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# Understanding Homelessness Through Women's Experiences and Journey Through it

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# UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AND JOURNEY THROUGH IT

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**UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AND JOURNEY THROUGH IT**

By

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**Declaration**

Student Number: 380671

I, Rirhandzu Khoza, declare that *Understanding homelessness through women's experiences and journey into it* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

_____ _____

Date Signature

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# Chapter one: Women of the street



# Introduction

> "*Cities are at once spaces of opportunity and abject poverty; connectivity circuits of people, goods and ideas, yet simultaneously contain spaces of marginalisation; cities are places of hope and creativity and at the same time despair and despondency; they are the harbingers of democracy yet sites where some of the most violent abuses of human rights have taken place. Urban life in Africa often means straddling multiple worlds"* (Kihato, 2009,p.16)

Kihato (2009) highlights the prospect that cities hold for people. In Olufemi and Reeves work, titled *Lifeworld strategies of women who find themselves homeless in South Africa,* a series of interviews pin point the possible prosperity that the city holds for many. They note that it is for this reason that cities attract people from all walks of life into places like Johannesburg; yet it has often resulted in the participants finding themselves homeless (Olufemi and Reeves, 2004). In addition, the journal highlights the various experiences that the females encounter once they are homeless. Females are most likely to be categorised as one of the most vulnerable groups in society alongside children, the elderly and disabled. This vulnerability encourages the need to study the experiences of females, particularly those who are homeless. In conjunction with their experiences, it is vital to understand their paths travelled, which led them to becoming homeless. This research will unveil the aspects that Kihato (2009) refers to as opportunities, poverty, links between social networks, hopelessness and the violation of basic human rights. The above characteristics in the lives of the homeless community are found in different forms and expressed through different perspectives of the homeless females.

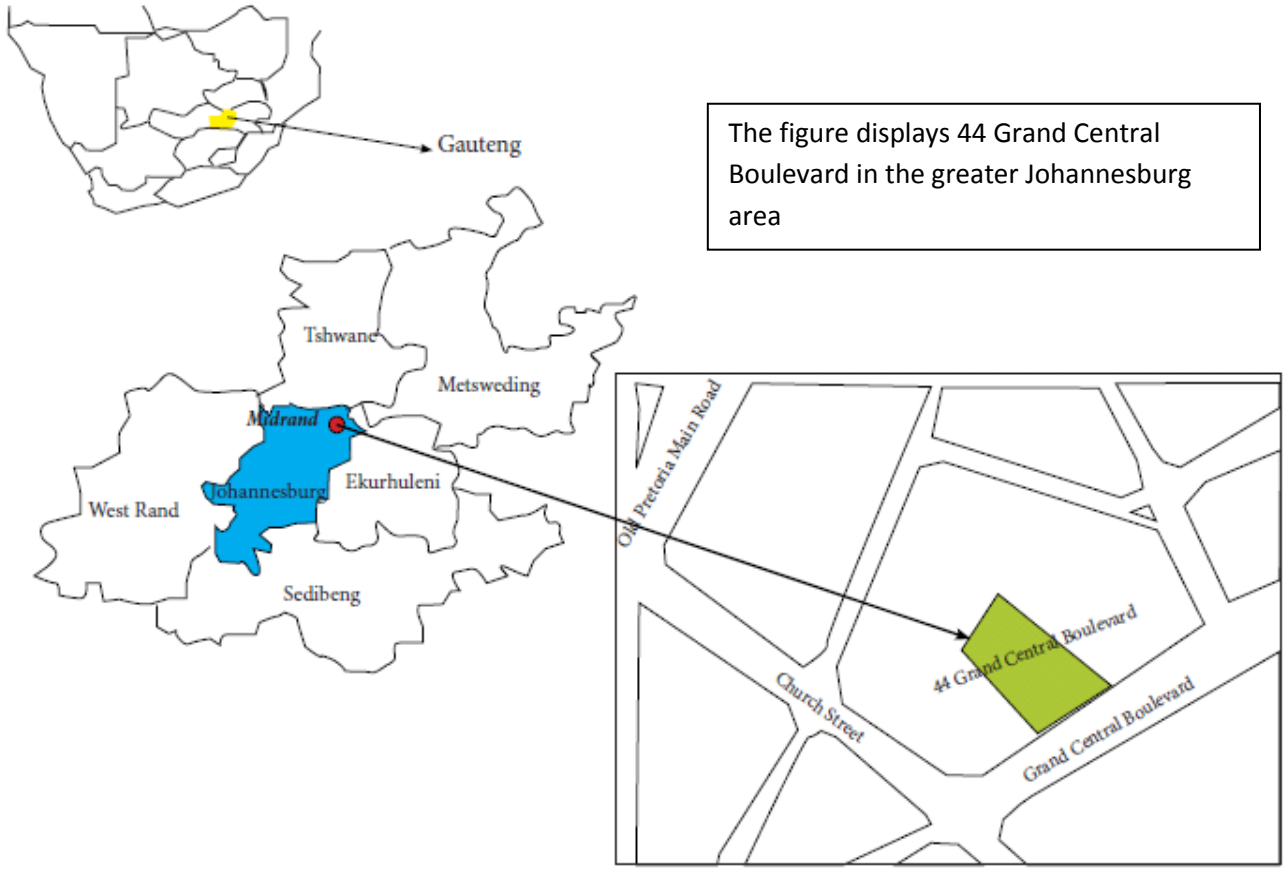
Homeless females are most likely to locate themselves close to employment opportunities that afford them better chances in improving their livelihoods. 44 Grand Central Boulevard, the site of the study, is located in the heart of Midrand, Johannesburg. The females that are illegally occupying privately owned land are from different rural areas drawn to the site due to poverty. This research shows the understanding of homelessness from a female's perspective. In this research, a gendered perspective on homelessness and the notion of vulnerability is explored. The concept of insecure living and accommodation forms an aspect of the concept of 'homelessness'. Insecure living refers to the dangers of residing in a settlement that can possibly be life threatening, whilst insecure accommodation refers to the participants residing illegally on land, which makes them prone to eviction at anytime.

This research report focuses on females from different walks of life who have become homeless. Broadly, the research seeks to understand the experience of homelessness from a female's perspective, whilst also delving into the factors that lead to homelessness on 44 Grand Central BoulevardThe research uncovers the females' experience of homelessness against the backdrop of socio-economic factors that have resulted in their homelessness. It highlights the dangers of being homeless, the inability to gain access to basic services and explores the manner in which the homeless females have been able to shape and design the spaces that they live in. From a gendered perspective, the research reveals the preference of illegally living on private land in comparison to the participants living in secure accommodation. Furthermore, it seeks to understand the females' perception of home and homelessness. Tipple and Speak (2005) argue that establish a nuanced understanding of homelessness is challenging therefore it needs to be understood within a particular context. Therefore, the research re-examines and contextualises the conditions of homelessness on 44 Grand Central Boulevard in order to better understand homelessness.

## Background

Development plans in Midrand [are] aimed at increasing density around the Gautrain station in order to curb urban sprawl and reduce road congestion (Pillay, 2008). This enables people to live, work and play close to public transport (Pillay, 2008). Since the densification process in Midrand begun, the Boulders shopping centre, taxi rank, clinic, and retail outlets have attracted a community that reside in a temporary settlement constructed out of cardboard boxes and plastic-covered shelters. The site is located along Grand Central Boulevard adjacent to the McDonald's fast food franchise in Midrand, Johannesburg. The settlement is estimated to be 3.8ha in size (www.windeed.com, 2014) with an estimated 115 shacks on site. The population that lives on the site consist of males, women and children. At first sight, it is evident that there are a large number of males on the land, with fewer females and children. Olufemi (1999) explains that females are the hidden homeless individuals whose numbers are consistently growing in the homeless community, hence It is for this reason that the research has singled out females. Females are vulnerable group in society that need to be understood and taken into account, in terms of special needs that they may require such as basic infrastructure and social services.

Figure 1: Location of the site , 44 Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand, Johannesburg




Khoza (2014)

Sonile (2014) explains that the community that once lived along Church Street, Midrand, was evicted by the metro police and have now relocated to their current place of residence which is along Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand,. The community was informed that they would be provided with alternative accommodation in Meriting in Midrand. The dwellers were promised transportation to Meriting, as well as provision of adequate water and sanitation facilities. However, according to Sonile (2014), these promises did not materialize . According to MrKekana, a lawyer who represents the homeless community in the eviction court case, pro-bono, the move to Meriting failed because the residents of Meriting were not consulted about the residents of 44 Grand Central Boulevard that were to relocate to Meriting and the City of Johannesburg allegedly did not provide transportation as promised. The eviction on Church Street encouraged the move to private open space owned by Rondo Pty Ltd adjacent to McDonald's as allegedly advised by the metro police in

January 2014 (Sonile, 2014). Sonile (2014) notes that the alarming factor to the community's move is that the metro police were accused of burning the community member's temporary shelters in Church Street. However, reports have also noted that the community members set their own belongings on fire in defiance Sonile, 2014), as is seen in the figures below. The insecure living conditions that the community finds themselves in drew the interest in tracking the experiences of homeless females, residing in temporary shelter constructed out of plastic material, illegally occupying private owned property and living without access to basic amenities.

Image 1: Burnt down shelters





Khoza (2014)

## Problem Statement and Rationale

A gendered perspective on homelessness has been neglected in the past. The focus has been on studying the causes of homelessness according to (Milburn and D'Ercole, 1991), therefore there is a need to understand females' experiences. Tipple and Speak, (2009) explain that the emergence of homelessness amongst women is often a result of violence, structural changes in the work environment and mental illness amongst other aspects. The daily challenges that women are faced with are not fully understood. Meth (2003) explains that women residing in vulnerable conditions are often over looked, or poorly provided for in terms of infrastructure. It is not only the insecurity of their accommodation that poses a problem for women but the inability to gain access to resources to enable them to mitigate the challenges they face (Meth,2003). In addition, Olufemi (2001) explains that homeless people are insecure in their condition. Their insecurity ranges from not knowing where their next meal will come from and the lack of security from locked doors (Olufemi, 2001).

In order to understand the conditions under which homeless females live, it is essential to understand the manner in which they define homelessness. Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that it is essential to define homelessness in order to be able to count the number of homeless people. This becomes challenging when females conceal their homelessness. Many females have hidden their homelessness by remaining inconspicuous owed to their lack of societal acceptance and

vulnerability; nevertheless homelessness from a female perspective has been barely investigated (Milburn and D'Ercole, 1991). For this reason, it is challenging to understand the concept of homelessness from a females' perspective. Olufemi (2001) concludes that the homeless females are often over looked by officials for a number of reasons. It is essential to understand why females are marginalised, therefore more information and research is needed (Olufemi, 2001)

## Research Aims

This research project aims to achieve the following:

- To gain knowledge on the women's journey into homelessness
- To gain knowledge of the women's daily experiences of their living conditions
- To define homelessness in the context of 44 Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand
- To understand the role of the state in the dwellers' lives

## Research question

- How do females experience homelessness on 44 Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand?

## Sub-questions

- How did the women find themselves in this situation?
- What are the daily routines and daily life experiences of homeless females?
- What is the meaning of home and homelessness to the dwellers, and how does this inform their situations?

## Approach used to understand homelessness on 44 Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand

The approach adopted in investigating the participants is best achieved through the case study strategy. The adopted methodology assists in investigating homeless women's experiences from an urban planner's perspective. It enables me, as the researcher, to understand the physical, social, political, economic and spatial context of the places that people use. In utilising this strategy, it will allow the urban planner to develop future housing policies that will improve the homeless community's future environment. The best possible manner to understand the female's requirements within the homeless community is through the utilisation of empirical techniques. Bhattacherjee (2012) explains that the observation of participants is considered a descriptive

research element. It enables the researcher to provide a detailed documentation of the findings of this component of the research strategy. From the observations, the descriptive research elements permit me to answer the research questions in this project, in terms of the experiences of females residing in insecure conditions and their journey into homelessness. The participants have been observed from a distance and within their personal space, by initially conducting a pilot project of two participants'. The pilot project tests the research method (semi-structured interviews and participant observation) that have been identified as the best possible method in understanding the study. The pilot project highlights the limitations in the research strategy and it confirms the accuracy of the research design. The research seeks to observe the following activities that take place on 44 Grand Central Boulevard:

- The activities that the females routinely do in the mornings, afternoons and evenings
- The routes that they travel to gain access to public amenities and healthcare service
- Economic activities, relationships and social interaction that take place on the settlement

Semi-structured interviews form part of the pilot project. The interviews are conducted with the participants' concentrating on concepts unveiled in the literature review, which is to follow. The participants are able to provide detailed explanations of their experiences and the journey into homelessness due to the construction of the interviews. Semi-structured interviews complement the case study strategy. Bhattacherjee (2012) explains that the case study strategy is an in-depth study of real life settings. Furthermore, it ensures a concrete understanding of interlocking set of social, cultural and economic factors (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The qualitative research allows the researcher to understand the perspective of the participants and to explore their meaning of the environment.

The research has approached women on the basis of those who are willing to participate in the research, those who are willing to provide information and those who are willing to share their experiences. The chosen form of sampling enables me to gain in-depth information about women's experiences. It has been achieved through existing primary relationships, as well as friendships that have been developed with the members of the homeless community. These relationships are established on the basis of understanding the nature of the community, identifying those that have resided in the community for the longest and thus hold the most knowledge.

# Locating the research

## The definition of homelessness in developing countries

The context of the research seeks to understand female homelessness in developing countries, paying particular attention to homeless South African women. It thus draws on definitions from developed countries to gain a broader understanding. Developing countries definition of homelessness emerged from mainly two sources, the first source is government and the second is Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that government officials need to understand homelessness so that they have knowledge of the number of homeless people. Information provided on the quantity of homeless people enables policy makers to establish appropriate policies to address the nature of homelessness within a particular context (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Tipple and Speak (2005) explain that an NGO in South Africa, South Africa Homeless People's Federation, regards shack and hostels dwellers as homeless. This definition encapsulates the poorest groups in society, whereas government's definition of homelessness is broader to accommodate policy makers (Tipple and Speak (2005).

In other African countries such as Zimbabwe, homelessness is defined as not having access to housing (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Whilst in India, homelessness is defined by not having shelter and a place that is able to take care of one's health, social and economic requirements (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Within the South African context, homelessness is often associated with squatter settlements, rented backroom shacks and not having secure tenure (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Tipple and Speak (2009) note that it is necessary to understand the broader views of homelessness, as this view reveals the dynamic nature, experiences of homelessness and the path taken by homeless people. Therefore homelessness is the process of various housing needs that have resulted in individual circumstances (Tipple and Speak, 2009).

## Path into homelessness

Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that the path into homelessness is complex and it varies per individual. They note that in industrial countries the journey into homelessness is often associated with unemployment (Tipple and Speak, 2009). However, in developing countries, the cause of homelessness may not have strong roots in unemployment as compared to industrial countries. Poverty in developing countries is one of the many factors of homelessness (Tipple and Speak, 2009).The poorest members of society are unable to breach the affordability gap to purchase a house. (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Poverty is the main driver of rural to urban migration, forcing people to live on the streets and in slums once they have moved to cities. Migrants often work in unskilled sectors, so that they can send money back home to their families. Other than the effects of

poverty and unemployment that leads people and specifically, females into homelessness. It has been observed by Tipple and Speak (2009) that the social causes of homelessness can be a result of social and cultural issues such as relationships and family breakdown, ill health and an aging society. Women, children, elderly and those with disabilities are mostly likely to be vulnerable to homelessness owed to the breakdown of social ties such as divorce, being a widow or not having extended family members that will take care of an elderly person according to Tipple and Speak (2009). The causes of homelessness can yield different experiences for each individual, and it is therefore essential to pay attention to the experiences of different groups in society.

## The experiences of the homeless

The daily struggles faced by homeless women include exposure to dangerous situations such as abuse, kidnapping and victimisation (robbery and mugging) according to Tipple and Speak (2009). Besides the women being exposed to dangerous situations (Milburn and D'Ercole, 1991) they suffer from poorer health and they have less access to appropriate health care services. Meth (2003) suggests that females are one of the most insecure groups in informal settlements, faced with challenges in gaining access to employment and school facilities amongst other public services. The challenges that females encounter can create stress owed to external pressures. External pressures include such as employment problems which limit one's ability to gain access to an income that will enable one to purchase food and clothes (Milburn and D'Ercole, 1991). Wolch et al (2007) explain that the above stress illustrates some of the key traits of homelessness and that the stresses can create a new class of people that is a class that prefers to live in their current situation because going to a shelter or hostel can prove to be much more dangerous than living on open spaces (Tipple and Speak, 2009).

# Structure of the research report

This chapter highlights the importance of investigating the experiences of homeless women. It details the research aims, problem statement and the importance of investigating homelessness, particularly for women, research question, sub questions, the research approach and the important theoretical foundation of the chapter are discussed. In doing so, the study argues that the individual experiences of homelessness and journey into homelessness results in people interpreting home and homelessness in various ways. Therefore, in order to understand homelessness, the concepts need to be contextualised. Each individual understands their circumstances differently within their given context.

The second chapter titled “Understanding the theoretical foundation” draws on a set body of literature. The literature highlights specific themes that contain sub-themes. The first theme focuses on the meaning of ‘home’, whilst the second theme concentrates on homelessness. It is essential to understand the meaning of home, because it forms the foundation of the word ‘homelessness’. The third theme seeks to understand the path into homelessness, so as to establish the choices that have led people to becoming homeless. The focus of this theme is based on socio-economic conditions as a result of becoming homeless. The final theme seeks to understand the experiences of homeless females, and within this theme, are sub -themes such as violence and lack of access to basic services.

Chapter three, “Research methods adopted in understanding the females lives” is one which highlights the various techniques used in understanding the experiences of homeless females on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The women’s notion of ‘home’ and ‘homelessness’ is identified through the case study strategy as the most essential strategy adopted in conducting ethnographic research.

Chapter four is a descriptive chapter titled, “Everyday life”. This chapter describes the females’ path into homelessness. It describes the socio-economic challenges that the females faced prior to becoming homeless. In understanding the females’ paths into homelessness, it highlights the various locations in which the females have lived, prior to arriving in Midrand. In addition, it describes the experiences of females on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. By understanding the above aspects, the chapter is able to describe the features that have a great amount of meaning for the participants such as home, rights and homelessness.

Chapter five, titled, “Understanding the findings in relation to literature” draws on important characteristics which link the findings and literature. This chapter makes a contribution towards understanding homelessness, thereby aiding the process of supporting homeless women in Midrand.

Lastly, chapter six concludes this research project by drawing back on the main themes and explaining the relevance of the research for an urban planner. This chapter concludes that ‘homelessness’ is a complex concept to understand, and notes that it’s various definitions and typologies are used as a channel into understanding it. Furthermore, it concludes that understanding the experiences of homeless females enables urban planners, such as me, to provide the appropriate location, adequate shelter and necessary needs for homeless females. In addition, tracing the journey into homelessness can introduce new strategies that will reduce the risk of homelessness at large.

# Chapter Two: Understanding the theoretical foundation



# Introduction

The number of homeless females has increased, however the number of homeless women has often been concealed and therefore homeless females remain a hidden group within in society (Burt and Cohen, 1989 and Olufemi, 1999). It has been found that in the United Kingdom, homeless females are often younger than homeless men (Olufemi, 1999). Whilst in Europe, there is a higher rate of homeless women who seek assistance because they have no home (Olufemi, 1999). Olufemi (1999) further explains that homeless women share similar characteristics of their predicament. In South Africa, the path into homelessness for many women can be related to migrating to the city to escape rural poverty or supplement rural livelihoods in places such as Pretoria and Rustenburg (Makiwane et al, 2010). Others become homeless because they choose to be homeless (Parsell and Parsell, 2012). Majority of street homeless people suffer from ill health and are victims of crime (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Street homeless people are those that live on the street and pavements. They are considered to be separate from those that live on opens spaces or those that illegally occupy land (Olufemi, 1999). This chapter provides an understanding of the various experiences that members of the homeless community are faced with. Furthermore, it provides an overview of the journey into homelessness and seeks to differentiate between homelessness and inadequate housing.

In so doing, it displays my perspective, as the researcher, on homelessness and the way in which I interpreted the findings in the research. The chapter argues that the most likely causes of homelessness are social and economic factors. In addition, it seeks to understand the various typologies of homelessness.

