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Intersection: Reading, And Adult Homelessness And Public Libraries

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INTERSECTION: READING, AND ADULT HOMELESSNESS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated first to my husband, Ralph, who served as tech advisor, gopher, encourager-in-chief and shoulder to cry on throughout my PhD journey.

I also dedicate this dissertation to selfless pubic librarians, underpaid, underfunded and overworked daily while maintaining the highest ethical standard of facilitating access to information for everyone and anyone.

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ABSTRACT

A deeper understanding of reading as more than a set of word-attack and decoding skills may help to guide public librarians seeking to fully implement the ethical professional standard of equitable access to information for everyone, including marginalized patrons such as adults experiencing homelessness. As public libraries respond to questions about their continued relevance in a digital age, an understanding of how libraries can contribute to solutions to community social needs such as homelessness has the potential to broaden community support for more inclusive library programming. In this qualitative study of the experience of reading among eight adults in a transitional homeless shelter in a small southern city, the power of a reading life to provide respite or "escape" from the struggles of homelessness is documented. Four themes emerge: (1) Reading provides a distraction from negative feelings of loneliness, melancholy, and/or boredom experienced while homeless. (2) Reading experiences temporarily "transport" the reader out of the negative experience of homelessness by allowing the person to "travel." (3) Reading experiences assist in managing personal behavior necessary to maintaining an interface with services to overcome homelessness. (4) Reading experiences ameliorate stress by providing calm and/or comfort in the uncertain circumstance of homelessness.

PREFACE

A personal experience lead to my interest in investigating reading experiences among adults experiencing homelessness. While I was director of an adult literacy program, someone in the mayor's office called me to request our participation in a "resource fair" at the temporary winter homeless shelter. I decided to set up a table to give away free books, mainly popular paperbacks, although I doubted we would have many takers, as I thought adults dealing with homelessness would be unable to read. But I wanted to please the mayor, so I packed 20 boxes and hauled them to the shelter.

In so many ways, I turned out to be wrong. My table was the most popular one there. The people rummaged with great enthusiasm through the boxes of paperbacks, and were delighted when I encouraged them to take what they wanted. I found myself discussing John Grisham, Patricia Cornwell, and other popular authors with people who had read the same books I had. Some asked me for specific items: "Do you have any books on philosophy? Travel? Cookbooks? Hey, here's one about American history! Do you have any more?" Others wanted specific titles or specific authors. "Tokien? Ernest Hemingway? To Kill a Mockingbird?" Clearly there was a thirst for reading. Many walked from my table directly to a corner and sat on the floor to begin reading. Soon there were no books left.

Later, I remembered my community's struggle to expand county public library services and facilities, a time when the downtown main branch was small and often very crowded. On an especially cold day, I dropped in to return a book and noticed many people I presumed to be homeless. Of course, I couldn't be sure the people I observed were homeless. But they were bundled up in raggedy clothes and pretty smelly, and walked with little energy. I think it was a safe bet they were homeless. Some appeared to be there just to keep warm, drowsing oblivious to the surroundings or just sitting, but others were looking at magazines or newspapers or reading books or walking around the stacks.

I asked several library staff about how they were dealing with the situation. The new library had been planned by that time and funding was being secured. Some of the staff were frank about their disgust with the homeless patrons and asserted the library was not a shelter. The new library would have better security, they hoped. Some wondered if the relocation would disrupt the routine of several individuals who came every day. Maybe they would go away. Some library staff seemed to fear for their own safety when we spoke of the problem. They mentioned thievery, and the "messiness" of some individuals, how they would "pull things off shelves", lay them down without even looking at the material, and then move on, trying to "fake" an interest in the collection so "we wouldn't make them leave". They also said many were drunk, or incoherent, maybe "crazy". The library staff did not want to be facing these problems in their workplace.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALA ....American Library Association

HUD.................................United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

MACH... Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless

OLOS ....(ALA's) Office for Research and Outreach Services

PiT..Point in Time (Count)

SRRT..(ALA's) Social Responsibilities Round Table

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

I want to understand how reading may or may not influence adult readers who are experiencing homelessness and who are addressing the situation by voluntarily participating in a program to achieve independent housing. The promotion of reading may be an under-utilized tool among policy-makers and service providers who want to identify strategies to make a lasting impact on homelessness. The persistent phenomenon of so many people struggling with homelessness in the midst of communities where others prosper has proven resistant to both short-term solutions and efforts to address root causes. Illiteracy may be a major factor, yet no studies have addressed how a library's mission to promote reading intersects with the needs of adult readers who experience homelessness.

Recognition of the transformational power of the written word in an individual life is well-established in the scholarly literature (e.g. Krashen, 1993; Rosenblatt, 1995; Ross, McKechnie & Rothbauer, 2006). "The number of people who are homeless is on the rise, as is library service for them. Still, many librarians and library administrators believe they cannot meet the needs of this group since homelessness is such a complex issue" (Lilienthal, 2011). The complexity of homelessness is self-evident: "Without stable shelter, everything else falls apart" (Desmond, 2016, p. 300). A deeper understanding of

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reading as more than a set of word-attack skills may help to guide librarians who wish to fully implement ALA's standard of facilitating access to information for all, including marginalized patrons and those who do not read well. As public libraries respond to questions about their continued relevance in a digital age, an understanding of how libraries can contribute to solutions to community social needs, including homelessness, may help to broaden community support for more extensive and more inclusive library programming.

If individuals experiencing homelessness identify reading as a source of help to deal with the situation, shouldn't educational programs such as public libraries work with service providers to encourage or facilitate more reading? This exploration of the reading experiences of adults dealing with homelessness may offer new insight into what kinds of policies, activities and resources could guide the process.

1.2 Research Questions

My dissertation title is: *Intersection: Public libraries, reading and adult homelessness*. The object under study is reading as a practice and how it is experienced by a particular group of individuals. The intent of the study is to describe the experience of independent reading in the particular context of transitional homelessness. The goal of the study is to examine the impact of reading experiences on adult readers who are experiencing homelessness, in order to empower public librarians who wish to improve programming and outreach to this population.

Incorporating the object, the intent, and the goal of this study, I address the following questions:

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1. Among adult readers residing in a transitional homeless shelter, what is the relationship between the experiences of reading and transitioning out of homelessness?

    a. How do they describe reading as an activity? What happens while they read?

    b. Why do they read?

    c. How is reading relevant to the experience of homelessness?"

2. Among adult readers who currently reside in a transitional homeless shelter, what characterizes their reading preferences and practices?

    a. What kinds of books and/or other resources do they read?

    b. How do they choose reading materials?

    c. How do they utilize libraries?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions

Independent reading/Adult readers

The term "independent reading" is ordinarily used in reference to "children's reading of text — such as books, magazines, and newspapers — on their own, with minimal to no assistance from adults" (Spear-Swerling, n.d.). The same term might be applied to adults whose literacy skills are adequate to read a range of material without assistance from anyone. This does not mean that either children or adults deemed "literate" can read *anything* at any time. Reading proficiency is affected not only by an individual's literacy skills but also the nature of the text. For the purposes of this study, independent reading is defined as an activity or experience with text in any form, on paper or electronic, whether fiction or nonfiction, undertaken without assistance. Persons over 18 who read independently are defined as "adult readers".

Homelessness

For purposes of identifying study participants, this inquiry used the US Department of Housing and Urban Development definition of a homeless person:

- An individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for

human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

- An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);
- An individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;
- An individual or family who will imminently lose their housing… has no subsequent residence identified; and lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing…(Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009).

Transitional homeless shelter

While an emergency shelter may provide a bed for a night and may or may not provide a meal on a first come, first served basis, transitional homeless shelters differ from emergency shelters in a number of ways. Transitional shelters are designed to provide a comprehensive range of services delivered over a longer period of time, including three meals a day. Transitional shelters are usually funded through a variety of mechanisms, and may incorporate a number of programs, each with its own qualifications for acceptance and continued residence in the shelter. Among its programs, a transitional shelter may also incorporate emergency services as well. Residence in transitional shelters therefore ranges from one night to two years, depending on the mix of funding and the variety of programs offered.

2.2 The Extent of Homelessness in the US, SC, and Columbia, SC

On a single night in January 2015, the most recent year as of this writing for which national data have been published, 564,708 people in the United States experiencing homelessness were counted, meaning they were sleeping outside or in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program. The 2016 Point in Time (PiT) Count

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for South Carolina, the most recent report available, was 5,050 individuals, including 384 families, 759 children, and 307 youth aged 18-24 (Kahle, 2016).

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2016) reported aggregated state data documenting race and gender among South Carolina's homeless to be male (65%), and African American (52%). Among adults, the Alliance estimated 12% in SC were veterans.

The following description of the procedures used for the data collection and the reporting process to develop the PiT Count demonstrates that the Count is an inexact process resulting in only an approximation of the extent of homelessness, and an inexact portrait of the face of homelessness. The PiT Count is widely believed to be much below the actual number of persons experiencing homelessness due to limitations on how the count is conducted. The data are collected at the local level, transmitted to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and aggregated into the annual Count. HUD specifies what data are to be collected and reporting forms are standardized across the country. The nature of the collected data is driven by the federal legislation constituting the primary source of grants for providing services to specific groups of people who qualify as homeless under federal law. Respondents are interviewed to collect the following information: gender; race; disabilities, including alcohol or drug abuse, HIV, mental health difficulties or chronic health conditions; whether or not the individual is a victim or survivor of domestic violence; whether the individual has served in the United States military; where the individual is sleeping on the night interviewed; how many adults, young adults, and children are staying with the individual on the specified night and their relationship to the adult(s); and the total number of months the

individual or family has been on the street or in a shelter in the past three years. The names, date of birth, and Social Security numbers of the individual and/or family members are recorded. If and only if the individual or a member of the family is under 24, three additional questions are asked: the last year of schooling completed, current schooling status, and whether the person is expected to become a parent in the next nine months (Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless, 2018).

No other data are collected. Nothing is known about the educational attainment of homeless individuals over the age of 24, with the exception of some attempts to document homelessness among college students. For example, a survey of 4000 undergraduates at ten community colleges across the nation showed 13% of community college students were homeless (Goldrick-Rab, Broton, and Eisenberg, 2015). Individual shelters, such as the Transitions shelter in Columbia, SC, do record the number of years' schooling for residents, but the data are not aggregated either internally or with other shelters.

For central South Carolina, HUD has identified the United Way of the Midlands as the "collaborative applicant" responsible for the PiT data collection. Although the Midlands United Way funds a variety of human services in only six counties, the agency coordinates homeless data collection for 14 counties and manages the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database for this part of the state. The data are cloud-based and encrypted.

Funding to support the collection and preparation of the data is cobbled together from federal and local sources. It may be significant that unlike other states, the data

collection system in South Carolina receives no state funding. Local governments and private sources must therefore complement the federal funds.

In the Midlands of SC, the collection process is carried out almost exclusively by recruited and trained unpaid volunteers, many of them associated with both private and public nonprofit organizations providing services to the homeless population. Volunteers interview unsheltered individuals wherever they may be found; some choose to cooperate, others decline to be interviewed and therefore go uncounted. Individuals who are sheltered on the designated date are not interviewed. Instead the shelters report the information to the United Way using the data collected when a person enters the facility.

The United Way staff coordinator indicated that a sufficient number of volunteers have been consistently available over the last five years for the annual counts in urban and suburban areas, but are acutely difficult to recruit in rural areas. (J. Moore, personal communication, January 23, 2017).

If the PiT data is accepted at face value (it is the only data collected and aggregated nationally, regionally or locally) the majority of the homeless population in South Carolina isn't consistently or chronically homeless and was not without shelter on the night of the count. The 2016 Count identified only 20% experiencing chronic homelessness; 69% were sheltered at the time of the Count (Kahle, 2016).

2.3 Research on Public Library Services to Adult Readers Experiencing Homelessness

Scholarly studies in LIS literature about libraries, reading and adult homelessness in the United States are sparse. A bibliometric assessment of published research about public libraries and the economically disadvantaged (Manganello, 2017) listed 53 articles

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published in LIS scholarly journals between 1996-2016. The databases used for this assessment were limited to: *Library and Information Science Source; Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts; Academic Search Premier* and *Google Scholar.* (Only journal articles published in English were selected, and books and other professional journals were excluded.) Nine of the 53 studies were concerned with homeless children or homeless families; six of the studies addressed the topic of libraries and marginalized populations in countries other than the US, and none specifically considered adults experiencing homelessness without children. Although a number of scholarly articles across several disciplines have described public librarians' interactions with the homeless, (Cathcart, 2008; Collins, Howard, & Miraflor, 2009; Mars, 2012; Milone, 2011; McLaine, 2010; Tashbook, 2009; and Yi, 2009), none of these studies mention adult literacy programs developed for the homeless or the literacy needs or practices of patrons dealing with homelessness.

However, a considerable amount of anecdotal evidence has been offered about how libraries serve patrons understood to be homeless. Lilienthal (2011) described a program of peer counselors in the San Francisco public library, and stressed the importance of public libraries offering services, such as book clubs, tailored to the needs of adults experiencing homelessness. Book clubs have been started in a number of public libraries, including Alachua County in Florida (Keen, 2010). Other communities, including San Francisco, California (Baer, 2016), the District of Columbia (Jenkins 2014), Carbondale, Illinois (Esters, 2016), and Denver, Colorado (Sakas, 2017) provide a professional social worker in their public libraries. In Santa Rosa, California, the public library offered art workshops for the homeless (Taylor, 2014). In the small city of

Multnomah, Oregon, a public librarian founded and manages a nonprofit "street library", using bicycles to make books available to persons living outdoors (Johnson, 2014).

In 1990, the American Library Association adopted Policy 61, Library Services for the Poor (now renumbered Policy B.8.10.1) This "Poor People's Policy" was developed to ensure that libraries are accessible and useful to low-income citizens and to encourage a deeper understanding of poverty's dimensions, its causes, and the ways it can be ended. In 1996, members of the ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) formed the Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force to promote and implement Policy 61 and to raise awareness of poverty issues. Since then, the task force has

- mounted major conference programs
- secured policy support from ALA Presidential candidates
- initiated a SRRT resolution on poverty-related subject headings
- distributed resource information
- encouraged the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS) Advisory Committee to create a Poverty Subcommittee
- published a first ever statement on class and libraries in *American Libraries*
- coordinated poverty-focused surveys of ALA units and members in 2007 (American Library Association, n.d.)

In addition, ALA has published a handbook for delivering public library services to the poor (Holt and Holt, 2010).

In 2005, observing the 15th anniversary of Policy 61, the ALA Jean E. Coleman Outreach Lecture was offered by Sanford Berman, founder of the SRRT and a co-author of Policy 61. Berman began with an anecdotal report of exclusionary policies and activities in public libraries, such as shorter hours in poor neighborhoods, evidence of new libraries deliberately located where poor people would be unlikely to obtain access, local governmental legislation prohibiting "sleeping on tables" in the library, a report of an ALA official commenting to a reporter about issues of patrons with poor hygiene,

and an attempt to offer organized, scheduled lectures to teach citizens "how to behave" in the library (Berman, 2005).

Berman balanced his lecture with examples of library activities around the country that specifically reach out to homeless populations. He spoke of librarians involved in advocacy and collaboration to build showers for homeless use, of a public library board member who told a reporter that individuals thought to be homeless had always frequented the library but never presented any problems, and of a public library director serving on a panel with the mayor and a low income advocate to identify what could be done to address homelessness. Then he asked:

> "Why this pronounced failure to adopt and promote ALA's poor people's policy? And why the rush to further burden and even criminalize people who already have next to nothing and certainly don't enjoy a level playing field? Why the cascading efforts to exclude them from public spaces, deny them fair access to library resources, and treat them as 'problems,' as pariahs?"

Berman concluded by charging librarians and others to "first recognize their own attitudinal hang-ups" (Berman, 2005).

What is known about reading preferences and practices among adults experiencing homelessness? A few library and information science researchers have investigated information poverty, information behavior, or information access among individuals and/or families experiencing homelessness. However, a review of the literature yielded no studies to date specifically examining how adult independent reading and homelessness might interrelate. "Direct research into the effect of reading for pleasure …is scarce. This is perhaps because reading for pleasure is less quantifiable than other influences on a non-reading adult's quality of life" (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 9).

Published research related to libraries, reading and adult homelessness appears to coalesce into four categories:

a. *Studies about how libraries serve or manage adults experiencing homelessness, but without regard to the experience of reading.* For example, Muggleton (2013) described difficulties encountered by public libraries when serving the homeless.

A survey of perceptions among public librarians about serious mental illness and its relationship to homelessness (Pressley, 2017) revealed that a large number of public librarians experience concerns about how such users may impact other users and the potential for violence. The survey respondents indicated a need for greater personal awareness of serious mental illness and how that might help them in their interactions with users who may be mentally ill.

Anderson, Simpson, and Fisher (2012) found that librarians "are not well trained to address the specific and often complex needs of homeless people" (p. 188). Their exploratory study suggested that librarians are willing to help homeless individuals, but are not well-prepared to do so. These conclusions were the findings of a survey without a high response rate (13.7%). (Some respondents noted that they were not permitted to engage in research, and others stated that homeless patrons did not frequent their particular branch.)

Giesler (2017) explored public librarians' response to homelessness and suggested three emerging themes: acknowledgment that libraries serve as *de facto* shelters; an inconsistent implementation of code of conduct policies affecting homeless patrons; and surreptitious efforts by library administration and staff to resolve tensions emanating from the presence of homeless persons in the library.

Several researchers (e.g. Ayers, 2006) have examined the ethical imperatives of library service to the poor and homeless in the context of equitable access.

b. *Studies about the information needs or information behavior of adults experiencing homelessness, again without regard to reading experiences.* For example, Hersberger (2001) considered whether the digital divide affects the homeless and their access to information. She concluded access to the internet may be irrelevant to this population because the study participants (all parents) instead relied mainly on other people for information. She later (2003, 2005) documented the everyday information needs and information sources consulted by homeless adults in a shelter in North Carolina without mentioning reading.

In contrast to Hersberger's conclusions about technology, Le Dantec and Edwards (2008) documented the importance of access to the internet by conducting several studies regarding the homeless and technology, beginning with homeless perceptions of technology. This study was conducted in two homeless outreach centers; books were not included as a form of technology. Later, another group lead by Le Dantec with a larger team looked at the use of computers in a shelter for mothers experiencing homelessness (Le Dantec, Ferell, Christensen, Bailey, Ellis, Kellogg, & Edwards, 2011), finding access to technology was important to their lives.

Harvey (2002) found that homeless individuals identify the library as a place for reading and learning to gain knowledge as well as a safe place for respite and peace, but did not investigate personal reading experiences. This dissertation confirmed Harvey's findings, linking her conclusions directly to a personal reading life.

Muggleton and Ruthven (2012) studied information access by adults experiencing homelessness in Scotland. Like Hersberger, this study built on concepts of social context and efficacy. Like Chatman (1996), the study also identified the practice of secrecy among adults experiencing homelessness. Similarly, Lingel and Boyd (2013) considered the role of stigma and concluded "when information practices are understood to be shaped by social context, [then] privilege and marginalization alternately affect not only access to, but also use of information resources" (p. 1).

      c. *Studies about how public libraries are or can be involved in promoting adult literacy, but with no mention of adults experiencing homelessness.* For example, Horning (2010) details the history and role of libraries in adult literacy, but includes no evidence about homeless patrons, other than to assert "libraries have especially recently taken on literacy instruction for poor and immigrant patrons, information literacy instruction for all, and continued access to information of all types for everyone" (p. 162). (This study also included a discussion of varying definitions of literacy, including adult functional literacy.) Weibel (2007) offered programming and collection development guidance for libraries fostering adult literacy, but was not looking at services targeted to the homeless. Likewise Shen (2013) investigated library services to urban immigrants as related to strategies to overcome information poverty, but did not consider whether any of the immigrants had experienced homelessness and does not mention literacy.

      d. *Studies concerned with literacy and homelessness, but with no reference to libraries.* A recent quantitative dissertation (Holland, 2014) investigated the relationship between literacy and depression and anxiety among adults experiencing homelessness, suggesting that low literacy might be related to depression and anxiety, but finding

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instead that higher prose literacy skills may be associated with *higher* degrees of anxiety. However, the researcher reported that the data neither definitively nor significantly support this conclusion. One might ask if this was partially due to the limitations of specific delineations of "literacy" and "anxiety" as defined by the testing instruments. Another dissertation (Drayton, 2012), a multiple case study, looked at the connections between literacy and identity among African-American males. However, the participants were not homeless. The findings indicated that the experiences of this group of men in a literacy program improved their self-concepts and their belief in their abilities to succeed. Although these findings may or may not be transferable because conclusions were derived from a small sample (N=6), Drayton's study does hint at a possible connection between literacy and self-efficacy.

2.4 The Context for this Study

Three dimensions define the context for this study: public perceptions about the causes of homelessness; the real-life implications of homeless status for daily living; and the particular challenges of public library service to adults undergoing homelessness. In addition, a summary of a legal case will serve to highlight difficulties encountered by public libraries when serving this population.

Public Perceptions about the Causes of Homelessness

A 2007 Gallup poll (Gallup, Inc. 2007) investigated Americans' perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge of homelessness. Among the poll respondents, 85% believed that drug and alcohol abuse is a major factor of why some people might be homeless, with 26% believing substance abuse to be the primary cause. Yet in South Carolina in

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2016, the Point in Time Count (Kahle, 2016) documented addiction as common to only 17% of the homeless population.

In the Gallup poll, 77% of adults perceived homeless people as being adult individuals, but there are estimates of approximately 1.5 million homeless children in the United States and homeless families are believed to make up 34% of the homeless population (Facts on Family Homelessness, n.d.). In South Carolina in 2016, the Point in Time Count showed 16% of the homeless were children under 18 and 7% were youth ages 18 – 24, a combined total of 23% (Kahle, 2016).

The Gallup poll also showed 67% of respondents cited mental illness and related disorders such as posttraumatic stress as a major factor, with 21% citing mental disabilities/posttraumatic stress as the primary cause. Again, the data do not match the perception: in South Carolina in 2016, 14% of the homeless population in the state reported mental illness.

Job loss or unemployment was the third cause mentioned most often (by 18% of respondents to the poll). No other causes were mentioned by more than 8%.

The greatest contributors to homelessness are not mental illness or addiction alone or even unemployment. Up to 40% of homeless individuals have been reported to have some type of chronic health problem (Schanzer. Dominguez, Shrout, & Caton, 2007), ranging from community-acquired pneumonia, tuberculosis and HIV to cardio-vascular disease and chronic obstructive lung disease. A study of 2578 homeless and "marginally housed" persons in the US found that 40.4% of respondents had one or more emergency department encounters in the previous year (Kushel, Perry, Bangsberg, Clark, & Moss, 2002).

Among adults, homelessness in the United States is also associated with incarceration. Homelessness contributes to the risk for incarceration, and incarceration contributes to higher risks of homelessness (Metraux, Caterina, & Cho, 2008). Approximately 15% of adult inmates have been homeless in the year prior to their incarceration (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2008), and 54% of adults experiencing homelessness reported spending time in a correctional facility at some point in their lives (HCH Clinicians Network, 2004).

It seems clear that the public's ideas about what causes homelessness place an exaggerated emphasis on mental illness and substance abuse as primary factors, with a failure to recognize other factors such as incarceration or health problems, or consideration of economic factors such as downturns in the economy or the shortage of affordable housing.

Affordable housing is scarce in South Carolina, as in most states. In terms of housing costs for rentals, the state ranks 32nd. Rental housing for a family (a minimum of two-bedrooms) is now out-of-reach in South Carolina for even the average hourly wage earner. According to census data, in South Carolina, where the minimum wage is $7.25 per hour, the average wage among persons who rented in 2017 was $12.23. (The state does not supplement the federal minimum of $7.25, and Congress has not raised the federal minimum since 2009.) The state annual median income was $58,894, compared to the national median of $69,712. The fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in SC in 2017 was $843 per month. Thus in order to afford a two-bedroom housing unit for rent, the required "average housing wage" (the amount needed to earn enough to pay a rent of 30% of income) was calculated to be $15.83 per hour, and rising. This means the

cost of the average unit ($15.83) is well beyond the reach of even the average renter, who makes an hourly wage of only $12.23, and far beyond the reach of those who earn only the federal minimum. (Aurand, A., Emmanuel, D., Yentel, D., Errico, E., & Pang, M. (2017). In the HMFA (statistical area) of the state capital of Columbia, as in all metropolitan areas, the numbers are higher: the average annual median was $67,000, the average housing cost $16.85, and the average wage among renters $12.92. At minimum wage, the worker would have to work 87 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom apartment (Aurand, et al., 2017).

Real estate markets in most places have by now recovered from the Great Recession, resulting in a steady rise in the cost of renting living space. As of 2015, more than 20 million renters, more than half of all renters in the US (up from almost 15 million in 2001) are burdened with spending at least 30 percent of their income on rent. While rents have risen 66% since 2000, household incomes have only risen 35%. In summary, "High rents, low wages and insufficient federal aid combine to produce recurrent bouts of homelessness – a cycle of instability" (Fraiman, 2017, p. 2). According to the realty group Redfin, in 2015 an estimated 2.7 million Americans faced eviction (McMullen, 2016).

> Fewer and fewer families can afford a roof over their head… For decades, we've focused mainly on jobs, public assistance, parenting, and mass incarceration. No one can deny the importance of these issues, but something fundamental is missing. We have failed to fully appreciate how deeply housing is implicated in the creation of poverty. Not everyone living in a distressed neighborhood is associated with gang members, parole officers, employers, social workers, or pastors. But nearly all of them have a landlord (Desmond, 2016).

A brief history of homelessness demonstrates the correlation of this social problem with economic and political forces far beyond the control of any individual.

Homelessness has been a challenge for many urban communities in the United States and Europe since the Industrial Revolution became a catalyst for the social upheaval of rural peoples migrating to the cities looking for housing, in order to take jobs in factories characterized by unspeakable oppression. The Bowery Mission was established in New York City in 1879, during the same era the Salvation Army was founded in England. Later, the Great Depression of the 1930s featured widespread homelessness in rural areas as well as cities, when two million adults migrated across the United States from place to place, looking for jobs. In the 1970's, the de-institutionalization of the mentally ill and the failure of community services to support their integration into society resulted in a new dimension to homelessness, worsened in the 80's by a recession and cut-backs in public funding for social services, especially federal low-income housing programs. Advocates calling for solutions to the growing problem of homelessness were successful in convincing Congress to pass the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in 1987, leading to the development of shelters and supportive services in many communities. Since 2003, the return of thousands of veterans from two wars has focused the homelessness issue on identifying best practices specific to the needs of diverse sub-groups within the homeless population, including veterans, and also homeless families who lost their homes in the Great Recession of 2007-2009, the growing number of runaway youth, and victims of the on-going AIDs epidemic (Wikipedia, n.d.).

This emphasis on the specific needs of sub-groups may reflect the desire of a dominant culture to "end homelessness once and for all" by focusing on demographic categories of need, ascribing homelessness to the failure of individuals to adjust to social

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and economic conditions, rather than adopting a paradigm that might address those conditions directly.

It is becoming apparent that providing services to alleviate the symptoms of homelessness is not addressing broader associated problems such a stubborn, long-standing shortage of affordable housing, drug and alcohol addiction, mental health needs, generational poverty, and under-education. While other societal challenges have been addressed systemically at the national level, efforts to curtail homelessness are left to local service providers. "We have affirmed provision in old age, 12 years of education, and basic nutrition to be the right of every citizen because we have recognized that human dignity depends on the fulfillment of these fundamental human needs…it is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need" (Desmond, 2016).

The implications of homeless status

Beyond the daily struggle to obtain food and shelter, homelessness may bring a host of other challenges to daily life. "Homeless people can lose faith in their own ability to care for themselves and in the willingness of others to help them, and may develop an abiding sense of distrust of others" (Goodman, Saxe & Harvey, 1991, p. 1121). Homelessness may be a traumatic experience for any individual, and can bring on emotional disorder. Social bonds become disrupted, leading to a sense of isolation or distrust.

Scaglia (2008) hypothesized that learned helplessness would increase among adults experiencing homelessness who report a longer homeless status. Although she found no statistically significant correlation to support this idea, she did find that "the direction of the relationship between learned helplessness and chronic homelessness is

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consistent with the literature which speculates that the longer individuals are homeless, the more likely they are to experience a general sense of passivity and an absence of control over their daily lives" (p. 63). She also found a statistically significant correlation between a homeless individual's sense of personal control over their circumstances and his/her perception of available social support: as "locus of control becomes more external, perceived social support diminishes" (p. 65).

On the other hand, for some individuals homelessness may function as a form of community. Groups form camps where food, drink, cigarettes, clothing and cash are shared, leadership is evident, and individuals care for one another (Underwood, 1993). Meals are cooked and the kids' homework gets done (Kozol, 2006).

Individuals experiencing homelessness grapple daily with stereotypes derived from public perceptions about homelessness:

> To those who are safely housed, a homeless person is apt to inspire feelings ranging from fear and disgust to pity and guilt. Such negative responses are rooted in long-standing myths about "hobos", "Bowery bums", and "bag ladies." Some may believe that homeless people are free spirits who simply prefer to live outside. More likely, they're viewed as misfits – dysfunctional, threatening, potentially criminal. Above all, they are not like us (Fraiman, 2017).

Knecht and Martinez (2009) conducted a field experiment with volunteers who served in homeless shelters to investigate whether contact with homeless individuals changes perceptions of homelessness. In pre and post surveys, volunteers were asked to respond to the following statements on a 5-point Lickert scale: "Homeless people are a danger to society," "Homeless people are easily identifiable," and "I feel uneasy when I see homeless people." Questions also explored whether the volunteers believed homeless persons were lazy, irresponsible, or choose to be homeless. The researchers found the

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experience of contact with homeless individuals significantly improved the volunteers' perception.

Phelan, Link, Moore, and Stueve (1997) found that the stigma attached to homeless status equals that for mental hospitalization. In view of the Gallup poll finding that most people believe mental illness is a primary cause of homelessness, this is not surprising.

