‘Troubled lives’: Vulnerability, livelihoods and capabilities of homeless women living in a train station in Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis aims to provide insight into the dynamic nature of vulnerability within the everyday lives and life histories of women experiencing homelessness in Dhaka, Bangladesh. An anthropology of development approach was adopted within this study, with fieldwork conducted over a period of ten months, from 2014 – 2015, within a large train station in Dhaka. I explore the processes of becoming, living and remaining homeless for women, and in doing so, shed light into the multi-dimensional, multi-layered and dynamic nature of vulnerability for the urban poor. An asset focused understanding of vulnerability and livelihoods, commonly employed within development theory and practice, does not do justice to the multiplicitous and fluid ways in which women attempt to negotiate and cope with risk within their everyday lives. I argue that re-integrating capabilities into a conceptualization of livelihoods, or asking what women are able to 'be and to do,' allows the processes underpinning women's vulnerability to be interrogated. Women's lives problematize dominant development theories and public narratives surrounding their homelessness, with structural constraints to employment and housing or economic poverty as inadequate explanations for why women become and remain homelessness. My analysis demonstrates structural gender inequalities, everyday violence and uncertainty as key to understanding women's vulnerability and homelessness. Women's discussions of their 'troubled lives,' or the reoccurring broken, exploitative and inadequate relationships perpetuating trauma and loss throughout their life histories, were painful realities not merely regulated to the past, but which continued to hold implications for women's present and future lives, livelihoods and capabilities. Utilizing ethnographic data, the thesis explores the precarious livelihoods of sex-work, marriage and 'living alone' as women pursue, and make complex trade-offs between, the survival, protection and honour that they seek. I argue for a trauma-informed approach to addressing gendered homelessness, with the fine-grained analysis and tools developed throughout this study providing a means by which development practitioners can sensitively engage with, conceptualize and address the vulnerabilities, capabilities and livelihoods of marginalized urban populations.

Statement of originality

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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To love, to be loved. To never forget your own insignificance. To never get used to the unspeakable violence and vulgar disparity of the life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places. To pursue beauty to its lair. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power. Above all to watch. To try and understand. To never look away. And never, never to forget - Arundhati Roy.

This thesis is dedicated to the **forty-nine women** who shared their space, everyday lives and life histories throughout fieldwork in Kamalapur station. The quote above captures beautifully the lessons I've learnt from sitting beside, talking to, and learning from these women – and from the relationships that were developed over the course of fieldwork. In particular I would like to acknowledge **Shanta**, for her honesty, courage and being one of the strongest people I know.

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Figure 1: A woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Chapter One - Introduction

This thesis seeks to challenge dominant discourses within development studies surrounding an overtly asset-focused means of understanding vulnerability and livelihoods for the urban poor. Instead, my analysis offers a more nuanced way to understand the processes of vulnerability, by investigating the everyday lives and life histories of women experiencing homelessness in a large railway station in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The underlying processes and dynamic nature of women's vulnerability throughout their life histories provide a rationale for a re-integration of capabilities in conceptualizing vulnerability and livelihoods. This study thus seeks to provide in-depth ethnographic insights and tools that will enable development practitioners and policy makers to understand the challenges faced by, and respond more sensitively to, marginalized and vulnerable urban populations. Given the dearth of gendered qualitative research amongst the adult homeless population in Bangladesh, research for this project was exploratory in nature. My work builds on homelessness literature that acknowledges the dynamic processes underpinning homelessness (Auerswald & Eyre 2002; Casey, S 2002; Mayock & Sheridan 2012; Mayock, Sheridan & Parker 2015; Snow & Anderson 1993).

Three main questions and processes are investigated within this study; firstly, to understand the processes by which women become vulnerable to becoming homeless and eventually arrive on the streets. Secondly, to explore vulnerability within the everyday lives of homeless women: exploring the political, social and cultural economy of the railway station, the ways in which women cope and adapt to risk and engage in livelihoods within this space. Finally, the study seeks to understand the reasons and processes by which women become vulnerable to long-term and cyclical homelessness within the station context. Women's lives are demonstrated to be characterized by ongoing and repeated violence, loss and uncertainty which shape women's reconfigured capabilities to have control over their environment, engage in 'practical reason'[1] and affiliative relationships. My analysis demonstrates that the dynamic nature of capabilities within women's lives and life histories, holds implications for the concepts of vulnerability and livelihoods are engaged with at the theoretical, programmatic and policy levels in a way that is useful for women to meet their immediate and long-term needs within this context.

Following Watts and Bohle (1993), I conceptualize vulnerability as having three co-ordinates, including exposure to, the capacity to cope with and adapt to, and the potentiality of adverse events and risk. I argue that the livelihoods approach, or 'the

[1] Definition: To engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life (Nussbaum 2001, p. 79).

capabilities, assets…and activities required for a means of living' has congruence with each of the three co-ordinates of vulnerability (Chambers, R & Conway 1991, p. 6). Women's livelihoods or 'means of living,' have an integral part to play in creating a women's exposure to risk, the way in which they may cope with or adapt to risk, whilst, finally, the potential outcomes of risk may reconfigure women's assets, capabilities and livelihoods. Through use of ethnographic data, I demonstrate the cyclical and dynamic nature of vulnerability and the role of livelihoods and capabilities in shaping, and being shaped by, women's experiences of everyday violence and adverse events throughout their lifespan.

Feminist anthropology for development

This study follows the feminist tradition of endeavouring to conceptualize the role of gender within development theory and practice (Afshar & Dennis 1992; Boserup 1970; Folbre 1986; Kabeer 1994; Moore 1988; Pearson & Jackson 1998; Whitehead 1981). In investigating the role of gender and relationships within the life histories and everyday lives of women, the thesis critiques the populist concept of 'social capital' within development literature as an asset that, particularly women, can readily accrue and mobilize to manage poverty and vulnerability (Cleaver 2005; Fine 2002; Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Instead, the social relationships of women that perpetuate gendered inequalities, particularly within kinship and marital relationships, and which undermine women's livelihoods and capabilities, are problematized and interrogated (Nussbaum 2001; Pearson & Jackson 1998). My analysis demonstrates that it is the quality and nature of social relationships throughout women's life spans, and what capabilities these afford women, which are critical to understanding their vulnerability. This study, in adopting a feminist anthropology for development approach, has utilized ethnographic and visual participatory methods to develop an in-depth understanding of the lives of homeless women in Dhaka, Bangladesh (Gardner & Lewis 1996; Tacchi et al. 2008). Fieldwork was conducted over a period of ten months, from 2014 – 2015, in Kamalapur, a large train station in Dhaka. 'Kamalapur railway station' is one of the 11 major homeless population concentrations throughout the city, as seen in Figure 2. The fieldwork site will be referred to as either 'the station' or 'Kamalapur' throughout the thesis, following the way in which participants referred to this location.

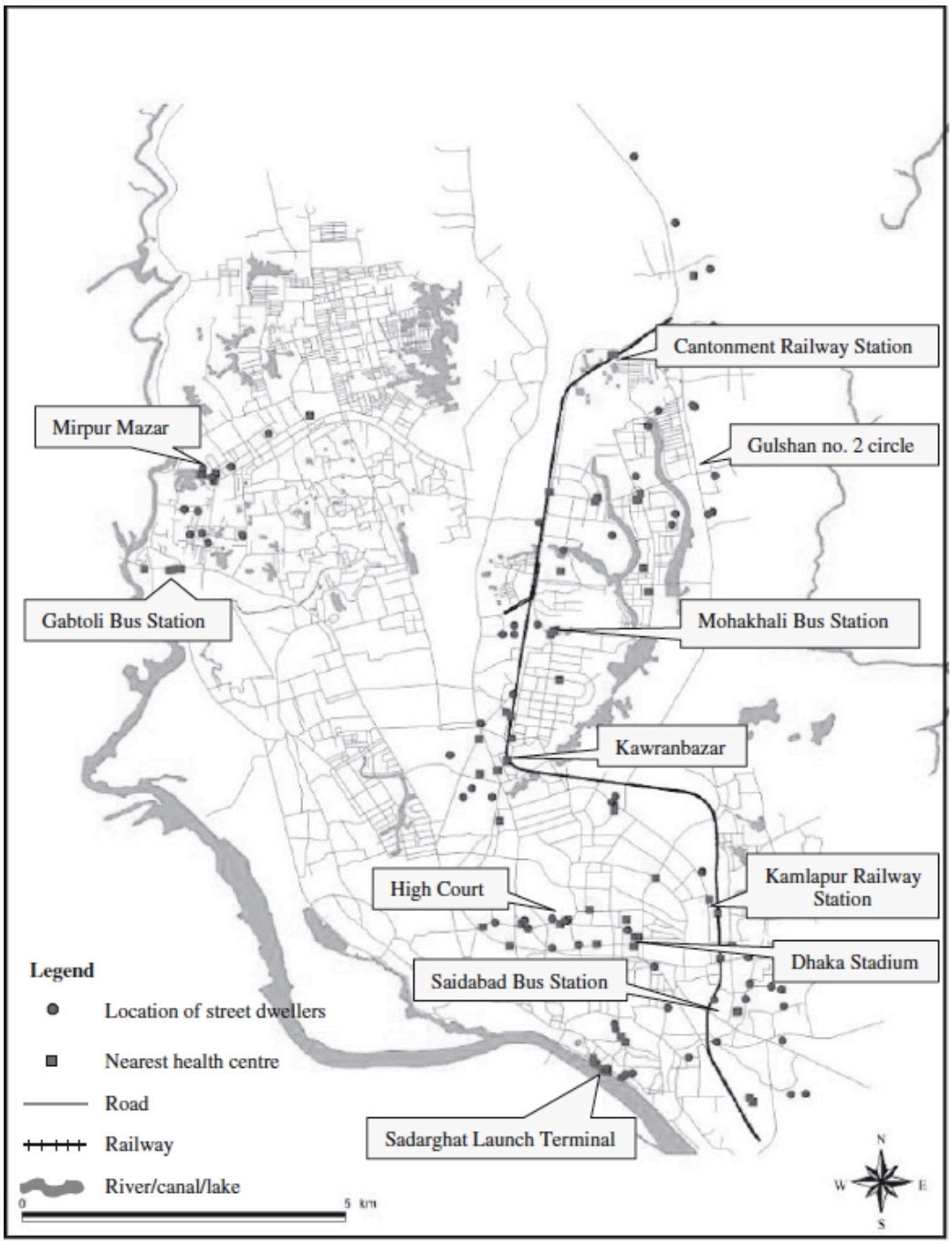


Figure 2: Location of homeless population concentrations throughout Dhaka, Bangladesh (Uddin, MJ et al. 2009, p. 387).

Figure 3: Kamalapur station entrance. Drawing by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Figure 4: Clothes drying in main courtyard. Photographed by TA Nibir.

Sitting with Fatema

I would like to begin with a short narrative of a fieldwork interaction, that captures some of the many difficult realities that make up women's 'troubled lives' in the station. This narrative illustrates the interplay between women's life history events, the influence these hold for women's continued, everyday experience of vulnerability and the way in which women utilize livelihoods to cope and adapt to everyday violence.

My research assistant, Shaoli, and I arrived at the main entrance to Kamalapur station, one morning about five months into fieldwork (see Figure 3). The station was chaos as usual, the yard full of men with lean limbs, deeply tanned from years of constant exposure to the sun, with lines of worry and lack of sleep etched onto their faces. Brightly coloured rickshaws[2], in various stages of disrepair, performed complex manoeuvres, weaving in and out of the crowd and negotiating the road traffic. Large buses, trucks and cars careened past, with limited attention to the crowds swarming in close proximity.

I entered the 'new' station, walking under the covered walkway. Between the pillars, women and men sat in groups. Despite it being noon, the figures of immobile bodies could be seen lying, trying to sleep on the ground, newspapers or a cement bag beneath them in a vain attempt to keep the dirt at bay. I felt a small hand tug on my *kamiz* (dress). '*Amar kidha lagse'* (I'm hungry). I looked down and recognized the tugging child as Fatema's son. Fatema was a long term resident of the station and a woman I had been talking to early on in fieldwork. I hadn't seen her in quite a while, and I had assumed she had left Kamalapur. '*Tomar ma koy?*' (where's your mum?) I asked. He pointed over to the station yard, where groups of women, most often those who engaged in sex work commonly sat, passing the day.

I wandered over, past the clothes drying over the fence dividing the courtyard. Women sat on the ledge, combing each other's hair for lice, chatting. Another group sat in a circle, passing around a joint. Two boys wrestled in the dirt, screaming at each other, yet with the police closely behind me I continued on. When the boys saw the approaching officers they quickly scurried away into the hordes of passengers; escaping at best a harsh reprimand, at worst a more severe beating than they were giving each other. I continued through the yard and finally see Fatema, curled into a ball, sitting alone on a step, head on her knees. I sat beside her and gently asked, *kemon achen* (how are you)? She shook her head, not wanting to look at me. 'I

[2] Rickshaws are a small, three-wheeled passenger vehicle. They are generally 'pulled' by one man, utilizing a bicycle mechanism to transport from one to five passengers.

haven't seen you in a long time, where have you been?' Her muffled voice replies, 'Chittagong'[3].

'Why?'

She looked up and sighed. Her eyes were bloodshot and she looked like she hasn't slept in days. She told me about a police raid few weeks ago, where she had been badly beaten and kicked by officers who had accused her of being a drug dealer. Shortly after, the guy she had most recently 'married' had 'abandoned her.' She had needed to get away from the station, the drugs and the pain; and so had taken a train down to Chittagong to meet a 'sister, but not by blood,' a woman she had previously lived with in the station. She hadn't liked Chittagong, where she felt 'out of place' and 'easily disturbed' (vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse). Fatema had decided that, in comparison, she 'liked the station' because here she is 'able to stay …can sleep [with] no disturbances.'

'Is this how you felt about the station when you first arrived?' I asked.

'No, when I first arrived at the station I didn't like it.'

'Why?'

She replied, 'At first…I didn't know that I'd have to live in the station…. [but now] I feel at place here…[before] I hadn't thought about getting married or having children of my own.'

Then Fatema shook her head and gestured, sweeping the station yard with her arm, 'the men here…they ruin us.'

I looked at her arm, exposed from her sleeve, filled with fresh self-harm wounds, crisscrossed over existing, thicker, deeper scars. I was reminded of another participant only a few days ago who had described women who cut as having 'arms like noodles' and realised just what an apt description this was. The scars traversed the length of Fatema's arm and some had weeping bandages. Fatema had previously told me that she only cut when she was high on *yabba* (methamphetamines), most commonly when she was engaging in sex work, and I knew this probably meant she was not doing well. 'What's happening?' I asked her gently as she watched my eyes travel from her arm to her face.

'Apa…' (big sister) she started, and then she leaned into me, unable to speak, and we sat. After a while, Fatema broke the silence by telling me that when she had returned to the station, her 'husband' had well and truly left the station, and that he had

[3] Chittagong is the second largest city in Bangladesh, approximately 250km and a 5-8 hour journey by train from Dhaka.

probably gone back to the village 'to his other wife and kids.' Fatema's voice shook, 'he loves her more than me, and why wouldn't he – look at me – I'm ruined[4]…I'm ugly, look at my face, look at this body!' Her face screwed into disgust. Later in the conversation, Shaoli asked Fatema if she would get married again. She shook her head, explaining, 'they say there is a future for your son if you marry a guy…But I say no. I'll send my son to an orphanage and although I have a broken hand, with one good hand I'll earn a living for myself however I can.' After talking for a bit about her son, she tells me she needs to earn for the day and left, the conversation abruptly ended.

I spent a bit of time with Fatema throughout fieldwork. Sometimes she would yell out to me from across the courtyard as I walked by, just wanting to say hello. If I saw Fatema engaging in begging on one of the station platforms, she would beam a huge smile in my direction and then go back to 'playing sad.' Other times we would hold conversations where Fatema shared her worries over her son, his lack of a father, and her wish to get him educated.

Fatema's account of the livelihoods engaged in whilst living in the station mirrors that of many other women I spoke to throughout fieldwork. Women engage in various, fluid and shifting livelihood strategies[5] to 'get through the day,' including marriage, sex work, drug use and 'being alone' (deciding not to (re)marry). As my analysis will demonstrate, women's often precarious and transitory livelihood strategies were the means by which women attempted to navigate the violence and uncertainty of the everyday; as women pursued, and made complex trade-off between, their livelihood priorities of survival, protection and honour that they sought.

This engagement with Fatema captures not only the uncertainty of everyday life, but additionally that of fieldwork interactions within the station. I never knew who I was going to see or which women had suddenly left (for villages, employment or just to another part of the city) when I arrived at the station. Who was going to come and tell me about violence from another station resident or the police, or who was going to have recently self-harmed or (re)engaged in drug use. Sometimes fieldwork would be a woman approaching to say hello, willing to share a part of her day and space with myself and Shaoli. Perhaps we would just sit and 'gossip' or watch her children play with a stray dog. Occasionally, women would engage in a deep conversation

[4] 'Being ruined' was a phrase women used to discuss the stigma associated with homelessness, but could also refer to having experienced rape or engagement in sex-work (Chapter 5).

[5] The term 'livelihood strategies' is problematized in Chapter 5.

about the painful realities that were embedded within their life histories. Other days, women's lives were filled with too much pain, despair, hunger and violence to even consider having a conversation.