# Home

Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that in understanding the notion of 'homelessness' it is essential to understand the concept of home. Kellett and Moore (2003) go further to explain that the theoretical concept of a home has multiple layers, making it difficult to define. It encompasses the social, psychological and culture of domestic living that is associated with activities of everyday life and contains broader dimensions related to economic and social positions (Kellett and Moore, 2003). Watson and Austerberry (1986) add that the concept of home, noting that there are material conditions and standards that women often associate with a home because traditionally women have a greater control over a home than over any other sphere. A home is defined as the "relationship between people and a place" (Tipple and Speak, 2009, p30). It is the emotional and meaningful association of a home that people have with their dwelling place according to Tipple and Speak (2009). Watson and Austerberry (1986) reiterate what has been mentioned by Kellett and Moore (2003), in making the claim that the social meaning of home often relates to strong family

bonds and the ability to entertain family and friend in the comfort and warmth of an individual's personal space.

Furthermore, Tipple and Speak (2009) elucidate that a home is a rich concept that symbolizes ideas of comfort, security, identity and belonging. A home is socially constructed, it comprises of particular activities that enables one to withdraw from society and to interact with society therefore it can be considered as a 'safe haven'. In Olufemi's (2002) research that is based in Johannesburg, she explains the links that tie the social constructions of home are family such as the parental home or the ancestral home. This understanding cannot be viewed in isolation because the meaning of home is emotionally based. It is associated with the nature of security and the feeling of warmth (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Olufemi (2002) explains that a home is above one that provides adequate shelter. Adequate shelter is accompanied by basic infrastructure close to the house such as running water and sanitation systems. A home eradicates the fear of eviction; it protects one from intruders and provides easy access to health care facilities. Homelessness is then understood as the direct opposite of what constitutes a home or adequate housing (Tipple and Speak, 2009; Olufemi, 2002).

Watson and Austerberry (1986) study on homeless women in Britain included the homeless women's definition and conceptualisation of home. The homeless women provide the following categories:

a. Material conditions and standards
b. Emotional and physical well being
c. Social relations
d. Control and privacy

The above categories illustrate that a home is defined as an environment that should have material condition and standards, which refer to the interior decoration. The emotional and physical well being of the home provides warmth, comfort with security being the prime aspect of a home (Watson and Austerberry, 1986). Furthermore, Watson's and Austerberry's (1986) study expand the definition of a home to an environment that females should have control over, without being subjected to other peoples rules and to have privacy within the confines of their own walls (Watson and Austerberry, 1986). Watson and Austerberry (1986) explain that a home has social relations and should be a space that one has privacy and can control. Lastly, Watson and Austerberry (1986) identified that it is only a handful of homeless women who have defined a home as a place that is not associated with the physical structure but a place where they slept.

Tipple and Speak (2009) argue that not having a home does not equate to being homeless. In areas such as India, people have constructed rudimentary shelters on the sidewalks (Tipple and Speak, 2009). This lifestyle is viewed by many as an aspect of homelessness, however the street community do not view themselves as homeless according to (Tipple and Speak, 2009).They are not homeless because they have privacy, have lasting social relations with people around them and can entertain guest in their dwellings (Tipple and Speak, 2009). It is evident what constitutes a home differs for each person. The complexity of the definition of 'home' and the approaches to understanding what is meant by it shape the understanding of home in this paper. It is for this reason that the study also placed great emphasis on questioning participant women about their understanding of 'home'.

## Defining Homelessness

Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that by providing a definition for homelessness it will enable the number of homeless people to be counted, thus helping to inform appropriate responses. This section seeks to define homelessness, in order to better understand the homeless community's interpretation of being homeless and their experiences for the purpose of the research. It is difficult to have a nuanced definition of homelessness because the conditions of homeless differ per context. In unravelling the concept, it has been defined in relation to the physical structure and the emotional attachment that is associated with homelessness. Veness (1993) explains that the core of homelessness refers to an individual not having a conventional dwelling or any individual who does not own a house or pay rent. Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that the above explanation of homelessness is generalised, therefore a better understanding of homelessness within the particular context is required. Veness (1993) further explains that the understanding of homelessness that addresses the physical aspects is not in line with society's standards of a home as it neglects the quality of life. Watson and Austerberry (1986) explain that homelessness is a relative concept just like poverty. People define their condition depending on how they perceive themselves within the greater society.

"A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small it satisfies all social demands for a dwelling. But let a place arise beside the little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut ... the occupant of the relatively small house will feel more and more uncomfortable, dissatisfied and cramped within its four walls" (Watson and Austerberry 1986,p.10)

With the above description by Watson and Austerberry (1986) indicates that it is only when one feels that they reside below the normal standards of living that they begin to feel homeless. The above explanation, however, is far too broad in that it may cause multiple people to consider

themselves as homeless. The perception and understanding of homelessness have important implication for the explanations of homelessness (Olufemi, 2002). This statement better defines the concept, in that it refers to social and economic inequality raising the issue of homeless people feeling excluded from society.

"A homeless person is without a conventional home and lacks most of the economic and social supports that a home normally affords. She is often cut off from the support of relatives and friends, she has few independent resources and often has no immediate means and in some cases little prospects of self support. She is in danger of falling below the poverty line, at least from time to time (Tipple and Speak, 2009, p.56)

Olufemi (2002) highlights the importance of analysing homelessness within the context of social and economic conditions. It is the depreciation of social and economic factors that have often resulted in people living in substandard conditions (Olufemi, 2002). Wolch et al (1988) explain that homelessness can be defined as the absence of a stable dwelling, one in which one can sleep and receive mail. Olufemi (2002) notes that inadequate shelter is one whereby one is not being protected from intruders, there is a lack of potable water in proximity to the house, lack of site drainage and lack of easy access to health care. Tipple and Speak (2009) disagree with Olufemi, noting that not having access to water in proximity to ones house does not characterise an individual as being homeless. In most developing countries such as Indonesia many households do not have access to water in proximity of their house (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Olufemi (2002) continues to explain that homeless people include those that reside in insecure or temporary shelter that is often of poor quality such as squatters whom have found accommodation by illegally occupying privately owned land or are under constant threat of eviction.

Wolch et al (1988) note that there are various degrees of homelessness that span over a continuum. This ranges from lack of permanent shelter to inadequate housing conditions and living arrangement. The typologies of homelessness vary from extreme homelessness that include street homelessness and living under a bridge, whilst the lesser degree of homelessness refer to those living unlawfully on privately owned land or on open spaces (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Olufemi (1999) explains that Johannesburg has three categories of homelessness. The first category includes those that sleep on uncovered floors, street kerbs and cardboard boxes. The second category refers to disorganised shelters in the form of shacks, built with plastics or cardboard boxes, and the final category includes people who reside in informal shelters (Olufemi, 1999). Furthermore, homeless people that fit into these categories are those that do not have real homes, live in bad housing or sleep on pavements and do not have access to sanitation (Olufemi, 1999). The above category of

homelessness has been critiqued as one that lacks the cultural dimension in which people experience their homeless state (Tipple and Speak, 2009).

Tipple (2007) established a typology that has assisted in defining homelessness in developing countries. It highlights that individuals from developing nation are considered to be homeless if they fall within the six categories. The first typology that would result in an individual becoming homeless refers to lifestyle. The lifestyle category refers to an individual who does not live in a recognised dwelling (Tipple, 2007). This group of people sleep in different places every night such as on the street or open spaces (Tipple and Speak, 2007). The second criteria are the location; Tipple (2007) explains that this criterion refers to where the homeless people are located. The third criterion is "the permanence of occupation, security and tenure. The criterion brings together the risk of becoming homeless and the risk of having no permanent place to stay (Tipple, 2007). The fourth criterion deals with the quality of the shelter; it refers to people living in sub standard housing (Tipple, 2007). The fifth criterion refers to welfare entitlement and lack of welfare entitlement. Tipple (2007) notes that those who are on the local authority housing waiting list are considered to be homeless, such as in Zimbabwe. In other countries such as India, people who live in the worst conditions such as street homeless people are not provided with welfare entitlements, but squatters have been provided with welfare entitlement. The last criterion refers to the upward trajectory that enables homeless people to improve their living conditions, this category of people who can improve their conditions are therefore not regarded as homeless (Tipple and Speak, 2007).

The above definition according to Tipple and Speak (2009) has not taken into consideration the perspectives of the homeless individuals, yet seeks to define their conditions. Many homeless people may not fit into the above typologies. They therefore do not consider themselves as homeless but rather as individuals who may be living in sub-standard shelter (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Olufemi (2001) explains that the definition of homelessness includes the unavailability of shelter, land and security of tenure. It is for this reason that it is essential to differentiate between homelessness and inadequate housing.

## Differentiating between homelessness and inadequate housing

Adequate housing is highlighted by Tipple and Speak (2009) as a house that comprises of security, durability and access to services. It is important to distinguish between factors that can constitute one as homeless from those that constitute inadequate housing. According to Tipple and Speak (2009) the condition of someone who resides in an informal settlement whose dwelling has informal infrastructure such as water supplied by tanker cannot be compared to someone who lacks the

above or a women sleeping on the streets. Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that it is hard to differentiate between inadequate housing and homelessness in developing countries. The characteristics of homelessness and those of inadequate housing are as follows:

Table 1: Differentiating between inadequate housing and homelessness

| **Differential factors** | **People in informal settlements** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Inadequately Housed** | **Homeless** |
| **Security of settlement** | Spontaneous/informal | Spontaneous |
| **Access to land** | Invasion backed by political support | Illegal invasion |
| **Security of tenure** | Partial or temporary | None, little or misplaced psychological security |
| **Personal safety** | Moderate safety | Minimum Safety |
| **Type of building material** | Iron sheets sometimes wood, iron sheets, mud, brick or stone walls | Scavenged wood, iron sheets |
| **Employment** | Full time in most cases, low paid manual and domestic work many small businesses | Unemployed/very erratic begging and lowest paid manual |
| **Response of government** | Upgrading | Resettlement/often summon of eviction |
| **Access to services** | Partial, often illegally connected likely to improve | Very basic, often illegally connected, or none, unlikely to improve |

Tipple and Speak (2009, p.98)

Tipple and Speak (2009) reiterate that people that are inadequately housed are often well off as compared to those that are homeless. However, the boundaries between the two categories are often blurred. The definition based on the quality of the shelter is a broad definition (Tipple and Speak, 2009). If the definition of homelessness is based on the quality of the shelter, then majority of the population in developing countries would be classified as homeless. It is therefore important to note the differences between those that are housed inadequately and homelessness (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Tipple and Speak (2009) note that the various categories of street homelessness include those that sleep on pavements, those that have made an attempt to build fragile shelters and the most undeveloped informal settlements where the structures can be fragile and without services as illustrated by Tipple and Speak (2009). In countries such as India, the distinction is less clear. In India, street homeless people can reside in relatively well constructed shelters with a fixed

location for years. Conversely, in South Africa shelters can be of a bad condition for lengthy periods of time because people are unwilling to invest in their shacks until they are guaranteed protection from eviction according to Tipple and Speak (2009). These people are regarded as homeless in South Africa, as the shacks that are in question are constructed of rudimentary materials such as cardboard (Tipple and Speak, 2009). The poor quality of these shelters and the lack of services draw attention to the conditions that homeless females live under, and the impact that these conditions have on their lives. The above section will enable me to distinctly identify the differences between those that are inadequately housed and those that are homeless in Midrand. It will further assist me in confirming the classification made by Olufemi earlier of homelessness in Johannesburg.

## Experiences of homelessness

The focus of this section is on the daily experiences and routines of homeless people. Makiwane et al (2010) explain that homeless people often experience harsh conditions as they are exposed to harassment, mugging, diseases and rape. In addition, the effects of homelessness according to Makiwane et al (2010) often lead to deterioration of basic health, loss of self confidence, dignity and self respect and drug and alcohol abuse. This section discusses experiences faced by members of the homeless community that relate to substance abuse, health care, violence and eviction. Homeless people understand their stance in society as lacking rights, and this lack of rights is "often associated with not having a home (Daly, 1996). The police harass homeless people and arrest them for victimless crimes such as disorderly conduct, trespassing or sleeping in public parks (Daly, 1996). Homeless people are victims of violence because they are often alone and they lack civil rights (Daly, 1996).

Homeless people move from place to place but remain within a small area of the inner city that is strictly restricted and defined by casual labour pools, retail outlets which are heavily used by street people, public facilities and support services such as public clinics (Daly, 1996). Their food market choices are limited because in areas such as North America, the residents have to rely on expensive 'convenience stores' (Daly, 1996). On the other hand, women and men differ "in the nature of their networks, activity patterns and the way in which they use the city" (Daly, 1996, p.131). Women are limited in their movement on the streets because they lack safety of numbers that some may enjoy, and because they are more vulnerable and concerned about their physical security. Homeless women are often situational homeless, (their homelessness is as a result of structural factors) because their condition can be a result of abuse or economic conditions (Daly, 1996). Once they live on the street, the physical abuse that they face may increase and they are often jobless for long periods of time according to Daly (1996). Dladla and Vetten (2004) explain that women who reside in

constructed homes fear that strangers can enter their premises because they do not have doors that lock and they fear the members of the homeless community (Dladla and Vetten, 2004).

## Substance abuse

Martins (2008) explains that homeless people often resort to substance abuse of alcohol and drugs. The substances are also a form of underground resourcefulness. The substances are used to numb the pain and stresses of being homeless and to help them sleep (Martin, 2008). Others purchase illegal drugs when they are unable to gain access to prescribed medication (Martins, 2008).

## Health

Homeless people lack the basic essentials to ensure a healthy and sustainable life. Many of them do not have access to shelter, clothing, healthy food and phones (Martins, 2008). Homeless people do not have toilets, showers, washers, refrigerators, stoves or medical cabinets (Martins, 2008). Participants interviewed by Martins (2008) in the study of *Experiences of Homeless People in the Health Care Delivery System: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study* illustrates that residing on the streets without some of the above necessities that are commonly found in every household is not easy. For many it is not easy living on the streets because their immune system is weak cause by not eating properly (Martins, 2008). People who are homeless suffer from diseases such as hypertension or diabetes are often unable to access foods and medication that will reduce the risk of their illnesses worsening. Besides the above challenges that are faced by the homeless community, Hwang (2001) explains that they are faced with barriers that impair their access to health care services.

Many homeless people are unable to gain access to health care services because they have lost their identification. Such a case has occurred in Toronto, where 7 percent of homeless individuals reported having been refused health care at least once because they had lacked a health insurance card (Hwang, 2001). Martins (2008) explains in his findings that many homeless people indicated that it is difficult to be unable to gain access to medical attention because they would then have to take care of themselves due to the lack of identification or because they were too scared to see a doctor . In addition, there had often been a general negative feeling with regards to the health care system. Many people found that they had been given the run around when they went to health care institutions (Martins, 2008). The challenges faced by the homeless community with ill health have thus been one of the obstacles of living on the street.

Ross (2010) explains that the nutrition levels of homeless people and their ability to remain healthy is dependent on the types of food that they eat. Ross (2010) highlights that the homeless community ability to purchase food is dependent on the consistency of income that they receive.. Families have

only been able to purchase food when they have money. Therefore, many of them survive on leftovers, with no food or bread and other starches as their main meal (Ross, 2010). Many of the members of the homeless community operate on hand-to-mouth basis because of the lack of a stable income, according to Ross (2010) does not enable members of the homeless community to adequately plan for their future needs.

## Violence

Violence is often inflicted on members of the homeless community by the police and local residents. Those who are most vulnerable to acts of violence are the elderly, women and children as indicated by Daly (1996). Violent acts that face homeless people often go unreported (Daly, 1996). Dladla and Vetten (2004) explain that women are vulnerable to conditions that place their personal safety under constant threat. According to Dladla and Vetten (2004) women that have been abused in their relationships are more likely to remain in abusive relationships. Females often remain in abusive relationships because they are dependent on their male partners for access to shelter and income for survival (Dladla and Vetten, 2004). Homeless females (lack family support, self-esteem and financial assets), then, have even fewer resources for escaping violence (Dladla and Vetten, 2004). Some of the violent acts that are faced by the females include sexual violence, domestic violence and other physical and emotional abuse (Dladla and Vetten, 2004). The physical abuse in the study of *FEAR AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES AMONG HOMELESS WOMEN LIVING IN INNER-CITY JOHANNESBURG***,** ranged from slapping, kicking, punching to stabbing and breaking bones (Dladla and Vetten, 2004).

The participants in Dladla and Vettens (2004) study indicated that homeless females expressed the need to leave the abusive relationships, but have few options for shelter and survival. Many of the participants are not formally employed. They rely heavily on infrequent piece jobs, collecting paper and scrap metals and begging and hawking for survival (Dladla and Vetten 2004), whilst other "females were dependant on their spouses for survival, or supplemented their meagre earnings from the informal sector with the income of their male partners" (Dladla and Vetten, 2004, p.31). Furthermore, the authors note that "Many of the respondents who live with their male partners are entirely dependent on them for maintaining access to shelter, and in some instances enter into these relationships in order to obtain accommodation" (Dladla and Vettent, 2004,p.31).

## Eviction

Ross (2010) explains that her study of homeless people in Cape Town revealed that residents of the bush did not recognise themselves as individuals who had rights to the land that they lived on nor to

the shacks that they have built. Attached to the lack of rights the residents of the bush had been faced with multiple attempts of eviction (Ross, 2010). Dladla and Vetten (2004) explain that many homeless people have expressed fear and concern regarding being evicted from their shelters. Homeless women often face double insecurity of tenure. Females residing in insecure conditions do not have security to tenure, little knowledge of their rights and little access to organisations that can support their struggle to maintain access to existing shelter or to find alternatives accommodation (Dladla and Vetten, 2004).. They are vulnerable to losing access to accommodation secured through their male partners and are insecure in relation to external forces (council, owners, and other outsiders) note Dladla and Vetten (2004). Ross's (2010) study of the Bush in Cape Town documents her findings, which revealed that despite the multiple attempts to evict the homeless community, the community continued to live on the bush.

## Employment

The homeless community is often involved in seasonal work that is concentrated in the informal sector according to Ross (2010). Tipple and Speak (2009) stress that members of the homeless community are more likely to fall below the poverty line. The informal sector accommodates those that do not have an address and those that do not have a bank account- factors which are needed for the formal employment sector, note Tipple and Speak (2009). Informal work requires unskilled labour and consequently the employment sector is often temporary and insecure (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Work that is often characterised as decent work is referred to as a piece job such as kitchen work, factory work and working for a contractor (Tipple and Speak, 2009). The advantage of this type of work is that it is regulated by labour laws therefore it is not seasonal work; it guarantees ongoing employment and reliability of work, according to Ross (2010). It is easy to get work in the informal sector; however, there are daily uncertainties of not having an income (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Majority of the homeless people in these communities are often hand cart pulling, construction workers, collecting and processing waste material, selling goods on the street, guarding parked cars and only if nothing else is available, they beg on street corners (Tipple and Speak, 2009).

The above experiences faced by the homeless community have been a result of their path into homelessness. This is as a result of the lack of employment, the disintegration of the support structure of friends and family, previously living in an abusive household, being evicted from one place of residence or an unexpected pregnancy. This journey into homelessness has resulted in homeless people being prone to various dangers and limited employment options.

## The journey into homelessness and experiences of homelessness

The journey into homelessness has been caused by one or a combination of social, economic and political factors (Tipple and Speak, 2009). The social factor is seen when social relations have undergone strain to the extent that makes it challenging for traditional family unit to function adequately (Tipple and Speak, 2009). The second journey into homelessness is created by economic factors that occur when the distribution and production of housing is ineffective and inefficient manner due to the failure of economic institutions of the housing market (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Furthermore, "the institutions that deliver in the housing market are the same institutions that reinforce inequality", (Tipple and Speak, 2009, p.141) affecting the poorest individual in society according to Tipple and Speak (2009). Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that homelessness arises from government's inability to achieve or maintain its social justice policy as a result of the political dimension of homelessness. The political dimension suggests that homelessness is a state in which political institutions are unresponsive to the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society. It is the inability of the state to intervene effectively to achieve an equitable distribution of housing costs and benefits (Tipple and Speak, 2009). This section will focus on economic and social challenges which make people more vulnerable to homelessness, as these are seen as the most common issues in people's lives.