The Kreimer Case: Highlighting Issues of Public Library Response to Homelessness

Embracing this study's goal to empower public librarians who wish to improve programming and outreach to this population, a summary of a landmark legal case may serve to highlight the issues surrounding public library service to adults experiencing homelessness.

In the early 1990's, Richard R. Kreimer, a man experiencing homelessness in Morristown, New Jersey, was a frequent patron of the Joint Free Public Library of Morristown, but was expelled from the library on at least five occasions and arrested for violating its code governing patron conduct. Mr. Kreimer eventually filed a lawsuit alleging that his civil right to access to a publicly-supported institution had been violated. (Kreimer v. Bureau of Police for the Town of Morristown, 958F. 2nd (3rd Cir) 1992, hereafter designated *Kreimer*)

Before filing suit, Mr. Kreimer consulted the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, who wrote a letter to the library board asserting that the written Code was vague and in violation of the Due Process Clause of the US Constitution. "In an attempt to assuage the ACLU-NJ's concerns" (*Kreimer*, p. 1248), the board modified its Code to read, in part: "Patrons shall be engaged in activities associated with the use of a public

library while in the building. Patrons not engaged in reading, studying, or using library materials shall be required to leave the building" (*Kreimer,* p. 1248).

The ACLU-NJ letter complaining of vagueness caused the library to *strengthen* the Code of Conduct by making it more specific, modifying language that previously stated "patrons shall not interfere with the use of the library by other patrons…" with specific, more observable behavior, including "noisy or boisterous activities… unnecessary staring, following another person through the building, playing walkmans (*sic*)…singing or talking to oneself…or other behavior which may reasonably result in the disturbance of other persons" (*Kreimer*, p. 1248). In hindsight, it seems ironic that the new language only served to clarify Mr. Kreimer's case; his complaint did not address *all* the rules listed after the modifications to the Code of Conduct or the existence of a Code of Conduct, but instead based the case on First Amendment rights to free speech, made applicable to the states by the Fourteenth Amendment, and provisions of the New Jersey Constitution.

The court's ruling accepted Mr. Kreimer's arguments and issued an injunction prohibiting the enforcement of several of the library's rules, but not all of them. The town and library appealed to the federal Appellate Court for the Third Circuit. The appellate court reversed the lower court, restoring the library's authority to restrict certain activities by patrons and to expel violators of the Code of Conduct from the library building. The appellate court noted that the lower court's decision "gives short shrift to (the library's) significant interest in achieving the optimum and safest use of its facilities" (*Kreimer*, p.1242*)*.

The appellate court's opinion was pinned to their view of a public library as a limited public forum open for a specific purpose, where the right to free speech may be restricted to the extent necessary for the library to carry out its mission, and where "it is of great significance that Morristown and Morris Township were not obliged to open a public library; rather, they did so by choice" (*Kreimer,* 1992, p. 1259). This differs from a traditional public forum such as a park, sidewalk or street where case law more jealously safeguards First Amendment rights. The appellate court's designation of a public library as a limited forum has had the effect of requiring all public libraries to "consider any restrictions imposed on speech" (Helper, 1994, p. 521.) Thus, the adjudication of the Kreimer complaint occurred in the context of the First Amendment Right to Free Speech. In its written opinion, the appellate court referred to a 1966 case which described a library as "a place dedicated to quiet, to knowledge, and to beauty" (Brown v Louisiana, 1966, n.p.). The appellate court asserted the library's "very purpose is to aid in the acquisition of knowledge through reading, writing and quiet contemplation" (*Kreimer,* 1992, p. 1260).

But Mr. Kreimer did not allege that he was prevented from speaking in the library. His complaint revolved around his repeated expulsions, resulting in a denial of his access to information. Does the U.S. Constitution grant a right to receive information?

The U.S. Supreme Court had already ruled that it does. The Court developed the theory of a constitutional right to receive information in 1943 in *Martin v. Struthers*. The Court held that since free speech is guaranteed, if you can't get access to free speech, the "guarantee is diminished" (Mart, 2003, p. 175), and therefore, the right to receive

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information is critical to insuring the right of free speech. One might argue that if someone is speaking but no one has access to listen, the right to speak is moot.

In 1982, ten years before *Kreimer*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the first case to consider the right to receive information specifically in a library. The case was *Board of Education v. Pico*. The *Kreimer* appellate court referred to *Pico* in its majority opinion, affirming the constitutional right to receive information, but curiously, having referred to *Pico*, the opinion then offered no analysis of whether or not Mr. Kreimer's right had been infringed, only whether his behavior infringed on the corresponding right of other patrons to receive information. Most likely this was because Mr. Kreimer did not specifically allege that his right to receive information had been infringed; his complaint asserted the rules were "facially invalid under the First Amendment" (*Kreimer,* p.1242) and that he had been denied equal protection of the law because the library's rules were applied unequally to him as compared to other patrons. In *Kreimer,* the issue of access to information was not addressed by either court. Instead the library's assertion that Mr. Kreimer's actions interfered with their operations and mission became the central question.

Some of the arguments offered in the *Kreimer* case point to long-standing disagreement about the role and purpose of public libraries. Public statements by the wealthy men who advocated for public libraries have been scrutinized (e.g. Harris, 1973). Conflicting opinions about the role of public libraries in the US date to the nineteenth century, when the purpose of investing public funds into libraries was promoted as crucial to the extension of civic participation in a democratic society. But by the end of the twentieth century revisionist research suggested "such notions regarding the lofty

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origins of the public library are more the product of rose-tinted hindsight than of fact…[some] fear the library will be deflected from its true purpose of serving the community's literate and successful backbone [while others] interpret the principle of free access to include the removal of any impediments that might inhibit full use of the library by all members of the community" (Nauratil, 1985, p. 14-15).

The on-going debate on the role of public libraries in relation to the communities they serve has been sharpened by the Great Recession (Rooney-Browne, 2009). Drastic budget cuts have forced libraries of all kinds to sift through their competing priorities in an economic environment where anything deemed a lower priority for funding may remain unaddressed for years. If libraries develop programs and resources for the homeless, what programs might be starved in the process?

The days are long past when libraries functioned as a place where the primary activity is reading and writing (as stated in *Kreimer*), or where staff stereotypically "shush" patrons, where study is solitary, or human interaction at most consists of whispers among staff and patrons, or where minds are connected solely through the written word, and where movement about the facility is minimal. The Digital Age now permeates every aspect of learning and research, and public libraries have been instrumental in ameliorating the digital divide between those with access to cyberspace and those who have no alternative but to locate and use free and accessible connectivity. In short, libraries are no longer functioning as cathedrals of learning where knowledge is worshipped in isolation from the outside world, church-like, a place where serious scholars enter a privileged space where they are not to be disturbed.

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Public libraries have become community centers not only through their service of free connectivity, but also as "social capital" for the vitality of the community (Given and Leckie, 2004). Worldwide, some are exploring a leadership role as conveners for public discourse about community issues. One study in Norway summarized the emerging trend:

> The purpose of public libraries is still to further democracy, equality and social justice, increase access to information, disseminate culture and knowledge, contribute to a meaningful and informative leisure time, and act as a communal institution and a social meeting place. In order to fulfill this purpose today, however, there is a need to reevaluate the public library's role (Aabo, 2005, p.210).

The scope of information services for adults through many public library systems is much broader than just personal enrichment programs such as photography, the arts, health information, and book clubs. Richland Library in Columbia, SC is a case in point. Currently the library's programming includes a comprehensive business and jobs center at the main branch with full-time professional staff and 30 online workstations, online workstations in every branch, and classes such as interviewing, creating a resume or career portfolio, networking both traditionally and by the use of social media, searching for online job announcements, and research skills to start a company. Computer courses include basic introduction to computers and email, as well as applications such as Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and Publisher (Richland Library, n.d.c.). Clearly information and resources like these are vital to those searching for employment, including adults experiencing homelessness. Richland Library has also established a small "branch" in a local transitional homeless shelter by placing a collection on site, staffed once a week by volunteers.

The advent of e-government and the ongoing transfer of government services and information from face-to-face to internet-only have further expanded the role and

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responsibilities of public libraries (Gibson, Bertot and McClure, 2009). Individuals experiencing homelessness may have no other option but to connect online in order to access opportunities not only for employment, training or education, but also government benefits comprising the social safety net.

The role of convener is increasingly important. Today, libraries of all types host many cultural and social activities that do not involve reading and writing or even using the collection, including meetings, artistic events, exhibits, classes and "maker-spaces". In short, "public libraries are undergoing a slow constitutional metamorphosis and are being redefined as a public forum for the receipt of ideas, rather than a limited public forum for the dissemination of ideas" (Mart, 2003, p. 176).

Public libraries may be uniquely positioned to stimulate and support local efforts to address homelessness as a hybrid service featuring highly varied resources, including community networks and facilities for discourse and research. Although the *Kreimer* case was decided more than 20 years ago, a public library that strictly implements an exclusionary Code of Conduct may well still be vulnerable to new legal complaints alleging unfair exclusionary practices barring access to information. Furthermore, it may be only a matter of time before the courts re-define the public library as an open rather than a limited forum.

2.5 Theoretical frameworks

Several theoretical frameworks, (two from education, one from information science, and one from psychology), work together to create a lens for this study. These frameworks have been selected because each supports an underlying epistemological/ontological constructivist stance, taking the position that the nature of

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reality involves human perception, and that learning and knowledge are built on human interaction. Taken together, the overall theoretical perspective incorporates this study's commitment to transformation, intellectual growth, and personal empowerment.

a. *John Dewey* pioneered a delineation of education as a lifelong continuous process of learning from experiences, both positive and negative. "Education is a development within, by and for experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 28). Dewey stressed the importance of interaction with others as well as the impact of experiential context. "Experience does not go on simply inside a person…every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experience is had" (p. 39).

Dewey's ideas about the connections between lived experience and learning provide a philosophical and epistemological point of view for this study. If homelessness may be viewed as an experience rather than a static demographic category, a reader's experiences with text could be related to effects on individuals coping with the experience of homelessness.

b. Drawing from Dewey's philosophical legacy, *Malcolm Knowles* conceptualized the adult learner as a person who learns best when in control of her own learning process, a theory grounded in the assumption that adults function independently compared to children (Knowles, 1968, 1973, 1980). Initially Knowles focused on what he called "informal learning", educational experiences adults accessed at their own initiative after leaving school. For Knowles, learning is a lifelong process beyond mere schooling. Like Dewey, he stressed the importance of experience, developing the concept of andragogy, a distinctly adult educational methodology, as opposed to pedagogy, methodology for

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teaching children. Knowles' emphasis on the value of independent learning contrasts with traditional pedagogy where teachers make all the decisions and the learner is an empty vessel to be filled (Knowles, 1968). For Knowles, an independent learner is an adult who is conscious of his or her learning style and information needs and who actively chooses learning processes that are personally meaningful and effective. Andragogy also emphasizes the adult need for the direct application of learning to a specific context or to solve a problem. If homelessness is conceptualized as a life challenge to be addressed, Knowles' concepts of andragogy and lifelong learning depict adults as independent learners and push back at the deficit-model of adults who are experiencing homelessness as helpless victims.

c. *Louise Rosenblatt* laid the foundation for what would become reader response theory in the field of information science. As an educator, Rosenblatt rejected a dominant literary theory which assumed textual features, rhetorical style and story structure govern the reader's experience when engaged with literature. Her work is "radically interdisciplinary…Shattering all sharp borderlines dividing philosophy, the social sciences, and literary criticism and pedagogy" (Booth, 1995, p. xi). She called for an end to "viewing the text as authority to a view that focuses on the reader's relationship with text" (Church, 1997, p.71). The meaning of a selection of text is constructed by the reader, not the writer.

> The submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 30-31).

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In this study of how adult readers who are currently homeless experience text, Rosenblatt's idea of "submerged associations" provides a pathway for inquiry into the mind of the reader.

  d. The *discipline of cognitive psychology* has much to offer this study, especially Theory of Mind (ToM) (Goldman, 2012). Noting how cognitive theory has led to a wide variety and range of applications, Belkin (1990) summarized the usefulness of the cognitive viewpoint to the information science discipline, postulating that new information changes the structure of knowledge to a new modified structure. Belkin (1990) stressed how the cognitive viewpoint has led to significant advances in bibliometrics, user studies, the reference interview, and information retrieval.

  As a user study, an investigation into the influence of reading on the experience of homelessness might be framed by Theory of Mind concepts. ToM stems from constructivist theory, and refers to the human ability to query the existence and development of the human mind through introspection and to understand that others have perspectives that differ from one's own. The development of one's mind occurs via reciprocal social interaction, largely through language. ToM complements Knowles' emphasis on the adult independent learner capable of consciousness about his or her own learning processes (metacognition). This theory provides the basis for formulating questions about how the experience of reading relates to personal development, because asking those questions assumes the respondent is conscious of both his or her own thoughts as well as the perceptions of others.

  Kidd and Castano (2013) directly linked the use of literature as "deployed in programs intended to promote social welfare" to ToM, and noted "the currently

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predominant view is that literary fiction – often described as narratives that focus on in-depth portrayals of subjects' inner feelings and thoughts – can be linked to Theory of Mind processes" (p. 377). The results of studies investigating the use of reading to promote empathy among doctors and life skills among prisoners show "that reading literary fiction may hone adults' ToM, a complex and critical social capacity" (p. 385).

Gerrig and Rapp (2004) argue that individuals must engage in effortful processing in order to *disbelieve* the information they derive from literary narratives. Likewise, Gilbert (1991) pointed out how Spinoza (born 1632, died 1677) hypothesized that understanding an idea implies accepting that idea in the first place, and further noted that "A multitude of [modern] research literatures converge on a single point: people are credulous creatures who find it very easy to believe and very difficult to doubt" (p. 117).

Zunshine (2006) related ToM concepts to motivation for reading novels. Other researchers have analyzed the impact of reading fiction on the emotions of the reader, combining literary criticism with psychology. Fiction (including novels, short stories, plays, and film) has been conceptualized as a kind of simulation that runs not on computers but on minds (Mar and Oatley, 2008), evoking emotions before, during and after reading that can lead to alteration is cognitive processing and even transformations in personality (Mar, Oatley, Djikic, and Mullin, 2011).

> Many people consider reading fiction merely a leisure activity. The labels we place on fiction, however, do not negate its contribution to cognitive development. The world of literature encourages us to become others in imagination, and this may be one of the most benign means of improving one's abilities in the social domain. Of course, we can understand others by interacting with them, but in real life misunderstanding often causes severe upsets. Fictional literature, in which we can misunderstand without suffering negative consequences, may be a gentler teacher (Djikic, Oatley & Moldoveanu, 2013, p. 24).

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Oatley (1999) listed three psychological processes that lead the reader to experience specific emotions when reading fiction: identification, sympathy, and autobiographical memory, helping the reader to explain and plan his or her own actions. He expounded on the concept of *mimesis*, first used by Aristotle to describe the relation of the world to text, but today the term is largely accepted as meaning imitation or representation. Oatley suggests there are other ways to think of mimesis that go beyond representation. Redefining ToM's emphasis on direct social interaction as a source of self-awareness, "One might think of fiction as a simulation, with the purpose of shedding light on problems of human action and emotions…the writer invites the reader to enter, Alice like, through the looking glass and into the imagined story world. [This is] like entering a particular kind of social interaction" (p. 105-106).

Nell (1988) described a reader's interaction with a book as a form of absorption, a process from attention to perception to comprehension, creating the world of the book in the mind of the reader. Echoing Dewey and Knowles, this perspective departs from cognitive psychology to assert "it is the reader's (prior) subjective experience, rather than the thought mechanisms, that allow the experience to take place" (p. 73). Whereas cognitive psychology stresses the physiological functioning and structure of the brain, Nell points out moving from attention to comprehension is dependent on prior experiences, although the process is certainly impossible without brain function. Thus, Nell downplays a traditional body of work in experimental psychology that has concentrated on the measurement of observable components of reading such as letter discrimination, reading rate, eye movements, and memory. This dissection of the reading process was first offered in 1908 by a seminal text, E.B. Huey's *The Psychology and*

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Pedagogy of Reading, later republished in 1968 by MIT Press. Venezky (1977) pointed out that the systematic study of physiological reading processes began at the same time and in the same place as experimental psychology, and still concerns researchers in both cognitive and experimental psychology today. Thus the age-old debate about whether human development is the result of nature (physiological processes) or nurture (experience) continues.

Summary of theories

Taken together, these four theories as outlined above (Dewey's learning as experience, Knowles' independent adult learner, Rosenblatt's theory of reader response, and cognitive psychology's Theory of Mind), conceptualize adult readers experiencing homelessness as independent lifelong learners (Knowles) whose experiences with homelessness provide a laboratory for learning (Dewey) about themselves and others (ToM) through a lens of a multidimensional relationship with text (Rosenblatt). Adult readers who are currently homeless may therefore have the capacity for personal growth through reading.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Epistemology

Like Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, (2011), I lean toward a constructivist epistemology, believing truth to be built on multiple paradigms born out of collective experience. I subscribe to the idea of research as situated cultural practice, a view that is grounded in interdisciplinary scholarship, linking a view of culture with human development (Arzubiaga, et al. 2008).

My methodology is informed by the four theoretical frameworks outlined in chapter two and is derived from my activist values. I seek to emulate Hale (2001) who embraced "the basic constructivist insight about the politically situated character of all knowledge production" but who also attempted to "distinguish between better and less good explanations" (p. 13). The activist methodological mandate "involves some form of participation among interested subjects, groups or communities in the research process" (p. 14).

The participants in this study, adult readers who are experiencing homelessness at the time of interview, are considered by many as members of a minority group who occupy "a position in a multiethnic society suffering from the disabilities of prejudice and discrimination…maintaining a separate group identity" (Gibson, M.A., 1991, p. 358). As I considered the design of this study, I wanted to avoid becoming a "traveler", like the

European white men who constructed stories of indigenous cultures around their own cultural views (Smith, L.T., 2012). Instead I sought to decolonize my own mind, recognizing I have been strongly influenced by a Protestant work ethic, which may perceive adult readers who are currently homeless to be lazy, inept, and deliberately relying on the largess of others. As part of the context for the research question about how reading and transitioning out of homelessness are related, I also sought an understanding of how the dominant culture affects, and may even perpetuate, a status of homelessness.

3.2 Methodology

This study was guided by the tenets of phenomenography, an approach that evolved in the 1970s at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, in response to educators' questions about the different meanings students ascribe to information content. Marton (1981) highlighted the significance of the development of the phenomenographic approach because it was designed specifically to answer questions about thinking and learning, and differs from cognitive psychology because the emphasis is on the *content* of thinking rather than on the physiological processes used by humans to perceive the world. I view phenomenography as an application of hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology to educational disciplines, and appropriate for this study because the goal is to inform the educational practice of public librarians. In the field of information science, Limberg (1998) used phenomenography to delineate relationships between two concepts by looking at how student conceptions of information seeking and use interact with their conceptions of subject matter.

Phenomenography uses descriptions of "knowledge in terms of the individual's understanding of something in terms (*sic*) of the meaning that something has to the individual" (Svensson, 1997, p. 163). In this sense, phenomenography is inherently a decolonizing epistemology, because truth extracted by the inquiry is defined and co-constructed by those who contribute qualitative data to the researcher about concepts as understood in their own minds. When this epistemology is applied to information science, researchers "attempt to enter the 'life-world' of the information user and to interpret variation in experienced meaning within some context" (Bruce, 1999, p. 9). Phenomenography's object of study is the meaning of a concept as opposed to an investigation of a particular experience, as in phenomenology. In this study, for example, the meaning of reading is the object of study, and the experience of homelessness is the context.

Brookfield (1994) provides another example of the phenomenographic approach related to this proposed study. The object of his study was adult critical reflection. Results revealed significant themes about the experiences of adult educators when participating in critical reflection events, including journaling, conversations, classroom discussions, and structured autobiographical analyses. Thus, the idea of adult critical reflection was described through data depicting various ways adult educators choose to reflect, deconstructing how critical reflection is conceived differently among the participants.

Phenomenography is profoundly constructivist and cannot be undertaken without the researcher's commitment to the primacy of the participants' active and leading role throughout the inquiry. A phenomenographic approach is appropriate when the purpose

of the research is to "identify and describe qualitative variation in people's experience of phenomena" (Dortins, 2002, p. 297). Ontological and epistemological validity are dependent on faithfulness to a specific research process (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) including the analysis of in-depth and open-ended qualitative interviews.

In phenomenography, the transcription of this kind of interview can become a process that transforms the researcher by creating some distance between the interviewer and the interview situations and participants. When conversation becomes text, the researcher may edit out her own emotional responses to the conversation, an internal re-orientation from personal interaction to an analysis of a transcript in light of a particular analytical framework utilizing a hermeneutic method (Dortins, 2002). This transports the researcher from entering the life world of participants to a more dispassionate outcome space (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). Kvale (1996) conceptualizes transcription as a form of translation. For the interviewer, everyday language becomes academic, sensitive information becomes objective, and a social space is transformed into a framework, a productive interaction (Marton, 1994) that is often a new experience for the participant. The process ameliorates researcher positionality in some ways but raises the possibility of stripping the data of its authenticity. While phenomenographic interviews must be creative (in an epistemological sense), phenomenographic studies, like other qualitative research, have been criticized when analysis veers too far into interpretive speculation about the meaning of the data.

The phenomenographic approach seeks to analyze copious amounts of data until two or three differing patterns emerge comprising a small number of categories of description. Phenomenographers look for variation in ways of understanding a specific

concept, in this case, the experience of reading, within a context (homelessness) shared by the participants. The epistemology of phenomenography asserts: "they do not... understand (the concept) in their own unique way; rather, a set of qualitatively different ways of understanding can be arrived at which has an internal logic…" (Booth, S., 1994).

3.3 Data Collection

The methods of data collection for this study included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, document reviews, and taking notes while attending two fundraising events. In the early stages of the study, observation was used primarily to obtain an overview of the local phenomenon of homelessness and community response to homelessness in Columbia, SC. Additional data about the surrounding context of homelessness was collected as well through structured interviews and informal conversations with gatekeepers and service providers (see Appendix D), and by analysis of program documents (available for review.) I also attended a series of meetings of the Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless at the United Way of the Midlands headquarters.

Later observations served to identify potential study participants by observing adults in the act of reading as they accessed services designed to address their needs in various locations, including feeding programs, a facility for showers and laundry, the public library, and church services.

This study also included participatory methods of data collection. I facilitated both an art course and a creative writing class as a volunteer at Transitions homeless shelter three days a week over a period of six months. Participants who wished to write stories and/or poems were interviewed later about their reading lives. Similarly, the

production of art work (e.g., Jordan, J., 1995) and dramatic presentations (e.g., Conrad, 2014), followed by corresponding interviews, proved to be effective in establishing rapport and trust. Thomas, Gray, McGinty, and Ebringer (2011) demonstrated how the engagement of homeless adults in art provides encouragement for self-expression and social inclusion: "The non-threatening approach of the facilitator and opportunity to engage freely at any level helped individuals who were socially isolated…to become involved and accepted members of a group. Art is a safe way to express oneself" (p. 434). The artifacts produced through these activities became evidence of the participants' personal contributions to the study as well as data to guide me through purposive sampling to select participants for in-depth interviewing.

Participants were invited to member-check conclusions and interpretations. This proved to be problematic due to the transient nature of homeless populations. Member checking was more successful with stakeholder informants.

In summary, I anticipated gathering a massive amount of data in the form of observational field notes, participant interview transcripts, documents, and participant-produced artifacts ranging from paintings to poetry. Interviews with stakeholders provided additional information to document the study's context in the library, at the homeless shelter, and in other locations.

3.4 Participant Selection and Sample Size

Participants were selected through a purposive and semi-random sampling process in order to include individual adults who satisfied all four of the following criteria:

a. *individuals 18 or older experiencing homelessness*, because adults represent the largest segment of the homeless population.

b. *individuals who self-identify as a "reader"*. The person's literacy skill level is irrelevant to the study, except insofar as the individual reads well enough to describe something about the reading experience as related to homelessness. It did not matter what the individual read, how well, or how often in terms of eligibility to participate.

c. *individuals free from the responsibilities of primary caregiving* to a child at the time of the interview. Research about the information needs and reading lives of parents and caregivers who are experiencing homelessness has already been done (e.g. Hersberger, 2005). The results indicate the caregivers' motivation for reading to be overwhelmingly influenced by the imperative and urgent needs of their children. This study seeks to investigate the influence of reading on adult readers experiencing homelessness independent of the tremendous mitigation of caring for a child.

d. *individuals willing to commit to in-depth interviewing* that may require as much as 1-2 hours on more than one occasion.

Participants volunteered to be interviewed in response to oral invitations, continuously extended to all participants in the art and creative writing classes, until I determined that the data became saturated. The resulting sampling was somewhat random as attendance varied from class to class sessions. No respondent was specifically individually recruited by the researcher. Inclusion in the study was confirmed through a one-on-one (unrecorded) interview to ensure informed consent.

The sample size for the study's in-depth interviews was undecided as the research began. The guiding principle to conclude the sample was large enough was data

saturation, the point where patterns emerged and repeatedly emerged as interviewing proceeded. A total of eight individuals experiencing homelessness and a selection of key stakeholders (Appendix D) participated in the interviews. Data from transcripts for the eight individuals dealing with homelessness were analyzed.

Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggested the idea of data saturation may be useful at the conceptual stage of a research plan, but perhaps problematic when implemented. "Although the idea of saturation is helpful at the conceptual level, it provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes prior to data collection, necessary for conducting quality research" (p. 59). Seeking to make evidenced-based recommendations regarding sample size in qualitative interviewing, they found that saturation usually occurred within the first 12 interviews. Nevertheless, they cautioned "against assuming that six to twelve interviews will always be enough to achieve a desired research objective or using the findings …to justify 'quick and dirty' research. Purposive samples still need to be carefully selected, and twelve interviews will likely not be enough if a selected group is relatively heterogeneous, the data quality is poor, and the domain of inquiry is diffuse and/or vague" (p. 79).

In an examination of 560 qualitative studies using interviews as the method of data collection, Mason (2010) showed that the mean sample size was 31; however, the distribution was not random, with a statistically significant proportion of studies presenting sample sizes that were multiples of ten. Perhaps many of the study samples were in practice premeditated.

3.5 Site selections

To examine the experience of homelessness in a small southern city, as well as the experience of reading as related to homelessness, multiple sites where homeless individuals access services were selected to generate data through observation, interviews and document review. This approach was selected in order to triangulate data.

Richland Library

The public library site selected as a data collection site for this study was the main branch of the Richland County library system in Columbia, SC, a small city with a 2017 estimated population within the city limits of 133,114 (US Census Bureau, 2017). Known as Richland Library, the system has eleven locations throughout the county, six of them within the city limits, including the Main Branch downtown.

Following a successful bond referendum passed by the voters of Richland County, the entire system has been recently renovated and upgraded (Ellis, 2016), curating the collection and broadening services to include maker spaces, more and larger meeting spaces, expanded business and employment services, and display space for art and artifacts.

The Library also spearheads the county's activities surrounding Literacy 2030, a statewide effort launched in 2010 "designed by a group of library and literacy service providers to address South Carolina's literacy efforts through improved community collaboration" (SC State Library, n.d.) with a goal of achieving 100% literacy in South Carolina by 2030. In 2017, Richland Library was chosen by the National Institute of Museum and Library Services as a recipient of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, having been nominated for the award for the two previous

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years in a row (Shaw, 2017). The Institute cited the library's response to the October 2015 historic floods in Richland county, participating in the White House's "ConnectED Challenge", and working with the Affordable Care Act as factors that contributed to the Library's award. The Library was one of ten selected that year and the only one in SC.

The Library has published an Emergency Services Directory in both print and electronic versions and includes a page on its website about homelessness in Columbia. The website is also linked to the Homeless Shelters and Services for the Needy city directory, to the county's website Help for Homeless and Hungry People, and the site for the Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless (MACH) (Richland Library, n.d.e).

One of the reasons this library was selected as a site for this study was my concern for the reputation of the downtown branch as a safe environment. I wanted to look more closely at this issue. In March, 2013, Richland Library director, Melanie Huggins, issued a statement concerning homelessness in the library still available on the library's website. In part, Ms. Huggins stated:

> Yet among some residents, the impression of Main is not a positive one…
> It breaks my heart when they say 'I don't use that library. There are too
> many homeless people there.' … Are they afraid for their safety?.. Their
> fears are unfounded. In January 2013 alone, we had more than 87,000
> visits at Main and asked 171 customers to leave because they wouldn't
> abide by our code of conduct. There were no violent incidents… I know it
> doesn't always feel comfortable to be around people who aren't like you…
> Public libraries pride themselves on providing access to information that
> represents diverse opinions and viewpoints. Serving the homeless is a part
> of the fabric of what we do… Richland Library, n.d.b

Transitions Homeless Center

The Transitions Homeless Center is the largest program providing residential services to homeless individuals in Columbia, and the only one serving both men and

women (without children) year-round. It is located downtown one block west of Main Street. Since opening in 2011, the shelter has helped more than 2077 residents transition into permanent housing and has served 7,765 unique clients over the six-year period 2011 to 2017 (Transitions Homeless Center, n.d.). The shelter offers a comprehensive program, with all services located in one place, and collaborates with 52 local community organizations to generate referrals and coordinate related services for Transitions residents, with transportation available to access needed services not available on-site. In FY 17, 879 referrals were made to Transitions by partner organizations. Special programs address the unique needs of veterans, homeless youth aged 18 to 24, and older adults aged 62 years old or older.

Residency ranges from one night up to six months or longer in specific cases. A day center is also available to assist non-residents, including showers and laundry, serving an average of 83 homeless adults each day. Almost half of day users (47%) become residents.

The facility includes a library, a computer lab with internet access, and a clothing closet. The facility is handicapped-accessible and offers 182 beds for men and 78 for women aged 18 or older, reflecting the approximate 70/30 proportion of men and women among homeless adults both nationally and locally.

