can listen”Police sometimes, pick up on a lot of people. they put you into trouble, our color, we get regular abuse for nothing. ...they pay them to give ticket on people, and if you get one ticket, you need a lawyer, jury to help you. All these need money”</p> <p>”If you have a problem with a white guy, they gone pick you up, even if it was the other person who started the problem. Surviving as a black man in Western world is tough. ...discrimination, it is like a food chain.”</p> <p>“... one person will do it and it is okay but, another does it you get kicked out. Some of the staff, if they don’t like you they can make your life hell.”</p> <p>“...government targeting people... it is the government that make people to commit crime”</p> <p>“...there is really, not anything for white women in need of home. ...this place, they don’t want women down here. they don’t want intoxicated women here. There is segregation because, they are women”</p>

Row 13	Improve the Hygiene and Maintenance Culture of Shelters	<p>“...everyone has right to have the same opportunity. To have housing, income, and nutrition</p> <p>”..very dirty here, there is a lot of lungs issues. 300 guys in in a room exhaling and inhaling, door, filthy and dirty cloths, stinky shoes, stinking work boots, bed bugs, air quality is just bad”</p> <p>“Bed bugs, maintenance, they need to update things inside the building, maintenance should take place every six months to two years. Maintenance culture should be a routine from 6months to two years. regularly”</p> <p>“ More exterminator for bugs (hygiene), we have bed bug problem in this building, cleaner showers, cleaner hygiene area, place to go to, the shower is full of corrosion. It needs to be updated. Cleaning supplies. The maintenance need to be updated like less than two years. Like in my eyes, this place is filthy</p> <p>..controlled environment with trained staff on how to handle street people, and their security”</p>
Row 14	Improve Security, Safety, and Privacy at the Shelters.	<p>”I lost a jacket here, and cell phone. there are security issues here. The security checked and said that they didn’t see anything. Now, I have a locker to secure my stuff. that makes me feel better”</p> <p>“...better searchers and tight security about stuffs coming into the shelter, so that what is not allowed by policy doesn’t find its way into the place.”</p>
Row 15	Create Awareness of Shelter and Government Support Systems and the Services they Provide	<p>“CUPS (Help people with damage deposits, identification same as Alberta works, Red Cross. They help with identification, medical treatment and sometimes they health with transportation”</p> <p>“I don’t think everyone knows all these, I just recently find out that I can store my ID with Sheldon Chumir Hospital building for medical radiology.. there is not a lot of people who know a lot about any of these services. That is why there is more need for information awareness for people”</p> <p>”Awareness, more awareness” “Awareness, is the big thing. If the government should tell us about shelters and services that they provide and where to go when they are helpless situation. or need of help”</p> <p>“...Advertising, maybe, everybody sees this building while driving but, they don’t what is inside this building”</p>
Row 16	Provide Sports, Recreational, and Wellness Programs for the homeless.	<p>“Awareness of where to get resources, and support when you need them”</p> <p>“...the wellness classes, and gardening group, it is beneficial...”</p> <p>“recreation facilities, going for an hour work, play volley ball etc...”</p> <p>“ There is homeless games, soccer and sports for the world homeless. They should promote homeless sporting activities in the shelters in Alberta, and Canada. Another world homeless soccer and sport for female and male with addictions is coming up in Scotland in 2017.</p> <p>They should participate by promoting and training to participate in these games and sporting activities. I am a homeless soccer player. I really, prefer to get up and go and play soccer than to go and drink. This will help them to discover the talents among the homeless addicts”</p> <p>“...something for meditation, and things like a place where people can stay and meditate to find some inner peace.”</p>
Row 17	Review Policy on Child Support, Separation and Divorce	<p>“Payment of child maintenance and child support, I have a job that I was paying child maintenance (CM) for \$900 for three children and my income was \$1400. After CM, I was left with only \$500. I can’t afford my own</p>

Row 18	Conduct More Research to Teach People About Homelessness	<p>place.”</p> <p>“I am on Canada pension plan (CPP). It is worth \$370 per month. I pay CM of \$240, I am left with a total of \$130. he sighs...”</p> <p>“Having someone to share this problem, like you did, is a big load out of me. I started to open-up to you freely to let out, what I couldn’t do like, one month ago. It helps me a lot to talk to you”</p> <p>“I am happy that you are doing this research on homelessness because, not a lot of people know anything about homeless people, or being homeless. And it is good to see somebody that wants to help, even in a little way. Every little things count.”</p>
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**RQ4. What are the recommendations of individuals experiencing homelessness on how they could overcome homelessness?**

**Description of Themes About Participants’ Recommendations on How to Exit homelessness.**

These were participants’ recommendations on how they can overcome Homelessness. Several themes appeared from the participants’ recommendations on how they can go out of homelessness. The themes are as follows: end homelessness; fulltime employment, and adequate financial support for people with mental and physical disabilities, and review housing policies including rent and mortgage qualification criteria, and tax. Others are review policies on credit bureau and criminal record; lower utility bills and total cost of living and new tax; welfare and other benefit payers to give homeless grace period before withholding payment; provide vital Skills training on job, financial management, behavior and social and anger management skills, and guidance on spending; inefficient government support system and discriminatory support system; provide more fund and resources for shelters, and stop shelter privatization and implement inclusion policy. Also, caring and people oriented professionally trained staff, counsellors, case workers, security staff, motivational speakers and motivational workers;

end discrimination of all kinds; improve the hygiene and maintenance culture of shelters; improve security, safety, and privacy at the shelters; create awareness of shelter services and support they provide; Provide sports, recreation and wellness programs at the shelter; review policy on child support and child maintenance; too long waiting, too many questions and unnecessary protocols, and more research to teach people about homelessness emerged as themes. Next is end homelessness.

### **Theme 28. End Homelessness**

The participants clearly expressed that it is time to end homelessness because, the experience is painful and the taste is bitter, and people died out of homelessness every day. Verbatim statements of the subjects supporting the expression above are:

“...end homelessness as quickly as possible. People die every single day out of homelessness. People should stand up, and fight. It is time to stand up, and fight homelessness. It is time to end homelessness.”

The subjects action plan here was clear thus, no much description was necessary. They indicated that homelessness need to end as quickly as possible, with no more delays.

### **Theme 29. Providing Full-Time Employment, and Adequate Financial Support for People with Mental and Physical disabilities is critical for the Homeless.**

The participants clearly expressed that regular fulltime employment are decisive for those who are ready for employment. They need higher than \$12 per hour to afford a home, and exit homelessness. In their thought, it would be fair for benefits to go higher when the cost of living went up. In that way, they can meet their basic needs including

house with their fixed income. If not, they will become homeless. The following verbatim quotations from the participants' words supported the statements above:

"...back to minimum wage, and if they would drop process of rent, and maybe a person can get out of homelessness. ... I have to find a full-time job that pays \$17-\$18 per hour and not \$12 per hour." "... but there is just no work"

"lose in your job", "Lose of job"

"raise the minimum wage because, no one can survive on \$12 per hour. By the time you pay tax, you are making about \$10 boxes, ... you cannot survive."

"People who can't walk, immobility people, I thought that was not right. That they shall be somewhere else where they can get better help. "

All participants stated that *No Money* was the number one reason people were homeless, since, employment remained a primary source of income, giving people regular fulltime and part time employment will help them get enough money to meet the necessities of life including house. In that way, they can leave homelessness for permanent homes.

