

Young, Homeless and Alone

- A Glance into the Mental Wellbeing of Homeless Youth
in High-Income Countries



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Abstract

Introduction: Homeless people experience higher levels of morbidity and mortality compared to the general population and with over 100 million homeless people worldwide and an alarming increase in homelessness youth in several high-income, cause great concern within the field of global health. Several high-income countries such as Denmark has implemented housing first strategies with special emphasis on decreasing rates of homeless youth, however numbers are still increasing. The aim of this thesis is to assist the need for research on how to provide better social support for homeless youth in Denmark by investigating the causes and consequences of social isolation and feelings of loneliness among homeless youth both prior to and during their homelessness.

Method: A scoping review was conducted from 37 articles gathered from PubMed, PsycInfo and SCOPUS, and included research from Australia, Canada, Denmark, England and United States. Results were analyzed through using elements from the theoretical work of Erikson, Bourdieu, and Weiss in order to create a base for discussion.

Results: Causes of isolation and feelings of loneliness were found to be connected to neglect during childhood, rejection from peers, destructive friendships with street peers and lack of compassion and understanding within the child welfare system. Consequences of social isolation and feelings of loneliness were found to include social withdrawal, involving in destructive friendships as well as attempting suicide

Discussion: Homeless youth often come from families that have not provided them with sufficient amount of care during their childhood and thus they have likely not had a healthy psychosocial development that will enable them to create positive relationships with peers. Not having the same internal dispositions as mainstream society will prove challenging when trying to understand the 'rules of the game' and will likely increase feelings of insufficiency when not meeting up standards.

Conclusion: The hypothesis that some of the causes of social isolation and feelings of loneliness are related to neglect prior to youth becoming homeless and that social isolation and feelings of loneliness will have consequences on these youths' ability to develop strong positive relationships later on in life was confirmed. It was likewise confirmed that reoccurring experiences with being socially isolated and feelings of loneliness have resulted in consequences that could provide a barrier for them to fully accept assistance from support services provided by the Danish state and other institutions working with interventions for homeless youth.

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1. Introduction

Homeless individuals are some of the most vulnerable and exposed people within society, posing great concern for global health, their rates of both morbidity and mortality being higher than the general population (Fazel, 2014). Homeless people are in some countries excluded from accessing medical care and often find themselves living in inadequate housing or shelter that does not provide protection against weather conditions, theft and various kinds of assault (ibid). They often suffer from many nutritional deficiencies due to not having access to nutritious and safe food, as well as from mental disorders that they do not receive proper medication nor counselling for (ibid). Homelessness is a serious issue not only in low and middle-income countries but continues to exist in high-income countries as well (ibid). According to the United Nation Commission on Human Rights, it is estimated that 100 million people worldwide are homeless, 400.000 people within the European Union and as many as 600.000 in the USA alone (Fazel et al. 2014).

The fact that many homeless individuals suffer from mental issues suggests that being homeless goes beyond the issue of not having stable housing, which is consistent with research that has tried to define what a home actually means (Sommerville, 1991). Sommerville (1991) argues that a home should be understood as being more than merely a roof over one's head, suggesting that it contains at least six or seven dimensions of meaning. A home should provide a sense of physical (protection), psychological (relaxation), emotional (happiness), territorial (possession), ontological (self), spatial (space), ideality (bliss) security. (ibid). Acknowledging these factors when considering homelessness it becomes clear that providing only shelter will not necessarily mean that a person has a home, especially not when if that person suffers from e.g. mental health issues and/or substance addictions that are not subsequently treated. Recognition of the fact that homeless people often need to be provided with more assistance than a roof over their heads, initiated the creation of the Housing First Principle (National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), 2015). Housing First refers to a strategy developed in Los Angeles, California in 1988, and seeks to provide homeless individuals with quick access to stable housing, combined with services that will, based on an individual needs assessment, ensure the this housing stability is maintained. Unlike previous homeless strategies, Housing First does not require homeless individuals to participate in mandatory service or therapy compliance (NAEH, 2015).

Youth homelessness has become an increasing problem in many European countries over the years and according to the European Commission, close to one out of three young people of the age of 18-24 are at risk of social exclusion and poverty within the European Union (EACEA, 2014). Even though the WHO emphasize the focus on adolescent health (WHO, 2015), a concerning amount of young people seem to fall through the cracks of the system placed to assist them even in high-income countries such as Australia, Canada, Denmark, the UK and USA. According to the Danish National homeless count from 2013, 1138 of the 6000 homeless people in Denmark were between the ages of 18-29 years old, the number having increased from 633 people in 2009, which meant an increase of around 80 % (SFI, 2013).

1.1 The Danish Homeless Strategy and the issue of youth homelessness in Denmark

In 2013, 17 of the 98 municipalities in Denmark implemented the Danish Homeless Strategy, that is built on the Housing First principle (The Danish National Center for Social Research, (SFI), 2013). In the strategy, local municipalities work closely together with national policy makers in order to test out several housing support interventions that are monitored both on a national, municipal and individual level (ibid). In recognition of the increasing problem of youth homelessness, one of the four objectives of the strategy deals specifically with homeless youth and seeks to provide other solutions than merely the opportunity for homeless youth to be accommodated in shelters (ibid). The program works with floating support interventions, which means that the youth is supported based on their various needs of assistance, in order for them to be able to maintain their stable housing situation (ibid). The floating support options consist of three types, namely Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Individual Case Management (ICM) or Critical Time Intervention (CTI). ACT is given to the individuals identified as being worst off and in need of support from a multidisciplinary professional team that can help with addictions, physical and mental issues, job coaching etc (SFI, 2013). This type of assistance takes place within the individual's own home, as he/she has been found to be poor at utilizing existing services. Unlike individuals in need of ACT, the homeless people assigned ICM, are capable to some extent of making use of services but just need support in the process. This support is to be provided as long as a person is in need of it (ibid). The last type of support, CTI, is given to individuals who are moving from a shelter to own permanent housing. Normally this support option is provided for nine months, after which, other service options should take over, should they still be needed (ibid). The different floating programs are thus provided depending on individual's needs and as of 2013, most individuals have been

enrolled in the ICM program (1010 people). Besides, from the three floating programs, street outreach programs were also used assessing 1481 individuals (SFI, 2013).

Even though the Danish homeless strategy seemingly provide both housing as well as a series of support options based on the needs of the homeless individual, still some homeless youth do not receive the necessary assistance. According to an evaluation of the Danish Housing First Strategy made by SFI from 2013, close three out of four homeless youth were housed, however the rest did not get offered housing, even though they had been attached to a support program (Benjaminsen, 2013). 9 % of the individuals that were housed, did not manage to maintain their housing, and of these only 4 % were rehoused (ibid). Furthermore, the report also found that the floating programs had not been provided to many homeless people in Copenhagen, compared to the extent of homeless individuals residing there (Benjaminsen, 2013), which again indicate that also some youth might not have been provided with the necessary assistance. What is even more concerning is that seemingly only 24% of homeless youth are connected to a contact person or a government action plan (Benjaminsen & Lauritzen, 2013). Even though the strategy acknowledges the fact that youth homelessness has become an increasing issue and therefore focuses on this particular age group, something is apparently not functioning as well as it should.

Taking into account the before-mentioned dimensions of a 'home', being provided with a home combined with support may not in itself be able to constitute a home in its full meaning (Pleace, 1998). It is recognized that the reason for why young people become homeless is complex (Gaetz, 2004), and due to the fact that some youth are not capable of maintaining their housing once provided with it, indicate that the complexity of the issues these youth struggle with are not yet fully comprehended. Furthermore, research has found that most homeless youth come from 'broken' homes having experienced various kinds of parental abuse (Taylor Seehafer, 2008, Pedersen, 2012), and especially children who have been placed in foster care are of great risk of becoming homeless compared to other children their age (Mendes & Muslehuddin, 2004). Due to these facts, some homeless youth have likely never really had a 'home' in the full meaning of the word, nor received proper social support. As the population of homeless youth has increased, several institutions have requested further research on how to improve the support services for this particular group (Benjaminsen, 2013, SPUK, 2014). A report from Social Pædagogisk Udviklings- og Kursuscenter (SPUK), that reviewed the current initiatives to assist youth with the different reasons for being homeless from 2014, found that research that specifically focused on chronic isolated/lonely youth in a broader sense was needed (SPUK, 2014).

Focusing on the effects of being socially isolated and lonely seems relevant due to the fact that research as show loneliness to be a common feeling in homeless youth (Miller et al, 2004, Rokach, 2005).

In the recent years research has shown that chronic feelings of loneliness does not only affect an individual's mental wellbeing but also physical health and has a great effect on both morbidity and mortality (Cacioppo, 2008). A study conducted in 2010 concluded that loneliness predicted all-cause mortality and that this was greater among individuals that felt chronically lonely than individuals that feel lonely only occasionally (ibid). According to research, chronic loneliness can in time lead to hypertension, increased cholesterol levels and coronary heart disease (ibid). Chronic loneliness can also have long-term effects on cognitive performance, suggesting that individuals who experience chronic loneliness are more likely to experience cognitive decline over time, and evidence even show a link between chronic loneliness and the development of Alzheimer's disease (ibid). Due to this evidence, researchers has stated that feeling chronically lonely pose the same health risk as being obese as well as smoking (Cacioppo, 2008).

Looking into the causes and consequences of loneliness both during and even before the youth experienced homelessness could perhaps assist in gaining a better understanding as to how support for this particular group could be improved. Understanding how to provide better social support for homeless youth would assist greatly in creating more targeted interventions that can ensure that these youth maintain stable housing and are prevented from living on the street, which would improve their overall mental health and physical wellbeing.

1.2 Problem statement

This thesis aims to investigate what the existing literature identifies as being the causes and consequences of social isolation and feelings of loneliness among homeless youth both prior to and during their homelessness in order to make recommendations for the Danish state and other institutions working with homeless youth on how to provide better social support for these youth as well as preventing 'at risk' youth from becoming socially isolated and homeless.

1.3 Hypothesis

It is expected that some of the causes of social isolation and feelings of loneliness are related to neglect prior to youth becoming homeless and that social isolation and feelings of loneliness will have consequences on these youths' ability to develop strong relationships later on in life.

Furthermore, due to the belief that social isolation and feelings of loneliness have been reoccurring throughout their lives, it is expected that they will have resulted in consequences that could provide a barrier for them to fully accept assistance from support services provided by the Danish state and other institutions working with interventions for homeless youth.

2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

2.1 Defining homelessness

Even though homelessness is a serious issue, all European countries have not yet agreed on a definition of homelessness, however the European Federation of National of Organizations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) has tried to synchronize different countries definitions into a ETHOS-Classification (European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion) (FEANTSA, 2011). The benefits of having a common definition will ensure a more common ‘language’ on the issue of homelessness, which will assist greatly in the ability to compare results across country boundaries. The ETHOS have combined European definitions into four overall categories:

1. People suffering from rooflessness, which means they do not have shelter of any kind/ sleeping rough.
2. People who experience houselessness, which means they have a place to sleep temporarily in an institutions or at a shelter.
3. People who find themselves living in insecure housing, who is threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies or even eviction. The term also includes cases of people experiencing domestic violence.
4. People who live in inadequate housing such as in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing or in housing that is extremely overcrowded.

As seen, currently the definition only focuses on the housing situation and does not as such focus on the social factors involved. Several European countries have based their definition of homelessness on the ETHOS and thus use the four categories as overall headlines for different types of homelessness (FEANTSA, 2012). In Denmark, the definition places different scenarios of homelessness in the four ETHOS categories in the following way:

Roofless:

1. Spending the night on the street, on a staircase, in a shed or the like, without having a proper amount of shelter.
2. Night shelters that does not provide the opportunity to stay a full day.

Houseless:

1. Homeless people that are living in provided accommodation, which include both acute, and temporarily placements.
2. Women who live in provided accommodation such as women's shelter, crisis centers etc.
3. People that live in provided accommodation for refugees, which include people that are temporarily place in housing due to their status as a refugee.
4. People that are going to be released from prison or discharged from institutions including treatment centers and orphanages and who needs assistance in acquiring proper accommodation.
5. People that due to their homelessness have been provided with support for a longer period of time, including nursing homes for older homeless individuals and individuals living on provided housing with additional support services.

Insecure Housing

1. People that live in insecure housing due to either living with family members, do not possess a housing contract, or due to occupying accommodation illegally.
2. People who have received threats of eviction from their house.
3. People who live with threats of violence (e.g. domestic violence that is registered in police records).

Inadequate housing

1. People who live in temporary structures such as mobile homes or in irregular or temporary buildings.
2. People that live in accommodation that has been declared inadequate for inhabitation.
3. People living in overcrowded accommodation that exceeds the national recommendations.

Homeless people within the age group of 18-24 are considered to be in the category of homeless youth but other than the age limitation, they do not, as of yet, have a separate definition.

Besides these definitions, homeless individuals can also be further divided into three categories based on their duration spent as a homeless individual, namely crisis homelessness, intermittent homelessness and chronic homelessness (Fazel, 2014). Crisis homelessness refers to individuals who experience homelessness only a few times in the duration of less than a year. Normally this type of homelessness will occur after a crisis such as e.g. becoming unemployed or being divorced (ibid). Intermittent homelessness refers to, as the name indicates, an individual who experiences several episodes of homelessness and who due to this has been in contact with institutional care such as treatment programs or jail (ibid). Individuals are defined as being chronically homeless if they have experienced homelessness lasting more than a year or have experienced four episodes of being homeless within the last two years (Fazel, 2014). Lastly, an individual may also find him/herself in this category if he/she has a disabling condition (ibid). Even though these three divisions indicate the mental aspect of being homeless, such as having experienced crisis, they still focus mainly on the absence of proper housing and not as much on the reasons behind it, nor the consequences surrounding it. However, other researchers within the academic fields have tried to describe the complexity of the issue of being homeless. Sommerville (1998) argues that a proper definition of homelessness should be placed in broader context of the housing system of society and poverty and should consist of theoretical frameworks that includes considerations on state policies, the housing market processes as well as the actions society take to deal with the issue of homelessness (Sommerville, 1998). He argues that homeless individuals are not a part of the underclass that is merely excluded from the middle and upper class, but are rather to be found outside the class-system entirely, due to their exclusion from the labor market and lack of housing (ibid). These arguments is consistent with those of Pleace (1998), who argues that homelessness should be viewed as:

'A set of consequences that arise when social exclusion occurs in a context within which little or no assistance is given to those who experience it' (Pleace, 1998, pp. 57).

Homeless individuals have various reasons for why they became homeless and also experience their homelessness differently, and thus insisting on the fact that the 'homelessness problem' should be studied as an isolated issue, in order to identify the ultimate solution that suits all is rather misunderstood (Pleace, 1998).