The remainder of this chapter is broken into three parts. The first section develops a contextual rationale for this study. An overview of key research and definitions of homelessness at both global and national level are provided. I argue gender as mediating the experience of homelessness and highlight the need for more gendered homelessness research within low-income countries. I then develop an argument for the theoretical relevance of this study, discussing the concepts of vulnerability, the livelihoods and capabilities approaches and how these are conceptualized within this thesis. Finally, an overview of the chapters within the thesis is provided.

Homelessness

Homelessness is a global phenomenon, with estimations ranging from 100 million to over one billion, depending on the definition of homelessness utilized (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2005). Existing homeless research has largely focused on populations in high income countries, yet there is a limited focus on adult homelessness within development literature (Anderson, I 2003; Tipple & Speak 2009). Given that the causes and experiences of homelessness vary across place, gender, race and ethnicity, there is limited transferability of existing research to understand and address the needs of populations in the low-income settings (Tipple & Speak 2003; Watson, S 2000).

Defining homelessness itself is a subject of much contestation, whereby 'the struggle by different vested interests to impose a particular definition of homelessness on the policy agenda is critical to the way in which homelessness is treated as a social problem' (Jacobs, Kemeny & Manzi 1999, p. 11). In their analysis of the various definitions utilized amongst developing countries, Tipple and Speak (2005, p. 350) comment that 'the concept of homelessness is one that varies greatly among nations and often reflects the political climate rather than the reality of deprivation.' Listing certain criteria within definitions of homelessness allows the state to address those 'problems' amenable to policy, without consideration of the more difficult to address root causes (Tipple & Speak 2005).

The United Nations have developed a definition of homelessness that includes two types: 'primary' and 'secondary' homelessness. Primary homelessness is defined solely with respect to the absence of a physical structure or shelter, commonly referred to as 'primary homelessness', or 'rooflessness.' Secondary homelessness

refers to 'persons with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation (including dwellings, shelters or other living quarters); and persons usually resident in long-term 'transitional' shelters or similar arrangements for the homeless' (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2009, pg. 3). Whilst widely adopted, the UN definition of homelessness has been critiqued as being restrictive, and as not capturing an individual's right to adequate shelter and living arrangements that possess the characteristics necessary for health (Australian Government 1994). In an effort to capture these various conceptualizations, academics have recommended adopting a continuum approach when defining homelessness, where at one end lies inadequate and/or insecure housing, and at the other, 'sleeping rough' or 'primary' homelessness (Speak & Tipple 2006).

A definition of 'adequate shelter' within low income contexts would include many populations living within informal (slum) settlements or refugee camps, due to the inadequacy of shelter and insecurity of tenure experienced in both (Tipple & Speak 2005). Yet In Dhaka, if a definition of 'inadequate shelter' was utilized, it would increase the homeless count from the estimated 53,000 to several million, once again obscuring the needs of those who experience the most acute forms of inadequate shelter (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2015; Levinson 2004). Conflating the housing issues of the urban poor to that of 'inadequate shelter,' does little justice to what it means to become, live and remain homeless as a distinctly different experience than that of living in an informal settlement (Ghafur 2004; Speak 2004). It is useful for development practitioners to differentiate within the urban poor population with respect to types of shelter, in order to articulate and to improve understanding of the specific causes, varying experiences and needs of each. For the purposes of identifying participants for this study within fieldwork, the UN definition of 'primary homelessness' was utilized (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2009, pg. 3). 'Primary homelessness' was further refined by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) definition of the 'floating population,' or individuals sleeping 'at railway stations, launch ghats, bus terminals, boats, temples, pagodas, mosques…footpaths, under building-stairs, overpass/underpass and some other unusual places' (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2014, p. 6).

In attempting to understand and define homelessness, various typologies of homelessness have been developed (Speak 2004; Un-Habitat 2000). Tipple & Speak (2004; 2005) have attempted to address the complex issue of not only differing between slum and homeless populations, but also endeavouring to reflect the complexity of differing experiences of homeless populations within low income countries. For Speak it is important to reflect the:

> …degree of choice the homeless person or household can exercise over their situation, and the level of opportunity the homelessness affords them to improve their longer-term situation…Why someone is homeless and how they perceive their homelessness, is as important as a basis for policy and intervention, as how that homelessness manifests itself.
>
> (2004, p. 466)

Speak (2004) identifies three categories of homelessness, including 'supplementation,' 'survival,' and 'crisis' homelessness in an attempt to different degrees of deprivation, choice and the causes of homelessness between categories. Supplementation and survival homelessness are similar in location and conditions of shelter, yet it is their 'connectedness to their previous lives and places of origin and their perception of their homeless situation' that differs these two groups (Speak 2004, p. 476). Those experiencing 'survival' homelessness seldom return 'home' (to previous residences, often village and kinship housing), whilst those experiencing 'supplementation' homelessness, often driven by pragmatic economic considerations, are more likely to return to their village. Whilst these categories are applicable for a small number of the participants of this study, my analysis suggests they are more appropriate for street-dwelling families and single men. 'Crisis' homelessness includes individual or household homelessness caused 'by family break-up, bereavement, disaster, evictor or personal crisis,' and reflects a change 'well beyond their control'. Crisis homelessness is thus largely reflective of the drivers and experiences of the women within the field site of this study (Speak 2004, p. 477). Following Speak, I seek to investigate the varying processes that have their part to play in underlying these crisis events that immediately precipitate homelessness for women. The integral role of the loss and breakdown of relationships and the capability of social affiliation is explored throughout the thesis and is demonstrated to hold implications for women's vulnerability, livelihoods and homelessness processes.

Homelessness in Bangladesh

In a world that now has more urban than rural dwelling citizens, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries, with a population of 164 million (United Nations 2017). Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh it is one of the fastest growing megacities globally, with an annual growth rate of 3.9% (United Nations 2015). Internal rural-urban migration is the primary driver of urbanization, driven by economic and employment push and pull factors, with migration a risk factor for homelessness (Marshall, R & Rahman 2013). The untrammeled pace of urbanization

has overwhelmed the capacity of the state to plan and regulate growth, perpetuating inequalities that continue to widen as the urban population increases. It is estimated that at least one third of Dhaka's population constantly struggles to meet their basic needs, with access to housing, food, stable employment, clean water, sanitation, health care and adequate nutrition being difficult or out of reach (Ahmed et al. 2011; World Bank 2007). Of the estimated 300-400,000 migrants to Dhaka each year, approximately three-quarters find shelter in urban slums (Streatfield & Karar 2008). With the urban poor population growing disproportionately higher than that of the average urban growth (7% compared to 3.9%), the availability of housing, infrastructure and unskilled labour employment opportunities are becoming increasingly strained, with academics calling for attention to the growing spatial inequalities within cities (Marshall, R & Rahman 2013; Streatfield & Karar 2008). This thesis offers timely attention to inequalities that are growing within urban areas, investigating the gendered relations of poverty using a local-level analysis.

According to the national census, 53% of the total urban 'floating' or homeless population in the country resides in Dhaka city alone (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2015). Of the 16.9 million living in the city of Dhaka, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics estimates that approximately 53,253 were homeless in 2011 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2015). The actual number is estimated to be somewhat higher, due to the data collection methods utilized in the national census and population growth since the last census (United Nations 2015; UPPR 2010). To date, research conducted amongst the homeless in Bangladesh has focused on three main populations, namely, street children, 'floating' sex workers, and the adult street dwellers. Within the literature there are various terms used in reference to the homeless population in Bangladesh including 'pavement' or 'street' dwellers, and the 'floating population'(Ahmed et al. 2011). The population of street children have received disproportionate attention within the literature, with multiple surveys and in-depth qualitative research conducted (Ahmed & Adeeb 1998; Alam, MN & Hussain 2013; ARISE 2001; Conticini 2008; Conticini & Hulme 2007; FREPD 2003; Uddin, MJ et al. 2011).

This project was designed to fill a gap in existing research regarding the adult homeless population in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Surveys comprise the majority of research, investigating various aspects of the adult homeless population's lives and livelihoods, health status and health seeking behaviour, and the levels of sexual and physical abuse experienced (Ahmed et al. 2011; Koehlmoos et al. 2009; Uddin, MJ et al. 2009). In addition, multiple smaller scale research projects have also been conducted, including exploratory research investigating the 'non-existent home' and survival strategies of street dwellers, a scoping study regarding access to water,

sanitation and hygiene for the homeless, and a secondary review of data investigating the nature and extent of homelessness in Bangladesh with several interviews conducted with the homeless population and NGO staff in Dhaka (Ghafur 2002, 2004; Shoma 2010; Uddin, SMN et al. 2016). Contemporary within my own fieldwork, Jackman (2016) has conducted a year-long ethnography over 2014-2015, using a sociological lens to understanding violence, party politics and poverty amongst the adult homeless population, with his fieldwork particularly focusing on a large marketplace in the centre of the city. The only gender specific research has focused on street-based commercial sex workers, including the prevalence STD infection and high risk behaviours, etiology of STI's, the risks and vulnerabilities faced by commercial sex workers, further serving to perpetrate narratives that conflates women's homelessness with that of sex work (Golden 1992; Mondal et al. 2008; Rahman, M et al. 2000; Sabet, Rahman & Ahmad 2012; Sarker et al. 1998). Yet to date, no in-depth ethnographic research has investigated the gendered nature of adult homelessness in Bangladesh and the implications this hold for in development practice and theory.

The '*Amrao Manush'* (we are people too) project is currently the only project working with the adult homeless population in Dhaka. '*Amrao Manush'* was initiated by Concern Worldwide in 2008 and delivered through Nari Maitree, SEEP Bangladesh and the Sajida Foundation until 2016, with Sajida Foundation continuing the project until present (Nari Maitree 2015; Sajida Foundation 2017; SEEP Bangladesh 2017). Currently five pavement dweller centres (PDC's) are running throughout Dhaka (Sajida Foundation 2017). The project has four main streams including that of 'Rights and Entitlements'; 'Livelihood and training'; 'Basic service provision' and 'Advocacy.' The project's activities included providing basic services (access to sanitary facilities, lockers and non-formal education for children), developing a savings program, providing cash grants to individuals to start business', and facilitates birth registration and access to national ID cards (Concern Worldwide 2016). This research was initially based out one of the Sajida Foundation PDC's that was located approximately one kilometre from my field site, with program staff providing invaluable logistic support and practical advice throughout fieldwork.

Gender, space and homelessness

Gender is unassailably central to the construction and experience of homelessness (Pain, R & Francis 2004). There has been a historical absence of gendered analysis within homelessness literature, with an increasing recognition of gender as mediating the homeless experience (May, Cloke & Johnsen 2007; Wardhaugh 1999).

Research has investigated gendered experiences of homelessness, identity and management of bodily space, perspectives of the characteristics of a 'home,' a range of health and health care needs, the risk of mortality, sexual and physical abuse and issues regarding drug and alcohol use (Chambers, C et al. 2013; Cheung & Hwang 2004; D'Ercole & Struening 1990; Finfgeld-Connett, Bloom & Johnson 2012; Hill 1991; Huey, Fthenos & Hryniewicz 2012; Lim et al. 2002; May, Cloke & Johnsen 2007; Merrill, Richards & Sloan 2011; Mill, Singh & Taylor 2012; Nyamathi et al. 2000; Stephen 1998; Tucker et al. 2011; Walsh, Rutherford & Kuzmak 2009; Wardhaugh 1999). Existing research is limited in the extent to which it is applicable to the experiences of women in low income and developing countries, due to the social and cultural norms that influence life and dynamics on the street. Explicitly gendered research amongst homeless populations is less common within low-income countries, although some studies amongst homeless populations compare results with respect to gender (Ahmed et al. 2011; Joshi, Fawcett & Mannan 2011; Olufemi 1998; Uddin, MJ et al. 2009; Uddin, MJ et al. 2010). Gendered analysis allows some of the more insidious inequalities, and the processes behind these, to be revealed, and in doing so, facilitate greater understanding and awareness of the role gender has in perpetuating inequality and exclusion (Kabeer 1994).

The nature of engaging with and contesting for public urban spaces are critical in understanding the vulnerability contexts of urban poor women. The identities of the homeless have long been recognized as being created by the use of space (Desjarlais 1997; Pain, R & Francis 2004; Speak & Tipple 2006). In the South Asian context, the use of the phrase 'street dweller,' rather than 'homeless' in the literature is of note. The world 'homeless,' connotes an absence of a shelter or home whilst the phrase 'street dweller' denotes a possessive use of the streets as a place to dwell and perform the functions of everyday life. The women 'dwelling' in the station utilize the space for income generation, eating, sitting, playing, washing, toileting, conversations and arguments, as well as sleeping. Life in its many functions and forms is visibly performed, and the station bears witness to the spectrum of life events including births, deaths and marriages. Becoming homeless forces women in Bangladesh to occupy and contest for public space in ways that contravene dominant social and cultural practices.

Gendered constraints that shape women's perceptions and use of public space has been explored within contemporary research within high-income contexts (Casey, R, Goudie & Reeve 2008; Day 2000; Wardhaugh 1999). As Watson and Austerberry argue:

> …homeless women's bodies…represent a challenge to the feminine body…by sleeping on the street…[they] challenge the public/private

> boundary…the [private] sphere associated with feminine domesticity and sexuality [seeps] in to the public in a disruptive and threatening [way].
>
> (1986, p. 96-97)

There is a dearth of literature exploring gendered relations and use of urban public space in South Asia within development literature, with a few notable exceptions (Ali 2012; Roy 2003). Women in Bangladesh have traditionally been regulated to the private sphere where their bodies can be protected and 'purdah' maintained, with women being subject to punishment if she challenges these norms (Bandyopadhyay & Khan 2003; Kabeer 1988). Following Ali (2012), I will argue that the dominant discourses and moral codes surrounding women's bodies, particularly when occupying public space, are integral in shaping the social production of women's vulnerability.

Gendered narratives regarding women who occupy and live on the street have been normalized by public narratives. One of the most prevailing narratives is that all street women choose to engage in regular paid sex work. Indeed, the phrase *rastar mohila* (woman of the street) is used interchangeably in Bangladesh to refer to either a homeless women and/or a sex worker (Ghafur 2002). Other dominant narratives focus on individualist arguments regarding the causes of homelessness, including that women are illegitimate and 'unwanted' children or were unfaithful to their spouses. For women living on the streets 'whatever social-identity one has is either erased or badly tarnished, to the extent of becoming a pariah in the eyes of society' (Ghafur 2002, p. 23). Homeless women are labelled deviant and 'bad' because they do not conform to the social and cultural gendered notions of acceptable uses of space in this context.

Not only are the women of the station contending with public narratives of homeless women, but additionally those of the station itself. The station is infamous for being a place of violence, sex work and commercialization of illicit substances. The 'taint' of Kamalapur as a place, becomes superimposed onto and reinforces the stigma of pre-existing narratives of what it means to be a *rastar mohila* (Wacquant 2008). The women of Kamalapur are thus stereotyped by the public and the state as violent, criminals, sex-workers and drug-users. As Pia, one of the participants of this study, explained:

> …they (the public) say we are bad girls (sex workers). We feel very bad when we hear these things. Even if we feel bad about these things, there is nothing we can do. Because of our life in the streets they are able to say such things to us. Because we argue and fight with people…We get

> up to mischief, mix with guys, because of all that many people think we're bad.
>
> (12th May 2015)

For Pia, by virtue of living on the streets and the practices engaged in on the streets, the pubic 'are able to say such things.' There is 'nothing' Pia can perceive of being 'able' to do, and reflects the extent to which these narratives surrounding homelessness have rendered women defenceless against such assaults. Homogenous stereotypes of what it is to be a street dweller undermines women's capability of affiliation or 'being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others' (Nussbaum 2001, p. 79). Instead, women's bodies within this space are viewed as 'bad' by both the public and state, transgressing social, cultural and spatial norms. My analysis will show that the narratives and discourses surrounding women's bodies and the subsequent justification of the perpetration of violence plays an integral role in shaping women's vulnerability, engagement in livelihoods and reconfigured capabilities.

Vulnerability and Development

Vulnerability is a multifaceted concept, with a plethora of definitions and potential applications, reflecting the diversity of disciplines that have contributed to this concept. Vulnerability as a theoretical concept has been applied to a specific threat (or disaster), a place, an outcome, or a socio-economic or demographic population; spanning the areas of disaster risk, climate change, livelihoods, poverty and food security (Argüelles 2010; Brooks 2003; Chambers, R 1989; Moser 1998; Pasteur 2011; Schroder-Butterfill & Marianti 2006; Swift 1989; Watts & Bohle 1993). Studies of vulnerability within development academia have been traditionally rooted in studies of disasters and hazards, particularity that of famine (Swift 1989; Watts & Bohle 1993; Wisner & Luce 1993). Development studies has endeavoured to understand the underlying causes of vulnerability and how they differ between and within populations. Studies have investigated the particular vulnerability of the poor to disasters, as well as the relationship between chronic poverty, sustainable livelihoods and vulnerability (Devereux 2001; Prowse 2003; Wisner & Luce 1993).

Disaggregation of vulnerability has often led to a reductionist approach, and the linking of vulnerability to one causal factor. Yet, vulnerability is a complex, multi-faceted concept that, like poverty, can be conceptualized in a number of ways. As Prowse (2003) discusses, there is a need to move beyond merely viewing vulnerability within the lens of an acute hazard or cause, and instead see it as a dynamic, evolving process that changes over time. According to Wisner and Luce

(1993, pg. 129), the challenge is then to 'create ways of analysing vulnerability implicit in daily life' and this analysis can uncover the 'processes or points of weakness which can create, maintain and reproduce [vulnerability]' (Prowse 2003, pg. 6).