**Overlapping Theme. Reviewing Housing Policies Including Rent and Mortgage Qualification Criteria, and Tax is Necessary.**

Again, this theme overlapped as a recommendation. It first occurred as variable to homelessness, then shelter that met need of people at the shelter. The subjects specified that housing policies on rent, and mortgage qualification criteria, referencing, and house tax stand in the way of people getting permanent homes. It caused many people not to qualify for house, and led them into homelessness. If a person get a bad reference just because of hate and not because of his fault, this will disqualify him from renting or

getting mortgage and cause him to become homeless. Supporting verbatim words of participants to the statement above are listed below:

“...housing is the most important...affordable housing, subsidized housing, ... make it easier to get a mortgage, and rent a place to live” “ If you are not employed you can’t get a mortgage, and it is hard to rent, even, with fixed regular income.”

“...the need to start making rent affordable, better funding for people that want to get into their own houses for rent and mortgage.”

“... if there was more like low-income houses available, and if there is availability, where is it? I wish I can find one” “If the government can open-up abandoned buildings, and building not in use for the homeless. And abandoned properties, ...turn them into low-income housing and homeless shelters. There are 30,000 empty properties in Calgary right now, not used. They can be used for homeless shelters and low-income housing”

”Lack of subsidized housing, taxes on houses are high. It affects the number of people that can’t get a home. Rent is too high in the city”

The subjects recommended amending housing policies to help those in homeless situation get permanent homes, and go out of homelessness.

**Overlapping Theme. Reviewing Policies on Credit Bureau and Criminal Record is Essential.**

This theme overlapped with theme 7 for government variable that led people into homelessness. Message remains the same. Participants’ action plan was to amend these policies to get people out of homelessness, and put them into permanent homes.

**Overlapping Theme. Lower Utility Bills, Total Cost of Living and Stop New Tax.**

This also overlapped with similar theme about the government variables that led people into homelessness. Participants indicated that a stop on new taxes, low cost of utilities and reduction in the general costs of living was necessary to assist people depart homelessness. May you refer to theme 9 for more information about this theme.

**Overlapping Theme. Welfare and Other Benefit Payers to Give the Homeless Grace period Before Withholding Payment.**

Participants stated that cutting off payment of welfare, and benefits from the homeless made it impossible for the homeless to get out of homelessness because, if they do not have two months' rent (one month for down payment), they cannot get a rent even if they qualify for a house. Also, housing policy made it hard for someone who was not working to get a house for rent. Even if you have cash or entitlement, that was not a government recognized income that can make somebody qualify to get a house. Also, the employers do not offer people jobs if they do not have a home, or if they live in a shelter. These conditions were like a default that people in homeless situation will not overcome homelessness. Because, it made it impossible for people at the shelter to depart homelessness. Participants clearly expressed that in Alberta, someone needs a house to get a job, and you cannot get a job without having a house. Additionally, fixed income from benefits is not a government recognized condition to get a house. In a situation like this, it became impossible for someone to get out of homelessness. Participants want welfare, and other benefit payers to give people two to three months' grace period before withholding payment. Their action plan was for employers to give people at the shelter regular jobs even when they are staying at the shelters. In that way, people can get jobs

and save up money to get their basic needs including houses to go out of homelessness. Also, they suggested that it will help if, people qualify for rent, and house even with a fixed regular benefit. Examples of participants' verbatim statements that supported the expressions above are as follows:

“Get welfare whether you are here or not and give you time to find a home.” “Because, shelter gives clients food, and shelter, you don't get income support from Alberta Works”

“I can apply for AISH. AISH is a disability allowance, if I get a house but, then, how do you get a house when you cannot work or don't have an income?”

“If they have training every other week, a am..., if they have training tools to help people change their lives, like courses, and classes, menu management courses.”

Participants clearly expressed that they should be given grace period even when they were at the shelter to get a house before withholding payment of benefit to the people at the shelter. Also, they proposed that housing policy should recognize fixed regular income from benefits as a qualification condition to get a house. If that happens, someone staying at the shelter could leave homelessness. This theme overlapped with theme 11

**Overlapping Theme. Vital Skills Training on Job, Financial Management, Behavior and Social and anger management skills, and Guidance on Spending is Necessary at the Shelter.**

This was another overlap with the shelter variable that lead people into homelessness, and shelter that met the need of people at the shelter. The information is the same. Participants believe that providing these training will help people get homes

and exit homelessness. May you be directed to theme 14 for more information about this theme.

**Overlapping Theme. Make Government Support System to be Efficient and End Discriminatory Support System.**

This was another overlap with government related variables that make people to be homeless. The information is the same. The subjects want adequate government support systems that is devoid of discrimination and that are accessible to all in need of home. And not only for one group of people, or for just one specific sex. The participants believe that when they got to a point of not having money at all, if there was family, or community, or government support, perhaps they may not become homeless. They recommend having an efficient government support system that is accessible to all in serious financial need to help people depart from homelessness and get into permanent homes. This theme overlapped with theme 10 so, please, refer to theme 10 for details.

**Overlapping Theme. Accommodation and Resources for Shelters.**

This was an overlapping theme with similar theme for shelter related variables that met the need of people in homeless situation. The description is similar. The participants encouraged providing more resources to the shelters, in that way, shelters could have more resources to meet the numerous needs of people at the shelter. Please, refer to theme 18 for more information about this theme.

**Theme 30. Stop Shelter Privatization and Implement Inclusion Policy**

The participants suggested that it would be better if the shelter is run as a government agency instead of a private business. They cited an example with Ontario

where shelter is run as a government agency. Participants stated that in Ontario for example, the federal government policy on inclusion was enforced because, it is a government agency. But, in Alberta, shelters were sold to private entities who they think run shelter as a business. The subjects particularly want the federal government legislation on inclusion be applied at the shelters in Alberta. What point were they driving at? That somebody who is a registered member of one shelter can also visit other shelters to socialize, or eat. Also, that somebody staying at the shelter be allowed to welcome visitors to keep them company because, they feel too lonely, and isolated at the shelter. The following verbatim words of participants supported the statements above:

”...in Ontario, Homeless agency is under the government. But, here, it is privatized whoever that runs this place follows their own policies and not the government policies, ...stop privatization of shelters to apply government legislations into it, the inclusion policies.”

The participants suggested that the federal government inclusion policy be enforced at the shelters in Alberta to give the homeless more freedom to socialize within and across shelters. And to have shelters operate as government agency, instead of being operated as a private business.

**Overlapping Theme. Caring and People Oriented Professionally Trained Staff, Counsellors, Case Workers, Security Staff, Motivational Speakers and Motivational workers.**

This was an overlapping theme. The information is same as it appeared in shelter related variables and in shelter that meets the needs of people at the shelter. Please, be directed to theme 17 for more information about this theme.

**Overlapping theme. End All Kinds of Discrimination**

This theme overlapped with a similar theme that occurred among the government variables that cause people to become homeless, and among the lived experiences of people in homeless situation. The information and supporting subjects' verbatim words are the same. Participants simply, are not happy that people are discriminated against and that has been a major factor to people becoming homeless and not able to go out of homelessness. The subjects want the government to put an end all kinds of discrimination to prevent people from becoming homeless and to get those already homeless to get out of homelessness. You may want to refer to theme 3 for details.

**Overlapping theme. Improve the Hygiene and Maintenance Culture of Shelters**

This theme is yet another theme overlapping with a similar theme about shelter that meets needs. The subjects specified that there is a need to improve the maintenance culture and state of hygiene at the shelter. Presence of bed bugs was evident to the poor hygienic condition of the shelter. The lesson about this theme is same as that of a shelter that met the needs of the homeless already described above. May you be directed to theme 27 for a detailed information about this theme.

