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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Explaining the Homelessness Phenomenon in Familistic Mediterranean Societies: A New Analytical Framework

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Abstract
This article studies the importance of the loss of family ties and its symbolic burden in the narrative of homeless people in familistic societies. The family is the main reason why poverty does not directly lead to social exclusion in southern European countries. However, the economic crises of the last two decades have weakened the ability of the family to protect its members. The new forms of poverty that imply processes of individualized social exclusion that lead to homelessness in southern Europe can be understood as a consequence of the overload currently suffered by families in those countries due to the recent economic crises. The loss of family ties in this type of society is so stigmatizing that, even if the person is living on the street for structural reasons such as having been unemployed and having lost their home due to the effects of the recent economic crises and not receiving aid from social services, always reproduces a characteristic story of self-victimization and mourning for not having had a good family that has helped him in times of need.

Keywords Homelessness causes · Southern Europe · Familistic societies · Economic crisis · Social stigma

1 Introduction

Homelessness is an extreme form of social exclusion that must be studied as a multidimensional phenomenon. The causes that lead a person to social exclusion and homelessness are diverse and interact with each other over time (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). Debates on the causes of homelessness have been polarized around: firstly, more structural causes linked to changes in labor market dynamics, poverty, the residential policy environment, and the

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protective capacity of the welfare system; and, secondly, individual and psychological factors linked to the individual "agent", such as alcoholism, drug addiction and mental illness (Glasser, 1994; Neale, 1997). It seems clear that neither of the two approaches by itself identifies the complexity of the phenomenon of homelessness; the two types of causes interact with each other (Anderson, 2007).

Toro (2007a, b) argues that this analytical simplification is due to the contrast between the different theoretical backgrounds of homelessness studies in the United States and Europe. According to Toro, the interest in homelessness as a phenomenon to study began especially in the United States and with important contributions from the field of psychology. This means that there is a tendency to adopt a more individual level of analysis in research and theorizing, and that research focuses on "trauma theory" (Goodman et al., 1991). That is, homelessness is associated with psychological trauma that can lead to a "disordered" life and other harmful outcomes that lead to victimization processes, such as associating with "deviant" peers, or engaging in subsistence survival strategies. (for example, prostitution, or misdemeanors). On the other hand, Toro believes that European researchers tend to resort to sociological theories and related disciplines to explain and study homelessness. Europeans tend to look at the structural, sociocultural aspects and the level of coverage and generosity of welfare systems (Anderson, 2007). This duality even affects the opinion of the general population on homelessness on both sides of the Atlantic. Toro (2007a, b) detect less compassionate attitudes towards homeless people in the United States and the United Kingdom -where there is a tendency to blame the person individually for their situation of homelessness- than in the rest of the European countries where the lack of resources to alleviate the problem is blamed more.

The Welfare State model is not only important in the fight against homelessness, but also models the predominant type of homelessness in each society. Stephens and Fitzpatrick (2007) hypothesize that countries with extensive public welfare systems and lower levels of poverty and social inequality tend to have proportionately fewer homeless people than countries with less extensive welfare systems that carry higher levels of poverty and inequality. Furthermore, in countries with extensive welfare systems, homelessness is more likely to be concentrated among people with complex personal support needs, such as mental illness or substance abuse. In contrast, in countries that prioritize market and individual responsibility and the welfare system is secondary or residual, homelessness is a more widespread phenomenon and is more likely to be the result of structural causes such as poverty, joblessness or housing affordability issues. The work of Benjaminsen and Andrade (2015), which compares patterns of use of shelters for homeless people in Denmark and the United States, confirmed Stephens and Fitzpatrick's hypothesis.

One must ask, however, what happens in the countries of southern Europe where, in addition to the market and the State, there is a third basic actor to alleviate situations of poverty and social exclusion, which is the family. Analyzing homelessness in terms of the extension of the welfare system and how ambitious public policies are in the fight against poverty and social marginalization is of little use in analyzing the "familistic" countries of southern Europe where housing policies, dependency or minimum income are very scarce and sometimes non-existent. In these countries, their welfare system is described as "familistic" due to the role played by the family in meeting social needs and protecting its most vulnerable members (Ferrera, 1996). The institution of the family in these countries functions as an informal mechanism of social protection and also as an economic agent. The family makes up for the lack of public benefits by cushioning the effects of economic scarcity derived from adverse economic cycles, offering housing in times of difficulty and taking responsibility for caring for dependent children, young people and elderly. At the same

time, the State is reluctant to intervene by offering services for fear of breaking solidarity dynamics that are considered beneficial in all senses: both for the containment of public spending, and for the positive effects of solidarity and security on people.

In order to understand the dynamics of the phenomenon of homelessness in the family-oriented societies of southern Europe, it is necessary to use an analytical framework that takes into account the importance of family relationships. Edgar (2009) defines four broad categories of causes that can lead to homelessness: structural, institutional, individual, and relational.[1] Structural factors refer to broad economic and social changes, such as periods of economic crisis, migration processes, or changes in real estate market prices. Institutional factors refer to the availability of social services, normally linked to the welfare state model of the country under analysis and whether the welfare system is more or less extensive, whether it covers the majority of the population, and whether it has housing policies. Individual factors refer to the existence of disability or illness (physical or mental), addiction to alcohol or drugs or poor educational skills. And, finally, relational factors refer to the state of your family relationships; if there is a break in family ties due to orphanhood, widowhood, divorce or separation; if they have suffered episodes of domestic violence, or sexual abuse within the family, either during childhood or adulthood (Fig. 1).