The field of social vulnerability asserts that that it is not 'random forces' that determine the exposure of groups of people to risk and physical insecurity. Social vulnerability views vulnerability as embedded within social and environmental arenas, with Pelling (2002, p. 60) asserting that it is critical to explore the 'social structures that underlie access to these resources which shape patterns of… vulnerability.' Rather than exploring the 'poverty effects' of the lives of the women in the station, my analysis seeks to explore the underlying causes of extreme poverty, including the social, cultural and political structures within which women operate as well as the underlying life history events and processes that result in them becoming, living and remaining homeless (Devine, Joe & Wood 2011; Green, M & Hulme 2005). Given that 'many of the underlying causes of…vulnerability…relate to the context in which [the poor] operate,' the focus on vulnerability is particularly appropriate to a study of homelessness (Meikle, Ramasut & Walker 2001, p. 14). Access to adequate shelter for the urban poor is recognized as a 'key asset, which underpins many other components of successful livelihoods… offer[ing] security along economic, social, cultural and psychological dimensions' (Wood 2003, p. 678). Consequently, I argue that the vulnerability of the homelessness is not merely the result of the risks arising from the absence a shelter (eg. providing physical shelter, security, privacy) but that homelessness exposes individuals to additional risks (such as physical, verbal and sexual abuse, social stigma and marginalization) as a result of sleeping and occupying public spaces. These risks are not experienced uniformly, nor often in a predictable manner, given the heterogeneous nature of the homeless population and the fluid contexts within which they operate. It is critical to explore the underlying causes of risk, the capacity for individuals to resists or adapt and potentiality for women's capabilities in order to meaningfully discuss vulnerability or 'degrees of choice and constraint' within which homeless women make livelihood decisions (Watts & Bohle 1993, p. 118). My analysis will demonstrate that the processes of vulnerability for women implicit in everyday life, arise from both a lack of access to adequate shelter and from seeking shelter from Kamalapur railway station and provide insights into the key points of intervention for development practitioners and policy makers.

Differential degrees of vulnerability are experienced at the individual, household, regional and national level (Wisner & Luce 1993). As such, there is a need to develop away to interrogate, and differentiate between, the various underlying causes and processes that shape exposure to risk for both individuals and groups of people

(Devereux 2001). In an attempt to quantify vulnerability, Moser (1998, p. 3) discusses the vulnerability of households as function of the number, diversity and value of assets it possess, where assets are viewed as the means by which households can be 'responsive [to],…resisting or recovering from…a changing environment.' Yet Moser's (1998) 'asset vulnerability framework' does not enable practitioners to model the vulnerability and differing distribution of power and assets within households, thus obscuring the gendered dimensions of risk at the individual level. The reduction of vulnerability to asset ownership is problematic, as it results in a narrow conceptualization of the capacity and potentiality aspects of vulnerability for individuals and their lives. Viewing vulnerability as a function of asset ownership, in part, originates from the increasing adoption of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework as a way of conceptualizing livelihoods within development practice (DFID 2007; Scoones 1998).

Vulnerability and livelihoods

The livelihoods approach is a particularly dominant way of approaching development that acknowledges the role of vulnerability in shaping the lives and livelihoods of the poor. The livelihood approach was developed in an effort to capture the relational and dynamic processes that influence the 'diverse ways in which people make a living and build their worlds' (Bebbington 1999, p. 2021). Instead of merely viewing poverty as an economic problem, the approach aimed to embrace a multidisciplinary perspective that acknowledged the role of political, cultural, social and ecological aspects of poverty (Kaag 2004).

One of the most commonly utilized definitions of livelihoods is provided by Chambers & Conway whom define livelihoods as:

> …comprimis[ing] the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.
>
> (1991, p. 6)

Building on this definition, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) was developed by DFID (2007) and has become a dominant framework within development theory and practice (Scoones 1998). The framework purportedly offers a way to analyse the existing livelihoods of individuals or groups of people, as well as

providing a platform to design and implement development activities (DFID 2007). Whilst initially designed for rural livelihood analysis, the framework has also been used within urban settings (Beall & Fox 2007; Farrington, Ramasut & Walker 2002; Meikle, Ramasut & Walker 2001).

The technicist and homogenising tendencies of development theory and practice have resulted in the livelihoods approach only superficially addressing the issues it sought to address (Duffield 2001; Schuurman 1993). Particularly problematic is the essentialising and homogenising nature of the SLF that assumes that assets and capital are an appropriate means of conceptualizing livelihoods across all cultures and contexts (Du Toit, Skuse & Cousins 2007). The conflation of the social and cultural aspects of individuals lives into a reductive and positivist term like 'social capital' is to ignore the nuanced and dynamic nature of the multiple and various relationships the framework seeks to investigate (Fine 2002; Stirrat 2004). Whilst assets do not necessarily have to become entirely redundant within a conceptualization of livelihoods and vulnerability, attention must be given to their complexity and the meaning they have within everyday live (Beall 2002). Following Schuurman (1993), I seek to provide a model in Chapter 4 that highlights the diversity and dynamic nature of women's vulnerability as they attempt to navigate everyday life.

The additional danger of a central focus on assets within the livelihoods framework, is that it privileges the productive and income generating aspects of everyday lives. As Speak (2012, p. 4) notes, 'poor people are not merely embodiments of poverty and agents of survival, their everyday lives are greater than the productive sphere which is privileged by the livelihoods approach.' My work explores the three main livelihood priorities of women, and show that these include survival (the pursuit of food), physical protection and honour. Marriage is one livelihood strategy women may engage in, with my analysis showing that this strategy can have limited, or negative, implications for women's financial and aspects of their physical security. Yet marriages are often retained by women in order to pursue honour and a semblance of security for both themselves and their children. I argue that women engage in complex and fluid trade-offs between these three livelihood priorities (survival, protection and honour), that extend beyond solely productivity and survival, as women attempt to navigate and live homelessness. Following Banks (2015), I suggest that the social-political factors that shape the livelihoods of the urban poor must be given greater attention within any analysis of livelihoods.

Gender analysis of livelihoods is not explicitly encouraged within the SLF, obscuring gender as a key factor in influencing the lives, livelihoods and vulnerability of individuals (Fordham 2004). Importantly, the framework does not explicitly require

the collection of experiential knowledge, with the danger that once again women's lived realities are obscured by, largely male dominated, development discourses (Kabeer 1994; Speak 2012). Several researchers have used the SLF framework to conceptualize and interrogate the specific livelihood challenges faced by women (Kabeer & Whitehead 2003; Masanjala 2007; Masika & Joekes 1996). However, many livelihood analyses use the household as an analytic unit and overlook the role of gender in mediating the access to and management of livelihood resources within households (Beall 2002; Hulme, Moore & Shepherd 2001). Within the experience of homelessness for women, the 'household' is a largely redundant notion, even when analysing the livelihoods of married women. As my analysis will illustrate, altruism and reciprocity within the institutions of kinship and marriage cannot be assumed to exist. Consequently, I argue that the quality and nature of women's social relationships require interrogation in order to understand the extent to which these play a role in mitigating, or exposing women to, vulnerability. The complexity and specificity of the analysis provided by my model of vulnerability, is directly the function of the depth and time spent collecting experiential knowledge from, and observations of, the population the model seeks to interrogate. The complexity and nuance of women's lives and experiences provided in this thesis further demonstrates the benefits of using ethnographic methods when engaging with vulnerable groups in order to understand their fluid and shifting realities, livelihoods and vulnerability.

The SLF regulates the concept of vulnerability to the 'vulnerability context' or the 'external environment in which people exist' (DFID 2007). The framework asserts that this vulnerability context is the 'furthest from peoples control' and that there is limited capacity for individuals or groups to alter the factors that make up vulnerability, 'Factors' are categorized into 'trends', 'shocks' and 'seasonality.' The framework, reflecting its focus on a macro-level and disaster scholarship in understanding rural livelihoods, privileges the natural, political and economic forces that shape vulnerability. Yet the framework does not explicitly acknowledge the social production of risk, nor the dynamic and local level arenas within which exposure to risk is created - which are particularly pertinent to the analysis of vulnerability within an urban context (Bohle 2007). In limiting the concept of vulnerability to an external 'vulnerability context,' the SLF is limited in its ability to conceptualize and interrogate the individually, socially and contextually specific, and I will argue, fluid and dynamic, nature of vulnerability in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the lives of those it seeks to understand.

I argue that livelihoods and vulnerability cannot be understood as discrete concepts and instead that livelihoods are integral to an understanding of vulnerability

processes. A model of vulnerability, as developed in Chapter 4, allows development practitioners to interrogate the complex, dynamic, processes of vulnerability, at both the individual, household or community level. I argue that that interrogating the three co-ordinates of vulnerability, as developed by Watts and Bohle (1993)[6], requires an understanding of how livelihoods are embedded within, influence, and are influenced by, each coordinate. My analysis demonstrates that the way in which individuals pursue a livelihood or 'means of living' influences their exposure to risk and capacity to cope or adapt to risk. Reconfigured assets and capabilities, as an outcome of exposure and the capacity to adapt or cope with risk, have implications for an individual's subsequent engagement in livelihoods. Pursuing a livelihood and means of living is more than having security from hunger, disease and crime or a 'freedom from fear and want' (HDR 1994). A rights based approach moves a conceptualization of human security and livelihoods beyond a 'freedom from' and instead asks what freedoms humans have to 'be and to do' (Gasper 2005). Re-introducing capabilities into an analysis of livelihoods, or asking what people are able to 'be and to do,' offers a way to conceptualize and map the inter-relatedness of livelihoods and vulnerability as dynamic processes (Nussbaum 2001).

Vulnerability and capabilities

Finally, I wish to consider how Nussbaum's capabilities approach offers a nuanced, yet grounded way to analyse women's vulnerability processes. Following Sen (Nussbaum & Sen 1993; Sen, A 2001), Nussbaum (2001) presents a case for a universal approach to the way in which each human life is considered as holding worth and value, in an effort to begin to conceptualize what it means to ensure social and gender justice for all humans. Nussbaum provides a proposed list of ten central human capabilities which include life; bodily health; bodily integrity; sense, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation (a) and (b); other species; play; and control over one's environment (a) and (b). The definition of each capability and how these apply to the experience of homelessness are provided in Appendix 1. The list was developed by Nussbaum to provide a descriptive and normative account of human capabilities, aiming to:

[6] Three co-ordinates of vulnerability include:

> Exposure: The risk of exposure to [adverse events]
>
> Capacity: The risk of inadequate capacities to cope with [adverse events]
>
> Potentiality: The risk of severe consequences of, and the attendant risks of slow or limited recovery from [adverse events] (Watts & Bohle 1993, pg. 118).

> …preserve liberties and opportunities for each and every person, taken one by one, respecting each of them as an end, rather than simply as the agent or supporter of the ends of others…recognizing that each person has just one life to live.
>
> (Nussbaum 2001, p. 55-56)

Nussbaum provides two important qualifications to the list. First, that this is a list of separate components, whereby, 'all are of central importance and all are distinct in quality' (Nussbaum 2001, p. 81). Secondly, each item relates to each other in complex ways and one cannot be promoted at the expense of the other.

The capabilities approach offers a grounded way in which to interrogate Watts and Bohle's (1993) three co-ordinates of vulnerability for individuals or groups of people as it privileges the underlying causes of inequalities (Nussbaum 2003). I demonstrate that gendered inequalities and discrimination have an important role to play in women becoming homeless as well as creating exposure to risk (Chapter 3). By analysing the capabilities of individuals to 'be and do' throughout their life histories, my analysis provides a nuanced account of the micro-strategies within livelihoods, women's capacity to cope/adapt with risk and provides crucial insights into how these change over time (Chapters 5 and 6). Finally, as a result of living homelessness, I demonstrate that the potential outcomes for women include that of reconfigured capabilities that allow women to be contextually resilient, yet which entrenches their vulnerability to remaining homeless and further reconfigures their exposure to risk (Chapter 7).

For Nussbaum, there were two primary intuitive 'ideas' behind the capabilities approach and which have particular bearing on this thesis:

> …first, that certain functions are particularly central in human life, In the sense that their presence or absence is typically understood to be a mark of the presence or absence of human life; and second, …. that there is something that is to do these functions in a truly human way, not merely an animal way…as a dignified free being who shapes his or her life in cooperation and reciprocity with others, rather than being passively shaped or pushed around by the world in a manner of a[n] … animal.
>
> (2001, p. 72)

This thesis will illustrate how the process of becoming, living and remaining homeless undermines these two central tenants (social affiliation and practical reason) of what it is to have a full human life. Indeed, Nussbaum herself highlights the importance of

affiliation and practical reason as 'organiz[ing] and suffus[ing] all the other (capabilities)' (Nussbaum 2001, p. 81).

My analysis demonstrates the integral role of relationships and capability of social affiliation in mediating the homelessness process and playing an integral role in shaping women's vulnerability. Development research has become increasingly interested in the role of relationships in shaping the process that underpin poverty dynamics, however little attention has been given to the gendered nature of social relations and implications for women's vulnerability processes (Coulthard et al. 2014; van Dijk 2011). The life histories of the participants of this study demonstrate women's relationships with other social actors to be routinely and repeatedly characterized by violence, abuse and/or exploitation, with limited opportunities for women to 'shape [their] li[ves] in co-operation and reciprocity with others' (ibid). I argue that broken, lost and inadequate relationships play an integral role in the process of becoming homeless for women, whilst living and remaining homeless may further undermine and reconfigure women's capability to engage in and maintain affiliative relationships. Consequently, I demonstrate that relationships and the capability for affiliation are integral to an understanding of women's process of becoming, living and remaining homeless as well as their vulnerability and livelihood processes.

Secondly, everyday violence is demonstrated to create precarity and uncertainty within women's everyday, with particular implications for their vulnerability and livelihoods. Human security is defined as 'protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of our daily lives' and the ability to exercise choice 'freely and safely' (HDR 1994, p. 3). Concepts such as 'security' are elusive to women in the station, with my analysis demonstrating this to be the direct result of the challenges of living homeless and everyday violence within the station context. Consequently, I argue that women's livelihood priorities are reconfigured to that of the pursuit of survival, protection and honour within the process of 'living' homeless. Women cannot be confident that their assets or the livelihood strategies they adopt today will be lost or altered tomorrow and as such, 'living for today,' is one of the coping strategies the most vulnerable women in the station engage in, as way of organizing their lives and livelihoods. 'Living for today' is coping in reactive and fluid ways that enable women to get through one day at a time, with limited consideration of the future, and demonstrates the extent to which everyday violence and uncertainty undermines women's capability to exercise 'practical reason' regarding their own bodily integrity and security. Everyday violence and uncertainty are demonstrated to have particular implications for women's capability of practical reason, and thus their

vulnerability and engagement in livelihoods, an argument developed throughout Chapters 4 to 6.

Thesis overview

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter Two provides a reflexive account of the methods utilized, ethical considerations and challenges experienced throughout fieldwork. Many of the issues that I struggled with throughout fieldwork, to develop relationships and trust with women and the violence, despair and power dynamics of the station, are echoed within women's own stories of navigating this space. As such, the chapter aims to both provide an account of fieldwork, whilst orienting the reader to key issues that shape subsequent theoretical arguments.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the process of becoming homeless for women, and in doing so, challenges the two dominant narratives that surround the reasons for women's homelessness. Within development studies, homelessness is often conflated with economic poverty and structural constraints to housing and employment. The second narrative, dominant within public discourse in Bangladesh, views homelessness as the result of women's moral failings. My analysis unpicks these narratives, and provides a more detailed insight into the gendered nature of risk factors that underpin the processes of becoming homeless. Both poverty and gender discrimination within social, cultural and legal norms create structural constraints for women to inheriting land and accessing employment and housing. The quality and nature of women's social relationships, shaped by social and cultural norms, act as key risk factors for homelessness and which exacerbate existing structural constraints to accessing housing.

Chapter Four begins to set the context within women live homelessness within the station by developing an analysis of vulnerability. Drawing on the definition developed by Watts and Bohle (1993), I propose a model designed to interrogate the vulnerability implicit in everyday life, enabling development practitioners to identify the underlying processes and sources of risk for vulnerable populations. Fieldwork data is used to contextualise the model and to identify the 'everyday problems' (risks) women are exposed to, the capacity of women to adapt or cope with these, and the potentiality of outcomes. Finally, ethnographic data demonstrates how police violence, as one form of risk that dominants women's narratives of everyday life, creates the everyday uncertainty and violence within the station. Protracted and

constant everyday uncertainty is demonstrated to characterise the vulnerability context within which the women of the station negotiate and pursue livelihoods.

Chapters Five and Six specifically explore women 'living' within the station. The livelihood strategies women adopt to meet their shifting livelihood priorities in response to the vulnerability context of the station are explored. Women's livelihood priorities are identified as including survival, protection and honour. My analysis demonstrates that engagement in any of the three primary livelihood strategies available within the station (sex work, marriage and 'being alone') do not enable women to meet all three of their livelihood priorities, with complex trade-off's occurring throughout women's time in the station in order to meet and respond to various and shifting needs and risks.