In FY 17, 61% of residents were from Richland County, where Transitions is located, and 11% were from the adjacent Lexington County. Closely reflecting national demographics, residents in FY 17 were 67% black, 31% white, and 2% "other." Age cohorts reflect national averages as well, with 8% aged 18 to 24, 17% aged 25 to 34, 48% aged 35 to 61, and 8% 62 or older. Again reflecting national averages, 10% self-reported

as chronically homeless, 43% reported chronic health concerns or disability, 34% self-reported mental illness, and 35% reported substance abuse. Employed individuals entering Transitions for residence comprised 15%, and 22% left Transitions employed in FY 17.

Staffing at Transitions includes 11 case managers who are supervised by a program director and a lead case manager, each holding a master's degree in social work. Partner agencies provide full-time personnel on-site to manage food service in the shelter, staff the health clinic, and conduct intake for therapy. More than 1700 partnering volunteers deliver more than 250 on-site class hours each month, including art, creative writing, Bible study, financial and legal information, and a wide range of support groups, contributing a total of 13,806 hours of service in addition to 3,770 service hours provided by 19 college interns.

For FY 17, total revenue to support the program was $2,691,019. 48% of revenue stemmed from 16 grants, and 27.5% came from contributions. Federal grants totaled slightly less than 15% (L.Wilkie, personal conversation, January 11, 2018).

In addition to Transitions, I selected supplementary sites where adults experiencing homelessness might be found. To obtain an overview of the experience of homelessness in Columbia, SC apart from life in a homeless shelter, I also observed and interviewed individuals and groups presumed to be homeless and unsheltered. Many faith communities and several businesses provide meals, clothing, and other services outside of shelters. Within the city limits, a consortium of congregations has collaborated for more than 20 years with a local law firm to provide a midday meal every Saturday, rain or shine, outdoors on the grounds surrounding the law firm building. This ministry is

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known as Resurrections. I selected this program because of its long-standing presence in the city. Similarly, a number of ministries provide meals regularly at the downtown city park, to the extent that hot food is available there once or twice a day every day of the week. I observed and interviewed in Finlay Park on five occasions at different times of the day. Other opportunities to observe and interview were available at downtown churches who use their kitchen facilities to serve meals indoors on a regular schedule. I chose Trinity Cathedral because it is the only place available for breakfast on Sunday morning, and I volunteered to help prepare and serve lunch at the "soup kitchen" at Washington United Methodist Church on Thursdays for a period of three months. All of these "feeding programs" serve between 100-200 individuals.

In addition, Catholic Ministries operates a stand-alone facility where persons may do laundry and take showers, free by appointment, five days a week. This is a small facility with four washer/dryers and a half dozen shower stalls. I spent the morning there twice, informally interviewing customers as they sat and waited for their laundry to dry.

3.6 Researcher's positionality

My primary concern while conducting this study was my positionality, both as an asset informing my inquiry, as well as a challenge while conducting interviews, observing at the sites, and analyzing data. I accepted the need for ongoing and rigorous reflexivity to investigate my own biases from the beginning of my research process, writing memos to document my thoughts. Maxwell (2005) provided a structure for my memo writing during the design phase and a "home base" for review and re-review from time to time (Appendix F).

I began with the hope that inviting someone to discuss his/her reading habits and inner experiences with story and text would be less threatening than other more personal questions. However, I did ask about connections between reading and the individual's homeless situation (if this information was not spontaneously offered), which had the potential to be intrusively personal or off-putting depending on the individual. To my surprise, I found that every respondent was eager to schedule the interview, and appreciative of the opportunity to discuss the impact of reading on his or her homeless experience. All of them spontaneously shared highly personal information with me about their situations. I hope and believe my engagement in many ways over many years with poverty, discrimination, and social pressures to conform counteracted to some degree the hesitation I sometimes have when approaching marginalized, struggling individuals. My experience, I believe, helped me to appear open, sensitive and non-judgmental, at least most of the time. (Only those I have met can say so.) I believe I interacted authentically exactly as who I am, (as an experienced educator, counselor, manager, student, and advocate, not as a confidante, ally or change agent), respecting everyone's freedom to choose whether to enter into a relationship with me or not, and always with a concern that I might be perceived as patronizing because of my privileged status as a well-educated white woman in a position of power as I lead classes at the homeless shelter.

As an adult literacy instructor and program administrator, it has been my experience that many adults, whether proficient readers or not, sometimes have difficulty orally describing their own insights into their personal intellectual processes. Although I could find no studies with adults investigating possible correlation between verbal fluency and reading proficiency, my experience pointed to the possibility. I was

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concerned about my ability to elicit rich and revealing data through a qualitative oral interview process. To my surprise, none of the individuals I interviewed had any difficulty offering detailed responses to my questions. After piloting the interview protocol, all the interviews yielded useful data. I believe this was because I am myself highly reflective about my own reading life, and it was relatively easy to establish common ground with individuals who also proved to be avid readers. We talked about favorite genres and authors, and several times found we had read the same books. I also believe my persona as a teacher provided some credibility for my sincere interest in both the topic of the power of reading and in the individual respondents as people, beyond their importance to me in a research project.

On the other hand, my teacher persona raises the issue of whether participants told me what they thought I wanted to hear. My experience with adult literacy learners leads me to expect some participants would assume a deferential relationship with me, and in ordinary life I am frequently asked whether I am a teacher even when I have made no reference to the fact. Deference and admiration from many respondents was obvious. Expressions of gratitude for my time and interest were constant. In my relationships with respondents, I accepted that my teacher self seems to be an obvious and dominant characteristic of my personality. Considering whether respondents endeavored to please me with their responses, I believe the use of projective and open-ended questioning combined with our mutual enthusiasm for reading went a long way in establishing rapport and authenticity of responses. An audit of the interview transcripts would reveal many expressions of enthusiasm for books, reading, and the research topic, with extended answers, as opposed to short responses seeking for my approval.

I chose to address an issue of poverty out of my personal values, to examine reading and its impact out of my capacity for understanding my own development, and to investigate dimensions of homelessness out of my interest in my immediate community and its quality of life.

3.7 Entry into the field

Individuals experiencing homelessness are likely to develop an abiding distrust of others (Goodman, Saxe & Harvey, 1991). Chatman (1999) challenged a central argument offered by many studies of information need that individuals will share critical information with others. Instead, she suggested secrecy and deception define marginalized lives. When working with a constructivist research paradigm, a trusting relationship between the researcher and the study participants is crucial, because the researcher and the participants constitute a team in order to conduct the study. Therefore, entry into the life world of adults experiencing homelessness must be undertaken not just with sensitivity to the participants' potential wariness, but also with genuine respect for the need to establish common ground.

In this study, I did not find the establishment of a trusting relationship with respondents to be difficult. I believe this happened because I was careful to use my teaching experience to build a safe learning environment in my art and creative writing classes, based on a foundation of a covenant of cooperation and mutual respect, stressing the necessity for openness because art is a form of personal expression, which cannot be fostered in a group setting without ground rules to encourage the sharing of ideas. When talking with individuals, the use of open-ended questions posed in a nonjudgmental fashion led to spontaneous personal disclosures, some of them very personal. I also often

listened to individuals sharing details with one another about their past and present experiences in the homeless shelter.

This study began with securing the necessary permissions by conducting interviews with gatekeepers and service providers to identify stakeholders and assess the feasibility of this study. (See Appendix D for a list of individuals interviewed.) The response was consistent encouragement.

Entry into the field was initiated as I observed and volunteered alongside service providers who interact on a daily basis with adults experiencing homelessness. My positioning was made possible by providers who actively desired the support of the community in order to operate a shelter, conduct educational programs, and assist with maintenance and food service (e.g., Hersberger, 2001). After observing service delivery at several sites, long-term field placement began in a comprehensive homeless center. Field placement required a substantial time commitment to create opportunities to build relationships, a total of 8-10 hours per week for more than six months. Service providers assisted the research process by providing orientation for my specific roles, establishing my legitimacy for a presence in the field. In the shelter, I tutored, attended fundraising events and provider meetings, assisted in the shelter's library, and lead a creative writing class as well as a visual arts program. Participants who were individually interviewed in-depth were all recruited among the adults who attended my classes.

3.8 Informed Consent

All participants who were interviewed for this study were informed of the study's nature and purpose, the confidential boundaries of the study, and the opportunities to

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validate or confirm the study's conclusions and representations (see Appendix A). Each participant gave oral consent.

3.9 Interview protocol

I was initially concerned that as a marginalized and fragile population, adult readers dealing with homelessness may be suspicious of strangers. I thought some might also have difficulty expressing thoughts orally, especially about deeply-held beliefs, attitudes, and opinions. I thought some may be challenged to discuss an idea as abstract as a reader's inner life. To address this challenge, I adapted an interviewing technique called projective questioning, used in market research, clinical psychology, and education. Projective techniques provide a way for interviewees to "project their subjective beliefs onto other people or objects. Individuals' feelings are inferred from what they say" (Hines, n.d.). For example, one of the prompts included in the protocol was: "Imagine you could read anything you want to; tell me what you are thinking about." Also included in the protocol was this prompt: "Pretend you are telling a friend about the best thing you ever read. What would you say?"

In market research and education, projective techniques are used routinely. This may be because, compared to the use of projection in individual psycho-social interviewing, projective exercises are likely to be much less personal when working with groups such as in the classroom or when discussing preferred brands or products in focus groups. The techniques are more controversial among psychologists, especially when used for personality assessment (Lilienfield, Wood & Garb, 2000) or psychotherapy.

Linzey (1959) identified five categories of projective techniques based on the type of responses elicited: associative techniques where the immediacy of response is

important (e.g. word associations); construction techniques which encourage the expression of imagination and creativity (e.g. filling in cartoon balloons or describing drawings or photographs); completion techniques, which demand less from respondents because the stimulus material has more structure (e.g. sentence completions); choice or ordering techniques, where respondents select from a list of alternatives (e.g. rank ordering); and expressive techniques, where respondents produce a product or artifact guided by a structured stimulus, (e.g. role-play). This study used association questions (e.g. Reading is…) combined with completion questions (e.g. I wonder…), choice (e.g. offering a list of reading materials for comment) and to a limited extent, expression (e.g. writing essays and poetry).

Catterall and Ibbotson (2000) suggested that such techniques can be versatile, involving, and help to overcome response barriers. They also caution that ethical issues may be involved, because the true purpose of the questions can be concealed by ambiguous design, and they noted that the validity of interpretations of the responses is open to challenge. The researchers suggest interpretation and analysis falls into one of two categories: content analysis and interpretive analysis. Content analysis "is well documented in the literature and involves an examination of the content of the data to identify themes or categories and their salience…[while] interpretive approaches to the data [include] semiotic analysis and… psychodynamic frameworks" (p. 251). In this study, I worked with the content data, minimizing interpretation by using the respondents' exact words whenever possible.

Content analysis of data elicited through projective interview techniques was chosen because this fits well with the phenomenographical paradigm. As an experienced

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educator, I have often formally practiced projective questioning from the perspective of identifying learner understanding of course content, and I have used the results to make instructional decisions.

The interview protocol (Appendix B) for this study evolved from a pilot. Using a semi-structured approach, five persons were interviewed in the pilot using successive versions of the protocol before the final version was standardized, then recordings were made of eight new interviews with the purposively-selected study respondents. Individuals selected for both the pilot and the standardized interviews included participants in my art and creative writing classes as well as non-participants, but all were residents in the transitional shelter. There was considerable randomness involved in selecting interviewees as persons were available for interviewing according to how their individual schedules aligned with my schedule, entirely a matter of chance.

In light of research about "life in the round" (Chatman, 1999) documenting secretiveness and a distrust of outsiders among marginalized populations, the piloting process resulted in a strategy of minimizing personal questions about individual circumstances surrounding homelessness in order to foster trust. Questions about homelessness were few, indirect and general (e.g. "Not having a place to live is…). General, impersonal data about the experience of homelessness was elicited primarily by observation of service delivery at a variety of sites.

3.10 Data Analysis

The overall strategy for analysis in this study was guided by an emic approach of coming from below, from the depth of copious data to the surface of a set of descriptions of varying ways of understanding the impact of reading from the perspective of the

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research participants (Henwood, 2008), while at the same time backing away from imposing stringent guidelines on how the research develops or how data are interpreted. The strategy was inductive and thematic.

This qualitative strategy required memo writing to foster reflexivity about my positionality (Parker, Oceguera, & Sanchez, 2011) because, in contrast to most adult readers experiencing homelessness, I am a privileged individual who feels secure and confident of the future. Reflexivity "entails scrutinizing issues such as the dynamics of the research encounter, the values and assumptions framing the research, and the social embeddedness of the research process for their impact on knowledge generation and to inform readers or research users about the consumption of products of research" (Henwood, 2008, p. 45). I used a specific structure (Maxwell, 2005) for my memos about relationships, values, and positionality and to develop a concept map (Appendix G). Reflexivity is critical for all qualitative research, but perhaps especially so when working with marginal populations. Challenges related to positionality will inevitably occur when scholarly researchers work with and for the disadvantaged.

Memo writing is therefore critical to analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Writing memos about what a person is saying, what is implied, and what connections exist between the study's research questions and the data all served to work "up" from an emic level, looking for patterns.

My memo writing also served to facilitate the creation of an audit trail for consideration of this study's credibility. Although some researchers (e.g, Cutcliffe and McKenna, 2004) have questioned the necessity for audit trails in certain situations, I sought to provide detailed documentation of the decisions made during data analysis

because I am a novice researcher, as suggested by Halpern (1983). The memos generated by this study are available. (For key excerpts, see Appendix C.)

Bracketing, "a method of demonstrating the validity of the data collection and an analysis process in most phenomenological studies" (Chan, Fung, and Chien, 2013, p. 1), is a methodological device whereby the researcher deliberately puts aside what she already knows about a subject under investigation (Carpenter, 2007). Bracketing is crucial to investigate second-order perspectives, because the object of study must not become what the researcher hopes the participants' conceptions might be (Pherali, 2011). Fidelity to an authentic rendering of the participants' "voice" is essential. It is impossible for human researchers to be totally objective (Crotty, 1996). Therefore, a record of the researcher's reflexive memos becomes part of the data. Analyzed alongside the results of member checking, greater validity may be achieved because the influence of the researcher's own experiences and knowledge may be minimized. I worked to bracket my experience and knowledge by writing about it, embracing the advice that bracketing "be adopted upon initiating the research proposal and not merely in the data collection and analysis process" (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013, p.1). However, I cannot say my experience and background were "minimized", only identified, recorded and kept at the forefront of my analytic process. This study is partially participatory, and my background and skills as a teacher were utilized to build relationships in order to generate rich, thick data.

In phenomenography, the analytic process is similar to grounded theory, in that both begin with creating codes to annotate the data, followed by categorizing the codes once patterns begin to emerge. But the objective is not to arrive at one overarching theory

about how reading affects adults seeking to overcome homelessness. This study does not investigate issues of cause and effect. Instead I sought to identify not only patterns (commonalities) but also variation (differences) within the participants' individual descriptions of their understandings and experiences with the concept of reading and its impact on their lives while homeless. My presentation of the findings for this study is therefore divided into two parts: commonalities across the participant group regarding reading's relationship to homelessness and then differences among the participants' individual reading lives.

Colaizzi's seven step method for data analysis (Colaizzi, 1978) provided a foundation for the analysis process. First, the interviews were transcribed. Second, all statements that relate directly to the meaning of reading and its relationship to homelessness were extracted, numbered, and entered into a list. Third, the researcher formulated general restatements of meanings for each statement extracted. Fourth, the formulated meanings were clustered into repeating themes.

It is at this point where phenomenographic analysis begins. In Step Five, I aggregated the themes into no more than 2-4 interpreted categories of meaning, according to significant *variation* in the data of the meaning of reading and its impact. This differs from Colaizzi's Step Six, (omitted in this study) which refers to deriving the fundamental structure [or] essence of the experiential phenomenon as it is revealed by explication" (Edward and Welch, 2011). Instead of searching the data for the "essence" of how reading impacts homelessness, the phenomenographer looks for *variation* of what reading means and how it intersects the experience of homelessness. Phenomenographic emphasis on variation of meaning was central to this study as a direct result of the

application of the guiding theories offered by Dewey, Knowles, Rosenblatt and Theory of

Mind. Taken together, this study's theoretical foundations emphasize *individual*

experience, *individual* responses to text, and *individual* understanding of one's own

thoughts. Finally, I attempted to return to the participants (whenever possible) for

validation (member check) of my conclusions and findings. This corresponds to

Colaizzi's Step Seven.

3.11 Summary of Research Design: Question and Methods Matrix

A widely-used textbook on qualitative research by Joseph Maxwell greatly

influenced this study. Adapting his Interactive Model of Research Design (Maxwell,

2005, p. 5), I offer this matrix summarizing my research design (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Matrix of Research Design

Goals	Conceptual Frameworks	Research Questions	Methods (for both Q's)	Validity (for both Q's)
To **examine the impact of reading experiences** on adult readers who are experiencing homelessness, in order to empower public librarians who wish to improve programming and outreach	**John Dewey**, experiential learning **Malcolm Knowles**, andragogy **Theory of Mind,** Cognition, self-awareness **Louise Rosenblatt**, reader response	1. Among adult readers residing in a transitional homeless shelter, **what is the relationship between the experiences of reading and transitioning out of homeless-ness?** 2. Among adult readers who currently reside in a transitional homeless shelter, **what characterizes their reading preferences and practices?**	1.Partially purposive, partially random **sampling** 2. Purposive, multiple **site selection:** one public library, one transitional homeless shelter, multiple service sites 3.**Observation** 4. **semi-structured interviews** 5. **document review** 6. **participant writing and art** 7. **Colaizzi and Auerbach/ Silverstein analysis**	1. Acknowledge **limitations** 2. **Reflexivity** memos and **bracketing** 3. Rich, thick, triangulated **data** 4. **Member check** 5. Specific **recommend-dations** vetted by practitioners

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I acknowledge that phenomenography as a research strategy has been challenged by criticisms common to other qualitative methodologies (Pherali, 2011). Richardson (1999) emphasized this is why phenomenography must be pursued with rigorous adherence to the epistemology and analysis techniques of the paradigm.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) suggested a way to analyze and present findings about commonalities across a respondent group that fits well with an emic approach and which I found helpful when assessing data saturation. Instead of formulating charts or matrices when presenting the data, the results might be presented in outline form (Table 3.1).

Table 3.2
Outline Presentation of Auerbach and Silverstein's Coding Procedures

```
            I.  Theoretical construct #1
                    A.  Theme #1
                            1.  Repeating idea #1
                            2.  Repeating idea #2  etc.
                    B.  Theme #2 etc.
                            1.  Repeating Idea #1
                            2.  Repeating Idea #2  etc.
            II. Theoretical construct #2 etc.
```

The progression of analysis from the specific to the general is an emic approach from the bottom up. Data is organized by coding Repeating Ideas, which are then organized into Repeating Themes, in turn bundled into Theoretical Constructs, and culminating in a theoretical Narrative (the Discussion section of this dissertation.) The presentation of this process can then be organized into an outline laying out the process from the top down, general to specific, as indicated in Table 3.1.

This presentation seemed useful to me because it forced me to assess whether I had enough data to draw a particular conclusion, i.e. identify a Theme or Theoretical

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Construct. A Repeating Idea is defined as "repeating" if at least two different respondents offered the same Idea. The outline format requires that, logically, a Repeating Idea does not exist unless two different respondents express the idea, a Theme is not defined unless the evidence supports the conclusion with at least two Repeating Ideas, and a Theoretical Construct is not formulated unless there are two Themes supporting it. In short, one does not create an A without also identifying a B.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Researcher's Observations of Community Response to Homelessness in Columbia, SC

Provision of Support Services

As a state capital, Columbia, South Carolina is headquarters for many state and federal social service agencies, public, private and faith-based, providing services addressing a wide range of needs related to poverty. In addition to HUD-funded housing programs (all with long waiting lists), community-based housing for the mentally ill, and emergency shelters for women escaping from domestic violence, there are seven homeless shelters within the city limits. Two of the seven serve families only. One serves women with children only, one serves men only, one serves women only, and one is an emergency shelter open to men and women (without children) only in winter.

A broad array of government programs, faith-based services, secular nonprofit organizations, veterans' organizations, and businesses work separately and together to address the problem of homelessness. The United Way of the Midlands provides a full-time paid coordinator and meeting space for the Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless (MACH), an umbrella organization open to any entity willing to pay modest dues. The MACH is subdivided into many committees and task forces.

I attended a quarterly meeting of the MACH and two sessions of the committee on Meal Sharing Collaboration. At the April 20, 2017 meeting of the committee, a one page listing of the many feeding programs available in the community was distributed. The listing was compiled and is regularly updated using an Excel spreadsheet by a self-appointed homeless man who also attends the meetings. The free feeding programs are all operated by volunteers, both secular and faith-based, and listed no fewer than nine opportunities for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the Columbia city center every day of the week, with 15 opportunities on Saturday and 14 on Sunday. The spreadsheet also includes information about several healthcare centers, two programs with help for seniors, 15 food pantries in addition to the regional food bank, places offering showers and laundry facilities in three locations, and six clothes closets.

The committee meeting featured a lengthy discussion about the issue of "pop up programs", additional efforts that suddenly appear, and may just as suddenly disappear, to serve the homeless in all sorts of venues. The committee does what it can to reach out to "pop-ups" and invites them into the consortium.

The largest city park in Columbia is located downtown, called Finley Park. From time to time, complaints about the presence of homeless individuals in the park have been directed to city government (e.g. Hayes, 2018). The spreadsheet distributed at the April, 2017 MACH meeting (available) listed entities conducting feeding programs in the park on Sundays, (not all of them appearing every Sunday), three on Saturdays (again, not every Saturday), and at least one on every other day of the week except Monday. Since

2014, no entity may use the park for homeless services without a permit from the city (Moore, 2014).

In October, 2017, an 81-year-old church volunteer died after he was punched while feeding homeless people in the park by a homeless man who was attempting to make change from the offering plate (Mills, 2017). The police department issued a statement that what happened there was an isolated incident, and that police officers regularly patrol the park, but two local pastors who work extensively with the homeless commented that security is an issue at the park.

I conducted five observations in the park during daylight hours on both the weekend and weekdays, at various times, including periods when no feeding program was present. There were always a few persons sleeping on the ground and often on the park benches. I also noted sleeping bags and other belongings behind some of the shrubbery. At no time did anyone ever approach me asking for assistance or for money. I also noted in the afternoons in good weather there were usually families with children at the playground area or having picnics on the grass. I never observed anyone approaching them and none of the families appeared concerned about the presence of homeless individuals in the area. On the two occasions when I observed feeding programs in progress, I noticed there were no security personnel.

In the course of my observations and interactions with homeless individuals in Finlay Park, two encounters were especially memorable, both occurring on the day a church was conducting a feeding program.

First, I had an extended conversation with a man who called himself "the Preacher." He was wearing a very dirty and torn full-length black robe, similar to the one

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I wore when singing in my church choir. I asked him about the robe. He told me his "full-time ministry" was to homeless individuals "like myself", and we had a lively discussion about Jesus and poor people. He also said he had been homeless a very long time, and was not looking to ever "leave my ministry." He said he did not need a roof over his head in a warm climate like South Carolina. When I asked him if he had ever had a job or had pursued an occupation, he said, "This is my occupation."

Later on the same afternoon, I met a young couple, the woman very heavy with pregnancy. They told me they were new in town and were grateful for some information I gave them about available services. When I asked where they had come from, the young man said they had come from Seattle and had been in 27 states over the past few months, traveling by illegally "hitching a ride" on freight trains. He said they "like to move around" but thought they "might" need to "settle for a little while" until after the baby was born.

These conversations with persons who did not appear to be looking for permanent housing were a marked contrast to the interviews I conducted with residents at the Transitions Homeless Center, who were all struggling to establish permanent residency somewhere.

I also interviewed persons at one of the facilities for laundry and showers. When I asked about any needs for storing belongings, I learned that two persons rented one of the smaller "lockups" at the U-Haul storage facility downtown for $10 a month. I was told this was against company policy but that the manager "looked the other way" so long as he had unoccupied storage. I also learned of the need for warehouse-type facilities for the storage of large items such as furniture, necessary for homeless individuals who had been

evicted from their homes but wanted to keep as many of their belongings as possible. This need was also mentioned by staff at the Transitions Homeless Center.

Columbia is also the site of the main campus of the state's flagship university, the University of South Carolina. As an enrolled doctoral student, I participated in two supervised research studies related to services addressing homelessness: an evaluation with recommendations for reorganization of a small food pantry, and a research project to determine the need for a free service for the storage of personal belongings. The food pantry was struggling to meet a $30,000 fundraising need for a new roof, (which was eventually successful). The study of the need for free, secure storage of personal belongings documented the problem of being stigmatized by the need to carry around backpacks and bags, complicated by the frequent theft of important belongings, including medicine and personal documents necessary to qualify for many services.

As a researcher with the project about storage needs I queried 29 homeless respondents about their perceptions of the "friendliness" of the City toward adults experiencing homelessness. None of the respondents felt that the "people" of the city were antagonistic towards them, but more than half complained about downtown merchants "running me off" because "I had a backpack" and entered the store wanting to use the restroom. I learned the only downtown public restrooms are located at Finlay Park. Three respondents complained that the restrooms are "nasty" because the city does not maintain them "except when there is a special event" in the park such as a concert. The unsheltered homeless and virtually only the unsheltered homeless have no access to facilities for personal hygiene in many communities. Except for public restrooms in the city's largest park, this was true in Columbia until 2013, but recently a church opened a

ministry where showers are available in the daytime, by appointment, to individuals not in residence at a shelter.

I frequently came across the problem of transportation. Accessing services is time-consuming and exhausting (especially in summer), as individuals must walk from one location to another in a timely fashion for appointments and scheduled feeding programs. In spite of the availability of reduced-cost bus tickets, the inadequacy of the local bus system is a well-known community problem (Bland, D.T. 2017). The Transitions Homeless Center operates its own transportation system in addition to providing bus tickets. In winter, the shelter serves as a gathering place at dusk where individuals without shelter may board a special city bus to take them to the winter shelter, located on the edge of the city limits.

The downtown community has a loosely-organized network of individuals currently or formerly homeless who have created their own organizations. I observed activities offered by three such organizations: two fundraisers for Homeless Helping Homeless, a church service conducted by Keeping It Real Ministries, and a presentation to the MACH by Needful Things.

In the course of my observations, every individual I met possessed a cell phone. Free cell phones and service plans are available through a federal program. The justification for the taxpayer support of the cell phone program is based on the importance of a contact number to respond to potential employers.

Public Library Services

The Richland (public) Library downtown Main Branch appears to be the primary resource for homeless adults seeking assistance with employment, as the career center

there is open seven days a week and into the evening hours, unlike governmental

employment services. I attended an Employment Resource Fair at the library which was

cosponsored by the MACH. The Fair was crowded with job seekers and employers hiring

on-site.

The library's Code of Conduct for Library Customers is published on the library's

website and posted throughout the library system. The Code is divided into three

sections: Respect Staff and Customers, Respect Materials and Equipment, and Respect

Buildings and Property. It is worth noting that the organization of the Code is clearly

designed to stress these three positive behaviors even though the bulk of the Code lists

negative behavior that may lead to ejections and loss of privileges. Notice is given that

warnings are at the discretion of staff. The Code establishes that a patron must be in the

library to use the library's resources and for no other reason: "Users must be engaged in a

library activity such as reading, studying, doing research or participating in a library

program" (Richland Library, n.d.d), in this respect an echo of Morristown's Code of

Conduct which came under scrutiny in the *Kreimer* case.

Included in the list of prohibited conduct such as fighting, using the library for

child care, or possession of weapons are three items that might be construed as

specifically directed at the homeless: "offensive personal hygiene… bringing in

backpacks or other personal items that take up an excessive amount of space…Restrooms

are not to be used for "bathing or shaving" (Richland Library, n.d.d).

The Richland Library's Code specifically describes excessively large items as

limited to two pieces, each no more than 20 inches in height, length, or width, and

examples are offered, including bedrolls, musical instruments, sports equipment, and

skateboards. One may wonder whether a child toting his baseball bat who stopped by a library branch after his Little League game would be confronted, or if perhaps a college student who uses his skateboard for transportation around the USC campus, located blocks from the Main branch, might find himself warned were he to enter with the skateboard under his arm. Also, might the limit of 2 items be directed specifically at the homeless, since students ordinarily do not carry more than one backpack, likely to be smaller than 20 inches, while homeless patrons are forced to keep all their worldly possessions with them at all times?

These questions, like the *Kreimer* case, again raise the issue of whether portions of the Code of Conduct, whether deliberately or unconsciously, are aimed solely at a group of individuals defined by their status. What recourse does an unsheltered homeless individual have if he or she is unable to wash? Where can they leave what possessions they do have when they enter the library?

An interview with Brian Oliver, director of security at Richland Library, provided the answers to these and other questions. In the event of a customer or a staff complaint regarding the Code, administrative policy requires that the matter be referred directly to him. Experienced in law enforcement from his service in the Army, the FBI and the business community, he has been the head of security at Richland Library for 13 years.

Mr. Oliver's responsibilities are not limited to the Richland Library; he is in demand as a speaker and trainer on library security throughout the United States, and presents often at library conferences from the ALA national meetings to state and local

professional conferences. Most recently he addressed how to administer a library code of conduct at the SC Library Association annual conference in November, 2014.

His first comment in response to my question about how the Code functions when managing troublesome homeless patrons set the tone: "The Code is not a hammer…it is a fluid document, and a communication to gain learned behavior…I like to call it a 'pillow approach', not meant to be rigid but firm. It's important to get the phraseology right". He explained the library's view of the Code as a tool to encourage and sometimes directly teach the positive behaviors conducive to a productive library experience and good human relations. "If there is a problem with hygiene, I quietly and privately ask the customer to go take care of those needs and then come back. Most of the time, the person isn't aware his or her odor is offensive. Their reaction is embarrassment, not hostility. By the way, someone wearing two bottles of cologne might be equally offensive." Mr. Oliver expressed pride in "how much things have changed" at the library in recent years. "Homeless individuals in our community know they are welcome here. Over time, many have also learned and practice the expected behaviors we promote. I have a much bigger problem with some sectors of the community who think our library is just a homeless hangout." (B. Oliver, personal communication, 2014). Mr. Oliver also stressed the importance of staff training, which he conducts with Richland staff up to three times a year in 2-3 hour segments.