As the first definitions of homelessness focuses on varies housing instabilities, Sommerville (1998) and Pleace (1998) speak of society's role in excluding certain people from goods, which the

individual do not possess great power over, indicating that the issues surrounding homelessness should be understood as being complex (Sommerville, 1998, Pleace, 1998). This thesis wish to look at homelessness as being a more complex issue that goes beyond not having stable and secure housing and thus also look into the role of society. Due to the fact that this thesis wishes to investigate the matter of isolation and feelings of loneliness in homeless youth in high-income countries with the aim of providing recommendations for providing better support for Danish homeless youth, it will use ETHOS-based Danish definitions of homelessness. More specifically, it wish to look mainly at youth that fall under the definition of being roofless, since these youth expectantly feel more socially isolated and alone, having only limited or no contact with family members or friends that can/will offer them a place to stay. Lastly, due to limiting the scope of this thesis, it will not focus on refugee youth, nor homeless youth from indigenous populations.

2.2 Defining social isolation and loneliness

Even though some research has focused on the effects of chronic loneliness, an agreed upon definition is still not available and finding a proper definition might also be somewhat challenging since the feeling of loneliness is very subjective. (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). In order to try to explain how the definition has evolved throughout time, two definitions are here presented.

In 1973, Weiss came with his definition, which emphasized man's need for social interaction:

'Loneliness is caused not by being alone but being without some definite needed relationship or set of relationships... Loneliness appears always to be a response to the absence of some particular type of relationship or, more accurately, a response to the absence of some particular relationship provision.' (Weiss, 1973, pp. 17).

Weiss noted that there were different ways a person could feel lonely, distinguishing between loneliness of emotional isolation and loneliness of social isolation (Weiss, 1973). The difference between the two is that emotional loneliness is a stronger feeling of abandonment, strongly resembling the feeling of being abandoned by parents in the early childhood years. Loneliness of social isolation can occur when a person feels bored or excluded. Cacioppo (2008) has further developed Weiss' division of loneliness and adds that emotional loneliness refers to the loneliness an individual feels when he/she does not have a good relationship with, or feel disconnected to the people that are closest to them. The people that are in the intimate space are likely the people an individual choose to confide in and who they perceive to understand them (ibid). Normally only a

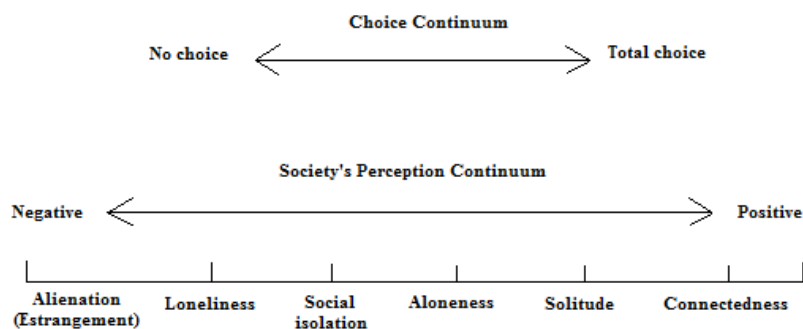
few people are to be found within this space and it can prove very difficult to replace a person who is considered to be in this sphere. Cacioppo (2008) also elaborates on Weiss' understanding of social loneliness, explaining that a person is at risk of feeling this type of loneliness if that person's close network of friends (normally only up to around 50 people) do not contain the quality that he/she expect. Besides the two types, Cacioppo (2008) describes a third type he calls collective loneliness. The collective space contain approximately 150 – 1500 people and refers to the group of people that a person identifies with, whether it be e.g. the local football team, volunteer group, the army or one's workplace (ibid).

Killeen (1998), published an article in the Journal of Advanced Nursing proposing yet another definition, focusing even more on the experience of feeling lonely:

'Loneliness is a condition that describes the distressing, depressing, dehumanizing, detached feelings that a person endures when there is a gaping emptiness in their life due to an unfulfilled social and/or emotional life.' (Killeen, 1998, pp. 764)

Due to working at a hospital, Killeen had experienced first-hand the agonizing consequences loneliness had caused among the elderly patients (Killeen, 1998). Killeen thus went further and tried creating a better understanding of the term 'loneliness' and how it relates to other terms commonly recognized as synonymous or at least related to loneliness such as 'aleness', 'social isolation', 'alienation', 'estrangement' and 'solitude'. His conclusion was that none of the words was the exact same as the term 'loneliness', but could be placed in an Alienation-Connectedness continuum (Killeen, 1998, pp. 765).

Figure 1. The Alienation-Connectedness Continuum.



Source: Killeen, 1998, pp. 765

Killeen (1998) argues that the term ‘alienation’ is the same as ‘estrangement’ and is the most negative sense of loneliness. Feeling alienated means state that an individual feel different from the people or society surrounding them. ‘Loneliness’ is also a term which most people in society believe to express a negative emotion. Social isolation, Killeen (1998) argues, can be both negative as well as positive, since people sometimes choose to be socially isolated, however when people are socially isolated against their choice, then the risk of feeling lonely becomes greater. Aloneness and solitude are both terms that are more positively perceived, since being alone does not necessarily mean being lonely. According to Killeen solitude even refers to the positive benefits of enjoying one’s own company. Lastly, connectedness is the most positive state, which refers to a feeling of being connected and thereby far away from alienation. In the model the role of choice plays a significant role. If one purposely choose to remove one-self from social interactions it is perceived positively, however if no choice is involved the perception moves in a more negatively direction, where the person becomes at greater risk of feeling lonely and in the most extreme cases, alienated.

Even though there are, as presented, various definitions of loneliness, this thesis wishes to use the definition by Killeen (1998), due to the fact that it seems to capture not only the meaning of the word but also the agonizing feelings associated with it. The Alienation-Connectedness continuum has tried to provide an overview of the different terms used as synonyms for loneliness, in order to provide a better understanding as to why the term loneliness and social isolation was chosen, instead of, in Killeen’s (1998) words, more positive terms such as solitude and aloneness. All the terms have been used in the literature search conducted for this thesis, in order to include articles that might define the terms differently than Killeen (1998)..

2.3 Theory used

In order to analyze the results gained from the scoping review, this thesis seeks to use elements of the theoretical work of psychoanalyst Erikson, sociologist Bourdieu and Weiss, in order to create a better overview of the causes and consequences of social isolation in homeless youth as well as create a basis for discussion. Both Erikson, Bourdieu and Weiss agree on the fact that the factors involved in a child’s upbringing has a great say in that child’s future view on life and also how that individual is able to fit it and interact with other people. Therefore, these theories are expected to provide a greater insight in to the causes to as well as the consequences of youth to become socially isolated and lonely not only prior but also during homelessness. Furthermore, all three also agree on the fact that society plays a role a strong role in deciding who are to be included who should not and

a person cannot be fully understood without looking at the forces of the society in which they live (Stevens, 1983, Wilken, 2006 Weiss 1973,). Not fitting in with a certain society, very much depend on how this development and dispositions correlates with that of society (ibid). The following section will provide a brief overview of Erikson’s ‘Eight Stages of Man’, Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’, ‘field’ and ‘capital’ as well as Weiss’ work on ‘attachment’.

2.3.1 Erikson’s Eight Stages of Man

This thesis will make use of Stevens’ (1983) interpretation of Erikson’s work and the following will present the interpretation of the ‘eight stages of man’.

Erikson believed that in order to fully comprehend the structure of a person, three factors had to be taken into account namely the somatic process, the social context and the ego process and identity (Stevens, 1983). The somatic process covers e.g. physiological processes on which behavior and experience depend, the social context deals with e.g. the meanings and significances which society provides, and the ego process and identity which refers e.g. to the way a person resolves conflicts and makes sense of him or herself and the situation (ibid). Erikson will be used to analyze the young people’s upbringing prior to their homelessness in order to see how this upbringing could possibly be assist in them feeling isolated (ibid)

Figure 2. Erikson’s ‘Eight Stages of Man’.

Stage	Psychosocial Crisis	Basic Virtue	Age
1	Trust vs. mistrust	Hope	Infancy (0 to 1 ½)
2	Autonomy vs. shame	Will	Early Childhood (1 ½ to 3)
3	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose	Play Age (3 to 5)
4	Industry vs. inferiority	Competency	School Age (5 to 12)
5	Ego identity vs. Role Confusion	Fidelity	Adolescence (12 to 18)
6	Intimacy vs. isolation	Love	Young Adult (18 to 40)
7	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care	Adult hood(40 to 65)
8	Ego integrity vs. despair	Wisdom	Maturity (65+)

Source: McLeod, 2013

Figure 2 shows the eight stages of man that Erikson created in 1959. It explains the different steps a person will go through in life, and what skills that individual will develop at which stage. Should a person not be given the right amount of support, care and freedom to evolve during the different stages, the ego quality skill could develop in a negative direction, leaving a person with a negative world-view, poor self-esteem and possibly a self-restricted personality (Stevens, 1983). The development of the different skills in the 'eight ages of man', should be seen as being continuous, which means that the way an individual develop their skills in the different stages is very much dependent on how they have developed their previous skills (ibid). If e.g. their world-view have developed in a negative direction then they will also likely find it harder to develop e.g. intimate relationships later on in life.

Erikson's 'eight ages of man' will serve as a tool to analyze on an individual level, homeless youth's experience of their childhood and relationships with their parents or caretaker, in order to shed light on aspects of their upbringing that could have caused them to become withdrawn and isolated (Stevens, 1983). Due to the fact that this thesis focuses on youth, only stage 1 – 5 will be used, which concentrates mainly on the ages 0 – 18, however, because of this thesis expanding the youth term to include young adults, it will also include stage 6. The positive outcomes of these stages are hope for the future, a sense of will and purpose, feelings of being competent, being able to maintain fidelity, and devote oneself completely to another person (Stevens, 1983). The negative outcomes are on the other hand, mistrust in the future, feeling ashamed and guilt for living out desires, feeling inferior to other people, being confused about identity, and withdrawing from other people and becoming isolated (ibid). How a person develops in these years are thus crucial in future ability to connect to other people and feelings of belonging. Further understanding of the eight stages of man will be provided when discussion the results.

2.3.2 Bourdieu's habitus, field and capital

This thesis wishes to make use of Wilken's (2006) interpretation of Bourdieu's work of habitus, capital and field.

The work of sociologist Bourdieu will be used to compliment the work of Erikson, in order to further analyze the causes and consequences of social isolation and feelings of loneliness in homeless youth both prior and after homelessness. The following section seek to briefly describe Bourdieu's idea of habitus, field and different kinds of capital.

Habitus is a term Bourdieu uses to describe the environment a person comes from, and thus which internal dispositions that person has developed (Wilken, 2006). Like Erikson, Bourdieu argues that depending on the habitus, an individual develops internal dispositions that contains a certain world-view and understanding of society. Due to these internal dispositions, people act in certain ways that reflect the habitus they come from (ibid). The idea of habitus and internal dispositions will be used to, in combination with Erikson, to analyze the young homeless people's upbringing in order to identify how their internal dispositions might lead to feelings of social isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, Bourdieu defines 'fields' as having a system of positions that is related to one another which gain their purpose through other positions within the same field (Wilken, 2006). These positions are opposites, meaning that they on one side has contradicting values and on the other side has different values. In order to be a part of a field it becomes necessary to accept the rules in which the field is built upon and often the structure of an individual's habitus will resemble that of the field entered (ibid). Thus the individual is capable of understanding the 'doxa' of a field, which is a term used to describe the social order the field is built upon and the unwritten rules of how to act and what is appropriate to express (ibid). For people who have a different habitus, these rules are not easily understood as they have not been embedded in them and thus has to observe both the spoken and unspoken in order to create some sort of meaning (Wilken, 2006). Bourdieu's idea of 'field' will be used to explain the young people's own 'field' of being homeless and what obstacles lie in the way of removing oneself from the homeless/street environment entering the 'field' of mainstream society¹, with extra emphasis of the 'academic' society. Habitus and field cannot be analyzed without also accounting for capital and Bourdieu works with four types namely, economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital (ibid). In this thesis only the first three will be used and briefly described, a person can gain economic capital by acquiring financial means, cultural capital by among other things getting an education, and social capital by having a social network (Wilken, 2006). Having great amounts of one capital can sometimes ensure the acquiring of other capitals. Having a high education can e.g. lead to acquiring a prestigious job which will ensure a person economic capital (ibid). Social capital refers to the degree of social network of people an individual can draw upon. The interplay between habitus, field and different types of capitals Bourdieu describes as being almost a game (Wilken, 2006). There are rules which a person should respect and obey by and based on these agent's habitus they are each equipped with different types and amounts of capital and 'feel' for the game (ibid). If not respecting the 'doxa' an agent is

¹ Mainstream society refers to the prevalent attitude, values and practices of society.

excluded from part-taking in the game. Everyone will have 'illusio' which means they believe in the game that takes place (ibid). Bourdieu's also believes that people part-take in the game within these fields with certain strategies and that an individual's habitus determines what kind of strategy a person chooses to use (ibid).

2.3.3 Loneliness

Sociologist Weiss was one of the first people to investigate the meaning of being socially isolated and the experience of feeling lonely (Weiss, 1973). Weiss' theory deals with children's attachment patterns during the childhood years. Weiss argues that in the childhood years a child is mostly attached to parents, experiencing anxiety due to emotional isolation when left for a longer period (Weiss, 1973). In the adolescent years, parents are pushed away and the need to attach to new people emerges (ibid). If no satisfactory attachment can be identified this can also lead to feelings of loneliness. Weiss argues that non-lonely individuals often find it hard to understand why a person who feels lonely does not simply go out and meet people (ibid). This lack of understanding from other people is likely only making the feeling of isolation and even alienation worse, as it can lead to feelings of lack of assistance and even self-blame. He also argues that an individual has a tendency to forget how it felt being lonely as soon as that individual leaves this state (ibid).

It is recognized that Erikson, Bourdieu and Weiss are not the only theorists, theorizing on just how childhood forms us as individuals and that therefore this analysis only provides one way of viewing the results. However, by including all three theorist it is hoped that the analysis will be less narrow and provide more views on the same issue. Even though Erikson, Bourdieu and Weiss uses different theoretical terms and views to describe their theory, it has been found that they seem to meet on certain points, which should provide more validity to the analysis.

3. Methodology

In order to determine how social isolation and feelings of loneliness affect homeless youth, a scoping review was chosen as the preferred methodology, searching relevant databases in order to identify the relevant research available concerning this topic (Levac, 2010).

To identify other search terms that are often considered synonym with loneliness, terms presented in Killeen's (1998) Alienation-Connectedness continuum, were used. Thus, 'loneliness', 'isolation', 'alienation' as well as 'solitude' were included. It was also recognized that the term 'loneliness' might not identify all articles that used the word 'lonely' and thus 'lonely' was included as a search

term as well, as well as ‘Social alienation’. To identify articles that dealt with homeless youth, the search terms homeless*, “homeless persons” and “homeless youth” were used. In addition the terms roofless* and “street youth” were also included due to the interest of identifying all the literature that focused on youth living on the street, in shelters or the like. Furthermore, in order to ensure that all articles were identified the term ‘marginalized youth’ were added. Due to the fact that this thesis wish to investigate social isolation and feelings of loneliness both prior and during homelessness, the search terms ‘at risk youth’ was also included, since the term indicates that the youth has not yet become homeless, however is at risk.