Chapter Five has a particular focus on sex work and drug use. Sex work is conceptualized as a 'dualistic' and 'multiplex' livelihood strategy. The term 'dualistic strategy' refers to the dualistic nature of both advantageous and adverse outcomes associated with this form of livelihood. Sex work offers women a degree of economic security, and access to particular forms of social networks, thus enabling them meet their priorities of survival and protection in the short term. Yet sex work has multiple adverse immediate and long term potential outcomes for women's assets, capabilities and ability to leave the station. Sex work as a 'multiplex strategy,' refers to the way in which this form of livelihood is often accompanied by drug use and self-harm. Drug use and self-harm are explored as livelihood and coping strategies women engage in as they endeavour to cope with a precarious every day. I discuss the concept of 'living for today' as an adaptation adopted by women in response to the uncertainty and precarity of everyday life. 'Living for today' as ultimately undermining women's capability to conceive of alternative futures, and thus engage in practical reason[7], is discussed as central to understand the vulnerability of women within this context.

Chapter Six seeks to understand the multiple reasons women enter into, remain, maintain or disengage from marital relationships and the ramifications these hold for women, particularly with respect to their livelihood priorities, capabilities and homelessness trajectories. I critique the 'uneasy' concept of 'social capital' as a reductionist and positivist term that does not adequately capture the fluidity of social relationships and what these allow women 'to be and to do' throughout their lives.

Chapter Seven examines the process of reconfigured capabilities throughout women's life-span and the implications this holds for understanding women's

[7] Definition: To engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life (Nussbaum 2001, p. 80).

resilience and vulnerability to long-term homelessness. Trauma and loss within relationships are demonstrated to be a reoccurring feature of women's life histories and which reconfigure women's capabilities. Reconfigurations include women's actual and perceived ability to access and trust affiliative relationships (social disaffiliation), how women conceive of the extent to which they have control over, and thus the possibilities for, their own lives and women's developed capability to successfully navigate and 'become habituated' to the station. Resilience in the station was women's capability to navigate the precariousness of the everyday, yet these contextually resilient ways of 'being and doing' did not translate outside this context. The very factors that enabled women's contextual resilience, often creates women's vulnerability to remaining in long-term homelessness.

Finally, **Chapter Eight** sets out policy and practice implications that arise from this study. The chapter discusses a tool developed for development practitioners to identify indicators of vulnerability for women within the station context. I argue the need for development practice and the state to protect human capabilities and freedom 'to be and to do.' The chapter argues for a trauma informed approach to understanding and addressing homelessness, in order to meet women's 'being and doing.'

Figure 5: A woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Chapter Two - 'You come and sit beside us…and we can talk to each other': The methods, ethics and challenges of fieldwork

Introduction

This chapter develops a rationale for the 'engaged activist' anthropology of development approach taken within this research project (Gardner & Lewis 1996, p. 3; Lewis, DJ 2005). The methodology adopted in this study was both a response to the gap in existing research with the adult homeless population in Dhaka and in enabling the study to provide rich and meaningful data to meet the research aims. An account of fieldwork is provided, addressing the call for greater reflexivity, 'transparency and detailed methodological accounts' within development studies, particularly within livelihoods research (Camfield 2014, p. 312; Prowse 2010). The chapter explores the issues of access and trust when working with particularly marginalized and vulnerable populations and the ethics of navigating the expectations and health care needs of participants (Conticini & Hulme 2007; Pollock 1996). Following Scheper-Hughes (1993), the principal of recognition was fundamental in shaping interactions and relationships with women throughout fieldwork. Sitting and acting 'beside' women, was an evolution of fieldwork in response to women's expressed needs. These practices of recognition challenged, in a small way, the dominant discourses that legitimate the perpetuation of ongoing violence shaping women's uncertain and precarious realities (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004).

Anthropology for Development

There is a long history of anthropological research and development studies(for an overview, see Escobar 1997; Gardner & Lewis 1996). Anthropological knowledge has widely been used for practical and advocacy purposes within development. The field of applied anthropology is defined by Lewis, DJ (2005, p. 480) as the 'use of anthropological methods and ideas in practical or policy contexts' and has served as a means to 'counter the dominant privileging of the economic in development thinking.' Importantly, anthropologists have highlighted the need to understand both the 'social' as well as the economic in bringing about effective societal change (Lewis, DJ, Wood & Gregory 1996). Anthropological knowledge is crucial in enabling conversations between populations and 'outsiders' (development practitioners,

policy makers or the public) to occur and in interpreting and communicating the priorities and realities of both parties as programs are developed (Gardner & Lewis 1996). Ethnographies have a role in uncovering the inter-relatedness of macro and micro factors within historical, political, cultural and social contexts that shape the, sometimes hidden and complex, realities and everyday lives of people, and as such are particularly useful at the planning and pre-planning stages of development projects (Mair 1984; Pottier 1993). There is a tendency for development research to focus on the effects of poverty and characteristics of the poor, rather than the social relations within which poverty is embedded (Camfield 2014; Green, M & Hulme 2005). Instead, this research project has sought to uncover the processes and social relations underpinning homelessness, and in doing so, provide a contextualized analysis of women's everyday lives and vulnerability.

This thesis offers 'alternative ways of seeing' the women of Kamalapur, that aims to challenge the assumptions of existing dominant public, program, research and policy narratives surrounding this population (Gardner & Lewis 1996, p. 79). My research findings and analysis are grounded in long-term engagement and data collection within a population, and provides theoretical critiques of several common development assumptions and practices. Whilst the qualitative findings from this thesis echo many of those from existing surveys with the homeless population in Dhaka, adding depth and nuance to statistics, they also contravene other survey findings. This thesis challenges assumptions and dominant narratives surrounding women experiencing homelessness in Bangladesh, that are perpetuated, and in some instances misrepresented, within short term research projects and programs working with this population. The thesis problematizes dominant assumptions and narratives regarding the 'reasons' for women's' homelessness (Chapter 3), the nature of violence, trauma and loss, drug use, self-harm and women's marital status (Chapters 4-6) and how these influence women's livelihoods, vulnerability and homeless trajectories (Chapter 7). My analysis offers new insights that have both theoretical, programmatic and policy relevance, into the issues experienced by women who experience, or have experienced, homelessness in Bangladesh.

The project aimed to better understand the processes that underpin the vulnerability and homeless trajectories of women, and in doing so, critique several key development concepts. As fieldwork unfolded, the research additionally responded to women's insistence that the research be 'useful.' The thesis thus produces both 'knowledge for understanding' and 'knowledge for action,' which, as Long and Long (1992) identifies, is inextricably linked within the field of development studies. The thesis provides insights for programs when designing socially and culturally appropriate interventions that promote women's livelihood priorities, prevent the

underlying causes of homelessness, and to aid in women's transition out of long-term homelessness. Additionally, I have developed a tool that enables development practitioners to identify key aspects of vulnerability for women experiencing homelessness at an individual level (see Appendix 6).

Undertaking Fieldwork

The station was identified as an initial fieldwork site, following discussions with various academics and program staff who had experience working with this population. The women who lived in the station were reported to have 'the hardest lives of women in Dhaka,' with 'the station' infamous for its large homeless population as well as prevalent sex-work and drug dealing practices (Project co-coordinator of the *Amrao Manush* Project, 4th August 2014). It was appropriate, given I was studying vulnerability, that my field site would capture what others characterised 'the hardest lives' [8].

A qualitative approach utilizing a 'toolkit' of research methods was utilized within this study (Ritchie et al. 2014). Methods included repeated in-depth interviews that spanned the topics of women's life histories and everyday lives, participant observation, visual methods and ranking exercises. Methods were designed to be flexible and reactive to the field context, to suit various types of interactions with women over the course of fieldwork, discussed in greater detail below (Liamputtong 2013). The thesis was informed by interviews, interactions and observations of 40 women that lived in the station – a few of the perhaps 100-300 (on any given night) that live in the station, and of the thousands that sleep and live on the streets of Dhaka. A total of 93 recorded interviews and discussions were conducted with both individuals and groups of women and field notes made of more than 70 additional interactions, observations and un-recorded conversations over the ten months of fieldwork. A further 15 formal interviews were conducted with NGO staff and academics involved with homeless programs in Dhaka, with field notes documenting numerous informal engagement with service providers. Ethics approval for this study was granted by the University of Adelaide, HREC committee (Project No. H-2014-110).

[8] After six months of fieldwork, a review with supervisors determined that the station would become my sole field-site, despite having initially conceptualized engaging in 2-3 locations throughout Dhaka in an attempt to understand the various 'types' and differences of homelessness that had been said to exist between various geographical locations (Alam, S 2009; Shoma 2010). I decided to remain in the station, given the difficulties accessing and developing trust and relationships with key participants. At six months, I had only recently established working relationships with key participants, with interviews and observations continually revealing new insights into women's lives.

The research predominantly utilized a convenience sampling method for initial conversations with women and I approached women whom I had observed to be living or working in the station to initiate conversation (Creswell 2013; Kidd & Davidson 2007). Initial interviews with women focused on everyday lives and briefly touched on their life-histories. Subsequent interviews (if possible) with women explored life histories and their everyday lives in greater detail. Utilizing life-history or biographical interviews are well recognized within homelessness research as a method to uncover the processes of becoming homeless, as well as improving understandings of the contextual factors that are critical for programs and policies (Auerswald & Eyre 2002; Mayock & Sheridan 2012). A group of eight key informants was developed with whom I conducted ongoing interviews and participant observation, to provide richer data on their specific experiences and lived realities.

Fieldwork was conducted with a fieldwork assistant, utilizing two different assistants, Silvia and Shaoli, over the fieldwork period[9]. Research assistants were trained prior to fieldwork in interviewing techniques and a briefing of my research aims, methods and interview questions in order to improve the reliability of data collected (Kapborg & Berterö 2002). Interviews were conducted in Bengali and translated by the fieldwork assistant at opportune moments (approximately every 5-10 minutes) throughout the interview so as to not interrupt the flow of participant's narratives. Key questions and the direction of the interview was determined by myself, with the fieldwork assistant(s) trained to probe for further insights throughout the interview. The majority of interviews were audio-recorded following oral informed consent being obtained, as written consent was not possible given the illiteracy of participants. Participant consent forms were signed and co-signed by myself and my research assistant to verify that informed consent had been orally obtained (Marshall, PL 2007). In the rare instances when participants did not wish to be recorded, interviews were noted by both myself and my research assistant with permission. Interviews were subsequently translated and transcribed verbatim by research assistants and another translator. During the initial stages of research, translation inter-reliability exercises were conducted between research assistants (Lopez et al. 2008).

A key aspect of the research was acknowledging and developing the expertise and knowledge of research assistants as my ears at the frontline of data collection (Mauthner & Doucet 2008). Whilst I had conversational Bengali language proficiency, there were countless nuances and fast-paced conversations I missed. Whilst I could

[9] Silvia was my research assistant from September 2014 till January 2015 and Shaoli from January till August 2015.

observe and re-read interview transcripts, there were many insights, culturally specific non-verbal cues and un-recorded conversations that I relied on my research assistants to note and relay to me. Reflexive sessions were conducted with research assistants, to prepare and debrief for sessions. These sessions were conducted on the bus or CNG rides to and from the station, as well as during *cha* (tea) and lunch breaks at nearby food stalls. Reflexive sessions were crucial to enable me to clarify any details I was unable to gather within interviews, to hear the research assistant's ideas and observations regarding interviews and fieldwork interactions and to discuss emergent themes and ideas I was generating from the research. As Shaoli, my longer-term assistant, became more proficient in interviewing, I encouraged her to ask her own probing questions to clarify aspects of women's interviews that she found particularly interesting or did not fit within existing narratives (her own narratives about women, homelessness, poverty or the emergent themes fieldwork was uncovering). In developing Shaoli's own critical interviewing skills, further quality was added to the data gathered within fieldwork and uncovered multiple culturally specific nuances that I may have missed. Having a fieldwork assistant was not only invaluable for interviewing, but also for moral support, safety and for someone to debrief following a particularly difficult session. I am incredibly grateful to my assistants for their support, enthusiasm and commitment to the project throughout fieldwork.

An ethical issue that must be addressed before discussing fieldwork is that of the privacy and confidentiality of participants. The study names and identifies the field site, a practice not commonly employed within ethnographic research (Ervin 2005). The contextually specific insights that this research provides would be obscured through de-identification of the field site, given that Kamalapur is the only large railway station in Dhaka, rendering findings largely un-useable and undermining the value of the research for future program and policy development (O'Mathúna 2015). A pragmatic decision was made to name the field-site and strictly adhere to other measures to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

The research intended to pseudonyms to prevent identification of the women who were participants of this project, as discussed with women when collecting informed consent. Yet whilst the majority of participants were assigned pseudonyms, several women specifically requested that their names were included within this thesis. Research ethics are not a one-time event of obtaining 'informed consent' when engaging in research. Rather, as O'Mathúna and Siriwardhana (2017, p. 2228) discuss, communities should ideally be consulted within the design, implementation and reporting of research, with the premise that communities are 'heard and their voices allowed to bring change.' The key informants of this study became a crucial

sounding board for my own continual ethical reflections around the 'usefulness' of the research, to ensure that it was addressing appropriate topics, to answer women's emergent questions around the purpose of the research, how the research would be disseminated, and to discuss the potential implications of the process (O'Mathúna & Siriwardhana 2017). Key participants were integral to the development of my project as I engaged in continued reflexivity around the ethics of the research.

In the process of consulting women around ethical considerations, an un-anticipated issue arose. Towards the end of fieldwork, I asked four key informants what they would like their pseudonym to be when 'I wrote about their stories.' During these discussions I was unanimously told by these informants that they would like their own names recorded (Field notes, 31st May, 9th June, 8th, 22nd August 2015). Even when we discussed the potential ramifications of identification (for example, potential violence from law enforcement), these women were steadfast in their wish for their names to be documented. As one woman explained, 'well what can [the police] do? We have nothing else to lose… but at least we will have had our names recorded' (31st May 2015). The need for women to be recognized and 'seen' was once again re-iterated within these discussions. Following the principal of respect for participants, and given the extent of conversations surrounding this issue, where I was satisfied that informed consent around the use of their names had been obtained, I have respected the wishes of these women (O'Mathúna 2015). The majority of participants who originally consented to the use of a pseudonym and did not engage in further discussions around the use of their name, have been assigned a pseudonym when referencing their names throughout the thesis. Additionally, care has been taken to not include identifying sensitive information that could cause harm to women.

Navigating Kamalapur

I began fieldwork with naivety of an early career researcher. Despite having spent almost two years researching primary health care projects for the urban poor in Bangladesh, visiting numerous urban slums during this time, I was ill-equipped for fieldwork. I had a plan, and even though the plan had been well rationalised prior to fieldwork, I quickly realised that planning was not something that often worked within the context of Kamalapur. Green, L (2013, p. 59), writing about researching fear in Guatemala reflected, 'it soon became apparent that any understanding of women's lives would include a journey into the state of fear in which terror reigned, and this would shape the nature and interactions in [the field].' Likewise, my attempts in understanding the violence and uncertainty that pervaded the lives of

the women in the station required me to engage and embrace the precarious temporariness of Kamalapur; to be reactive, to be shaped by this space, to listen and learn.

My first few visits to the station had been with the program staff from the local *Amrao Manush* pavement dweller centre (PDC). Initial engagement with program staff is an approach widely utilized in homeless research, enabling the identification of an appropriate 'street site.' Engagement with the centre was additionally a strategy utilized to aid in the ethical conduct of the study, with the intent that I could facilitate participant referral for additional services and psychosocial support for participants if necessary following interviews. Additionally, program staff are viewed as being able to facilitate access to the homeless population. Developing relationships with staff and enlisting their support is suggested as crucial for a researcher working within this population (Mayock, Sheridan & Parker 2015). Yet I soon realised that introductions by centre staff immediately aligned myself and the agenda of the program, and which was somewhat counterproductive for my own priorities and agenda. Several of the station residents perceived the staff as corrupt and only interested in taking money from the residents (within their savings program)[10]. As such, aligning myself with staff served to undermine my own credibility and trustworthiness and thus initially limited access to several of the long-term station residents.

My very first interview with a woman living in the station was at the *Amrao Manush* Kamalapur PDC. I sat on a bed in one of the offices with Minera who had been asked by one of the staff to talk with me. She looked at me, making her assessment, and then asked:

> …what is the benefit of listening to our problems? We live in street and no one gives us a little space to put our head…what is the benefit to us by giving this information? Lots of people come and take interviews but there's no result.

(30th September 2014)

I was being asked a challenging question that would be repeatedly asked to me, and that I would ask of myself, throughout fieldwork. Women were disillusioned with researchers, journalists and the public coming to ask probing questions, with no

[10] Perceptions have arisen from women's reported difficulties in accessing their savings accounts or to obtain cash grants and welfare items (such as blankets during winter). Shanta and Jorina discussed staff as 'superior,' 'not understanding our way of life' and 'they think they can come and tell us what to do' as staff attitudes that may further perpetuates women's negative perceptions (9th January 2015).

'benefits' or tangible change to their situation[11], sometimes even resulting in violent ramifications for women[12]. The question, as I would learn later, also held deeper meanings and messages; narratives of learned helplessness and the perceived impossibility for change as well as an easily articulated resistance to engaging in conversations with a stranger.