**Overlapping Theme. Improve Security, Safety and privacy at the Shelters**

This was another overlapping theme. It overlapped with security that was described among shelter related variables that lead people into homelessness and privacy,

warm, safe, and secure place described in shelter that met the needs of participant. The participants want the shelter to be warm, and offer some privacy to people at the shelter. Also, lockers to secure valuable personal items and tighter security search for people entering into the facility was suggested. In that way, items prohibited at the shelter do not find their way into the shelters, and the sober people at the shelter do not run into the temptation of going back to the habit they were saying goodbye to. Please, refer to theme 22 for more information about this theme.

**Overlapping Theme. Create Awareness of Shelter and Government Support Systems and the Services they Provide**

This theme overlapped with same themes that occurred among the government and domestic related variables that caused people to become homeless. The lesson and the examples of participant's words are the same. In the participants' opinion, not many people know a lot about the shelter and government support systems that existed and the type of services they offer to the people in various need. Many do not know where to go and seek for help when in need of one. Participants recommended awareness creation about shelters, and government support systems so that people could be aware and go get the help that they need early, and stay in homes rather than becoming homeless just because someone did not ask for help when it was critical. May you direct attention to theme 12 for more information about this theme.

**Overlapping Theme. Provide Sports, Recreational, and Wellness Programs for the homeless.**

This has an overlap with same theme that appeared among shelter that met the needs of the people at the shelter. The information and examples are the same.

Participants submitted that sports, recreation and wellness programs be promoted at the shelters because, participating in the those made them to feel better. They stated that they preferred to participate in activities like that than to go and do drug or any other bad habit. The subjects felt that such tools could assist them to wean from bad habit, and exit homelessness. Please, direct attention to theme 24 for more information about this theme.

### **Overlapping Theme. Review Policy on Child Support and Child Maintenance**

Just as participants specified in same theme on CS and CM among government related variables that led people into homelessness, using 65% of people's income to pay CS or CM is too much for the participants. The subjects want the government to review that if not, according to the participants, it is a direct way of making CS and CM payers to become homeless because, the remaining 35% of their income cannot support an independent living.

Reviewing government policy on CS and CM will assist people to leave homelessness. May you refer to theme 6 for details about this theme.

### **Theme 31. Conduct More Research to Teach People About Homelessness**

The subjects stated that they were happy to see somebody conducting research about homelessness and that they were particularly happy to participate in the research study. They want more research studies to be performed about homelessness to teach people more about homelessness because, they believe that not many people knew about

homelessness. Examples of participants' verbatim words supporting the statements above are as listed below:

"Having someone to share this problem, like you did, is a big load out of me. I started to open-up to you freely to let out, what I couldn't do like, one month ago. It helps me a lot to talk to you"

"I am happy that you are doing this research on homelessness because, not a lot of people know anything about homeless people, or being homeless. And it is good to see somebody that wants to help, even in a little way. Every little things count."

Participants felt special to be involved in this research studies, and proposed conducting more studies about homelessness to teach people about homelessness. With the presentation and description of data in mind, next, is data interpretation and discussion in Chapter 5.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

I understood that validity and reliability in a qualitative study are rated differently from quantitative validity and reliability. A qualitative study may be valid, but not reliable (inconsistent response) (Creswell, 2011, p.190). The focus of my qualitative research is to ensure that it is credible, transferable, dependable, and able to be confirmed (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.112). To conduct a reliable study, it is a requirement that the researcher ensures that another person could replicate the study under similar conditions. I was trained to collect data via interviewing, and I received, recorded and translated information in a systematic manner. Another researcher can generate the same themes and arrive at the same conclusion if the approach is replicated in conducting the

same research (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.113).

This investigation being a qualitative study, the generalizability of the survey is not guaranteed; rather, the findings of this study may be relevant depending on the perspective of the person who wants to use the result (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.102). Externally valid outcome means that the findings can be generalizable. The participants' in-depth, detailed responses made the study more transferable to other settings. However, moderate generalizability is possible with the result of this study, but any such generalizability must be based on the individual's context and the intended use by the user. Also, the fact that the subjects were Canadian citizens that held from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds increases the results' chance of moderate generalizability (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.112). To help me increase the validity of this study, I used rich or full texts to describe my findings (Blackwell, 2015; Boyce & Neale, 2006; Creswell, 2011, p.191). However, the individual verbatim interview biographical information as well as complete conversation was not presented in chapter four. Because, it contains lots of personal identification information, which could place the participants' privacy and confidentiality in jeopardy. Hence, the demographic description of participants was provided as a group information and lots of verbatim information from subjects' own words were copied and pasted beside the themes as supporting categories of information for both the table and textural descriptions of all themes. In this way, it is much harder for participants to be identified with the information they shared with the researcher, and this provides them with further protection.

I used my proposal and dissertation class discussions to form a database that I used to

document all steps that I took in conducting this study (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2011, p.190). I used a procedure similar to those utilized in the past by other researchers, to increase reliability (Creswell, 2011, p.190; Gibbs, 2007). Other actions that I took to support the validity of this study were using triangulation or crosschecking, and member checking to increase accuracy. I further used pattern and theme for the study analysis and I described the research result in full (Blackwell, 2015; Boyce, & Neale, 2006).

Additionally, I included discrepant and negative information that I obtained from the themes of the result to increase the trustworthiness of the study. I tried as much as possible to spend time with the study participants in the study environment, interacted and mingled with them. It was useful for a familiarization purposes (getting to know them), and I used other researchers to scrutinize my study (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Creswell, 2011, p.190). I crosschecked the interview transcription with the participants for correction immediately after the study and when I returned on a later date, except one participant who was not found after several visits to the site to confirm transcription on a later date. I requested them for approval to ensure consensus on the information that I utilized for the analysis.

I used many dimensions of verification processes such as crosschecking or triangulation, voice recording, and member checking to clarify information that appeared unclear or incorrect. I had one colleague who is knowledgeable in the qualitative study and one external mentor review my study (Creswell, 2011, p.191). I secured the help of an external professor checking further for biases and pitfalls. I provided a detailed presentation of the data transcription in the study (Creswell, 2011, p.190).

**Summary**

In Chapter four, Several themes emerged as reasons why people became homeless; however, issues centering around money was a predominant theme. All participants clearly expressed in all the four research questions that money was a critical issue that led them into homelessness. Participants indicated that full time employment was essential for the people experiencing homelessness to overcome homelessness. the subjects stressed that a minimum wage of \$12 per hour was not sufficient to put people out of homelessness, they need \$18 per hour in full time employment to exit homelessness.

From the perspective experience of the participants, money issues were significance reasons why people were homeless and strategies targeted at addressing all issues surrounding money among the homeless were suggested by participants as crucial solutions towards ending homelessness.

Also, discrimination was clearly expressed by participants as central in issues surrounding homelessness. It was highlighted by all participants in their responses to all the four research questions as a prominent issue surrounding homeless phenomenon. They stated that discrimination stood in the way of people getting employment, home, giving and receiving services even at the shelters. Participants stated that discrimination is a reality in our world and the consequence can be as bad as subjecting people to homelessness. The subjects suggested that putting an end to all kinds of discrimination is compelling. So that its barrier to people getting employment, homes, giving and receiving services to assist them out of homelessness would be eliminated.