The search terms found to be synonymous with ‘youth’ were “young adults” “young adult” and ‘adolescents’. Furthermore, as this thesis aims at investigating causes and consequences both prior and during homelessness, the search terms ‘child’ and “adult children” were also included. The original idea was to only include recent articles published within the last decade, however after realizing that a larger amount of articles dealing with this subject had been published before 2005, the year limitation was expanded to included articles published between 2000 to 2015, meaning a range of 15 years instead of 10.

The databases used to identify literature with the use of these above-mentioned search terms were PubMed, PsycInfo and SCOPUS. These databases were chosen both due to the fact that they are all internationally acknowledged databases, and also to ensure that articles from a variety of academic fields were identified. PubMed specializes in Life Science and Biomedical topics (PubMed, 2015), PsycInfo specializes in literature relevant to psychology (PsycInfo, 2015), and SCOPUS contains articles within the technical, medical, and social sciences (SCOPUS, 2015). More databases could had been used, however due to the fact that both PubMed, PsycInfo and SCOPUS cover a wide range of peer-reviewed literature, only using the three was valued sufficient. Furthermore, due to the fact that the three databases all provided somewhat the same articles - only showing a few new ones with each search - the feeling of sufficiency was strengthened. Lastly, to receive sufficient guidance in choosing both databases as well as search terms, a library information specialist within Copenhagen University, was consulted.

The following example shows how the different search terms were used in PubMed.

“At risk youth" OR "marginalized youth") OR ("street youth") OR ("Homeless Persons"[Mesh] OR "Homeless Youth"[Mesh]) OR ("Homeless Persons" OR "Homeless Youth" OR homeless* OR roofless*)

AND

("Child"[Mesh] OR "Adult Children"[Mesh]) OR "Adolescent"[Mesh])) OR (Adolescent OR youth OR "young adults" OR "young adult" OR child*))

AND

("Loneliness"[Mesh]) OR "Social Alienation"[Mesh])) OR (Loneliness OR "Social Alienation" OR alienation OR solitude OR lonely OR isolated)

Depending on the database the search string had to be arranged accordingly, however the search terms remained unchanged. By using these terms 65 articles were identified in PubMed, 55 in PsycInfo, and 75 in SCOPUS. Thus a total of 195 articles were identified.

3.1 Inclusion criteria.

Due to restrictions of resources, all articles had to be published in either English or Danish. The articles identified had to be peer-reviewed and concerned with homeless youth and social isolation and/loneliness, which meant that articles only addressing one of the search terms were excluded. Due to the fact that it is commonly recognized that the issues experienced by homeless youth are complex, it was decided that the type of study design would not be restricted to any certain kind due fear of cutting out valuable information.

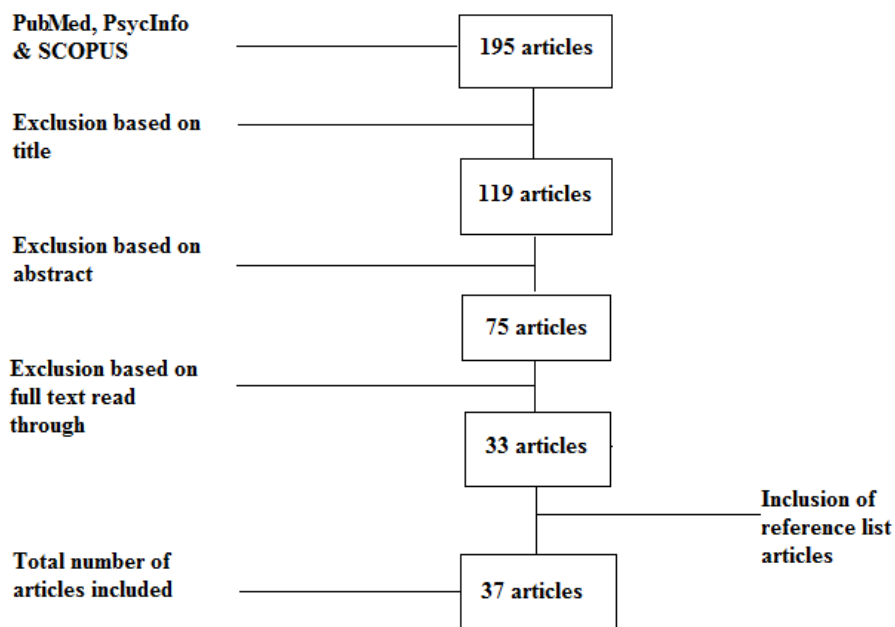
Due to the fact that the results identified should provide a basis for providing recommendations for people working with homeless youth within Denmark, the countries included had to be at least to some extent, comparable to the Danish setting. Therefore the first criteria was that countries included should be termed an OECD country by The World Bank (The World Bank, 2015), which meant that studies conducted in most Eastern European countries were excluded. Furthermore, countries had to have adopted strategies that emphasize supported housing as well as attend focus on the issue of homeless youth. Even though these criteria do not necessarily mean that a country is completely compatible with Denmark, the fact that the need for supported housing is recognized as well as being offered, suggest at least similar ways in development and thinking patterns. Lastly, the included countries had to experience issues of youth homelessness (See appendix 1).

3.2 Exclusion criteria

Studies focusing more on specific diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV and hepatitis C, were excluded since they moved too far away from the aim of this thesis. Two articles dealt with the benefits of

homeless youth owning pets to keep them company. After a thorough read through, these two articles were also excluded due to the acknowledgement that the topic would become too wide if included. Studies that included a broader age range, but did not specify any findings of interest for youth up to the age of 25, were also excluded. One author had published the same article four times in four journals under different titles. Only one of these articles were included. Due the previous-mentioned statement of limiting the scope of the thesis, studies that focused solely on refugee homeless youth or indigenous populations were also excluded

Figure 3: Overview of literature inclusion/exclusion process.



In total 195 articles were identified using the search term in the databases Pubmed, PsycInfo and SCOPUS. Based on the title, 94 articles were excluded and 131 remained. 75 articles remained after reading abstracts, and 33 remained after reading the full texts. Furthermore, 4 extra articles were found looking through the reference list of the 33 articles, which resulted in a total of 37 articles

4. Results

4.1 Description of included articles

The results presented in this section were identified using the scoping review, and comes from studies using a variety of study designs, the majority of the results coming from using qualitative or mixed method approach. The majority of the studies were conducted in Australia, Canada, England and the United States and only two studies were conducted in Denmark. A few studies used the same study participants to investigate different outcomes. The youth that were included in the studies were normally either living on the street or were currently staying at a shelter and/or using drop-in center services. The age of the youth included in the studies ranged from 12-25 years. When doing the search for studies it was realized that not many of them focused solely on the connection between social isolation, the feelings of loneliness etc. in relations to homeless youth, however it was mentioned as one of the (central) themes, or just touched upon briefly. Therefore, the extent of which the articles are being used in this section varies greatly, depending on degree of focus, some articles being used primarily as backing up other study findings.

4.2 Presentation of results

In the following section the most central themes identified in the conducted scoping review is presented and tries to provide an overview of factors involved in their social isolation process both prior and during homelessness and how this affects them. The result section have been divided into the themes that seemed to be the most central, and should provide a glance into the complexity of the issue, as well as the agonizing consequences it presents.

4.2.1 Family relationships

Social connections are important for human beings and already in infancy, the building and maintaining positive relationships are important for future development (Adam et al, 2011). These relationships have a great say in an individual's future emotional and even physical health (ibid). One of the first themes that emerged from reading through the identified articles were that of youths' relationship with family members, and thus how their upbringing had been. The look into family relationships will assist on providing an overview of both the causes and consequences of social isolation and feelings of loneliness in the years prior to youth becoming homeless.

The majority of homeless youth interviewed in the studies used for this scoping review if asked, reported that they came from a more or less dysfunctional family, having experienced either physical or emotional abuse or other types of neglect (Kidd & Kral, 2002, Hyde, 2005, Taylor-Seehafer et al, 2008, Bender et al, 2010, Gilbert et al, 2011, Dolson, 2015, i.e). A study conducted in Texas, US, found that the far majority of homeless youth accessing health services reported having experienced physical (70 %) emotional (74 %) or/and sexual abuse during their childhood (Taylor-Seehafer et al, 2008). Rew et al (2001), reported that as many as 1/3 of their sample size of 59 homeless adolescents had been sexually abused by either one or both parents. Miller et al (2004) found that the majority of youth in their study reported having been raised in a home lacking nurture, support and with parents doing drugs or drinking heavily, often resulting in violent conflicts. The youth reported having left their family on several occasions before becoming homeless and expressed a general feeling of alienation from their families (ibid). A study conducted in Toronto, Canada found that some youth reported running away from home because of parents fighting, because of having experienced being sexually abused by stepparents, due to parent's alcohol or drug addiction or parents being suicidal (Kolar et al, 2012). Another study conducted in both Texas and St Louis, US found similar patterns when looking at speaking infrequency with parents among homeless youth, this infrequency being greater in Texas where homeless youth were found to be more likely to use homeless services than seeking assistance from their parents (Bender et al, 2010). Several of the studies found similar family histories (Rew et al, 2002, Kidd & Kral, 2002, Hyde, 2005, Stablein, 2011,) and highlighted that this traumatic upbringing increases the risk of being socially isolated and lonely (Kidd & Kral, 2002). Kidd & Kral (2002) also found that parental homophobia (24%) and parent's disapproval of their child's alcohol and drug abuse (37%) were some of the reasons stated as explanations as to why some youth lived on the street. Some had left on their own account, however as many as 51% reported that they had been thrown out of the house (ibid).

Gilbert et al (2011) reported one youth stating that she did not feel as if she had a 'real' family, as she had been told at a very young age that her mother hated her. Adding to this feeling of worthlessness, she also explained that her mother would not intervene as her stepfather continuously beat her up. Several studies mentioned the feeling of worthlessness as a great issue for many of the youth (Miller et al. 2004, Dolson, 2015). Rew (2002) looked into the relationship between sexual abuse, social connectedness and loneliness in relation to how homeless youth perceived their own health status (Rew, 2001). The study concluded that homeless youth who had

experienced sexual abuse in general had less perceived feelings of being socially connected, felt lonelier and less healthy (ibid). They were left with the feeling of not being connected to anybody who could understand their situation, increasing the feelings of being lonely. In general, homeless youth included in this study were found to be much lonelier than non-homeless youth and that this feeling increased on special occasions such as birthdays and holidays (Rew, 2002). Adam et al. (2011), likewise found that loneliness was positively correlated with poor health and depression. Perceived positive feelings of parental support as well as feeling loved and accepted, could change these feelings in a positive direction (ibid). Pedersen et al. (2011), found in a study among Danish homeless people that the worse disadvantaged life circumstances a person had had, the worse they self-rated their feelings of loneliness. According to Taylor-Seehafer et al (2008), attachment theorists state that children that do not deal with their trauma are likely to experience some effect of this later on in adult life. Because of these past unresolved issues, the individual do not have an organized way of coping with their emotions which makes them at risk of engaging in violent behavior or being diagnosed with a borderline personality disorder (ibid). Pedersen et al. (2012) also found that younger people (22-34) staying at shelters often came from broken families. Some still maintained some family contact, however they expressed that they had more or less been alone their entire life and had somehow gotten used to it, adapting to the lifestyle of being socially isolated (Pedersen, 2012).

Not all young people are fully disconnected with family members. Stablein (2011) found that some of the homeless youth in his study conducted in Northeastern USA did have some type of semi-stable contact with their family or extended family members, however these contacts were not strong enough for them to return home permanently. Some managed to stay with family members for shorter periods (e.g. during winter months), however as many described their relationships with their family as problematic and even negative, they were either asked to leave, or chose to leave on their own account after some time (Stablein, 2011). Not having anywhere to go or anyone to turn to left these youth with feelings of isolation, alienation and marginalization (ibid). Family conflict is not as such the only reason for young people ending up on the street however, as Mallet et al (2005), found in their study on young people's pathways into homelessness, family conflict was found to be a significant factor (Mallet et al, 2005). The study showed that not only violence directed at the youth played a role, but also the violent behavior directed at other family members (ibid). Only 1/5 of n = 302 youth reported their own personal drug or alcohol use as being the

reason for leaving home, the majority sighting family conflict as playing a vital role, in their decision to leave (ibid).

4.2.2 Parental loss, the challenges of foster care and feeling alone

One of the central themes for youth to develop a sense of social isolation and loneliness were if they lost parents or were placed in foster care due to family conflict/abuse. Rew et al (2001) found that 14 % of interviewed homeless youth from Texas, US had become homeless due to parental loss. According to a young 22-year-old woman interviewed in a study by Hyde (2005), she first started feeling fully disconnected with her family after the death of her father, which resulted in her withdrawing herself as well as stopping communication with people surrounding her. She had been homeless since the age of 14, and stated that due to her father's death she had lost the person that both understood her and protected her against her mother's abuse. Due the label 'troubled child', she did not get any support from counselors, making her increasingly more isolated and ultimately choosing a life on the street, quitting her school (Hyde, 2005). In a study conducted in Detroit among young women from low-income households, found that the women who had lost a parent felt that they had lost a great emotional and social support (Berman, 2013). They had after the incident, experienced either 'jumping around' from different family members, resulting in them becoming more and more insecure about their situation. (Berman, 2013). Furthermore, all nine women who had lost their primary care taker at a young age reported feeling socially isolated, and were also found to be vulnerable to social and other health risk (Berman, 2013). All of the 20 women, who had either been removed from their parents as children, or had lost a parent at a young age, had not been provided with a proper long-term support system solution (ibid). To make matters worse, many of these young women had also experiencing being separated from their siblings, adding to the feeling of social isolation and abandonment (Berman, 2013).