In 2016 the library began a new collaborative program in partnership with the University of South Carolina to place graduate and undergraduate social work interns at the main branch to help the poor. There is also a full-time social worker leading the

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library's outreach department. In 2015 the library added a full time RN to the staff funded by a grant through the Affordable Care Act.

I interviewed two of the social work interns and their librarian supervisor, Heather McCue. Ms. McCue stated she never hesitates to call Mr. Oliver, "because I know he will be thoughtful in response. Once I called him when a certain male customer who comes here several times a week seemed to be getting a little "too friendly" with a staff member. Mr. Oliver spoke to him, and he just stopped the behavior. He still comes here. He's fine. He just needed to know his boundaries."

Future social workers Katie Epling and Katie Holland echoed Mr. Oliver's and Ms. McCue's confidence that the library's relationship with homeless customers is positive. "They know this is a safe and non-threatening place," said Katie Epling, "They know there are people here who will help, and they will not be demeaned. We are accessible and visible. Talking to people one-on-one is what's crucial".

I asked the interns if they felt their work at the library was unusual. "Our fellow students are curious. I do feel this is unchartered territory. This is a non-traditional setting for social work," said Katie Holland. "But working here helps me contemplate my role as a social worker. And the city is getting helped, too. We make connections."

The interns expressed their frustration with the limited resources available. Ms. Holland continued, "The library doesn't have any money for this, and neither do the helping agencies. What they do have just isn't enough."

I asked if they agreed there is a problem with community perception of the downtown library as a "homeless hang-out".

"Oh, yes," was the response. "My neighbor across the street asked me how I could feel safe there. Once at a suburban middle school the kids told me I shouldn't be at the library because they sell drugs there."

I interviewed a library volunteer at the main branch after randomly meeting him among the stacks. He explained he volunteers at several branches, moving around as needed, and at the time of the interview he had been working at the main branch three months. He acknowledged the presence of "many" homeless adults at the main branch downtown. When I asked him how he could tell if a patron was homeless, he agreed that it is not possible to do so just by appearances, but that the library staff, especially the security staff, was well acquainted with "the regulars," and this was how he knew who the homeless patrons are. He stated he never felt unsafe, and had full confidence that should any need arise the staff was fully capable, and that he had not experienced, nor witnessed, any problems nor heard any stories about difficulties with homeless patrons. He also pointed out the presence of families with children who clearly felt the library was safe.

Changing community attitudes requires consistent commitment and takes time. Richland Library provides an example of how a successful Code of Conduct can become a factor in changing attitudes. As public libraries demonstrate it is possible for everyone's needs to be respected and addressed as diligently as possible, the wider community is bound to notice. In the midst of the Great Recession, for example, the Richland Library was successful in initiating a bond referendum for a tax increase to expand the library's facilities and services. Clearly taxpayers in the community, at least

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the majority who were civically active and passed the referendum, recognized the library's importance.

The establishment of a small "branch library" at the Transitions Homeless Center provides an example of this library's community collaboration and outreach efforts. The space is small, a 10' by 12' room, with three walls covered by bookshelves to the ceiling and the fourth wall next to the door with a desk and chair where the volunteer enters check-out information into a computer. In addition, there are two comfortable chairs for reading. When I moved a small table into the middle of the room so that I could sit next to a class member to review her writing with her, I was chastised by one of the case managers and told under no circumstances were any changes to be made in the library because, "This is the one room we want to keep nice."

Ostensibly staffed by unpaid volunteers, the library is ordinarily locked except for one hour a day from 4-5 p.m., Monday through Thursday, when a volunteer, if available, opens it for the purpose of checking out or returning books. For a period of approximately ten weeks, I was present at the shelter regularly on Mondays and Wednesdays in the late afternoon conducting my creative writing class. I purposely scheduled the class to end at 5 p.m., hoping to extend the library's hours until 6 p.m. so that it would be available during the dinner hours. In addition, I volunteered to open and staff the library for additional unscheduled hours in the mornings whenever I could on the days I conducted observations and interviews at the shelter. Not once did I find the library to be open between 4 and 5 p.m, on Mondays and Wednesdays as posted, and I never met another volunteer staffing the library during that time. When I found a document in the desk with the name of a volunteer contact person and a phone number, I

called. The volunteer was no longer working with Transitions and did not know of any other volunteers staffing the library. Neither the case managers I talked with nor paid staff at the reception desk were able to provide any further information.

During the hours I staffed the library, I always had at least one or two patrons. Often someone would drop in to return a book, so clearly books were being obtained at times when I was not there. Perhaps there were active volunteers on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

4.2 Researcher's Observations of Life in the Transitions Homeless Center

The Transitions Homeless Center consists of the cluster of renovated two-story buildings, previously utilized as small hotels. The buildings are arranged around an open square courtyard, together comprising about one-half a city block. The buildings are connected by a surrounding brick wall approximately 8 feet high, in order to create one entrance and one exit, each monitored by security staff. I wondered if the wall was high in order to screen the facility from the surrounding downtown community. There is a small parking lot at the entrance, reserved for staff and emergency vehicles only. Anyone else who arrives by vehicle uses metered city parking on adjacent streets. The parking lot is also walled off from the street, with a space for vehicle entry. A resident wearing a reflective vest stands at the turn into the parking lot, and stops entering cars to check that the driver is authorized to use the lot.

Upon entering double glass doors, to the right there is a counter with a sliding glass window and a receptionist, and to the left a full body metal detector framing the entrance hallway leading to a locked, windowless steel door. Only security staff possess a key card to open the door. Technically everyone, including residents, non-residents

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utilizing the day room/dining area, and all others are expected to empty pockets and pass through the metal detector. However, staff, officials, and vetted volunteers known to the receptionist, including myself, are greeted with a friendly wave and allowed to bypass the metal detector to walk down the hall and sign in at the security office. In my opinion this has the effect of immediately differentiating individuals experiencing homelessness from those privileged to bypass the metal detector. The security office has a large clear glass panel on the hallway side, and a one way darkened glass panel on the reception side, rendering the security staff invisible from the front door while inside the security office.

The shelter officially opens at 8:30 a.m. to individuals seeking residence or who wish to use the day room. The residents eat breakfast an hour before the shelter is opened to outsiders. My art class was scheduled to begin at 9 a.m., but I arrived at 8:15 in order to unlock the art supplies and set up the classroom. At that time, the receptionist usually had not yet arrived, and the glass doors were locked, but I would tap on the glass and the security staff would let me in, denying entry to the people who waited outside for the 8:30 opening. It became clear that people seeking shelter understood there was an advantage to arriving early, because leading out from the locked doors every single morning was a straight line of backpacks, suitcases, blankets, packages, and many other possessions lined up to establish the order of the early bird arrivals. Often several people were lying on the ground and appeared to be asleep. I wondered if they had spent the night there but I did not inquire. Most waited standing or sitting on the concrete, usually silent. I thought they appeared exhausted, with no energy for conversation. Occasionally one or two would make eye contact with me and I would smile good morning. Rarely, there would be a responding greeting. Once I arrived to find three men loudly arguing in

the parking lot, and as I started to tap on the door, security staff ran out past me and confronted the men, ordering them to leave. They complied. On another morning there was an ambulance parked at the front door, and before I entered I saw a woman on a gurney with two paramedics loading her into the vehicle.

The front building with the entrance also houses offices on the first floor, and resident housing on the second floor. The locked steel door leads to the back of the building and directly onto the large courtyard. Across the grass there is a covered patio area with four wooden picnic tables. This is the designated smoking area. A portion of the grassy area is used as a community garden, with raised boxed-in beds. In the spring and summer, the residents grow vegetables there which are harvested for resident meals.

A wide sidewalk lined with park benches connects the front building to the main building across the courtyard. Here there are two more glass doors opening into the day room/dining area. Inside facing the doors is another counter, staffed by two more receptionists busy answering questions and monitoring the use of the single telephone, used only by permission and for a maximum of five minutes. There is office space centered in the middle of the day room behind the counter. To the left of the counter are three snack and soda vending machines, and the door to the kitchen beyond.

The day room/dining area is furnished with badly-worn, long tables and unmatched metal and plastic chairs lined up in rows. There is one large flat screen television mounted on one wall. The kitchen, a small library, a large classroom, a small room with five computers, offices for each of the two intake social work case managers, and another smaller classroom surround the day room. All of these rooms are kept locked

when not in use and the receptionists behind the counter open and close them throughout the day.

Upon entering the day room, a prospective resident gives his or her name to one of the receptionists and sits down to wait for the name to be called by one of the intake case managers. In this way, it is first come, first served. This is significant because on most days there are many more people seeking residence than there is space available. During the six months that I taught classes at the shelter three days a week, in the mornings the day room was always full with approximately 60-70 people waiting for their names to be called, as well as residents who have finished breakfast and are waiting for scheduled appointments with case managers or for classes and meetings to begin. In inclement weather, the dayroom/dining area remains crowded and noisy throughout the day, as non-residents remain there through lunch, served to residents and nonresidents alike, and on into the afternoon if it is cold or rainy. Many somehow manage to sleep, sitting up in the uncomfortable chairs. All nonresidents must leave by 5:30 p.m., when dinner is served to residents only.

The Transitions Homeless Center is a "wet" facility, meaning that individuals may be accepted for residence even if known to be using alcohol or drugs, although such persons will also be required to participate in drug or alcohol rehabilitation programs in order to maintain residency. On several occasions, I could detect the smell of alcohol on the breath of one of my class participants. However, so long as decorum is maintained, this is tolerated at the shelter.

Residents choose or are assigned classes, meetings and appointments to attend in consultation with their case managers. My art and creative writing classes were

voluntary. AA meetings or Anger Management, for example, may be mandatory. Each resident carries a record of activities attended, with the instructor or leader signing each individual sheet each activity period. Table 4.1 lists scheduled activities on a randomly selected day. The list is handwritten on a white board each morning and displayed near the dayroom reception desk. Activities scheduled to finish before 5:30, including my art and creative writing classes, are open to residents and nonresidents. At the end of the week the list of activities is turned into the case manager. In this way residents are held accountable for cooperation and "progress toward independence." Residents may be asked to leave if their attendance records do not document sufficient participation in programs in the judgment of the case managers.

Table 4.1
Transitions Homeless Center Scheduled Activities: Monday, August 14, 2017

In the Day Center Classroom
10-11   Financial Stability
11-12   Anger Management
2-3   Get Smart
3-5   Creative Expressions Art Class
3-4   Safety Counts
4-5   Long-term Women's Dorm meeting
6-7   Bible Study

In the Computer Lab
2-4   Free flu shots
3-4   Client orientation

In the Novinger Conference Room
9-10   F.R.E.S.H.
10-11   LRADAC Peer Support
6-7   Homeless Helping Homeless meeting

Near the day center reception counter is a printed sign entitled "Bans for Clients", which states: "Transitions is committed to providing a safe community environment for

its clients, volunteers, partners and employees. Clients committing the following offenses

will be removed from the facility. Not all behavior is covered below, and Transitions staff

reserve the right to address those offenses on an individual basis". Table 4.2 lists the

offenses which result in immediate and permanent removal from the facility.

Table 4.2
Behaviors Resulting in Removal from the Transitions Homeless Center

1. Inappropriate conduct (includes panhandling, any misdemeanor off site, watching porn on site, disrespect, smoking in undesignated area, knocking/hanging around/entering a dorm/room that is not your assigned room, filming/photographs of clients without their permission or any other offense deemed inappropriate by staff)
2. Threatening of (*sic*) another client
3. Sexual activity on site
4. Sexual harassment towards another client or transitions staff member
5. Fighting/physical contact with another client
6. Threatening staff
7. Fighting/physical contact with staff
8. Unauthorized entrance/exit to Transitions facility (only security checkpoint for entrance)
9. Alcohol or drugs on transitions property
10. Illegal activity (theft, prostitution, selling drugs, arson, etc.)
11. Weapons on transitions property (anything used to be harmful can be viewed as a weapon)
12. Clients are responsible for ensuring the safety and security of their belongings at all times.
13. If pursuing legal action against transitions, you must leave the facility pending the outcome of the case.

As a comprehensive service center, Transitions provides shelter and programs for

up to 30 days for clients who "show progress". Those who meet specific criteria for the

youth or senior citizen programs and those who are employed may remain for up to six

months and may be assigned a private room, with a roommate, as available. All others

sleep in open bays, men separated from women in different buildings, and each

individual space is separated from the next by a 4 foot high concrete wall, with the bed

placed alongside the wall. Each assigned space includes a locker or small chest of two or

three drawers next to the bed. Residents must limit their belongings, including clothing and shoes, to no more than will fit in the locker or small chests. One or two books are allowed. Residents may not store any food or beverages in their assigned areas.

At Transitions, all residents, except those who work on night shifts, must arise at 7 a.m. Breakfast is served between 7:30-8:00 a.m. After this, residents are not permitted to return to their assigned bed spaces until the shelter is closed at 5:30 p.m. This means that the clients must organize what they need for the day before leaving their assigned bed space, as they cannot return to that area until dinner time. Most carry around a large tote bag or backpack. Those living in private rooms have access to their room in the afternoons. All residents must be inside the shelter by 8 p.m. and lights are turned out at 10 p.m. On four separate occasions during my six months at Transitions, residents complained to me that theft is frequent, and two people told me that fights are common.

Transitions allocates a specific number of beds for categories of especially vulnerable clients, including youth 18-25, seniors, the physically disabled, and some medically fragile individuals referred upon discharge from a hospital. (The facility houses a medical clinic staffed by nurses for minor health care needs and first aid.)

I witnessed medical emergencies involving participants in my classes on two separate occasions. The first incident was a grand mal seizure by a resident I knew to be epileptic. On the second occasion a woman I was working with in the library, known to have congestive heart failure, suddenly passed out and I could not awaken her. In both instances I summoned staff immediately. On both occasions staff members knew the clients and their histories of medical need, and called for an ambulance which arrived both times in less than 15 minutes. A staff member later told me that ambulances are

called for medical emergencies as often as 2 to 3 times a week. Many times, I heard the sirens while I was teaching.

Privacy at Transitions is problematic. With the permission of the informant, I conducted my first research interview in the courtyard sitting on a bench. We were interrupted several times by other residents. Later I obtained permission to use the library during the times when it was not already in use for small meetings or open for business..

4.3 Findings for Research Question #1: Reading and Homelessness

I designed interview prompts to probe the meaning of the experience of reading in the minds of respondents as well as the meaning of the experience of homelessness. I asked two research questions, one about the relationships between the experiences of reading and homelessness and the other about what characterizes reading preferences and practices. I then analyzed the interview data, looking for connections between the two experiences to see if there were commonalities as well as variation among the individual respondents. I present the findings of commonalities using the Auerbach/Silverstein outline format, and then the findings of differences among individual reading lives using a narrative format.

Using Auerbach and Silverstein's outline format to list Theoretical Constructs supported by at least two Themes, with each Theme supported by at least two (italicized) Repeating Ideas, each Repeating Idea supported by data from at least *two* respondents (otherwise the Idea would not be *repeating*!) I present the findings of commonalities for research questions #1 and #2 in Table 4.3, including a sampling of the data supporting each Repeating Idea. The data entries begin with a letter code indicating which respondent contributed the data and the page(s) of the master transcript where the data

may be found. At the end of the Auerbach/Silverstein outline, Table 4.4 summarizes findings without the data.

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Table 4.3
Auerbach/Silverstein Data Analysis

PART ONE: Reading and Homelessness Separately

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Commonalities for Research Questions #1 and #2: Among adult readers who currently reside in a transitional homeless shelter, what is the relationship between the experiences of reading and transitioning out of homelessness? How do they describe reading as an activity? What happens while they read? Why do they read? How is reading relevant to the experience of homelessness? {Note: words in ( ) are the interviewer's prompts}

I. Among adults experiencing homelessness, the experience of reading is significant.

    A. Reading is Important

        1. Reading is necessary.

        A-23-24, 26 (Reading is…?) necessary. (What makes it necessary?) But if you read, I mean it keeps your mind, I think it makes you smarter and I think it keeps your mind functioning and moving forward I think if you can't, if you're illiterate to begin with, then it makes everything else harder. (I wonder why reading is…?) so important…Why reading is vital?

        Aut-62 Everything else can go but you can still read. Even if you lost your eyesight, you could still, you know, consume a book through your ears. You know, my greatest fear is losing my eyesight just for that reason, I'd rather read than listen.

        S-86 (Reading is…?) Fundamental

        2. Reading is beneficial.

        KK-114 Isn't enjoyed by more people, if they only knew the benefits from reading that it could bring them. I think they might be more open to it, and not just reading for recreation it can be reading to learn, reading to grow, reading to improve.

        R-153 Well, I wish more people would do it. It's knowledge and they always say knowledge is power

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3. Reading is a means to an end.

N-5 (I think reading could be…) a better tool to help people cope in life.

A-23, 28, 29 it's not where you just stall to, "I graduated from high school and this is all I got." Okay, where at 26, I went back and I got my GED and I didn't stop there…(I think reading could be…) a fundamental tool for anybody…(How is your reading related to your daily life right now?) Right now it's about trying to better myself, better my position, maybe get a better job. Eventually try to help other people in the future because it's never been just me as the reason why I'm doing something.

S-88 (I wonder why reading…?) Is unimportant in some people's lives… if you can read, the more you can read, the better job you'll have.

Aut-59 I always feel a sense of accomplishment when I finish a book.

B. Reading is pleasurable.

1. Reading is fun.

N-4 (Reading is…?) fun.

A-28   it's like reading something for fun

S-86 (Reading is…?) and fun.

KK-116 …because I want to feel funny

2. Reading is entertaining.

N-1, 4, 5 I enjoy it…(Reading is…?) enjoyable…(I wonder why reading…?) is so entertaining for me.

S-85 (Reading is…?)….entertaining

KK 117 …it's also written in a way that's entertaining

3. Reading is enjoyable.

A-32 I just think when you open up your imagination, when you do, you enjoy reading.

D-83   also enjoy Literature, English and stories and all of that.

S-95   enjoyed reading that in college.

KK-113, 114, 116, 120 (Reading is…?) Enjoyable…One of the more enjoyable aspects of life. I really enjoyed the things I was reading...(I wonder why reading…?) Isn't enjoyed by more people… I usually generally read for recreation…I really enjoy science fiction…I enjoy reading newspapers.

L-140 (Reading is…?) A source of enjoyment

R-150, 154 that's something I love and enjoy to do…(so they) can be able to enjoy a good book too

4. Reading passes the time.

N-1 Because it helps pass the time

A-28 kill the time

S-89 (When I am reading I ...) lose track of time. Oh definitely, there's been times when I've been told to get in the dinner line, a friend of mine noticed I missed it. Once I get my nose in a mystery, I don't want to put it down until I find out who did it.

KK-115 I'm just stuck here sitting and reading fills the time.

R-152 to me it's a pastime

5. Reading provides something to do.

S-87, 90 (Reading is…?) Gives me something to do…(Tell me why you read.) For something to do.

KK-115 (Tell me why you read.) The main thing is to fill the hours, it's so boring here there's not a lot to do

C. Reading transcends time and place.

1. Reading feels like traveling to another place.

ANON (writing sample) I like getting transported to different times and places… love reading National Geographic's (*sic*). They offer wonderful articles about the whole world. New inventions, people of the past. They did a great article about Nero, the crazed Emperor of Rome. I particularly liked a book about Michelle Rockefeller, who went to an island in New Guinea and was supposedly eaten by headhunters.

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N-5 Feel like I'm in the book, feel like I'm living in the book.

A-23, 27, 48 You can travel in your mind…reading helps you travel, learn new things, go places you haven't been before…(Reading helps me to…?) …a good book, you know you can go away for a little bit.

Aut-58 (Is there any special reason why you like books as opposed to magazines, or comics…)) Yeah, more complex. Yeah. Go deeper into the story. (When you say that you go deeper, is that related to your feeling of escape?) Yeah. And then you are lost in it, you know, you actually become like, you are in the story and not a participant, but an active observer, you know. (You are just not here.) Right. (You are there.) Right.

S-91 one of the mystery series I'm reading takes place in Charleston, and makes me want to go to visit Charleston…They inspire me to want to go places.

L-140-141 If I get into a good book, a good story, it'll take my mind there instead of where I would wander back into the past and missing what I left…Why reading, because you can do it anywhere, you can just go up into a corner by yourself with a good book and get engrossed in it or engaged in what's happening in the book. It could show you like the Diary of Anne Frank, books about Anne Frank will show you what a family had gone through…

2. Reading can be an escape.

A-48, 49 (Reading helps me to…) yeah, kinda, somewhat a distraction…(Reading helps me to…?) yeah, of course escape…a good book, you know you can go away for a little bit.

Aut-58 And then you are lost in it, you know, you actually become like, you are in the story and not a participant, but an active observer, you know. (You are just not here.) Right. (You are there.) Right.

KK-114-115, 118 (When I am reading I…?) tune everything out…So yes, it's an escape. It's not too deep. It's a way to get away in your mind. It's an escape and it does counteract the feel and the rhythm of the facility.

L-140 (So reading gives you a break?) Yeah, because it diverts my mind away from it… I have a lot of melancholy. And reading a book can divert my mind away from that… If I get into a good book, a good story, it'll take my mind there instead of where I would wander back into the past and missing what I left…

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R-153… it's my escape. I guess it is good one word to describe it, is my escape.

3. *Reading can give a feeling of a different time.*

ANON (writing sample) I like getting transported to different times

S-89 When I am reading I ...) Lose track of time. Oh definitely, there's been times when I've been told to get in the dinner line, a friend of mine noticed I missed it. Once I get my nose in a mystery, I don't want to put it down until I find out who did it. (Do you mean you may even forget to eat?) Yeah.

D. Reading is conducive to mental and emotional well-being.

1. *Reading helps cope with stress.*

N-5 (Reading helps me to…) Deal with the stuff, struggles in life.

A-26 It's just sometimes when I get behind the computer and I let my stress and my worry like, about a situation and what everybody else is doing around me, I can't change what everybody else is doing around me. What they think? What they think I should do? I can focus, try to focus me and keep on doing what I've been doing…When I am reading I tend to let a lot of the worries step aside…trying to get through it regardless of what's going on. All my worries and all my stress and all my anxieties going on right now because of the situation, everything like that. That I know what I'm doing is going to end up benefiting me in the long run.

Aut-48 stress relief, it gets my mind off problems…

D-76, 77 (Reading is…) therapeutic. Very therapeutic…Then you release that anger and the frustration and the resentment. Because you think well these guys had it really hard. In real life they're not that hard. But you think about what they had to go through to get to that point to be so hard. (Are you saying that you build some sympathy?) Yes. It helps build sympathy…I mean it helps you develop, to my understanding, from what I have gone through, things I've gone through, throughout my life. It helps release some of that pent up anger and aggression and hatred.

L-140 loneliness and longing to go back home to Long Island in New York. (So it gives you a break?) Yeah, because it diverts my mind away from it… If I get into a good book, a good story, it'll take my mind there instead of where I would wander back into the past and missing what I left…

R-152, 153, 156, 157, 159   I got anxiety and when I start reading or even doing my crocheting, it focuses me away from what caused the anxiety to flare up in the first place, it gives me a focus point, that's what it does…I think that I calm, I'm in more of a calm state when I'm not worrying about what's going on around me (Reading is…?) medicine... my non-medical medicine for my medical problem. And I can say, I come in here plenty of times I sit down and just start reading a book… I got medication for my anxiety. When with me, with my reading and my other refocusing tools that there've been a couple of occasions in here where a situation occurred if it hadn't been for a good book or either my crocheting, I would have done lost my bed…I would tell anybody, "Just pick up a good book, It don't talk back to you, it don't fuss at you [laughter] and just cuddle up with a good book of your choice".

2. Reading calms.

Aut-49, 63 (Reading helps me to…?) it's the only way I can get serenity…As long as you got reason in your mind, that really cannot be taken away from you… Everything else can go but I can still read.

S-86, 90 (Reading helps me to…) It helps me keep my sanity here…(Tell me why you read.) To keep my sanity

KK-115,118 very comforted about being surrounded by books… I like the sound the pages make as I turn, I like actually seeing the print on the page, that to me brings a level of familiarity and comfort that I find appealing…to keep my mind sharp…I need something to help me get away from the doldrums of this place.

L-140 I have a lot of melancholy. And reading a book can divert my mind away from that.

R-153 …when I'm reading or working my crocheting it seems like that I don't need it as much as I would if I didn't have these ways of calming down…

E. Reading promotes personal growth.

1. Reading can provide pathways into learning.

N-6 it was easy to learn about string theory in black holes and quantum physics. .

A-26, 28 I think you could pick up a lot of vocabulary, lot of knowledge you didn't know you had by reading…Yes. I mean it's like you pick up biographies on war heroes or something like that, you get their

terminology, you get the history and everything like that…read up because you want to learn (or you might not realize how much it helped you until in the future?) Yes till you need it because I mean, you could see when you read that it's like reading something for fun to kill the time, or read up because you want to learn, there's a difference, but you're always learning regardless of whether or not it's just for fun or something you actually want to learn and retain…

Aut-59 I would prefer to learn something

D-72 (Where did you learn your science?) Reading and observing and watching and understanding.

S-86, 90 (Reading is…?) Educational…(Tell me why you read.) to learn.

L-140 It yields a lot of knowledge, depending upon what you read

2. Reading develops the mind.

A-23, 27, 32, 34 It opens up your mind… it helps you open up your mind…it opens up your imagination to what's possible. (Reading is) necessary. (What makes it necessary?) But if you read, I mean it keeps your mind, I think it makes you smarter and I think it keeps your mind functioning and moving forward…(Reading helps you bring back things you learned before?)... it helps you like, retain it, like you can study something but if you don't read like, a lot of extra books on it and stuff like that you really don't grasp it. Some of it seems more real. Like you can use your imagination more because you've already read on it, you know what I'm saying… I just think when you open up your imagination, when you do, you enjoy reading…So maybe you could think differently than anybody else because whatever you've read is different than anybody else.

Aut-60   sometimes I can read a book about something and it will change the way that I have pictured something from my whole life, you know, what I thought to be true, I will read a book and, that is what can give a sense of accomplishment, you actually, you know, learned the truth. That it makes sense. (that it changes your perspective?) Right exactly.

S-92 You know while I'm reading, I'm visualizing in my mind, what is going on.

KK-114 (Reading helps me to…) Grow as an individual.

II. For adults living in a transitional homeless shelter, homelessness is difficult.

A. Homelessness is stressful.

1. Homelessness is frustrating.

A-25 (Not having a place to live is…?) stressful, frustrating.

S-87 (Not having a place to live is…?) Frustrating…annoying

2. Homelessness creates uncertainty.

N-5 (I need to know…) What the future holds.

A-25 I need to know what comes next. I need to know what I'm going to do next.

Aut-49 (I need to know) I need to know that my future is in God's hands

KK-114, 115 (Not having a place to live is…?) Horrible. It's the bane of my existence. Unforeseeable and certainly never fine being in this situation. And hopefully temporary, extremely temporary. I'm just stuck here sitting and reading fills the time.

L-141 This is a terrible, tumultuous change in my life

3. Homelessness creates loss.

A-30 like I've been collecting books since I was in the fourth grade. I lost them one time when I was homeless at 27.

Aut-45, 47 I lost everything, pretty much… I lost my daughter, she won't even talk to me.

L-140 loneliness and longing to go back home to Long Island in New York… I lost everything I loved. My job, my car, my beloved pets

B. Homelessness increases anxiety.

1. Homelessness can aggravate existing anxiety.

A-25 I think it definitely hits up my anxiety a lot. And it adds a lot to your other worries because if you don't have your own apartment then if you lose the bed you're living in, what's going to happen next?

Aut-46, 50 I'll always PTSD and anxiety. I have a counselor but the anxiety has been really kicking my butt…(Not having a place to live is…?) traumatic

2. Homelessness can create new anxieties.

L-142 (Is there anything particular that distracts you consistently?) I just think worrying, being in a strange environment…

R-153, 157 in here, I feel like that you worry about how you never know when you might slip up and do a little thing, well, I mean it may not be a major thing, but in here worrying about losing your bed….

PART TWO: Relationships Between Reading and Homelessness

III. Theoretical Construct: Reading experiences are directly relevant to adult readers residing in a transitional homeless shelter.

A. Reading experiences provide respite from homelessness.

1. Adult readers while residing in a transitional shelter use reading to distract from loneliness, melancholy and/or boredom.

KK-115 (Tell me why you read.) The main thing is to fill the hours, it's so boring here there's not a lot to do

L-140 (So reading gives you a break?) Yeah, because it diverts my mind away from it… I have a lot of melancholy. And reading a book can divert my mind away from that… If I get into a good book, a good story, it'll take my mind there instead of where I would wander back into the past and missing what I left…

2. Adult readers while residing in a transitional shelter use reading to "travel" to a different place.

N-5 Feel like I'm in the book, feel like I'm living in the book.

A-48 (Reading helps me to…?) …a good book, you know you can go away for a little bit.

Aut-58 (You are just not here.) Right. (You are there.) Right.

L-140-141 If I get into a good book, a good story, it'll take my mind there instead of where I would wander back into the past and missing what I left…

B. Reading experiences provide strategies for adult readers residing in a transitional shelter to manage personal behavior.

1. Reading experiences enable focus.

A-26, 28 When I am reading I tend to let a lot of the worries step aside and focus on what I'm doing. And it's harder sometimes to focus these days because of a lot of worries that I have on my plate but I've pushed myself to focus.