Other themes that were prominent in providing answers to the four research questions were efficient government support systems, lack of awareness of shelters and other support systems, and affordable housing, rent and mortgage qualification criteria and house taxes. Insufficient caring and people oriented professionally trained staff at the shelter and absence of Motivational Speakers and Motivational Support staff; credit bureau and criminal records; child support; sports, recreation and wellness programs; the high cost of living; instituting a grace period to the homeless before withholding benefits; absence of vital skills; security; and poor hygiene and maintenance culture were prominent themes among others that provided answers to the four research questions.

Results showed that there is no one single reason why people are homeless. As the participants were from diverse backgrounds so, also are their stories. Aside from one participant who had a regular part time job who hopes to get a fulltime job soon, and four participants who were not ready for employment, the rest were ready for regular part time and regular full time employment. Also, those ready for employment were available to learn more job skills but, they were yet to get the chance. One participants specified that he was to get a First Aid training soon and he was happy that it could open-up a new job opportunity for him. Some who pay child support and are still getting some regular income, keep on paying 65% of what they get and for those who have zero income, the payment of CS is on hold until they begin to get some income again.

The survival strategies of those in homeless situation were, keep busy as much as you can, read books including Bible, and hold on to your memories. Others were, hold unto pictures, computers, watch movies, do temporary jobs, pick up bottles and cans from

blue bins and recycle for some change (small money), and hold on to your faith. Also, keeping a positive attitude, avoiding negative feelings or thoughts about your situation, socializing, and making friends, and counting on yourself only but, no other to get out of homelessness. Additionally, talk to the counselors, and extend a helping hand to other people in homeless situation that might need your help. Most importantly, make a personal effort to get information about any available support system that could be beneficial to you to overcome homelessness. Keeping in mind the result of this study, next, is a discussion about the findings.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Interpretation of Data

### Introduction

My objective in this phenomenological study was to understand the phenomenon of homelessness from the perspectives of those experiencing homelessness using the following four research questions:

- ❖ RQ1: What are the lived experiences of people in a homeless situation?
- ❖ RQ2: What are the life events that led people in a homeless situation into homelessness?
- ❖ RQ3: How would you describe a shelter that would meet your shelter needs?
- ❖ RQ4: What are the recommendations of individuals experiencing homelessness on how they could overcome homelessness?

The purpose of this study was to explore whether there are new lessons that need to be learned to understand the homelessness phenomenon well. I believed that involving those experiencing homelessness in search of a solution is imperative for better understanding the subject. Researchers have suggested that better understanding of the problem is critical to the development of improved strategies and policy decisions that could bring homelessness under control or ideally end it (Awosoga et al., 2013; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013; Hubac & Stroick, 2007). The results of this study supported the findings of previous studies and revealed new lessons. The perspectives of people in a homeless situation remain vital for a better understanding of the homelessness phenomenon because they provided many new lessons about the phenomenon.

The two prominent themes that all the participants touched on and that were also given as responses to all four of the research questions were: no money and discrimination. All other emergent themes centered on these two themes of how to get money to exit homelessness and how discrimination is standing in the way. The themes' characteristics are abstract in nature, and I employed a procedure of axial coding in their development. I derived the characteristics and variables about homelessness from the interview data transcription, further analyzed and coded them as nodes, and then placed them into categories. The unit themes were further analyzed to eliminate redundancy and merged further into bigger themes, and the overlapping themes were clustered to form cluster themes. Several of the themes were overlapping in two or three research questions; however, no money and discrimination surfaced in all research questions, and the themes overlapped across other themes with similar and unique content. Several themes surfaced as independent and overlapping themes, sharing similar and unique characteristics, while there were also a few themes that did not overlap.

This chapter consists of my interpretation of the findings, discussions of the limitations of the study, researcher bias, and generalizability of the findings, my recommendations for further research, implications of the results, and a conclusion.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

My main goal with this study was to learn what homelessness means to those experiencing it (see Bandura, 1977; National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc., 2010; Tolman, 1932). I adopted both the principles of retrieving and interpreting data, a hermeneutic theory, on the meaning of homelessness from the

perspectives of those experiencing homelessness (Communication Theory, n.d.; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I used a phenomenological design to conduct this study (Creswell, 2007), which assisted me in understanding homelessness from the different perspectives of the participants from diverse backgrounds who were in a homeless situation. Blumer (1969) described this approach as “seeing a situation the way the actor sees it” (p. 56). To achieve this goal and its objective, I employed social cognitive constructs because my focus was more of a social problem that threatens the health of the community. Through this study, I identified new lessons and experiences from the different perspectives of those in homeless situations.

SI theory also supported this study. Proponents of the SI theory contend that facts or symbols are produced through the processes of human interaction, and these symbols are usually given meanings based on the perceptions of the people involved (Wiebe, Durpos, & Mills, 2010). Mead (2009) posited that an individual has two sides, the *I* and *me*: *me* is the attitude of the persons in an individual’s environment that influence the behavior of that individual, and *I* is an aspect of a person that responds to the behavior. In this study, I gathered data on the *me* (environmental influences) and the *I* (the self-will or potentials of the individuals) of the participants concerning their perspectives on their homelessness situations.

The government- and shelter-related themes included environmental influences (*me*) that cause and keep people in homelessness, and the domestic-related themes were the self-will or potentials (*I*) that lead people into and keep them in homelessness. I derived the themes from the meanings and symbols the homeless participants attached to

their homelessness based on their experiences, and my focus was on reflexively sharing those meanings with the subjects and interpreting the symbols in a manner that readers could understand. In this chapter, I discuss the prominent and overlapping themes in synthesis with the four research questions and the findings in previous researcher that I reviewed in Chapter 2. Below is the outline of the prominent and overlapping themes of the results. A description and synthesis of the major themes of this study and findings of previous studies will follow the outline.

Major themes from the results included:

1. A situation where someone has nothing, no money, home, privacy, or support.
2. A situation of discrimination of all kinds.
3. A situation of mental illness, and addiction
4. Review policy on child support, separation and divorce
5. Review policies on credit bureau and criminal record
6. Review housing policies and the housing tax
7. Inefficient government support system and discriminatory support system.
8. Create awareness for shelter and government support systems and the services they provide
9. Caring and people oriented professionally trained staff, counsellors, case workers, security staff, motivational speakers and motivational workers.
10. Vital skills training on job, financial management, behavior and social and anger management skills, and guidance on spending is necessary at the shelter.

11. Provide sports, recreational, and wellness programs for the homeless.
12. Improve security, safety, and privacy at the shelters.
13. Economic recession, high cost of living, fixed income and new taxes increase homelessness.
14. Welfare and other benefit payers to give homeless grace period before withholding payment.
15. Improve the hygiene and maintenance culture of shelters
16. Too long waiting and unnecessary questions and protocols.
17. Conduct more research to teach people about homelessness.

#### **A Situation Where Someone has Nothing, No Money, Home, Privacy, or Support**

Having seen from ongoing discussion that money is pivotal to the genesis and ending of homelessness, the themes centering on money were prominent in all the themes that emerged in the four research questions. In the lived experiences of people experiencing homelessness, this theme emerged as having nothing: no money, home, privacy, or support. In the domestic variable of a life event that leads people into homelessness, the theme appeared as unemployment and a lack of employment skills and fixed income with no family support. In the question about a shelter that meets their needs, the theme of money surfaced as insufficient space, more resources, privacy, and a warm, safe, and secure place. In the question asking for the recommendations of participants on how people can overcome homelessness, the theme showed up as full-time employment. The theme of money and unemployment issues was in line with previous studies on homelessness. For instance, Hulchanski (2009) stated that barriers

such as lack of employment skills, unemployment, or poor wages, and no, poor, or limited access to essential support, are hindrances to those necessities. Bloom et al (2012) and Gaetz et al. (2013) specified that unemployment, loss of employment, and irregular employment are barriers to people departing from homelessness. Also, a high level of precarious jobs such as insecure jobs, jobs with wages that are too low, and unsafe or risky jobs leads people into and keeps them in a homeless situation (Graham & Schiff, 2010). An issue of concern for all researchers was getting the individual a sufficient amount of money needed to overcome homelessness, and to provide shelters with a sufficient amount of money so that they can meet the needs of the people and assist them in exiting homelessness.