As already mentioned, an issue discussed by youth placed in foster care is that their foster family does not always acknowledge the often-abusive backgrounds that these youth come from and are therefore not able to fully relate to the anger, disappointment and harm that this type of upbringing has caused (Hyde, 2005). Again, this speaks of further isolation from people, indicating that this lack of understanding can provide a barrier for youth to fully embrace and benefit from service assistance and their placement in foster care. Children placed in foster care have been removed from homes where their parents have been voted insufficient in managing the child's needs and it is therefore highly likely that these children have not received adequate physical and emotional

nourishment (Alexander & Shrauben, 2006). Alexander & Schrauben (2006) stated that only 12 % of the children placed in foster care in the United States have a normal physical examination, most suffering from more or less severe physical and psychological problems. Because of having been neglected these children also tend to be unwilling to make strong attachments with foster families and thus keeping their distance in order to protect against further abandonment (Alexander & Schrauben, 2006, Snow, 2008). In normal functioning families, children are not as such being kicked out from home due to conflicts and thus when a youth has to change foster family due to conflicts they are again reminded that they are not a true family member (Snow, 2008). In a study by Snow (2008), one youth experienced being moved abruptly, not being told why he was being moved nor where too, which made him feel strangely uninvolved in the decision making. Stein (2006) divides children that leave foster care into three categories. (1) the 'resilient' ones who are capable of taking good care of themselves after they finish care, (2) the 'survivors' who are coping, however mostly due to the care they have received from professional or personal relations, and lastly (3) the 'victims', who are the ones that show the most difficulties and is thus in need of more sustained support. Often the youth who are found in the third category come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and are in the highest risk group for becoming homeless, having mental health issues, being lonely and not being able to maintain housing nor a job (Stein, 2006). Some of the studies did also find that, many of the now homeless youth had dropped out of school (Hyde, 2005, Berman et al, 2013). According to Berman et al (2013) one girl stated that after her mother died nobody asked her how her school had been, what she had learned and in general showed an interest in her educational achievements. This ultimately made her quit school, due to the lack of encouragement and support (ibid) According to Stein (2005), young people that come from disadvantaged backgrounds will have the best opportunities of doing well if they have a strong bond with at least one family member or parent substitute.

The issue with both young people leaving foster care and other young individuals in need of parental support and the child welfare system is mentioned several times (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2004). Mendes & Moslehuddin (2004) emphasized that one of the issues with the public system is that it often do not provide enough support for young individuals 'graduating' from the UK child welfare system, meaning that many young people suddenly find themselves alone, without any type of social support. According to Snow (2008), many of the youth interviewed had mixed feelings concerning the way they were being handled within the system by their social worker (ibid). Some had experienced social workers not keeping appointments, which they described as being frustrating

as the social worker was the only adult figure they had in their life who could assist them. They all emphasized the importance of having social workers who would listen to the needs of the individual, who truly cared and who let the young person express him/herself freely (ibid). The youth participating in the study acknowledged that they were just one of many youth their social worker had to care for (ibid). Even though they wanted to maintain contact with their social worker after leaving the system (just to have somebody who would check up on them), they knew it was unrealistic (Snow, 2008). According to McKenzie-Mohr et al (2012) since most homeless youth have run away due to unstable relationships with parents, people that work with these youth should seek to create an secure emotional environment where they feel they can trust people, in order to prevent them from running away again.

4.2.3 The challenges of befriending peers

As parents are important for a child to develop the basic social skills, peers become important for further social development into adulthood, and thus acceptance and respect from this group proves essential (Harper et al, 2008, Milburn et al, 2005). According to a review conducted by Anooshian (2005) children who had experienced domestic violence during their upbringing were more likely to show aggression when interacting with peers. Due to the fact that violent behavior is in general not tolerated, it can lead to a vicious circle of becoming further excluded by peers, which will then lead to more violent behavior and thus increased feelings of social isolation (ibid). Because of the harsh judgmental attitude of peers, these youth are likely to be excluded from certain groups, and are therefore forced to form other perhaps more destructive relationships (Harper et al, 2008). However, even though these friendships can provide the much needed emotional support they can also have many negative consequences. Kidd & Shahar (2008) found that fearful attachments were related to feelings of loneliness. According to Harper et al (2008) African American male youth who are involved with gangs feel lonelier and has significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms and anxiety than their non-gang-involved peers.

4.2.4 Friendships on the street and sense of community

Finding friends while living on the street seem essential for homeless youth (Harper, 2008, Thomas et al, 2012, Fast et al, 2013). These friendships are sought, not only to provide social support in a difficult time, but also to provide protection (ibid). It is widely recognized that being two creates a better protection than being alone (Fast et al, 2013). Homeless youth living on the streets are in general very exposed, them having to guard themselves in order to avoid violence, theft etc. (ibid).

The most vulnerable homeless youth that live on the street or shelters have no place to store their belongings, which therefore often means that they have to carry around their most valuable papers such as identification papers (Dolson, 2015). Staying in shelters or on the street, provide great risk for these papers to get stolen, which can result in exclusion from centers build to assist homeless youth, as seen (Dolson, 2015). Being able to create friendships on the street is essential for survival (Fast et al, 2013). In a study on homeless youth conducted in Vancouver, Canada, young women explain that being in a relationship with people who has some sort of power (e.g. high ranking gang members), provides them with protection, knowing that if anyone would ever hurt them, they would be assisted (Fast et al, 2013). By forming these relationships, they ensured a good place within the street community (ibid). Several of the studies mentioned a sort of ‘community’ of the homeless youth (Stablein, 2011, Fast et al, 2013). Due to the fact that many of these youth find themselves on the street or shelters because they have a poor relationships with their parents, they seek friendships in order to get that sense of ‘feeling like family’, being in a companionship and belonging to a group (Foster & Spencer, 2013). Stablein (2011) conducted an ethnographic study on a city square in the Northeastern of the United States where a group of young homeless people had their daily life. By being a part of this community on the Square the young people got a sense of identity. Thomas et al (2012) described drop-in centers as providing a good opportunity for homeless youth to meet each other and talk. Dolson (2015), in his story about Marius the street youth also explained that the drop-in center created a place for the homeless youth to just ‘be’. Marius sometimes did not as such wish to talk to other people, however just the sense of being among people still provided some sort of companionship although from a distance and buffered from social isolation and feelings of being lonely (ibid).

4.2.5 Feeling the game – being street smart

In order to live on the street a person has to obey by certain rules, and a few studies mentioned the concept of being ‘street smart’ or ‘having a feel for the game’. (Roy et al 2008, Fast et al, 2013). These words speak of the youth’s ability to navigate the rules of the streets, where not to go, who not to socialize with and who to get in touch with when wanting supplies (ibid). However, it should be mentioned that not everyone experience living on street as being a part of a good community. Their opinions concerning their presence on the street differs greatly as some report being street smart as something cool, whereas others are appalled by the thought.

'I don't get this about people.... Like the "street youth community" [sarcastic].... Everyone's [referring to inexperienced youth] like, "Oh, it's so cool to sleep on the street." "Oh you've got to be street smart to live on the streets." Anyone can easily drop a blanket on the ground and just lay down and throw another blanket on top of them and there: they're on the street. This place is a gong show [crazy, out of control]. There is nothing good about it. It is really, really, really, really, really, really stupid how you got to be like "street smart" to be on the street and stuff like that! Being street smart means not being on the streets. I don't know why, but I hate that idea. (Aaron, age 18, personal communication) (Fast et al, 2013, pp. 104)

Aaron talks about youth that find being street smart as something cool as 'inexperienced', indicating that life on the street is not as cool when you have been there for a longer time. This suggests that the children that feel they have the opportunity to return home are likely to do so within a certain time period, leaving only the worst off youth living on the street. This is consistent with the finding from Pedersen et al (Pedersen, 2011), that resilience in homeless youth is found to decrease gradually in relation to time spent being homeless. Stablein (2011) found that several youth had tried to return home on several occasions, however always ended up becoming homeless again. Roy et al (2008) found when trying to divide homeless youth into groups, that some homeless youth described as 'downtowners', might have become so embedded in the street environment that they feel fully integrated and 'street smart', without having issues with this fact.

Thomas et al (2012) described that according to statements made by some homeless youth, it is necessary to constantly be on the move, not staying in the same place for too long. This is done in order to complicate matters for people who try to locate their position. Thus, perhaps not surprisingly, many of the studies presented the difficulty of creating and maintaining proper friendships, since these are often transient, most homeless youth looking out for only themselves (Fast et al, 2013). According to Gaetz (2004), 19 % of his study population had altered their appearance in order to 'look as tough as possible' so that potential attackers would be scared off. Many studies describe the relationship between homeless youth as being based on exchanging goods and even though they might walk together in pairs, many state that they do not have anybody they feel they can confide in (Gaetz, 2004). Friendships created on the street are for the most part superficial and only valid if a person has something to offer as e.g. financial means that they can share but otherwise they do not really care if the person lives or dies (Kidd & Kral, 2002). Because street life is about survival, homeless youth cannot as such be expected to receive help from other homeless people without giving something in return. A study conducted by Barker (2014) found an

example of this when reporting the story of Luke and Michelle, two former homeless youth, who now got their own apartment. Even though, they did expressed feelings of wanting to assist other homeless youth, a combination of having been living of the streets for too long and financial constraints, they still often lied to tenants about the rent, making them pay more (ibid). This again emphasizes that assistance in the homeless milieu, often comes at a price. Luke and Michelle found stable housing together, however Barker et al (2014) also found that feelings of loneliness are still present among youth who acquire stable housing. Barker (2014) also encountered a former homeless young man who had great difficulties finding friends. Due to increasing feelings of loneliness of living isolated in his new apartment, he befriended two people who took advantage of his goodwill. Even though he was fully aware of being used his fear of being all alone made him maintain his friendship with them.

4.2.6 Social isolation as a tactic

Due to the factors mentioned, it is not surprising that creating friendships on the street as a mean of gaining some sort of social support has its disadvantages, and thus social isolation might be chosen as the preferred tactic in order to increase the chances of surviving street life (Kidd, 2004). Choosing a life in solitude is difficult since this often means acceptance of the fact that nobody cares and if something ought to happen to you it is highly likely that no one is going to search for you (Kidd, 2004, Fast et al, 2013). These reflections combined with the need for companionship and some kind of social support is likely the reason for homeless youth to seek friendships anyway, even though they might provide more damage than good (Barker, 2014). Furthermore, as mentioned, it has also been found that resilience in youth is decreasing in relation to how long the youth have been without a home. Being longer on the street meant less resilience and greater psychological distress (Cleverly and Kidd, 2011). According to Rice et al (2011), increasing numbers of face-to-face interaction with street peers increased depressive symptoms and anxiety among homeless youth, again pointing out the unstable relationships that form on the street. Even though some relationships ensures greater protection from harm from the outside, it does not necessarily protect from the inside as seen in the case of many homeless women (Fast et al, 2013). As mentioned previously, young women might benefit from being in a relationship with men, however many also experience sexual, violent and emotional abuse within this relationship (ibid). However the fear of being alone and vulnerable on the street, somehow seem stronger than the fears of being abused within this relationship (ibid). According to Steward et al (2010) some homeless

adolescents withdraw themselves from social networks. Street life has made many of the young people tough and many have learned the hard way that they can only trust themselves, making it difficult for service providers to provide their services (ibid). These are all reasons as to why homeless youth might choose to isolate themselves instead of seeking a support they are expectantly very much in need of. Thus, even though this isolation is voluntarily, this choice is based on a previous life of disappointment and betrayal, both from family members, friends and the often the system as well.

You got to build – before you do anything, you have to build a sense of trust with them. Coming off the streets, they're [street youth are] not going to trust nobody except for themselves, because all they really know IS themselves. (17-year-old White male – IY10) (Steward et al 2010 pp. 159)

This statement underlines the fact that life on the street is rough and you are on your own. It is possible that isolating oneself from other people is a tactic in order for young people to avoid stressors, as contact with other people have, for a majority of homeless youth, lead to tremendous psychological distress in their childhood and adolescent years (Pedersen, 2011). According to Perron (2008), when youth find themselves in socially hostile environments, they have a tendency to develop avoidant attachment styles (Perron, 2008).

4.2.7 Social isolation, feelings of loneliness and Suicide

According to a study conducted by Kidd (2004) the feeling of being totally alone played a central role in the narratives of 20 homeless youth who had tried to commit suicide, participating in the study (Kidd, 2004). There are many reasons as to why young people who find themselves in a homeless situation tries to commit suicide, however the feeling of being completely socially isolated from family, friends as well as society gave the young people the feeling that they had no one to talk to (ibid).

[at the time of suicide attempt]: Well, I had no place to go. Like, nobody... my parents didn't know where I was, I had boyfriends coming in and out of my life. Just people... I don't know... I felt totally alone. (Woman, 18). (Kidd et al, 2004, pp...)

Kidd et al. also proves that many of the young people who have experienced being abused by their parents have left them feeling worthless seeing no reason to carry on with their lives.

... I really want to kill myself because I come from a really abusive home where my dad used to hit me, and my mother would come into my room and tell me that I'm shit, and everything around me is

shit, and that is why I am falling apart... just hearing my mother tell me that I was a street rat and that I was worthless. (Kidd, 2002 pp. 420).

The feeling of worthlessness continue to haunt them throughout their lives, even when they leave their parents for good (Kidd & Kral, 2002). Suicide is the ultimate consequence of feeling socially isolated and extremely lonely. Kidd & Kral (2002), found in their study on suicide and prostitution among street youth that of the 29 street youth included in the study, 76% had tried to commit suicide. 50 % of the youth reported that the most dominating feelings they felt were that of isolation or “aloneness”. The acknowledgement that nobody would likely care if they would die is also a factor for choosing to end it all, again emphasizing the complete deprivation of intimate relationships (ibid). Some also reported having friends that committed suicide slowly, meaning that they just wasted away on drugs, not trying to change their situation (ibid). Even though friendships are often described as being superficial by homeless youth they do provide some sort of protective factor for suicide, some youth stating that the emotional pain they feel are somehow being eased by having people listening to them (ibid). Again, this underlines the fact that though these friendships are superficial they are sometimes better than being all alone (Kidd, 2002). One homeless youth, however described, having had a friend committing suicide right in front of him with a razor blade (Kidd, 2004). He described the episode as scaring him mentally and even triggering feelings of wanting to commit suicide himself. Due to the fact that homeless youth often do not have that many social relations, the ones they do have, they have a tendency to attribute greater value (Kidd & Kral, 2002). Especially intimate partners are often considered more than just a partner and thought of as almost being a family member. Due to this strong perceived connection (perhaps the only strong connection they have), losing them often results in some sort of mental distress and further social withdrawal, just adding to the list of people who have betrayed them throughout their lives (ibid). Loosing, or even just fighting with this person can therefore also be a trigger for committing suicide, since feelings of neglect, hopelessness, worthlessness and loneliness once again reach the surface (ibid).

4.2.8 The role of substance abuse

Most of the studies that included a focus on substance abuse found it to be a rather natural part of homeless communities (re). Foster and Spencer (2013) described drugs as being the kind of glue that keeps homeless youth together. Drugs are used both to ensure and maintain social networks as well as coping with the emotional distress that comes with living on the street (Roy et al, 2008).