Aut-48, 51, 53 Stress relief, it get my mind off problems…You know, I am starting to count my blessings a lot more, daily, you know. I look around before the lights go out of 10, or around that, you know quarter of 10. There might be two or three people with a book, me one of them… Get by with other people that just complain, complain, complain, complain, I just got to get away from the groups, you know. I can understand that we are not on the same page, you know. (So having your glasses and a book to read nearby might be good.) Yeah, it is going to help.

R-152 I got anxiety and when I start reading or even doing my crocheting, it focuses me away from what caused the anxiety to flare up in the first place, it gives me a focus point, that's what it does…

2. Reading experiences are calming and/or comforting.   R-153

A-26 It's just sometimes when I get behind the computer and I let my stress and my worry like, about a situation and what everybody else is doing around me, I can't change what everybody else is doing around me. What they think? What they think I should do? …When I am reading I tend to let a lot of the worries step aside…trying to get through it regardless of what's going on. All my worries and all my stress and all my anxieties going on right now because of the situation, everything like that. That I know what I'm doing is going to end up benefiting me in the long run.

Aut-48, 49, 51, 53 Stress relief, it gets my mind off problems…it's the only way I can get serenity…You know, I am starting to count my blessings a lot more, daily, you know. I look around before the lights go out of 10, or around that, you know quarter of 10. There might be two or three people with a book, me one of them… Get by with other people that just complain, complain, complain, complain, I just got to get away from the groups, you know. I can understand that we are not on the same page, you know. (So having your glasses and a book to read nearby might be good.) Yeah, it is going to help.

S-86 It helps me keep my sanity here.

KK-115 I feel very comfortable and very comforted about being surrounded by books and I know everything is done online these days but I like the feel of real paper, you know I like the sound the pages make as I turn, I like actually seeing the print on the page, that to me brings a level of familiarity and comfort that I find appealing.

L-140 loneliness and longing to go back home to Long Island in New York. (So it gives you a break?) Yeah, because it diverts my mind away from it… If I get into a good book, a good story, it'll take my mind there instead of where I would wander back into the past and missing what I left…

R-153 I think that I calm, I'm in more of a calm state when I'm not worrying about what's going on around me. I still got my friends I worry about but that's kind of-- it's my escape. I guess it is good one word to describe it, is my escape.

4.4 Summary of Findings for Research Question #1

Table 4.4
Summary of Auerbach/Silverstein Outline

I. Among adults experiencing homelessness, the experience of reading is significant.
- A. Reading is important.
  1. Reading is necessary.
  2. Reading is beneficial.
  3. Reading is a means to an end.
- B. Reading is pleasurable.
  1. Reading is fun.
  2. Reading is entertaining.
  3. Reading is enjoyable.
  4. Reading passes the time.
  5. Reading provides something to do.
- C. Reading transcends time and space.
  1. Reading feels like travelling to another place.
  2. Reading can be an escape.
  3. Reading can give a feeling of a different time.
- D. Reading is conducive to mental and emotional well-being.
  1. Reading helps cope with stress.
  2. Reading calms.
- E. Reading promotes personal growth.
  1. Reading provides pathways into learning.
  2. Reading develops the mind.

II. For adults living in a transitional homeless shelter, homelessness is difficult.

    A. Homelessness is stressful.

        1. Homelessness is frustrating.

        2. Homelessness creates uncertainty.

    B. Homelessness increases anxiety.

        1. Homelessness can aggravate existing anxiety.

        2. Homelessness can create new anxieties.

III. Reading experiences among adults residing in a transitional homeless shelter are directly related to the experience of homelessness.

    A. Reading experiences provide respite from homelessness.

        1. Adult readers while residing in a transitional homeless shelter use reading to distract from loneliness, melancholy and/or boredom.

        2. Adult readers while residing in a transitional homeless shelter use reading to "travel" to a different place.

    B. Reading experiences provide strategies for adult readers residing in a transitional shelter to manage personal behavior.

        1. Reading experiences enable focus.

        2. Reading experiences are calming and/or comforting

4.5 Findings for Research Question #2: Differences in Individual Reading Lives

Research Question #2 about reading practices and Interview questions #6-14 (see Appendix B, Interview Protocol) yielded additional data reflecting individual differences, as well as some commonalities, in the reading lives of the study participants. These questions were designed to be more specific about reading preferences and practices, as opposed to more general questions about the significance of reading in the context of homelessness. I present these findings here in narrative format, describing the responses of each individual participant. (The participants' names have been changed.) I then present a summary of commonalities among the eight respondents about their reading lives.

Nigel was the only participant who flatly answered "no", twice, when asked if his reading life was in any way related to his daily life at his time of residence in the Transitions shelter. Although he did not finish high school, when he spoke of his reading, he often referred to books he read in school, and specifically in the seventh and ninth

grades. He mentioned classic works by Dickens, Shakespeare, and Orson Welles, with a special fondness for Dickens, naming *Great Expectations* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, rereading the latter many times up to the present day. When asked what he would like to know more about, he named quantum physics, referring to a book recommended by a science teacher in the ninth grade called *From the Black Hole to the Big Bang*. He described reading as fun and enjoyable and helpful to passing time, and he wondered why "reading is so enjoyable." Unlike some of the other participants, he avoids reading newspapers in order to "stay away from the news (because) "it's all politics." He likes short stories as well as books and visits the library in the shelter "once or twice a week". He reported that he has never talked with a librarian. Nigel chooses his reading materials by browsing. He also wondered why he found reading so enjoyable, evidence of his metacognition (thinking about thinking), and he thought "reading could be a better tool to help people cope in life." He stated reading helps him to "deal with stuff, struggles in life."

Angie spends as much time in the main branch of the public library as she can, using the computer. She was clearly proficient with computers and described technology as "addictive." However, she said both books and computers are important to her reading life: "I think there's nothing wrong with picking up the actual book and I like the book better but I know that computers are useful at the same time."

Angie was the only participant to report a bad experience at the library, which involved a confrontation with another patron. While she was using the restroom at the library, this patron "made a comment about me being homeless." Angie responded aggressively using a "not so nice word" and when the patron complained to security, Angie was barred from the library for 30 days.

Angie had been using the library a great deal before she was homeless because "I like books. I like being around books and it's usually the most helpful place…" Her responses to my questions revealed her thirst for knowledge and her view of herself as a lifelong learner. Angie left high school but completed her credential by passing the GED, and said, "I'm not stopping there…I been trying to push hard at my studies since my mom passed away about six years ago." She recalled memories of her mother reading books herself as well as taking Angie to the library. She stated she has "always been an avid reader… And it was just part of who I am. I've always had my nose in books." She described reading as "necessary" before she described it also as "fun" and showed great insight into the impact of her reading life on herself as a person, both in her skill development and in her delight that reading made her able to "travel in my mind." When asked about literary genres, she responded, "with my genre, it's like I switched genres throughout my life", moving from romance novels (naming Christian Freeman) to horror books and then to nonfiction. Like Nigel, she also expressed curiosity about why reading "is so important…why it expands your mind." She mentioned the importance of reading as a way to develop imagination several times, and described reading as a "tool." She also shared her experience of helpful and deep conversations with librarians, despite her one experience of being barred from the library. Angie chooses her reading materials carefully and with deliberation, often searching for something specific. She showed awareness of services available at the library other than books, such as workshops. For Angie, reading helps her satisfy a felt, immediate, and specific need.

Autry described his reading life as "up and down" depending on his sobriety and mental health, even as a child. His passion has always been anything related to the ocean

and seafaring, so much of his reading has been about pirates and sea adventures, including Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea.* For Autry, reading is a way to feel near the ocean when he is unable to be there in reality. Autry also described himself as a Christian believer and he studies the Bible.

Autry spoke at length about how his reading life helps him cope with PTSD and anxiety, describing the importance of reading as "monumental for me." He conflated reading with self-efficacy: "Everything else can go, but you can still read." When asked about genres, he said that, at the moment, "First, I go to spiritual books. I usually keep two books going. I have been anyway. And then, just something that you know catches me like, I kind of like medieval sometimes too." When he chooses materials, he does not browse, but instead "chooses a category." His descriptions of his interactions with librarians were clearly reader advisory moments of direct library assistance to meet his personal requests, including suggestions for movies and books to check out. He gets suggestions for "something that is similar and by all means I will talk to them, you know, because it is some of the best things I have got (*sic*) were from that. Some things that you have never even heard of..."

Autry was an enthusiastic and faithful participant in my creative writing class, usually composing poetry. He made no mention of using technology in his reading life in any way.

David appeared for his interview with me carrying a tote bag containing at least one book. When I asked what it was, he said it was the Bible, but added he was also currently reading another book entitled *I am Nujood, Aged 10 and Divorced.* David prefers true life stories or nonfiction: "I would prefer those because you get to see an

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inside view of what's going on in our world." He also expressed an interest in mythology and science fiction/fantasy, stating he has read Tolkien and the Hunger Games trilogy. He is an avid fan of video games and plays them online at the library. David also said he likes cookbooks, and has written one. He spoke of "the fine line between fact and fiction," and noted that he sometimes seeks out information to read about something he saw on television. He described his reading life as "therapeutic".

David shared that he dropped out of school in the seventh grade. He earned a GED credential and said he would like to go to college.

He was the only respondent who did not offer any recollections of reading while a child in school or at home, but he also stated, "It was a constant thing for me throughout my life, is that the---I would just study things in a scientific view."

Sharon made a clear connection in our interview between reading and obtaining a good job: "The more you can read the better job you'll have." She also said her reading captivates her, even to the point of forgetting to eat: "Once I get my nose in a mystery, I don't want to put it down until I find out who did it." She remembered teaching her younger sister (20 months age difference) to read when they were both very young, not because she was asked to help her, but because she wanted to. "I just learned to read myself, and here I am teaching a four year old." She mentioned that her mother was a reader of romance novels, "even though she dropped out of high school in the ninth grade".

Sharon was specific about how reading inspires her to want to visit the places described in her books, mentioning Charleston, New Orleans and Greenwich Village. She also described how reading allows her to "visualize in my mind." Lately she has become

interested in history, naming "a book on my Kindle, *The Middle East from Biblical Times to the Present."* She has also read Doris Kearns Goodwin's book about Lincoln, *Team of Rivals.* Sharon has owned a series of Kindles since 2011. She chooses her books according to "whatever piques my interest at the moment," mentioning cookbooks, romance, the Bible and biographies. Sharon mentioned a desire to work in a bookstore, although "If I went to a job in a bookstore, there'd go my paycheck…it would stay in the store." She wondered why reading "is unimportant in some people's lives." She also noted that she has a friend who is "functionally illiterate" but "can read and write if he has to." She thought reading "could help more people if they learned how to read at an earlier age." She was also aware that when she reads "I'm visualizing in my mind what is going on."

Sharon visits both the Transitions library and the public library main branch often, where she "just learned" how to load free books onto her phone. "That way if I don't have a book, and I'm in the meal line, I can still read." She makes a routine of visiting the public library every Saturday, where she uses the computers to check her email and Facebook account and to search for job openings. She approaches library staff for help finding things but not for reading suggestions. She chooses her reading materials by browsing the library's listings on her computer, noting authors and titles, then reading the descriptions of those that "peak my interest at the moment". She prefers to download books on her Kindle rather than check out hard copies. Sharon has not discussed recommendations for things to read with librarians, but said she would not hesitate to ask for help with her job hunt if she needed it.

Sharon holds an associate degree in arts and science, and has taken additional courses toward a BA.

Katie holds a BA in journalism and said she "enjoyed" her career as a writer and reporter before her health gave way. She still keeps a journal. She associates her reading life with her personal growth "as an individual", and she reads "for many reasons," including "technical aspects." She likes to "look at the way writers write and seeing exactly how they get their point across, how they develop characters, how they move the plot line forward." Katie said with some books she thinks more about the writer behind the books than the storyline.

Katie likes to read in the library, where she feels "very comforted about being surrounded by books and I know everything is done online these days, but I like the feel of real paper. You know I like the sound the pages make as I turn, I like actually seeing the print on the page. That to me brings a level of familiarity and comfort that I find appealing." She differentiated between science fiction and fantasy, mentioning Isaac Asimov's foundation trilogy. Katie also wondered why reading "isn't enjoyed by more people. If they only knew the benefits from reading that it could bring them, I think they might be more open to it, and not just reading for recreation it can be reading to learn, reading to grow, reading to improve."

Katie chooses her books usually by looking up an author she has in mind, but she also consults the *New York Times* bestsellers list. She routinely discusses recommendations for books with librarians, especially about new authors, and values the way they "direct me in areas that maybe I haven't thought about." She most recently read

I Am Malala, and stated she reads "about a book a day." She reads a number of magazines regularly.

Katie also reads online, using the website Lynda.com to take graduate school courses. In our interview, we discussed open source opportunities for learning (MOOCs) of which she was not aware. She described herself as a "big Internet buff" and in the 1990s she wrote a book about the Internet.

Lisa values reading because "you can do it anywhere." She commented that the surrounding environment "doesn't matter" because she becomes "engrossed or engaged in what is happening in the book." She expressed regret that she reads slowly and "would really like to be able to read more books." Lisa likes true-life crime stories, mentioning *The Killer of Little Shepherds* by David Starr. She chooses her books by going to the mystery section of the library, pulling books off the shelf, and then reading the blurbs inside the book jacket. She likes magazines because of the pictures and reminisced about reading *Life* and *Look* as a child. *National Geographic* is still her favorite. Originally from Long Island, New York, she misses reading the *New York Times* (Sunday edition) and the newspaper's weekly magazine.

Lisa loves libraries so much she wants to be a volunteer there. However, she commented, "I've grown into such a mess. I look so disheveled." She expressed the hope that she would be able to be a library volunteer once "I get a place of my own." She has talked with a librarian about what she could do there. Lisa loves the movies, and checked videos out of the library regularly before entering Transitions, where at the time of our interview she was not permitted to leave the shelter campus due to her health issues.

Randy expressed his love for reading by likening it to "medicine", helping him with his anxiety by giving him a way to "calm down" and providing him a "focus point." He stated, "If I feel like I want to be by myself it's something I can pick up and do without interruption." He also equated reading with knowledge, and knowledge with "power", listing examples such as a cookbook to prepare food, the Bible as a guidebook, travel guides that "can show you where to go… on a limited income" and autobiographies "of important people" as helpful. Like Angie, Randy sees reading as a means to an end, speaking of libraries as a "tool."

Randy was aware of the changing role of libraries and the controversy of whether investments in public libraries remain relevant. He spoke of the digital divide: "I believe that there still should be brick-and-mortar libraries (because) they're getting high-tech and getting online more, yes, but you only get a percentage of people that got the ability to use that service… I've seen older people that can't even write their name talking about reading a book… I want to say we still need the individuals, the human part of the library system, I feel like we still need that."

Randy has talked with library staff at checkout, and with the "reference librarians up on the second and third floor, and the ladies and gentlemen that does (*sic)* the computer station, I've talked with them. I've got help through the social services at the library and that's something that most libraries don't have." Randy also spoke knowledgeably about how public libraries are funded, especially stressing the need for more funding for small towns. He was aware of the successful bond referendum expanding library services in the Columbia area spoke of this as an indication of the community's support.

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Randy chooses his books from a "certain genre of science fiction" as well as "techno-thrillers like Clive Cussler", and was familiar with books by Stephen King, Isaac Asimov, and Arthur C Clarke. He "occasionally" reads *Popular Mechanics* and *Scientific American*. He also reminisced about reading "probably before I went to school" and recalled the TV show *Reading Rainbow*.

4.6 Findings for Research Question #2: Commonalities among Individual Reading Lives

l. All eight of the individuals interviewed for this study regularly use the public library as well as the small library located in the transitions shelter. All of them have a library card.

2. All eight individuals used the word "enjoy" when asked about their reading lives.

3. All eight individuals spontaneously named authors and/or book titles they have read in the past and remember fondly.

4. All eight individuals indicated preferences regarding literary genres, including spiritual, mythology, science fiction, fantasy, romance, history, biography and autobiography, mysteries, spy thrillers and crime. None of the respondents indicated they choose one genre only. None of the respondents read graphic novels.

5. Seven of the eight individuals spontaneously reminisced about reading in childhood, either at home or in school.

6. Seven of the eight individuals own a cell phone. One specifically mentioned using her phone and the library's computers to access social media.

7. Four of the eight individuals reflected on how reading interacts with their own mental processes (metacognition) such as helping with focus, developing imagination, or visualization.

8. Four of the eight individuals have talked with librarians, three of those discussing recommendations for things to read. The other four have never talked with a librarian.

9. Four of the eight individuals talked about the use of technology in their reading lives, including the use of a Kindle, conducting research, downloading free books to a cell phone, and taking online courses. Two respondents never use a computer. The remaining two respondents did not discuss their use or lack of use of technology.

10. Three of the eight individuals spontaneously described reading as a "tool".

4.7 Discussion of Findings

Application of the Four Theoretical Frameworks to Findings

John Dewey's emphasis on the connections between lived experience and learning, stressing the importance of education as a lifelong and continuous process, strongly informed this study. Seven of the eight respondents spontaneously reflected upon their reading as a lifelong feature of their lives, beginning in childhood and extending into the present even as they experience homelessness. Sharon continues to strive for completion of a college degree despite her circumstances. David also expressed a desire to go to college.

Echoing Malcolm Knowles' ideas about informal education pursued independently of institutional enrollment, Angie and Katie both continue their educations informally using free online resources. Knowles' theories about the adult need to apply

learning, not just to pursue it for its own sake, are reflected in Angie's, Katie's, and Randy's descriptions of reading as a tool, a means to an end. Nigel noted how reading made it "easy to learn about string theory in black holes and quantum physics." Sharon equated reading with education and learning as her first response when asked about what reading "is" and why she reads. Lisa stated that reading "yields a lot of knowledge, depending upon what you read."

Autry's reading life is directly connected to his experiences with life on and near the ocean. Louise Rosenblatt would not be surprised by this. Literary devices such as rhetorical style or story structure have little to do with what motivates Autry to read. For him, the connection of what he reads to his personal experiences is paramount. Of the eight respondents, only Katie, herself a journalist and writer, expressed an interest in reading with an eye to the structure of text and language, and her motivation to do so was one of many reasons she reads. All eight respondents spoke of the pleasure of interacting with the written page, and several of them spoke of choosing their reading materials based on whatever "interests" them. Rosenblatt would note that all of these readers respond to text by constructing their own meanings, all of them talking about the reading experience converting into entertainment and pleasure. Nigel went so far as to describe himself as "living in the book." David ties his reading to his love of video games, a way to immerse himself in fantasy and vicarious experiences.

Theory of Mind concepts, particularly introspection, are clearly expressed in the interviews with the five participants who wondered about how reading processes work within their own minds. Angie particularly noted how reading expands her imagination, helps her with retention of information and increases her vocabulary. Randy spoke of

experiences where reading exposed him to ideas he had not considered before. Autry spoke of learning "the truth" through his reading and how he might "read a book about something and it will change the way I have pictured something my whole life." Katie reflected on how reading helps her "grow." Sharon noted that reading helps her visualize in her mind "what is going on." These reflections on the part of readers about the impact of their reading lives on their thought processes offer a clue to how reading relates to self-efficacy, perhaps nurturing motivation to persevere and overcome difficult circumstances such as homelessness. This aspect of the interaction between reading and the navigation of life's challenges begs for further research.

The terms metacognition, self-regulation, and self-regulated learning are sometimes used interchangeably, especially in educational literature and research, but researchers have also offered delineation of distinctions among the three (Dinsmore, Alexander, & Loughlin, 2008). Flavell (1979) defined metacognition as "thinking about thinking", attempting to describe the developmental aspects about how a person monitors one's own cognition. Bandura (1977) conceptualized human efficacy as the interaction between person, behavior, and environment, a construct forming the basis of his Social Learning Theory. Behavior mediates the environment and is shaped by motivation. In the 1980s, the importance of self-regulation in the classroom was posited by a number of educational researchers leading to the development of Self Regulated Learning (SRL) as a construct with its own applications in educational settings. Taken together, the three constructs on metacognition, self-regulation and self-regulated learning share the proposition that "individuals make efforts to monitor their thoughts and actions and to act accordingly to gain some control over them" (Dinsmore, et al. 2008, p. 409).

So far as could be determined, no researcher to date has focused the lenses of metacognition and self-regulation on the real-life adult experience of overcoming homelessness. It is worth noting that much of the early research in this sphere was conducted with children because of the implications for educational practice (e.g. Nash-Ditzel, 2010). More recently, metacognition has been researched as an aspect of cognitive psychology, with an emphasis on how to measure it (e.g. Harrison and Vallin, 2018).

Relationships between the Experiences of Homelessness and the Individual's Reading Life

All eight of the respondents in this study specifically linked their reading lives to the experience of homelessness. Four themes emerged:

a. *Reading provides a distraction from negative feelings of loneliness, melancholy, and/or boredom experienced while homeless.*

The effects of boredom have long been the subject of research and of concern especially to the business community seeking to maximize productivity. Rupp and Vodanovich (1997) showed that boredom is linked to anger and aggression, Farmer and Sundberg (1986) investigated the link between boredom and depression, and Vodanovich and Rupp (1999) linked boredom to procrastination. Watt and Hargis (2010) noted that boredom has traditionally been viewed as a temporary condition or as a result of dull and repetitive work, but asserted there is "growing acknowledgment of the dispositional nature of boredom." (p.164).

Published narratives about adult homelessness rarely fail to mention how boring homelessness can be (e.g. Perez, 1987). A recent book about homelessness in Romania (O'Neill, 2017) underscores the stultifying crush of boredom on adults experiencing

homelessness. In societies where consumption is a feature of daily life, O'Neill shows how those without a job, a home, or money to spend manage boredom by seeking stimulation. The need for stimulation may be the reason the adult readers in this study so clearly valued reading as entertainment, all eight of them using the word "enjoy" when describing their reading lives. Five of them noted how reading passes the time

b. *Reading experiences temporarily "transports" the reader (at least mentally) out of the negative experience of homelessness by allowing the person to "travel."*

Five of the eight respondents and one additional study participant who wrote about his reading life shared some length about how reading transcends time and place: "I like getting transported to different times and places;" "feel like I'm living in the book;" "you can travel in your mind;" "you are in the story;" "they inspire me to want to go places;" "it'll take my mind there instead of where I would wander back into the past and missing what I left."

These comments echo a conclusion reported by Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer (2006): "When a reader chooses a book, she is choosing to enter a world and live there for a given period of time." (p. 153). What struck me as poignant about the comments from the study respondents was the wistful look on each face as he or she spoke of being transported, almost as though they wished they could remain wherever their reading had taken them.

c. *Reading experiences assist in managing personal behavior necessary to maintaining an interface with services to overcome homelessness.* The emergence of this theme among the study respondents was unexpected. While this idea was not expressed by a majority of the interviewees, four of them offered information about their ongoing

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mental health issues and spoke of how their reading lives assisted them with this challenge. A fifth respondent did not speak of dealing with a diagnosed mental health issue, but she did state flatly that reading "helps me keep my sanity here." These comments took me into the research on bibliotherapy (e.g. Pearson, 1962) by now a tried-and-true-strategy used with groups in mental health settings. However, I could find no studies of the use of bibliotherapy with individuals outside of a clinical setting. My respondents arrived at their own conclusions about the power of reading to stabilize emotional well-being, and the words they use to describe the process were striking: "appease;" "let a lot of the worries step aside;" "it's my escape"; "reading is medicine".

d. *Reading experiences ameliorate stress by providing calm and/or comfort in the unfamiliar and uncertain circumstance of homelessness.*

In contrast to the need for stimulation in the midst of boredom, some of the study's respondents talked about reading as a way to obtain calm and comfort, perhaps a temporary peacefulness. Linking reading and respite, this finding confirms and extends Harvey's (2002) findings. Randy, for example, was so worried that his frustrations and anxiety in his uncertain situation might explode into aggression, to the point where he could be banned from the Transitions shelter, he several times expressed the importance of calming down. He said when he is not quietly reading or otherwise engaged he quietly crochets as an antidote to the impulses he struggles to control. Lisa referred several times to being in a "strange" environment and her "longing" to return to her home in Long Island where she could be with her pets. Her homesickness was perhaps a part of her frequent reminiscing in her interview about her life as a child on a farm. She was aware of this: "I have a lot of melancholy. And reading a book can divert my mind away from

that…instead of where I would wander away back into the past." She described homelessness as "tumultuous", and clearly sought a quiet sense of comfort.

Three of the respondents immediately answered the completion prompt "I need to know…" with words expressing the uncertainty of experiencing homelessness. I need to know what the future holds, or what comes next, or that "my future is in God's hands." Katie was passionate about homelessness as "horrible, the bane of my existence, unforeseeable and hopefully temporary." Katie was also the respondent who spoke eloquently about the familiarity of holding a book in her hands, even liking the "sound of turning the pages."

Implications of Life in a Transitional Homeless Shelter

The Transitions Homeless Center requires compliance with a specific program of appointments, classes, and individual effort toward self-sufficiency. All of the study respondents participated fully, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. It is mandatory to accept the authority of the shelter staff and case managers as well as adherence to strict routines for day-to-day living in order to maintain order, if not harmony, among the shelter residents. All of this implies a surrender of adult autonomy and independence. This is not a comfortable life, and I'm convinced no one would choose such a set of circumstances except as a last resort.

Yet for all of the study respondents, living in a homeless shelter was appreciated as an improvement over life on the streets, or in prison, or on the sofa of a friend, however temporary the shelter's protection might be. Much of the sense of uncertainty among these respondents derived from the likelihood of being turned out, aware as they were of the limitations on how long shelter services might be available. The most

pernicious stress for a sheltered adult may be the ticking clock, and the need to find more permanent arrangements quickly or consequences far more dire than shelter residence could result. At the same time, study respondents were aware that only a minority manage to achieve independent living before time runs out and they must leave the shelter. All of them recognized that resources are limited, and prioritized to protect the most vulnerable and those viewed as most deserving: the young, the old, the ill and the veteran. In most communities, it is the able-bodied, middle-aged man, woman or couple without children, living precariously but independently on minimum wage, who fall prey to a fluctuating economy and the growing shortage of affordable housing, losing the job and then the home, who may be most at risk for a prolonged life on the streets.

Implications of Community Response to Homelessness

Response to the societal challenge of homelessness in the 21st century in the US appears to be bounded by two overarching features of contemporary American life: the nature of a representative democracy founded on the principles of federalism, where power is shared among local, regional and national entities and is derived from the ebb and flow of the popular vote; and the growing unpredictability of capitalist economies, increasingly intertwined in a global age. Public policies and funding are promulgated to address homelessness by elected bodies at all levels, and the availability of resources, policy priorities, and strategies for action sometimes overlap or contradict one another. Public/'private partnerships are also a feature of service provision, and the involvement of faith-based ministries is vital but further complicates efforts to streamline systems and maximize resources.

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Homelessness results from a myriad of complex factors, including societal attitudes, economic pressures, public policy making, and personal circumstances ranging from irresponsibility and criminality to plain bad luck. All of these factors are inherently resistant to quick solutions. Consistent, sustained effort to address homelessness has always been a daunting task, and the parameters of success are difficult to define.

Yet the local service providers who directly grapple with the problem on a daily basis accumulate success stories and are quick to report them in their newsletters, fundraising appeals, and local media. Within the microcosm of this study, eight adults all attributed their ability to find sustaining respite, relief and escape from homelessness, if even for a short time, to their reading lives. Their ready access to reading materials was facilitated by the outreach efforts of public librarians, who made possible the presence of on-site services at the homeless shelter, as well as ensuring an open door to the full scope of the public library main branch facility located nearby. Perhaps the most significant result of this study is a reminder that addressing homelessness is not only about physical security and well-being; attention to the intellectual, emotional, and educational sustenance of the human mind is equally if not more critical.

Within the discipline of information science, it may be worth noting that none of these individuals talked about reading as the application of a skill necessary to fill out forms, complete job applications, or search for housing. Instead of appreciation for the practical applications of reading, they all spoke most immediately and most passionately about reading as pleasure and as a lifelong activity.

Implications of Commonalities among Individual Reading Lives

When the reading lives of adults who happen to be experiencing homelessness are examined in the context of research about how reading empowers, perhaps it should not be surprising to find evidence about the pleasure of a book and its ability to transcend and/or influence a person's circumstances.

In this study, seven of the eight respondents spontaneously reminisced about reading in childhood. Carlsen and Sherrill (1988) described how adult readers recall the joy of hearing books read aloud in early childhood or by teachers in school. While commenting on the warm childhood memories offered by adult respondents in their research, Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer (2006) noted, "Reading is not a matter of mind only. The emotional dimension of reading is there from the beginning" (p. 152).

Ross et al. also found that "Books themselves can be friends and comforters, always to be relied on in hard times" (p.152). My study respondent Katie stated, "I like the sound the pages make as I turn, I like actually seeing the print on the page, that to me brings a level of familiarity and comfort that I find appealing… I need something to help me get away from the doldrums of this place."

Angie's awareness of the development of her cognitive skills (focus, improved vocabulary, organization) as a result of her reading provides an example of another conclusion: "For many avid readers the experience of reading itself is an area of competency as well as independence" (Ross et al. pp 152-153).

Ross et al. also found that "readers report being reluctant to leave the fictional world, carrying the book characters in their minds alongside whatever else is going on in their everyday world, and being anxious to get back to the world of the book" (p. 154).

When Sharon mentioned forgetting to get into the dinner line because she was engrossed in a mystery, she was sharing her reluctance to leave her fictional world.

In many ways, the respondents in this study are typical of avid readers everywhere.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Limitations of the Study

Challenges to the rigor of qualitative research persist in the 21st century (Cypress, 2017), continuing four decades of debate about the reliability, validity, and generalizability of ethnographic, naturalistic, and constructivist approaches to inquiry (Denzin, 2008). Issues have revolved around the precise definition of quality (Cypress, 2017). Lincoln and Guba (1991) identified four aspects of trustworthiness relevant to both quantitative and qualitative studies: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. This study has endeavored to apply all four aspects, starting with the concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research as parallel to the empiricist concepts of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Manning, 1997).