Makiwane et al (2010) indicates that homelessness in the South African context can be traced back to the displacement created by the competing demands of labour. The social causes of homelessness are related to the family structure and are caused by divorce, violence, substance abuse, ill health and disability, amongst other aspects. Speak (2013) explains that there is a causation axis that explains the journey into homelessness as a result of agency. Van Huyssteen (2003) explains that the term agency refers to an individual's ability to act, interpret their surroundings and make choices. The individual locates the path into homelessness in inadequate agency, such as learning difficulty or in deviant behaviour such as alcohol abuse or drug abuse (Speak, 2013), and such examples provided are mostly associated with social aspects that lead people into homelessness (Makiwane et al, 2010).

Speak (2013) makes the comment that in contrast to the agency approach, the structural view highlights the path into homelessness is outside of the individual's control. Van Huyssteen (2003) explains that the structure refers to orderly and patterned relationships between elements of society such as institutions like the economy and the state. Speak (2013) explains that the debate around the structural view is not clear. There is an uncertainty whether the structural view is a result of the housing markets inability to provide adequate, affordable housing or economic factors leading to increased poverty and vulnerability (Speak, 2013). The economic factor associates the journey

into homelessness with rural-urban migration and people in search for employment to escape poverty as one of the many factors (Makiwane et al, 2010). Most importantly, poverty and homelessness are connected (Tipple and Speak, 2005; Olufemi, 2002). Feelings of exclusion and the need to create a home out of waste material applies to homeless females in South Africa (Olufemi, 1999). In a study conducted by Olufemi (1997) it was found that South African females' state of homelessness was associated with poverty and unemployment. The meaning of homelessness to women is not having clothing, unemployment, and no connection to parents, no food, no hope, and no property and experiencing isolation from society (Olufemi, 1997).

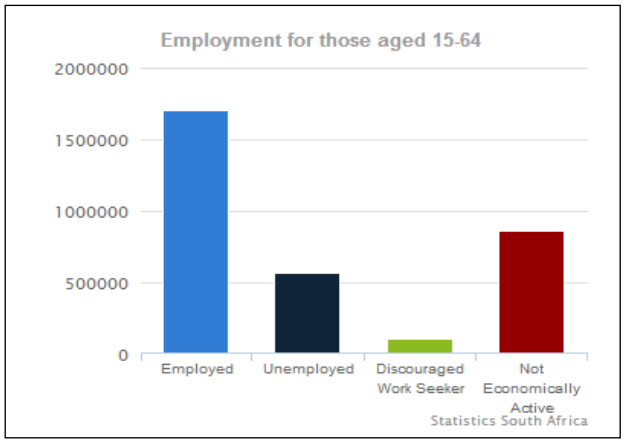
## Economic dimension of the journey into homelessness

Robertson and Greenblatt (1992) highlight one of the originating sources of homelessness as poverty: "the economy has been mentioned frequently as historical and current causes of homelessness" (Robertson and Greenblatt, 1992, p. 6). Tipple and Speak (2009) discuss the journey into homelessness in industrial countries. It is noted that the economy of industrial countries has often been destabilized by globalisation of production and investment. This has resulted in big implications for government revenues, for welfare states and for housing security (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Watson and Austerberry (1986) explain that labour had been concentrated in the urban centres where a number of people would flock into the city in search for employment in factories or shops. As a result, the ability to provide housing for the increased numbers became strained.

Female headed households are one of the first groups of people to find themselves homeless (Tipple and Speak, 2009). The reconfiguration of welfare programmes has been one of the causes of homelessness in the United States (Tipple and Speak, 2009). The number of people who lived in shelters increased because the programme excluded many people according to Tipple and Speak (2009). The number of homeless females grew over the years owed to the welfare programmes excluding people, the destabilisation of the economy, the loss of income for low income households and economic insecurity has been some of the factors that have made females susceptible to homelessness (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Lenon (2000) gives an illustration of Canada, whereby an estimated 57 percent of female headed households are considered to be affected by poverty even though there are social benefits. Nevertheless, Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that in industrial countries, the homeless constitute one of the most vulnerable groups, with the least abilities and greatest problems. With the absence of welfare networks in developing countries the homeless are a concentration of different individuals with mixed abilities as compared to industrial countries.

Developing countries have experienced fiscal problems. Such countries include Argentina, Chile and Uruguay in the early 1980s which suffered from financial deregulation according to Tipple and Speak (2009). Following the 1997 economic crisis in East Asian countries, a significant increase in homelessness was noted in Japan, Korea and Indonesia (Tipple and Speak, 2009). The Metropolitan City Office of Seoul reported that the number of homeless people had increased in 1998 from 2550 in September to over 6000 in December (Tipple and Speak, 2009). South Africa's main cause of homelessness, according to Makiwane et al (2010) is poverty as a result of unemployment. Makiwane et al (2010) explains that unemployment in 2006 increased, placing it at a high of 25.2 per cent.

As expected, unemployment is particularly high in cities. Makiwane et al (2010) has recorded that big cities bear the burden of unemployment due to migration. People leave their rural areas in the hope of finding a job in the city, but most of them end up living on the streets (Makiwane et al (2010). Olufemi (1999) explains that the employment condition of homeless females is unpredictable. The low income that they receive from the odd jobs that they do is owed to a poor educational background (Olufemi, 1999). This has a cumulative effect on the path to homelessness and creates an insurmountable obstacle to accessing accommodation, notes Olufemi (1999). Tipple and Speak (2009) note that 58 per cent of the population in South Africa lived below the poverty line in 1995. Statistics South Africa (2014), however, notes that there is an estimated 2261490 economically active individuals in Johannesburg, of these 25 percent are unemployed (i.e. an estimated 500000 of the population is unemployed).**Graph 1: Employment status in Johannesburg**



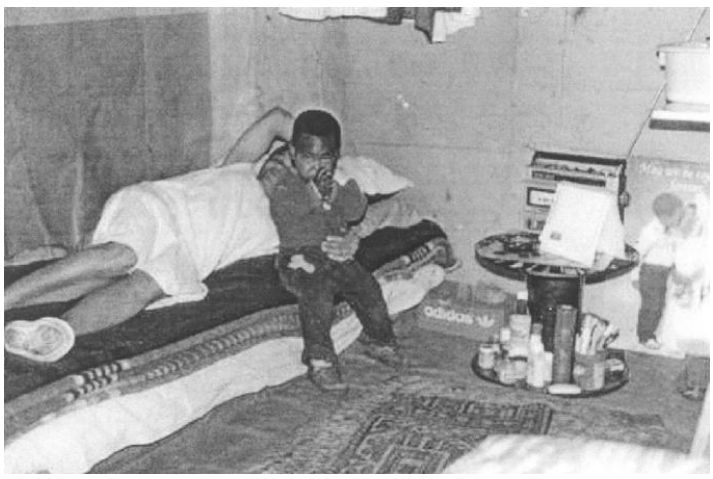

Stats SA (2014)

## Social dimension of the journey into homelessness

A large sample of literature refers to the various conditions that make females most vulnerable to homelessness. One of the main reasons for female homelessness is linked to factors related to family structure breakdown, disability or ill health, alcoholism and abuse (Lenon, 2000; Olufemi, 1999; Tipple and Speak 2009). Lenon (2000) explains that the traditional role of females as the household caregiver has resulted in majority of females being highly dependent on nuptial or other personal relationships. Lenon (2000) explains that residing under the same roof with someone does not mean that you share equal resources and this dependency makes females most vulnerable to homelessness. It is often difficult for women who are highly dependent on their partners financially to remove themselves from relationship, as this could potentially cause them to become homeless.

Osuji and Hirst (2013) explain note that females that are homeless have often experienced abuse in their childhood and have been battered as adults. Anderson and Rayens (2004) add to this, making the claim that females can become homeless due to violence, however violence is not the only creator of homelessness. Long term abuse can lead to adults not being able to form a healthy adult relationship which is a predictor of homelessness according to Osuji and Hirst (2013). Miller and DuMont (2000) explain that there are other causes of homelessness that have an impact on females such as eviction, mental health and addiction to substances. In many cases, when women experience homelessness they find that their entire social support network has dissolved, (Osuji and Hirst, 2013) and that life on the streets is their only option. In South Africa, it has been noted that 18 percent of homeless street women cited broken homes as the cause of homelessness (Osuji and Hirst, 2013).

Image 2: A homeless woman and her child in a shack made out of cardboard



(Olufemi and Reeves, 2004)

Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that women have often been abandoned, widowed or they have left their homes in order to escape an abusive environment. The women have found themselves turning to inappropriate relationships to secure accommodation for themselves and their children, or they have found themselves residing in insecure conditions (2009). In 2004, Olufemi and Reeves conducted a series of interviews in Johannesburg that reflect the conditions that resulted in the females becoming homeless. Some of the women had relocated to Johannesburg from areas such as the Eastern Cape in search of employment (Olufemi and Reeves, 2004). Urban rural migration is a common trend, which entails people migrating from rural areas, to escape poverty and unemployment, in attempts to improve their lives. Such accounts of women abuse and subsequent homelessness have been documented by Olufemi and Reeves (2004), and are noted below.

> "I was abused and became pregnant in the course of looking for a job. I had no money to take care of the child and myself. So I met a lady who said I should come with her to Park Station where you don't need money to rent a flat. I sleep on the pavement using cardboard boxes with my child and I scavenge to keep body and soul together…" (Olufemi and Reeves, 2004, p.79).

> "Velaphi is 23 years old and a single mother. She lived in the East Rand and was in school (in standard 10) before becoming homeless. Velaphi became homeless in 1993. She was 'kicked' out by her stepfather and had nowhere to go. No money to continue her education" (Olufemi and Reeves, 2004, p.79).

Tipple and Speak (2009) assert that the above characteristics of social problems into homelessness are characteristics of homelessness in many countries. Olufemi (1997) notes that the females' economic status has had an impact on their condition of homelessness including ill health, lack of education, childcare living conditions and safety. Poverty and the breakdown of family ties and other social networks has increased females' likely hood of becoming homeless over the years. The breakdown of social networks (family and friends) that females often associate with the home and the need to find employment has resulted in females leaving their place of residence. Therefore, there are individual experiences which determine the different paths into homelessness.

## Conclusion

Olufemi (2001) explains that there are over eight million shack dwellers and three million street homeless people in South Africa. According to Olufemi (2001) homelessness in South Africa is entrenched in political, economic, social and behavioural factors. The experiences of the homeless

are forced upon them by mostly economic, social, behavioural and political factors. The purpose of this section is to act as a compass that will guide the understanding of the case study, that is, homeless females that reside on 44 Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand. The study highlights how homelessness is defined, what the concept of home and homelessness entails to participants, and path ways into homelessness- all of which are factors which help shape the analysis of the research findings.

The site visit to the case study location provided further insight into homelessness in a South African context. The findings are presumably reflective of the experiences and journey of those discussed above, with particular attention paid to the lack of access to basic services and illegal occupation. Tipple and Speak (2009) make a clear distinction between those that are homeless and those that reside in inadequate housing. The site should demonstrate features of homelessness that are echoed by Tipple and Speak (2009), such as lacking access to basic services or illegally occupying private land. It should be fairly easy to establish the above aspects on 44 Grand Central Boulevard.

The typology of homelessness in Olufemi's (2001) work of *Feminisation of poverty among the street homeless women in South Africa* will also be helpful in defining homelessness on 44 Grand Central Boulevard, as it stipulates that homelessness is most likely to be found based on the following categories:

a. Rooflessness
b. Houselessness
c. Insecure accommodation
d. Substandard housing

All of the females living on the study site fall into one of the above categories. This enabled me to better understand the definition of homelessness. Homelessness is often defined according to the structure that one sleeps in, access to infrastructure, the connection to social networks such as family or friends and the lack of emotional connection to the shelter, according to Watson and Austerberry (1986). Tipple and Speak (2009) note that the understanding of homelessness from different contexts is not unified, therefore there are grey areas that define homelessness. The grey areas that lie in between what is considered inadequate housing and homelessness have guided the understanding of homelessness making it challenging to define homelessness (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that people are considered as being homeless when they lack access to adequate shelter, loss of social ties or owed to economic factors, however, those that are homeless do not view their circumstances as homelessness. The definition of homelessness is

rooted in the various typologies of homelessness. Those that understand their homeless condition may define it narrowly, making it challenging to apply to others in their specific context.

The path into homelessness is as a result of multiple aspects (Olufemi, 2001). In South Africa, Makiwane et al (2010) explains that homelessness is rooted in poverty. It is the inability of communities to gain access into the labour market owed the low level of education (Olufemi, 2004). Olufemi (1999) highlighted the possible social causes of homelessness that should be identified in the research process such as unemployment, poverty, the loss of social network or escaping an abusive relationship and it is likely that my research will unveil similar social problems on 44 Grand Central Boulevard, such as the loss of family ties and violence in the household. Furthermore, it is essential to note the rational choice of homelessness and the deviant choice of homelessness.

The theoretical foundations refer to the path into homelessness with regards to agency. Ward (1979) explains that the rational strategy taken by people to become homeless is a romanticised view of homelessness. Parsell and Parsell (2012) argue that it is the choice of a more comfortable life; therefore homelessness is a calculated and rational choice of free agency. The choice of being homeless is viewed as being rebellious or testing the limits of society in order to gain personal freedom and achieving independency (Parsell and Parsell, 2012). In addition, the romanticised view is based on the supportive homeless community (homeless community begins to feel like family) and the comfort of feeling at home on the streets (Parsell and Parsell, 2012). The deviant choice into homelessness refers to a consequence of bad choices in life (Parsell and Parsell, 2012). An illustration provided by Parsell and Parsell (2012) elucidates that homelessness is indirectly chosen due to the unwillingness to engage with mainstream institutions such as the workforce. Parsell and Parsell (2012) further argue that homelessness is due to a problematic individual in society who tries to test the barriers of society by going against the norms). These points by Parsell and Parsell (2012) will act as guidance in determining whether or not homelessness on 44 Grand Central Boulevard is chosen or if it is a result of structural causes.

The arguments highlighted by Dladla and Vetten (2004) indicate that I, as the researcher should be aware of the various experiences that females are exposed to. It has been proven that the experiences that females undergo such as violence, the search for employment, access to health care services and substance abuse is a common struggle for females in Johannesburg as noted by Olufemi (2004). In 1999, Olufemi conducted a series of interviews with street homeless people in the city of Johannesburg, which revealed that majority of these people relocated to the city to escape violent homes. Others indicated that they relocated in search for employment to better their lives. However, many of these people found themselves living in parks, on street kerbs, shelters,

train stations amongst other places (Olufemi, 1999). The methodology used will enable me to identify concepts, key ideas and experiences found in the real-life experiences of the homeless community, particularly females that live on 44 Grand Central Boulevard.

# Chapter Three: Research methods adopted in understanding the females lives



# Introduction

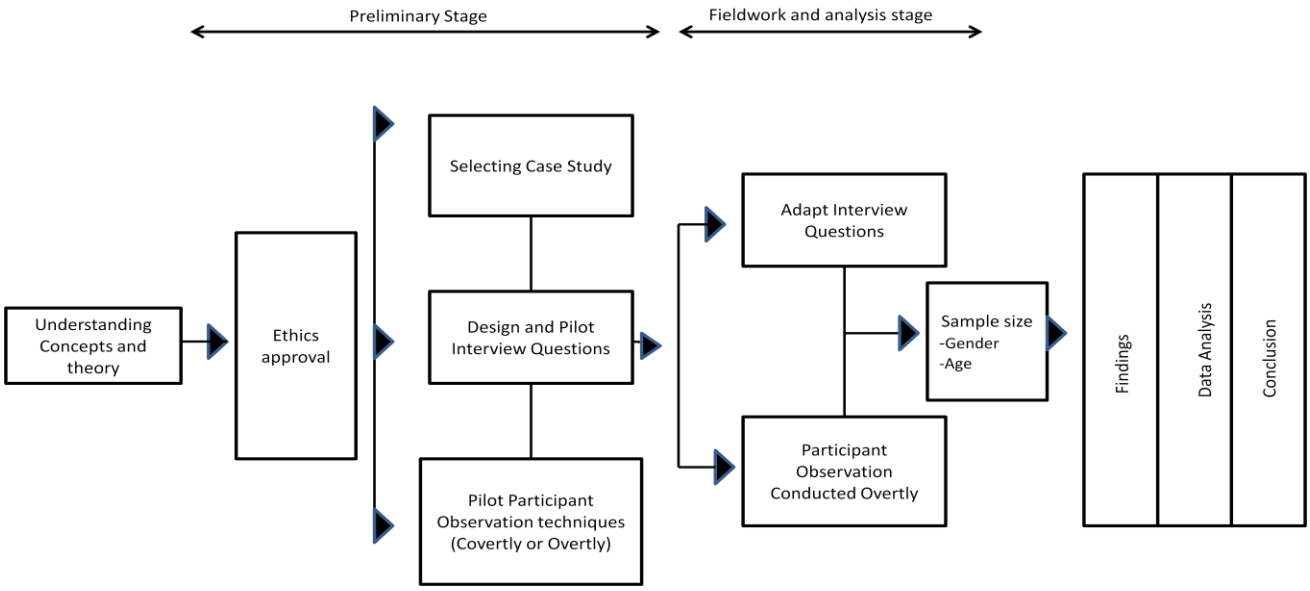
The type of research conducted required me to study the social world in its natural state. This was to be done with caution to avoid disturbing the daily routines of the participants according to Hamersley and Atkinson (1995). The research is descriptive, as the participants daily lives are observed, in order to understand and relate their experiences in this context. The research method has enabled me to produce deep and rich descriptions. This type of research is referred to as ethnographic research (Madden, 2010). The research method uses a combination of participant observation and interviews within the case study strategy which result in a narrative and a descriptive account of real life setting. Bhattacherjee (2012) explains that the utilisation of qualitative methods such as the above ensures a systematic mode of investigation into complex social structures, interactions and processes (2012). Therefore, in order to better understand complex environments, it is best to employ small focused samples that fit the phenomenon of interest, as compared to the utilisation of large samples (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The approach was informed by the nature of the study.

The ethnographic work is carried out through the case study strategy which has explored the experiences and journey into homelessness of females residing on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. This was done without having a fixed idea on how the participants would respond to the interview questions. I have taken the time to study the females within the setting that they live in, so that I am able to learn from the participants, and thereby understand their social interactions with each other and with others. This includes various aspects of their lives, such as the jargon that they use, their way of life and build relationships with the females. This has been achieved mostly through observation, but also significantly by conducting informal interviews. I also took time to actively participate in the daily activities of the participants, in order to better understand the experience of illegally living on a private piece of land as a homeless female. This has been adequately achieved through quality engagement with the everyday lives of the participants.

The semi-structured interview questions and participant observation technique are the primary source of data for this research project. The primary aim of the study is to describe what takes place in a particular setting, how the participants of the research view their own experiences and those of others and the setting in which the action takes place (Madden, 2010). The research objective is rigid in nature, however, I have been open to various outcomes and I have enabled myself to enter an unfamiliar environment which afforded me first-hand experience in the field. I have presented some of the key findings in quotation marks, as these are direct accounts of the females studied. This allowed my research to grow substantially, in that real-life voices and struggles were expressed.

Diagram 1 illustrates the steps that have been taken in ensuring the most suitable strategy is adopted in understanding the females' experiences.

Diagram 1: Steps taken to understand the case study




Khoza (2014)

Diagram 1 illustrates the process taken to find the best possible outcome for this research project. The initial stage required my understanding of the concepts informed by the literature of 'home' and 'homelessness', the journey into homelessness and the lived experiences of the homeless females. The literature informed a series of interview questions that were drawn up and different participant observation techniques that were conducted in the case study location (area of concern). Initially, it was unclear as to whether studying the participants overtly or covertly would yield more accurate results. Covertly participating in the participants lives requires one to observe the participants without them knowing that they are constantly being recorded, whilst overtly refers to openly recording the participants activities. It was decided that the more successful option was to overtly study the participants. I achieved the above by going onto to site with a camera and a recorder on days that I was to conduct interviews and on other days, without a recorder and camera. After explaining to the females' of 44 Grand Central Boulevard the intention of the research, that is, to spend the day with them, create friendships and get to know their way of life, my research began. The choice of studying the participants in this manner was achieved through a pilot project. The pilot project took place with two participants. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were used as a method to obtain the most reliable information pertaining to the participants' experiences and journeys into homelessness.