#### **A Situation of Discrimination of All Kinds**

Discrimination also emerged as a central issue, and emerged as a theme in all four research questions as well. Participants clearly expressed that discrimination was a reality in the city of Calgary, and that the consequences can be as bad as leading people to homelessness. Likewise, Gaetz et al. (2013) in their study stated that discrimination was identified as a major obstacle to obtaining employment. It was also a barrier to receiving justice and other supporting services, and it affected non-Caucasian racial ethnic groups the most. This was in direct accord with the results of this study, where the participants of African and First Nations origin clearly expressed with tears in their eyes that their homelessness was owing to racial discrimination or hatred. While Gaetz (2013) stated that discrimination is a barrier to employment, the participants of this study stated that in addition to being a barrier to employment, it was also a barrier to getting homes and

receiving services as well. Also, researchers have identified discrimination as a structural cause of homelessness, stating that it has economic and societal reasons, which influence the environment to deny an individual the opportunity to gain economic and social autonomy and stability that could prevent homelessness (Bloom, Finfgeld-Connect, & Johnson, 2012; Gaetz et al., 2013). These causes include low income, discrimination, and absence of affordable housing or health support. Participants demanded an end to all kinds of discrimination so that its barrier to people getting employment, homes, and giving and receiving services that would get them out of homelessness would be eliminated. In that way, people will get the money they need to get into permanent homes and exit homelessness.

#### **A Situation of Mental Illness and Addiction**

All participants mentioned that mental illness and addiction of all kinds, including gambling, is a reality among the people in a homeless situation. Participants stated that some picked up the behavior prior to becoming homeless while struggling to deal with their threatening financial situations, namely the loss of their job or home, unhealthy relationships, or unsafe living environment. Some developed mental illness and addiction, such as drug abuse, alcoholism, and gambling, after they became homeless in a struggle to deal with the problems and stigma associated with homelessness. Some reported becoming addicted based on keeping bad friends. Also, worthy of note is the fact that some people with mental illness are homeless because they lack the capacity to effectively manage their income well to live independent live, and others become homeless because they have no income at all. All mental illness and addiction related

situations could render people homeless. All participants stated that mental disorders are common among the people at the shelter. Schizophrenia was reported by many as being prevalent at the shelter, and psychiatric cases without access to medication is a concern to the people in a homeless situation.

The prevalence of mental illness and addiction is high among those in a homeless situation. The diagnosed not having medications and the undiagnosed are big concerns to the people at the shelter. This is not a brand-new finding as many previous researchers revealed that mental illnesses and addiction are high among the people experiencing homelessness (Bloom, Finfgeld-Connect, & Johnson, 2012; Campbell, Gibson, O'Neill, & Thurston, 2015; Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry, & Patel, 2007; Gaetz et al., 2013; Ganesh, 2013; HRSDC, 2010; NCH, 2009). However, apart from addiction, schizophrenia was clearly expressed by participants as the most prominent mental illness existing among the people at the shelter. Participants suggested that keeping bad friends, addiction, and mental illness can all lead to homelessness. Addressing the problem of mental illness and addiction of people at the shelter will assist in people departing homelessness.

### **Review Policies on Child Support, Separation, and Divorce**

I identified the issue of payment of child support, separation, and divorce as a government- and domestic-related variable that led people into homelessness as well as a recommendation of participants on how they can exit homelessness. Participants were not happy that people pay 65% of their income for CS and CM. In situations like that, the participants are left with only 35% of their income to live, which makes it impossible for

those involved to depart homelessness. Relationship factors, such as family break-ups, were suggested by Statistic Canada (2011) as a cause of homelessness, which is in consensus with the theme of separation and divorce identified in this study as a barrier to people exiting homeless to secure permanent homes. However, CS and CM is a new theme learned from the results of this study, which had not been suggested by previous researchers on homelessness. Participants specified that CS and CM needs to be amended to assist the homeless who are paying CS or CM to overcome homelessness.

### **Review Policies on Credit Bureau (CB) and Criminal Record (CR)**

This theme was suggested by participants as a factor why people are homeless. The participants specified that the CB and CRs are hindrance to people securing employment and qualifying for rent or a mortgage. Thus, reviewing CB and CR policy is integral to assisting people overcome homelessness. The subjects clearly expressed that when they could not pay their cell phone bill because they had no money, were unemployed, and homeless, their names were taken to the CB, leading to bad credit record. This bad credit record disqualifies them from renting a house from a property management company and disqualifies them from obtaining a mortgage. As long as their credit is bad, no bank can approve them for a mortgage, even if eventually, they secure good job.

Additionally, participants stated that if someone commits a criminal offense and goes to jail and is released, it is as hard for them to get a job or house. The property owners and employers continue to deny that person a house or employment and remind the person that they have a criminal record, which does not motivate such a person to

change their behavior. And without changing their behavior, that person will never get a house or a job. The CB and CR are new lessons learned in this study that were not suggested by previous researchers; however, this theme could have been implicated in the structural or environmental factors that Gaetz (2013) and Bloom et al. (2012) described as economic and societal reasons that influence the environment to deny an individual the opportunity to gain economic and social autonomy and stability that could prevent homelessness. The subjects stated that the CB and CR are prominent among the reasons why people are homeless. I identified the CB and CR as a government variable of why people are homeless and a recommendation of the subjects on how people can depart homelessness (forth research question). Participants requested an amendment of CB and CR policies to assist people to overcome all barriers to exiting homelessness.

### **Review Housing Policies and the Housing Tax**

The theme of housing policies and the housing tax also emerged as a government-related variable to homelessness, as well as the participants' recommendation of how people can leave homelessness. Lack of affordable housing, high rent, rent references, rent and mortgage conditions that could not be met, strict qualification criteria, and a high mortgage tax were specified by the subjects as among the factors that led people into homelessness. Participants clearly expressed that there is little to no affordable housing in the city and that makes it hard for people to get permanent homes and overcome homelessness. Participants stated that the process, conditions, and qualification criteria required of people to secure a rental property or obtain a mortgage in the city of Calgary makes it difficult for people to get their own homes and depart homelessness. Participants

also stated that there is a high tax on homes, and these conditions are standing in the way for people to get their own homes and exit homelessness. While lack of affordable housing was supported by the studies of Graham and Schiff (2010), Gaetz et al. (2013), and Work Alberta (2015), rent references, rent and mortgage conditions, stringent qualification criteria, and a high mortgage tax as factors that put people in a homeless situation are new findings that have not been reported by previous researchers reviewed in my literature.

Another finding of this study that is new is that the participants suggested ways the government could increase affordable house. They suggested that the government could repair properties not in use or abandoned properties and convert them and the 30,000 empty properties in Calgary into affordable housing. Also, they suggested building more affordable housing and making a new policy that would make certain housing available specifically for low income earners and another for high income earners. However, one participant revealed discrepant information about rent. He stated that it seems that rent is coming down to \$1,000 per month because no one is renting and people have been losing their jobs. This information is in contrast to the previous research findings and the responses from the rest of participants in this study. Participants clearly expressed that the housing policies, including rent and mortgage qualification criteria and referencing, stand in the way of people getting permanent homes and exiting homelessness. Reviewing housing policies including rent, mortgage qualification criteria, and referencing will assist people to overcome the barrier housing policies caused in preventing people from obtaining their permanent homes and in exiting homelessness.