The lives of the women in Kamalapur are on constant public display, and women's stories are one of the few aspects of their lives that that they have a measure of control over. Asking participants to move beyond a superficial description of their life histories and everyday entailed asking them to engage with difficult, painful and often socially stigmatized, inescapable everyday realities. The topics women shared were not divulged lightly; yet over time, as trust was built, they would include women's multiple marriages, engaging in sex work or drug selling, drug use, self-harm, interpersonal violence and giving away or perhaps selling their child(ren).

What then was the incentive to share these stories and accounts with a stranger? There was none. My initial perception was that the only motivating factor to engage in the research was the possibility of a benefit of some kind. For some women, there was the hope that I might possibly offer money or food as a reward for a conversation, a common practice employed by journalists[13]. Whilst most women initially appeared to be more interested in how the research would pragmatically challenge the everyday violence and constraints they faced. Likewise, Berreman discusses that:

> …this is the substance of the searching questions of the third world…namely, what has been the effect of your work among us? Have you contributed to the solution of the problems you have witnessed? Have you even mentioned those problems? If not, then you are part of those problems and hence must be changed, excluded or eradicated.
>
> (1974, p. 90)

[11] Similarly, Shoma (2010, p. 30) documented that when talking to one woman, 'it was no use to introduce myself as a researcher…since she was so angry about people who occasionally show interest to talk or take photos but at the end she remains as pavement dweller without any improvement.'

[12] The population had considerable experience with journalists and short-term researchers extracting information and stories from them, with occasionally violent ramifications following the publication of this information in public newspapers (see Chapter 4).

[13] Money was never offered in exchange for engagement in the research, however I often shared *tiffen* (snacks) with women whilst conducting interviews or spending time together. Occasionally I would take some of my key informants to a nearby restaurant for *tiffen* or a meal if appropriate, in order to afford privacy for a longer interview.

It quickly became apparent that this research had to be grounded in an ethical commitment to 'seek knowledge that is relevant to the problems of the people' I was working with (Davies 2008, p. 12). My own research priorities and the issues that I was investigating had to align with women's own priorities and issues that were important to them if I was to even begin having conversations with women.

As fieldwork progressed, discussions around the pointlessness of research, and how my interactions and data collection was going to be of direct benefit to the occupants of the station largely subsided. It became apparent that the initial resistance of women to engaging in conversation with me was only in part about the possibility of immediate and long term benefits, but also due to the initial lack of trust as well as the power and social dynamics at play. I was an outsider, an unknown entity with an unknown agenda, and in no way deserving of these women's time and trust. I had to prove that I was worthy. There is the assumption within some research that the differentials in material wealth and social status automatically makes the researcher the powerful subject and the participant the passive informer. Yet as Lammers (2007, p. 102) discusses, it is 'ultimately, people [who] decide what to tell, how to tell it, what to hide, or when to be quiet.'

It was the power I held outside the station, derived from material wealth, education, skin colour and social status, which rendered me largely powerless within. In Kamalapur I was stepping into social and spatial spaces governed by the state and the station occupants themselves. It was a public space and I could move with ease, I could approach a woman without other issues of access that many other researchers face. Yet it was this very freedom that made women adept at fiercely protecting their lives, their privacy and their stories. Lammers, discussing the multidimensionality of power remarks:

> …power springs from many sources: power that comes from wealth or status, physical power, creative power, the power of personality, intellectual power, the power (or ability) to have rewarding relationships with others, to love and be loved.
>
> (2007, p. 102)

The sources of power that held true for myself outside of the station had to be reconfigured in order to negotiate the power dynamics within. It was through creating a space and role for myself, as well as developing trust and relationships with women, appealing to the power derived from 'having rewarding relationships with others,' and the ability 'to love and be loved' that eventually enabled some of the more intimate and detailed discussions to be held with participants.

Meeting Shanta

I first met Shanta sitting at the entrance to the old station with a group of other women. She had a ragged red *orna* (scarf) tied around her body and was chewing *paan* (bettle nut). It was my first day alone at the station, having ventured there without program staff from the PDC and was only accompanied by Silvia, my first fieldwork assistant. We must have looked entirely out of place. A young, blonde, white woman and a middle class, young, Bangladeshi woman, wandering around the station, trying to engage and initiate conversations, evidently not really knowing what we were doing. I was walking through the old station courtyard and a woman (Shanta) yelled out at us, 'what? You want to know how we all sell our vaginas? You want me to tell you about that? …. No? Well you can go f*ck off.' Silvia was mortified as she translated and asked to leave. I told her that sure, we didn't have to speak to this group of women, but there was no way we were going to get scared off and leave just yet. Instead we sat with another woman and held a rather disjointed interview and then, finally admitting defeat, left for the day.

A few weeks later I had a conversation with a PDC staff member, discussing how difficult it had been to talk to women. The staff member, encouraging me, reflected:

> …definitely they will talk. Not today though. The problem is they don't speak the truth. Only after talking to them for a long time, after listening to them, gaining their trust [will they talk]. The thing is, I am an ordinary person. What I will have to do is sit with them and try to mix with them, then suddenly they will reveal these things. They will speak... But I have to be at the same level with them. Like if I am sitting up here and they're sitting on the ground, they will never reveal it.
>
> (20th October 2015)

Theoretically I knew that taking time to sit with women, being 'at their level', developing relationships and trust was going to be critical to my research, but I just wasn't sure how that was going to happen, given their hostility and reticence to engage in any form of conversation.

The turning point

I had been in the station for about two months. Fieldwork had been much more difficult than I had anticipated. None of the women wanted to speak to or engage with me. I would walk into the station and women stood up and magically disappeared. If I managed to chat to someone, answers were evasive and vague, or I got the feeling I was being lied to. Yet one morning, the 24th of November, one of the

women, Jorina approached me. 'Mali's wound is really bad.' Those five words, unbeknownst to me, would irrevocably change fieldwork.

Jorina was a woman who had been living for the past 30 years in the railway station. I had been introduced to Jorina by the program staff and we had had a few tentative interactions. Nothing in-depth, and Jorina had made it clear she didn't trust me. But this day, Jorina approached me and was telling me that something was wrong with her daughter, Mali. Mali was approximately 15 years old, experienced cerebral palsy, an intellectual disability and epilepsy. She had very limited verbal capacity, could get highly aggressive, but could also be sweet, funny and *chalak* (clever). During the day, Mali was chained by her foot to a wall in the station, away from the hum-drum and flows of passengers, beside an open-air school for the street kids. Jorina had explained that she chained Mali because she was afraid Mali would wander off and either get lost and disoriented, upset, anxious or be abused. Regularly experiencing epileptic fits in this space, sometimes hitting against the hard cement wall, meant that Mali readily acquired wounds, on her face, her hands, her legs… and her elbows. Given that Mali stood, sat and slept all day on a bamboo mat in the dusty courtyard, these wounds quickly became infected.

Jorina showed me Mali's arm that had three gaping wounds, two the size of an Australian twenty cent piece, another the size of a five cent piece. I stared at the wounds on Mali's elbow and face, oozing puss and muck, clearly necrotic, semi-dried, yet open. In my head I frantically ran through every actual medical friend I know in Dhaka. I called them all. No response. I asked Jorina what she had done previously in situations like this and she told me she would normally ask for assistance from the free health clinic at the PDC, but since the paramedic was on holidays, and Jorina was unable to pay for health care elsewhere, there was nothing else she could do. I realised that Jorina had asked me to help as a last resort, hoping that perhaps I knew something or someone that could assist. So I told myself that I was a trained health professional, had completed several first aid courses, and that anything has to be better than leaving these wounds open to the dirt. I got out my filtered water, irrigated the wounds, placed the biggest Band-aids I had in my bag over them and hoped for the best. That night I revised wound care with my medical professional friends, as no-one with experience was available to make the trip to the station the next day. So I started to dress Mali's wound, coming every second day to change the dressing, irrespective of whether or not I could conduct interviews and whether or not my research assistant could accompany me. After two weeks of wound dressings, some of which were incredibly difficult while others were easier, Mali's wound finally healed.

One morning, about a week later, following a particularly distressing dressing change where Mali was being quite difficult to work with, one of the women ushered me over to a mat where several other women, including Shanta, were sitting. '*Ashen Apa'* (come big sister); a simple sign of respect that signified the beginning of a creation of space for me. And so I sat. We didn't talk about anything of great importance, instead exchanging the normal things that people talk about when they first meet in Bangladesh – our names, marital status, family details, where I came from, and what their village was. The women commented on some henna on my hand, and I asked if they would like to do henna with me the next day. I left the station that morning with the strange sense that something had changed and shifted.

Being human in Kamalapur

As Cassell (2002, p. 180) discusses, if a researcher is engaged in prolonged field work, as a 'living, reacting fellow human being, rather than a human pretending to be a disembodied fly on the wall, the people you are studying will create a space, a role for you.' Within my fieldwork it was an event and the people within it that provided me this space and which became the turning point of my research. Over the next eight months I became the 'wound doctor' of Kamalapur, a term and role that was given, indeed thrust upon me, by the station occupants who had found me to be competent in fulfilling one of their immediate needs.

Over the remainder of fieldwork, I was involved in four more serious wound dressings that required multiple dressings as well as responding to countless requests (primarily from street children) for once-off cleaning and bandaging of their wounds. Some wounds were deep and new, others were minor, whilst some women and children showed me the scars of previously healed wounds that they believed my 'medicine' (bandages and ointment) could somehow heal. Many of the children didn't have parents in the station, and the cuts, scrapes and wounds I dressed were often from a fight between groups or the result of their often risky employment and everyday livelihood strategies.

Adopting this role of 'wound doctor' that, at the time I felt I had 'fallen into,' was fraught with ethical issues (Pollock 1996). There were several competing issues at stake. Despite having a shared understanding of the type of medical intervention that was required, with many of the station occupants having sought and received similar medical attention previously (that of wound dressings), the level of treatment that I provided challenged the station norms regarding the relationship between accessing care and the severity of a wound (Pollock 1996). I was 'treating', occasionally, quite minor scrapes and wounds, and perhaps re-enforcing the existing

'treatment' oriented understandings of health care that are prevalent amongst the urban poor (Adams et al. 2012). As such, I was careful to re-iterate that I was not a doctor and encouraged (and facilitated in a few emergency situations) access to health care services where possible.

I faced an ethical and human conundrum, where I knew what I felt compelled to do (to provide wound care), yet I questioned if this was appropriate. The assumption of a 'healing' role had the potential to undermine the role of 'researcher' within this setting, blurring lines and understandings of my purpose and intent of being in the station (Pollock 1996). There are very few guidelines regarding such dilemmas faced by researchers of violence, where:

> …the rules of living-with (or being with) people in dramatic flux…remain as yet unwritten, perhaps even unspoken. There is no appropriate distance to take from our subject…When the researcher is witness to crimes against humanity, mere scientific empathy is not sufficient.
>
> (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004, p. 26-27)

I was unable to maintain my scientific distance from the violence inscribed the bodies of station dwellers, and instead, in the face of these events I became first and foremost, a human. As Pollock, in his examination of adopting a healing role within fieldwork and in reflecting on his own experiences, comments, 'we are challenged to display our fundamental humanity and our willingness to act towards others' (Pollock 1996, p. 152). Given my background[14] as a trained health professional, as well as the financial, logistical and social barriers faced by station occupants to accessing health care elsewhere, I felt unable to refuse requests for wound care. Accessing health care for wound dressings was financially inaccessible for many of the station residents. Nearby clinics would ask individuals to come daily or every second day for wound dressings over the period of several weeks, charging approximately 300-500 taka (5-8 AUD) for each visit, which was the equivalent of a day's wage. Station occupants would resort to attending a clinic once weekly, resulting in, often re-occurring, infections and a lengthy healing period. Not being able to access health care to address an acute health care need, within my own world-view and value set, was unacceptable. I was asked for very little throughout my time in the station[15], yet

[14] I am an Occupational Therapist and have received training in providing basic first aid and wound care. I had also previously been involved in a research project investigating access to health care for the urban poor in Bangladesh.

[15] I had expected to be constantly asked for financial assistance throughout fieldwork, an assumption that turned out to be incorrect. Indeed, despite having established a form of a relationship with some women, even small offers of assistance were sometimes refused.

wound care and occasionally health advice were one of the few things that the station occupants requested from me.

It was not expected that I could solve all the (many) difficulties and 'troubles' experienced by the women, however I was expected to provide assistance where I could, if I was to be allowed access into women's lives and be given the privilege of being able to sit with, ask and listen. As Robben discusses:

> …fieldwork is not a detached activity carried out by an objective observer but subjective experiences…are part and parcel of fieldwork and its results. The ethnographer's multiple social identities and…dynamic self may be…research assets… [used to] obtain data that are unavailable to those with different personal assets.

(2012, p. 63)

As such, dressing wounds was just one way I was able to show my own humanity and recognition of the many challenges these women face, whilst other simple acts such as sitting with women and being sensitive to the way in which I explored certain issues were other small ways I endeavoured to create this sense of recognition.

Creating a physical and affiliative space

The interaction with Mali in-avertedly enabled access into the world of Jorina, Mali's mother. Unbeknownst to me at the time, Jorina was a key player in the station. She knew everyone, and everyone knew her. Jorina portrayed a sense of helplessness and vulnerability to the outside world, and indeed with the added demands and challenges faced with caring for a child with multiple chronic health conditions, everyday life was not easy for Jorina. Yet Jorina was street-smart and her survival in the station as a single woman for 30 years, 15 of which were caring for Mali, were evidence of this. Because of the respect and presence Jorina had in the station, she had managed to acquire a small hut, courtesy of the railway and, later into fieldwork, a small tarpaulin shelter attached to one side was erected as a space for Mali to sit through the day.

Developing a relationship with Jorina, although tenuous, enabled me to develop both a geographical and affiliative space within the station. I would often head over to 'Jorina's area' where Mali was sitting, say hello to Mali, Jorina and Shumi (a woman who, a few months later erected a shelter/hut next to Jorina), facilitating a sense purpose and place within the station (see Figure 6). This sense of purpose and belonging was critical in enabling myself, but perhaps also the other station dwellers, to legitimate my continued presence and interactions with the women, serving as a

point of reference, which was to facilitate access to and engagement with other station women. Developing a relationship with Jorina also began to create an affiliative space where trust, empathy and relationships could start to be built between myself and the station women (cf. Jensen 2012).

Figure 6: The 'old' station courtyard

Over the ten months of fieldwork, eight women (referred to as Jorina, Shumi, Shanta, Fatema, Minera, Kolpona, Parul & Lucky within this thesis) became the key informants of this study. These women choose me as much as I chose them, becoming key informants by virtue of being 'simply more willing' to engage in re-occurring conversations with me (Davies 2008, p. 81). These were women with whom, at different points throughout fieldwork, I had developed enough of a relationship where either the woman would approach me when I arrived at the station, or I was able to go sit with them without saying anything and just observe and be with women (unlike many other women in the station). With this group of women, I was able to discuss their day, have reoccurring, in-depth conversations about their life-histories and ask questions around key ideas and themes that I had been thinking over since my last visit to the station. Developing these relationships was invaluable to my research, enabling detailed insights into these women's life histories and everyday practices as well as gaining an understanding of the individual ways in which they each perceived and negotiated station life.

Getting to know Shanta

I'm not exactly sure now how Shanta and I became close. Perhaps because of her allegiance to Jorina during that time. Perhaps it was a mutual admiration of each other's 'courage'. I grudgingly admired Shanta to have said exactly what she thought when we first met. Later, Shanta told me that she had admired my 'strength' in consistently dressing Mali's wounds, and which had demonstrated to her that I genuinely cared for the welfare of the station occupants (2nd April 2015). Initially Shanta was reticent to engage in an interview and instead would come over as I was walking around the station, tell me some news, ask me a few questions and then walk off. Sometimes she would join a group of woman and just quietly observe. I didn't push her to engage with me and I always adopted the position that it was up to women to engage and talk in their own way and on their own terms (see discussion below).

One afternoon I had come down to the station with my friend Ruhul who had offered to draw portraits of the women as a potential new method to engage with women. When we arrived at the station, Shanta was one of the few women hanging out in the courtyard and when asked, agreed to sit for a portrait. About half way into the drawing, Shanta began to talk. She began to tell us about her 18-month child who had been taken by her husband. She hadn't seen her son in six months and even though she knew where her husband was living, had been terrified by the death

threats against herself and her son if she attempted to find them. She began to cry and we just sat with her, because there was nothing to say.

Following the portrait sitting, Shanta began to spend more time with me in the station, allowing me to interview her, and she was incredibly patient with my ever expanding list of questions. Over time, Shanta seemed to embrace the challenge of trying to explain *why* she thought something was the case and to assist a *bideshi* (foreigner) understand the chaotic, crazy, space that had become her home. Shanta also self-volunteered to find me additional research participants. There were several instances when I arrived at the station and, five minutes later, Shanta appeared with another woman in tow telling me that 'you should interview her.' Shanta was a particularly engaged, and informative key informant, with our interactions shaping key aspects of fieldwork and subsequently this thesis (Davies 2008).