## Case Study Strategy

Maginn asserts (2007) confirms that ethnography is the social scientific description of people and their cultural basis. Madden (2010) further explains it as a process that enables the ethnographer to learn from people. Ethnography is associated with various types of qualitative research. The case study strategy is recognised as the most flexible research design according to Schell (1992), as it allows the researcher to preserve the holistic traits of the real life settings and events, while investigating empirical events. It is therefore defined as an empirical study that aims to "investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context" (Schell, 1992, p.2), "especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Schell, 1992; Noor 2008). Anderson (1993) describes case studies as "being concerned with how and why things happen, allowing the investigation of contextual realities and the differences between what was planned and what actually occurred. Furthermore, case studies are selected as a strategy because it is not intended as a study of the entire organisation, but rather, it is intended to focus on a particular issue, feature or unit of analysis in order to understand and examine the processes and activities in organisations. Noor (2008) explains that this method "enables the researcher to understand the complex real-life activities in which different sources of evidence are used. The strategy is relevant to the focus area of the research because it ensures that the researcher has an in-depth understanding of the research area. This approach enabled me to select the most crucial and relevant aspects for this research.

The case study strategy has been critiqued for lacking scientific rigour, reliability and for not addressing the issue of generalization, according to Noor (2008). In addition Schell (1992) notes that the strategy is highly labour intensive, which can generate stress that may affect the lone fieldworker. At the various stages of research, a certain level of energy is required: At the observation stage, the researcher has to deal with the sheer range of phenomena encountered with other strategies; following the field work stage, the researcher has to collate and review the larger recorded volume of notes; and at the writing-up stage the researcher has to spend much more time determining what to write-up, how to code and analyze the data" (Schell, 1992,p.8) Critics have explained that the above stages are time consuming and may be influenced by researcher bias as compared to other research methods, according to Schell (1992). Miles (1979) explains that the dominant critique of the strategy is that unlike quantitative research, there are a few conventions the researcher can rely upon to defend herself against unreliable or invalid conclusions.

Nevertheless, the strategy contains a number of strengths. The strategy enables the researcher to gain a holistic view of a phenomenon or series of events and can provide a round picture since multiple sources of evidence are used (Noor, 2008). Another advantage is that the strategy can be useful in capturing the emergent and imminent properties of life in communities and the communities' activity, especially where the dynamics of the community are changing very fast (Noor, 2008). The strategy offers flexibility in application which is more sensitive to the complexities of social phenomena (Noor, 2008). It enables the researcher to select the most appropriate combination of observation and sensitivity. The strategy therefore enabled me to understand the complex real life activities of the females located at 44 Grand Central Boulevard.

## Participant Observation

According to Becker and Geer(1957) participant observation acts as a measuring tool that measures the completeness of data gathered in order to fill in the gaps of information that have not been gathered. Therefore, participant observation is a method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people that are under study, either covertly or overtly (Becker and Geer, 1957). An interview process is conducted in order to gain the baseline understanding of what is taking place within the research area, therefore, the advantage of using the participant observation technique is to clarify misunderstandings that may have taken place in the interview session (Becker and Geer, 1957). By being actively involved in the daily activities of the participants' lives, this method is able to reveal information that other methods of research are unable to expose. Participant observation enables the researcher to watch the research participants to understand their daily activities (Becker, 1958). The researcher enters into conversation with the people being studied, and discovers their interpretation of the events observed (Becker, 1958).Becker (1958) notes that observational research produces a large amount of detailed description (Becker 1958). Faced with quantity of 'rich', but varied findings, the researcher encounters the problem of systematically analysing it, and then presenting the conclusions so as to ensure validity.

Participant observation research has been conducted through the case study strategy. The participants have been observed and recorded over a period of five weeks. Within the five weeks, I, the researcher, ensured I was on the site twice a week conducting semi-structured interviews and observing the participants. Apart from the two days that I was on site, I visited the participants on an ad hoc basis at least once a week. The total amount of days that I have spent on the site is estimated at fourteen days. The duration of observation and recording is limited, because the research is concentrated in a fixed period. Therefore, this particular type of research is short term. Bhattacherjee (2012) explains that the observation of participants is considered as descriptive

research element. It has thus enabled me to provide a detailed documentation of the findings. The descriptive research element has also enabled me to answer the research questions that were formulated, as the experiences of females residing in insecure conditions and the manner in which their daily challenges are addressed were all consciously observed. The participants have been observed from a distance and within their personal space.

A pilot project was conducted with 2 females discussed below. I met with Pamela who is a 32 year old female, residing within an informal gated community, 44 Grand Central Boulevard, which is meant to protect the females and control the amount of residents within the settlement. I arrived on the settlement along Grand Central Boulevard on Tuesday, 29 July 2014, at 9:30 to spend the day with Pamela. While I was there, I conducted an interview with her that lasted for a total of ninety minutes. Through the interview process a number of residents gathered around to listen to the question and answer session. This made it very difficult for Pamela to answer questions openly and honestly. The reliability of the information gathered was best ensured by not taking what Pamela was saying at face value. The interview progressed into an open discussion where everybody commented on things that made Pamela uncomfortable and therefore, less reliable. Nevertheless, in observing her daily activities and the manner in which others interact with her, I was able get a true reflection of Pamela's life, including her activities such as employment. Through observing Pamela, it was made clear that she holds a great amount of power within the community. She is well respected by males and females. It was also evident through observation that Pamela does not only recycle as means of income, as within her shack were four crates of beer that she sells to members of the community. As we sat outside her shack, it was evident that Pamela has created a communal place where her customers gather. This has proven to be strength in participant observation. Spending the day with her revealed the hidden truth about the activities that Pamela is involved in, and the role that she plays within the community such as being a prior member of the committee, Homeless committee next door McDonalds.

Being a part of the participant's lives' in an overt manner has proven to be a challenge. This is because the participants are very careful of what they say and the manner in which they behave around the researcher. With the above in mind, it can now be said that it is best to observe the participants without them being aware of their observation. The advantage of doing this is that the participants are more relaxed and do not feel that they are under scrutiny. After leaving Pamela and her friends on the various days I spent with them, I would write detailed field notes of what I had heard and the activities they had participated in. The participation in the homeless women's lives through developing personal relationships has allowed me an essential contextual background to

understanding their social practices, words and roles as women. These varied greatly, and included the single mother residing with her child, female without a child and the elderly grandmother.

## Interviews

In an attempt to understanding individuals' lived experiences, their journey into homelessness and the social meanings that their experiences have for them, an interview session was held with each of the nine participants. The advantage of open-ended questions and conversational inquiry is that the participants can openly and freely express themselves. However, the interviewing process according to Geer and Becker (1957) contains constraints, such as misinterpreting what the interviewee is saying due to cultural differences or an unfamiliar jargon. It has been proven that the best way to ensure creditability of the data collected is through spending a few days shadowing the interviewee, in order to clarify and to understand better what the participants say to each other and to the researcher thus making the two methods complimentary according to Geer and Becker (1957).

I arrived at 44 Grand Central Boulevard on Thursday, 31 July 2014, at 08:30 to conduct the second pilot project which focused on the interview questions, rather than observation techniques. A different technique was used to interview Ayanda. Unlike Pamela, Ayanda was requested to answer the questions in a more private place. The technique proved to be successful because Ayanda seemingly answered the questions more openly, honestly and showed a greater amount of emotion when answering the questions. This showed that all interviews to be conducted with the females should be done in isolation from other members of the homeless community, so as to ensure freedom of expression. Out of the 9 females from the settlement that were interviewed, there were only two women who did not answer all the questions. This was because certain questions made them feel uncomfortable. The semi-structured interview questions were conducted in the participant's place of preference that provided a degree of privacy. Patton and Cochran (2002) note that semi-structured interviews are open-ended questions. It was advantageous to use opened ended questions because it allows the participant to openly express their opinions. Furthermore, the open-ended questions turned the interview session into an informal conversation, which was comfortable and friendly. Noor (2008) confirms this experience, as he notes that semi-structured interviews are employed to offer a flexible approach to different respondents while covering the same area of data collection.

Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility for the participants to answer the questions as they interpret them. It is found that the females often misinterpreted questions, especially questions related to human rights and safety. The participants were asked questions in their preferred

language, however, in some cases English was used to provide clarity. The language barrier may have resulted in the participants not fully addressing the question. When this occurred, I would rephrase the question and request for examples that would enable the participants to speak more to the matter at hand. After the pilot project, the interview questions were amended to include a question regarding education, as this enabled a better understanding of the participants' employment status and the skills that they were able to offer in the employment sector. The interviews were recorded to secure an accurate account of the conversation and avoid losing data. Every voice recording has been named with the interviewee's alias name, in order to avoid confusion. Semi-structured interview questions proved to be a strategic method to draw out information from the participants, followed by subsequent questions, and requests for examples that highlighted clarity on the matter discussed.

## Sample

Millburn and D'Ercole, (1991) explains that homeless women are often under the age of 35, have not completed school and have experienced more than one episode of homelessness in their lifetime. The sample comprises of 9 females that are above the age of 20. The sample size is relatively small and does not allow one to generalise the conditions of homeless women in Midrand. However, it has permitted an insightful view of homeless women who live on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The selection process is based on age, gender and in the first instance, women with children and the elderly and secondly those without children. The selection process looked to accomplish a sample which had a mixture of age, race and nationality (if relevant), so as to get an overview of how their experiences are similar and different. The documentation of the diverse variations has enabled me to identify common trends that cut across the sample size. This particular type of sampling is purposive sampling, according to Patton and Cochran (2002).

The questions that have been asked have been aimed at understanding the females' journey into homelessness and their experiences of homelessness, with a particular focus on the settlement in Midrand. When the females were asked to address issues of human rights or what a 'home' meant to them, it became very personal, and often made it challenging for them to answer. It was required that the questions were rephrased so that they were easier to understand, and thus be answered. The other participants selected for the interview are the lawyer representing homeless community, male committee member and the journalist who has written the article on the homeless community. The above have been interviewed based on the notion that they were able to provide a contextual background to how the homeless women arrived at the private open land. The journalist and the lawyer verified the actions of others, metro police that often led to the females' distress and

possible hopelessness. The purpose of the interviews is to have oral evidence that focuses on understanding how the females have become homeless. Purposive sampling is a form of qualitative research (Bhattachejee, 2012), which is what this is, as it is a means of selecting participants based on the usefulness of generating data that will address the research aims.

## Data Analysis

There are two stages of data analysis that have been conducted within the research. The initial stage started during the fieldwork. The preliminary stage of the field work tested the semi-structured interviews and different participant observation techniques. The preliminary stage enabled me to refine interview questions and to engage with emerging avenues that I had not considered. The second stage of analysis was conducted off the field. It is predominantly the textual phase of the research. I have recorded the information shared by the participants through means of transcribing interviews, jotting down field notes and reflecting on the time spent with the participants. The transcripts and notes are raw descriptive data that have been sorted and compartmentalised. The compartmentalisation of the data enabled me to make sense of the large volume of data that have been gathered and to understand the data collected. The categories have been identified through concepts, themes or issues adopted within literature. The data in each category has been compared to the literature in order to identify the differences and similarities. The process enabled me to argue the need to understand homelessness within a single context and to better understand the condition of the homeless females. The comparison approach included a comparison between the findings (explanation from individual participants) this enabled me to have a better understanding of the conditions of each individual and the manner in which they understand their homeless state**.**

## Ethical consideration

The research has taken into consideration possible ethical conditions, as it is required to be respectful and thoughtful of the participants' circumstances. The interaction with a vulnerable group of people in society required a sensitive approach in addressing the homeless females. A series of steps were taken prior to conducting the research, to ensure the participants' protection, as well as mine. The following ethical procedures were taken:

a. Requested assistance from local church for counselling services
b. Submitted application to the University's Human Research Ethic Committee (non-medical) for approval

c. Ensuring that the research does not draw attention to local authority, Johannesburg Metro Police Department (JMPD)

Firstly, the main focus of this research is to understand women's experiences of living in insecure conditions in Midrand. The interview questions thus required the participants to reflect back on past experiences, as well as consciously delve into their current situations. Such engagement with their experiences naturally incur sensitive feelings.These may include reminders of frightening, humiliating and painful experiences that can cause anxiety. It can also cause distress during or after the interview it is therefore important that the interview takes place at a comfortable and safe place for the participant, where she is able to express herself openly. As a result, it is required that counselling session are made available to the participants. The House of Faith Church in Midrand has a counselling program that is open to the local community, and I had specifically arranged for the participants to be counselled, if required.

Secondly, the application form that has been submitted to the Human Research Ethic Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand for approval is to ensure that the research will not reveal new dangers to the homeless community and that it will not trigger stressors that cannot be managed. The application, number H14/05/09, was approved. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the participants were informed about the research aims, objectives and were told that the research is purely done for academic purposes. The participants were requested to provide verbal consent and to read the participant information sheet. For illiterate participants, I explained the participant information sheet in detail to ensure that they understood. Furthermore, it was made clear to the participants that their identities would be protected at all times by using alias names.

Lastly, the research does not reveal conditions that the local authority, that is, the JMPD, is not aware of. The use of alias names protects illegal immigrants from possible deportation. The homeless community is represented by lawyer from Kekana Attorneys and their case has been documented in the local newspaper, Midrand Reporter, therefore the research report seeks not to expose their current location, or make them vulnerable to eviction.

As a young, black, middle class female, the research held its advantages and limitations. I was initially viewed as an outsider by the homeless community. At first, it was difficult to gain their trust. They did not understand why I was on the site, even after my purpose there had been explained. Majority of the females had their reservations, as they believed I had been sent by the government.

This made it challenging for me to gain the females' trust and for them to open up to me about their lives and experiences. In order to gain their trust, I did the following:

a. On Pamela's birthday, 5th of August 2014, I spent the day with her and her friend in celebration, without a recorder or camera
b. On my birthday, 19th August 2014, I bought cake and chips and shared it with the participants and their families
c. I sat with the females discussing topics such as music, hair, church and their favourite drinks without relating it to the research.

I found that the more time I spent on site, the easier it was for the participants to open up to me. This made it easier for the females to speak to me. It is for this reason that the females were more open to discussing their experiences. Nevertheless, it was evident that they were not comfortable in discussing issues related to violence within the homeless community. Many of the females were not comfortable with me taking pictures of them, but they were okay with me taking pictures of their houses. This is related issue of exposure. The concern was that once the research report was published, they did not want family members to see what had become of them.

"Do not take pictures of us, I do not want my family in the Eastern Cape to see that I have become homeless and that I did not make it in Johannesburg" Ayanda (July 2014)

Trust was not the only challenge during the research process. The languages barriers often made it difficult for me to express myself in a way that made it clear for some of the participants to understand the interview questions. When this happened I speak in a language more familiar to the participants such as Tsonga, Zulu or Pedi, rephrased the question and provide examples so that they could understand the questions. The strategy that I used turned into a benefit, because the females began to answer some of the questions and provided examples to elaborate and to make sure that I understood what they were saying.

## Conclusion

Meth (2003) explains that ethnographic approaches in urban studies are most useful because it provides an in depth understanding and analysis of what the researcher is trying to achieve. The ethnographic approach adopted in this research is participant observation and semi-structured

interviews within the case study strategy. I became part of the participants' lives in order to understand their lived experiences on 44 Grand Central Boulevard, the meaning of home and homelessness to each of them, and their journey into homelessness. The approach adopted enabled me to understand the formal and informal layers that are intertwined and to decode the barriers that restrict me in understanding unfamiliar terminology, language and gaining the trust of the participants. In order to ensure that the research was conducted in way that is ethically correct, an ethics form was submitted to the University, and I followed all processes that would make the participants most comfortable in answering the interview questions.

The sample size of the research was determined by the number of females that reside in the study area who were willing to partake in the research. The research is therefore unable to generalise the conditions and understanding of homelessness for females illegally residing on private property in Midrand. However, it is able to provide an in-depth understanding of the females' lives on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The next chapter details what the case study technique was able to discover with the small sample of participants.

# Chapter Four: Everyday life



**Every day life**

The images on the left reflect the everyday life of the participants. It illustrates the activities that the participants do, such as taking care of their children, and also shows a communal area where the participants gather around with their neighbours to discuss their daily lives, drink beer, do laundry and cook

# Introduction

This chapter is organised into concepts that resonate within the broader theme of the research. The research themes are: home, homelessness, the journey into homelessness and the lived experiences of the participants. The crucial sections within the chapter are the understanding of home and homelessness and the lived experiences of the participants. It is organised in this manner because this research aims to make lucid the women's journey into homelessness, their daily experiences within their living conditions, and their definitions of homelessness, in the context of 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The research also aims to understand the role of the state and other forms of authority in the dwellers' lives and how this has impacted the dwellers.

The findings outline the females' perspectives into homelessness and the various experiences that the females have gone through whilst being homeless, particularly within 44 Grand Central Boulevard. There are an estimated 115 [1]*mukhukhus* or rudimentary shelters on the private owned piece of land, with an estimated one to four people living in one shack. It has been estimated that there are approximately fifteen females that live on the land. The females are from different rural areas and townships. The females that were interviewed are older than 24. The clear categorisation of interview material reveals the various routes that the females have travelled into homelessness. It is the journey that they have travelled and the one that they are still currently travelling that has influenced the experiences of the homeless females. This section pays particular attention to the daily challenges that the females are faced with and their understanding of basic concepts of home, homelessness and rights. Furthermore, it aims to understand the root cause of some of the challenges that have had a direct influence on their experiences.

The females are from different walks of life and have faced various challenges that have led them to finding themselves under the circumstance of homelessness. Many of the females within the study have migrated from different parts of South Africa; however, the participants are not limited to South African citizens. The females mostly originate from rural parts of South Africa. The reason for the females move to Midrand was that they sought out employment opportunities within the informal sector, and believed that there would be greater work opportunities in Midrand, in comparison to other areas. The search for employment opportunities, however, was not the sole reason that the females found themselves living in an insecure environment. Other women explained that they are highly dependent on their male partners. They support their spouses in every challenge or life obstacle that their partners find themselves in. For others, the journey into homelessness has been a personal choice- a strategic choice that will enable them to gain a foothold

[1] Mukhukhu is the Zulu word for shack

into the housing sector. The females feel that by living in such conditions, the government will notice them and provide them with alternative accommodation. The female's circumstances and journey into homelessness are distinctively different. However, it must be noted that within these differences lay common trends that illustrate the hardship of the homeless women living on 44 Grand Central Boulevard.

## Historical Background

Mr Thoza, a 56 year old resident of the homeless settlement, 44 Grand Central Boulevard, and a member of the Homeless Committee Next Door McDonald provided a historical backdrop of how the residents of 44 Grand Central Boulevard found themselves living on an open piece of private land adjacent to McDonald's. Mr Thoza is one of the founding members of the Homeless Committee Next Door McDonald that was established on the 14th May 2013. The reason behind establishing the committee was constant police harassment. The impact that the harassment had on the community in general made them feel inhumane and foreign to South Africa. Over the years, the homeless community tolerated police harassment, until it reached a point where they could no longer deal with the constant harassment. They thus formed a committee to defend themselves, as a united front.

The metro police removed the community from the bush along Church Street in January 2014. They burnt down their belongings and the equipment that they used to make an income. The community was not allowed to take any of their belongings when the JMPD arrived to burn down their shacks. The police did not provide a notice of eviction. Furthermore, Mr Thoza indicated that the land that they lived on had no board stating that it was privately owned land, or any sign that indicated that the community was not allowed to reside on the land. The community therefore assumed that their occupation of the land was acceptable. He indicates what many of the female participants have expressed: that they believe they have the right to live on the land. They believe they have earned the right to live on the land because they do it in a peaceful manner. They assert that they have not stolen from anyone, nor inflicted any danger on the members of the local community. Nevertheless, these people felt trapped and had nowhere to go because the JMPD were constantly harassing them. They could not fight with members of the law enforcement because that would place them under greater danger. The people constantly lived in fear of the JMPD. Their fears had been further heightened by the fact that they no longer had the means to earn an income and they had been excluded from society.

Mr Thoza clearly explains an incident that had occurred when the JMPD had arrested all the members of the community for loitering. He provides an analogy of the charges, to those that were imposed on black people under the apartheid government. He recalls being requested to sit in a singular file on the pavement whilst their *mukhukhus* were searched and burnt down with no explanation. The arrest and the allegations that they had been arrested for reminded Mr Thoza of the pass laws under the apartheid regime. It made sense to them because even though there were no signs illustrating that they were not allowed to live on the land, they were aware that they were unlawfully residing on private land. The community still believed, however, that even though they were aware that they were wrong, they still deserved to be treated humanely and as citizens of South Africa. The above treatment in the bush along Church Street motivated the move on 44 Grand Central Boulevard.