In southern European societies, it is important to study this fourth analytical dimension represented by relational factors in order to understand the centrality of stressful life events that led to the loss of family networks. As Busch-Geertsema et al. (2010, p. 10), hace ya más de diez años, argue in the FEANTSA study *Homelessness and homeless policies in Europe: Lessons from research*: "There is considerable evidence on homelessness in Europe, but our knowledge remains very uneven with a lack of data and understanding on some aspects of homelessness. More crucially, there is relatively little research in the South and in the Central and East European member states […] This has hindered the development of a broader perspective and consideration of this social problem at the supranational level".

In the last decade, research on homelessness has begun to be developed somewhat more consistently in southern European countries, but there is still a long way to go to fully understand the specificities of the problem of homelessness in southern Europe. The economic crisis of 2008 and its effects on the increase in homeless people in European countries in the Mediterranean area has represented a boost for academic work on homelessness, although not so much for social policies that provide solutions to the problem. In Italy it is important to cite the works of Lancione (2014), Lancione et al. (2018), Consoli et al. (2016), Consoli and Meo (2020) and Natili et al. (2021) on the approaches that housing and social assistance policies should have to address the phenomenon of homelessness. In the case of Portugal, it is worth highlighting the work of Baptista (2013) on strategies to confront homelessness. In Greece Kourachanis (2017, 2018) conducts research on the consequences of the 2008 economic crisis and the deterioration of the protection that families can offer. Finally, in the last decade, research such as that of Vázquez et al. (2015, 2018, 2022), Vázquez and Panadero (2019), Sales (2015), Fajardo-Bullón et al. (2019), Matulič et al. (2019), Cabrera and García-Pérez (2020, 2021, 2023), Cabrera et al. (2023), Calvo et al. (2020) and Botija et al. (2023) define the problem of contemporary homelessness in Spain and delve into the new

[1] Although Edgar (2009) identified the family-related factors as causes of homelessness, and these factors are subsequently developed as in Busch-Geertsema et al. (2010), he did not apply it to southern European societies.

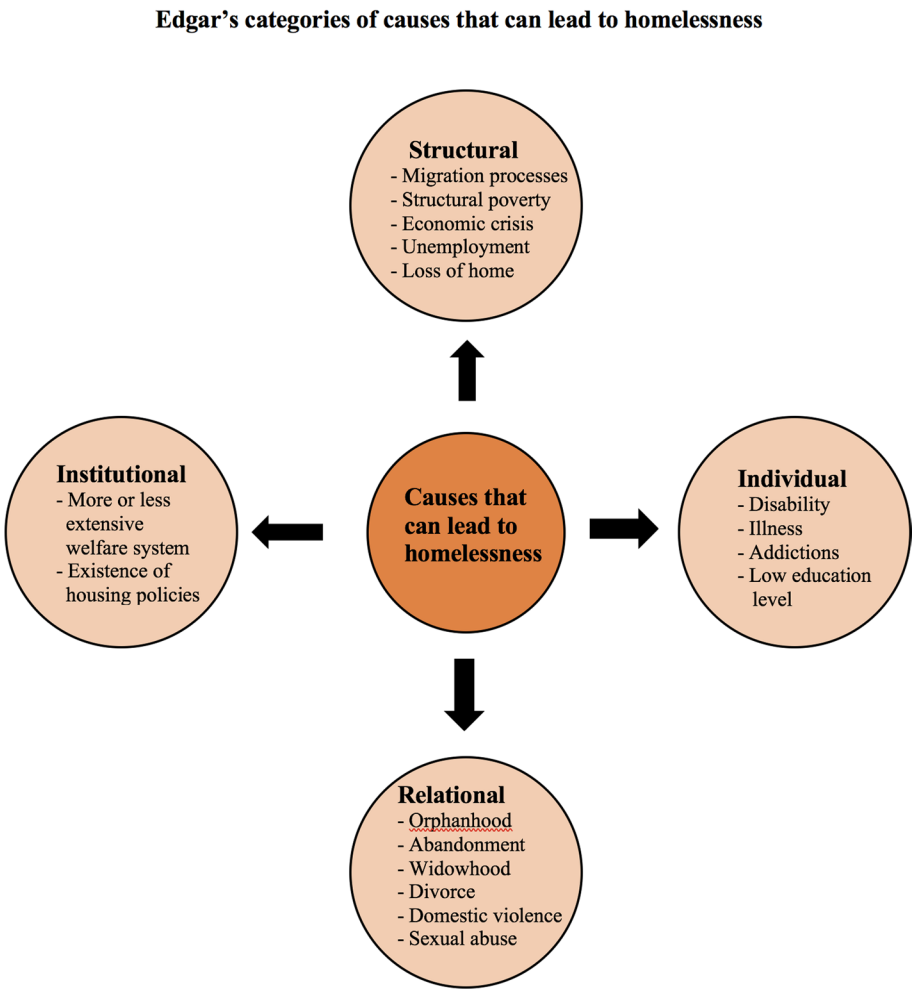

Fig. 1 Edgar's categories of causes that can lead to homelessness. Source: Own elaboration based on Edgar (2009)

realities of homelessness in Spain, such as the case of female homelessness or that of homeless families.

This article shows the need to delve into the characteristics of homelessness in familistic Mediterranean societies based on a dynamic analysis of the pathways that lead to homelessness. In this study, based on the analysis of 18 life stories of homeless men and women recruited from six well-known non-profit organizations in Barcelona (Spain), it can be seen how the narrative of the participants always focuses on mourning for the loss of family networks -which are essential in a family-oriented society- more than in economic, labor or health problems. Our informants always structure their relates around traumatic life events in the family environment that lead to the loss of family ties. In some cases, these events occur during people's childhood, in dysfunctional homes, with histories of physical and/or sexual abuse, substance abuse, mental illness, death of parents, etc. In the analysis of the reports, it is possible to observe the processes

of victimization and mourning of the person due to the loss or non-existence of a protective family environment in their lives.