Like most qualitative inquiries (Maxwell, 2005), the research design for this study was not linear. Planning and implementation were simultaneous and Colaizzi's steps of inquiry were repeated multiple times during the process. Constantly cognizant of myself as the primary research instrument for this study, I sought to bracket my biases over a period of six years by keeping a research journal (available for review) and during data analysis I wrote memos of reflexivity (see Appendix C). An audit trail consisting of documents related to the study and a coding notebook are also available. When coding, as much as possible I used the actual vocabulary words present in the transcripts.

I also personally edited (for misspellings and errors) and re-formatted the professionally-transcribed audiotaped data; the original tapes, initial transcriptions, and edited master transcript are all available. I endeavored to be transparent about my positionality and professional background in all my relationships while conducting the study, taking special care to truly listen to interview respondents. My methodology sought to triangulate data sources by using a variety of methods.

Working from a constructivist paradigm, I recognize my findings are not generalizable in the traditional sense, but there is no reason why the methodology could not be transferred to similar sites with similar respondents to exam the experience of independent reading, that is, with a sampling of non-caregiving adults seeking to overcome homelessness, living in a transitional shelter that provides comprehensive services, and located in a city of similar size and climate. That said, transferability may also be related to an additional contingency: the need for the researcher to adopt a participatory paradigm in order to secure the trust of the respondents.

One limitation may be inherent to any similar study, however. While seeking to understand the experience of homelessness, how does one determine that a potential informant is actually homeless? Certainly one should not determine this by appearance. This challenge is why I limited my sample to sheltered adults. The experiences of sheltered homelessness and "living on the streets" are likely to be radically different. Out of respect for the dignity of all human beings, I was not willing to circulate amongst those accessing support services like a free meal or a shower asking whether or not individuals might fit the definition of homelessness. Similarly, my data-gathering in the library were limited to observing the environment, interviewing stakeholders, and

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reviewing library policies and procedures. I did not disturb any library patrons in any way.

Perhaps the greatest limitation of this study was the inaccessibility of respondents for follow-up interviews, precluding the important qualitative technique of member-checking the study's conclusions. Because the interview respondents were all required to leave the shelter at the end of specified periods of time even if they were not able to secure independent housing, when I needed to follow-up with respondents in order to extend and enrich the data, I could not locate the interviewees. The shelter staff was not willing or able to share personal information such as addresses or even whether or not housing was secured after interviewees left the shelter. In two situations I did schedule a follow-up interview when I knew within a short timeframe (a day or week) that a follow-up interview would be useful, but both times the interviewee did not appear for the appointment. I did anticipate this situation, recognizing the transient nature of homelessness, and was not surprised. The limitation of only one interview per respondent dictated the primary reason why this study is descriptive in nature and did not seek to develop theory.

The veracity of the study respondents might be open to question. All of the adults interviewed volunteered. All of them also had a relationship with me over periods ranging from 10 days to several weeks in the context of voluntary participation in classes designed to encourage open communication through artistic expression. A review of the interview transcripts will show that all of the respondents voluntarily shared personal information with no incentive to do so other than the quality of the communication between myself and the interviewee. There was never an incentive to prevaricate.

As a novice researcher, a further limitation rests in my inexperience. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) posit interviewing as a craft honed by experience. As an educator and literacy practitioner of more than 40 years' experience, and as a hiring program administrator, I have interviewed hundreds of individuals. However, I found conducting interviews in the context of qualitative research to be very different from assessing learner needs, querying the effectiveness of my teaching, or training a literacy tutor. "Interview knowledge is produced in a conversational relation; it is contextual, linguistic, narrative, and pragmatic" (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 21). In my career, I was always interviewing from the position of authority. In this research, I was always interviewing conscious of the need to minimize my position of authority. I take heart in this observation: "The quality of interviewing is judged by the strength and value of the knowledge produced" (p. 20).

5.2 Recommendations for Public Librarians

Cathcart (2008) was particularly concerned with the implications of e-government upon library professionals. Increasingly, at the local, state and national levels, access to social services requires access to the Internet. This fact alone places librarians squarely in the middle of the digital divide as they work to meet the needs of many library patrons, especially the elderly and the poor. Cathcart (2008) focused on the need for training:

> Perhaps there is a need for the role of the librarian to evolve, with the incorporation of social service training in library schools to better prepare librarians for the social advocacy aspect of public librarianship. Or, if the blurring line between librarianship and social work is too messy for some, that too can inform decisions on library policies, staffing, and services. If serving as de facto social workers is beyond the purview of librarianship, who will provide such services, and how will libraries involve more appropriate stakeholders and service providers? (pp. 90-91)

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Crafting recommendations for library school curricula is beyond the scope and intent of this inquiry. In view of the findings of this study, and after interviewing public librarians for their input, I offer the following recommendations for professional practice to those seeking to address the issue of homelessness:

a. *Construct pathways for library staff to learn more about homelessness*. For example, librarians' concerns about the potential for violence (Pressley, 2017), rooted in the perception of widespread mental illness among the homeless, indicates a need for an understanding that the majority of adults experiencing homelessness are not seriously mentally ill.

b. *Initiate an assessment or reassessment of the library's responsiveness* to homeless patrons. Review the library's website, code of conduct, and procedures needed or already in place for dealing with disruptions, patron complaints, and the attitudes of staff toward inclusiveness and outreach. Giesler (2017) provides an interview protocol for such an assessment as an appendix to his journal article. Consider the implications of the assessment results for staff in-service training.

c. *Investigate the staff's commitment to advocacy* not only for libraries but for marginalized populations, then challenge the staff to speak out about stereotypes and correct misinformation and misconceptions through their own personal affiliations in the community. Advocacy extends beyond the professional workplace.

d. *Identify stakeholders, policymakers, and service providers* in the local community connected to the issue of homelessness. Find out the extent to which the community centralizes or coordinates service provision and if so, begin by contacting the primary entity. Consider how the library staff might participate and contribute to

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opportunities for public dialogue, including with the faith community. Consider collaborations such as convening a forum, setting up a library on-site in homeless shelters, and/or creating ways to promote public awareness of the complexities and challenges of addressing homelessness.

e. *Construct or adopt another library's Lib Guides* about adult homelessness and adult literacy and publish them.

f. *Ensure that the library's policymaking stakeholders are familiar* with ALA's handbook, *Public Library Services for the Poor.*

g. *Check with the State Library* to see what resources are offered regarding homelessness.

h. If the library's service area includes institutions of higher education, *ascertain if any studies are underway regarding homelessness* and if so, how the library might support the research. This might be done in consultation with academic librarians at the higher ed academic library.

i. *Consider collaborations with institutions of higher education* including service internships in the library or collaborative research projects for students studying social service provision, public administration, healthcare, criminal justice and law, and other disciplines intersecting with homelessness.

j. *Consider developing or expanding library programming* directly tailored to individuals experiencing homelessness similar to those mentioned in this study, such as developing collections specifically with the homeless in mind, book clubs, book drives and book giveaways, "books by bike" (Johnson, 2014), the Book Well program

(McLaine, 2010), guest speakers from social service agencies, and/or drives for supplies such as necessity/personal hygiene kits.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Anderson, Simpson, and Fisher's (2012) conclusion that librarians may be ill-prepared to confront homelessness points to the need for further research about the preparation of librarians to meet the needs of homeless patrons. They suggested "in-depth interviews with library staff in branches with large populations of homeless patrons" (p. 187). Discussion of their findings did not speculate as to reasons why their respondents felt ill-prepared. An expansion of their exploratory study seems merited. Perhaps research surveying the curricula of library schools could help pinpoint preservice training needs. Assessment of in-service training needs in regard to serving the homeless might also prove fruitful.

This study did not attempt to explore the possibility of a relationship between independent reading experiences and the long-term outcomes for adults seeking to overcome homelessness. Do adults who read transition out of homelessness more readily compared to those who do not read? What relationships exist, if any, between reading and self-efficacy? Does the experience of reading itself inspire perseverance, action, or social inclusiveness?

While bracketing my own biases, I uncovered a personal expectation that respondents would draw on their reading lives for inspiration to persevere through stressful circumstances. Perhaps because of the limitations of this study, particularly the difficulty in pursuing follow-up interviews, or perhaps because my own reading life manifests itself in ways different from this population, my expectation of data

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demonstrating that reading can inspire and equip did not materialize. I didn't ask my respondents if they felt inspired to persevere and if so, whether their reading lives might be related to their abilities to press on. The question deserves consideration.

This study did not embrace the values or practices of participatory action research, but because the data-gathering process included participatory activities, study participants gave voice, especially in the creative writing class, to the experience of homelessness in a way that yielded additional data pointing to the need for further research. Those who chose to write about their own homelessness were not prompted to do so in any way. As I consciously and purposefully created a classroom atmosphere maximizing participant choice, I stressed writing as a form of self-expression without any guidance about topics. Obtaining permission from those who were willing to leave their writing with me, I compiled excerpts (Appendix E) that raise questions deserving of study.

For example, one participant in the writing class wrote:

> Being homeless is not half of the struggle I thought it would be. I never thought I would meet some of the most smartest (*sic)*, gregarious, powerful people so far (*sic*) my life. Being homeless has shown me a group of people that live, struggle, and strive every single day. I'm learning how much more every day is valuable… I never thought I would feel this way about homeless people. I have made nothing but friends, associates, people with names I don't know, but share a common bond… I'm homeless, everyone is homeless. But we don't look at ourselves as some people do.

For some, perhaps homelessness results not in trauma but in growth. How and to what extent do community investments in helping individuals experiencing homelessness result in outcomes beyond stabilizing housing status? Perhaps research could provide an answer. In today's rapidly changing political environment, perhaps it is time for the Gallup poll of 2007 to be administered again to track society's perceptions of

homelessness. Have stereotypes deepened, or are communities becoming more compassionate and more willing to take a deeper look?

More typically, some of the participants in the writing class shared bits and pieces of stories of family dysfunction, physical disasters, or lifelong deprivation:

> I was an abused child growing hope (*sic*). Lost my father when I was 17 years old. Lost my mom at 14. Been on my own since I was 12 years old. It's been really hard for me but I am still here with God's blessing. I've been in a car accident (*sic)* 20 years ago that left me disabled and unable to work. I came to Columbia South Carolina to live with my sister, helped her out, then she kicked me out. Now I am here at Transitions.

My examination of this study's context, the experience of homelessness, underscores the difficulties researchers encounter when studying homelessness: factors leading to homelessness are myriad and intertwined; homeless status is episodic and profoundly affected by local circumstances such as real estate markets, local public policies and the robustness of local resources to address the problem; and transitioning out of homelessness, for adults, is related to individual self-efficacy and highly personal situations.

It may be fair to ask whether the eight individuals experiencing homelessness who were interviewed for this study seem unusual in their passion for reading. From the perspective of a researcher, it is not possible to draw such a conclusion from this qualitative study investigating the inner life of a small number of adult readers coping with homelessness. Yet I can say that it was not difficult to locate and connect with readers to conduct this study by simply interacting authentically over time and in depth with adults experiencing homelessness. Numerous times while conducting observations at several service delivery sites, I noticed individuals tucked into quieter corners, reading

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books. Often I saw adults standing in line for a free meal carrying or reading a book. Regularly I replaced magazines in the shelter library because the ones I had left the week before were gone. I also recall the popularity of newspapers in the shelter.

This study has touched on the significance of the individuality of homelessness, not only the diversity of the human "population" demographically, but also wide variance in the willingness and capacity for communities to address the issue. In a global age, perhaps there is a need for cross-cultural comparative studies of efforts to address homelessness and associated policy-making at both local and national levels. The challenges for further research like those encountered in this study should not discourage the pursuit of evidence-based best practices in order to ameliorate homelessness by understanding its causes and effects and identifying potential remedies. The cost to a community's most valuable resource, human potential, is too high.

Several of the respondents to the interview questions in this study were as passionate about the information they derived from their reading and their plans to use it as they were about reading as an enjoyable activity. For information scientists interested in the context of homelessness and its relationship to information behavior, this poses questions. Do individuals coping with major life challenges pursue information in some special way? Perhaps more urgently, or with more compelling purpose? How do affective needs influence information seeking?

As the director of an adult literacy program, I was once asked to bring books to an emergency shelter to give away. I loaded up my car with 10 boxes of donated paperback volumes, and as I unloaded them I was immediately surrounded by adults eager to investigate what I had brought. By the end of the day, all the books had found a new

home, and I had enjoyed numerous conversations talking with readers about our mutual experiences reading the same popular fiction.

From my perspective as an experienced adult educator who specialized in literacy instruction, I continue to embrace the definition of a *reader* as someone who derives meaning from text, whether at a basic level or by utilizing more sophisticated skills. The power of reading lies not in the content, the subject matter or the genre. Especially for adults, it is all about the intersection of the mind of the reader with the context of his or her life. Public librarians who understand this dynamic may commit to greater efforts to expand library services to everyone, no matter how marginalized.

Summarizing a list of qualitative studies about reading, Ross et al. (2006) concluded:

> Over and over… readers say: Books give me comfort; make me feel better about myself; reassure me that I am normal and not a freak because characters in books have feelings like mine; and provide confirmation that others have gone through similar experiences and survived. Books are a way of recharging my batteries and helping me keep my life in balance… Books help me clarify my feelings; change my way of thinking about things; help me make a decision; and give me the strength and courage to make some major changes in my own life. (p. 163

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APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

The purpose of this research is to explore how reading affects the lives of individual adults experiencing homelessness. You have been selected as a possible participant because you are a resident of a transitional homeless shelter.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this interview, you will not be affected in any way. If you decide to participate, you may answer "pass" in response to any question. You may stop the interview at any time. There are no known risks to participation except those you might expect in everyday life. Your responses will remain confidential, and the data and recordings from this research will be kept safe and shared only as an anonymous compilation of all participants' responses. You may ask that the recorder be stopped at any time. You are encouraged to ask the interviewer any questions you like at any time, and you will be provided with a copy of this form.

To thank you for your participation, everyone who is interviewed will receive a small gift valued at no more than $10 whether the interview is completed or not.

Information on the rights of human subjects in research is available through the University of South Carolina's Institutional Review Board at University of South Carolina, 1600 Hampton Street, Suite 414, Columbia, SC, 29208.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Part A: Introductions

1. Interviewer's revelatory introduction of self, ice-breaking chat.
2. Informed consent: purpose of study, nature and use of audio recording.
    Recorder turned on.

Part B: Interview Prompts

Section One

1. Is reading important to you? Tell me why you read.

2. Does reading have anything to do with your life? How is it related to your
daily living right now?

3. Imagine yourself somewhere reading something. Describe what you are doing.
Where are you? What are you reading? What are you reading about? What are
you thinking about?

4. Is there any topic you would like to read more about? If so, why?

Section Two: Finish these sentences with the first thing that comes to you mind:

      a. Reading is…
      b. Reading helps me to…
      c. I need to know…
      d. Change is….
      e. Not having a place to live is…
      f. I wonder why reading…
      g. When I am reading I…
      h. In order to read, I need…
      i. I think reading could be…

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Section Three

1. How do you choose your reading materials?

2. Is it easy or hard to get reading materials? Why?

3. Imagine that right now, you could read anything you want to. Tell me what you are thinking of.

4. Pretend you are telling a friend about the best thing you ever read. What would you say?

5. Here is a list of different kinds of reading materials. Which ones do you read? Which ones do you like best? Why do you like them? Which ones do you never read? Why not?

     a. Books
     b. Magazines
     c. Comics or graphic novels
     d. Newspapers
     e. Reading materials that teach me something
     f. Reading materials that are stories
     g. Reading materials that have pictures
     h. Reading materials that help me
     i. Things on the internet

Section Four

1.Do you use the library? Why? When? How often?

2.Do you have a library card?

3.Have you ever talked to a librarian? Tell me about it.

4.Does the library help you? How? Is the library ever a problem for you?

APPENDIX C

RESEARCHER'S DATA ANALYSIS MEMOS

(underlined sections are conclusion statements)

My heart for homeless adults and a personal passion for reading

It is so difficult to separate my emotions from my researcher eye. I don't even know if I should. Half the time I feel such worry, sadness, and concern for my research respondents. I've lost sleep wondering what is happening to them, and the adults experiencing homelessness who were actually interviewed for my study by this time feel like my friends. I feel angry at the shortage of affordable housing, as I watch good people struggle with circumstances that were not of their own making. It seems so unjust. I want to straighten it all out. It worries me that these feelings would cause me to read a lot into their responses. When I combine these feelings with my experience and commitment to education, my bias seems overwhelming. For example, KK, page 114, says she wonders why reading isn't enjoyed by more people, if they only knew the benefits from reading that it could bring them. I identify immediately with her concern that reading may be a dying art. I think about all the attention to short misspelled mutterings on twitter, how what I call the "tyranny of data" seems to drive everything, and I feel that our society is losing something.

It occurs to me that these feelings may be the source of the many times I have been downright depressed doing this work. Of course it's depressing! We're talking about homelessness! We're talking about reading, my lifelong passion!

On the other hand, I also sense my desire to make heroes out of my respondents, because to me they have persevered through so much. Not one of them has given up, as evidenced by their extended commitment to using the resources available at the shelter. Not once has any of them expressed despair to me, and as I look at the transcripts there were several opportunities when this could've happened. But it didn't. I think I want to believe that every one of them will make it, and soon, and the temptation to connect this to their reading lives is also something else I have to resist. My research has not shown that reading necessarily accelerates or directly facilitates emerging from homelessness. But it does show that it can ameliorate what? Perhaps a loss of self efficacy, as evidenced by the respondents' desire to continue to learn through their reading? Most of all, I think the expressions of reading as escape, even to the point of "keeping my sanity", or Autry avoiding a release of anger by distracting himself with his reading, documents the contribution of a reading life to maintaining or achieving mental and emotional equilibrium, at least temporarily.

Autry, page 62, strikes me straight to the heart when he says, "Everything else can go but you can still read. Even if you lost your eyesight, you could still consume a book through your ears. My greatest fear is losing my eyesight for just that reason". Is he expressing sorrow about his losses? As I look at the rest of the interview he plainly does, but this quote does not contain that message. His sorrow, if relevant, must be documented by other quotes. I do not have other quotes about this. I note that I have the same fear about losing my eyesight, and for the same reason.

I see Randy expressing a wish that more people would do more reading, similarly to KK. And he says that knowledge is power. Does this mean he wishes people who don't read would have more power? No, he didn't say that. Yet somehow I feel a yearning in his comment. No doubt this comes from my teacher persona, a reflection of my strong passion for learning, my love of reading, and years of frustration trying to convince young and old to share this value with me.

Nicholas wonders why reading is so entertaining for him. This is metacognition. Thinking about thinking has been a lifelong pursuit of mine and I immediately click with someone else who is reflecting on their own thinking processes. I have a passion for teaching people how to think about their own thinking, not in the sense of what they should believe, but in the sense of helping them develop the skills that are involved for metacognition. Does Nicholas wonder about why reading entertains him because he was incarcerated and experienced hours of boredom? Perhaps, but he didn't say that. KK however, says straight out that it's boring to be in a homeless shelter and that she is trying to fill the hours. Sheryl expresses her need to have something to do. My reading has come across adults talking about the boredom of homeless shelters over and over again. I think I can conclude that the many comments in my interviews about reading functioning as a diversion documents this idea of the power of reading to entertain, divert, or provide respite in circumstances when boredom reigns.

Reading can be an escape from homelessness.

My thinking about this section must be documented in writing, because I believe the portions in the quoted data in red to be evidence directly linking reading experiences to homeless experiences. This is critical to get right. The word "escape" is a little uncomfortable, as though my respondents are tied up. Certainly I have had my own "escapes" that had nothing to do with reading. I choose to use this word because several of them used it, directly connecting reading with escape from homelessness. Using my respondents' own words as much as possible and reporting my results is out of my respect and admiration for them, and fits with best practices for ethnographic study.

A-48, 49 (Reading helps me to…) yeah, kinda, somewhat a distraction…(Reading helps me to…?) yeah, of course escape…a good book, you know you can go away for a little bit.

First, Angie. She says reading is a distraction and an escape, allowing her to go away. It is written in the present tense, and the context of her residence in a homeless shelter implies she is going away from homelessness when she reads, but is that really true? I think so, but I realize I conclude this from my knowledge of her as a whole person

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combined with my experience as a professional educator. Well, not completely. I believe anyone would read her transcript and conclude that she is a lifelong learner with a hunger for knowledge and that she uses her reading skills to feed that hunger. Her frustration and almost desperation in being homeless is also strongly implied in many places in the transcript. When her access to the library is compromised by someone else's behavior, her reaction is extraordinarily strong, to the point where she is expelled. I was also Angie's art teacher in the shelter environment. I observed her on several occasions expressing her frustration because she was living there, through both her unsolicited comments and her actions. Twice she left the class and told me later it was because she "couldn't be around these people." <u>So yes, I can conclude that she wants to to out and that reading is an escape from homelessness for her.</u>

KK-114-115, 118 (When I am reading I…?) tune everything out…So yes, it's an escape. It's not too deep. It's a way to get away in your mind. It's an escape and it does counteract the feel and the rhythm of the facility.

KK's connection of escape from homelessness through reading and is clear from the quote.

L-140 (So reading gives you a break?) Yeah, because it diverts my mind away from it… I have a lot of melancholy. And reading a book can divert my mind away from that.

As in the case of Angie, my broader knowledge of Lisa beyond the quote is part of my conclusion that she escapes homelessness through reading. In class, she often expressed her homesickness, her loss of her pets (which she also referenced in the transcript) made necessary by where she is living, and her struggles with melancholy. She was also the first interrupter in David's transcript, a conversation that took place in the shelter, and her frantic search for her book is obvious in the transcript. <u>So yes, I can conclude that Lisa uses reading to escape from her homeless circumstance.</u>

R-153… it's my escape. I guess it is a good one word to describe it, is my escape.

Randy's idea of reading as escape from homelessness is the most difficult to document. In the transcript, he expresses his worry about losing his bed. He also speaks a great deal about calming down, about anxiety, and the importance of managing it, and how he uses reading and his crochet hobby to manage himself. But is his concern about calming down connected to his worry about losing his bed? The rules for the shelter are clear and I have documented them in the text of my dissertation. If Randy were unable to remain calm, the loss of his bed would definitely occur. Randy also spontaneously mentioned in the transcript that the cause of his homelessness was alcoholism and drug addiction, even to the point of listing his drugs of choice: " crack, meths, heroin". I know he still struggles with alcohol because I could detect it on his breath on one occasion. Therefore, in the context of his residence in the shelter, he has reason to be anxious about losing his bed and he is clear about using his reading to manage his anxiety. <u>So yes, I can conclude that Randy sees reading as a way to escape from his homeless circumstances, in order to manage himself, at least to the point of remaining in a shelter rather than on the</u>

<u>street.</u> (Note: Angie's transcript also mentions a fear of losing her bed in the shelter, and she also mentions challenges controlling her anger.)

Reading develops the mind.

A-23, 27, 32, 34 It opens up your mind… it helps you open up your mind…it opens up your imagination to what's possible. (Reading is) necessary. (What makes it necessary?) But if you read, I mean it keeps your mind, I think it makes you smarter and I think it keeps your mind functioning and moving forward…(Reading helps you bring back things you learned before?)... it helps you like, retain it, like you can study something but if you don't read like, a lot of extra books on it and stuff like that you really don't grasp it. Some of it seems more real. Like you can use your imagination more because you've already read on it, you know what I'm saying… I just think when you open up your imagination, when you do, you enjoy reading…So maybe you could think differently than anybody else because whatever you've read is different than anybody else.

Aub-60 sometimes I can read a book about something and it will change the way that I have pictured something from my whole life, you know, what I thought to be true, I will read a book and, that is what can give a sense of accomplishment, you actually, you know, learned the truth. That it makes sense. (That it changes your perspective?) Right exactly.

S-92 You know while I'm reading, I'm visualizing in my mind, what is going on.

KK-114 (Reading helps me to…) Grow as an individual.

Angie, Autry, and Sharon's comments about how reading develops their minds are clear. KK's comment about reading helping her to grow as an individual is more oblique. Certainly I personally equate my own growth to learning, and my lifelong learning to reading. I definitely conflate learning with growing. Is growing as an individual the same as developing your mind? It seems to me this is true, because again my teacher persona equates the development of any mind with personal growth. KK is the best educated of all my respondents, and she was employed for some years in an intellectual pursuit, that of a journalist and writer. Her transcript also shows her deep admiration for me as a teacher. She refers to a love of reading "since I was old enough to hold a book in my hands." She also wonders why people do not read more, "and not just reading for recreation it can be reading to learn, reading to grow, reading to improve." <u>This sounds to me like the development of the mind.</u>

Reading fosters organization

A-30 (So you're saying that reading helps you get organized?) Yes. Yes, it does, absolutely. I get more organized depending on what I'm doing**.**

This is an interesting comment from Angie but she is the only one who links reading to her personal organization. It is interesting to me because I never thought of this before. I wish I had asked Angie more questions about this. Because I have set the standard for a Theme as needing at least two Repeating Ideas, i.e. from two different people, I decided to eliminate this conclusion from my findings.

Reading requires time and/or resources

N-5 (In order to read I need…) Quiet

KK-115 a place to sit and I prefer quiet but it doesn't have to be,

A-26 just to be able to focus. I couldn't read in a room full of people. I can read in solitude. I kind of like to -- I mean when I read usually I just turn on some music or something like that. I like to have music in the background and (inaudible) it depends on what I'm reading , I like to have the solitude. Sometimes it doesn't matter.

AUB-51 My glasses. [LAUGHS] And I got a set of earplugs, they help right now.

L-141 A place to sit, a corner to go in, I could actually sit anywhere and read.

R-153 Free time, that's it, time to do it.

The interview protocol queried "in order to read I need…?" But the data did not yield enough Repeating Ideas to identify Themes or a Theoretical Construct. Some people need quiet, others don't, including me. Some people have more time than others etc. As I think about concluding that "reading requires time and/or resources" I see my own desire for more money to be spent on reading instruction, more availability of books, more time to read myself. If I had wanted to research what resources are necessary for reading, I would do it through a quantitative study with a much larger sample.

Homelessness is stressful.

N-5 (Not having a place to live is …?) a hurdle in life.

A-25 Not having a place to live is…?) stressful, frustrating. I think it definitely hits up my anxiety a lot. And it adds a lot to your other worries because if you don't have your own apartment then if you lose the bed you're living in, what's going to happen next?

Aub-46, 50 I'll always have PTSD and anxiety. I have a counselor but the anxiety has been really kicking my butt…(Not having a place to live is…?)   traumatic but I'm praying on it and I am taking a stand that God has put me here for a reason, to prepare me for the rest of my life

S-87 (Not having a place to live is…?) Frustrating…annoying

KK-114, 115 (Not having a place to live is…?)   Horrible. It's the bane of my existence. Unforeseeable and certainly never fine being in this situation. And hopefully temporary, extremely temporary. I'm just stuck here sitting and reading fills the time.

L-141 This is a terrible, tumultuous change in my life

R-153, 157 Well, it's stressful only if you allow it to…in here., I feel like that you worry about how you never know when you might slip up and do a little thing, well, I mean it may not be a major thing, but in here worrying about losing your bed, I know that's stressful.

In this section about the stress of homelessness, <u>I need to think about what I believe is stressful.</u> Without veering off into a side issue about varying definitions of stress, I have chosen the word "stress" to include (using the words of the respondents): a hurdle, frustration, PTSD, anxiety, annoyance, the bane of my existence, trauma, unforeseeable circumstance, never fine, stuck, terrible tumultuous change, and worry. I note that I have experienced unusual levels of stress in my own life, as principal of an under- resourced rural high school, as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, and as a person with health risks. I understand intellectually that stressors are neither positive nor negative, they just are, and the challenge is the management of stress, not its elimination, but people commonly think of stress as negative and certainly I do. I believe my respondents feel the same, as evidenced by the wider context of their comments.

What homelessness is like

I offer one Theoretical Construct about homelessness: homelessness can be difficult. I think all of the data cited under this idea obviously supports that conclusion, and have included it in the Auerbach/Silverstein outline. But I need to think about how I feel about these findings. In the literature review, I talked about stereotypes related to homelessness. <u>None of my respondents mentioned anything about feeling stereotyped.</u> This surprised me, but is not relevant to the research question. Also, I consciously did not directly ask them to talk about their homeless circumstances because I felt it an invasion of privacy. Instead, I used a projective prompt to make it is less personal: "not having a place to live is …", and then I chose to include these responses, as well as spontaneously-offered comments about their individual circumstances, as part of the data set. I did this before analyzing my results because I believed the data might provide information and documentation about the experience of homelessness that might lead to connections between reading and homelessness. <u>This did indeed happen, leading to the primary finding of my research: that reading experiences influence homeless experiences by providing a means of temporary escape.</u>

I also considered a second construct which might be that homelessness can create opportunities. The following data took me in this direction:

D-72 (so you've made friends here or are you talking about outside?) I have ones here I would consider friends. (Here in Transitions?) Yes, I would consider as friends.

David offered no other comments about his homeless situation. By the time I interviewed him, I had observed the development of several friendships in the shelter, so I was not surprised to hear this from him. It did not occur to me to ask subsequent interviewees about friendships, and I wish it had. Lesson learned. I note that I failed to explore several avenues to extend my questioning as I proceeded from one respondent to another. I think this prevented my study from being as complete as it might have been otherwise. On the other hand, after teaching for six months before interviewing anyone, I did consciously think about where and when to stop data-gathering. My reading informed me the place to stop is when the data become "saturated", and I think I sought a saturation point sooner rather than later by adhering fairly strictly to the interview protocol. When I allowed interviews to deviate from the protocol into many side conversations, it was out of a desire to grow trust, not to collect more data about experiences I thought might not be relevant to the research questions. This was a mistake.

S-107 (Would you like to share about how you feel about being homeless?) I don't like it, but I'm doing what I can to change the situation. (So you're making progress and you're working on it?) Yes. Yes. (Sounds like you are being patient.) Yes, with this back to work program, a job coach I saw yesterday she said hopefully by the end of this coming week, I will have a job.