Sitting 'beside'

The simple act of sitting 'beside' women was an unexpected, yet seemingly critical aspect of developing relationships with women. Granted, the ground was dirty, covered with dirt, cigarette butts, and rubbish, with the distinct smell of urine close to any vertical surface, yet this was my participants home, their living space, the place they slept, ate and spent their days. This was their world. If Shaoli and I were going to demonstrate that we were worthy of their time, their thoughts, their stories and maybe acceptance, we had to demonstrate that in some small way we could 'do,' their world. Of course we were never going to be able to do this in the fullest sense, but 'sitting beside' was one small way that we could demonstrate our willingness to engage. So we sat; on the ground, on rocks, on our shoes, pieces of plastic, newspaper or occasionally the jute sleeping mats provided by some of the women (see Figure 7). To me, sitting 'beside' was incredibly normal, and indeed practical for conducting our sometimes lengthy conversations and interviews, yet it appeared that participants viewed this practice quite differently.

One afternoon about halfway into fieldwork, I was having a conversation with Shumi and Shanta about friendship. Shanta was telling us that she didn't have any friends that she could confide in, comparing it to the way in which she was talking to us now. When Silvia, my research assistant asked why this was, Shanta began discussing the reasons why she had begun a process of confiding in us, explaining to Silvia:

> …there are people, they say that we live in the streets and we cannot be spoken to…but you come and sit beside us. We are happy with that, happy that someone comes to us and we can talk to each other. That's a

> big deal really…I like it…the way she[16] comes and draws us close…If we take a shower today we won't get water to shower for the next seven days…Someone from a good family would not come here and sit to talk to us. Take yourself [Silvia] for example. You are sitting here only because she is here. Would you sit here otherwise? You would walk right by us. You would say you have nothing to talk about with us… I just like the way she comes and hugs us, even though we are so dirty. She is not disgusted by us…We sit on the ground and she also sits on the ground. We get pleasure and love from her…There is no feeling of superiority within.
>
> (19th January 2015)

In Shanta's explanation, trust was built through the gesture of 'sitting beside', along with the hugs and the simple act of talking to the station women as equals, that demonstrated I cared for the women beyond that of a research informant.

Figure 7: Shaoli sitting in the old station courtyard one afternoon during a break, watching small boys climbing over the wall

[16] 'She' is referring to myself as the researcher

Engaging in their own way, on their own terms

Following Mayock, Sheridan and Parker (2015), central to fieldwork was the commitment to, 'engag[e] with [homeless] women in ways that would allow them to articulate their experiences, in their own way and on their own terms.' This commitment to facilitating spaces and opportunities for women to engage in their own way within the research was designed to challenge the narrative of women as powerless victims and that, I as a (white, outsider, young, female) researcher, had the right to engage and talk to them about their lives (Banyard & Graham-Bermann 1993; Tischler 2009). I discovered that unless women found my questions interesting or meaningful, then they were going to quickly disengage from the conversation and simply walk away. I rapidly learnt the questions which the women were un-interested in answering, the questions which were too difficult or shameful to answer in a first time interaction, and those questions that elicited the more insightful discussions around women's stories and lives in the station. Unlike other homeless research, which would begin with asking a question about how they 'ended up on the streets,' this was one of the very last topics I would explore with women (Kidd & Davidson 2007). I didn't expect women to wish to engage in an in-depth interview at our first meeting (although this was the ideal as I could never be certain of seeing the woman again) due to the inherent distrust of 'outsiders' and particularly white individuals who ask 'so many questions' (Shumi, 28th November 2014). My paramount concern was to articulate who I was, what my agenda was, and to establish rapport.

I would start by approaching a woman (or a group) and ask permission to sit with her/them. Almost without exception it was only the women who lived in Kamalapur that sat alone or in groups of just women in the station. This question in of itself was met with incredulity, raised eyebrows or resigned faces of women, speaking to the lack of ownership and privacy they experienced in this space. So I would sit beside them, asking women's names, verify if they lived in the station and how long they had been there. I would ask women if they had seen me around the station before and if they knew why I was talking to them. After clarifying, I would comment on the length of my research (that I had so many months to go, or that I had been there for so many months) in order to establish my own legitimacy and to differentiate myself from other 'researchers' (journalists) who had engaged in the short-term interactions so ill-regarded by the station occupants.

The success of fieldwork was built on the relationships, trust and recognition that I developed with women and which was premised on knowing what issues I could delve into and those that I could not. As Malkki discusses within her fieldwork with refugees:

> …the success of the fieldwork hinged not so much on a determination to ferret out 'the facts' as on a willingness to leave some stones unturned, to listen to what my informants deemed important, and to demonstrate my trustworthiness by not prying where I was not wanted.
>
> (1995, p. 51)

There were many aspects of women's lives that I did not explore, or was only able to discuss in superficial terms. A woman agreeing to talk to me was only the first step in trying to understand the complex, ever-amorphous 'truth' of women narratives and the way in which these were embedded within their own fluid and emergent realities and station life. Superficial engagement was often due to the one-time interactions I was only able to have with women. Once-off interactions did not allow me to establish the rapport and trust necessary to investigate women's life histories (Conticini & Hulme 2007). Whilst for other women, even those I had developed relationships with, there were topics, aspects of everyday life and life histories that they were simply unwilling to discuss and explore with me.

I began to realize that the 'truth' was perhaps just a fluid notion that was constantly in negotiation. As I delved deeper into the complexity of station life, I progressively found it more difficult to be able to talk about concrete 'truths' about women's lives that were constantly in a state of uncertainty and flux. Lammers (2007, p. 101) articulates the struggles of grappling with the 'truth' of participants' narratives:

> …as researchers we want to know and understand the very histories that people may desire to forget or need to hide. What does all this imply for the knowledge we set out to gain and the understanding we hope to reach? During my years [of fieldwork] I often felt I could not get much grip on the reality I was studying, not only because I was extraneous to the situation, but also because I was constantly confronted with its disparities and controversies, its silences, the hidden tales. The combination of my curiosity, empathy, and imagination were not sufficient to bring to light the twists and turns of the reality I was studying. I had discarded the concept of truth with a capital T before starting my research. Nevertheless, the ambiguity I encountered, and the fact that truth…had so many faces, made me feel uncomfortable.
>
> (2007, p. 101)

I was working with a diverse group of women, each with their own perspectives and testimonies of violence, of their life histories, and ways of navigating the everyday. The longer I was in the station, the more I felt I was 'loosing grip' on the truth, whereby each narrative or perspective, rather than shedding light onto this elusive concept, just served to highlight just how multifaceted, dynamic and amorphous

station life was. I reconciled myself to learning from my key informants; spending time with and learning from them, discovering the nuances of their unique pathways to the station and how they were each trying to negotiate the many everyday challenges within the chaos and unpredictability of this space.

Relationships and uncertainty

I never knew what was going to present itself each time I went to Kamalapur. It could be a day of wandering, chatting and not 'achieving' any interviews. Maybe having the opportunity to just sit with a group of women and talk about the everyday, the small things like whether or not someone's child would begin walking soon, 'gossiping' about an upcoming drug charge trial or an alleged relationship. The day could entail multiple women initiating and engaging in conversation with myself, resulting in several in-depth interviews. It could be sitting with Mali and having a chat, playing a ball game with some of the kids to pass the time, waiting for a woman to turn up who had promised to engage in an interview. Or it could be witnessing a physical or verbal altercation between women or intimate partners, watching the police 'move' (beat) station dwellers out of the station, witnessing a child take drugs or being told about the death or 'disappearance' of another.

I quickly learnt the futility of trying to plan fieldwork interactions and instead learnt that within this informal, fluid context, my methods had to adapt[17]. I could never count on seeing a woman twice and therefore any interaction had to be carefully negotiated in order to maximize a conversation we were able to have. The unpredictable flow of the station and its occupancy by the women was a reflection of

[17] I developed a system whereby a page in my notebook was allocated to each women interviewed. Here I noted observations and follow up questions for interviews following analysis of a woman's interview transcript. Many questions were never answered because I was unable to re-engage with the woman (either due to unwillingness on her part, or because I never saw her again in my trips to the station). I also developed a running list of questions as they arose within interviews. These were questions that I would ask of my key informants when I had the opportunity, as well as weaving into initial interviews with new women where appropriate.

There were many other small ways in which I found the informality and fluidity of the station becoming part of my own research practices. I learnt never to promise anything to a woman without an absolute certainty that I could follow through. If I said I would come tomorrow and was unable to deliver on this promise, I would be sure to hear about it from at least two women. I was unable to visit the station every day, due to the competing study commitments of my research assistant, illness, days of political violence, or simply the feeling of being unable to emotionally and mentally engage with visiting the station. I thus learnt to say, 'I will try,' instead of 'I will' to women.

the lack of routine and structure with women's everyday (see Chapter 4). Some days the station would be packed with women and people, other times it would be empty – with women themselves being unable to, and uninterested in, articulating the 'reasons' for these differences. This unpredictability was just station life and 'how it was' (Parul, 14th February 2015). There was apparently no other explanation.

The uncertainty of the station held me hostage as I developed relationships with women, only to be severed because of the insecurity that shaped the 'choices' they were forced to make and the sense of impermanence that pervaded their everyday lives. I waited for women I knew to (maybe) return to the station, or perhaps to call me after leaving for visits to villages, in search of alternative housing or promised forms of employment. Some women I never saw or heard of again, whilst others I only saw many months later. Only a few relationships, such as with Jorina, Shumi, and Shanta, spanned the entire duration of fieldwork.

The themes of uncertainty, broken trust and social disaffiliation, that will be discussed in greater detail throughout this thesis, were evident throughout reoccurring observations, engagement and interviews with Shanta, Shumi and Jorina. These three women were the longest residing station residents amongst key participants. One afternoon (12th January 2015), I was sitting with Shumi and Shanta having a chat. As we were wrapping up the conversation, Shumi suddenly remarked, 'just give us some poison, we'll take it and die.' When I queried this seemingly un-related turn of the conversation, Shanta replied, 'death is better than this life on the streets', with Shumi interjecting, 'death is better than this. We'll be completely free then.' Shanta began to reflect on the abandonment throughout her life history:

> …just to get some food I held someone's hand (married her husband), but even he left me and went away. If this isn't for our sins, then what for?... We feel proud when we see Mali's mother, a mother can never abandon her child, but a father can abandon ten of his own children.

Shumi, picking up on this theme of abandonment, remarked to Shanta, 'six months later she [myself, the researcher] will forget us, leave us and go to Australia.' Shanta turned to her and repeated a Bengali proverb, 'will you be able to hold her back? A free bird shall fly away; it cannot be kept in a cage.' Shumi retorted, 'she wouldn't want to come [back]. She'll say that she has already talked to us and that's that. Once she is in Australia, she will forget about us.' I interjected, telling Shumi that given that I was going to be writing for some time about the station, that I was unlikely to forget her. Shumi took a moment and nodded. 'Ok, so when you go back to Australia, then you give me your Australian number.' Shumi never actually asked for my number and appeared unperturbed when I eventually said goodbye. Saying goodbye to Shanta

was however very different, and one of the most difficult things I did during fieldwork.

It was my very last day of fieldwork before I left for Australia (22nd August 2015). I had been trying to call Shanta for a few weeks to let her know I was leaving, with no response. Yet word gets around in Kamalapur, and as I was saying goodbye to several other women, someone slipped their arm around my waist. I turned, and it was Shanta with a huge smile on her face. I returned the hug and we went to get some *cha*. We talked for over an hour and then we had to say goodbye. I knew that it could very well be the last time I saw Shanta, given her frequent movements and the ever changing nature of the station. Shanta held my hands, tears streaming down both of our faces. 'I won't forget you' I told her. '*Aboshoy apa'* (of course big sister) she told me. The relationship between Shanta and I had irreversibly shaped my fieldwork experience, having traversed the roles of adversary, key informant and friend. Someone who had deeply cared for me when I was at breaking point, whom I had fought with, someone, when I had no idea where she was (or if she was alive) that had kept me up at night worrying, someone I cared deeply about. It was the hardest goodbye I've ever had to say. There were no words to express my gratitude for all she had done and how much she meant to me. So we hugged again, and it was goodbye.

Conclusion

The women of the station have their own stories, knowledge and power. As a researcher, it took a lengthy period of time developing relationships and trust with participants that enabled the experiences of homelessness and the influence of shifting and multifaceted contexts on everyday lives of women and their amorphous 'truths' to be revealed. One afternoon, the 12th of January 2015, I was having a conversation with Shanta about how we both conceptualized the role of research. I shared that I was 'trying to better understand the lives of women' in the hope that this would 'improve programs to better meet women's needs.' Shanta in her explanation of how she perceived the role of research explained to me,

> … it can be seen that after studying, you have gathered some knowledge, but we, without doing any studying, have also… acquired knowledge. That's what I think, if [programs] want to help, they also need to look at people's lives and the state they are in. There are differences, between those who actually don't have anything and those who do have [things], that needs to be assessed. So whoever wants to

> work, they need…to see…There's a need to assess, to observe, to see and understand.

As I probed into this statement, Shanta explained that 'not everyone or anything is the same here in Kamalapur' speaking both to the shifting spectrum of vulnerability experienced by women living in the station, as well as the fluidity and ever-changing nature of everyday life. It was clear to Shanta that whilst I had 'some knowledge,' after spending four months in the station, I still had a long way to go before I would 'understand.' Shanta's statement re-iterates the anthropology of development stance that programs cannot 'presume to know' the issues facing individuals or a population (Rahnema 1992, p. 122). Instead, as Shanta explained, there is a need to spend prolonged periods of engagement with a group of people, 'to assess, to observe, to see and understand' (Gardner & Lewis 1996).

I continued the conversation, asking Shanta, 'so how could program workers learn and understand from you in a shorter amount of time who needs the most assistance?' She answered me,

> …how can they be able to tell in less time? Um, that *Apa* (big sister) I do not know. What we do know, is that if [programs] really intend to help [us]…then they need to take help and learn from people who know us and have talked to us. Then it can be done. If you can help them a bit, then maybe it (providing assistance that meets women's needs) is possible. That's how it can be successful.

For Shanta, the success of a program endeavouring to work with a population like the homeless living in Kamalapur is not a simple, straightforward task. Given that development practitioners and programs often can-not often afford to engage in long-term ethnographic research, it is useful for programs to engage with researchers who have spent time understanding a population and analysing the context within which their everyday experiences are embedded (Camfield 2014). By spending extended periods of time sitting, talking, observing and 'being' with women over the ten-month period of fieldwork, this study has sought to understand the issues facing the women of Kamalapur. This thesis not only aims to discuss findings in a way that is useful for programs endeavouring to work with this population, but has also developed a tool for practitioners to be able to identify key aspects of vulnerability for women (see Appendix 6).

The success of fieldwork was founded upon the relationships, trust and recognition developed with women. It was not the power that I held outside the station that enabled me to engage in this research that delved into women's everyday lives and life histories. Instead, I was required to appeal to the power that came from 'having

rewarding relationships with others' that developed trust and facilitated the more intimate and detailed discussions I held with participants (Lammers 2007). Trust is essential within any researcher-participant relationship, but even more crucial when working with a population who have experienced repeated and ongoing loss, trauma and broken trust within their life histories (Conticini & Hulme 2007). Trust was not an outcome, but rather a continual process of negotiation within relationships with women as they came and left the station, and as I spent time with certain women and heard more of their stories unfold. Trust was developed and re-negotiated as I learnt how to engage with and listen to women, to know what questions I could ask, and to know when and where I was not wanted (Malkki 1995). Likewise, it is well documented within homelessness research, re-iterated through conversations with the long-term program staff working with the Amrao Manush project, that sitting with and learning from women over a long period of time is the most effective, albeit time consuming, means of engaging with homeless populations (Desjarlais 1997; Kidd & Davidson 2007)

Recognition of the violence and precarity that shaped women's everyday lives became fundamental to my fieldwork, inter-woven within many of the interactions and relationships I developed with participants. I was asked by women to not just look and record but to see and engage with the wounds that that told stories of ongoing violence and injustice that dominated their everyday lives and life histories. Sitting beside and dressing wounds of women were embodied practices that I adopted within fieldwork, with these practices telling women that their physical and mental health were important, and that their bodily integrity was a right, not a privilege (Nussbaum 2001). Scheper-Hughes, in a discussion of the role of researchers in engaging with violence, marginalization and poverty within fieldwork comments:

> …seeing, listening, touching, can be, if done with care and sensitivity, acts of fraternity and sisterhood, acts of solidarity. Above all they are the work of recognition. Not to look, not to touch, not to record can be the hostile act, the act of indifference and of turning away.
>
> (1993, p. 28)

In sitting beside women and engaging in my own small way with the everyday issues that they faced, the research recognized and actively challenged dominant narratives that enabled everyday violence to be perpetrated against women (Gardner & Lewis 1996).

The station was a place of uncertainty, precarity and fluidity; themes that are discussed within the body of this thesis as characterizing the vulnerability and

livelihoods of women's lives, but were also mirrored within my interactions women. Developing methods that allowed for and recognized the uncertainty and fluidity of station life, and amorphous 'truth' of women's narratives and lives as they negotiated Kamalapur were crucial (Lammers 2007). The methods and ethics of fieldwork were a continual unfolding process, irrevocably shaped by women. I endeavoured to learn from women about what questions were appropriate, how I was expected to 'be and do' in ways that recognized women's lived realities and which methods and outcomes of this research were deemed acceptable to women and the wider population they represented (O'Mathúna 2015). The station forced me to relinquish a sense of control and the need to plan fieldwork interactions. Indeed, the station made me go on the journey into the precarity and uncertainty of Kamalapur, allowing the evolving relationships with women, and the events that occurred, to shape and inform fieldwork interactions.