2 Theoretical Frame

2.1 The Protective Role of the Family

The functioning of the family is the main reason why poverty does not lead directly to social exclusion in southern Europe (Katrougalos, 1996). People who are outside family networks lose access to important protection resources.

In Spain, as in the rest of southern European countries, the family traditionally behaves like a small organization responsible for generating a sufficient level of income that allows it to offer goods and services to its members whenever necessary. This social structure based on strong and protective family entities makes people feel vulnerable mainly to a small number of social risks for which the family is not able to offer protection. All this leads to the creation of family welfare states that are generated from a symbiosis between the social services covered by the State, and those covered by families on their own. In the case of Spain, the public authorities offer access to a highly fragmented social protection system where a distinction must be made between a group of well-protected beneficiaries and a large group of unprotected workers and citizens (Moreno, 2006). There is a strong age bias in Spanish social policies that defines this situation. While older workers (and the elderly in general) are relatively well protected, younger workers and their families remain largely outside the safety net. In this sense, policies favorable to youth (provisions of housing or affordable social housing, child care, economic support for young households with children) or active labor policies for young people who are going to enter the labor market have remained underdeveloped in Spain (Marí-Klose & Moreno-Fuentes, 2013).

There is also a strong connection between family welfare systems and market segmentation. The labor market in Spain is dualist with a very important part of workers in the informal sector. In the familistic countries the distinction between internal and external workers is reinforced by the high levels of contributions that are necessary to finance the exceptionally generous pension plans for workers in the formal sector and that contrast with an almost non-existent provision of resources for the workers in the informal labor sector. All this generates a favorable dynamic for the maintenance and perpetuation of the dualist labor market, since both employers and employees have strong incentives to use informal labor relations that do not require the payment of these high contributions (Esping-Andersen, 1996). This results in the fact that, on the one hand, some categories of employees (white-collar workers, basic blue-collar workers in medium and large companies with indefinite contracts and public employees) receive relatively generous benefits to cover short-term social risks (sickness, maternity, periods of temporary unemployment) and also relatively generous income-related pensions. While, on the other hand, a large segment of citizens such as: new participants in the labor markets, workers in the underground economy, long-term unemployed, inactive persons who provide informal care to dependents or undocumented immigrants, are not eligible for assistance social and are vulnerable to those same social risks (Marí-Klose & Moreno-Fuentes, 2013).

The strength of the primary solidarity networks embodied in the family and kinship compensate for the possible social exclusion derived from this dual pattern in the labor market; and, at the same time, they facilitate the expansion of the informal employment

sector, since the family is the main source of relational contacts that allow access to the informal labor market. Allen (2006) explains that it is usually vital for the well-being of the family nucleus to have at least one worker in the formal labor market to benefit from the hyperprotection offered by the public system to these workers. This makes it possible to extend the impact of these benefits from the formal sector to family members who work in the informal and irregular sectors.

In addition, in this type of economy characterized by large informal sectors and segmented labor markets, the family is the most significant institution in the provision and access to housing for people (Allen, 2006). For this reason, familism should not be understood, simplistically, only as a response to a welfare model with scarce resources and characterized by the scarcity and underdevelopment of the public social protection system. The social network provided by the extended family is an indispensable resource because it is a way to access other resources. The family provides primary solidarities based on affective links, housing, personal connections, and networks of economic exchange and sociability that form the basis of social assistance in economies characterized by segmented labor markets. This is why, in a family-oriented society like the Spanish one, without housing policies, the periods of economic crisis that have taken place in the last two decades have dragged many people who no longer had family support into a situation of homelessness.

Mingione and Benassi (2019) argue that in the societies of Mediterranean Europe the danger of social exclusion is where the family network does not exist or can offer little, while public services (schools, hospitals, transport, domestic care, childcare etc.) are scarce or of low quality. The risk increases when one or more dependent members suffer serious problems or when the head of the family is at a disadvantage from an occupational point of view. In addition, they argue that, in all these cases, the risk of being trapped in a perverse intergenerational circuit is high. Children grow up in disadvantaged contexts, leave school early or enjoy fewer opportunities to improve their educational level and professional qualifications. Therefore, as young adults they face a selective labor market with few personal resources and low levels of qualification, being condemned to unstable careers. This is a standard life itinerary that leads to homelessness (Matulič et al., 2019).

2.2 Economic Crisis and Weakening of the Family Contract

The effects of the 2008 economic crisis in Spain were profound. Unemployment, which in 2007, just before the crisis, was around 1,760,000 people (8% of the active population), reached a historic high in 2013 of more than six million unemployed (a 28% of the active population) and youth unemployment (unemployed under the age of 25) of almost one million people (57%) according to data from the Active Population Survey, INE (2013). Spain's GDP per capita went from being 105% of the European Union average in 2006 to representing 95% of the same in 2013 (EUROSTAT, 2015). Public debt, which in 2007 represented 36.1% of GDP, rose to 93.4% in 2013 (Banco de España, 2013). All of this represented a deterioration in people's quality of life that can be seen in the fact that the average household income in Spain decreased from 29,634 euros per year in 2009 to 26,174 in 2013 according to the Living Conditions Survey (INE, 2015). Income inequality between Spaniards also increased rapidly. The crisis affected the entire population, but the poorest lost much more than the richest: between 2008 and 2011 the poorest ten percent of Spaniards saw their annual income drop by 42.4%, while for the richest ten percent in the same period they only decreased by 5.6%. Spain became the second country with the greatest economic inequality in the entire European Union, surpassed only by the United Kingdom

according to the Income Inequality Update (OECD, 2014). The effect of these data is clearly seen in the residential exclusion. The 2019 Foessa Report indicates that 23.7% of the population is affected by some indicator of residential exclusion in Spain; a figure that rises to 60% among the population living in severe poverty. All of this had a major impact on the increase in homelessness. In 2022 the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE) estimated that the number of people needing restoration or accommodation services in Spain is 28,552.[2]