According to Roy et al (2008) youth ranged from wanting to be a part of the street environment due to seeing the street life as the only place they belonged, to youth who wanted a normal life, however were on the street for different reasons (ibid). Some of the youth were quicker to escalate their drug use into injection drug use, not really recognizing or at least acknowledging the danger of engaging in this activity (ibid). Others did acknowledge the danger however this was not always enough for them to stay clean (ibid). The last group Roy et al (2008) described was the youth involved with alcohol (ibid). Unlike the drug users who do drugs with friends, the alcoholics often drink alone not feeling any connection to the street environment. Also unlike the drug users, alcoholics are very aware that alcohol is the cause of their issues (Roy et al, 2008). They have often experienced sexual abuse in their family and because they have been growing up surrounded by people drinking, they themselves find it normal to drink as well. They do not enjoy their street life, but are rather saddened by their life circumstances that they wish to escape from (Roy et al, 2008). Being a part of a drug community might be wrong in terms of the general society's views on drugs, however for homeless youth the need for being a part of something likely overpowers the fear of possible consequences of getting involved with drugs. According to Roy et al (2008) some youth indicated that they knew drug use would remove them further away from their dream of being a part of mainstream society, however as drugs are such an embedded part of street life, combined with both lack of strategy and resources, some youth ended up using anyway (ibid).

Although many have witnessed friends dying, insisting on distancing themselves from drugs often means losing their entire network (Kidd & Kral, 2002). Again, the fear of being isolated overpowers the fear of dying from using drugs. Barker (2014) also tells the story of Michael a homeless youth who finds social networks on the street to be counterproductive, having experienced several times to be dragged back into doing drugs after becoming clean because of hanging out with friends that are still using. This had made him choose a life in isolation, making sure that he did not interact with other homeless youth and also never accepted gifts in order not to be indebted to anyone (ibid). A different view on the street community's relations to drug abuse, where found in Stablein's (2011) study where the homeless youth living on the Square had made some informal rules that stronger drugs such as heroin, crack and coke were not to enter (Stablein, 2011). The fear of being socially excluded from the square provided protection for the homeless youth from becoming addicted to harder drugs (ibid). However, one negative effect the square had on youth was the appealing factor of providing social support and acceptance, which could perhaps encourage youth to run away from home (ibid).

4.2.9 Restricted and alienated from mainstream society

Homeless youth are to be found at the edge of society and according to the literature, they are painfully aware that they do not as such fit in as they feel alienated and unwanted from mainstream society (Kidd, 2004, Fast et al, 2013). Society tend to view homeless youth as ‘broken’ individuals more than strong young people who had the strength to seek a better way of life, away from abusive parents (Taylor-Seehafer et al, 2008). As mentioned previously, many of the homeless youth do maintain some sort of hope for the future, however many lack a strategy in order for that to happen (Gilbert et al, 2011). When the young people talk about becoming part of the society again, they all mentions having a job and an apartment – those two being the main criteria (Fast et al, 2013). One of the great obstacles that homeless youth face when trying to realize their dream is that many have not finished school and thus have acquired little education (Hyde, 2005). Another problem was also highlighted by Hyde (2005) stating that of homeless youth feeling alienated from society, which therefore made them skeptical of becoming a part of society again. Due to their disappointment with adult support they have experienced throughout their life, they have become afraid to fail, not being able to live up to the expectations of mainstream society (ibid). Furthermore a study by Kidd (2007) found that homeless youths’ perceived feelings of stigmatization was associated feelings of loneliness, meaning that society can also play an active part of ensuring loneliness in these youth.

Homeless individuals often live in the toughest neighborhoods, which is often due to their access to public spaces being restricted by economic, political as well as social conditions (Gaetz, 2004). In this sense, homeless youth are being socially excluded from entering certain places due to certain barriers placed by society (ibid). As mentioned previously, not having a place to stay, means having to live on the street, which exposes an individual greatly, making him/her very vulnerable (ibid). When homeless youth do try to go to more safe places, they are often denied access or moved by force (ibid). Many youth find it difficult both acquiring and maintaining jobs, and thus are often forced to engage in criminal activities such as selling drugs in order to survive, which again lead to further marginalization (Gaetz, 2004). Gaetz’s (2004) found that 81.9 % of street youth had experienced being victims of a crime in the past year and 79, 4% had experienced more than one. Gaetz (2004) highlights the fact that many homeless youth do not report if anything has happened to them. In fact, only 12.2 % of the street youth participating in the study had reported their worst victimization experience to the police (ibid). Furthermore, even though many know that stealing

and other types of crime is wrong, the street life is about survival and even the justice system can find it difficult to penetrate this society, since, as one youth stated, ‘*Nobody wants to be called a snitch*’ (Gaetz, 2004, pp. 440). Besides being afraid of what might happen to them, if they do report the crime to the police, they also report being skeptical of what the police would actually be able to do about it, or if they will even believe them in the first place (ibid). They express their fear of not being taken seriously, indicating the belief that their crime is probably not serious enough, or perhaps acknowledging the fact that not much is going to be done about it (ibid). Thus, society plays an active part in ensuring young homeless individuals becoming further excluded and marginalized by unwilling forcing them to fall victim of criminal behavior, due to physically restricting access to safer areas (ibid).

4.2.10 ‘Why don’t you just go and get a job?’

Strategies for homeless people in, among others, Canada and North America have focused on interventions targeted at the individual, providing job coaching and education, but neglecting underlying root causes for their homelessness (McKenzie-Mohr et al, 2012, Dolson, 2015). As Dolson (2015) describes in his study of street youth that a job coach, who is connected to a drop in center where many homeless youth socialize, would go and offer job training (Dolson, 2015). Even though the coach would offer face-to-face sessions to the youth, she rarely met anyone who was interested in taking the offer (ibid). Due to the program called Ontario Works in Canada everyone on social assistance should seek work in order not to lose their social assistance benefits (ibid). Due to the fact that many youth are still effected by past experiences and left on the street with unresolved traumas, they have compiled a great deal of anger and often prefer to maintain a certain distance from other youth (ibid). The same issue of not having dealt with unresolved trauma was expressed by a 20 year old women in the Gilbert et al (2011) study, stating she had never dealt with the emotional consequences of the domestic abuse she experienced growing up, nor the numerous rapes she fell victim to in the younger adult years. A 20-year-old woman from a study by Kidd (2004) also pointed out that getting a job without an education was difficult and she had even experienced being shooed away due to her appearance. Another 21-year-old youth from the same study stated that he was so traumatized by the rape and death of his brother that he had a hard time caring about anything, least at all a job (ibid). Some of the homeless youth in the Dolson (2015) study had had a job, however due to the fact that many suffer from unresolved mental issues,

combined with the difficulties of living from place to place under insecure conditions the majority were not capable of maintaining this job.

4.2.11 identifying with no-one – becoming invisible

According to Miller et al (2004) homeless youth in general feel alienated from older homeless individuals, describing their own homeless situation as being only temporary and as something that had taught them a great deal. This finding is interesting in the sense that not only do young people feel alienated from society by being marked as homeless, they somehow do not identify with the meaning of the term, believing themselves to be different. Homeless youth often try to disguise themselves to not appear homeless by either changing appearance to better suit rest of society and/or by being at places where non-homeless individuals will not perceive them as being homeless, such as public libraries (Miller et al, 2004, Thomas et al, 2012). Roy et al (2008) also found that different groups of homeless youth do often not identify with each other, some homeless youth distancing themselves from people who seem to accept their street life situation and drug use.

Some youth report the benefits of having friends outside of the homeless milieu that they can sometimes visit to get a shower and a good meal (Stablein, 2013). Some stay in contact with friends from school and work (if having a job) but not everyone wants to admit to their non-homeless friends that they are in fact homeless, indicating that they know society's attitude towards homelessness and thus feels embarrassed by their situation (Miller et al, 2004).

'I've got some friends at work but I haven't told them where I actually live. I just don't feel like giving that out you know. But they're just great 'cause I get carrying on and get laughing with them and it helps me relax. (Miller et al, 2004, pp. 746)

This statement suggests that non-homeless friends can provide some sort of 'safe haven' offering time to relax from an otherwise stressful life. As mentioned previously, Thomas et al (2012) found that homeless youth would try to look as normal as possible, disguising themselves in order for them to hang on to themselves and keep human. They stated that letting themselves go could cause them to spiral downwards into becoming just an animal (ibid). Thus, friends outside the homeless milieu provide some incentives and protective barrier from sinking deeper into homelessness (Thomas et al, 2012). Rice et al (2012) found that some homeless youth were able to keep friendships with people from outside the homeless milieu by using technology such as cell phones and the internet, which assisted in improving their overall mental health.

4.2.12 Homeless youths' perception of their isolation

Some of the studies mentioned that homeless youth are a different group than older homeless people (Miller et al, 2004, Gilbert et al, 2011, Pedersen, 2012). Pedersen et al (2012) , studied the experience of social isolation among homeless individuals staying at a homeless shelter in Denmark, and found that homeless youth (in this case from 22 – 34 years of age) were different in their experience of social isolation. As the older individuals in the shelters could be categorized as being either; satisfied loners or socially related but lonely or socially isolated, the young people were to be found somewhere in-between these categories (ibid). The young homeless people interviewed did not as such perceive themselves as being isolated, however they seemed troubled somehow. When they spoke of being alone, it became clear that perhaps they did not feel lonely simply because of the fact that they were so used to being on their own, not having anybody (Pedersen, 2012). In a sense, the social isolation has become an embedded part of them (ibid). Even though they described themselves as being related to some extent and thereby not as such feeling socially isolated, the researchers sensed that they did somehow feel unsatisfied with their social lives (ibid). Another difference in age was found in Miller's et al study (2004) of Canadian homeless youth, where the homeless youth were found to emphasize street social life, continuously talking about a sense of a community and friendship in the homeless setting. This was very different from older homeless individuals, who did not emphasize their sense of community in the same degree.

5. Analysis and Discussion

When looking at the different articles included in this review it becomes clear that homeless youth suffer from complex issues and often come from complex situations. This section wishes to provide an overview of the factors involved in making young people feel socially isolated and lonely both prior and during their homelessness due to their upbringing and personal dispositions and how these factors can influence rejection and feelings of social isolation in the Danish society. The results will be analyzed using Erikson, Bourdieu and Weiss and the discussion will center on these analyzed finding's relevance in the Danish society's context. At the end of each section, recommendations as to how the presented information can be used by the Danish State and other people working with homeless youth will be offered.

5.1 Family relations, upbringing and social isolation

The first important causes of feeling socially isolated and lonely was the fact that many of the homeless/at risk youth included in the studies came from more or less 'broken' families. According to Weiss children will at some point in their life feel separation anxiety, since they will eventually be left for shorter periods by their parents without knowing if they will ever return (Weiss, 1973). This can lead to great emotional distress, however for the majority of children, parents do return and they feel safe in their environment (ibid). According to the statements made by homeless youth from the studies, they have felt this anxiety on several occasions, not feeling comfortable in the presence of their parents, expecting their parents to either leave or physically or verbally abuse them at any point in time (Kidd, 2002). In the early years, children attach themselves to parents, relying on them for emotional support and care (Weiss, 1973). When this support is not received it can lead to immense feelings of abandonment and loneliness (ibid).

According to Erikson, not getting the right amount of care during a child's upbringing can greatly affect how that child comes to view the world (Stevens, 1983). Referring to the 'eight ages of man', a healthy development of the ego is very much dependent on the support and care an individual receives during the childhood years (ibid). As a child is greatly dependent on parents, it has to trust the parents to be present and provide support, however if the child is constantly being neglected it can critically determine future ability to trust and thus have a great say in that individual's future ability to develop fruitful friendships (Stevens, 1983). This is supported by Weiss, who states that children who feel abandoned may in time experience increasing feelings of hopelessness and despair (Weiss, 1973). Research has found a connection between how children thrive within their home and their relationship with peers (Mølholdt, 2014). Furthermore, the way children thrive within their families does not just have an effect on the childhood years but will as both Erikson and Bourdieu state be a factor that can affect them throughout their life (Stevens, 1983, Wilken, 2006). In Erikson's eight stages of man the second step deals with the battle of autonomy, where the child is encouraged to exert self-control and create a sense of free (Stevens, 1983). Parents should be careful not to shame their children, since this will create a self-doubt within the child. Evidence from the studies suggest that several of the homeless youth felt worthless and that this feeling started emerging already during childhood as their parents repeatedly expressed their discontent with them (Kidd & Kral, 2002, Kolar et al, 2012). Shaming children into believing they are worthless is limiting the strength of an individual's ego quality in many ways (Stevens, 1983). Due

to the fact that these children are not being provided with encouragement and support to try out different things, they are at great risk of becoming insecure about themselves and can even result in the development of a self-restricted personality (ibid). If a child is allowed to assert themselves they get to live out their desires, however if they are being punished for this need, they can develop a sense of guilt (ibid). If a child develops a self-restricted personality, it will inhibit that child's courage to pursue goals. According to Erikson, the lack of confidence and self-esteem can have great consequences, since these two qualities are of great importance when encountering other children in institutions such as kindergarten and school later on (Stevens, 1983). This is very relevant to note, especially in a country such as Denmark, which has the most daycare spaces per capita, and thus Danish children become very familiar with the institutional system from a very young age (Mølholdt, 2014).

A poor development of the ego can lead to feeling insufficient when entering the school system (Stevens, 1983). Here they will be judged based on their performance and thus intimidation of other children combined with lack of self-esteem and confidence (and perhaps poor developed skills due to being shamed when trying to live out their desires) can become a great barrier for children to perform well and feel as if they belong (ibid). Even though not all of the studies mentioned the socio-economic status of parents as such, factors such as parents having a drug and/or alcohol addiction (Hyde, 2005, Gilbert et al. 2011, i.e.), or mothers being financially dependent on a man (Hyde, 2005) indicate that at least some of these youth come from homes with lesser economic and probably also cultural capital than their peers. According to Bourdieu, coming from a family where parents have little cultural capital, may not provide the best foundation for achieving great results in school (Wilken, 2006). However, if supported enough by parents who believe in the importance of getting an education, children can through this encouragement learn to perform well, regardless of their parent's own cultural capital (ibid). The young homeless individual's accounts of their childhood do, however, not give the impression that they had a lot of parental support, but rather as mentioned, indicated that poor relationships with parents was often the cause of them becoming homeless (Mallet et al, 2005, Hyde, 2005, Gilbert et al, 2011 i.e.). Not having this support combined with feelings of insufficiency in school can likely lead to feelings of isolation. Referring back to Kidd, self-esteem is a great buffer against feeling lonely (Kidd, 2008), however, as many of these youth have experienced neglect and not received support, the feeling of self-esteem might be low.

Several youth reported having dropped out of school, due to the lack of support and interest in them doing well (Berman, 2013). Furthermore, research has shown that the worse socio-economic status parents have, the greater the risk is for a child to suffer psychological and physical discomfort (Mølholdt, 2014). To make matters worse, normally one side of the brain is more dominant than the other, however the dominant side are in non-lonely individuals able to exert executive control in order to override this bias (Cacioppo, 2008)). However, in lonely individuals the ability to perform this executive control is impaired (ibid). Brains of people that are socially isolated are less active in certain parts related to executive control, which can affect e.g. the ability to hear and maintain focused attention. This indicates that individuals, who have experienced chronic loneliness from being continuously socially isolated, will have a physiological disadvantage when trying to keep up in school (ibid). Furthermore, Knowles et al. found that chronic lonely individuals are at risk of developing anxiety under social pressure, which inhibits their performance under social pressure (Knowles, 2013).