Map 1: Map of old site (Church Street) and new site (44 Grand Central Boulevard)




Khoza (2014)

The gradual move to 44 Grand Central Boulevard began with a small group of people who laid down plastics and slept under trees. It rained for approximately three days, and these people begun to construct rudimentary houses made out of plastic and boxes. The number of people who lived on Church Street vacated the land and joined the others on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. As the number of people on the settlement expanded, it drew attention and the JMPD noticed their new location. The JMPD then proceeded to burn down their make-shift homes as soon as they had noticed the community's new living space, that is, 44 Grand Central Boulevard.

According to Mr Thoza, the people relocated to the bush adjacent to them because it was the closest to them. The rate of police harassment decreased when the fence was constructed around the plot to secure the homeless community that is living there, and to insure that the number of homeless people in the area did not increase. Mr Kekana, the homeless community's lawyer, indicated that the above is one of the few strategies that have been put in place for the homeless community. A few of the other strategies that have been put in place in relation to their issues in general are as follows:

a. The owner of the property has launched an application to evict the homeless community from his piece of land.
b. It has been recommended by the lawyer that the City of Johannesburg find alternative accommodation for the homeless community

It is the above strategies that have encouraged the committee to establish a set of rules that will not have negative implications on the court case. Minimal information has been disclosed about the court case by the lawyer, because it is not only a sensitive matter, but also one which is legally bound. However, it was indicated by Mr Kekana that the court case is dependent on the City of Johannesburg finding alternative accommodation for the dwellers. The rules that the committee have put into place have protected the members of the homeless community. The committee also supports the law enforcement, by reporting criminal activities to the local police station. Such criminal activity includes theft and domestic violence. This is to ensure that the local community does not suspect the homeless community of committing petty crimes. Furthermore, the committee ensures that the area that they live in is clean, tidy and the members of the committee liaise with the rest of the members of the homeless community regarding court cases or any pressing issues.
Image 3: Committee meeting place



Khoza (2014)

## Table of findings

## Home

The questions concerning what a home means to the people of 44 Grand Central Boulevard have been aimed at understanding their perspectives of the word 'home'. It sought to define their condition, and thereby understand if the participants viewed the current situation that they are in as detrimental to their well being, or as a place they could call home. The participants illustrated a clear understanding of what constitutes a home. They suggested that a home is a place that is associated with family ties. According to the participants, it is an environment that they are able to provide for their children and leave behind a legacy that their children can grow to cherish. A home is a structure or land that they can call their own, and fully owned by the individual without fear of eviction or forced removal. A home is, to them, an environment that has a fence, water, electricity and toilet. Four of the participants regarded their shacks as a home, only because they live in it. Of these four, one participant indicated that it made her feel free. It is a place where you can put your head on a pillow and sleep without any worries, a place that protects one from bad weather and a structure where the females can have access to all the things that they need just like their childhood homes. A home is a place that provides safety and security from possible eviction and one that is warm.

Image 4: A place called home because it provides shelter



Khoza (2014)

## Construction

The females of 44 Grand Central Boulevard construct their homes in one of the three ways:

1. They ask the males on the settlement to build their houses for them
2. They ask their boyfriends to build their houses for them
3. They build their own houses

The shacks of 44 Grand Central Boulevard are mostly constructed out of plastic, boxes and hard boards. The equipment that was used to be building the shacks was mostly recyclable materials that are purchased from the men that collect these materials for recycling. The shacks are very neat and tidy, and are well decorated. The females take pride in the places that they reside in. They take pride in their home by keeping the place clean. The inside of each shack has basics such as a bed, clothing, blankets, pots and plates, just as any other home does.

Image 5: The material used to construct the inside of the shacks



Bula's shack



Zodwa's shack



Ma Ntombi's shack

Khoza (2014)

## Homelessness

The females have all defined their homeless conditions differently. It is therefore challenging to combine the females' understandings of homelessness into a singular definition. Three out of the four of the nine participants indicated that they have homes; however, when asked if they considered themselves as homeless, they said that they did not have homes. It is the lack of property rights that has made the females categorise themselves as homeless. The insecurity of not residing in a secure environment that is not prone to police harassment or eviction has made the females consider they homeless. In addition to this, the lack of a stable place to stay adds to the females deeming themselves as homeless. They compare their conditions to those that have homes. Because their comparison does not align with what is considered as adequate housing, they consider themselves homeless.

Homelessness has been associated with the loss of kinship. When a family unity and extended family members have passed away, the females note that they have nothing to go back to in their rural homes. Two participants reflected on the death of family members that have subsequently left them homeless. The African tradition states that the male (brother) would become the head of the house and their sisters need to leave the house if both parents are deceased. The inability to provide a stable home constructed out of adequate materials, instead of boxes, meant that their children

would grow to be homeless just as they are homeless. It is the burden that they carry on their shoulders that makes them feel homeless. As discussed above, it is some of the women's past experiences that have made them homeless; their situations have impacted on their families' situations. An example of this can be seen from an interview with Anna, who notes:

"I want a house as you see me living in the bush; I do not have a house. I do not have a house because this place is squashed and it is not serviced. I left my children [behind] because I do not have a proper place to stay; if I had a proper place to stay I would be close to my children."

Anna (August 2014)

Image 6: Conditions that make the females feel home less



Khoza (2014)

It is evident that there are females that live on the site that have concealed homelessness. On the 1st of September 2014, there were five new faces on the site. These are people that I had not seen before prior to the court date on the 25th August 2014. The females indicated that they had constructed shelters on the private piece of land, but were currently living with family elsewhere. I had an informal discussion with a young lady who explained that she lived in Tembisa while she was waiting for the government to give her a home, as we waited for feedback from the lawyers and the council to explain if the females would have homes or not. In the process of waiting and discussing the possible outcomes of the court case, the female indicated that she was homeless and wanted a house for herself and her child so that she could be free from any possible threats of evictions amongst other stresses of living with family.

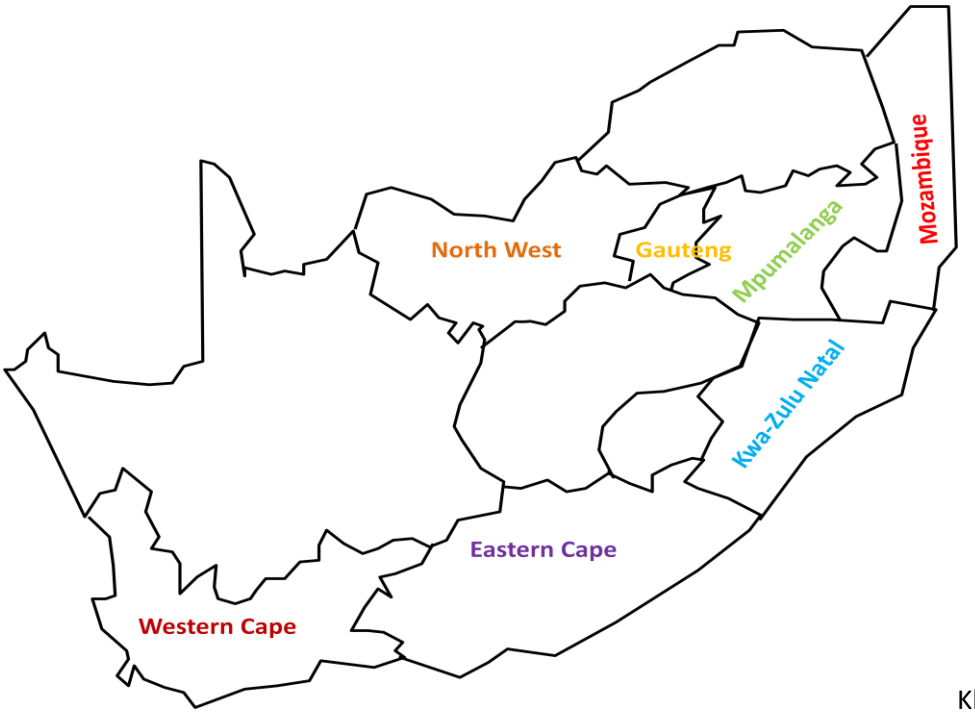
The definition of homelessness from the participants varies from individual to individual. The participants view themselves as being homeless, but at the same time assert that they do have homes, because they have shelter. There has not been association by the participants between the

right to adequate shelter and the concept of homelessness. Six of the participants echoed that they had the right to a house; however, those rights were placed in the hands of the Lord to provide them with someone who will assist them in getting access to a house. One participant indicated that she did not have rights, whilst another illustrated that her rights were based on the laws governing the country. She associated the word rights with basic human rights such as the right to a house. She clearly explained that she has the right to adequate shelter, that provides water, but also recognises her as homeless and therefore, her rights have been violated.

## Journey into homelessness as a result of the journey to Midrand Women from different walks of life

The females of 44 Grand Central Boulevard are all from different parts of rural South Africa, except for one, who is an immigrant Many of the females have found themselves living in two or more areas prior to settling in Midrand, and a number of these settlements have been insecure. The females have travelled from as far as Mozambique, Mpumalanga, Cape Town, Middleburg, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal, as well as from closer areas such as Soweto in search for better futures. The pattern of rural to urban migration for eight of the females was as a result of desperation to improve their living conditions. The females left the rural areas because they found neither hope nor future in remaining in conditions that were unsuitable for them, in that they lacked employment opportunities. They also described their conditions as unsuitable in that they were laden with violence, loss of family ties and poverty. The females have all walked different paths, but have come together at this open piece of private land covered by shrubs. The findings below highlight significant routes into homelessness of some the females.

Figure 2: The provinces that the women originate from




Khoza (2014)

When the war began in Mozambique, Anna left with her family. She recalls walking for many days before they crossed the border to Mpumalanga, where she resided for many years. Anna, like many of the other females did not complete school. She therefore is unable to work in the formal sector. The reason she left Mpumalanga was because the only work that was available to her was as a farm worker, which she saw as labour intensive and painful to work on farms.

“I arrived in Johannesburg when Mandela was released from jail”

-Anna (August 2014)

Anna first arrived in Ivory Park, Midrand, in search for better employment. Anna, like many of the females that reside on 44 Grand Central Boulevard moved to the bush along Church Street because she saw economic opportunity in Midrand. The bush was initially used as a place where she could boil or grill the corn she sold to make a living. The people that already lived in the bush attracted her to settle there as well. By moving to the settlement, she would be close to where she purchased her goods, which would allow her to earn more.

Just like Anna, Thandi is from a rural settlement in Mpumalanga. Thandi also left her hometown in search for work, but only arrived in Midrand last year. Thandi moved to the settlement on 44 Grand Central Boulevard because her friend that she was living with had relocated to Cape Town, leaving Thandi homeless. Thandi began dating and she is currently living with him on the settlement.

Thandi is living on the land with her boyfriend because she has nowhere else to go and has no family in Johannesburg. Anna and Thandi are illustrations of females who have left their family homes in search for employment. There is a clear trend in the interviews conducted that most of the females left their homes for work related reasons,

There is a common trend of females who are dependent on their male partners for financial support (food or clothing) and accommodation because they are unable to get access to these things on their own. A young lady by the name of Bula from Cape Town relocated to Klipfontein, Midrand in 2003 to live with her parents. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, just like Thandi, the young lady has now become dependent on her partner for food, financial and emotional support. She has made a personal choice to live under such circumstances with her partner. Zodwa, who is originally from Soweto, Johannesburg also lives with her partner. In doing so, she has willingly chosen to live in the bush. When Zodwa initially arrived in Midrand, she lived in Kaalfontein, Johannesburg with her children and husband. Zodwa also asserted that this is not the first time that she is living in insecure conditions. She expresses that she has lived in a settlement just like 44 Grand Central Boulevard, in Puma Sizwe, Tembisa.

In an interview with Zodwa, she explained her living situation. She said, “I have problem even at the house in Kaalfontein. I was married to him for seven years and I have a protection order against him and the one that I live with currently I have been with him for 3 years now. My ex-husband does not want to leave my house and he is from outside, [he is from] Maputo. Here is my title deed and documents from the legal aid but there is no moving forward. I am a Sangoma so when I go to [the police] for help but I don’t get any help. He was told that after 30days he needs to move out of my house, but still he is still living there. He is staying there because I have a child with him, my daughter loves him because sometimes he gives her money. I have nowhere to go but to stay here with my boyfriend” (August 2014)

It is evident that Zodwa believes that she is unable to get help from people mainly because she is a Sangoma and is rooted in her faith. The only reason she is living on 44 Grand Central Boulevard is to support her boyfriend through difficult times and that she has now where else’s to go. It is evident with all three females that the loss of social ties with family and friends has resulted in them being highly dependent on their male partners. The strategic choice of illegally locating oneself on an open piece of land with the hope to find a house is common amongst the women. Another participant, Ma Ntombi, clearly stated that she has an alternative accommodation opportunity in Ivory Park, where her family members are living. However, she asserts that she would rather live on this land, and potentially be homeless, because there are greater chances of obtaining a stand or a house on 44

Grand Central Boulevard as compared to Ivory Park. Ma Ntombi heard about the land from a friend prior to moving there.

Pamela, just like the other females, moved to Midrand in search for work. Midrand became a familiar place for her, which she could always return to.

"I arrived in Johannesburg with my friend in search for work. However, when we arrived here she was living in the bush so I also started to stay there. When I first arrived in Midrand I stayed at the Snake Park [settlement] in Midrand. I have also lived in Rustenburg and Pretoria, but I always ended up in Midrand because this is where I started", said Pamela ( July 2014).

Such a claim by Pamela asserts that even though she is homeless, there is a sense of home for her, and that is found in Midrand. Five out of the nine females have been exposed to at least one insecure living condition in their lifetime, prior to 44 Grand Central Boulevard. Majority of them have travelled from various rural areas in hope of improving their lives. However, there are some who have made strategic choices in their lives, and chosen to live in such conditions, in hope that this will ensure a foothold in the housing market. Only one female participant has become homeless by leaving her abusive husband and living in the settlement .

# Experiences of the homeless females

## Violence

Table 2: Illustrating number of females experiencing different act of violence

| Number of females | Type of violence experienced |
|---|---|
| 2 | Domestic violence |
| 5 | Harassment from JMPD |
| 1 | Violence within the community |

Four out of the nine females interviewed have been living there for short duration, with their time on the site ranging between one and five months. The participants' lives on the private piece of land, covered by shrubs, have been pleasant because they have not been confronted by the JMPD. Those that have come into contact with the police have explained that the JMPD arrived on the settlement to burn down their shacks and clothes. These people were left with nothing. The following items were reported as being the most essential items that have been burnt:

a. Shacks (shelter)

b. Identification documents (ID)
c. Clothes
d. Blankets

The females on 44 Grand Central Boulevard emphasised that the JMPD had destroyed their shacks along Church Street, this would take place regularly, and this prompted the move to 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The site that they previously lived on, along Church Street, the police had approached the community three times. Whilst they lived on the settlement they were provided with a notice to remove their belongings and relocate elsewhere. Once they had relocated to 44 Grand Central Boulevard, they had not been provided with any warning of eviction. The police destroyed their shelters once again. This left the females' frustrated, forcing them to sleep on the pavement and the ashes, which were all that remained of their shacks, were burnt. Others merely slept on the hard ground, covering themselves with plastics.

Two of the females indicated that they have experienced physical abuse, in the form of being kicked or punched by their male partners. The females have suffered from beatings that they do not explain in detail. They have both indicated that they feel unappreciated and are emotionally scarred by the beatings. A single female indicated that she dislikes it when her boyfriend tries to kick her out of the shack. Besides her boyfriend trying to remove her from their shelter, she has not any encountered any other form of eviction.

"My rights are that if I live here, I do not want my boyfriend to hit me. He was the one who gave me the mark that you see on my face. I do not like it when he puts his hand on me, I want us to live peacefully", said Zodwa. (August 2014) . Zodwa, one of the abused participants has hope that things will get better with her boyfriend and that they will live peacefully. She has indicated that with the assistance of the committee, her boyfriend has reduced his abusive behaviour. The committee frequently provides guidance to couples who are abusive, and if the matter worsens, they contact the police.

The last pattern of violence that is found on the privately owned piece of land is violence that occurs between members of the community. All the participants reported that there is a high level of violence when the members of the community consume high volumes of alcohol. A single female reported an encounter that she had, when a man thought that she had stolen his phone. Both individuals had been drinking and sitting around an open fire place, when the man purposely kicked the hot water off the stove which burnt the female who he believed had stolen his phone. Violence within the community amongst the community members is rife. The female indicated that the

committee members are regularly trying, by all possible means to resolve issues that may lead to violent acts between the residents of the homeless community.

## Health

The participants have highlighted three aspects with regards to the aspects that influence their health conditions. First, the homeless community asserts that they try to keep the land as clean and organised as they can. By living on land that is covered with shrubs, there are unspoken rules that everyone follows to ensure that the land is clean. The second aspect is related to the food that the females eat. They have noted that, because of the foods that they eat, they all are prone to similar illnesses. This is because their foods are not always sufficiently nutritious. The last aspect that the females identify is the manner in which the nurses treat the homeless patients, prior to them receiving medical care at a clinic.

The women try to keep their *mukhukhus* and the areas around them as clean as possible . On Tuesday, 29th July 2014, when I walked into the gates of the settlement, the area looked well organised, with certain sections of the land designated for heaps of dirty clothes, scrap and rubble. The area did not smell of urine, nor did it have stench of waste food. The morning that I arrived, I found an old lady cleaning her shelter. It was asserted by many of the participants that they believed that residing in a bush did not constitute living as dirty people. They noted that if they did not clean the area in which they live, it would attract rats, because they cook and store their food outside. This is one of the reasons that they try to keep the area clean. The second reason is related to the fact that if they do not keep the area that they live in clean, the risks of becoming ill are high. The two areas that they try to keep clean at all times is the inside of their shelters and the cooking area. However, there are certain cooking areas that are not as clean as others. In some cooking areas, there are mostly males, who often urinate against the trees, making that section unhygienic. Majority of the members of the homeless community follow unspoken rules, however, that enable the land to be clean. One such rule is that the land should not be used as a toilet, but rather, residents must leave the land to make use of other toilet facilities. This is a rule most commonly followed by the females.

Image 7: Cooking area



Cooking place next to dumping site



Clean cooking area

Khoza (2014)

The cleanliness of the land plays a role on the various types of illnesses that the females have contracted. The above image depicts the heap of clothes and dirt located close to the cooking site, whilst the second image illustrates a cleaner cooking area. Both the areas are occupied by females that live on the land. The females indicate that they are prone to various illnesses because of the areas in which they live, despite their attempts to keep these areas clean. The participants have described common illnesses that they get such as diarrhoea , sores on the body, headaches, the common flu, and the monthly menstruation cycle. Diarrhoea, experienced by the participants, is often caused by the foods that they eat or the water that they cook with. Often, the females go a day or two without eating. When they do have money, the most common thing that is purchased is maize meal and meat. None of the participants mentioned purchasing vegetables. Instead, they receive vegetables from the individuals, lawyer or churches, who hand out food to the settlers as charity. If they do not receive hand-outs or if do not have money, the food they eat is collected from dustbins. A single female indicated that due to the fact that she does not eat well, she often becomes ill. This makes it difficult for her to take care of herself, especially considering the fact that she is on Tuberculosis (TB) medication, which she collects at the clinic.

Majority of the females interviewed have access to the local clinic. The females emerged from previous townships, such as Ivory Park, Kaalfontein, Klipfontein and Rabie Ridge, and it is for this reason that some participants often travel the clinic in the areas that they previously lived in. These clinics have their medical records, which makes it easier for participants to receive necessary treatments. However, five females out of the nine interviewed regularly visit the clinic in Midrand, that is, the Halfway House clinic. It has been an easy process for four of the females to get

assistance from the clinic, however, one out of the five females found it challenging to gain access to services provided by the clinic. Ayanda notes this experience, as she says, “They usually want an ID and proof of address but because the Metro burnt down our things we lost that in the fire. I have to beg them to check me, because I don’t have an ID or an address. Sometimes they will turn you away. I remember I took my daughter to the clinic last year when she was pregnant and they turned us away.” Ayanda (July 2014).