The economic crises are revealing the weak points of the model of protection offered by the family against poverty and exclusion in the familistic welfare models. The tools in the hands of families to protect their members from poverty, social exclusion and homelessness have weakened. Due to the crisis of 2008, the quality of public social benefits deteriorated in the familistic countries of southern Europe due to cost containment. They also introduced (additional) co-payments combined with incentives to subscribe to private insurance which opened the door to a deep reduction in welfare among the lowest income social groups. The lesser involvement of the public system, combined with the weakening of family ties and the intergenerational contract within families, has weakened the role of families as "absorbers" of extreme forms of social exclusion (Caïs & Folguera, 2013). The losers of the recent and radical economic reforms that have taken place in the last decade and a half in the countries of Mediterranean Europe must fight the COVID-19 crisis in a different world, with a precarious labor market, with less workers protected by the public policies, and with less effective families in preventing the social exclusion of its members than in the past.

According to Mingione and Benassi (2019), the forms of poverty that involve processes of individualized decline can be understood as a response of families to the overload they suffer. The new dynamics of family poverty generate a growing number of subjects with difficulties and socially isolated and who can easily find themselves in a homeless situation. They are, to a large extent, young people, single-parent families and immigrants precariously inserted in the labor market, excluded from welfare, with housing and integration problems. Social isolation and abandonment by the family have more dangerous repercussions in a model of social solidarity based on familism precisely because the welfare model is based on informal solidarity and shows inadequacies in public programs and services of social reinsertion.

2.3 The Social Stigma of Being Homeless in the Mediterranean Societies

In family-based societies, the loss of family ties is a trigger for homelessness and an important limitation in social recovery processes. According to INE data (2022) the vast majority of homeless people in Spain are lonely people. Only 24.9% of people in this group say they have a partner, and of these, only half live with them. Based on their legal status, 11.0% are married, 23.0% are separated or divorced, 63.7% are single and 2.3% are widowed. Only 20% of homeless people report having had a family

[2] During the development of the Covid-19 pandemic, various entities warned of the increase and worsening of situations of social exclusion in the most vulnerable people and families (Arrels Fundació, 2020a, b; Caritas, 2020). According to data from Arrels Fundació, 2020a, b in Barcelona, more than 4700 homeless people were counted in Barcelona during the Covid-19, of which 1239 were still sleeping on the street in full state of alarm decreed by Covid-19, despite of having opened more than 600 emergency places for this reason.

environment without serious problems or conflicts. We are, therefore, facing people who have a vulnerable social capital linked to difficulties associated with structural and relational factors of varying intensity.

The social stigma of not having a home or family took shape in Spain during most of the twentieth century through the Vagrancy Act (*Ley de vagos y maleantes*). This law was aimed at the treatment of vagabonds, nomads, pimps and any other element considered antisocial. In 1970 it was replaced and repealed by the "Law on dangerousness and social rehabilitation" (Ley de *Peligrosidad y rehabilitación social)* with very similar terms, but which also included sentences of up to five years of internment in prisons or insane asylums for homosexuals and other individuals considered socially dangerous. Since these laws, control was exercised and all those people who transgressed the rules, who presented alternative lifestyles, or who were in various processes of uprooting and extreme poverty, were punished. In the words of Declerck (2001), those people who developed their lives in a public space were the ones who presented the most extreme consequences of desocialization and the loss of ties with others and with the world.

In the twenty-first century, little has changed since homeless people continue to be associated with a stigmatizing and exclusionary collective imagination that calls into question their own status as citizens (Cabrera, 2008). At present, the stigmatization towards homeless people is still present in familistic societies, focusing on different factors that blame them. Among the most important stigmas that result in the loss of family networks, stand out those related to health (mental disorders and addictions), those related to culture and origin (immigration) and finally those linked to gender discrimination (Rubio-Martín, 2017).

The stigmatization suffered by homeless people is associated with the concept of *aporophobia*, which has its roots in rejection and fear of the poor. This process is articulated through various representations and actions charged with violence that range from invisibility to hate crimes (Cortina, 2017). According to INE data (2022), 39.0% of homeless people have been attacked and 68.9% have received insults and threats. Moreover, the judgment that is poured out on people who are homeless entails a moral condemnation that incapacitates and penalizes them (Cabrera, 2004).

The harmful effects of stigmatization produce devaluation and self-stigmatization in people, who feel ashamed and blame themselves for their situation. In the words of Goffman (1963), the "moral career" to which they are exposed throughout their processes of social and residential exclusion has devastating effects on physical and emotional health (Muñoz et al., 2003). According to the National Comprehensive Strategy for the Homeless 2015–2020 plan of the Government of Spain (2015), the life expectancy of homeless people in Spain is reduced by 20 years and homeless people presents between two and fifty times more problems of physical and mental health than the rest of the population. This increases the importance of losing relational supports (family, friendship or community), since these relational supports act as basic support in situations of social emergency and have a protective effect against stressful events that occur throughout life. According to Durbin et al. (2019), social support increases resistance to these events and reduces their impact situations.

Stressful Life Events (SLE) are the set of experiences linked to various losses, breakups, conflicts and relational, material and structural difficulties of varying intensity that affect the person's physical and mental health, reducing their ability to face other SLE. Homeless people present throughout their processes of social and residential exclusion a high number of SLE. Homeless women have an average of 11 traumatic events throughout their lives, compared to 9 for homeless men (Vázquez et al., 2015).