5.1.1 Summary and recommendations

For many of the homeless youth there have been several factors involved already from childhood that have resulted in them becoming isolated and not fitting in, with mainstream society. Their ego-quality skills gained at the early years before adolescence are likely to have developed in a negative direction due to having been shamed and not provided with sufficient support and care to live out desires. Feelings of being unwanted from early childhood has likely caused immense feelings of emotional loneliness, anxiety and fear of abandonment. A poor development of self-esteem combined with little or no parental support, have caused several youth to drop out of school, which has limited their options of acquiring cultural capital, that could otherwise provide an excellent tool for at risk youth to remain of the street and stay in contact with ‘well-functioning’ peers. Referring back to the aim of this thesis, the factors mentioned in this section can all be causes of a young person being isolated and feeling lonely.

As mentioned, homeless youth in general feel lonelier than their non-homeless peers (Rokach, 2005). Sometimes lonely individuals can in their wish to connect with other people, choke under pressure their social skills failing them when trying to interact with other people. Institutions that work with homeless young people might benefit greatly from identifying if choking under social pressure is an issue for the youth they work with, since this can be an obstacle for them to make new friends. Referring back to Weiss, sometimes non-lonely individuals have a hard time

understanding why lonely people do not just seek other people, however this finding suggest that even though the skills are there, they become inhibited by social anxiety when facing social pressure. Being able to socially interact with other people of mainstream society seems to be a factor in need of great focus in order for homeless youth to maintain housing stability, and thus people working with homeless youth should remember to focus on the development of these skills. If at risk youth learn to overcome possible trades of social anxiety, then perhaps they can find valuable friendships and support in their peers, which can assist them in staying in school and even protect them from homelessness.

5.2 Friendships

According to Erikson, when reaching the fifth step in the eight ages of man, a child has reached the adolescent years and the search for identity is initiated, which can occur rather quietly, or with the need to distance oneself from authority figures (Stevens, 1983). In the process adolescents tries to figure out who they are and what they wish to do with their lives (ibid), a process that can leave many feeling very much on their own and can thus lead to feelings of loneliness (Weiss, 1973). Some reject parents and teachers in order to break out of roles given to them. In order to find out who they are they will likely experiment with being a part of different groups, idolizing different people and explore their sexuality (Stevens, 1983). If given the right amount of space and time the adolescent will find their identity which will benefit them greatly in the adult years, having a greater sense of who they are and where they are going (ibid). The ego quality gained at this step is to sustain fidelity and being loyal regardless of being in the midst of confusion and contradictions (Stevens, 1983). In the social order this is the step in which ideology develops offering values and beliefs to follow. Depending on their self-esteem and ability to fit in with the group, leads to either inclusion or rejection (ibid). Youth that are different, whether this difference is small or large, may be excluded from part-taking (Stevens, 1983).

According to Bourdieu, people's sense of reality is generated through internalized dispositions to think, act and feel in certain ways (Wilken, 2006). These dispositions are created dependent on the social conditions that the individual has lived under, throughout their life. Most of the social processes that is acquired through early childhood is not remembered but become a part of our identity, taught by parents, teachers etc. (ibid). The way we choose to act is therefore deeply embedded in our social background and history, which create a subjective view of the world within every individual (ibid). Due to their often harsh upbringing, homeless youth are likely to have

acquired different internal dispositions during their childhood which has been combined with little or perhaps no emotional support. Combining Erikson's psychosocial development theory with Bourdieu theory on habitus, youth with a poor developed ego quality and different internal dispositions that do not match that of their peers, may come off as being reserved and different and thus have a greater risk of being rejected by peers in the adolescent years. Referring back to Knowles et al (2013), lonely people's social skills tend to fail them under social pressure, meaning that the anxiety of failing to connect is in itself a barrier to reconnect (Knowles, 2013). However, it should be mentioned that some youth also choose to isolate themselves, which does not necessarily mean that they are particularly disliked by their peers they are just of a shy nature (Stevens, 1983) or have low need for social interaction (Cacioppo, 2008), which may or may not be linked to low self-esteem (ibid). However, research has also found that due to having been neglected and isolated, individuals can become very poor at handling criticism, constantly blaming and questioning themselves (Cacioppo, 2008). Constantly fearing what other people think, can be the psychological factor involved when choosing to withdraw from social interaction (ibid). Other times, adolescents can choose to isolate themselves as a way of trying to cope with their situation as seen in the case of the 22-year-old girl, who started withdrawing from people in school due to her mother's abuse at home (Hyde, 2005).

Erikson's sixth stage in the 'eight stages of man' deals with the ability to develop intimate relationships with other people such as friends and lovers (Stevens, 1983). Erikson argues that the strength and firmness of the identity that has been created is at this stage put to the test, as being able to create fully intimate relationships requires both deep involvement and also a power to willingly put this identity at risk (ibid). He also argues as relationships before the early twenties have been used in the search of identity these relationships are more intimate (ibid). The ego quality gained at this stage is thus love and the mutuality of devotion. Isolation and self-absorption becomes the counterpart, where the fear of risking once ego results the individual to distancing him/herself from other people who wish to create intimate relationships, especially those with very different ideologies (ibid). The relationships that homeless youth tend to develop seem to be both more turbulent and of a stronger character (Kidd & Kral, 2004, Fast et al, 2013) As explained, due to the fact that they have no other person with which they feel connected to, homeless youth can have a tendency to throw all their affections towards one person (ibid). As Weiss describes, the adolescent years is a time where the first relationships and heart ache starts, which for every individual can lead to extreme feelings of loneliness (Weiss, 1973). Homeless youth might

experience an ending relationship as just one extra person that have abandoned them in their life, leading to feelings of emotional loneliness that may resemble that experienced in childhood (Weiss, 1973).

Some homeless youth may be capable of handling the situation of being socially isolated for a longer time than others, however evidence suggest that even their resilience will decline over time (Rew, 2001, Pedersen, 2011, Cleverley & Kidd, 2011). Referring back to the story with the former homeless youth, who felt isolated in an apartment and thus befriended two neighbors that took advantage of his goodwill (Barker, 2013). Even though he tried to distance himself, the need for social interaction was so great, that he stayed in this destructive friendship (Barker, 2013). This story clearly indicate that even though quality of friendships are starting to be valued higher in the adolescent years (Stevens, 1983), some homeless youth do not have the luxury or being picky with regards to who they want to befriend but sometimes have to take what they can get, if not wanting to be by themselves (ibid). This information is troubling, since it indicates that the need for social interaction might lead to homeless youth getting involved with people and situations that they would normally stay clear off.

5.2.1 Summary and recommendations

When focusing on the aim of this thesis, friends can be seen as causing feelings of loneliness both prior and during homelessness. Friendships with peers are important, however due to rejection from peers and feelings of social isolation and loneliness youth are forced to create friendships with peers that are somewhat destructive and exploitive, which again can lead to social isolation. Friendships with peers of the street seem to buffer against these feelings.

Homeless youth feel different, some feeling both alienated from ‘well-functioning’ peers, society and even older homeless individuals. Some homeless youth do have friends outside the homeless milieu that they, even though they did not wish to share their homeless situation with them, experienced these friendships as a way to sometime escape from the brutality of street life. Making sure that at risk youth maintain friendships with their peers, could prove very beneficial in protecting against the risk of becoming homeless.

5.3 Challenges for acquiring cultural capital and competing in the ‘Competition State’

The socialization process in a country such as Denmark takes place in schools and institutions and centers around academic performance, judged by grading scales rather than teaching children about compassion and responsibility for one another in society (Jerlang & Jerlang, 1996). In Denmark, great emphasis is put on the ability to compete in a global market and thus young people should acquire an education. Currently the state aims at having 60 % completing a secondary education by 2020 (Thomsen, 2014). Out of these 25 % should complete a higher education (ibid). This development and focus for young people to acquire higher academic degrees, puts immense pressure on the individual to succeed (Jerlang & Jerlang, 1996). Entering the school system with low self-esteem and no support from family members will likely not provide the best opportunity for a child to do well in school (Stevens, 1983). Shaming can here be seen as both happening within the family as well as in school where good performance is praised and children performing poorly are frowned upon, or marked 'troubled'. According to Berger and Luckmann (2003), the leading forces have created both the written and unwritten rules of society, in order to maintain order, productivity and ensuring routines. Referring back to Bourdieu, the internal dispositions that people develop based on their social environment is also a collective, seeing that people growing up within the same environment will likely have somewhat the same understanding of that environment (Wilken, 2006). Thus, the internalized dispositions that are being embedded in us when we are young should match our outer environment in order for us to thrive (ibid). For many people this is the case however some people experience a mismatch between their habitus and the reality in which they find themselves in (ibid). Having a habitus that does not resemble that of reality of society can be very confusing for an individual when wanting to fit in but does not know the 'rules of the game' (Wilken, 2006). Having the right 'feel for the game' will provide individuals with much greater chances of living up to the standards of society as these standards will be understood and sought from the beginning (ibid).

At risk youth and homeless youth have not been provided with the best opportunities and thus they will likely have to fight harder in order to do as well as their peers. As society puts great emphasis on the individual's ability to acquire academic skills, this can likely add to the risk of young people feeling isolated as well as insufficient, if they are not capable of meeting these requirements. Furthermore, research has found evidence to suggest that the longer young people live at home with parents, the greater chances are for them to complete a higher education (Thomas, 2014). At risk/homeless youth, such as the ones included in the studies for this scoping review, often do not

have any parental support and are thus statistically less likely to succeed, which can likely lead to feelings of exclusion.

According to Bourdieu, due to the fact that the government is in possession of power and thereby the ability to create laws and rules which citizens should obey by and who should be provided with support, they also have the power to construct the society's social reality (Wilken, 2006). Therefore, the government owns the right of reality which is difficult for other kinds of reality to challenge (ibid). In Denmark, as well as in Canada, the need for education and job training has been emphasized greatly (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte, 2013, Dolson, 2015). As mentioned, many youth do know that in order to be a well-functioning member of society they should get an education and/or job, however, as explained, the worst of do not have a tactic to pursue this goal. The focus on getting homeless youth into the job market becomes apparent when looking at the report 'Hjemløshed I Danmark 2013' (Homelessness in Denmark), where 18 % of the young people reporting being in a job activation program, whereas only 24 % reported having any type of government plan to assist them out of homelessness (Benjaminsen & Lauritzen, 2013). Referring back to Dolson's study (2015) from Canada as well as the fact that as many as 51 % of Danish homeless youth report having mental health problems (Benjaminsen & Lauritzen, 2013), it seems odd that the focus on job training is emphasized. Even though young people should be assisted in acquiring a job, providing job training to a youth who suffers greatly from emotional trauma, seems rather misunderstood and the job coach attached to the drop-in center also did not seem to have success in her pursuit for new clients (Dolson, 2015). Mortensen (2014) criticizes the way the Danish welfare state has developed, and in his book 'The Common Good' he quotes the author behind 'Konkurrencestaten' (The Competition State):

"The competition state is a state which seeks to hold an individual responsible for his or her own life and which views community as tied to work, and freedom as identical to the freedom to realize one's own needs – instead of stressing (as the welfare state does) moral formation, democracy as community and freedom as the opportunity to take part in political processes." (Mortensen, 2014, pp. 40)

Mortensen (2014) argues that citizens of Denmark are likely to find it more difficult to create relationships, since the emphasis of taking responsibility for one another has been replaced by a greater need to seek self-interests. Due to this competition, people create a distance between each other since other people will be viewed as competitors in the pursuit of power and success

(Mortensen, 2014). We judge ourselves and each other on the way we look, what we do and who we associate with (ibid). Mortensen (2014) states that due to the constant need of appearing successful and energetic a tremendous amount of pressure is placed on the individual. (ibid). With this pressure combined with the emphasis on the individual's responsibility to succeed, people become scared of failing, since this then reflects who they are (ibid). Perhaps because of knowing that society perceives homeless individuals as being somewhat failures who should just get a job (Fast et al, 2013), homeless youth try to disguise themselves in order to fit in with mainstream society (Thomas, 2012). By staying in libraries and other public places, they give the impression that they are active whether it be with studying or window-shopping. The fact that many of the articles described the homeless youth need to conceal their misery, emphasizes the tendency to view people who experience homelessness as being, to a more or less extreme degree, failures and perhaps even as being responsible for their own misfortune. The tendency with disguising homelessness is also largely found within homeless youth, perhaps not only due to the fact that wanting to belong is very strong in the adolescent years (Weiss, 1973, Stevens, 1983), but could also be due to them being ashamed of not succeeding (Thomsen, 2014). The Danish government constantly brings forth new initiatives to encourage young people to both start and finish their degree sooner (Uddannelsesguiden, 2015, Københavns Universitet, 2015). Young people are either accepted or excluded from entering academic degrees based on their grading average (ibid), which ensures that some people are excluded from entering them. Furthermore, whereas previously people were not as conscious about other people's achievements, the introduction of social media pages such as Facebook, has made sharing of successful stories possible, leading to low-self-esteem and greater feelings of being inadequate, especially for young people (Denti et al, 2012). This is due to the fact that people tend to compare themselves with people that are seemingly more happy and successful (ibid).

Referring back to the work of Cacioppo (2008) it becomes clear that many of the homeless youth at least participating in the studies used for this scoping review, have likely experienced both emotional, social and collective loneliness. They often do not have anybody they can confide in, or who truly comprehend their situation, their friendships often being transient or exploitive. Furthermore, some homeless youth apparently do also not feel as if they belong to neither the homeless community nor mainstream society. Due to the fact that they do not identify with any group within society combined with desperately wanting to fit in, they have become almost invisible. Referring back to Weiss (1973), it can likely be very difficult for people thriving within

mainstream society to comprehend just how socially isolated and lonely some homeless youth do feel. However, what is also troubling in the findings from the studies are the number of youth, who have accepted and adapted to the fact that they are alone and thus do not even seem to view this isolation as a problem but rather a natural part of them (Pedersen, 2011). They value their independence, not being used to having people around they trust to truly be concerned about their wellbeing (ibid). As one youth stated in the study by Steward et al (2010), trust has to be built in order for some homeless youth to give up some of their autonomy.