The females identification documents (ID) had been burnt by the JMPD , and because they occupy illegal land, they have no proof of address. The lack of physical address has forced many of the females to plead with the nurses until they get assistance, which does not always guarantee them healthcare. In such a case, the female felt that she did not receive the adequate treatment because she is homeless.

The participant that was accused of stealing a cell phone from one of the community members had been badly burnt by a pot of hot water. She needed medical treatment, and walked to the clinic for an estimated hour in a great amount of pain, only to be turned away because the lines were too long. The frustration that this participant, Thandi, experienced at the clinic was due to the fact that she unable to receive treatment because the clinic was closing, despite having waited in the queue since midday. It was visible to the nurses that she had been burnt badly, but she was still sent home with no treatment. Thandi explains this situation as frustrating. She notes that in instances like this, she has often self medicated without consulting a doctor, all in the hope of recovery . However, throughout her experiences, Thandi is one of the few people who have not been turned away from the clinic because she does not have proof of identification nor address. The politeness of the nurses differs, some are kind and they understand the females’ situation, and it is these few nurses that have opened a file for a few of the homeless females.

Map 2: Journey travelled to the clinic




Adopted from Google maps (2014)

## Safety

Prior to the fence and security being installed on the property, many of the females expressed that they did not feel safe because living in such conditions made them vulnerable to danger. The installation of the fence secured an artificial sense of security. It is artificial because many of the females still have hidden fears, that it is not safe for them to be in this environment. Multiple aspects make the females feel unsafe in the area. It varies from noises that they hear at night to people who drunkenly fight. They often describe the unsafe feeling on the land as something minor that can be dealt with, with the assistance of the committee. The assistance provided by the committee is done by reporting any criminal offences to the police, beating the accused and ensuring that all rules put in place by the committee are followed. The presence of the committee makes the females feel safer in a male dominated environment, whilst other females ( who do not live with a male counterpart ) defend themselves at all costs. The females that live with their male partners feel much safer, when compared to single females, who fear that they may be harassed at night.

Theft in the area is uncommon. The advantage of this homeless community is that it is a small community, in which everyone is familiar. They understand that they live in the condition that they do due to poverty, and thus feel that it is morally wrong for them to steal from one another. The findings, however, have proven contradictory, because most single females have indicated that petty crime does take place within the homeless community, because people steal food and money when they have the opportunity to. However, it is mostly leftover food that goes missing, people do not steal blankets, clothing, building material or property. It is the set of rules that have been put in place by the committee that ensures the security of most people's belongings. If any individual is

found stealing or fighting, they are most likely to be reported to the police, beaten by the members of the committee or they are charged a fine that is due to the person that has been offended.

The artificial sense of security is brought about by the following:

a. The security guard at the gate
b. When one convinces herself that she is safe

Out of the females that had been interviewed, two of the females who are single have noted that they feel unsafe even with the security gate. The mere fact that they are females living in an insecure environment makes them vulnerable to the members of the community and males outside of the community. It is possible for a male to walk into a shack and do as he pleases. Pamela asserts this, as she says, "As a woman, it is not right because *tsotsi*'s (criminals) can come and no one will fight for you. I don't feel safe here. You don't know who will jump over the fence and do what they want, but the people from inside the fence will not do that. It is not safe because they can come in and kill you or rape you and do whatever that person is thinking of doing." Pamela(July 2014).

It is evident that single females believe that they are at a greater risk than those that are married or have boyfriends. The second sense of artificial security refers to one convincing herself that no one will violate her personal space in any form. The psychological processes of some of the women has allowed them to feel protected. Believing that they are safe enables them to sleep better at night. The members of the community find comfort in the people that they trust in the area, because when they are not around, their friends take care of their belongings, even though such protection may not be necessary. However, the many forms of protection which aid the artificial sense of security, such as the committee members protecting the community and the security at the gate do not ensure a full sense of safety, as the females expressed that they feel insecure, but there is nothing that they are able to do to aid their safety.

## Basic amenities

The land that the homeless community has located themselves on has no basic services such as a standalone water pipe, any form of electricity or temporary services, such as removable toilet facilities . The settlers have thus been forced to find alternative ways to gain accesses to water, electricity and toilets. The women have been forced to use public toilets at the taxi rank, local shebeen or the shopping complex, where they have to pay for the use of the toilet. When these options are unavailable, they use an open piece of land as a toilet. In the evenings, they use the bucket system, which entails urinating and defecating in a bucket, which they empty the next day.

Map 3: The bush they use as a toilet




Khoza (2014)

The females not having access to a temporary toilet in the site does not bother the females. However, the lack of access to water certainly does. The females explain that the greatest challenge they have is getting water. Initially, they would walk to the Total or BP petrol stations to collect water in 5liter buckets, but the managers of these corporations are not always willing to give them water. They then decided to access water illegally from a standalone pipe that is located on vacant land. It is very risky to collect water from the standalone pipe because, they are at risk of being arrested and only being released with bail of R2000. Other women suggest the hiring of a young boy who lives on the settlement for R5, to collect water. The females use the water for drinking, washing their laundry, taking baths and cooking.

Without electricity on the land the females often cook their food outside. They collect or buy wood as fuel. Cooking pots are placed in between bricks or on a *braai* stand cover. All the participants cook outside, except for two of the females who use paraffin stoves. The equipment that they use to cook is mostly recycled equipment, such as powdered milk tins. The pots that they use are bought from those who do general recycling. Two of the females do recycling at least twice a week, whilst the males that live on the land do recycling on a daily basis. This is done as a means of income. The females often purchase equipment they need from the male recyclers. Many of the females do not have cell phones, because there is no electricity to charge the phones. However, four of those who do have cell phones charge their phones at the taxi rank for R5. When they do not have money to

do so, the phone battery remains flat until they can raise the funds to charge their phones. In the evenings, the females use candles as a source of light before they go to bed.

## Working women

Working, for many of the females, is a necessity, as it allows them to provide for their families. Eight out of nine females that were interviewed have children. There are only two children who live on the settlement, whilst the remainder of the females' children live with their extended family members. The children are either at school or are old enough to work. The two young girls who live on the settlement are currently not schooling because the JMPD burnt down their uniforms and identification documents. The females have managed to support their families, mostly their children, through the informal sector. In other cases, the females are financial dependent on the spouses or are dependent on other members of their families, but they are able to support themselves. In order for them to support their families, they each undertake odd jobs, such as selling vegetables and fruits, sweets, chips, cigarette and beer. They stock their supplies from the local shops in Midrand CBD and the taxi rank. The traditional African beer that they sell is delivered to them at least once a week. It is unclear how this arrangement was made.

One example of the women's work is as follows. "I have 6 children who live in Mpumalanga with family. I support my children by selling corn, bananas and avocados . I stock my goods from the rank. I do not have piece job [temporary employment] all I do is sell veggies. I sell my corn for R9, avocado at different prices there are ones for R5, R6 and the bananas for R2. I do not have a fixed place where I sell my goods I just walk about until they have all been sold", says Anna (18 August). Such an account directly shows how hardworking these women are. They work hard to provide for their families, even though they are at great distances from them.

There are other females like Anna on the settlement who sell their goods to people who walk from the Gautrain station to the taxi rank, as well as to those that live on the settlement. However, those who sell beer have a single target market, that is, mostly males that live within their community. Besides those that sell goods, there is a single female who does odd piece jobs such as ironing and doing peoples laundry. There are also females such as Ayanda, who wake up at approximately 04:00am every Tuesday and Thursday, to collect recyclable materials such as papers, tins and plastic bottles. She then takes these materials to a scrap yard, where she is paid R6 to R50. Although this is a small amount of money, it helps Ayanda buy essentials. On days whereby she is unable to collect recyclable material, Ayanda sells cigarettes for R1.

Image 8: Activities that provide an income for the homeless women



Ma Ntombi's sweet stall



Ayanda's recycling material

Khoza (2014)

Whilst there are a large number of females who work, those that do not work are dependent on their family members to take care of them. Bula goes home ( to Kaalfontain) at least 3 times a week, to get the things that she needs from her family. Xoliswa, too, receives food from her sister. She mentioned, however, that there are days she steals from her sister in order to survive, because her sister is not always willing to help her. Only a single female, Zodwa, indicated that she receives grant money from the government for her youngest daughter, rental money from the backroom shacks her house in Klipfontein, and sells tradition African beer to make extra money to send to her boyfriend's mother.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that females understand their current circumstances as lacking a home. They have a clear understanding of what constitutes a home therefore justifying their current situation as being homeless. Furthermore, their homeless condition has not limited the females in creating a home for themselves through the use of decorating their homes. The females believe that they are homeless, because they do not have what a conventional house consist of. This belief is limited to those that permanently reside on the settlement. Two of the five female's homelessness is concealed; because they live with extended family members confirm that they do not have a home. It can therefore be concluded that the females living on 44 Grand Central Boulevard have defined a home based on emotional ties, a place that is free from eviction, based on social relations and infrastructure that the house has. On 44 Grand Central Boulevard, it is difficult to establish a set definition for all those that live on the land because, their definitions of homelessness are specific to their circumstances.

The journey into homelessness has been pushed by their circumstances. The females have mostly moved into homelessness due to poverty, abusive relations and in some cases, loss of a family member. For each participant, the journey has been a difficult one filled with different experiences. The participants all shared similar struggles with regards to the collection of water and the usage of toilets. The differences in the participants' experiences lies in the degree of violence that the participants experience on the settlement, the type of work that they do and their access to health care services. The following chapter aims to digest the most valuable aspect of the findings with the assistance of the literature.

# Chapter Five: Understanding the findings in relation to literature



# Introduction

This section aims to draw on the research question and sub-questions so as to establish the links between the findings and the literature. The structure of this section is based on the titles of the sub-questions of the research. This section has been structured in this manner to link the findings, research question and the literature. The links are mostly drawn out of the important aspects of the findings. The importance of focusing on the crucial aspects of the findings will enable me to answer the research question. In addition, it highlights the significance of studying females' lived experiences and their understanding of concepts based on their experiences. The aspects that have been drawn out of the findings are as follows:

a. Home
b. Homelessness
    i. Inadequate housing vs. homelessness
c. Journey into homelessness
d. Females' experiences of homelessness
    i. Health
    ii. Working women
    iii. Interpretation of basic rights, hopes and fear of eviction
    iv. Violence and Safety
    v. Government officials

The above concepts are highlighted because these concepts are echoed throughout the findings . The last concepts consist of sub themes. Each subtheme feeds information into the greater theme, which in turn informs the experience of homelessness. Furthermore, this section seeks to argue the relevance of understanding homelessness, paying particular attention to homeless females.

Over the years, the definition and the understanding of homelessness has evolved. The definition of homelessness was, and is still currently associated with the lack of shelter. However, as more research has been conducted, the definition of homelessness has expanded to include the lack of meaningful social relations and despondency, stress, powerlessness and vulnerability(Tipple and Speak, 2009). The experiences of the female's gathered from interviews has informed the understanding of homelessness. The journey into homelessness has further heightened the females' understanding of their situation.

# The journey and experiences of homelessness have changed

## The meaning of home and homelessness

### Home

Although many aspects were identified in the findings which constitute a home, it is still not a concept that can be easily defined. The categories that Watson and Austerberry (1986) have described as a home are identified in the nine female's description of what a home is. Watson and Austerberry (1986) have indicated that a home should be presentable with the appropriate interior decoration and material conditions. For many of the women, the shack that they live in has been converted into a suitable home for them, by decorating the inside of the shack and making it presentable. One example of this can be seen with Zodwa, who says, "My children visit me [in the bush]. As a female I try to make it look nice so that they do not feel sorry for me when they visit" Zodwa (August 2014).

The above statement by Zodwa shows that she has decorated her shack and kept it tidy to ensure that it feels like home. This is a place where she can entertain her guests, making them and herself feel comfortable. In the time being, she refers to the shack as home. Zodwa's understanding of a home, in her homeless situation, confirms Watson and Austerberry (1986) argument that a home is associated with social networks that enable an individual to entertain guest in the comfort of their own walls. In addition to the definition of a home being an environment that is associated with social ties, a home has emotional connection, infrastructure, water, electricity and toilet, a structure that protects one from eviction, provides safety and security(Olufemi,2002); and Tipple and Speak,2009).

The notion that land can be associated with a home has not been adequately investigated. The association of a home with land has not been considered. Land refers to vacant open space that legally belongs to the participants. Two females revealed that it is the government's responsibility to provide homes, through allocating land to its people. In this case, a home is not associated with social ties, emotional connection or physical structure as discussed above, but with land that can be converted into a home by building a house or shack. It provides the security of not being constantly harassed by police and limits the threat of eviction. As noted by Anna and Zandile below, it is more important that they have land upon which they will be able to construct a brick house or a shack.

"What makes a home is when they have cut up your own piece of land just like a stand [plot] and where you can call the place your own" -Anna(August 2014)

“A house [home] is [land] or a house that government will give you... when you come back [from work] you [know that you] are coming back to your own yard” -Zandile ( August 2014)

The crucial component of a home for the females is not associated with the type of shelter that they live in, but rather with land ownership. FEANTSA (1999) explains that the flimsy construction of a house does not necessary mean that the individual is without a home. FEANTSA (1999) also points out that the quality of the house does not justify that an individual does not have a home; it is the right to the land that makes it a home, reducing the risk threatening elements. Tipple and Speak (2009) further reiterate that the definition of a home differs per context, by noting that it is not the lack of resources that makes a home, but it is the manner in which an individual perceives a home that makes a place a home, whether it has been associated with land, social ties or emotional connections. Without the above characteristics, individuals often feel homeless.

## Homelessness

The findings illustrate that homelessness is not just about the lack of living space. Somerville (1992) reiterates this point, by noting that it is the lack of comfort, despondency, the lack of privacy and the lack of purpose in the world. The participants have revealed through their interviews that homelessness is complex and multidimensional. In unpacking the females’ understandings of their homeless conditions, this section aims to define homelessness within the category that has been recognized in developing countries. Furthermore, this section aims to show that homelessness is a complex concept, making it difficult to define within this category. Tipple (2007) discusses the typology that defines homelessness in developing countries that constitute people as homeless. He notes that he working definition of homelessness in developing countries highlights that homelessness is based on the following aspects:

a. Lifestyle
b. Location
c. Permanence of occupation, security of tenure
d. Quality

(Tipple, 2007)

The category that has been identified for developing nations as a characteristic of homeless is not an exact fit for all homeless people. It is evident that within the definition of homelessness in developing countries, there are grey areas. The grey areas are as a result of individuals understanding their homelessness, with their personal circumstances.

The females have described their homeless conditions based on their lifestyles. The lifestyle category applies, because the females refer to their shelters as an unrecognised or unacceptable environment. They often refer to the private piece of land that they sleep on as 'messy' and 'squashed', and they also refer to the shelters that they sleep in as boxes. This homeless community does not sleep in different places every night. Therefore, they are long term illegal settlers of the privately owned land. The lifestyle category highlighted by Tipple (2007) identifies the community as homeless because they do not reside in a recognised house. The participants consider their shacks unrecognised houses, because they do not have access to basic services. Furthermore, the fragile construction of their houses cause them to define their homelessness in comparison to those that live in conventional houses. This confirms Watson and Austerberry's (1986) understanding that homelessness is a relative concept . It is relative because of the manner that they perceive their homeless.

It is by comparison of themselves to others that the females have been able to define their homelessness. The comparison is often based on location and the quality of their shacks. The females are homeless, because they live in the bush and the material used to construct their shacks is unlike houses constructed out of cement and bricks. Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that the definition of homelessness based on quality and location is a definition often used by government officials. Tipple (2007) explains that the definition enables government officials to adequately address the females' homelessness. In addition to location and quality, the permanence of occupation and security of tenure was evident in the findings. The females understand that they are illegally living on the land. Zandile is one of the females that expressed that she is unable to live in the township because rental accommodation is expensive, yet living in the bush makes her vulnerable to eviction. Tipple (2007) and Olufemi (2002) asserts that being homeless means not having a permanent place to stay, illegally occupying land and living in temporary shelter. The homeless guide provided by Tipple (2007) based on lifestyle, location, quality of the shelter, permanence of occupation and security of tenure confirms that the participants are homeless, despite their efforts of trying to create a home out of their homeless condition as discussed above .

Tipple and Speak (2009) confirm that the lack of social ties, especially those that are related to family ties is one of the multiple components that construct the definition of homelessness. The females have asserted this claim, noting that the loss of family ties and the inability to provide a home owed to the death of a family member or abandonment by a family member has resulted in them becoming homeless. The females have often associated their homelessness with the inability to provide for their children's wellbeing, and this is echoed by Tipple and Speak (2009) who illustrate

that homelessness is often associated with the inability to provide for their families financially. Speak (2013) explains that the personal circumstances brings meaning to the way in which homelessness is understood. A single female has defined homelessness with reference to the abusive relationship that she was part of . It is such experiences that often lead women to define homelessness. Somerville (1992) refers to this as the condition of being houseless or roofless as compared to being homeless.

Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that the definition of homelessness has been adopted from developed countries, in order to makes sense of homelessness in developing countries. This approach often limits the understanding of homelessness in developing countries (Tipple and Speak, 2009). In this case, however, it appears that nuanced definitions are not always country specific. It seeks to understand homelessness within a particular context, despite the fact that the typology discussed above categorises the females as homeless. Two females who reside within the homeless community do not define themselves as being homeless. Rather, they view themselves as individuals that have a home, because they feel 'free', live in a place where they can fall into deep sleep, a place to protect them from bad weather and a place wherein they live . Speak (2013) explains that the definition of homelessness differ per sub group of homeless people being considered. Typologies which seek to classify people, who may be homeless by any given definition, can be helpful (Speak, 2013). Such typologies are helpful because they provide a guide to areas that can be possibly considered as homeless settlements. On the other hand, the various typologies provided are not a fixed definition of homelessness for any given area.

## Inadequate housing vs. homelessness

Chapter two serves the purpose of discussing the understanding of concepts or typologies of homelessness as opposed to inadequate housing. The females that live on 44 Grand Central Boulevard are illegally occupying land. Their houses are constructed out of rudimentary material, and they are unemployed. They also lack access to basic services. Tipple and Speak have developed a table in which they differentiate between inadequate housing and homelessness (Tipple and Speak, 2009). It confirms that the females on 44 Grand Central Boulevard are homeless and are not inadequately housed. There is minimal possibility that the females will get access to temporary services (toilets and water), nor that they will be given the opportunity to upgrade their shacks on the land. The females' live as homeless street dwellers do, in the sense that they are in constant fear of possible dangers such as eviction and criminal offences. The females' conditions on the settlement cannot be compared to those that live in recognised informal settlements that have access to water, electricity and public services. Therefore, one can conclude that the females are not

only homeless in the manner in which they define their homelessness, but they are homeless according to the typologies that have been provided and their experience into homelessness,

# Journey into homelessness

## The combination of the socio-economic dimension into homelessness

Parsell and Parsell (2012) provide their perspective of the path taken into homelessness. The findings on 44 Grand Central Boulevard demonstrate that there has been a calculated thought in becoming homeless. Parsell and Parsell (2012) explain that the choice of being homeless lies on an axis. The first half of the axis identifies the path into homelessness as making bad decisions in life and the second half of the axis recognises homelessness as a rational choice (Parsell and Parsell, 2012). The females are divided in their reasons for becoming homeless. Five of the nine females have indicated that the journey into homelessness has not been a choice for them, whilst the four other females have illustrated that they have strategically chosen to become and remain homeless on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The four participants that have chosen to become homeless explained that being homeless on the site may provide them a better chance in receiving a stand or a RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) house. Ma Ntombi is a good illustration of such an individual. Parsell and Parsell (2012) therefore describe homelessness as positive state, it is the "rationale strategy of achieving desired ends" (Parsell and Parsell, 2012. p422). However, Ma Ntombi's behaviour is also considered as rebellious. Parsell and Parsell (2012) explain that it is rebellious behaviour because she is testing the parameters of society. MaNtombi is doing this by willing leaving in the study area even though she has a house of her own in Ivory Park.

The second half of the axis is the deviant choice of being homeless, according to Parsell and Parsell (2012). It is deviant in the sense that people do no not want to become members of formal institutions such as a member of the workforce (Parsell and Parsell, 2012). The findings do not illustrate that any of females have made the deviant choice to become homeless. Ward (1979) explains that often, homeless people choose to be homeless in order to live a more desired life without any responsibilities. The females that live on 44 Grand Central Boulevard are certainly not part of this group, as they have tried by all means to gain access to an income by becoming hawkers and doing ad hoc recycling. The findings illustrate that the females do not desire, nor do they wish to remain in this situation. However, they remain in the undesired conditions in the hope of a better future.