SLE can be understood as predisposing or precipitating in relation to physical and mental health risk (Cruz Terán et al., 2006). The predisposing factors are those related to events that occurred during childhood, highlighting among them: mistreatment, abandonment, family violence, death of a family member, having had parents with mental health problems or addictions, early substance use addictive and expulsion from home, among others. And the precipitating factors are the recent changes, associated with the adult stage, among which stand out: material problems related to the loss of work and housing, the fragility or loss of family ties, mourning caused by the death of close relatives, separations and divorces, as well as the appearance of various disorders related to health (addictions and physical and mental health). The presence of stressful events during childhood can increase individual vulnerability to recent life events (Padgett et al., 2012). Among the most impactful SLE in these early stages are abandonment, violence in the family and having suffered mistreatment and physical abuse (Coates & McKenzie-Mohr, 2010). Various studies suggest that stressful life events affect women more traumatically than men (Zugazaga, 2004; Rodríguez Moreno et al., 2016). Women are more likely than men to have been both physically and sexually abused in their childhood; as well as having experienced violence or abusive situations in their adult life (Vázquez & Panadero, 2019). Violence in its various forms is presented as a distinctive and precipitating element in the vital processes of homeless women (Mayock & Bretherton, 2016, Matulič et al., 2019; Cabrera et al., 2023).

3 Methods and Data

3.1 Aim

The objective of this article is to understand the central role of the family in the processes of individualized social exclusion that lead to homelessness in familistic Mediterranean societies, as well as the symbolic burden that having lost the family represents.

3.2 Design

The methodological approach used to carry out this research is to study the pathways to homelessness. The pathways offer a deep insight into homelessness, which highlight both the experiences of the homeless and the wider parameters (general economic and social circumstances, availability and effectiveness of social services, family and kin support networks, individual choices), which comprise the overall environment that lead each individual to homelessness.[3] As Farrugia says (2011): The aim of this type of analysis is to identify and analyse the meanings specific to the experience of homelessness, not to identify generalizable patterns. It is qualitative study with an inductive analytical approach based on the formulation of an initial hypothesis and the subsequent selection of relevant

[3] This methodological approach was first implemented in Fitzpatrick's (1999) study of homeless young people in Glasgow. To do so she conducted in-depth interviews with 25 homeless youth (with nine of them she managed to do more than one interview). Fitzpatrick, who until then had used large samples with statistical validity, was critical of the static perception of most studies of homeless people and believed that in-depth interviews helped to better understand and explain the dynamic nature of experiences and paths of the homeless. The same year, Crane (1999) does the same to understand in depth the homelessness of older people in a study called *Understanding Older Homeless People: Their circumstances, problems and needs*.

cases (Katz, 2001). The technique used to obtain data and carry out the analysis is in-depth interviews with the intention of constructing life stories that are as detailed as possible. If possible, more than one interview is carried out with the intention of "returning to the interviewee" with the intention of detecting inconsistencies or contradictions to improve and make the life story more detailed. With interviews, key stressful moments (SLE) can be detected that are essential for explaining the homelessness situation experienced by the person interviewed. The intention to see how these key hard and stressful moments in the life of a homeless person have impacted that person and to understand how they have lived them, experienced them and, in the specific case of our article, study the symbolic burden that having lost the family represents in this type of societies. The information about our interviewees is summarized in Table 1.

3.3 Participants

In our study, the interviews are carried out with 18 people (9 men and 9 women) over 18 years of age who have lived on the streets for more than two years and who at the time of the interview(s) were linked (living or using services) to social entities in Barcelona. The sufficiency criterion is used, seeking the maximum variety of participants and contexts (Seidman, 2013). The criterion used to determine the number of interviews necessary is information saturation. Interviews are stopped when the new information offered is redundant and no more different information is obtained from the new interviews. In our case this happened with 18 interviews (Hennink et al., 2017).

3.4 Data Collection

18 in-depth interviews were conducted that lasted between 2 and 3 h. We followed the recommendations of Seidman (2013) to design the interview protocol, proposing the sequential exploration of themes with the aim of facilitating the induction of the experience lived by the participant and better understanding the life trajectories of the participants from childhood to the present day. For reasons of fragility of the informants and to delve into specific aspects of the analysis, in most cases, the interviews were conducted during more than one session. The participants were selected by the researchers with the help of professionals from the non-profit organizations to which the people were linked at that time.[4] Once all the participants were chosen, an interview was arranged in the place chosen by the participants.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The participants were recruited after the research team had applied for permission from each institution involved in the study and their respective ethical committees. Before they agreed to be in the survey, all the participants had been informed of the overall objectives of the study and the procedures that would be followed. The researchers then requested their voluntary participation, clarifying that they could withdraw at any moment they

[4] The participating non-profit organizations are: Arrels fundació, Can Planes, Llar de Pau, Proges, Sant Joan de Déu, Santa Lluisa de Marillac. All of them located in Barcelona.