Also, repairing old properties, turning empty properties into affordable housing, as well as building more new affordable housing will assist people in getting permanent homes and leaving homelessness.

### **Inefficient Government Support System and Discriminatory Support System**

The participants stated that the absence of support systems including family, community, and the government can be a cause of people becoming homeless. People cannot support themselves once they have no income or if their income is not sufficient to support independent living. At that point, if there is no family, community, or government support available, an individual may become homeless. An individual who cannot support himself requires support from their family, community, or government to stand on their own feet again and move on with life. Also, some support systems provide discriminatory services to the people in need. Some favor women, some men, and some First Nations or Caucasians. Inefficient and insufficient support systems were also revealed by Gaetz et al. (2013) as a variable to homelessness. These researchers stated that insufficient support in all areas of their needs can lead to homelessness as well as full support being able to prevent them from returning to old habits that might ultimately send them back to homelessness. Hulchanski (2009), also, suggested that poor or limited access to essential support is a hindrance to those necessities and if the social support system is weak, the population of homeless will continue to go up. Additionally, Graham and Schiff (2010) specified that lack of social housing and no rental support can lead people into homelessness.

So, the importance of efficient and all accessible social support system cannot be overemphasized. The participants recommended having efficient and accessible support systems that an individual can fall back on when in extreme need of financial help. They stated that this type of support is critical to assist a person get into or remain in permanent homes and overcome homelessness. The subjects stated that Alberta Works is not efficient, so the establishment more and better support systems in addition to Alberta Works could make a difference in providing better a support system to people in need of financial support in the city of Calgary.

### **Create Awareness for Shelter and Government Support Systems and the Services They Provide**

The majority of the participants (all but three) did not know about the shelter before they became homeless; hence, this is the reason that many lived on the street or in their cars for many years before someone or police took them to the shelter. Participants stated that awareness is central to the people seeking help in times of extreme need, and a lack of awareness is behind people not going to the shelter when they first became homeless. The subjects also encouraged people who are not homeless yet to go out into the community to explore the community and government services that are available to the people in the community to become self-aware; so that in times of need, they know where to go for help to avoid homelessness. I indicated this theme as the government- and domestic-related variables that lead people into homelessness as well as a recommendation of members on how they can depart homelessness. Participants strongly recommended that the creation of awareness and distribution of information are

necessary to inform the people experiencing homelessness and the community at large about the shelters, support systems, and the services they provide to the people in need. This is a new lesson learned in this study. Prior studies that I reviewed in my review of literature did not mention awareness as an essential variable of homelessness.

**Caring, People-Oriented, Professionally-Trained Staff, Counselors, Case Workers, Security Staff, Motivational Speakers, and Motivational Workers**

The participants stated that professionally-trained caring staff is central to the people at the shelter overcoming homelessness. The subjects clearly expressed that the manner in which the people are handled by the staff at various posts matters a lot to how the people at the shelter respond to them and the services they offer. They specified that if the people at the shelter know that the staff cares and truly wants to assist them in getting out of homelessness, then people at the shelter will cooperate, feel motivated, and do their best to exit homelessness. However, if the attitude of the staff is negative, the people at the shelter will be demotivated and discouraged. They will not want to make the effort to get better, and they can even become worse in their bad habits.

The subjects recommended training all of the shelter staff at various posts to a professional level. This finding was in concurrence with a previous study by Gaetz et al. (2013), that identified excellent professional training and improved strategic planning is achievable for shelter staff but only when based on the evidence from the appropriate studies. Staff that cares and genuinely wants to help is a new finding and recommendation that was not suggested by earlier researchers. Also, all members encouraged having motivational speakers (MSPs) and motivational support (MS) staff as

a new tool added to the shelter services. Participants stated that including MSPs and MS staff would be decisive in assisting the people at the shelter to exit homelessness.

Participants specified that lots of people at the shelter have great talents, skills, and potential; however, the helplessness and hopelessness of their situations cause them to give up on themselves. They stated that having MSPs and MS staff could be critical in helping the people at the shelter pick up their pieces of their lives and struggle on to overcome homelessness. MSPs and MS staff are also a new finding and recommendation that was not revealed in the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2. This theme is so vital that it occurred in participant responses to all research questions but one.

### **Vital Skills Training on Jobs; Financial Management; Behavior, Social, and Anger Management Skills is Necessary at the Shelter**

The theme of lack of job; financial management; and behavior, social, and anger management skills was clearly expressed by the subjects as decisive in people at the shelter becoming homeless because the negative impacts of the lack of these skills on employment, spending, separation, and divorce is huge on the income of the participants. It impacts their ability to get sufficient money for permanent homes and depart homelessness. I indicated this theme as a domestic- and shelter-related variable to homelessness as well as a recommendation of members on how they can leave homelessness. This finding was in line with the findings of previous researchers concerning the behavior and social skills; Bandura (2010) referred to them as individual and relationship factors. However, Bandura stated that the domestic problem was a reason why people could learn how to behave well enough to keep a healthy relationship

and employment. This was in contrast to my findings in this study about behavior and social skills. In this study, the subjects stated that absence of good behavior and social skills caused their relationships to break up. Also, Bloom et al. (2012) and many other previous researchers suggested that inadequate job skills are barriers to people retaining good employment that can provide sufficient income to secure permanent homes (Acquaviva, 2000; Carroll & Trull, 1999; Hayden, 2005; Marcus, 2001; Trickett & Cgung, 2007). The participants stated that providing these skills to the people at the shelter would aid them to overcome homelessness.

### **Improve Security, Safety, and Privacy at the Shelters**

Security was identified by the subjects as a critical tool to meet the needs of the people at the shelter that could assist people to depart from homelessness. I implicated security as a shelter-related variable to homelessness, a variable in shelter that meets the needs of the participants, and in participants' recommendation of how the people at the shelter will overcome homelessness. The theme was defined by participants as privacy and a warm, safe, and secure place. The participants specified that privacy and heat are necessary for the people that are experiencing homelessness as well as improving the security at the entrance gate of the shelter and providing lockers for the people at the shelter to secure their personal valuable items. In that way, shelter users would not lose their valuables while at the shelter, using the washroom, or away for work or appointments. Participants suggested tightening the security at the gate to ensure that prohibited items do not get into the shelter. Also, increasing the privacy of the people at the shelter and providing personal lockers for people at the shelter to secure their

valuables will give people at the shelter peace of mind to focus on how they can obtain help to overcome homelessness rather than worrying about where they can keep their valuable items and their safety. The impact of the loss of the few remaining valuables the people at the shelter possess could be more devastating than being homeless itself expressed the subjects. This theme seemed to be new as the studies that I reviewed in the literature did not state that security, safety, and privacy were important tools or factors at a shelter. The participants recommended that increasing the privacy, heat, safety, and security of people at the shelter is necessary to support them exit homelessness.