Scheper Hughes writes that it is the role of a researcher to 'give voice to those who have been silenced…by political and economic oppression and illiteracy' (Scheper-Hughes 1993, p. 28). Yet for academics such as Spivak (1988), researching violence in non-western contexts is merely an exercise in post-colonialism. The assertion that research can 'give voice' is fundamentally flawed without serious consideration and reflexivity surrounding the intricately interwoven issues of power, politics and representation that occurs within the interaction of researcher, participant and field site, as this chapter has attempted to address (Davies 2008; Prowse 2010; Scheper-Hughes 1993, p. 28). The women living in the station, have been silenced in multiple ways, by illiteracy, by violence that has led to, and perpetuates, their current state of homelessness, compounded by dominant narratives that construct them as expendable non-persons, not even worthy of looking at, let alone listening to. Witnessing, hearing, recording and writing women's stories of their everyday lives in station was not a task that has been undertaken lightly. It is my hope that this thesis enables the reader to explore what it means for women to live in sites of everyday violence, uncertainty and precarity and in doing so, provide insights into what can be done to begin to unpick assumptions and address these issues at the programmatic, advocacy and policy level.

Figure 8: A young woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Chapter Three - 'If I could, I would explain why we are here': Pathways to homelessness for women

Introduction

This chapter explores women's pathways to becoming homeless and arriving at Kamalapur station. Explaining 'why' individuals and families become homeless is a complex, messy task, precisely because becoming homeless is a complex, messy process. Yet this question of 'why' is a critical one, with implications for how homelessness is conceptualized, defined and subsequently addressed within development programs and relevant policy agendas (Pleace 2000). Building on existing homelessness literature that acknowledges the gendered nature of risks for women becoming homeless in high income countries, this chapter provides an analysis of the risks underpinning women's pathways to homelessness in low income countries (Browne 1993; Edgar & Doherty 2001; Evans, RD & Forsyth 2004; Mayock & Sheridan 2012; Reeve, Casey & Goudie 2006; Tyler, Hoyt & Whitbeck 2000). Analysis of women's life histories reveal four common pathways, identifying 'risk events' (aligning with specific lifecycle stages) that lead to women's homelessness. Given the complexity and individuality of women's pathways, the underlying 'risk factors' that underpin 'risk events' within common pathways leading to homelessness are identified. Becoming homeless is demonstrated to be a process whereby repeated risk factors and events have accrued throughout a women's life history (Mallett et al. 2010; Watson, J 2011). I argue that that compounding risk factors and events leads to a depletion of assets and capabilities, making women increasingly vulnerable to structural constraints and which may result in their homelessness (Watson, S 2000).

The women of Kamalapur contend with two dominant narratives that problematically construct the reasons surrounding 'why' they are in the station. Within the development studies literature, if considered at all, homelessness is all too often conflated with economic poverty and structural constraints to housing that include inadequate and affordable shelter and informal settlement eviction (Beall & Fox 2007; Gilbert 2014). The second narrative, dominant within public discourse in Bangladesh, views women's homelessness as a result of their moral failings (including illegitimacy of birth, having been abandoned by a husband or seeking employment as a sex worker). As Kolpona, a key participant explained to me one morning, '[The public] think we are bad people. They think if we were good why would we be on the street?' (14th May 2015).

My analysis reveals these dominant narratives to be far too simplistic, if not entirely misrepresentative, explanations of the complex and painful realities of women's life histories and experiences of becoming homeless. Kolpona continued:

> …they don't think that there must be reasons for which we are [in the station] …If I could, I would explain to them why we are here… How would I be able to talk to them? How many would listen to me? You would, would anyone else?

Kolpona instead shared her explanation for 'why [she] was [in the station]':

> …when I was very young I got angry with my parents and ran away from them. I've never returned home. That's how I ended up on the streets. I grew up here. Got married here. Had children here. I am still here…Does someone just willingly leave their home and go away, to come and live at this railway station? No. They only do it if they suffer so much that they can't bear it anymore, and then they leave.

Kolpona's narrative contrasts sharply from dominant narratives, and instead reveals a life history of compounding risk, including abuse as precipitating her decision to leave her kinship household, migrating to Dhaka, and 'end[ing] up on the streets.'

This chapter firstly acknowledges economic poverty as an underlying risk factor for homelessness. Gendered inequalities inherent in cultural, social and legal norms influence women's ability to inherit land, access and retain housing, limits access to education and employment options. These gendered inequalities act as compounding risk factors to existing structural constraints the urban poor face in accessing employment and housing. Yet chronic poverty and structural constraints to housing alone are demonstrated to be insufficient to explain why women become homeless.

One of the predominant differences between homelessness in high and low-income countries are the underlying causes for coming to the streets. Tipple and Speak (2009, p. 146) assert that the absence of formal social protection mechanisms in low-income countries result in a 'greater mix and diversity of individuals with a broader range of backgrounds and abilities' than high income countries, theorizing that social protection may prevent all but the most vulnerable in becoming homeless in high income contexts. Bangladesh is a 'less effective informal security regime,' characterized by poor levels of welfare and public commitments with a dependence on moderate levels of international aid (Gough 2004, p. 43). The urban poor are particularly disadvantaged, with Banks, Roy and Hulme (2011, p. 500) asserting that 'the urban poor have not been equipped with an institutional framework that supports their efforts to increase resilience and access opportunities for upward

mobility.' Given that citizens cannot reasonably expect to meet their security needs through access to state services or participation in open labour markets within this context, Wood (2004, p. 51) concludes that they are forced to rely on 'problematic hierarchical' community and kinship relationships for their housing, economic, physical and social security. Women, in particular, thus become reliant on the institutions of family and marriage for social protection (Kabeer 1988; Tipple & Speak 2009).

This chapter demonstrates that a breakdown or loss of women's relationships with intimate partners, kinship networks and employers are key to understanding gendered homelessness in Bangladesh (Browne 1993; Reeve, Casey & Goudie 2006). My analysis builds on a wide body of homelessness literature, of relevance to understanding poverty and the practice of development, that identifies social exclusion, disaffiliation and a lack of social connectedness as central to the experience of homelessness in high income countries (Edgar, Doherty & Mina-Coull 1999; Grunberg & Eagle 1990; Lovisi et al. 2008; Pleace 2000). The dependency of women on relationships (particularly with men, but also women), for housing and often employment security, makes women particularly vulnerable to the dynamics and rules governing these (Tipple & Speak 2009; United Nations General Assembly 2011). Bangladesh belongs to a belt of countries characterised by 'classic patriarchy,' where patrilocal households are key to the reproduction of the control and subordination of women (Kandiyoti 1988). Within patrilocal patrilineal household structures, girls are married at a young age and are provided housing within their husband's extended family home; here girls become subordinate to the men in the household as well as the more senior women (Kandiyoti 1988). Classical patriarchy is traditionally understood to be characterized by the subordination of women into positions of reliance on their kinship relationships (particularly with men) for housing, economic, physical and social security. Yet my analysis reveals that within the ever-increasing rural to urban migration in Bangladesh, it is not only women's kinship networks that are implicated in the pursuit of security for women, but may also include relationships with employers and friends. As such, the nature and quality of women's relationships, both past and present, are demonstrated to be critical for women's [in]security and can form risk factors to women becoming homeless.

This thesis develops an argument for a need to understand the quality and nature of relationships throughout women's life histories. Specifically, this chapter explores three types of relationships and their role(s) within women's pathways to homelessness. Firstly, the role of kinship, marital and employment relationships upon which women's security of tenure rely. In particular the role of kinship networks in mediating access to education, the role of divorce and/or abandonment and abuse

perpetrated by kinship or places of employment are explored. Secondly, 'inadequate relationships' are defined as those relationships that are unable to provide support when women, particularly new migrants, experience an acute event that put her at risk of homelessness, such as a slum eviction or loss of employment. Finally, the chapter explores 'risk' relationships, including friends and acquaintances that women have within their networks that result in them gravitating towards, or becoming trafficked into, the station.

Becoming homeless: Existing explanatory models

There has been a long-standing debate within homelessness literature regarding the role of individual versus structural factors in explaining homelessness (Fitzpatrick, S 2005; Speak 2004). Individual explanations are typically restrictive, focusing on personal characteristics, 'pathologies', behaviours and needs of homeless individuals, whilst recent research has tended to favour structural explanations, which address macro-level social and economic factors including housing markets, employment levels, and poverty (Fitzpatrick, S 2005; Jacobs, Kemeny & Manzi 1999; Neale 1997). Not every structural or individual factor is applicable to those experiencing homelessness, whilst some individuals may experience several of these factors and not ever become homeless. Attempting to explain why some individuals are more at risk of homelessness than others, Pleace (2000) asserts that structural constraints create environments where homelessness is more likely to occur; individuals without certain skills and resources are more vulnerable to these adverse structural conditions and are thus more likely to become homeless.

Any structural versus individualistic debates of homelessness is largely reductionist, and can limit understandings of homelessness to a static once-off event that has occurred as a result of multiple immediate 'risk' factors converging at a point in time. These discussions often do not investigate of the underlying risk factors, life events and experiences that have accrued throughout an individual's life span, influencing their vulnerability to homelessness (Adkins et al. 2003). Research has illustrated that homelessness results from a complex interaction of 'risk factors' that may render an individual vulnerable to becoming homeless (Fitzpatrick, S 2005). Identified risk factors within literature from high-income countries have included childhood abuse, a lack of social support networks, drug and alcohol abuse, behavioural difficulties, housing eviction and leaving institutional or social care (Anderson, I & Christian 2003; Fitzpatrick, S 2000; Fitzpatrick, S, Bramley & Johnsen 2013).

More recent studies of homelessness have demonstrated that trajectories into homelessness are often non-linear, dynamic and cyclical processes, described as

'pathways' or 'journeys' into homelessness (Clapham 2003; Mayock & Sheridan 2012; Reeve, Casey & Goudie 2006). When adopting this approach, life-history, biographical and case-study methods are utilized, enabling a detailed understanding of the interplay between multiple events, experiences and underlying structural and individual factors that have a part to play within an individual's path to homelessness (Mayock & Sheridan 2012).

Women's pathways to homelessness

Analysis of 25 participant's life histories revealed four primary pathways into homelessness that are typically (but not exclusively) aligned with stages within an individual's lifespan (see Figure 9). The majority of the women interviewed had come to the street as a child or young woman (between 4-20 years old), and thus descriptions provided will largely focus on these demographics. Yet there were also examples of women who had been born on the streets through to elderly women who had recently become homeless. Whilst the 'risk events' depicted within the pathways may be common between women, there is often a unique combination of risk factors and experiences that have resulted in homelessness. Instead of exploring the four pathways identified, there is a focus on identifying and understanding the risk factors that underpin pathway events. My analysis moves the discussion from events immediately precipitating homelessness to the underlying 'risk factors,' aiding development programs and policy to address root causes and risk factors, rather than immediate 'risk events' and causes.

'Coming to the streets' is also not always not a one-time occurrence, but may be a repeated process as women endeavour to navigate the multiple constraints and risk factors both on and off the streets. Pathways are displayed in a linear fashion in Figure 9, however in reality are non-linear and cyclical over the course of a woman's lifespan. Additionally, the risk events detailed within Figure 9, such as 'loss of employment/ slum eviction/dissolution of marriage' represents the events that may occur either alone, or as a series of inter-related events within a short time period, for women. Structural constraints to accessing and maintaining housing as well as disaffilliative relationships form barriers to women getting off of the streets and assist in explaining the chronic and cyclical homelessness for women (see Chapter 7).

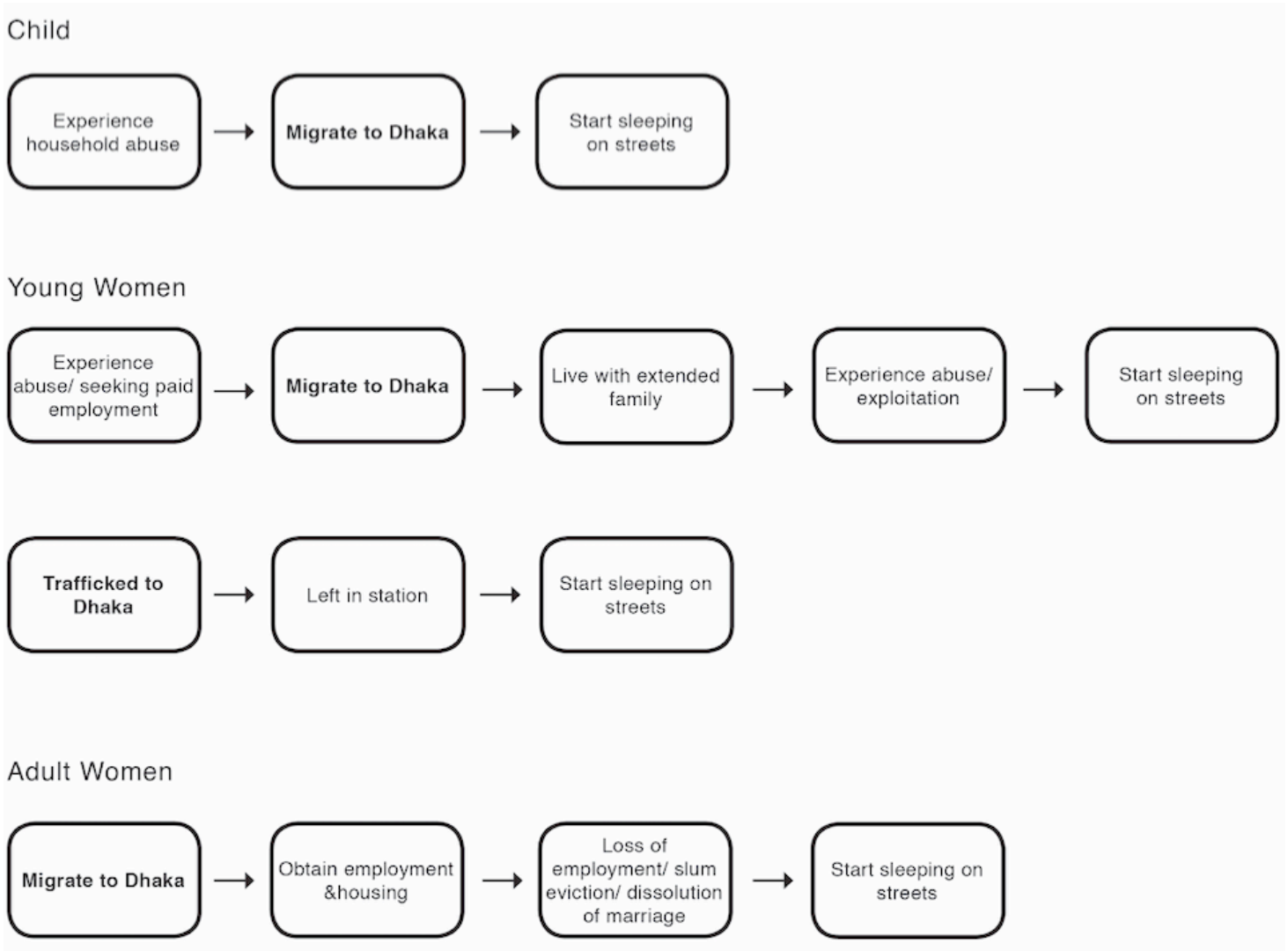


Figure 9: Women's life history pathways to homelessness

Economic poverty and homelessness

Economic poverty is a reoccurring theme throughout the lives of the homeless and forms an underlying risk factor for homelessness. Many women I spoke to had come from families that experienced chronic rural poverty. In Bangladesh, given the majority of the urban poor rely on the rental market for housing, a steady income stream is crucial (Ghafur 2002). Structural barriers to accessing housing and employment for women are discussed below. Poverty and lack of financial assets are cited as the leading 'cause' of homelessness in Dhaka, by 53% and 70% of participants in two city-wide surveys (Ahmed et al. 2011; Koehlmoos et al. 2009). Within the Ahmed et al. (2011) survey, 71% of women compared to 43% of men cite poverty as the leading cause for their homelessness, revealing a distinct gender disparity in reported causes. Likewise, my analysis revealed 'poverty' and *kothin/kharap shomossha* (hard or bad problems) as the predominant initial explanatory narrative for women's homelessness. Yet repeated engagement and discussions with women revealed a much more complex reality and cause(s) of their homelessness.

My research found that economic 'causes' are likely to be over-reported in once-off discussions with women who were homeless, a finding supported by Conticini and Hulme (2007) researching street-children in Dhaka. Attributing homelessness to poverty was found to be somewhat of a socially acceptable and articulable 'reason,' allowing women to bypass the often complex, painful and shameful events that have occurred within their life histories during initial discussions with a stranger (Ellsberg et al. 2001). Likewise, other homeless studies highlight that the 'reasons' identified by homeless individuals within interviews are not necessarily the key underlying causes of homelessness. As Adkins et al. (2003, p. ii) note, 'causes [of women's homelessness] are wider and more systemic than the individualized concept of reasons would lead us to believe.' Developing relationships with participants through repeated and long-term engagement enabled exploration and identification of underlying risk factors and processes leading to a woman's homelessness, as the following narrative illustrates.