Although Sharon commented that not having a place to live was frustrating and annoying, she was also optimistic and identified resources at Transitions that helped her. Looking back now at this interchange, I notice that my comment about her being patient was more of a complement offered out of admiration for her perseverance than a comment designed to encourage her to talk further.

L-142 the people are good here, the staff has helped me a lot.

Lisa expressed "melancholy" and loss, but she also bonded with staff and experienced results from those relationships. In some ways Lisa is a special case. A senior citizen diagnosed with dementia, she is restricted to the Transitions campus in order to maintain her residency there and cannot come in and out like the other residents, almost as if she were residing in a locked assisted living center. At no time did she express to me any desire to have the privilege to come and go. Perhaps she felt protected. But she did talk about her loneliness, and her relationship with me was one of the closest among my eight respondents.

R-153-154 I had an exit plan when I walked through the door. I don't plan to be here much longer. Each individual homeless person has got to look at their own situation. You look down, you got to, they all need to look down into what brought them here, what can they do to get away from here. None of us choose to be homeless but we don't have to stay homeless because I mean look at me, I came in, I had rotten teeth couldn't be seen, couldn't half see, couldn't breathe, and just being in this environment, in this Center is giving me the opportunity to get the problems fixed. I can see good now, I got the means to get me a set of false teeth now. I took advantage of the system that's in place here at transitions to better myself… Each individual has gotta make a good change, a change for the good instead of for the bad. That's each individual's determination to decide do you

want to do that. Some people are just glad to have a roof over their head; they're content for that but this place here is only temporary. It's like the name says, it's a transition, it's to help you with whatever problems you got to better yourself and get you into a position where you can be self-sustaining.

Randy is clearly supportive of the Transitions program, and in fact functions in a leadership role, always helpful to the staff. I often observed him monitoring the facility including whether or not the garbage needed be taken out or whether a door had been left open that should have been locked. I also observed him encouraging other residents often, explaining the rules or making suggestions. He recognizes, identifies, and values the opportunities afforded him by residing in the shelter. This was music to my ears, and I struggled not to react to this while I was interviewing Randy. (I think I succeeded.) I was so pleased to talk with someone who had an understanding of his personal responsibilities and the benefits, as well as the limitations, of the Transitions program. Since I retired from a long career in human services, I have begun to realize the toll on me extracted by the many situations where I felt underappreciated. I wanted to run to the staff to tell them about Randy's perspective but of course resisted. Most likely he expressed his appreciation himself anyway.

Taking these data from five of my eight respondents together, I started to generalize that homelessness can be a circumstance that leads to opportunities, but it is not homelessness that directly resulted in these opportunities, it is the Transitions program. When observing adults experiencing homelessness who were utilizing feeding programs in the community, the ones I talked to who were not sheltered often complained that no one cared and that they could not get help. <u>In summary, I concluded that the data are inconclusive and insufficient for the development of a Theoretical Construct. about whether or not homelessness can present opportunities.</u>

The Reading Lives of Adults Experiencing Homelessness

I found myself surprised that only two of my eight participants responded that they enjoyed comics or graphic novels, perhaps because the newspaper comics were so much a part of everyday life in our household growing up. My husband still reads the comics. As I analyzed the data regarding how my respondents choose reading materials <u>the responses to the choice of reading comics or graphic novels was not enough to identify a Repeating Idea</u>.

Six respondents were quite clear that they do not choose materials that have the comics or graphic drawings. Of the six, one asked me what a graphic novel is. Two identified the comics as something they did as children. I believe my surprise is also related to my age, 66, and I suppose adults who do enjoy comic characters are now watching blockbuster movies, something my respondents would not have access to.

Six of my eight respondents clearly said they like newspapers, and <u>and one detailed why it is difficult to get newspapers in a homeless shelter.</u> Here is another intersection between the experience of reading and the experience of homelessness.

What I Did Not Find

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When I began this study, I had some ideas about what I might find. I wondered if interview respondents would share stories about how their reading had inspired them. I found no evidence of this. Why am I surprised? Because I know in my own reading life, particular characters, both fictional and real life, have inspired me in many ways throughout my life. I believe at this point that the marked embrace of reading as a way to escape from homelessness in my data set may imply an overriding sense among respondents of wanting to escape from homelessness, perhaps superseding any sharing of stories about how reading impacts them in other ways. Had I been able to conduct follow-up interviews, this is one question I would've asked. I suppose I have just earmarked an idea for further research.

I believe my expectation that I might find sources of inspiration in the reading lives of my respondents also stems from my curiosity about how it is possible to persevere through homelessness for an extended period of time. I don't know the answer to this. Perhaps the reason for perseverance is simply the lack of alternatives.

Secrecy

In view of the findings of Chatman (1996) and Muggleton and Ruthven (2012) about a tendency of homeless individuals to keep secret information they have gleaned, I was also surprised in all my interactions with homeless adults for this study, not just the interviews, I did not sense any secretiveness. Perhaps this stemmed from my natural tendency to take people at face value, or perhaps my experience of a lack of secrecy grew from the development of personal relationships through the filter of facilitating art and creative writing classes. There is no way to tell. This might point to the possibility of further research, but I cannot imagine how a research design could take into account the quality of personal relationships.

Later thoughts about secrecy: on second thought, there may be ways to investigate correlation between the strength of personal relationships between the researcher and a homeless respondent, and the manifestation of keeping information secret.

GATEKEEPERS AND STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Name	Title/Position
Larry Nichols	Board chair, Resurrections
Monica Holmes	Volunteer, Resurrections; teacher,Gibbes Middle
Cathy Hood Pittenger	Social worker, Clean of Heart
Oscar Gadsden	Pastor, Keepin It Real ministries
Scott Shull	153 Project
Karina Henry	Homeless Services coordinator, United Way
Craig Currey	Director, Transitions Homeless Center
Stuart Litman	Program coordinator, Transitions Homeless Center
Margaret Deans Fawcett	Comm. Outreach & Vol. Coordinator, Transitions Shelter
Lauren Wilkie	Program director, Transitions Homeless Center
Linda English	Case manager, Transitions Homeless Center
Sandy	Transitions client, runs the "closet"
Rhemie Gantz	Coordinator, Cooperative Ministries
Dr. Hugh Harmon	Board member, Family Promise
Lisa Gieskes	Chair, ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table; Film and Sound Librarian, Richland Library
Sarah Gough	Programs and Partnerships Librarian Richland Library
Brian Oliver	Head of security, Richland Library
Heather McCue	Librarian, Richland Library Supervisor, social work interns
Lee Patterson	Social Work Manager, Richland Library
Scott Pope	Coordinator, Midlands Consortium for the Homeless (MACH)
Rev. Bob Regal	Trinity Cathedral
Edgar Maxwell	Soup kitchen volunteer coordinator, Trinity

APPENDIX E

ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WRITE ABOUT THEIR LIVES

Today seems to be a good day. I have seen no arguments, no fights, no one dissing anyone… Being homeless is not half of the struggle I thought it would be. I never thought I would meet some of the most smartest (*sic*), gregarious, powerful people so far (*sic*) my life. Being homeless has shown me a group of people that live, struggle, and strive every single day. I'm learning how much more every day is valuable. Valuable to obtaining my goals, allowing people to know how important they are to me and to the world. I never thought I would feel this way about homeless people. I have made nothing but friends, associates, people with names I don't know, but share a common bond. I hope God does not change the world too much because humans seem to bond more when something has to be overcome. I'm homeless, everyone is homeless. But we don't look at ourselves as some people do. I think I love this world and I pray that we as people look at one another as we would look at her (*sic*) own family.

It's a cold world out there but my heart's colder.
You realize that the world ain't what it seems to be as you get older.
As adults we got to help each other grow.
I'm using this to inspire, this ain't just another flow.
We may be grown but we still got a lot to learn,
As I sit back and slowly watch the world burn.
Gotta watch these cops because they got a target on a brother.
That's why we have to come together and uplift one another.
You know it really is sad.
The cops went from being the good guys to bad.
The cops have gotten worse.
That's why we're strapped more than your girl's purse.
It's a shame that when I go out now I gotta watch my back.
Right now, it's just not safe to be black.
The block is hot,
We're all we got.
At the end of the day it's just us.
All I can ask is where's the justice?
It's a cold world out there but my heart's colder.

I was an abused child growing hope (*sic*). Lost my father when I was 17 years old. Lost my mom at 14. Been on my own since I was 12 years old. It's been really hard for me but I am still here with God's blessing. I've been in a car accident 20 years ago that left me disabled and unable to work. I came to Columbia South Carolina to live with my sister, helped her out, then she kicked me out. Now I am here at Transitions.

My old friend, we first met at an early age when I was naïve and impressionable. I was uneducated in the ways the world and you were there to give me the courage to explore it. You were very powerful and appealing. You were a great friend back then because you were always there to share the good times and the bad times. You were a faithful friend and you never let me down. But as I matured you became selfish and came between me and everything else I had learned to love. You always demanded the better part of my time even if that meant taking away the things I love. As the years passed you became more and more possessive, and you started to demand all of my time. You were not happy unless my whole life revolves (*sic*) around you. But even that was not enough. You tried to take my health and even the air I breathe in the pursuit of my soul. So goodbye my old friend. You are never to return or be in my life, again, Mr. Alcohol.

I don't have any friends. At the ripe old age of 38, I, along with my peers, have placed a maximum-security wall around our hearts from newcomers. Those we would consider actual friends must meet a certain criteria that has its limitations. I've met those criteria for some and failed others. Some have crossed the line with me while others have a presence that slowly fell away. I live my life around people, but I live in isolation. I would like to have friends but my weirdness can be un-relatable. I use this word a lot. Maybe that is my problem… I never express myself fully to you because of the unknown. Sometimes I am shy and not fully grown. At times I was beaten and other times I was shamed into my silent voice. In my darkness I remain inside to hide my love, the only love I know. I want to share my darkness with you but you might be afraid of my bogeyman. I promise you he won't hurt you. He only hurts me. My bogeyman hides all my fears for me, so we agree for him to be the safe keeper of them. I come not to invite you to meet my bogeyman but to fight him for my release. In exchange I will be set free to give you the love I found in the darkness. I have been hiding it from the bogeyman because I gave him my fears. To you I want to give you my love. In exchange for my release can you fight and capture me? And when I am released will you stay or go away? Or are you just another bogeyman to take my love?

…I have been on about four sides of the law. The assailant, the victim, the enforcer and the silent. I have made many mistakes that I regret and law enforcement had to be involved. The officers either acted according to the law but others acted according to their immaturity. Some of their decisions were fair, and some were not. I was not always

punished according to the law. Some of my victims were denied justice because I received a lesser sentence. I've been an officer and operated by the book. Other times I was immature. As a victim and (*sic*) there were times when my cases were handled with heart, and other times I was ignored. I have respect for law enforcement and the law.

I knew as a child that I wanted to have a husband and children and to travel. Do most people think about that when they are children? I knew as a child that I loved and needed Jesus. What situations cause a mind to think of such things? How do we become who we are? Why do we make the choices that we do? The mind is an amazing thing! God is such an amazing author, amen. We get to choose who we are. We can submit our lives to God or do whatever. In our submission, we get to go full force or not. However that goes back to our own personality, which can be tweaked through life events. All in all, it goes back to who the person is, the way the mind receives concepts. I am grateful for my life. I love loving! There is a song that says maybe I love this life too much. That is me. I think that this very fact helps me deal with this situation. I don't know what is next, but I never did. My house burned down on 11 December 2017. I was hurled into so much confusion and distress. I had dealt with my husband's mental illness and abuse and whatever goes with those situations. However, I still had a home. Then a tree fell through my other home, but I still had a home. I choose to see this as an adventure. God is carrying me through this. I am grateful for my trust in him. All things work together for good to those that love the Lord according to his will.

I used to think my daughter would help me after I lost my home. However she turned out to be a devious humorless creature. She is not compassionate to my troubles. I wasn't the best mother even though it meant everything to me to raise her in a loving environment trying to be sensitive to her needs. I tried to put up a brave front for her when I felt lost and out of my luck. I cannot say that she has the integrity that I have. I wanted to be insightful to her needs. Even though at times I was critical of her.

I love to read crime thrillers. I like getting transported to different times and places. I like books about crime, thrillers, the whodunit books. I like the ugly murder stories and true crime stories of Robert Brown, the serial killer, or Donald peewee Gaskins. All those very unfortunate victims. I also love reading National Geographics. They offer wonderful articles of about the whole world. New inventions, people of the past. They did a great article about Nero, the crazed Emperor of Rome. I particularly liked a book about Michelle Rockefeller, who went to an island in New Guinea and was supposedly eaten by headhunters.

My children got their iPads at Christmas. My sister taught them to use them. I feel happy and grateful for them to have such things but, when they are playing on the iPads they focus on just that. I feel left out, not important enough to them, feel shut out. I think about

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how it can get better. And focus more and just know that they love me and can't nothing change that. So yes, I have to be a good father and reach out to let them understand that either a phone or iPad is (*sic*) simply something cosmetic and replaceable but, I as their father, am not.

APPENDIX F

MAXWELL REFLEXIVITY MEMOS

April, 2016

(key thoughts are underlined.)

I. Researcher Identity

What prior connections (social and intellectual) do you have to the topics, people, or settings you plan to study? How do you think and feel about these topics, people, or settings? What assumptions are you making, consciously or unconsciously, about these? What do you want to accomplish or learn by doing this study?

Below are two broad sets of questions that it is productive to reflect on in this memo. In your answers to these, try to be as specific as you can.

1. **What prior experiences have you had that are relevant to your topic or setting? What assumptions about your topic or setting have resulted from these experiences? What goals have emerged from these, or have otherwise become important for your research? How have these experiences, assumptions, and goals shaped your decision to choose this topic, and the way you are approaching this project?**

Prior Experiences relevant to topic/setting:

-- I am a military dependent who underwent constant moves, including overseas. I see this as a
type of homelessness (e. g. "Where are you from?" and having no answer.) Although this experience in fact never deprived our family of basic needs, in the eyes of a child and teenager, moving so often meant a series of threatening circumstances over a period of years, including a sense of <u>no control</u> over the family's future ("Uncle Sam decides"), and the imposition of a military hierarchy with <u>rules for daily</u> living (as in I "can't wear shorts into the base exchange"). By the time I reached puberty I felt a need not to invest too heavily in relationships, resulting in <u>feelings of isolation</u>. In addition, our family had little- to-no-contact with extended family members.

-- Our family life seemed very different: our father was sometimes absent for long periods; our mother was German. I felt very different among my peers: always the new

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kid; usually the smart kid; as a girl too tall and too large; I felt I was often scrutinized as an <u>outsider</u>, especially when overseas.

-- I am an <u>avid reader</u>, and through books I contrived an escape into worlds where I saw myself growing, happy, powerful, a part of things, with choices. This gave me a large vocabulary that combined with natural verbal skills to create a "voice" and made me a good communicator, resulting in school success and the development of my inner intellectual life. My reading brought rewards that in turn seemed to <u>balance out the stress</u>. I also developed a love for the mission and services of libraries.

-- I have a strong value for the need for <u>social justice</u>: an ethic that "might has an obligation to make right". This comes from seeing a lot of poverty up close in the Philippines, while teaching special education with inner-city kids, when counseling sexually-active teens at Planned Parenthood, as principal of a poor rural high school, and as an adult educator working with illiterate adults. My commitment to social justice also stems from knowledge of my parents' struggles; Dad grew up in impoverished Central America and Mom in war-torn Germany.

--As a teacher and educational administrator who worked with both teenagers and adults, including some experiencing homelessness, I accumulated years of observations of persons under daily stress as a result of poor reading skills. But I have also observed how lives change when a skill deficit is overcome. Also, I have had extensive practice with listening and interviewing, trial and error application of interventions, and direct observation of the effects of mentoring and coaching. In particular, I retired from a <u>successful career as a reading specialist.</u>

--As a long-time resident of my community, I have been active in many organizations in <u>leadership</u> positions, including professional, civic, faith-based, academic and political groups where I have been nurtured and valued. This has given me a sense that I can make a difference and have a measure of influence in my world. It also engenders a <u>sense of obligation</u> and a desire to give back.

I think all the experiences listed above have lead me unconsciously to have great empathy for homeless individuals, and I have now consciously chosen to operationalize that empathy into an attempt to help them, by examining the use of reading to cope successfully with what I believe to be similar issues, in the hope of capturing the process so it might be offered as a tool.

Assumptions about topic/setting; Alternatives or extensions of these assumptions:

--<u>Homelessness is painful</u>: it devalues the person's humanity; causes isolation; can cause or aggravate emotional/mental stress; inflicts lasting damage to relationships and personal development; and casts the person as deviant, unworthy, sick, criminal or incapable. Alternatively, homelessness may represent an escape from relationships that are problematic.

--The causes of homelessness lie not always, but most often, in circumstances of the wider socio/economic environment, (principally the dearth of affordable housing) and are not as a result of an individual's lack of efficacy, although personal choices often aggravate or accelerate the problem. Alternatively, personal experiences with mental illness or addiction may precipitate homelessness.

--Homelessness as an issue is marginalized, solutions are underfunded, and are seen as not possible to address on a wide scale or appears inevitable. This assumption leads me to conclude solutions lie in empowering individuals, as opposed to only providing services (vital as those services are). In the current political environment, I do not believe it is possible to move policy to address the underlying problem of inadequate affordable housing. Alternatively, in some local or regional locations, affordable housing may be more available.

--Both recreational reading and reading-for-information are essential as a foundation for general success in modern life in every way: getting an education, earning a living, relating to others, raising children, engaging with the community, maintaining physical and mental health, etc., as necessary in order to live as are water, food, clothing and shelter. The ability to read is a human right in an Information Age. Alternatively, this assumption stems from my values; others may see reading as unnecessary or less important to navigating daily life.

Emerging goals

Personal: to remain engaged in my community in a way that builds on my past experiences and capitalizes on my strengths.

Practical: to improve library services to homeless patrons

Research: to shed light on reading as a transformational activity that may impact on a real social justice problem at the individual level

How decisions of topic choice and approach have been shaped

My engagement in many ways over many years with poverty, discrimination, and social pressures to conform counteracts any hesitation I sometimes have when approaching marginalized, struggling individuals. I hope I have been open, sensitive and non-judgmental (only those I have met can say so) and will continue to interact authentically with them exactly as who I am, (not as a confidante, ally or change agent), leaving them with the freedom to choose whether to enter into a relationship with me or not, and always with a concern that I may be perceived as patronizing. I choose to confront poverty out of my values and upbringing; to examine reading out of my capacity for understanding my own development; and to investigate dimensions of homelessness out of my interest in my immediate community and its quality of life.

My identity and long experience as an <u>educator</u>, especially as an adult educator who taught reading, are central to my motivation in pursuing this topic. Ideas that stem from my practice, such as the importance of metacognition, inform my thoughts and decisions at every turn.

2. **What potential advantages do you think the goals, beliefs, and experiences that you described have for your study? What potential disadvantages do you think these may create for you, and how might you deal with these?**

Advantages of goals, beliefs, and experiences

The sum of my experiences, attitudes and aptitudes gives me a <u>passion</u> that increases energy and perseverance. I am largely unconcerned with how much time a study may require. I think this will help to give me latitude to build truly rich data using methodologies that demand flexibility and openness to multiple interpretations. At a deep level, qualitative constructivist research feels "right". Early in my development into a new identity as a theorist, I have arrived at a conviction that I am <u>"born and bred" to do constructivist research.</u>

Having worked with diverse and marginalized individuals for many years, especially in the context of developing reading skills, I feel <u>well-prepared</u> to attack this particular topic and this yields confidence. I am trained in the pedagogy involved in teaching reading to adults, and this gives me a foundation for developing interview questions about reading, thinking, and learning. I have much experience with the use of inductive questioning in the classroom. I have empathy that I can communicate when appropriate, but also enough knowledge of self that I know I have tendencies to over identify. I have made enough mistakes that I feel I have some understanding of the importance of <u>boundaries</u> in human relationships, and I hope this knowledge will serve to limit my <u>immersion</u> in this study without negating myself as a research instrument. My knowledge of self, although of course still evolving, stems from many years of reflection, counseling, and psychotherapy, made necessary by my own experiences with trauma and abuse. In some ways, I am on a <u>crusade</u>, finding constructive ways to respond to a difficult world and eager to share what I learn as I grow even as I continue to learn from others.

The use of self in research requires a certain amount of courage. My courage stems from the knowledge I have gained by overcoming my own personal history. I am an <u>adult survivor</u> of multiple challenges: childhood sexual abuse; the ostracism of my peers; and constant moves, including adjustment to foreign cultures during my formative years. In some situations I become wary, but I have learned how to <u>calculate risk and how to trust my own judgments</u> once I know there is support available when the consequences of risk-taking become painful.

My personal goal of living a whole, productive, and meaningful life and my willingness to work hard in this direction, combined with my understanding and value for process (as opposed to product) provides a framework of its own for this particular

research. I value <u>depth as much as breadth</u> and I am more interested in what people have in common than in what may divide. I believe these values align well with constructivist qualitative research investigating human development and social life.

Disadvantages and how to deal with them

I <u>presume</u> to identify with impoverished individuals, even though I have been privileged to live a middle-class lifestyle all my life. This is a paradox, and I need to remind myself frequently that others may see this as hypocritical.

The extent of my passion and depth of knowledge about learning, thinking and reading cloud my sense of scope and sequence for the research process. I <u>need to monitor my tendency to stray</u> into what may be insignificant directions, without squelching the value of my own expertise and familiarity with many concepts that seem to relate and might result in fruitful avenues of inquiry. The breadth of my experiences and my wide-ranging interests often cause me to become <u>adrift in the confusion</u> of everything appearing equally important. I <u>struggle with focus</u> and become frustrated with detail. For example, although I have been exploring this topic for more than three years, I am still struggling with the formulation of research questions.

On the other hand, I can be <u>stubborn</u> in my need for precision and clarity, a coping skill made necessary by a lifetime of navigating constant change. I am only now beginning to see how exactitude may be useful in research.

I am overly fascinated with issues of social justice and must invest energy into curbing my passions which can <u>blind</u> me to many things, such as the utility of tact, prudence, and just plain silence, all important when interviewing. At its worst, passion can lead to <u>dogmatism</u>. This can be aggravated by my learning style, which is <u>strongly verbal and overly serious</u>. I often miss humor, partly because I'm willing to embrace conflict, but in the process, I lose track of the need to alleviate tension and can be relentless in insisting on a resolution. This single-mindedness can cause me to <u>miss subtleties</u> and appearance insensitive I also must monitor my relationships so as not to be perceived aloof, overbearing or self-righteous. Such behavior would especially compromise interview methodology.

Overcoming trauma yields courage, and builds strength. I am now 64 years old and have never felt stronger. This strength, added to a naturally gregarious and talkative personality, often <u>overwhelms</u> others. My willingness to trust my intuition can overflow into <u>impulsiveness</u>, and sometimes even recklessness. It is important to surround myself with advisors I can trust.

Throughout my life, I have been known as a personality with great curiosity, never satisfied with surface appearances. I always have questions, and one question leads to another. In a researcher, this is of course an asset, but in human relationships, <u>nosiness</u> and an unwillingness to let go of uncertainty are difficult to manage. Since my goal is to become a social scientist, it is incumbent upon me to use my strengths in communication as a way to build human relationships, not discourage them.

II. Creating a Concept Map for Your Study

How do you develop a concept map? First, you need to have a set of concepts to work with. These can come from existing theory, from your own experience, or from the people you are studying – their *own* concepts of what's going on (discussed below in the section titled "Pilot Research"). The main thing to keep in mind is that at this point you are trying to represent the theory *you already have* about the phenomena you are studying, not primarily to invent a new theory.

1. You can think about the key words you use in talking about this topic; these probably represent important concepts in your theory. You can pull some of these concepts directly from things you've already written about your research.
2. You can take something you've already written and try to map the theory that is implicit (or explicit) in this. (This is often the best approach for people who don't think visually and prefer to work with prose.)
3. You can take one key concept, idea, or term and brainstorm all of the things that might be related to this, then go back and select those that seem most directly relevant to your study.
4. You can ask someone to interview you about your topic, probing for what you think is going on and why; then listen to the tape and write down the main terms you use in talking about it. Don't ignore concepts based on your own experience rather than "the literature"; these can be central to your conceptual framework.

Once you've generated some concepts to work with, ask yourself how these are related. What connections do you see among them? Leigh Star (quoted in Strauss, 1987, p. 179) suggested beginning with one category or concept and drawing "tendrils" to others. What do you think are the important connections between the concepts you're using? The key pieces of a concept map aren't the circles, but the arrows; these represent proposed *relationships* between the concepts or events. Ask yourself the following questions: What do I mean by this particular arrow? What does it *stand for?* Think of *concrete* examples of what you're dealing with, rather than working only with abstractions. Don't lock yourself into the first set of categories you select, or the first arrangement you try. Brainstorm different ways of putting the concepts together; move the categories around to see what works best. Ask questions about the diagram, draw possible connections, and think about whether they make sense.

Finally, write a *narrative* of what this concept map says about the phenomena you are studying. Try to capture in words the ideas that are embodied in the diagram.

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My concept map (April 28, 2016)
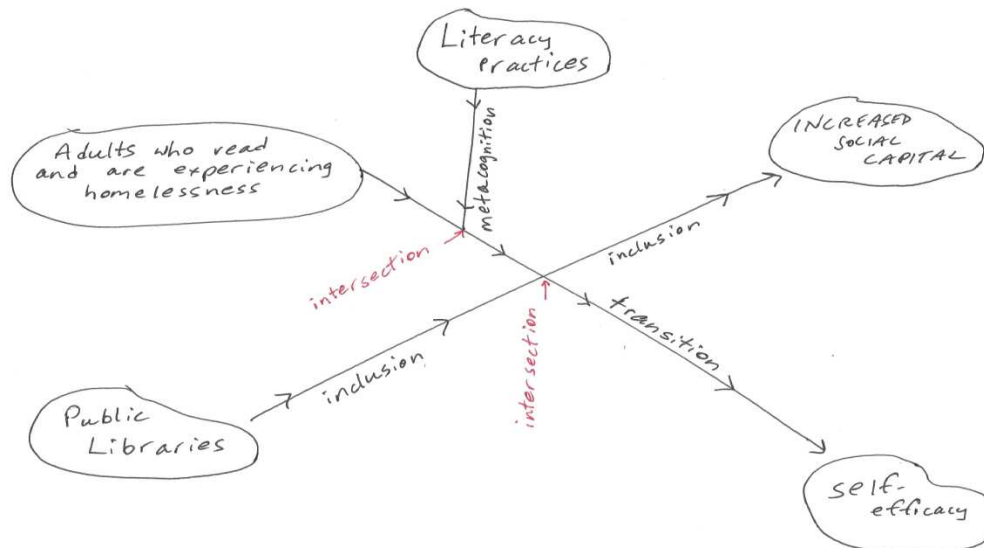
In my first attempt at concept mapping I divided the map into two halves. I see now how this placed the emphasis on the subheadings. I think most of the subheadings did not represent concepts, but rather potential data categories. So in this revision I have eliminated the items that do not to appear to be concept related. This eliminated the following items: policy 61, library facility, book clubs, business center, Internet access, and resource collection. Then as I looked at the map again, I realized all of the items listed under the subheading "processes" are theoretical terms from the literature. I also noted that one of the subheadings," imperatives" , actually has nothing to do with mapping a theory and concepts, but are justifications for the study.

All of this led me back to Maxwell's instructions, and I saw something I missed the first time: "The main thing to keep in mind is that at this point you are trying to represent the theory *you already have* about the phenomena you are studying, not primarily to invent a new theory." I noted that I used strategies one and three (listed in the instructions) in my first attempt, but had not tried strategy two: reviewing something I'd already written. I asked myself," Do I already have a clear conceptual framework?"

Concurrent with this work I have also been revising and resubmitting an article to a peer-reviewed journal that essentially provides a summary of my topic and a sampling of the literature review. Then I noticed the abstract may provide some clues that might be helpful to a better concept map. Here is the abstract:

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Homelessness is a problem which has proven resistant to both short-term solutions and to efforts to address root causes. Illiteracy may be a major factor, yet few studies have addressed how a library's mission to promote reading intersects with the needs of adults experiencing homelessness. An understanding of literacy as more than a set of reading skills may help to guide librarians who wish to fully implement ALA's standard of facilitating access to information for all, including marginalized patrons and those who not read well. As public libraries respond to questions about their continued relevance in a digital age, an understanding of how libraries can contribute to solutions to community social needs, including homelessness, may help to broaden community support for more extensive and more inclusive library programming.

The title of this paper is "Looking for the intersection: public libraries, adult literacy, and homelessness". As I looked at my first attempt at concept mapping, I realized the central concept for this research, ***intersection***, is not represented. So I constructed a new concept map. I emerged from this process with a new map containing only five concepts: adults who are experiencing homelessness, public libraries, literacy practices, increased social capital, and self-efficacy. I also have three processes involved in the relationship of these concepts: metacognition, inclusion, and transition. The map also shows two intersections: "Literacy practices" with "adults experiencing homelessness" through the process of "metacognition"; and "adults experiencing homelessness" intersecting with" public libraries" through the processes of "transition" and "inclusion".

Connections among the concepts

Depending on local factors, adults experiencing homelessness may or may not utilize public libraries. Because this research seeks to improve that connection, as a representation of the worst case scenario the concept map does not have a link between adults experiencing homelessness and public libraries.

Adults experiencing homelessness may or may not incorporate literacy practices into daily life while they are experiencing a homeless condition, but because the study will be limited to homeless adults who say they DO read, the concept map includes a line connecting literacy practices to the study participants. The line is a moving arrow in the direction of the homeless readers, suggesting an impact of literacy practices on study participants. When homeless adults read, literacy practices exercise metacognition, and this process intersects with homelessness if the reading experience is concurrent with the homeless experience and is part of the person's transition out of homelessness. Thus the moving arrow is labeled "metacognition".

The adults in this study, as residents in a *transitional* shelter, by definition have made commitments to changing their lives. Emerging from homelessness is not a quick process, but is a process of transition, so the moving arrow coming from the study participants is labeled "transition".