5.3.1 Summary and recommendations

Cultural capital is important in Denmark and other higher income countries, if wanting to succeed. Many of the homeless youth do not possess the same internal dispositions as mainstream society and thus have to struggle harder in order to understand ‘the rules of the game’ and be able to participate in the ‘academic field’. This can lead to feelings of being socially isolated and excluded from society. The Danish society’s emphasis on success of the individual may benefit the people that have the right dispositions to do well, however are likely to exclude people, who do not have these dispositions as well as limited options of support and care. Due to the constant pressure and comparison with other youth, homeless youth are at great risk of feeling as failures, disguising themselves in order to fit in better with mainstream society. Furthermore, social media such as Facebook has made the success of others even more visible. As a consequence of constant abandonment, chronic social isolation combined with not living up to the expectations of mainstream society, some homeless youth have become almost invisible, adapting to their solitary lifestyle, embracing their loneliness and accepted the fact that they can only depend on themselves.

Emphasis on getting young people to acquire an education as well as providing them job training is for some not the most beneficial starting point, since they are more likely in need of social support and care. Assessing their mental wellbeing seem to be a step in the right direction in order for them to receive care in the right order. Many ‘at risk’ and homeless youth have not had the sufficient support in their life compared to their peers and thus when venturing into society some might both feel alienated from the educational system as well as the rest of society. Some have experienced many years of being disappointment when dealing with the government system and are thus likely in need of regaining trust. Reentering mainstream society after having been homeless (especially if having lived on the street or in shelters) require some readjustment and rebuilding of trust.

5.4 Need for compassion and understanding within the social welfare system

Denmark has experienced an increase in the homeless youth population over the years, and even though the large majority of the articles used in this review did not focus specifically on Danish youth, several stories of the social welfare system having failed emerges when talking to homeless youth in Denmark (SFI, 2013, SPUK, 2014). According to a report by Rådet for Socialt Udsatte (2013) among 30 socially vulnerable young people in Denmark, found that even though the vast majority of them had made some (e.g. teachers) aware of their distressing situation during their upbringing, they had not experienced being offered assistance. For many, expressing the difficulties of living within a dysfunctional family to a person outside the family, required much strength, and thus when nothing was done, they lost this strength and confidence in other people (ibid). This is consistent with the story of the 22 year old girl, who experienced her situation worsen, due to authorities involving parents that were the root of the problem (Hyde 2005). It is important to recognize that parents might be a possible source of support (Milburn et al, 2005), however for some, involvement of the parents will likely not assist the situation, or will perhaps not even be possible (ibid). According to Mortensen (2014), one of the consequences of today's society is that the family has become smaller and does for many no longer consist of extended family members, but include for many only the closest related. The creation of nuclear families could be viewed as being a way of every family isolating themselves from the companionship of the rest of society (ibid). The families that do well and are capable of providing their children with the right amount of support and care, will likely not experience this isolating feeling, however children that are less fortunate will, due to this division likely find it difficult to find support elsewhere (ibid). This is very consistent with the findings that suggest that homeless youth before becoming homeless feel disconnected to not only their family but also society, many reporting having no adult person in their life to share their concerns with (Snow, 2008). Due to the child's need to protect both themselves and their parents, it should be taken very seriously when a young individual do choose to share his/her story.

In Denmark, several cases of child neglect have been reported where the system failed to take action in time, causing the children to suffer greatly from emotional scaring (Politiken, 2015). As mentioned, several of the young people living on the street, reported similar stories of meeting people within the system designed to help them, who possessed limited understanding of what they had gone through (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2004, Snow, 2008). One of the issues that kept

reoccurring was that of constantly changing caseworkers, which lead to young people within the system feeling insecure and confused about their situation (ibid). What seems important is to recognize when working with homeless individuals is that they are likely to attach themselves faster to people that state they will be there for them, giving them almost parental roles, such as requesting need for support and encouragement (Snow, 2008). Whereas support and encouragement can provide trust and comfort, harsh wordings or cancelled appointments are likely to push them further away (ibid). In addition, due to the fact that many young people know that their social worker is busy caring for many other youth, it must leave an imbalance in this relationship. The social worker is present as long as the young person is in the government system, however all contact is ended when they leave (Snow, 2008). This abrupt separation from the only trusted adult figure a young person has in their life, can likely lead to reemerging feelings of abandonment (ibid). Referring back to Cacioppo (2008), there is a time before becoming more isolated where an individual tries to reach out in order alleviate pain of loneliness. When continuously facing rejection, even the smallest cancellation or empty promise can cause great emotional damage leading to losing confidence in people and withdrawing from social interaction.

Based on the statements of homeless youth and youth placed in care, trusting the person that assist them within the system essential for them maintaining faith in the system. Furthermore, it should also be kept in mind that when children leave government care, they are often left alone again in a world that they still might not fully comprehend nor be able to keep up with (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2004). This again emphasize the importance of not ending support completely, when a young person leaves care. Even though a person turn 18, it does not necessarily mean that he/she is in less need of support (ibid). Due to the fact that there are often several factors causing a young person to become homeless (Gaetz, 2004), it should be recognized that long-term care that would exceed beyond the age of 18, could possibly prevent many at risk youth from becoming homeless.

Referring back to Cacioppo (2008), being neglected and alone for a prolonged period of time can result in a natural tendency to withdraw oneself, fearing interaction with other people, being skeptical towards even the kindest intentions and facial expressions. The deprivation of human contact these children have experienced combined with their different internal dispositions, can possibly have made them very poor at interpreting signals from other people and thus will likely find it difficult to engage in social activities and find new friends within society (Cacioppo, 2008). When reaching this stage, kind words and unconditional support are likely more useful than the use of e.g. antidepressant medication (Politiken, 2015). Another issue is that, if a young person is

homeless, he/she can maintain a marginalized status and thus becomes entitled for assistance from the government (Jerlang & Jerlang, 1996). Just venturing out into the Danish society today to find new friends is likely not easy, especially if not being a part of any educational institutions where friendships are often created (Mølholdt, 2014). As explained previously, there are many factors causing young people to reject certain individuals and some of these factors are out of an individual's control, such as feelings of identity and reduction in function (Mølholdt, 2015). Some youth are likely to fear social rejection (Knowles, 2013), and have perhaps poorly developed cognitive abilities (Cacioppo, 2008), which could likely be a reason for young people to consider them different, which can lead to rejection. What is also concerning is that only a third of the homeless youth living in Denmark is connected to a contact person, and only a fourth has been provided with a plan by the government to end their homelessness (Benjaminsen & Lauritzen, 2013).

5.4.1 Summary and recommendations

Homeless youth often feel alone within the system, having no one they feel truly understand their situation or cares, which increases their feelings of social isolation and loneliness. Not feeling cared for or having a trusted adult person in their life, are likely to push youth further into social isolation due to fear of being abandoned yet again. The need for having an adult figure they can trust in their life not only while they are in the system but also when they leave seem of great importance, however even though the request for this is great, 'at risk' youth often end up alone both while in the system and certainly when they leave. Due to poorly developed cognitive abilities as well as social anxiety, finding friends outside the homeless milieu is not easy and might be one of the factors involved in the decision of either choosing social isolation or befriending people within the homeless milieu.

People working with both at risk- and homeless youth should be very careful in how they address 'at risk' and homeless youth, since evidence in this review suggests that even the smallest things, such as cancelling a meeting or not providing proper information, can lead to feelings of being alone and not cared for. Especially people working within the government should acknowledge that past experiences can for these youth be very traumatizing to express and should therefore strive to make sure that the young individuals do not have to share this story more times than necessary. This also leads to the issue with constant changing social workers. Sometimes the social worker is the only adult person a youth has contact with, and having this person to continuously change, can lead

to reoccurring feelings of abandonment and loneliness. Homeless youth cherish social/case workers that show both empathy. The ability to show compassion was constantly highlighted as being of great importance, as was the possibility of reaching that their social worker, even though they were no longer in the system. Based on the evidence presented it seems as if compassion and understanding are two essential factors that could assist in preventing 'at risk' youth from becoming socially isolated, feeling lonely and perhaps even from becoming homeless. The possibility of youth maintaining contact with the same contact person might be rather utopic but this issue should be addressed nonetheless.

5.5. Substance abuse, social support and suicide

Drugs are easily accessible within the homeless community and as mentioned some of the studies even stated that drugs kept some homeless youth together (Roy et al, 2008, Fast et al 2013). As some homeless 'communities' seemed to buffer against youth becoming involved with drugs (Stablein, 2011) others almost seemed to encourage it (Foster and Spencer, 2013). According to Fast et al (2013), the homeless youth included in the study did report that the homeless community did protect new comers to the street from initiating drug use, since they knew the damaging effects of substance abuse (Fast et al, 2013). However, several of the homeless youth at the same time reported that they had themselves started using due to encouragement from an older homeless individual, when they first took to the street (ibid). In order to be a part of society, drugs cannot be accepted, however in order to be a part of the homeless society (which is likely where all the friends are), the use of drugs is such a huge part of it (Barker, 2014). This point is emphasized by Barker's story of Michael, a homeless youth who became clean multiple times, however, due to his friends still being in the environment, he got dragged back into it repeatedly (Barker, 2014). Choosing to withdraw from them can be challenging, especially within a society that, according to Mortensen (2014), has become increasingly individualized and less empathic. As mentioned, friends are an important part of youths' development and due to the fact that some homeless youth do not know anyone outside the homeless milieu, parting with this group of friends (destructive as it may be), means parting with their only type of emotional support option.

Society's rules of what is right and wrong exists and navigating through this system very much defines how other people within the same society perceive a person (Berger & Luckmann, 2003). Due to the fact that homeless youth have not as such been accustomed to the rules of mainstream society (both due to traumatic upbringing and street life/other types of homelessness) but have on

the contrary experienced being judged by other people within it (Kidd, 2004), this can likely be a painful transition. Venturing into a competitive society with little or no social, economic or cultural capital as well as little feeling of self-worth might seem just as frightening as staying in a drug environment, and thus might be a reason as to why many people do choose to take the risk of staying. Referring back to Kidd & Kral (2002), some homeless youth are so involved with the drug environment that they cannot leave even though they have seen their friends deteriorating and even dying from overdosing either involuntarily or as a mean of suicide (Kidd & Kral, 2002). In addition, drugs did also serve for some as an escape from reality, trying to cope with the fact that they were homeless, meaning that if they were to removing themselves from substances they would have to face this often traumatizing reality (Kidd, 2004, Roy et al, 2008). Referring back to Bourdieu and habitus, the fact that many homeless youth come from families where parents have likewise been drug/alcohol abusers, engaging in this risky behavior is probably seen as being normal.

According to a study conducted in England among former homeless drug users found that the study participants appreciated the fact that they were removed from the dangers of living on the street and truly treasured their new neighbors and tenancy support workers who acknowledged their presence and said hello (Bowpitt & Harding, 2008). The former homeless tenants were encouraged to build relationships with neighbors, which proved very beneficial for restoring their self-esteem (ibid). By including neighbors and other members of the surrounding community in welcoming the former homeless individual, the transition from street to home became less challenging and even enjoyable (ibid). This again highlights the importance of some degree of openness of the society, when trying to ensure that former homeless individuals do not return to their homeless/drug state, due to not feeling welcome outside the homeless milieu. Another issue is that society often push homeless youth into drug abuse or other types of criminal conduct due to restricting safer areas (Gaetz, 2004). Furthermore, being in an unsafe environment is likely stressful, which can prevent homeless youth from getting enough sleep (ibid). Sleep is important in order for the body to heal and if prevented, it can harm a person on a cellular level, meaning that the ability to self-regulate can become disrupted, which can lead to an individual becoming more vulnerable to stressors such as loneliness (Cacioppo, 2008).

It is clear that involvement with drugs will make a marginalized group of people, become even more marginalized and thus even more shunned from society (Jerlang & Jerlang, 1996). A consequence of being marginalized happens when a marked person comes to think of him or herself as indeed belonging to a different group of society, such as drug users (ibid). Because of this mark,

people who are categorized as being normal well-functioning individuals within society come to see these different individuals in a very generalized way, likely neglecting the fact that every individual within that group have different past experiences and characteristics (ibid). People who are outside the norm and become marked such as e.g. drug users, fall victims to great amounts of prejudices from the rest of society and thus begin to identify themselves as just being drug users – different from the norm – even though there are often several reasons as to why a person becomes addicted (Roy et al, 2008). It should be emphasized that society dictates what is normal and who differs, and thus very much decides, who can part-take and who cannot (Jerlang & Jerlang, 1996). However, it seems important to recognize that the reasons behind getting involved with drugs, go beyond that of just wanting to ‘get high’, the fear of becoming excluded from a group of friends being one of them (Barker, 2014).

In a survey conducted by SFI (2013), on the Danish perception of different vulnerable groups of society, a large percentage thought that people with drug addictions carried the biggest responsibility of becoming clean (70%). Even though this is true in the sense that a person has to want to become clean in order for any program to be successful, there might be, as presented, many underlying factors standing in the way that the individual has little or no control over. What is even more frightening is that the survey found that especially young people tend to show little empathy for homeless individuals compared to other age groups (ibid). In fact, according to the survey, a larger percentage of young people age 18-34 believe that people become homeless due to being lazy (31%) and that the individual chooses this way of life themselves (56%) (SFI, 2013). The number of individuals agreeing with these statements tended to decline with age. This finding is concerning, since these are the young people that homeless youth will try to network with, once leaving their homeless state. The need for socializing with people that both understand and respect a person combined with the hostility of mainstream society could be one of the reasons as to why some youth, repeatedly fall in and out of homelessness. As mentioned, Roy et al (2008) found among his sample of homeless youth that alcohol was not enjoyed in groups but was rather a solitude event. Therefore, it should be kept in mind that there might be differences between the two types of abuse that within the group of homeless youth could be investigated further in order to gain a better understanding of this issue. Furthermore, even though many of the studies used in this review touched upon drug abuse, it should also be mentioned that not all young homeless individuals are involved with drugs and that some numbers might be exaggerated (Robinson, 2008).

One of the concerning findings was that loneliness combined with feelings of not having nobody who cared, had a great say in young people choosing to commit suicide (Kidd, 2004). Homeless people have higher rates of suicide than their non-homeless counterparts (ibid) and according to the evidence discovered in this review, having a person who cared in their lives (and preferably outside the homeless milieu), could probably serve as a protective factor for choosing to end it all (Rew et al, 2001). Another concerning findings was that some youth seemed to use drugs to commit suicide slowly, not knowing nor caring if or when they were going to overdose (Kidd, 2004). This again emphasize the need of ensuring homeless youth that they are not worthless or alone, but that some people do care if they live or die.

5.5.1 Summery and recommendations

Substance abuse is very common within the homeless milieu and serves different purposes for youth, some seeing it as being glue that ensures social connections with other youth, others using it in order for escape from reality. Regardless of the reason, the issue with substance abuse is a complex matter, where distancing from it might mean departing with the only social support available and thus becoming socially isolated and alone. Especially young people seem to show little empathy towards homeless people and drug users, which could provide a great barrier for youth to develop friendships outside the homeless/drug environment both during and even after homelessness.