### **Provide Sports, Recreational, and Wellness Programs for the Homeless**

The subjects clearly expressed that having sports, recreation, and wellness programs at the shelter is a crucial tool that the shelter uses to help people depart homelessness. Many people at the shelter have bad habits, but when these types of programs are available, they often prefer to participate in these programs rather than repeating their bad habits. Participating in sports, recreation, and wellness activities put members in a positive mood stated the subjects. The participants also specified that having positive feelings is beneficial to getting people interested in achieving their goals, including making the effort to depart homelessness. They also suggested that shelters should promote world sporting competitions for the homeless and prepare the people at the shelter to participate in a global big sporting event, which could also change the financial status of the people at the shelter and affect the economy positively. This theme occurred as a necessity at the shelter to meet the needs of the participants, as well as the subjects' recommendation on how they can overcome homelessness. I considered this

finding to be a new lesson because previous studies that I reviewed in the literature did not report it among their findings. The participants recommended including sporting, recreation, and wellness programs as a critical tool to assist people overcome homelessness.

### **Economic Recession, High Cost of Living, Fixed Income, and New Taxes Increase Homelessness**

The subjects expressed that economic recession is a reality in the country of Canada and city of Calgary. For this reason, there is a high cost of living in the city and a high cost of utilities and taxes, and even new taxes such as the carbon tax. In an economy like this, people who receive a fixed income or benefits are not carried along stated the participants. With a fixed income in an economy where the cost of living is continuously rising, the participants stated that they can no longer afford the resources they used to be able to afford and that included obtaining a house. The consequence was that they became homeless. This theme was prominent among the government-related variables that lead people into homelessness as well as the participants' recommendation on how they can depart homelessness. The subjects specified that stopping new taxes and lowering the cost of utilities and the general cost of living will assist people at the shelter to exit homelessness. Also, they recommended that if the cost of living rises that it is critical that the benefit payers increase the amount they pay to people with fixed incomes as they would with insurance where they pay claims based on the present market situation and cost of the item at a time when an incident occurs. The high cost of living is a reality that affects the large community as well as the people experiencing homelessness and it

makes it difficult for people to depart from homelessness. However, there was a discrepant statement from one of the members, who was against the banks giving out loans and mortgages that could not be repaid. He did think though that there should be some control from the government over banks. At the same time, he simply wanted fair loans to be given out to investors and for mortgages in a way that the economy is not negatively affected.

This finding was in accord with the findings of Gaetz et al. (2013), who stated that the state of the national, regional, and local market economies could pose some challenges in obtaining or retaining employment and having affordable housing and argued that this was a function of people not having permanent houses and becoming homeless. Gaetze et al. also added that the government can provide a permanent solution to homelessness if it could make good use of human, material, and government economic resources. This good use would include eliminating all government's structural barriers to permanent full time employments and accessible affordable housing including rent and mortgages. Additionally, earlier homelessness researchers also revealed the economy as a barrier to people getting homes; however, in their studies they described the economy in the context of individual economy rather than market economy (Acquaviva, 2000; Bandura, 2010; Bloom et al., 2012; Carroll & Trull, 1999; Hayden, 2005; Marcus, 2001; Trickett & Cgung, 2007). Economic recession, high taxes, and a high cost of living stand in the way of people getting permanent homes to leave homelessness.

**Welfare and Other Benefit Payers to Give Homeless Grace Period Before Withholding Payment.**

The subjects stated that giving a grace period to the people at the shelter before withholding the payment of their entitlements or benefits was a government related variable that is critical to the people in Homeless situation obtaining permanent homes. Participants stated that the withholding of the payment of welfare, and benefits from the people in homeless situations is a significant barrier to the people getting out of homelessness. Because, if they do not have two months' rent (one month for down payment), they cannot get a rent even if they qualify for a house. Also, the subjects specified that the housing policy makes it hard for someone who is not working to get a house for rent. They stressed that even if a person has cash or receives regular entitlement, that is not a government recognized income criteria that can qualify a person to get a house. Additionally, the employers do not offer people jobs if they do not have a home, or if they live in a shelter. These conditions are among the structural barriers that make people in homeless situations unable to overcome homelessness. The subjects stated that this condition makes it impossible for people at the shelter to obtain permanent regular employment to aid them to depart homelessness. Participants clearly expressed that in Alberta, someone needs a house to get a job, and a person cannot get a job without having a house. So, participants expressed that providing a grace period is critical to the people at the shelter departing from homelessness for permanent homes. Moreover, fixed regular long-term income from benefits is not a government approved condition for a person to qualify get a house. In a situation like this, it is impossible for someone with fixed income to get out of homelessness. Hulchanski (2009) suggested that directing attention to improving the public priorities is essential in controlling homelessness. And

he added that if the social support system is weak or inefficient; the homeless population might continue to increase. Participants want welfare, and other benefit payers to give people two to three months' grace period before withholding payment. They want employers to give people regular fulltime or part time employment even when they are staying at the shelters. In that way, people can get the necessary jobs, and sufficient income required of them to get the necessities of life including securing permanent houses to go out of homelessness. Also, they want people to qualify for a rental and a house even with a fixed regular benefit. The participants recommended that the people at the shelter should be given some time to find a house before withholding the payment of their benefits. The subjects believe that if this suggestion is permitted, the people at the shelter would be aided to save up two months' rent, one month for the down payment to get permanent homes, and exit homelessness.

### **Improve the Hygiene and Maintenance Culture of Shelters.**

From the perspective experience of the Participants, good maintenance culture and hygiene is a crucial tool necessary to meet the needs of the people at the shelter, and it is an essential public health concern (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007). It is a public health issue because, when the hygiene at the shelter is too poor and epidemics occur, once one person from the shelter steps out of the shelter into the larger community of the city of Calgary, the disease can easily spread to the city. So, whatever affects the health and safety of the homeless community also threatens the health and safety of the larger community. Participants were dissatisfied with the infestation of bed bugs at the shelter, and poor lighting issue at the shelter. The

female participants were unhappy they just have one shower for a very large population of people (75 females) at the shelter, and the poor quality of air that they breath at the shelter due to poor ventilation. All participants stated that there are lots of lung diseases at the shelter, and in fact, I observed that all participants but three were coughing during the interview sessions. Participants desired to see a good maintenance culture at the shelters, and for the shelters to become cleaner than what they are right now. The subjects stated that improving the hygiene and maintenance culture of the shelters is decisive in meeting the needs of people at the shelter. They were not satisfied with the current level of maintenance and hygiene at the shelter where there is poor air quality (poor ventilation), poor lighting, lots of lung diseases, and bedbugs. A clean shelter meets the needs of the people at the shelter because, that aids them to keep clean too and avoid getting diseases expressed the subjects. In that way, the people at the shelter would rather focus on how they can exit homelessness than worrying about disease treatment. The decisiveness of good hygiene and improved sanitary condition as a way of preventing disease outbreak at the shelter is consistent with the findings of previous researchers namely, (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Frankish et al., 2005; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007; Gilbert, et al., 2006). Members specified that improving the maintenance culture, and hygiene of the shelter will improve the health and safety of the people at the shelter, and satisfy the needs of the people at the shelter. This would positively impact on the health and safety of the people in city of Calgary (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007).

### **Too Long Waiting, Too Many Questions and Unnecessary Protocols**

There are long periods of waiting and uncritical protocols that are hindrances to people obtaining various needs that they desire at the shelters, and all government support systems stated the participants. It makes the process of giving and receiving help clumsy and inefficient. People became and remained homeless because they could not receive help as urgently as they needed it. The subjects are not happy that they were waiting for too long before receiving the help that they need to prevent them from becoming homeless and to get out of homelessness. The participants' desire is that their needs be met as quickly as possible, and for the government and service providers to minimize the waiting period before assistance is offered to the people in need. Too long waiting, unnecessary protocols and too many questions neither help nor motivate people in need of financial help or experiencing homelessness to seek help. It rather discourages people from asking for help.