Table 1 Categorization of Stressful Life Events (SLE)

Interview	Structural SLE	Institutional SLE	Individual SLE	Relational SLE
I1 (AL) Male	- *Migration process* - Economic crisis 2008 - Unemployment 2008 - Loss of home	- Temporary accommodations in shelters - Detoxification centre	- Drug and alcohol abuse - *Abandonment of studies*	- *Father's death (9 years)* - Mother's death - Divorce (no children) - No family
I2 (AO) Male		- Jail (10 years) - Public hospital - Shelter (living in)	- Illness - Mental illness (violence) - *Abandonment of studies*	- *Father, mother and sister death (17 years)* - Never had a partner - No children
I3 (AT) Male	- *Structural poverty*	- Public hospital - Shelter (living in)	- Drug and alcohol abuse - Illness - *Abandonment of studies*	- *Mother's death (4 years)* - 3 divorces (3 children) - No relationship with brothers and sisters - Relationship with one of his daughters
I4 (AZ) Male	- Unemployment (work accident) - Loss of home	- Temporary accommodations in shelters	- Disability (work accident) - Alcohol abuse	- Divorce (no children) - Relationship with his brother
I5 (CA) Female	- Economic crisis 2008 - Unemployment 2008 - Loss of home		- **Teen pregnancy** - *Abandonment of studies*	- *Domestic violence* - **Gender violence** - No relationship with family
I6 (DO) Female	- *Migration process* - Economic crisis 2008 - Unemployment 2008 - Loss of home	- *Boarding school for abandoned children* - Temporary accommodations in shelters	- Alcohol abuse - **Teen pregnancy** - Illness - Mental Illness - *Abandonment of studies*	- *Abandonment* - Divorce - Has lived with many couples - No relationship with family - **Relational strategies with men in exchange for accommodation**
I7 (EL) Female	- *Migration process* - Migration process	- Temporary accommodations in shelters	- Mental Illness	- Widowhood - Father, mother and sister death - No family - Loneliness

Table 1 (continued)

Interview	Structural SLE	Institutional SLE	Individual SLE	Relational SLE
I8 (ISA) Female	- *Structural poverty*	- Temporary accommodations in shelters - Psychiatric hospital	- *Drug and alcohol abuse* - Drug and alcohol abuse - Mental Illness - *Abandonment of studies* - Drug dealer	- *Father's death (4 years)* - Mother's death - *Domestic violence* - **Gender violence** - **Relational strategies with men in exchange for accommodation** - **Withdrawal of guardianship of children** - Relationship with her sister
I9 (JM) Male		- *Boarding school for abandoned children* - Temporary accommodations in shelters	- Mental Illness - Pathological gambling - *Abandonment of studies*	- *Abandonment* - Bad relationship with family
I10 (JO) Male	- Unemployment (depression) - Loss of home	- Temporary accommodations in shelters	- Drug and alcohol abuse - Mental Illness	- *Sexual abuse (parental)* - Widowhood - Relationship with brothers, sisters—Relationship with 2 daughters that live abroad
I11 (JOM) Male	- Migration process - Unemployment (work accident)	- Temporary accommodations in shelters	- Disability (burns and blindness)	- Divorce (2 children) - Mother's death - Relationship with 2 of his 8 brothers and sisters - Relationship with 2 sons that live abroad
I12 (JR) Male	- *Migration Process* - Migration process - Economic crisis 2008 - Unemployment 2008	- Supervised flat	- *Alcohol abuse* - Alcohol abuse - Illness - Mental Illness	- *Alcoholic father* - *Father's death* - No relationship with brothers
I13 (MF) Male	- Unemployment (depression) - Loss of home (fire)		- Alcohol abuse - Malnutrition - *Abandonment of studies*	- 2 divorces (1 children) - Relationship with his son (who has mental illness)

Table 1 (continued)

Interview	Structural SLE	Institutional SLE	Individual SLE	Relational SLE
I14 (PL) Female	- *Structural poverty*	- Public hospital - Shelter (living in)	- *Drug and alcohol abuse* - Drug and alcohol abuse - Illness - Mental Illness - Prostitution - *Abandonment of studies* - Drug dealer	- *Alcoholic father* - *Domestic violence* - *Sexual abuse* - Father, and mother death - **Gender violence** - Relationship with some of her sisters
I15 (JU) Female	- Migration process - Economic crisis 2008 - Unemployment 2008 - Loss of home	- Shelter (living in)		- Emigrates and leaves her daughter with her parents - Bad relationship with parents and daughter
I16 (ROS) Female	- *Structural poverty* - Economic crisis 2008 - Unemployment 2008 - Loss of home	- Shelter (living in)	- *Abandonment of studies*	- *Domestic violence* - *Sexual abuse* - Mother's death - **Gender violence** - Divorce - No relationship with family
I17 (SA) Female	- Migration process - Economic crisis 2008 - Unemployment 2008 - Loss of home	- Temporary accommodations in shelters	- Alcohol abuse - Mental Illness	- *Father and mother death* - **Withdrawal of guardianship of children** - No relationship with family
I18 (SI) Female	- Migration process - Economic crisis 2008 - Unemployment 2008 - Loss of home	- Public hospital	- Illness	- No relationship with family

Note: SLE that occur during the interviewee's childhood and adolescence are highlighted in italics, and those that specifically affect women are highlighted in bold

Source: Own elaboration

wished. The individual interviews were conducted with the participants' verbal and written consent. Nobody chose to withdraw. Anonymity was also guaranteed in the transcripts and texts of the interviews.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews was first sorted into open codes to identify themes and create preliminary codes. Further coding interrogated the integrity of preliminary open codes, created new codes, and identified conceptual relationships between and within codes. The final analysis is the outcome of a process of coding which aimed to identify the subject positions being constructed by participants, and the cultural resources which participants are drawing upon to construct these subject positions.

4 Results

The following analysis explores the understandings of people experiencing homelessness of what it means to be a 'homeless person' in a familistic Mediterranean society, and the symbolic burden that having lost the family represents in this type of societies. When the people interviewed are asked about the reasons that have led them to live on the street, they always center the argument around traumatic life events in the family environment that lead to the loss of family ties. This is because in a familistic society, the loss of the family is the worst thing that can happen. The analysis of the interviews shows that the participants have suffered Stressful Life Events (SLE) throughout their lives that we can link to the four main categories of causal factors of homelessness: structural, institutional, individual and relational (Edgar, 2009). However, the people interviewed always center their relate on the SLE linked to the loss of relational ties with the family as the triggering factor and the justification for their situation of homelessness. This centrality of the relational factors of homelessness in the participants' life trajectories demonstrates the symbolic importance of the family in Mediterranean societies.