The reasons as to why many young homeless individuals turn to drug use are many, the need for social connections being one of them. Therefore, it should be recognized that becoming clean might mean that the young person will become socially isolated and alone. Furthermore, due to the Danish perception on drug users, homeless youth with drug addictions have probably felt even more socially isolated and alienated from the rest of society, as seen with many of the youth included in the studies used for this review. Rejoining a society that have rejected one before might thus be extremely challenging and perhaps not even wanted. Furthermore, as drugs are used for some to cope with their situation, support should be given in order for youth to face whatever they are trying to escape from, as well as teaching them other more positive and empowering coping mechanisms. In addition, due to having been in the drug environment and likely having had friends that were drug abusers as well, life has probably not been easy and some have perhaps even witnessed friends overdosing as seen the Kidd (2004) study. On a societal level, the Danish state could create more awareness on the complexity of the issues leading to youth becoming homeless as well as

highlighting the difficulties combined with reintegrating into mainstream society. Hopefully, this could assist in changing the Danish population's perception and assumptions on homelessness and even substance abuse. Furthermore, this could possibly also create a better overall understanding of the factors that make people become homeless, and thereby minimize the distancing from these people. A general openness to people that behave differently, would likely assist greatly in protecting people from becoming invisible due to not identifying with any groups within society.

5.6 Every homeless youth is different

Robinson (2008), a social worker who has conducted much research among homeless youth, emphasizes the importance of not assuming that every young homeless person is the same, since youth that fall outside the 'norm' will not be provided assistance to accommodate their needs. An example of this is that, even though many homeless youth likely feel alienated from the educational system, some are very much interested in continuing their school, and should therefore not be placed in the same category as youth that, for one or the other reason, have left school (Robinson, 2008). The importance of this acknowledgement can be linked to the statement by Taylor-Seehafer et al (2008), noting that many people tend to view homeless youth as being 'broken', rather than strong individuals, who left an intolerable life. As many of the young people could be described as broken, some do have strengths to build on and should thus not be overlooked (ibid). As mentioned, Snow (2008) also found that there were differences between youth who left foster care, some being resilient and others having a greater need for further assistance. When it comes to social support, humans are different in their needs, and so are homeless youth and in fact human's need for social interaction is genetically determined (Cacioppo, 2008). Some youth will find it more difficult to choose a life in isolation and thus youth that manage to maintain their social isolation for longer, may be individuals that have less need for social interaction in the first place (ibid). These youth might not as such need the companionship due to emotional support needs, however based on the evidence presented may still seek it for other reasons such as ensuring protection. Their background are different too, some having experienced great neglect, others rebelling against parents (Roy et al, 2008). As one study mentioned, parents might still be a possible source of support in some cases, if provided the right amount and type of assistance (Milburn et al, 2005). For others, getting parents involved in their child's life seem unrealistic. Roy et al (2008) described that there are several types of homeless youth from the downtowners who are so indoctrinated within

the street life that they would not want to leave it, to the ‘trippers’ and ‘hard-luck’ group that would like to leave the street if provided with the right assistance (Roy et al, 2008).

5.6.1 Summary and recommendations

To sum up, as every youth are different, they should not all receive the same assistance. Their need for social support might play a smaller or larger role in their reason for being on the street/living in shelters. Placing homeless youth in the same category, will likely cause individuals to feel misunderstood and even invisible and thus individuals who has resilience to build on, is at risk of being overlooked.

Many homeless youth expressed a willingness to get off the street as well as hope for the future, suggesting that the willingness to act is there, if given the right tools. Again, it is important to identify the need for every individual and also to acknowledge that the youth that show most resilience might not necessarily be in less need of social interaction but have just come to accept their life in isolation. These youth might have experienced chronic loneliness for many years, which as mentioned can have caused both psychological as well as physical consequences, and are thus in need of greater attention in rebuilding trust and social skills. Recognizing that youth have different needs will likely make them feel more heard and cared for.

6. Conclusion

As mentioned on several occasions in this thesis, the reason for why youth become homeless is complex and the feelings of social isolation and loneliness are just two of many factors to investigate. This thesis has tried to provide an overview of how social isolation and feelings of loneliness both occur and affect homeless youth, and as presented it seems as if several factors are involved and even interrelated.

The hypothesis that some causes of loneliness and social isolation are related to neglect prior to the youth becoming homeless has been confirmed. The studies included in this scoping review that looked into homeless youth background found many different types and degrees of neglect, which were found to lead to feelings of worthlessness, loneliness and even sometimes suicidal thoughts. Experiencing neglect during the childhood years can greatly affect how a person comes to view the world, and constantly being faced with neglect might lead young people withdrawing themselves from other people as a tactic to protect against further harm. Being chronically isolated and lonely

can lead to the development of social anxiety, which can cause people to underperform under social pressure. Withdrawing from social interaction or showing frustration or aggression due to not being able to connect with people are likely going to push people away, which can result in a vicious cycle in which an individual becomes more and more isolated. Thus, the hypothesis that a consequence of having experienced social isolation and loneliness due to neglect prior to homelessness is the difficulty of creating strong friendships was also confirmed. Even though some managed to have friends outside the homeless milieu, they were reluctant to inform them about their homeless situation, indicating that the relationship was not strong enough for these kind of issues to be shared. Friendships do form on the street, however due to them often being exploitive and of a transient nature, they are often not capable of providing the needed emotional support that many youth needed but rather increased feelings of psychological distress and even feelings of loneliness. Due to both physical and psychological consequences of being chronically lonely can thus controversially lead to a sceptic attitude towards the people who wish to provide assistance. In this sense, the third part of the hypothesis stating that reoccurring feelings of social isolation and loneliness can in itself be a barrier for accepting services was also confirmed. Feelings of disappointment as well as isolation have led many homeless youth to accept the fact that they can rely only on themselves and service providers that do not acknowledge the reasons behind this need for autonomy are not likely to succeed in their pursuit to assist.

The Danish homeless strategy seemingly has incorporated many of the elements necessary to assist homeless youth out of their homeless situation, however seeing that some youth still are not providing with the needed assistance, it still does not function perfectly. Based on the results from this scoping review, the need for compassion, care as well as the ability to listen seem to be essential for homeless youth to maintain their trust within the system. Referring back to Place (1998) a home is merely than a roof over one's head and as many homeless youth have never experienced having a safe home, this transition might be more difficult. A barrier for homeless youth to become fully integrated back into society is the constant focus on job training and education, which should in many cases, should not receive first priority when dealing with a traumatized individual. Due to the increasing individualization of the Danish society, the need for family support is greater than ever, and youth that do not receive this support will likely feel excluded when not being able to keep up. Reintroducing compassion within the child welfare system would like assist greatly in building young people's sense of self-esteem that could provide them with a fair chance of being able to compete in the competitive state. Lastly, it should be

remembered that humans are social beings, which is a fact that should be emphasized rather than drown in job training and educational success for the individual.

6.1 Strengths and limitations of study

This scoping review did use three databases, where many studies reappeared several times indicating that many of the relevant studies were identified, however one can never be sure, if certain search terms or use of other databases, would have generated more relevant results for inclusion. Due to the fact that research on homeless youth is still limited, the request for empirical research is great. However early on in this thesis process it was recognized that the restricted time frame, would not be sufficient in gathering an significant sample size of homeless youth, and thus a scoping review was chosen as the preferred methodology. In order to ensure the most data, a quite large time span was chosen, which could lead to speculations on recent validity of some of the findings, however as the most results correlated with current study findings, this speculation will hopefully be minimized. The study results identified in this scoping review aimed at informing both the Danish state and people working with homeless youth in Denmark on how to provide better social support. It is clear that perhaps not every high-income country could benefit from the same recommendations as every country work with different strategies to end homelessness. The majority of the studies were conducted in high-income countries such as Canada, the US, Australia and the UK, however, as the few studies conducted in Denmark seemingly had similar findings the recommendations given must be seen as being valid. Furthermore, grey literature was used to provide a better overview of the homeless youth situation in Denmark in order to try to compensate for this possible bias. Another limitation was that many of the studies used, focused on homeless youth staying on the street and in shelter. In Denmark, the percentage of homeless youth actually living on the street is very small, and likely the ones that are the worst off. Referring to the introduction, there are several ways a person can be homeless and thus not every homeless person live on the street nor in shelters. Thus, other homeless individual's experience of social isolation and loneliness might differ greatly since they might still be in contact with their family and friends and thus still use this network. Furthermore, it should also be mentioned that due to the fact that this thesis use one interpretation of the work of Erikson and Bourdieu, other interpretations might provide different views on the issue. One limitation that could not be adjusted for is that the result from the recent homeless count conducted in winter 2015, will not be published before summer 2015, surpassing the deadline for this thesis. Thus, it is uncertain if the Danish homeless initiatives

have been more effective in reducing the number of homeless youth, compared to the last count in 2013 where the number had increased (SFI, 2013).

7.1 Future study recommendations

Due to the fact that homeless youth is an increasing problem in many high-income countries, further research on this particular part of the population is needed in order to prevent generational patterns. Based on the articles used in this scoping review, enough relevant evidence seem to exist in order to investigate the issue of social isolation and feelings of loneliness in homeless youth further, by conducting thorough systematic literature reviews. Furthermore, it could be interesting to gather empirical data on the perspectives of the people working with ‘at risk’ or homeless youth within the government system, such as social workers. Seeing that there is always two sides to every story, there a likely several underlying factors that cause ‘at risk’ youth as well as homeless youth to loose trust in the system, that social workers do not possess control over. Future research on loneliness might find even more physical and psychological consequences of being chronically lonely that will provide an even better overview of this complex issue. This scoping review only managed to identify few studies conducted on social isolation and feelings of loneliness in Denmark, indicating that more is needed. Seeing that social isolation and feelings of loneliness are found to be rather common among homeless youth, more research on the effects of this issue would likely prove very beneficial in order to target interventions better to improve homeless youths’ overall mental wellbeing. Furthermore, this thesis did not go into depth with differences between homeless young males and females as only a few studies mentioned variations between gender, however as differences are likely to be found between gender it should also be investigated. Lastly, studies focusing on homeless refugee youth were not included in this study but seeing the growing issue of refugees coming to Europe, studies that focus on these also seem to be of great importance.

7. Global Perspectives – Final reflections

In recent years, Denmark has become a somewhat ‘competition state’, focusing greatly on the individual (Jerlang & Jerlang, 1996, Mortensen, 2014). Even though globalization has to some extent led to benefits for Denmark, one of the negative consequences is that inequality has increased, due to cutbacks in the financial aid given to the poorest (Abrahamson, 2014). According to Abrahamson (2014), globalization has caused an increase in employment and income, however in most European countries poverty has either not decreased or in some cases even increased. In this

sense, Abrahamson (2014) argues that the unemployed become the great losers in the globalized world. In order to insure a good income it is important to acquire cultural capital, however as mentioned, for some (and for the most part, the already disadvantaged groups of society) this capital is not easily obtained (Thomsen, 2014). Having equal opportunities for all, is something the Danish society is still fighting to achieve. (ibid). Furthermore, according to Pleace (1998) even goods that have previously been considered collective such as certain public spaces and access to water, have become somebody's property, meaning that some people are excluded from part-taking in public goods as seen with homeless youth being restricted from safe public places. The globalized world and the need to be a part of the economic marked has resulted in society becoming more fragmented, excluding certain parts of society, which has resulted in greater gaps between rich and poor (ibid). In Denmark, the housing costs have increased greatly, affecting especially young individuals who do not have parents who can afford buying a place for them (Danmark's Radio, 2014). The children that come from less economically stable families will thus find it harder to pay the high rent requested and some could even view this as society's way of excluding the already vulnerable people from entering the economic marked. Should the inequality gap continue to increase in the Danish society, an increase of socially vulnerable people, will likely follow and if the access to stable housing are becoming further restricted an further increase in the homeless youth population will also be a consequence. Furthermore, due to the economic crisis and increasing conflicts, many European countries are now receiving great numbers of refugees from Syria and other Middle Eastern countries they have to provide both food and shelter for (UNHCR, 2015). If nothing is done to resolve the issue of housing these massive amounts of people, the homeless situation overall are likely to increase, not only in Denmark but other high-income countries as well. In that sense, it will become more important for the Danish society to be more open to people who are different, in order for society to not to be divided into the included and excluded.

Furthermore, due to a recent report by the ministry of public health in Denmark, found that 22.000 young people from the age of 11-15 feel lonely, and that this feeling were slightly more common among the 15 year olds (7,1 %) than the 11 year olds (5,9%) (SDU, 2014). As mentioned, high rates of loneliness in the general population has also been found in both Australia and the UK, where it has even been named an epidemic (Mental Health Foundation, 2010, Franklin, 2013). This trend of loneliness within high-income countries could imply that these societies have become very individualistic and as mentioned relates very well with observations made by other researchers

(Jerlang & Jerlang, 1996, Mortensen, 2014). Seeing that humans are social beings, the development of society are moving in a direction that does not acknowledge this fact and thus is likely going to result in negative physical and mental health outcomes, especially for people who are genetically predisposed to have a greater need of social interaction.

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Appendix 1.

The following present a brief introduction to the countries that were included based on the inclusion criteria mentioned:

Australia: High-income OECD country with a GDP of 1.451 trillion US dollars (The World Bank, 2015). An estimated number of 105.000 people are homeless out of which around 26.000 are between the ages of 12-25. Australia's homeless strategy 'The Road Home' puts special emphasis on providing care and support options for older homeless people, ensure housing for low-income households as well as providing outreach programs for people sleeping on the street. (Homeless Taskforce, 2008).

Canada: High-income OECD country with a GDP of 1.787 trillion US dollars (The World Bank, 2015). According to Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, on any given night and estimated that around 8 - 11.000 youth are homeless, which accounts for approximately 20 % of the homeless population (CAEH, 2013). The definition of homeless youth are commonly 16 – 24, but often range from 12-29. Canada's homelessness strategy is called Homelessness Partnering strategy which is a community-based program based on a Homeless First Approach (ESDC, 2015).

England: High-income OECD country with a GDP of 2.942 trillion US dollars (The World Bank, 2015). An estimated number of 80.000 youth experience homelessness every year and 400 youth seeking homeless assistance every day (Homeless link, 2014). Homeless youth are commonly defined as being between the ages of 16-24. England's homeless strategy is called 'Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives' and has increasingly focused on prevention of homelessness as well as supported housing options for vulnerable person's, keeping homeless people off the streets, and provide more settled homes (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005).

United States: High-income OECD country with GDP of 17, 42 trillion US dollars in 2014 (The World Bank, 2015). According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the number of unaccompanied youth up to the age of 24 is estimated to be around 550.000, out of which approximately 380.000 are under the age of 18 (NAEH, 2015). Furthermore, around 50.000 of these youth are living on the street for at least 6 months or more (ibid). The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness from 2010, emphasizes need for focusing on veterans, chronically homeless individuals as well as family and youths.

All of the four countries acknowledge the fact that youth homelessness is in need of attention and all have a section devoted to the issue of homeless youth in their strategy plans.