The participants stated that the people in homeless situation need help as fast as possible. The subjects were discontented with the unnecessary delays or too long waiting that people experience when in extreme need of support. They stressed that it brings down their morale, and causes them to become or remain homeless. Essentially, many of them are at the lowest emotional ebbs, which prompt help could revive and motivate them to keep alive the struggle. Too long waiting demoralizes and demotivates them to strive on. The people experiencing homelessness want service providers to go right away and provide the services or help to people in need without any delay. The participants recommended immediate action to assist people in need of help to support them to exit

homelessness. They suggested starting the provision of support within one week, and to complete a help as quickly as possible based upon an individual's needs.

### **Conduct More Research to Teach People About Homelessness**

People experiencing homelessness think that the Calgary community does not know much about homelessness. For this reason, they encouraged conducting more studies on homelessness to teach the citizens of the city of Calgary about homelessness. The participants clearly expressed positive feeling about this study and most especially, their being part of this study and to have received an opportunity to voice their concerns to the authorities concerned. None of the researchers that I reviewed in Chapter 2 ever mentioned that the participants encouraged them to conduct more studies. However, researchers, namely; Aubry et al. (2014), Awosoga et al. (2013), Gaetz (2013), and Komarnicki (2014) all suggested conducting further studies to understand homelessness better. Please, refer to my recommendations for further studies below to know more about further studies.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study is not a quantitative study; therefore, I did not measure or determine any relationships or associations. I only conducted an interpretational analysis of the interview data that I collected from the experiences of those experiencing homelessness. And I was conscious that some subjects shared experiences could have missed point or focus of the conversation (Kaam, 1966; Moustakas, 1994; Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.40). The result of this study is not broadly generalizable because the sample size was not large enough to support generalization. Its use would depend on the eyes of the

beholder and the purpose to be satisfied. I selected the subjects purposefully (see Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.107), ensuring that samples were selected from Canadian people from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds living at a shelter.

This study is not objective, but rather subjective. Biases were likely to have occurred in this study because, I obtained my data based on the individual's past experiences (retrospective). Therefore, the tendency that participants could have forgotten, overstated, or understated information was not ruled out. Also, it was possible that some experience shared by some participants could have inaccurate in verbal expression. So, I collected data and reflexively interpreted it, and reflexive interpretation could be a potential source of bias (see Kaam, 1966; Moustakas, 1994; Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.40; Blackwell, 2015). I cross-checked the interview data that I obtained by taking notes and voice recording with the participants for member checking and correctness before I proceeded with data analysis. I performed further research on all unclear words and obtained the correct meaning or interpretation of them.

This study, being a phenomenological study that involved data collection, analysis, and interpretation, is prone to bias by its nature (see National Commission for Health Education Credentialing Inc, 2010, p.95; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Newton, & Rudestam, 2007, p.39). However, the credibility of this study lies in its consistency in measuring what the study was set to measure and its replicability (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.113). I further achieved the validity of this study by using detailed information or rich texts in data description and presentation (Creswell, 2011, p.191). Additionally, I increased the validity of this study by including negative or discrepant outcomes of the

study (Creswell, 2011, p.192). The use of these research findings is subject to the context and its relevance to the user (Newton & Rudestam, 2007, p.112; Creswell, 2011, p.191). I did not count or measure the population of those experiencing homelessness. However, members stated that over 1000 people are homeless partner shelter in Calgary every day.

### **Recommendations for Further Studies**

A repeat of this study by a researcher to debunk or support the findings of this study may be necessary. Researchers conducting studies on lungs diseases, and mental illness prevalence including schizophrenia, dementia, depression, and addiction among people in homeless situation and how to control that may be necessary. Additionally, Researchers performing studies to determine how to categorize the homeless in-service delivery to meet their various needs is crucial to ending homelessness.

### **Implications**

This study is expected to have some significant social change implications on the homeless, public, researchers, service providers, and policy makers. It added to the body of homeless literature in the city as well as in Canada; especially, as it sought an understanding of homeless phenomenon from the perspectives of the people experiencing homelessness. The outcome provides more education and new lessons to the homeless, homeless service providers and designated authorities of homelessness phenomenon. The comprehension of homelessness from the experiences of the people from diverse backgrounds who are in homeless situation could effectively support homeless strategies. Dissemination of my results could give the authorities concerned an opportunity to see homelessness from the eyes of those wearing the shoes, who know how much they pinch.

The results of my study supported some findings of previous researchers that I reviewed in chapter 2. Also, I unfolded many new lessons in my study. In this study, I found that there is no one single variable that leads people into homelessness; however, discrimination, money issues, housing policies, environmental or structural deterrents and domestic variables lead people into homelessness. The new lessons could add value to the solutions directed at ending homelessness in the city of Calgary when integrated into the homelessness strategies, policy development, and service provision. The new information learned from this study could add value in keeping more people off the street and place many more in permanent residences. A success at placing people in homeless situation to permanent homes would contribute to the improvement of health and safety of those involved and that of larger community of Calgary, which was the ultimate public health goal of this study (Donovan & Shinseki, 2013, 2013; Flisher, Hetrick, McGorry & Patel, 2007).

## **Conclusion**

From the lived experiences of those experiencing homelessness, homelessness means a rejected, helpless, and isolated person that has lose every essential of life who has no money, nobody, or nothing, exposed to danger, and subject to abuse. There is no one single variable that leads people into homelessness, the factors are unique and different; however, discrimination, money issues, housing policies, environmental or structural, and domestic variables lead people into homelessness. Professionally trained people oriented staff including Motivational Speakers and Motivational Support staff is critical to ending homelessness and homeless service provision is critical in meeting the

needs of people in homeless situation staying at the shelter. People experiencing homelessness suggested that the policy makers need to review the government policies on employment, housing, divorce and separation, child support, criminal record, credit bureau, and that a provision of vital skills training to the people experiencing homelessness will assist people to overcome homelessness. Shelter policies make it easy for people to enter the shelters when people make up their minds, but exiting the shelter remains a problem to people experiencing homelessness. The significant social change implication of this study is to provide more education and to unfold new lessons about homelessness to the homeless, public, researchers, public health service providers, and policy makers, targeted at influencing strategies and policy decisions to end homelessness, which is a public health concern in the city. This study has added to the body of homeless literature in the city as well as in Canada because, I explored an understanding of homelessness from the perspectives of Canadian citizens from diverse backgrounds who are experiencing homelessness.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date: .....

Location:.....

Name of interviewer: .....

Initials of interviewee: .....

Interview Number:

1. What are the lived experiences of people in homeless situation?
2. How did you become homeless?
3. What challenges did you experience before you were accepted into a facility?
4. What are the challenges (difficulties) you experienced during your stay in the facility?
5. How did you survive before and during your stay in the facility?
6. What does homelessness mean to you?
7. What variables led people into homelessness?
8. What government policies do you think contributed to your homelessness?
9. What agency policies do you think makes access to a shelter difficult?
10. How would you describe your major barriers to obtaining a permanent home?
11. How would you describe a shelter that would meet your shelter needs?
12. What difficulties did you experience gaining access to a shelter?
13. What do you not like about shelter services that you received?
14. What shelter services do you like most?

15. What are the recommendations of individuals experiencing homelessness on how they could overcome homelessness?
16. What do you think would make access to a shelter less difficult for people in need of a home?
17. Can you think of any government policy that would be helpful to people wanting to obtain a home?
18. How would you describe your readiness for employment?
19. Are there any other issues you wish to discuss with me concerning your situation?