Table 1 shows the SLE that the people interviewed have suffered throughout their lives. We have ordered the SLE that people have reported to us using the four broad categories of causal factors of homelessness: structural, institutional, individual and relational. In the table, the SLE that occur during childhood and adolescence have been highlighted in italics. SLE that specifically affect women have also been highlighted in bold.

The results of the interviews with the informants can be interpreted as fitting two vital itineraries defined by the existing literature that lead to homelessness: "Youth homelessness" and "Adult and later life homelessness" (Anderson & Christian, 2003; Anderson & Tulloch, 2000).

The first of them derives from SLE that occur during childhood. They are boys and girls who live in environments of extreme poverty, who drop out of school prematurely -in some cases they also run away from the family environment- and who never manage to integrate into a regular work environment. During their adult lives they always work in informal work environments and even in jobs outside the law. This means that the social aid or benefits they may receive are minimal. With no formal job many of these people easily find themselves experiencing homelessness.

The second vital itinerary that leads to homelessness derives from SLE that occur in adulthood. These are people who, due to the economic crisis of 2008 or due to accidents at

work or loss of loved ones that plunge them into a depressive process, end up losing their job and when public aid ends they also end up losing their home.

Although structural factors, such as poverty or job loss, are essential to understand the two vital itineraries to homelessness, the people interviewed center their story on SLE linked to the family and the loss of relational ties with it as a trigger and justification for their situation of homelessness. In Mediterranean countries, there is more fear of losing family ties than of job loss and poverty itself.

The loss or non-existence of a protective family environment is used to justify the situation in which the homeless find themselves. It can be understood as a process of self-victimization and mourning of the person for not having had a good family or for having lost it. The moral condemnation to which these people are exposed throughout their processes of social and residential exclusion has devastating effects on physical and emotional health. That is why the social stigma that living on the street represents for being addicted to alcohol or other types of narcotics or suffering from a mental illness, is justified by having had bad luck with the family; either due to the death of parents or a partner, or due to having been abandoned during childhood, or having suffered violence in the family environment; and at the same time, the structural causes that may have led the interviewee to homelessness are minimized.

This is clearly seen in the account of interviewee 1 Al who is an alcoholic and loses his job in September 2008 in the middle of the economic crisis, as explained in the interview:

> I lost my job in September 2008. It was because of the drink. My boss sat down with me and told me that I was not the same person that he hired, and that if I was able to solve my problems, he would hire me again with the same conditions. [Then] I started having financial problems and ended up living in a friend's apartment. Then the situation began to be untenable and I ended up on the street. (I1 Al)

But he justifies his situation of homelessness due to the loss of his mother and the break with his partner:

> I have spent my life working... but the death of my mother, and the break with my partner was the trigger for everything. It was the reason why I started drinking like crazy. (I1 Al)

In addition, he considers that without a family environment it is impossible to get out of a situation of homelessness:

> I have very little chance of leaving the streets because of my family situation. I have no family environment or outside help. My parents died. I have no siblings, I am an only child. I don't have family help and it's very difficult to leave without family support; And if you have a problem with alcohol or drugs, everything gets even more complicated. (I1 Al)

Sometimes the person interviewed justifies their situation of homelessness due to traumatic events with the family that occurred during childhood. This is the case of interviewee 9 JM who is a gambler and has lived on the street for years in different cities in Spain. He attributes his situation to the fact that his parents abandoned him in a foster home when he was 5 years old and his older brothers and sisters did not care for him.

> I am from Murcia and at the age of 5 they took me to an educational center for children in Madrid. I was there until I was 16 when I ran away from school. At school I believed that I had no family, that I was an orphan […]. When I was 10

years old, my parents appeared. I said that I had no parents. I didn't want them at the time either. I didn't know what a father or mother was. I didn't know what love was. […] They told me that my parents did not want me to be born, that my mother did not want me, that I should have died at birth. And this has happened to me throughout my life, that my family has not loved me. (I9 JM)

Then I started playing cards and I got lucky, I had a winning streak. Then I got hooked on machines. When I was there waiting for the card game to start I was playing the machine. Boredom got me hooked on machines. Until the bad streak came and everything went wrong for me. At that time, I owed money to everyone and I couldn't pay them. So, I went to the street to sleep. (I9 JM)

My brothers have not loved me. Always with the excuses that my mother didn't love me and that I shouldn't have been born, that I should have died. It was not my fault that I was born […]. My older brother has been mayor of a town and has denied me a job. I went to ask him for a job and he didn't give it to me. They have never given me anything. (I9 JM)

Traumatic events that occurred during childhood such as abandonment, abuse or ill-treatment within the family are called predisposing stressful life events. These types of events during childhood increase the vulnerability to stressful life events that occur during adulthood of the person who suffers them. A good example is the interviewee 10 JO who can't get over the death of his wife, starts drinking and loses his job and residence. Halfway through the interview, he justifies his situation by a terrible event during his childhood that he doesn't want to talk about and that has kept him in psychiatric treatment all his life (he suffered abuse from his parents during his childhood). He even denies that he ever had parents… but his parents are alive.