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If public libraries practice full inclusion in line with the profession's stated ethical standards, the library will intersect with homeless adults. Therefore a moving arrow from the public library is labeled "inclusion".

As a result of the three processes, metacognition, inclusion, and transition, both the adults experiencing homelessness and public libraries might become stronger as a result of the intersections: the library better positioned in the community with increased social capital and relevance, and the homeless adult with increased self-efficacy, to develop and implement strategies to emerge from a homeless status.

(Later note: the construction of a concept map in April 2016 marks the beginning of my struggle to narrow and focus my research. It also led me into a great deal of additional reading. I concluded the concept of social capital is beyond my purpose, which in turn took away the idea of an intersection with reading whereby libraries might increase social capital. This idea remained a motivating factor for my perseverance, but is consciously not represented in the research. The concept of social capital is also unrelated to the four theoretical frameworks I adopted as my foundation. I arrived at a similar conclusion about the concepts of "inclusion" and "self-efficacy". Both ideas lead me into completely separate literature and paradigms.

Placeholders

The revised concept map has no placeholders.

Questions

There are a number of ideas and concepts from my first attempt that are now not on the concept map, but which I still feel have a place in the study. I am just unsure where. So I will list them here as an inventory so as not to lose track: normalcy, emancipation, independence, freedom, privacy, shunning, family disruption, isolation, sense of community, Maslow's hierarchy, respite. All of these concepts come from my research so far combined with my experience, leading me to speculate some or all MIGHT surface in the study. I think most of these might be conceptual categories if data emerges to support the classification.

I thought this study would be based on the "voices" of homeless adults, but the first concept map looked more like I was viewing this from the perspective of library services. I was not comfortable with this. Part of my motivation is to give voice to the voiceless. I know from experience that the language of adult readers about the impact of their reading lives is often expressed in terms of daily living skills, not the language of personal growth and introspection. This exercise has surfaced some anxiety in me that it may be difficult to translate the everyday language of ordinary people into the academic language of a researcher. Yet, this is exactly what I hope to achieve. The new concept

map seems closer to the synthesis necessary for a clear theoretical framework, but <u>also it feels like a great deal is missing</u>. I suspect the challenge of communicating the purpose and value of this study will lie in communicating clear definitions for all of the five concepts represented in the new map.

Summary

I believe concept maps are not meant for decision-making, but for inductive reasoning.</u> I think the first concept map surfaced a lot of ideas, while the second map presents a beginning theory of the relationship of a more limited list of concepts, although I sense there is more I want to add. The new map expresses a hypothesis or a theory for the topic. I also like the way the new map communicates progression. I think the current concept map begs for grounded theory methodology.

III. Research Questions

1. **Begin by setting aside whatever research questions you already have, and start with your concept map. What are the places in this map that you *don't* understand adequately, or where you need to test your ideas?**

As I look at the current version of my concept map, <u>I need more information about the circumstances of homeless adults living in a shelter in order to have a better idea of the context.</u> I want to work with homeless participants because homelessness is an example of a circumstance where individuals may be highly stressed because of a loss of control of their lives. I would like to test whether reading ameliorates a <u>loss of control</u> and if so, how. I'm assuming that self-efficacy is very important to individuals experiencing homelessness. The idea of personal control over one's circumstances, especially something as basic as living arrangements,(who you live with if anyone, whether or not you eat what and when, what time you go to bed and wake up, whether or not you are in a safe place, etc.) may be <u>central to the conviction that change</u> is possible. These are all untested ideas.

<u>(Later note: Again, the concept of locus of control or loss of control led me into the literature of psychological adjustment and development. I also put this aside in order to focus on the phenomenological character of examining experience.)</u>

The thinking processes involved in making meaning of text are many and complex. Here I need to do more background reading, but I believe that <u>metacognition may be highly significant</u>. This is another idea that needs testing. I also have made an assumption that metacognition, if thoroughly developed, leads directly to self-efficacy, which is one of the outcomes I anticipate. Is there research already that has investigated the link I believe exists between well-developed metacognition and self-efficacy? Of course, the concepts of metacognition and self-efficacy must be defined. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a framework for the idea that metacognition about reading may lead to self-efficacy. A homeless individual living in a shelter at least has the lowest level of physiological needs satisfied (food, shelter). The next level, safety, is a concept

resting in the mind of the individual. For some, perhaps reading represents a "place" to go where it is "safe". While "there", perhaps higher needs are met in some way, including the needs (as delineated by Maslow) for love/belonging, the esteem of others, and self-actualization. All of this demands testing.

Independent reading itself may represent an exercise of personal control, if the reader has free access to whatever it is he or she wants to read. This is where the library comes in. Homeless individuals can hardly go to the local bookstore and stock up on the books or magazines etc. that they wish to read. If an adult is motivated to read partially or mostly because of the stresses of the status of homelessness, the library represents a facilitating factor to actualize a need for exercising choice or perhaps other needs from Maslow's hierarchy.

The extent and nature of library use among adults experiencing homelessness is another question I wish to test.

2.   **Where are the holes in, or conflicts between, your experiential knowledge and existing theories, and what questions do these suggest? What could you learn in a research study that would help you to better understand what's going on with these phenomena?**

It is possible that I am wrong about a connection between metacognition and self-efficacy, but I will not be able to find out until I understand more about self- efficacy. This represents a hoIe in the map. Also, my question about the link between metacognition and self-efficacy has been qualified. I just wrote that metacognition, in order to lead to self-efficacy, might need to be well developed. Why? I think this is coming from my experience teaching reading especially with new adult readers who so often struggle with learning disabilities. I have directly observed what happens when a reader steps back from text to think about how he was able to read the print. When the new reader knows she has learned a skill, and understands the skill can be transferred to new situations, I have seen breakthroughs occur. This is one facet of metacognition (there may be others also relevant), if defined as a personal awareness of an individual's own thinking processes. The more confidence the reader has in her own thinking skills, the more quickly the new reader progresses. Reading teachers would list phonological awareness, patterns of phrasing in the English language, context skills, and word attack skills as instrumental to deciphering meaning, among other things, but I think there is something more involved, and I speculate this something is metacognition, and that metacognition leads to self-efficacy when the reader is an adult.

I believe I want to work with readers as opposed to nonreaders because if I am correct about the power of metacognition as a factor to become a reader skilled enough to read independently, then a <u>reader should have something to say about their internal thinking processes involved when reading.</u> I know from experience that nonreaders do not understand metacognition but grow in their application of reading skills once they begin to grasp the concept. But here may be another hole. I need theory/published research for guidance about possible connections between metacognition and reading

proficiency, or if not available, I want to find out and report whether there is such a connection.

Try to write down all of the potential questions that you can generate from the map.

Does reading function as a form of personal control or self-efficacy in the life of a homeless adult?
Does metacognition about reading skills engender a sense of self-efficacy?
What needs might motivate a homeless adult to read?
What environmental factors influence the reading lives of sheltered homeless adults?
Is reading material for independent reading readily available?
What resources do homeless readers use to access reading material?
Assuming homeless adults who wish to read have access to a library, do they use it? If not, why not? If   so, what services are utilized?
If a homeless adult feels a need for changing his or her living circumstances, does reading facilitate action for change? Or perhaps the development of a sense of control or the identification of   options?
Might reading offer temporary respite from homelessness?
To what extent do public libraries live an ethic of inclusion?
How might the inclusion of adult readers who are experiencing homelessness increase the social capital of public libraries?

3. **Next, take your original research questions and compare them to the map and the questions you generated from it. What would answering these questions tell you that you don't already know? What changes or additions to your questions does your map suggest? Conversely, are there places where your questions imply things that should be in your map, but aren't? What changes do you need to make to your map?**

Original Questions:

1) What characterizes the literacy practices and preferences of adults living in a homeless shelter? 2) Do homeless adults perceive reading skills as important to overcoming their circumstances? If so, how? If not, why not? 3) How do homeless adults perceive the public library?

I see that the questions generated from the concept map are more specific than the original questions.
Here is a synthesis of the two groups of questions:

(Later note: The term "literacy" is problematic because it is imprecise, meaning different things to different people. Its definition is on a continuum. The term "reading" can be more precisely defined as interaction with text and is itself an experience. This fits better with phenomenology.

1) How do the literacy practices of adult readers experiencing homelessness influence transition to independent living?

2) What actions or decisions does independent reading facilitate in the lives of homeless adults?

(Later note: The way this question is phrased implies cause and effect. My study is about relationships, not cause.

3) Assuming homeless adults who wish to read have access to a library, do they use it? If not, why not? If so, what services are utilized?

4) What resources do sheltered homeless readers use to access reading material?

4. **Now go through the same process with your researcher identity memo (part II). What could you learn in a research study that would help to accomplish these goals? What questions does this imply? Conversely, how do your original questions connect to your reasons for conducting the study? How will answering these specific questions help you to achieve your goals? Which questions are most interesting to you, personally, practically, or intellectually?**

All three goals, personal, practical and research, still feel solid. Working with homeless adults locally, to learn more about their needs for reading and how those needs are met, as well as the impact of meeting those needs, keeps me connected to my community, my personal goal. Documenting what motivates reading among homeless adults can assist the library in developing programming, my practical goal. If I can learn and share one or more examples of how reading transforms adult lives, I will have helped to fill a research gap, as current research in this area is lacking and past research is sparse. This is my research goal. Thus I hope to meet all three goals.

5. **Now focus. What questions are most central for your study? How do these questions form a coherent set that will guide your study? You can't study everything interesting about your topic; start making choices. Three or four main questions are usually a reasonable maximum for a qualitative study, although you can have additional sub questions for each of the main questions.**

Question 1 is most central, and it's common to both the original questions and the synthesized questions. The synthesized questions are specific to a particular population and a particular setting, and represent a set extrapolated down from the broader question "How does independent reading impact an adult reader's life experiences?" Attempting to investigate this broader question generally would be the equivalent of studying "everything" about my topic. I think I am closer to formulating my final research

questions, but am still not there. <u>More study of the literature is needed, especially about metacognition.</u>

6. **In addition, you need to consider what sort of study could actually answer the questions you pose. Connect your questions to the methods you might use: Could your questions be answered by these methods and the data that they would provide? What methods would you need to use to collect data that would answer these questions? Conversely, what questions can a qualitative study of the kind you are planning productively address?**

It is conceivable that all four of the new research questions might be investigated through a quantitative approach (although it has never been done), but I do not think this would be possible with this particular population. Crafting a quantitative written questionnaire would define literacy at whatever level of skill might be needed to read and answer the questionnaire. An independent reader chooses to read what is accessible through his or her individual skill level, and my experience with marginalized populations tells me there will be wide variation in reading skill level among adults experiencing homelessness. <u>I wish to investigate literacy practices as a much broader concept than the attainment of a specific reading skill level.</u> Because the questions relate to thinking and learning as applied to a social justice issue, using grounded theory as a methodology seems feasible and semi-structured interviews will be the primary tool. Therefore, a qualitative study is called for although not just as a default. To investigate personal internal intellectual processes, a qualitative approach has the advantage of eliciting details and depth about a personally constructed reality (the power of reading). <u>This study is informed by a constructivist epistemology.</u>

7. **Assess the potential answers to your questions in terms of validity. What are the plausible validity threats and alternative explanations that you would have to rule out? How might you be wrong, and what implications does this have for the way you frame your questions?**

The study's central question carries two assumptions born out of my years as an educator: 1) independent reading is about thinking (metacognition) skills and 2) reading has the power to facilitate change. Both assumptions are highly subjective, and very little literature exists to "validate" either proposition, representing a threat to whatever conclusions might be formulated. I do not seek to find cause-and- effect, but instead *influence* and *perception* as identified by the study participants through the instrument of semi-structured interviews guided by the interviewer's experience and judgment (the researcher as instrument). The research questions do not propose answers; if the data points to alternative, additional, or supplementary explanations beyond conclusions drawn from this investigation, the study would still be worthwhile as a catalyst for further study.

The difficulty will be determining when enough data has been elicited to draw conclusions. The results of any one interview will likely influence how further

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interviews are conducted, a likelihood to be embraced as one way to develop rich, "thick" data, data made thicker by the interviewer's identity. The interview questions will need to be carefully bounded, however, so as not to slant them in the direction of the interviewer's passion for reading. This might represent another validity threat.

At this time I do not see implications for the research questions from these validity threats. It is possible, if not likely, that the wording of the questions might be changed, but not their framing within a set of definitions for the five concepts on the concept map: homelessness, public libraries, literacy practices, social capital, and self-efficacy.

IV. Reflecting on Your Research Relationships

1. What kinds of relationships have you established, or plan to establish, with the people in your study or setting? How did these relationships develop, or how do you plan to initiate and negotiate them? *Why* have you planned to do this? *How* do you think these relationships could (or already have) facilitate or impede your study? What alternative kinds of relationships could you create, and what advantages and disadvantages would these have?

2. How do you think you will be seen by the people you interact with in your research? How will this affect your relationships with these people? What could you do to better understand and (if necessary) modify this perception?

I will need to establish relationships with individuals in two or possibly more locations, including at least one transitional homeless shelter. I have already begun to develop relationships at the Transitions homeless shelter in Columbia, South Carolina. I have met twice with the shelter director, requesting appointments at his convenience both times. We met in his office, and I plan to continue to work with him in this way, deferring to his lead in developing a relationship. I arranged the appointments and met with him in my formal professional persona, both as a peer, (stressing my former experience as the director of another community nonprofit organization), and as a doctoral student at the University of South Carolina. This occurred during an exploratory phase when I was assessing the feasibility of conducting research at the shelter. I wanted to test how I might be received, hoping for eventual maximum buy-in, so I wanted to communicate that I understood and respected his turf. At the first meeting, he was willing to consider a project, but also stressed that approval would have to come first from another gatekeeper organization (Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless, MACH) which oversees local services to the homeless. Before our second meeting, I emailed him a paper that tentatively outlined the nature of my possible study, and then we met so he could give me brief feedback. This meeting resulted in tentative approval for

the general idea. In the future, <u>I expect our relationship to remain one of mutual respect with relatively little interaction except to keep him informed.</u>

Again as part of my exploration of feasibility, I next volunteered to become a reading tutor at the shelter, contacting the volunteer coordinator. Because the agency I formerly directed already has an existing tutoring program within the shelter and I was known to have worked with some adult homeless individuals in the past, my credibility went before me and I was immediately assigned to a shelter resident. In the process of working with this resident, I met several times with her case manager. (The case manager has since left, and the resident I was tutoring once a week has also left the shelter and at this time I no longer tutor there. The resident told me she was kicked out for failing a drug test.) My brief role as a tutor at the shelter <u>confirmed my suspicion that although residency there can extend to as much as six months, there is a very high turnover rate</u>.

I also have an existing relationship with one of the shelter's full-time staff members, who formerly served on my agency's Board of Directors before he was employed by Transitions. He now works directly with Transitions residents. For me this is a peer relationship and a friendly one, but not intimate. I hope to work with him in recruiting study participants. He is already aware of my status as a student and my interest in literacy and homelessness and is enthusiastic about working together.

In summary, I expect this groundwork initiating relationships with the shelter staff has already paved the way for some of the necessary permissions and buy-in from at least one institution that may be involved in my dissertation.

As for the study participants, I anticipate my involvement with them will consist primarily of obtaining informed consent followed by one or more in-depth interviews. I am hopeful that inviting someone to discuss their reading habits and inner relationship with story and text will be less threatening than other more personal questions. However, I do intend to ask about connections between reading and the individual's homeless situation if this information is not spontaneously offered, which may be just as personal as discussing sexual abuse, for instance. I expect to structure the interviews, of course, with less threatening questions at the beginning. I think my persona as a teacher may provide some credibility for my sincere interest in the topic and the person, (beyond just a research project), but this persona will probably also raise the issue of participants telling me what they think I want to hear. My experience with adult students leads me to expect some participants will assume a deferential relationship with me. (In normal life I am frequently asked if I am a teacher even though I have made no reference to the fact. I don't know how I might establish an alternative relationship, because my "teacher persona" seems to be so obvious and so dominant. Projecting myself in a different way carries with it the anxiety of appearing false.)

At this time <u>I am unsure of the extent I will be able to incorporate participant feedback as a method of boosting the validity of this research, because of the transient nature of this population.</u> I intend to design the study to have as much continuing contact with participants as may be necessary and feasible, but I anticipate this will be difficult.

3. What explicit agreements do you plan to negotiate with the participants in your study about how the research will be conducted and how you will report the results? What implicit understandings about these issues do you think these people (and you) will have? How will both the implicit and the explicit terms of the study affect your relationships and your research? Do any of these need to be discussed or changed?

I expect to negotiate a pledge from me for <u>strict confidentiality</u>, conducting the interviews in private, and reporting the results without reference to individuals except anonymously. Our implicit understanding will be that I will, however, discuss the research with colleagues at the University, without reference to names but with reference to residence at Transitions. I do not feel a need at this time to request that participants not discuss their interviews with other residents. I believe it is possible that should a participant discuss his or her interview with another resident, this may be to my benefit, as the homeless shelter is a very small community, and provided that the interviews are a positive experience for the participant, perhaps a positive reputation about me among the residents might be established and, if so, would help to establish rapport. It is possible that I may already be known to one or more residents, but I do not think I can ascertain this for sure. This may influence what people are inclined to share with me.

I will revisit my tentative conclusion to abstain from asking that participants not discuss the interviews with others after consulting with colleagues and searching the literature to clarify how a reputation might affect interview responses. In summary, I feel it is important that I stay in touch with the possibility that I may not be entering this facility as a complete unknown, and I may have to decide whether or not to select an alternative site. Ideally, I would like to conduct the study at both Transitions and at least one additional site.

4. What ethical issues or problems do these considerations raise? How do you plan to deal with these?

I believe at this time the potential severity of ethical dilemmas is minimized by my previous experience with this population, the relative noncontroversial nature of my questions, and the brevity of my contact with participants (if limited to one interview). I look forward to a frank discussion with MACH about potential ethical concerns. However, I <u>recall I did get involved in an ethical question</u> when tutoring at the shelter. The adult learner I worked with denied the accusation of her alleged drug use, and I was

tempted to intervene on her behalf. Upon reflection and consultation with my staff member friend, I did not do so.

V. Questions and Methods Matrix

1. **Construct the matrix itself. Your matrix should include columns for research questions, selection decisions, data collection methods, and kinds of analyses, but you can add any other columns you think would be useful in explaining the logic of your design.**
2. **Write a brief narrative justification for the choices you make in the matrix. One way to do this is as a separate discussion, by question, of the rationale for your choices in each row; another way is to include this as a column in the matrix itself (as in Figure 5.1).**

Research Questions	Selection decisions re: Questions (rationale)	Justification of choices re: Kind(s) of Analysis	Data collection tool
1. How do the literacy practices of adult readers experiencing homelessness influence transition to independent living?	The question connects a mental process to problem-solving in a social context	Grounded theory, generating explanations through the development of interrelated conceptual categories	In-depth individual serial interviews with enough respondents to document any patterns
2. What actions or decisions does independent reading facilitate in the lives of homeless adults?	The question operationalizes the opportunity to explore metacognition	Grounded theory, as above, or possibly phenomenology, if metacognition is not already theorized as relevant to reading	In-depth individual serial interviews with enough respondents to document any patterns
3. Assuming homeless adults who wish to read have access to a library, what services, if any, are utilized?	The question is useful to librarians for programming decisions	Open coding, in vivo coding, followed by word count and groupings into genre categories, to collect a list of services.	Interviews and/or possibly a focus group with homeless adults
4. What resources do homeless readers use to access reading material?	The question is useful to librarians for programming decisions	Open coding, in vivo coding, followed by word count and groupings into genre categories, to collect a list of resources.	Interviews and/or possibly a focus group with homeless adults

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VI. Identifying and Dealing with Validity Threats

1. **What are the most serious validity threats (alternative explanations) that you need to be concerned with in your study? In other words, what are the main ways in which you might be mistaken about what's going on? Be as specific as you can, rather than just giving general categories. Also, think about *why* you believe these might be serious threats.**
2. **What could you do in your research design (including data collection and data analysis) to deal with these threats and increase the credibility of your conclusions? Start by brainstorming possible solutions, and then consider which of these strategies are practical for your study, as well as theoretically relevant.**

For this Maxwell memo I shall use Lincoln and Guba's four criteria appropriate to the naturalistic paradigm. I believe my research will face validity threats related to all four of the criteria.

1. "truth value" (credibility)

My positionality as a former teacher makes me a "stranger in a strange land" inside a homeless shelter for a number of reasons. Distortions in the responses of study participants may occur and might be traced to this positionality. Everyone has experiences, some painful, some positive, with education, schools, and teachers in a society where school attendance is mandatory. Will the respondents answer my questions truthfully, or will they tell me what I want to hear, or will they be hostile? Most likely, all three possibilities will be manifested. So how might I discern what is authentic and what is not?

a. I intend to spend a <u>prolonged period</u> conducting participant observation in a homeless shelter's dayroom, obtaining access by volunteering as a literacy tutor. In this way I hope to "blunt" the novelty of my presence, as well as establish my presence to be benevolent as a helper. I also hope to capitalize on an existing relationship with a staff member who will introduce me to individual residents. In short, the priority upon my insertion into the field will be on establishing trust. My identity as an educator is also an asset (although for some it may be a liability); I have long experience working with at risk and marginalized individuals.

b. I will write out what my expectations are as to what may be observed in the day room before I begin volunteering. This can serve as a check later by comparing my expectations with my actual experiences as an embedded observer.

c. I am considering a request to conduct a focus group not only for the purpose of eliciting responses, but as a vehicle for residents to offer input to the library system about

their perceptions and experiences in the library. The focus group will be cast as a project as well as a research activity, by videotaping, editing, and narrating the tape to then be delivered to the library, once the group has approved its content. This will serve as a member check.

(Later note: because the data became saturated after eight interviews in terms of answering the question of commonalities, I decided to focus group in addition to interviewing was not necessary.)

d. For those respondents willing to meet with me multiple times, I will offer a transcript of our interviews that can be checked by the respondent.

e. The research will include interviews with staff at both the homeless shelter and the library, with a number of questions overlapping with the homeless interview. In this way, I hope to establish triangulation for some of my conclusions, the third point of the triangle consisting of the focus "group".

f. I plan to use grounded theory methodology, where contextual validation is inherent if properly conducted.

(Later note: After learning about phenomenography, I became interested in capturing variations as well as commonalities. Therefore I rejected grounded theory.)

g. As this is a doctoral dissertation, I look forward to debriefing as many aspects of the study as possible with mentors and particularly with fellow students (my peers).

2. applicability (transferability)

The transferability of conclusions from this study would depend on the extent that alternate sites and individuals hold a number of variables in common with one another and with the sites and individuals involved in this study. The investigator cannot know how, when, or where conclusions might be applied, so therefore transferability is not a goal of this descriptive study. In particular, public libraries vary greatly in many ways.

However, it should be noted transitional homeless shelters, while varying in their range of services and size of populations, are all focused on one purpose: empowering residents to obtain independent housing. By definition, transitional shelters all work with residents over a period of time, ranging from 30 days to six months or a year or more. Interview questions about the relationship of a reading life to obtaining affordable housing will be posed. However, this study does not seek to draw conclusions about populations or institutions.

The focus is on the individual experience of the reader with text, an inherently constructivist investigation requiring thick description. This will be a study primarily of

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inner experiences of the human mind as reported by individuals. It focuses on self-reported, self-described change. The study does not seek to establish universality, but will pose the possibility of commonality. Conclusions may represent working hypotheses for further study. It should be noted there has not been research of this kind with this population before, so far as is known. Providing a descriptive database about the impact of a reading life on homeless transition would be a beginning to help others make transferability judgments.

3. consistency (dependability)

To insure a dependable, consistent approach, the involvement of the doctoral committee may be extensive, effectively serving as inquiry auditors, examining both the process of the study and the products produced, including field notes, transcripts, memos, interview guides, and a reflexive journal.

(Later note: for this reason I chose to create an audit trail.)

4. confirmability

This criterion overlaps with dependability. The final products also provide evidence for an inquiry audit seeking to confirm the logic and internal soundness of the study.

At this stage of my thinking, one of my overriding concerns about establishing the "validity" of this study is its complexity. Actually, it seems to me the "inquiry audit", as well as the crafting of "products", have already begun, as I continue to struggle with research design.

VII. Toward a Research Proposal

1. *SITE AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION.*

   What setting(s) will you study, and/or what individuals will you include in your study? (If you haven't made these decisions yet, explain how you expect to make them, along with the criteria you plan to use.)

   I will study adults who read and are living in a transitional homeless shelter in Columbia, South Carolina, recruited in various ways including observation in the shelter day room, observation of a writing class conducted in the shelter, posters in the shelter offering an incentive, (Later note: This proved to be unnecessary.) snowball sampling, and referrals by staff.

   An adult who self-identifies as a "reader" shall be considered eligible to participate. (A "reader" is defined as anyone who uses text to function in daily life and/or for recreation or information purposes, without regard to skill level or educational attainment.)

What theoretical and practical considerations have influenced these choices?

Theoretically, adults living in a transitional center have made a commitment to end their
homeless status and have enough of their basic needs met to allow them to read. Columbia's transitional shelter has been selected because of my existing relationships with the director and one staff member, as well as with the local public library staff, facilitating access to a transient and fragile population as well as the activities at the library regarding the inclusion of homeless patrons.

How are these choices connected to your research questions (if this isn't obvious)?

I think this is obvious.

2. *DATA COLLECTION*

How do you plan to collect your data, and what data will you collect?

After piloting an interview guide, I will collect textual data about literacy practices and the experience of sheltered homelessness from an interview and/or a series of interviews with study participants.

How will these data enable you to answer your research questions (if this isn't obvious)?

I think this is obvious.

3. *DATA ANALYSIS*

What strategies and techniques will you use to make sense of your data? Why have you chosen these? Indicate the kinds of analyses you plan to do; don't just give boilerplate descriptions of methods.

I expect this study will use grounded theory strategies.

(Later note: Grounded theory did much to provide an example of data analysis that was helpful. But I instead chose to use phenomenography. Phenomenography seemed to fit the research questions better, because I view the act of reading as an experience. This is decidedly a point of view. As a reading instructor of long years experience both with teenagers and adults, I learned that the meaning of the words "reading" and "literacy" vary from person to person and from context to context. For example, an elementary school teacher may think of reading as a set of skills designed to decode words. In an adult context, this definition of reading in my experience frequently proved limiting, because long-standing habits in the adult mind such as strong verbal accents made the teaching of phonics and word attack

skills problematic. Often I abandoned phonics and instead used techniques known as language *experience*, creating exercises to teach reading by drawing on the experiences of the learner. This was especially useful with adults in my work because I was working with individuals, not groups, allowing me to individualize, and adults bring to the teaching/learning equation a wealth of experience. Another example of the shifting nature of the meaning of "literacy" and "reading" might be the many occasions when I spoke of literacy thinking about adults, but the person I was speaking to, including many librarians, spoke of literacy primarily in the context of children's literacy.

When I was examining theoretical frameworks as I began my research, I found echoes of my bias toward thinking of reading as experience in the work of Dewey, Rosenblatt, and Knowles. I realized my research questions were about the meaning of a concept, as *experienced*, precisely a paradigm that fits with phenomenography. Phenomenography was developed as a tool to search for variation of the meaning of a concept, and I knew I had my research methodology.)

Charmaz provides guidance. Data will be entirely textual derived from semi-structured interviews sequenced by theoretical sampling.

(Later note: In order to insure that my sample was limited to adults who read, I used a purposive rather than a theoretical sample.)

Accuracy in transcription combined with a relationship of rapport between the participants and the researcher as the investigative tool will be critical. The analysis techniques used in this investigation will be strongly determined by individual expressions of internal mental processes, as well as individual stories about overcoming a major life challenge. The analysis will seek to find commonalities and patterns, not just empirical overlaps, but conceptual relationships among the data, using inherently inductive techniques.

(Later note: As I began my data collection I anticipated my respondents would offer varying versions of the meaning of reading in the context of their homeless status. I did find variation, but was surprised to also find commonality, the idea of reading as an escape. I believe my surprise was rooted in discovering validation for my own experience of reading, which throughout my life has also served as an escape from considerable stress and trauma. During data collection, I was aware of my own notion of reading as escape and work hard to bracket those feelings, being extra careful during interviews not to lead in any way when posing the most critical question: "Reading is…"?)

Memo writing will be paramount and continual throughout the investigation, in order to speculate on the meaning behind the data, and to track the sequence of considered conclusions. As theory develops, the properties of conceptual categories might emerge, as tentative ideas about the data are examined to guide further empirical inquiry until saturation is reached. At this time, it is unknown how many interviews will be necessary, how many may be one-shot and how many serial, or even whether study participants will

be able to represent verbally the inner world of the reader as related to the outside context of homelessness. The framework for this study is immensely complex, just as grounded theory lends itself to the deconstruction of complex phenomena. As a constructivist inquiry, my background, my experience as a reading teacher, and my ability to elicit relevant responses will be as important to the analysis as the textual data itself, and will therefore need to be transparent and recorded in a way that these influences are identified and their impact acknowledged.

4. *VALIDITY*

What do you see as the most important potential threats to the validity of your conclusions?

What will you do to address these?

What limitations on generalizability do you see?

Potential threats	How to address	Limitations on generalizability
Truth value (credibility)	Member check, prolonged contact, triangulation, contextual validation, debriefing with mentors and peers	1. This study is limited to adults experiencing homelessness who have committed to a transition out of their circumstances, as defined by residence in a transitional shelter. Not all homeless adults fall into this category, and it is unknown how many do.
Applicability (transferability)	Study does not draw conclusions re: populations/institutions; transferability will depend on the receiving site. Study does not seek universality, but possible commonalities. Further study may be needed.	2. The study is limited to persons over 18 who do not have primary responsibility for caregiving of children or others.
Consistency (dependability)	Inquiry audit of products produced	3. The study does not include persons who cannot read or who don't.
Confirmability	Inquiry audit of products	4. Application to libraries is bounded by the mission of the library and available resources, including staff training and time commitments.