## Education and Employment

Olufemi (2000) and Makiwane et al (2010) explain that the journey into homelessness for females in Johannesburg is often as a result of poverty and unemployment. It is identified by Olufemi (2000) that females have few, or no property rights and females are less likely to have a stable or permanent employment. The above characteristics of females' journeys into homelessness have proven to be true for females who reside on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The females have highlighted that they do not have permanent jobs. The findings are in line with Makiwane et al (2010) and Watson and Austerberry (1986), who illustrate those females from rural areas often find themselves gravitating to urban centres in search for employment, but find themselves homeless due to the competing labour demands.

The females' education levels have often made it more challenging for them to find employment. The participants have low levels of education. Olufemi (2000) explains that most homeless females' education levels range from partially educated to under qualified education). The participants' levels of education dominate in the category of partially educated, in that it ranges from not having any primary education, to standard eight being the highest qualification. This implies that education in their rural homes was not highly valued by the care giver at the time or that they were forced to leave school and work to support the household. One such experience is Ma Ntombi's, as she was forced to drop out of school and assist her family with domestic work another reason for low education levels is unplanned pregnancies. A participant who experienced this during high school is Zodwa.

"I stopped my schooling at form 3. My father made me stop going to school when he found out that I was pregnant, [he said] that he will not be paying for another 'woman' [school fees]*",* said Zodwa (August 2014).

Zodwa is just one example of a homeless female who was forced to drop out of school because she has now become a 'woman', due to the fact that she was pregnant . Her father wanted her to become a lawyer in the near future, but without the financial support, she has been unable to go back to school. Olufemi (1999) explains that the level of education enables the females to secure permanent employment, and without the appropriate standard of education, the participants will remain trapped in the informal sector.

## Social Networks

Females associate their homes with family bonds. The loss of family members due to death has resulted in two of the females' inability to gain ownership of their family homes, which has left the females homeless. In the African tradition, when a man dies, the eldest son or brother inherits the

property. Females are often left susceptible to homelessness. They are forced out of their family homes as a result of conflicts that arise between siblings. Once the females become members of the homeless community, they establish new social networks. This can reduce the levels of depression and stress. The females have become dependent on the friendships that they have developed. The dependency on supportive friendships created in the homeless community begins to make them feel like a family according to Parsell and Parsell (2012). Furthermore, the homeless family share meals, clothes, secrets and finds comfort in each other's company, whilst constantly protecting one another. In these cases, the loss of biological families enables them to gain other families .

The breakdown of social networks, family and friends has resulted in a number of the females being dependant on their male partners. Culturally, women are domestically orientated. It is the female who bears the responsibility of taking care of the home. Historically, females are dependent on males and have been less able to house themselves independently ( Tipple and Speak, 2009). Dependency is a risky position for women, because they often "have to make do with inadequate housing or become homeless" (Saegert and Clark, 2006,p. 296). Olufemi (1999), Anderson and Rayens (2004), and Makiwane et al (2010) all highlight that violent or abusive relationships can lead to homelessness. Zodwa is a clear illustration of a female that has been unable to gain access to resources that would enable her to evict her previous husband from her home, thereby leaving her homeless. This has encouraged most of the females to live in the bush, which makes them feel free and safer than in their abusive households. The females have relocated from unstable homes to the bush to escape abusive relationships.

## Daily routines and everyday life of the homeless females

### Health

The findings illustrate that the participants have often been confronted by illnesses due to the environment that they live in. Olufemi (1999) and Hwang (2001) confirm that homeless females are often faced with illness such as tuberculosis and diarrhoea, as a result of living in poor quality housing. This causes increased stress level that is associated with health consequences(Olufemi, 1999). In an informal discussion with Ma Ntombi, she explains that she has had a bad headache over the past few days because she has "been thinking a lot" (Ma Ntombi (August) . This is related to increased stress levels, as explained above by Olufemi. Furthermore, the findings express that the lack of access to basic services can lead to various illnesses. Olufemi (1999) and Tipple and Speak (2009) confirm that women that live in poor conditions suffer from malnutrition, respiratory

infection and are most likely to suffer from negative environmental problems. The inability of the participants to eat a fully balanced meal points out that the participants have weak immune systems. It is for this reason that the participants' bodies are unable to fully combat minor illnesses.

In addition, Olufemi (1999) explains that females are more vulnerable to illnesses due to their biological difference. The participants confirm the above explanation by Olufemi, indicating that they categorise their monthly menstruation cycle as an illness. The do not have a constant income, and are therefore unable to purchase sanitary towels. When they do not have money, they use newspapers or torn T-shirts, and these are more likely to cause infections.

Tipple and Speak (2009) perspective on the health system is that public clinic employees do not provide the best services to their patients even though the service is for free. The above observation of the services provided at clinics coincides with the findings. When the females go to the local clinic, they are not provided with the best service possible. This emphasizes the need for the females to go to the townships that they previously lived in to get medical assistance as compared to the clinic in Midrand because they receive better service. This means that the females would only go to the clinic when they had to collect their monthly prescriptions or if they were seriously ill. Females that do not go to the clinic self medicate. Martins (2008) argues that people resort to substance abuse in order relive stresses, help them sleep or self-medicate if they are unable to gain access to medical facilities, and this proves true in cases like the participants. In self-medicating,, they avoid challenges faced in health care facilities.

## Working women

The females have found various strategies that have enabled them to gain an income on a weekly basis. The type of work that they carry out varies between individuals. Olufemi (1999) describes some of the work that the females do as 'scavenging', whilst Ross (2010) describes it as 'skarreling' for a living. The participants refer to the work that they do that as 'garaza'. The different terms used refer to similar type of work. Ross (2010) and Olufemi (1999) note that the work includes rummaging or the collecting of cans, papers, bottles from the streets or dustbins. The collected material is then sold to recycling companies. "The frantic search for life's basic necessities, the use of many tactics, a sense of tactic and trickery... involves living by ones wits" (Ross, 2010. p108). This is an approach that is used by all the females that live in the bush. The tactic ensures that they have the basic necessities that they require to survive. In desperation, the participants have illustrated that they are willing to do various types of work just to make a living. However, it is essential to note that their desperation does not run as far as prostitution. The combination of garaza and the females selling beer and cigarettes is a clear indication of doing what is necessary in order to survive.

The longer that the females' remain out of the formal work environment, the skills that they may have previously acquired have become outdated. Females that have worked in semi-skilled environments but have lost their jobs will require training to remain relevant in the market. Olufemi (1999) verifies the above by noting that the depreciation of the homeless community's basic skills and the loss of confidence are owed to the fact that they have not been working in the formal work environment for many years. This has resulted in increased consumption of alcohol abuse and has forced the females to remain within the informal sector with no hope of personal growth in their 'careers'.

## Violence and safety

Meth (2001) explains that insecure accommodation contributes to females' inability to escape domestic violence). A clear indication of this is illustrated by Bula, who feels free by living with her boyfriend, even though he occasionally abuses her when drunk. Another example of this is Zodwa, who left her abusive husband in search of stability, but now lives with an abusive boyfriend in a shack. Meth (2001) indicates that such behaviour is the outcome of domestic violence. In addition, Meth (2001) notes that by the females living in insecure conditions, they are unable to gain access to the resources that will enable them to challenge violence). Dladla and Vetten (2004) explain that females who often find themselves in abusive relationships have experienced abuse in their past, as a child or adult. They remain in these relationships because they feel that they have no alternative to what they currently have).

## The face of government

It is evident on the privately owned land that domestic violence is not the only form of violence. Daly (1996) confirms that one of the experiences faced by homeless communities is harassment by the police for victimless crimes. The participants of the research have indicated that the only force of government that they have come into contact with is the police. The Metro Police are expected to be the government body that protects the females from criminals, but instead, the police arrested the females for crimes such as trespassing and have used dangerous methods to evict the participants from the land that they are illegally occupying. The homeless community no longer knows who to call on for protection, since they are unable to call the JMPD. Nevertheless, they trust in government officials to provide them with land or houses who are not members of the law enforcement.

## Interpretation of basic rights, hopes and fears of eviction

It is confirmed by Daly (1996) that homeless people often feel as though they do not have rights".. The females that reside on 44 Grand Central Boulevard have confirmed this, expressing the belief

that they do not have rights. This could be due to the level of education that the females have acquired and the fact that they do not understand the concept of rights because they have not been exposed to the basics of it. Some of the females believed that their rights are those that the Lord had provided them with, and in so doing, they have highly placed their trust and dependency on religion, in hope that their conditions will become better. Their dependency on religion has enabled the participants to have greater hope of receiving houses and reduced the fear of eviction from the privately owned piece of land upon which they currently reside.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the similarities and differences between the literature and findings. It interprets the findings to provide clarity on the females' condition of homelessness on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The above reflects that the study of females' homelessness is of crucial importance, owed to the differences and similarities between the findings and literature. This chapter has been able to identify that homelessness from a females' perspective is crucial, because females are most likely to require services that are different from males. It is for this reason that the urban planner is required to play a specific role in Chapter six: Conclusion, The role of the Planner.

# Chapter Six: Conclusion, the Role of the Planner



# Introduction

This section of the research report tracks back the steps taken in understanding homelessness for women on 44 Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand. The research aimed to understand the females' journey into homelessness, their lived daily experiences, understanding homelessness and home in their given contexts and the role that the state authority plays in the females' lives. In doing so, it has been able to address the core research question that deals with experiences of homeless females that live at 44 Grand Central Boulevard. This section seeks to reflect on the theoretical foundation and research method, thereby understanding the findings in relation to these and to understand the research from the urban planner's perspective. This section has been structured in this manner in order to reflect on the research and to deepen the understanding of homelessness from a planner's perspective.

# Theoretical foundation

Various literatures have created typologies for homelessness. Speak (2004) explains that the establishment of the various typologies is to assist NGO's and government officials to allocate scarce resources to the most vulnerable groups in society and to assist homeless people, and thus improve their living circumstances). Most typologies that have been established are from developed nations. However, Tipple (2007) begins to draw on a typology that reflects homelessness in developing countries. The backdrop of the typology of homelessness in developing countries has enabled me to conclude that homelessness is a complex issue, that does not have a nuanced definition for all homeless individuals. The typology therefore acts as a tool in unpacking homelessness. In addition, Tipple and Speak (2005) argue that the typology of homelessness sets the standard that enables one to distinguish between inadequate housing and those that are homeless. This has been useful for me, because through the females' experiences and understandings of homelessness, I have been able to conclude that the females who are illegally occupying the land of 44 Grand Central Boulevard should not be considered as inadequately housed, but as homeless. The typology used to define homelessness will affect the interventions that are needed to assist homeless people (Tipple and Speak, 2009). It is therefore necessary that the different interventions that are used to address homelessness relate to the experiences and the paths into homelessness.

Tipple and Speak (2009) illustrate that the path into homelessness can be a result of economic, political and social factors. Furthermore, Makiwane et al (2010) explain that the most common reason that people have become homeless is owed to poverty. It is the affordability gap that does not enable the poorest individuals in society to gain access into the housing market (Tipple and Speak, 2009). Tipple and Speak (2005) argue that poverty cannot be considered as the underlying

cause of homelessness, but that social factors are one of the many causes of homelessness. The collapse of social support networks and abusive relationships are examples of social factors, as put by Miller and Du Mont (2000) and Olufemi (1999). In addition to the economic and social journey into homelessness, Tipple and Speak (2009) and Parsell and Parsell (2012) explain that homelessness can be a personal choice for individuals. It is the strategic choice of avoiding to pay for high rental accommodation, or a deviant choice of enjoying the leisure's of not doing any form of work. Females experiences of homelessness are also often associated with harassment, deterioration of basic health, lack of basic services, alcohol abuse, and violence inflicted on them by members of society and the homeless community, according to Daly (1996), Makiwane et al (2010) and Olufemi (1999).

## Understanding the findings in relation to the theoretical foundation

Throughout the field work the participants were asked to tell their stories of illegally residing on privately own piece of land, that is, 44 Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand. Their journeys into homelessness were also delved into. The field work revealed the participants' interpretations of what defines a home, and subsequently, what it means to be homeless. The theoretical foundation provided guidance in understanding the females' homeless states, and the paths that most females are likely to take into homelessness. It is evident that for every female, the path and experiences of homelessness have enabled them to define homelessness differently. Tipple and Speak (2009) explain that homelessness is a complex concept to define. The findings demonstrate much the same, in that homelessness resonates in the females' individual understandings of it.

Olufemi (2000) explains that homelessness is a concern in society that has a large impact on the economy. The potential skills held by the females located on 44 Grand Central Boulevard are often undervalued. The females work in the informal sector, carrying out different types of jobs. The income from the informal sector has limited the females, in that they cannot afford to pay for rental in the townships, nor own their own properties. Olufemi (2000) explains that it is essential to empower the homeless community in order to create an enabling environment for them. It's for this reason that the planner should provide an enabling environment by facilitating participatory methods (Olufemi, 1997). Participation and access is a characteristic of advocacy planning. Participatory planning will empower the homeless community and it is a crucial component of policy implementation, notes Sokolova (2006).

The methodology utilised enabled me to understand the females' homelessness from a broader perspective. The method applied through the case study strategy was participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The utilisation of these techniques revealed that the females have been

neglected and are unwanted members of society, due to constant harassment by the JMPD. The homeless females indicated that in order to resolve their homeless condition, they are dependent on the government to provide land for them or employment, which will afford them better salaries to pay rent with. The perspective taken in understanding the role of the planner in the homeless females' lives focuses on policy and programmes.

## Understanding the research from an urban planners perspective

Planning is the application of scientific techniques to policy making, without planners becoming politicians: thus they can be considered as decision makers, says Faludi (1973). Due to the fact that planners influence decisions, they produce design methodologies and implement strategies that will result in a preferred outcome (Sandercock, 1998). However, Hudson et al (1979) explain that to limit planning to the application of policies and programs is a narrow view of what is meant to fall under the umbrella of planning. Therefore, there is no set role of a planner, because a planner can play a variety of roles. This section serves the purpose of outlining the role that a planner should play in the lives of the homeless females. Further, it highlights the existing policies and programmes that assist the females in attaining subsidised houses or land, upon which they may construct their own homes. The reasoning behind this is that the findings highlighted that the participants feel entitled to the government providing them with land or subsidised housing. It is for this reason that this section focuses on the possible shortfalls and advantages of RDP houses. It also looks to place emphasis on the self-help approach, whilst taking into account the various role of a planner.

### Role of a planner

The primary findings of the research report illustrate that the planner should foster a bottom-up approach in order to adequately address the needs of homeless females. The females have often experienced ill heath, but have also experienced a great deal of harassment at the hands of the police. They also suffer from inadequate access to basic services. Olufemi (2000) explains that the most common illnesses to be found are conditions owed to living in unhygienic conditions and exposure to infectious illnesses that spread through body contact (Olufemi, 2000). The females, through living in such conditions, are faced with such illnesses. Their conditions are heightened by the lack of basic services such as temporary toilets, access to water and electricity. The females' frustration is not only due to lack of services, but is coupled with the fact that they can be evicted from the land at any given time. Olufemi (1997) explains that there is a need to advocate the rights of the most vulnerable groups in society, especially when individuals have illegally occupied land, as it raises conflict between different parties.

The role of the planner in the homeless community's life is to act as an advocate. The advocate planner defends the interest of vulnerable groups against the elite (Hudson et al, 1997). The planner is deeply rooted in the advocacy procedures upon the legal procedures, according to Hudson et al (1997). The advocate planner plays a role of a lawyer, making the client more politically powerful, adds Davidoff (1965). Therefore, the advocate model, according to Davidoff (1965) encourages public participation in order to recognise the need of the participants and creates good communication links. Olufemi (1997) explains that in acting as an advocate for the homeless females' the planner is required to mediate and negotiate the best possible outcome for the homeless females. In this case, the planner would negotiate the best solution to acquiring land for the participants or obtaining a house for the participants (Olufemi, 1997).

## Planner's role in developing adequate policies for the homeless community

The participants who live on 44 Grand Central Boulevard are currently living with the hopes of being given land or RDP houses. The subsidy system, known as the Reconstruction and Development Programme, aims to create integrated human settlements whereby the residents have access to socio-economic opportunities, infrastructure and services", notes Tissington (2011). Charlton and Kihato (2006) explain that the post- apartheid policy has been successful in placing a tangible asset in the presence of low income groups and providing secure tenure. In doing so, the owners of the subsidized houses were expected to upgrade their living conditions. This would then add value to the beneficiaries' property and the assumption that the homeowner would have access to financial institutions (Charlton and Kihato,2006). The above is a crucial element for the participants, because they would have access to a physical address and bank account. However, the disadvantage of this programme as indicated by Lemanski (2011) is that the RDP units are often located on the periphery, hence resulting in remote residential areas that do not produce valuable assets. This programme would therefore not be in line with the requirements of the homeless females. Urban planners need to establish policies that are in line with the homeless peoples' needs. Their needs have been informed by their experiences. The first hardship that the females express is poverty, which is why location is a crucial component In order for them to escape poverty, they need to be placed in an area that will enable them to not only continue with their daily economic activities, but more so, to enhance them.

As mentioned, the key strategy that has been put forward by the lawyer for the homeless community on 44 Grand Central Boulevard is that the City of Johannesburg is required to find alternative accommodation for the community. The urban planners are therefore required to

understand the needs of the homeless females and their sources of income, as this will allow them to continue to sustain their families. The participants need to be within close proximity of their markets, despite the fact that they are desperate to find secure accommodation. The females on 44 Grand Central Boulevard have established social networks, and the disruption of these networks can lead to socio-economic challenges. When planning for the homeless community, it is essential to consider "integration and co-operation, leading to the stabilisation and integration of these areas into the broader urban fabric" (Tissington, 2011,p. 68). The Breaking New Ground (BNG) policy seeks to support upgrading, maintain community networks and reduce the disruption in such communities (Tissington, 2011).

According to Ntema, (2011) the BNG is utilising the aided self-help approach, that is to say that the state either provides the beneficiary with a subsidised unit or does in-situ upgrading with the household being responsible for the construction of the unit. Ntema further (2011) notes that a shack is a house in process that is expected to be upgraded in an incremental manner. This then gives the individuals the freedom to control the design, management and construction of the house (Ntema, 2011). This could potentially be the best solution for the residents on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. The government would be advised to purchase the land from the property owner, as opposed to uprooting the settlers). With the ability to decide on the construction process, the individuals' economic requirements and social circumstances will be taken into consideration. The encouragement of adequate participation in government policies and the ability of the community to make decisions will ensure a more valuable asset base (Ntema,2011). A valuable asset base refers to a house as a social, economic and financial asset. Rust et al (2009) indicate that housing as a social asset improves the social networks, thus enhancing social cohesion and the ability to access social amenities owed to the access of a legal address (2009). Housing acts as a source of income generation through home based enterprises, and this view refers to the house as an economic asset. Housing as a financial asset has been expressed as a commodity that can be used as collateral. However, it is further noted that without the provision of subsided housing, "a successful housing intervention can do much to reduce poverty. It can dramatically improve health, increase income, greatly expand a low income household's asset base and improve security" (Rust et al, 2009, p.53).The aided self-help approach will result in more suitable locations for the residents, as long as they are consulted, for that is the most crucial element of the self-help housing approach.

## Conclusion

The theoretical foundation has highlighted the possible route into homelessness and experiences of homeless females on 44 Grand Central Boulevard. It identifies the challenges that are faced by these

females, acknowledging that not all these females have taken the same route into homelessness. The research method applied in order to establish the females' accounts confirms multiple aspects of literature studied, however, it also contradicts some aspects of the literature. It is for this reason that homeless females need to be studied in-depth, so as to adequately plan for their circumstances. In studying the females by this method, (participant observation and conducting semi-structured interviews) it has enabled me to address the research question, sub-questions and aims. It further highlighted the manner in which the planner should engage with the homeless females. The role that the planner plays in the homeless community's life should inform policy and strategies that are implemented, in order to attain the best suitable policy and programmes for homeless communities. The policy or programme should address the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society. The role that the planner plays in the most vulnerable groups (females') lives will be determined by fully engaging with those in question. For this study, it has proven effective to understand the females' experiences, interpretations of homelessness and their journeys travelled into homelessness. This will enable me, as the planner to play the necessary role in adequately planning for the females' housing conditions.