The death of my wife affected me a lot. I did not manage mourning properly. I was widowed and started drinking. I had never drunk. When my wife died I had no savings and I didn't want to work. I had job offers, but I didn't want to do anything. (I10 JO)

I want to recover and go back to being what I was before. Start to get up. But I know that this is slow... Because of the things that have happened to me as a child and that I talk about with the therapist... Little by little. These are things that you also have to work on throughout your life... because I never told anyone. I left home at 16 and I have never had a father or mother.....(silence and changes the subject). (I10 JO)

The stigma felt by homeless people in familistic societies is very important. Having lost family and living on the street is shameful and the stigma itself affects a person's physical and mental health and chances of recovery. The person blames himself and wants to bear the shame; he accepts the moral condemnation that having been left alone on the street implies as a form of atonement. Lacking normalized social relationships, in many cases, also implies having lost the motivation for personal recovery. This is clearly seen in the testimony of interviewee 13 MF who is an alcoholic, has spent 15 years living on the street and rejects the help offered by his son.

I had been on the street for 15 years, but I didn't want to go anywhere. I thought I was 42 or 44 kilos when the shelter picked me up, but I told them I didn't want to go in […]. My son's family also tried to help me by all means […] but in the condition you are in, you cannot accept going to anyone's house. Because if the person suffers, the others are also suffering. So little by little I moved away until I disappeared. (I13MF)

In the women's reports, there is evidence of greater victimization caused by the repercussions linked to the social and cultural role assigned to the female gender. The relationship with the children and the fear of losing them is always a central argument in the reports of the women informants. In the 6 DO interview of a woman who was abandoned during her childhood, we see how the relational strategies deployed are linked to gender, where the maintenance of family ties and motherhood occupy a predominant place. Preserving the family, recovering it or creating it has a relevant meaning in their stabilization and recovery processes.

> I left the boarding school at the age of 17. Then I fell in love with a boy who got me pregnant and then left. From there I was making my life. I've been through a lot, I've lived a lot, I've had to do things I don't like in order to survive […]. I put my girl in a boarding home for children because I couldn't have her. At that time, I did not work and did not receive any kind of help […]. So, I went to work in a brothel and married a man I met there. To get my daughter out of boarding school, I married him […] I didn't want my daughter to go through what I went through. (I6 DO)

The high incidence of traumatic events throughout life trajectories and the strong stigmatization to which homeless women are exposed negatively affects their state of health. Violence is present in the life trajectories of women, becoming one of the triggers for homelessness. In the interview 14 PL we can see how a dysfunctional family environment, where violent relationships manifest from childhood, generates emotional instability throughout life with serious consequences for physical and mental health.

> My childhood in Chinatown was very difficult. All I can tell you are negative things. My father was an abuser and that marked me and my brothers throughout our lives. When I was very little I was raped by a friend of my brother. This was very traumatic for me. I have kept the secret for many years, too many! Now I explain it to be able to overcome it. […] I vaguely remember my childhood. My sister got pregnant at the age of 13 and left home early. The rest of us were always on the street and at the age of thirteen I started using drugs. (I14 PL)

5 Conclusions

In the familistic countries of southern Europe, such as Spain, the economic crisis of 2008 had a severe impact. A decade later, and even without a full recovery of the economy and the job market, the coronavirus crisis worsened the situation. The tools in the hands of families to protect their members from poverty, social exclusion and homelessness have been weakened. The result of the successive economic crises is that, in Spain, almost a quarter of the population is affected by some indicator of residential exclusion. The high unemployment derived from the economic crises has generated risk situations for families. The analysis of our interviews identifies two vital itineraries that lead to homelessness that fit categories defined by the existing literature: "Youth homelessness" and "Adult and later life homelessness" (Anderson & Christian, 2003; Anderson & Tulloch, 2000). The families of people who lose their jobs and stop receiving social benefits are trapped in a circuit of perverse intergenerational degradation. In the "Youth homelessness" itinerary, children grow up in disadvantaged contexts and leave school early, being condemned to work in informal work environments and even in jobs outside the law. In the "Adult and later life homelessness", the loss of work leads to an individualized descent towards social

exclusion. There are people who, when they lose their job and stop receiving social benefits, either out of shame or despair, isolate themselves from their families until they end up finding themselves homeless.

The new forms of poverty that imply individualized social exclusion processes that lead to homelessness in southern Europe can be understood as a result of the overload that families currently suffer in those countries are currently suffering. The difficulties of families derive directly from structural factors such as poverty or loss of work linked to the effects of economic crises. But the family is so important in Mediterranean societies that the participants of the study leave aside objective explanations linked to work, public resources or housing and always focus their life story on events linked to family relationships. For the people interviewed, it is always the loss of relational ties to the family the trigger and justification of their situation of homelessness, not the fact of having lost the work, housing, or having stopped receiving public aid. In Mediterranean family societies, people carry a much higher moral condemnation for losing the family than to lose work or basic means of subsistence. That is why the people interviewed in this investigation reproduce a characteristic account of self-victimization and grieving for not having a good family or having lost it.

The use of an analytical framework of the causes that can lead to homelessness that, in addition to focusing on structural and individual elements, also includes relational factors, has allowed us to show that, in familistic Mediterranean societies, the social stigma that represents living on the streets is easier to justify for having had bad luck with the family -either for death of parents or the couple, for having been abandoned during childhood, or for having suffered domestic or gender violence- that for having been unemployed and having lost the house due to the effects of recent economic crises and not receiving aid from social services. In some cases, the moral career to which homeless people in familistic societies are exposed throughout their process of social and residential exclusion is so strong that the person loses the motivations for recovery and wants to load with the shame staying on the street as a form of expression. In the case of homeless women, victimization is even greater due to the social role of family caregivers that is assigned to them in familistic societies. Losing the family is inconceivable for the Mediterranean woman, especially if this involves the loss of children; all their vital decisions of her of her are aimed at conserving or recovering the family of her. Therefore, working on the reconstruction of the family networks of homeless people in Mediterranean societies is a priority from all those tasked with supporting these people, if they are to have the best chance of managing transitions and working towards stability in their lives.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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