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## Appendix A

### Appendix A 1: Ethics Approval

Research Office

**HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)**
R14/49 Khoza

| | |
|---|---|
| **CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE** | **PROTOCOL NUMBER H14/05/09** |
| **PROJECT TITLE** | Tracing women's experiences of insecure living in Midrand, in relation to existing plans and processes |
| **INVESTIGATOR(S)** | Ms R Khoza |
| **SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT** | Architecture & Planning |
| **DATE CONSIDERED** | 23 May 2014 |
| **DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE** | Approved Unconditionally |
| **EXPIRY DATE** | 21/08/2016 |

**DATE** 22/08/2014 **CHAIRPERSON** (Professor T Milani)

cc: Supervisor : S Charlton

**DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)**

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10000, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

10/10/2014
Date

## Appendix B

### Appendix B 1: Participant Information Sheet

**Participant Information Sheet for Honours Research Report**

Good day,

My name is Rirhandzu Khoza and I am currently completing my Honours in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

My current research is entitled "Tracing women's experiences of insecure living in Midrand, in relation to existing plans and processes". Through my research, I aim to explore the following:

1. The daily experiences of females residing in insecure conditions from an urban planner perspective
2. Trace the participants residential pattern
3. Identify how different organisations have had an impact on the participants lives
4. Identify solutions that have been provided to reduce stresses faced by the participants

I am inviting you to be a participant in my research. You have been selected because you are a female over the age of 21 living in insecure condition along Grand Central Boulevard Midrand, Johannesburg.

By being a participant in this research study I would request an interview session to be conducted in a place that you feel most comfortable in. With your permission, I ask that this interview be recorded through the use of an audio-recorder. This will allow for accurate documentation of the findings. This interview session will be approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes in length.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and I can guarantee that your personal details will remain anonymous throughout this research study and in the final research report. You as the participant may refuse to answer any questions which you feel uncomfortable with and may also feel free to withdraw from this study at any time. By being a participant in this research you will not receive payment of any form and the information you disclose will be used **only** for the research.

This research will be written into an Honours research report and will be available through the University's website. Should you require a summary of the research, I can make this available to you

Should you have any further questions or queries you are welcome to contact myself or my Supervisor, Sarah Charlton at any time at contact details provided below.


**Researcher**

Ms Rirhandzu Khoza

Rirhandzu.Khoza@students.wits.ac.za

**Supervisor**

Dr Sarah Charlton

Sarah. Charlton@wits.ac.za

Tel.: 0788305794 Tel.: 011 717 7717

**Appendix B 2: Interview Material**

Hello my name is Rhandzu Khoza. I am a Bsc Urban and Regional Planning student from the University of the Witwatersrand. The field that I am most likely to work in deals with understanding the physical, political, economic and spatial context of the places that people use to try and develop policies that will improve their environment. I am doing research in this area. The research is based on female's experiences living in insecure conditions. Insecure living conditions refer to the inability to gain access to basic services, not having a permanent, safe place to live in, and finding yourself in a compromising or dangerous situation. In doing so I will try understand the current solutions that you or others have tried to implement in trying to secure and improve your living conditions. I will also try to understand what actions by others make your living conditions more difficult. Answers to this interview will be treated in strict confidence, and I will not use your name in anything I write about in this discussion. You are free to stop the interview at any time, and you do not have to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable. The purpose of the research is to understand better what life is like for people – particularly women - living in these conditions. This will help inform people like me who will be working as urban planners to try to propose better solutions to this situation in the future. However the immediate purpose of the research will be to fulfil the requirements of my studies at the University.

**Interviews with residents of insecure living conditions**

A.

1. What name would you like me to use for you?
2. How old are you?
3. Where is your place of birth?
4. When did you arrive in Johannesburg?
5. When did you arrive in Midrand?
6. How did you come to be in this particular place?

B.

1. Where were you living before moving to this settlement?
2. What factors made you relocate?
3. In the past 6months how many times have you relocated? Why have you relocated?
4. If more than once, from where to where?
5. Why did you relocate to this specific open space?
6. Describe the type of shelter you occupy (construction materials, size).

7. Who constructed it?
8. What does it have inside it?
9. Who lives there with you?

C.

1. How do you gain access to toilets, and to water (for cooking, for washing)?
2. What do you use for lighting, for cooking, for any appliances (what energy eg electricity),
3. What kinds of health problems do you experience?
4. How do you gain access to public health facilities (clinics, hospitals) and where?
5. Do have children?
    a. If yes, where do they live?
    b. Where do they go to school? How do they get there?
    c. How do you support them financially?
6. Did you complete your schooling career?
    a. If no, what was the last grade that you passed?
7. Do you work?
    a. If yes, how do you get there?
    b. If no, how do you support yourself financially?
8. How do you protect your belongings when you are not at your shelter?
9. When you are not around, how do you ensure that nobody claims your property (shelter and small piece of land) as their own?
10. How do you get the things you need such as food, toiletries, sanitary towels and clothes?
11. Where do you prepare your food
12. How do you store your food?
13. What equipment do you use ( eg. stove) to cook your food?

D.

1. Do you consider yourself as being homeless?
    a) Why do you say this?
    b) How do you describe a home?

2. How do you survive in winter and rainy seasons – what adaptations do you make?
3. What would improve your situation?
4. How do you think you can participate in plans that may improve your existing situation?
5. What kind of rights do you have? (eg housing rights)
6. Would you like to continue living in this area?

E.

1. What government officials do you come into contact with? When, under what circumstances?
2. What happens when you interact with government officials?
3. What happens when you interact with JMPD?
4. What happens when you interact with the local community? What people/ grouping is this, under what circumstances do you meet?
5. What fears, or hopes, do you have when you interact with the above authorities?
6. Has anyone tried to evict you from this place?
    a. How many times?
    b. How long are you given to relocate?
    c. Where did you find yourself living?
    d. How do you cope with this?
7. Are you invited to local community meetings?
8. Who has offered assistance? Eg.Church community or the private sector?
    a. If yes, in what form?

F.

1. As a female what is it like living in this community? Are women or men stronger in this community? Why do you say this?
2. Do you feel safe? Why?
3. Is there a group of individuals in this community that makes the decisions for the entire community?
    a. If yes, how does this impact on your daily activities?

What rules do you follow in living here? Who makes these rules?

**Interviews with journalist**

A.

1. What is your view of people living on the open space along Grand Central Boulevard? Why do you say this?
2. What interaction have you had/ do you have with them? Under what circumstances?
3. What are some of the challenges that the females were faced with on the settlement?
    a. After the relocation, located on Grand Central Boulevard
    b. After the JMPD had allegedly invaded their space
4. Did the women associate their new residence as a home?
    a. If not, did they consider themselves homeless and why?
5. What current strategies are being put in place to resolve the 'homeless' women's needs?
    a. State
    b. Private parties, lawyer/members of the church
6. How are the strategies being implemented?
7. What can be done differently when dealing with 'homeless' women?

B.

Can you please provide me with contact details of the following people:

a) Leepile Motsomi ward 92 councillor
b) Kgadima Kekana lawyer
**c)** JMPD officer

**Interviews with lawyer**

C.

1. What are your thoughts on females residing in insecure conditions 'homeless'
2. In your opinion what are some of the causes of homeless women?
3. What are some of the general challenges faced by female in insecure conditions?

D.

1. What is your view of people living on the open space along Grand Central Boulevard? Why do you say this?
2. Why are they living in this situation and how did they come to be here?
3. What interaction have you had/ do you have with them? Under what circumstances?
4. How did it come about that you represent the community as their lawyer?
5. What decisions have been made to remove them or keep them there?
6. What are some of the challenges that the females are faced with on the settlement?
    a. After the relocation, located on Grand Central Boulevard
    b. After the JMPD had allegedly invaded their space

E.

1. Did the women associate their new residence with a home and why?
    a) If not, did they consider themselves homeless and why?

F.

1. With your encounter with residence, how do they describe some of their daily activities?
    c. Work
    d. Access to public services
    e. Housing etc

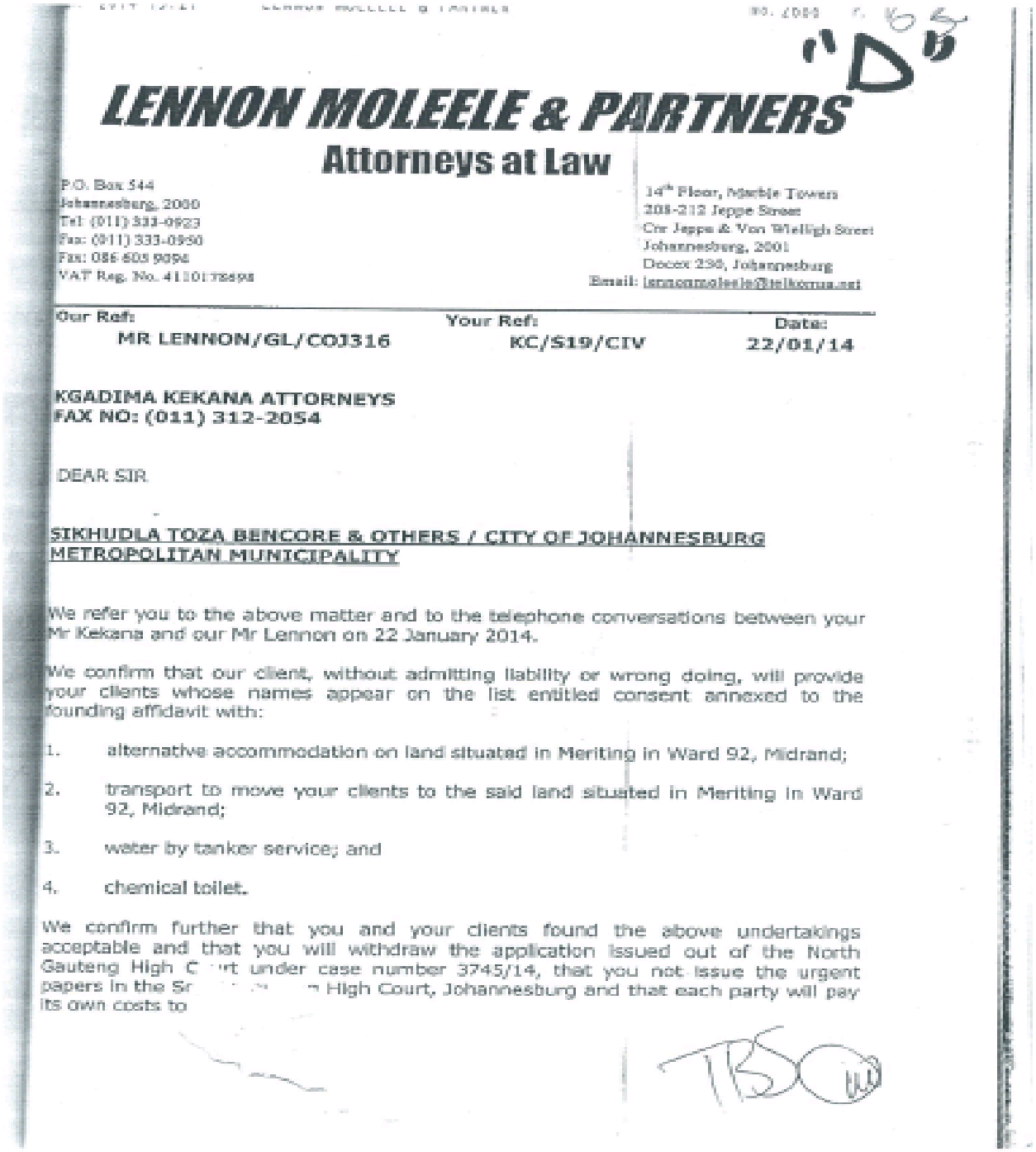
G.

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    b. Private parties, lawyer/members of the church

2. How are the strategies being implemented?
3. What can be done differently when dealing with 'homeless' women?

**Appendix C**

**Appendix C1 :Letter of confirmation for relocation process**



"D"

# LENNON MOLEELE & PARTNERS

## Attorneys at Law


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| Our Ref: | Your Ref: | Date: |
|---|---|---|
| MR LENNON/GL/CO1316 | KC/S19/CIV | 22/01/14 |

**KGADIMA KEKANA ATTORNEYS**
**FAX NO: (011) 312-2054**

DEAR SIR

**SIKHUDLA TOZA BENCORE & OTHERS / CITY OF JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

We refer you to the above matter and to the telephone conversations between your Mr Kekana and our Mr Lennon on 22 January 2014.

We confirm that our client, without admitting liability or wrong doing, will provide your clients whose names appear on the list entitled consent annexed to the founding affidavit with:

1. alternative accommodation on land situated in Meriting in Ward 92, Midrand;
2. transport to move your clients to the said land situated in Meriting in Ward 92, Midrand;
3. water by tanker service; and
4. chemical toilet.

We confirm further that you and your clients found the above undertakings acceptable and that you will withdraw the application issued out of the North Gauteng High C[illegible]rt under case number 3745/14, that you not issue the urgent papers in the Sr[illegible] High Court, Johannesburg and that each party will pay its own costs to

# Police set our shacks alight!

By PUMZA MOYO

THESE squatters say a major have lost all their homes and many more the city.

The people of Midland squatter camp were asleep and the police set their shacks alight on Tuesday morning.

Gordon James (37) told Daily Star: "The cops arrived and said nothing to us. They just started burning our shacks. When we tried to put out the fire or save our belongings, they whipped us with batons. We could have moved if we had been given notice and an alternative place to build our shacks, but not like this."

Peggy Tshabalala (28) said about 80 shacks were burned down.

"All my certificates, my ID and my ID are gone. My life just got harder," he said.

"We want to break down these shacks. The residents started this using petrol to shoot and chase us from the area," he said.

Sizo said looks. She said her 17-year-old daughter and seven-month-old grandchild would have become they had no food.

Edo Ngubeni said the attack came as a surprise. There was no warning or notice.

According to Sgt. the Midland Police Spokes commander told equipment yesterday that they were on government property and had no right in the land.

"We would have moved if we had given notice and an alternative place to build our shacks," Sgt. Ngubeni said.

Johary Moyo police spokesman Chief Superintendent Wayne Mlilo said police had not officers started the fire.

"We want to break down these shacks. The residents started this using petrol to shoot and chase us from the area," he said.

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Cops broke down illegal shacks in Midland but denied starting a fire

Photo by Jim Ngiri

"It's Ben or no 2," she said.

"He's just better that things didn't work out between us. I did everything for him but now he's told me to pay his rent"

She said Sizo even pinned her husband.

"Clearly he is not normal in the head. He was just trying to extort money more than he already has," said Thoko.

"I opened a case of intimidation against him because he was violent towards me."

Sizo said when he was Thoko at the places they used to go to together she tries to make him jealous with other men.

"I dumped her in December last year because I realised our relationship wasn't going anywhere and he was married," said Sizo.

He said he threatens to maintain to jail.

"She came to the room I was in the last year and broke down my door. She took my clothes, saying it was out of spite," said Sizo.

"The woman is making my life a living hell."

## Appendix D

### Appendix D 1: Transcript

**Transcript of Interview with Xolisaw a resident of 44 Grand Central Boulevard Midrand, 07 August 2014**

*I introduced myself and explained that I am doing research on female's experiences and journey into homelessness on Grand Central Boulevard, Midrand Johannesburg*

*I asked* Xoliswa *a series of questions concerning her daily activities on the settlement and home she came to be there and in the condition that she is in*

My name is Xoliswa from Qnembu from the Easter Cape and I am 45 years old. I have been in Johannesburg for 10 years now. I left the Eastern Cape when I was 20 years old. I left the Eastern Cape because of poverty, when I came to Johannesburg I thought I would find a job but that has not happened I did not complete my schooling; I left school at standard 6. I have been living in Midrand for two years now. I arrived in Ivory Park then I moved to the bush adjacent to where we are now. I left Ivory Park because of the high rental. It is too expensive, R600 a month, and I cannot afford it because I do not work.

We currently live on this site because the company (owner) of that place chased us away. The metro also arrived and burnt down our belongings. We than moved to this place (new site) but the metro also came here and burnt down our stuff but we stayed strong and collected card board boxes and made a place to place our heads inside. We moved to this side because we saw a bush that seemed like it would hide our 'heads', nobody told us to move to this particular area. I can describe my 'mukhukhu' as a place built out of cardboard boxes, (sayla) hard plastic, paper it is just a mix up) and news papers. I used wire to hold up my 'mukhukhu'. I asked a boy to build it for me, I bought him 'muqombot' traditional African beer to build the mukhukhu for me. My mukhukhu has papers inside that I used to sleep on, it has nothing else inside it. I live on my own.

When we need water we help each other as neighbours. Whoever comes back first with water will give their neighbour water if they need to drink just like that. We collect the water very far, you walk past the flats over there and there is a tap were we collect the water. I go to the felt when I need to use the toilet. I cook outside in an open fire by using a tin. I have a phone that I charge in town and I pay R5, when I do not have the money I speak to them and they charge it for me.

I do get sick because there is treatment that I use, I use TB tablets. When I go to the clinic they do not bother me because they know that I am on treatment. I go to the clinic in Tembisa, Ivory Park

Rabie Ridge.When a person sick in this area they do not tell you that they are sick and when you can see that the person is sick and you ask they do not tell you.

I do not have any children and I do not work. I manage to support myself through my sister because she works at the 'kitchens' domestic worker. When it is month end she gives me bread but sometimes when she is not looking I steal it because I know that it stays in the drawer. I am forced to go to her because if I do not go I will sleep without eating because Ntombi will not be able to give me because she sells sweets and sometimes people buy them on other days people do not buy. Other things that we need we pick up, even in the dustbin we pick up food. You can see the things that you can put in your mouth and that has fungus and you cannot it, you throw it away. When it is that time of the month you will tear up whatever you can because pads are expensive such as your old t-shirt or a cloth.

When I am not around Ntombi is around to look after my things. If she is not here I look after her things. There is nobody that enters another person place and claims that place as their own. It does not happen. No one steals from another person, when I have food I put it in my 'mukhukhu'.

I have hope that I have a home that things are positive. I see myself as someone who has a home because when it rains I can go inside and it does not rain on me. A home is a place that is warm. When there is dust you are able to go inside and hide yourself. When it rains the water does come into the house but I a pilot (wood) and I sit on top of it like a bird so that I do not get wet. When it is cold I sit around the 'barn fire' to get warm. The situation that I am in can be resolved by the government of this area. The government should take us and find the right place for us to stay. The thing that I wish for in my life is that we find a place to stay. That they can build houses for us or for them to find us stands (plots). A place where we can be free because in this place we are not free because we do not qualify to stay here.I do not want to live here I am staying here because there is nothing else that I can do. I will continue to live here because there is nowhere else I can go.

When the metro arrived here they notified us to move but you will not just move at the time that they want you to. They came back and burnt down the houses and we were left with nothing. We reported the matter at the police station and they did nothing about the matter. All my things were burnt so I went to my sister in Khayalami to ask for clothes because I was just left with the clothes that I was wearing. I cannot live with my sister because she is at work. She lives with her boss and her boss will not allow me to stay there.

The metro came twice, after the first time they said that they would come back but we did not take them seriously. They came back and burnt everything. After the metro had burn my ‘mukhukhu’ down I went to the bush to look for branches and plastics and I rebuilt my ‘mukhukhu’.

When I interact with the local community they undermine us but there is nothing we can do because there is nothing that they will help us with. I wish that I could have a safe place to stay because the life that I am living as a person who is on treatment I should not be living in area such as this one, you need to live in a clean place. I am not use to living in a place like this, I am forcing myself because I do not have a place to stay.

We are not invited to community meetings. People who do help us only bring food. They do not bring clothes and other things. Women are stronger than males because we stand our ground. If we have to toitoi or go to the police station males are realise the need when it is too late. We stand our ground in order for us to get a better place to stay. I am not safe here but there is nothing else that I can do. I have bad dreams, cars drive past and the guys that have trolls scare sometimes at night because this is something that I am not use to in my life. The males that live in this area do not scare me. We have a committee that you can report to when you have problems. The committee does help us because when you have a problem they will call everyone that is involved and try to resolve the problems such as someone who steals my bread. Some of the rules that they put in place are dates for meetings.

Observations

Over the weeks and days that have pasted Xoliswa now has mini tuck shop, bed and bedding, she no longer sleeps on the stone cold floor.