Halima's Story

Halima was a woman in her thirties living in the station who had experienced cyclical homelessness over the last ten years. Over the course of fieldwork, I held several interviews and discussions with Halima. I gradually pieced together her life-history which illustrates the complex interplay of structural and individual reasons for her homelessness. Poverty was articulated as the reason for Halima's homelessness

during our initial interview. She told me, 'I first came (to the station), because things were very difficult, I had to decide whether I'd pay for rent or feed my children. We were poor.' Subsequent observations and reoccurring interviews uncovered that whilst Halima's husband had regular employment as a rickshaw driver, he spent a significant proportion of his earnings on gambling and drugs. She had married her husband after running away from her aunt's house where she had experienced abuse working as a domestic worker. The eviction and closure of the slum in which they had been living had precipitated their first episode of homelessness. Halima and her husband had been alternatively living between the station and another nearby slum for the last five years, depending on how much money Halima had been able to save from the intermittent money her husband gave her from his earnings, as well as her own earnings from irregular bouts of employment. Given Halima had children, her own employment options were significantly reduced, increasing her reliance on her husband's income in order to retain housing. Since her husband's gambling had increased in the last few months following the death of their son, she had not been receiving regular income from him. As a result, they had been unable to pay their rent and had been forced to leave their most recent slum housing. Halima and her husband came to the station in my second month of fieldwork, and continued to live there over the subsequent eight months. The last time I spoke to Halima, she spoke of her husband's ever increasing drug use and the 'fear' that she would never leave the station.

Halima's story illustrates the multiple risk events and factors, beyond those of poverty, which render an individual vulnerable to initial, cyclical and eventually chronic homelessness. The following discussion will explore how, in addition to poverty, gender forms a particular risk factor for women's homelessness with implications for creating structural constraints and shaping social relationships as compounding risk factors that play out within women's pathways to sleeping on the streets.

Gender inequality and homelessness

Access to, and the retention of, housing is a key issue in understanding gender equality. As Rolnik notes:

> …women's right to adequate housing is central not only to understanding the female face of poverty worldwide, but also to understanding the dynamics of gender inequality itself, both within and outside the home.
>
> (2009, p. 3)

My analysis reveals gender inequality, inherent within the social, cultural and legal norms define the nature of employment, inheritance and housing practices available to women, and create structural constraints to accessing housing (Fitzpatrick, S 2005; Tipple & Speak 2009).

Access to employment and migration

Women face gendered, cultural and social constraints in accessing and retaining formal employment opportunities in Bangladesh. Within narratives, women recurringly discussed the 'difficulties' or 'impossibility' of obtaining employment in rural areas, with migration to the city viewed as a solution to these lack of opportunities. For example, one participant, Shahanara shared why her and her husband had initially come and remained in Dhaka:

> …[We came to Dhaka] to earn money and for food. We can get everything here, clothes, etc. If I lived in my village, I would have to work at someone's house, I would get only three meals a day and a little money. That's not enough for myself, forget about the rest of my family... That's why I struggle and live in Dhaka.
>
> (5th November 2014)

Potential paid employment as a predominant 'pull' factor driving rural to urban migration is supported by existing migration research (NIPORT et al. 2013; Ullah 2004).

Once in the city, there are two primary opportunities to obtain formal employment for women: garments factory or domestic service work. A common narrative was women's chronically poor rural families sending them to work or live with extended family in the city to obtain employment, as illustrated in Shima's account of becoming homeless:

> …I was from a good family, although my parents were very poor. From the day I left my parents' house I became separated from them. After my father died, my mother told me 'you find your own way now daughter.' I came to Dhaka as an unmarried woman to live in my aunties house. I didn't like the work. I had never worked before for food…I couldn't cope with it. I had an argument with my auntie, and after that argument I came to this station. I couldn't go back to my mother, how would she feed me?
>
> (16th October 2014)

Shima's migration was precipitated by her father's death and her kinship household no longer having the resources to support her. She had been sent to Dhaka to work as a housemaid in her aunt's household. Following a breakdown in the relationship with her aunt, due to Shima feeling like her labour was being exploited, Shima's housing and employment became untenuable. Shima had very few options available to her; she could go back to her village (where her mother was unable to support her) or sleep on the streets. So Shima came to the station, where she's been living for the last five years. Shima's story illustrates chronic poverty, being a new migrant and unmarried, experiencing abuse within one's housing and employment and the reliance on relationships for security of tenure as compounding risk factors for becoming homeless. Migration, abuse and exploitation experienced by domestic workers as risk factors for homelessness are explored within 'migration and inadequate relationships' section below.

Engagement in the garments sector was the alternative form of formal employment for women. Yet the women of the station reported significant barriers in accessing and retaining garments factory work due to their illiteracy, the prevalence of widespread abusive and exploitative workplace practices and marital partners control over their workplace participation (Paul-Majumder & Begum 2000; Salway, Jesmin & Rahman 2005). The growth of the garments sector in Bangladesh over the last decade has provided increasing opportunities for women to enter the formal labour market. Garment factories are recognized as favouring the employment of women due to the relative ease with which women can be exploited due to their lower wage expectations and relative bargaining power than that of men (Paul-Majumder & Begum 2000). Female workforce participation in Bangladesh has been found to be correlated with levels of education, whereby access and retention of garment factory jobs is particularly difficult if a woman has little or no education, with many factories requiring women to be able to sign their name (Hossain & Tisdell 2005; Kabeer 1991). Illiteracy or low education levels thus limit the access to formal employment opportunities. Once a woman had obtained a garments job, it was widespread abusive and exploitative practices that became are risk events for women's homelessness, as will be discussed within the 'risk relationships' section.

The loss of, or withdrawal from, formal employment is a risk event that often immediately precipitates homelessness for women. Several women discussed how their regular monthly income had made up the majority of their monthly rental payments, whilst husbands fluctuating daily income from engagement in the informal employment sector (eg. driving a rickshaw or daily labour) was utilized for daily expenses such as food and household items. Once women lost or had left formal employment, it was often difficult for families to meet rental payments. In the

absence of other forms of social safety nets, savings or assets, homelessness ensued, as is demonstrated by Parul's story.

Parul had lived in the station for approximately nine months when I met her. Parul discussed being often the sole income earner for her family, identifying her husband's 'laziness' and her own loss of employment as the reasons for their homelessness. Her husband worked intermittently, occasionally pulling a rickshaw, or working at a wedding venue. Parul had worked for a garments factory for several months, with her monthly income contributing to a significant proportion of their rental payments. Parul's husband had 'forced' her to leave employment, following the factory refusing to pay her a month's wages following her one-week absence from the workplace due to illness. Yet leaving the factory had meant Parul and her husband were unable to make their rental payment of their slum dwelling. Following an altercation between Parul's husband and their landlord, they were evicted, with one day's notice. So they had come to the station.

Engaging in the informal economy, characterized by infrequent and fluctuating income, was the only other livelihood option available to women. Employment included operating a small business (requiring capital that was often a formidable barrier for women), day labour, scavenging, begging or sex work. The uncertain and seasonal nature of income obtained from engagement in the informal economy creates insecurity and strains women's ability to save for monthly rental payments. Additionally, women are particularly vulnerable to harassment and regularly experience the confiscation of their equipment, exploitation and violence when working in public space which may additionally discourage engagement in informal livelihoods (Etzold 2015). Livelihood uncertainty and fluctuating income from informal employment may further create barriers to women retaining housing.

Land and inheritance laws

Land and inheritance laws in Bangladesh further perpetuate gender inequality and create gendered structural constraints to housing. Women have disparate rights with respect to property inheritance and ownership according to Bangladesh land law. Upon the death of a male property owner:

> …a wife inherits…one eighth of her husband's property if she has…one or more children and one fourth if she is childless; a daughter inherits…half of a son's share; if there are no male children, a daughter inherits a fixed share and the rest of the estate is inherited by other agnatic relatives (on the male side of the family), such as a brother or father of the deceased.

(Zaman 1999, p. 39)

Whilst women have some land inheritance rights under Bangladeshi law, these are often disregarded in rural areas in favour of male family members. 'In the name of local custom and culture,' married daughters give up their inheritance to male members of their families in exchange for *najor* (the right to visit their fathers or brothers home) (Zaman 1999, p. 39). Ghafur notes:

> …in reality, sisters in an average poor household in traditional rural society usually waive rights over their meagre share in favour of their brothers. Sisters expect that in return their brothers would look after them in moment of their unforeseen crisis.

(2002, p. 77)

Women are thus particularly vulnerable to homelessness in the event of divorce or the death of their husband and when extended male family members are either unwilling or unable to uphold traditional social welfare and protection practices (Zaman 1999).

Several women discussed issues of land ownership within families, whereby land had been 'stolen' in land ownership disputes by older brothers or powerful extended family members following the death of a husband or father. Salma discussed how, following the death of her husband, the land they had been living on was taken by her step-brother, leaving her without any financial or physical assets. Salma reported that she had subsequently contracted typhoid, was not provided treatment and as a result reportedly became 'mentally ill' (experiencing convulsions and confusion). The shame associated with the mental illness, combined with chronic poverty, drove her to migrate to Dhaka in search of employment. She explained,

> …my father died when I was very little…I was raised by my stepbrother. I got married off, but the man was also poor… He had no parents, he had nobody. He had some land inherited from his grandfather. Then after two years he died and my step-brother took the land. Because of typhoid fever I was bedridden for eight months, I didn't get any treatment because of a lack of money…I developed mental problems because of that. I didn't have any brothers or sisters of my own at home, just a stepbrother and his wife. They didn't look after me…I couldn't stay at my home village. With mental problems and no money, I came to Dhaka…looking for work.

(2nd February 2015)

In Asia, 'land grabbing' disproportionally affect women, partly due to their lack of awareness regarding their legal rights as well as the means to act upon these (United

Nations General Assembly 2011). The gender discrimination prevalent within land ownership and inheritance practices in Bangladesh force women to become dependent on their relationships with their husbands, brother and fathers. Women are particularly vulnerable to homelessness if these relationships are dissolved or broken as a result of death, divorce or abandonment, as discussed below.

Housing

The lack of availability of low-cost housing and evictions of informal settlements combined with the high rate of migration create both supply and demand constraints to the housing market for the urban poor in Bangladesh (Streatfield & Karar 2008). Ghafur's report on homelessness in Bangladesh identifies:

> …the urban poor's need for better access to land and for secure tenure on land they are occupying [a]s perhaps the single most crucial issue for ensuring adequate shelter for all.
>
> (2002, p. 15)

The report found that the shelter deficit in urban areas was 'huge in magnitude' (Ghafur 2002, p.12). The urban poor experience higher living costs than their rural counterparts, particularly with respect to housing and access to services (Banks 2010; Banks, Roy & Hulme 2011).

The state systematically ignores the housing needs of the urban poor, despite policies to the contrary. The National Housing Policy (NHP), Clause 4.3 has committed to, 'enhanc[ing] affordability of the disadvantaged and low-income groups, through provision of credit for income generation and income enhancement, housing loans at specially low interest' (National Housing Authority 2005). Yet despite the seemingly promising pro-poor and holistic focus of this policy, as Ghafur (2002, p. 14) notes, the 'words and works of [policy] rarely match.' Instead, the state, rather than protecting the housing needs of the urban poor, often instigate informal settlement evictions. There is a constant and prevalent threat of eviction within informal settlements (Rahman, Mohammed Mahbubur 2001). Landowners wish to reclaim valuable private land from 'illegal squatters,' whilst the state justifies evictions from public land in the name of 'removing dens of crime,' 'ending illegal consumption of public utilities,' and to 'improve the aesthetics and hygiene of the city' in an effort to reclaim valuable urban land (Ghafur 2002, p. 45).

For newly arrived migrants, a sudden shock such as a slum eviction can render them particularly vulnerable to homelessness. With very few financial assets or social networks, individuals or households turn to the streets as a short-term solution for a

place to sleep. For some, their homelessness is an issue of economics and a short-term inability to find alternative shelter, with these individuals/households typically moving to another slum once sufficient funds have been saved. For others with compounding structural or individual risk factors, a slum eviction may precipitate a more chronic or cyclical state of homelessness, as the story of Halima previously illustrated.

Single women face particular difficulties in accessing housing. Several unmarried women discussed not being able to find housing within urban informal settlement (as their only affordable option). Women reported that potential landlords immediately enquired about their marital status and when a woman reported that she was unmarried, was immediately refused tenancy. Women attributed this refusal to the widely prevailing assumption or concern that a single woman seeking housing is 'bad'. Women seeking housing alone are assumed to be outside of a sanctioned, socially acceptable relationship with a male family member or spouse, and potentially a practicing sex-worker. In cases where women have few social networks to vouch for them, particularly in the case of new migrants, obtaining housing was difficult if not impossible and sleeping on the streets became their only viable option.

Gender and relationships

Building on critical feminist development theory that calls for the 'gender relations in which women are subordinated [to] be problematized,' my analysis demonstrates that it is both women and men conforming to, perpetuating and subverting 'the rules of the game' of 'classic patriarchy' that shape women's relationships and determine women's risk of homelessness (Kandiyoti 1988; Pearson & Jackson 1998, p. 5; Whitehead 1990). Women constantly alluded to the crucial role relationships held within their pathways to homelessness in both overt and more implicit ways within discussions of their life histories. For example, Minera had lived on and off in the station for the last five years and became one of my key informants. During one of our last interviews, Minera endeavoured to explain why she had become and remained homeless, detailing her previous history of abuse within her family and ongoing marital relationship difficulties, finally concluding, 'if I didn't have a troubled life I wouldn't be here' (11th April 2015). Broken, deficit and 'troubled' relationships were not limited and kept in the past, rather they were painful realities holding ongoing ramifications for women's lives, livelihoods and capabilities.

Security of tenure relationships

Childhood abuse and education

A woman's experiences and events during childhood were found to be critical in shaping her level of education obtained (or human capital) and relationships within kinship networks. Household and kinship relationships are key in reproduction of gendered inequality, with Kabeer asserting that kinship relationships:

> …structure gender both as individual identity as well as social inequality… familial relationships are a primary mechanism through which social meanings are invested in and social controls exercised over women's bodies, labour, sexuality, reproductive capacity and life choices.
>
> (1994, p. 57-58)

Traditional patrilocal household structures in Bangladesh, institutionalize the control and subordination of women, where Islam is only partially implicated (Kabeer 1988). Men are given the role of guarding and protecting the honour of a family, resulting in the surveillance and control of women's lives (Kabeer 1988). Women are thus forced into a 'patriarchal bargain,' where household structures and relationships ensures the protection and honour of women in return for their subordination and dependence on men for their economic and housing security (Kabeer 1988; Kandiyoti 1988).

The majority of women interviewed were born into chronically poor rural households. Shanta discussed her childhood, saying:

> …I couldn't get… educated; I didn't have my own mother (who was dead)… Because of poverty… I used to work in the fields with my father…I would work… all day. He would take me to harvest the crops, I'd carry bundles on my head all day… My father also sent me to work at people's homes…He would beat me if I didn't go to work one day, not feed me properly…I didn't want to live with him… people would think that [my father] has no fault and that the fault was in us. No one…would be able to tell what type of person he is, how many faces he has. Only those who are close to him really know who he is, what kind of person he is…'
>
> (24th February 2015)

Shanta's life-history demonstrates the way in which rural poverty, non-traditional familial structures, abusive parents and illiteracy can act as compounding risk factors for homelessness.

Non-traditional family structures were identified as a risk factor for women's homelessness. Many of women's life-histories documented 'non-traditional' childhood households that had experienced a reconfiguration of inter-household dynamics as a result of parental death, inter-personal conflict and violence, marital instability or divorce. In the event of a divorce, the mothers had typically left (or been forced to leave) the household, leaving the children in the care of the father. Likewise Conticini and Hulme (2007, p. 24) found that street-children reported 'low levels of cohesion and integration' within households. These events often adversely impacted girls who became vulnerable to abuse, labour exploitation by parents, extended family or subsequent step-parents (Wood & Salway 2000).

Being unable or unwilling to access education, and consequently experiencing illiteracy, was a predominant and reoccurring feature within women's narratives. Some women had never attended school, whilst others had only sporadically attended for the first few years of primary school. Likewise a survey by Ahmed et al. (2011) found that 91% of homeless women surveyed in Dhaka were illiterate, with women more likely to be illiterate than men (79% of men). Illiteracy could be a reflection of the family's socio-economic status and/or a deviation from a traditional family structure. Shanta articulated her frustration that if she were educated then she would have the ability to access employment within the garments sector:

> …I cannot even write one letter and so they are not employing me in a garments factory. But if I had a little education… then they would definitely give me employment.
>
> (12th January 2015)

Given access to formal employment is often contingent on women's ability to read and write, illiteracy is a particular risk factor for a woman becoming and remaining homeless in Bangladesh.

Inter-household verbal, sexual or physical abuse was widely documented within women's life-histories. Women told accounts of being starved, neglected, chained, locked up and beaten as girls, whilst informal conversations with street children (both boys and girls) re-iterated these experiences. Abuse was typically perpetrated by a father, brother, uncle or step-parent (in particular step-mothers). Minera explained it was the abuse from her step-mother that precipitated leaving her kinship household:

> …my father re-married after my mother died. My step-mother used to misbehave with us. She used to make me and my sister work. Because [of this] I am like this (living in the station) today. I don't go to my village anymore. I went home once, and thought of staying back if my step

> mother changed her behaviour, but she didn't and I came back [to the station].

(11th April 2015)

There have been limited studies investigating child abuse in Bangladesh (Hadi 2000; Khan & Lynch 1997). The use of physical violence is perceived as an accepted and 'essential' component of child-rearing in Bangladesh, as a means to teach children to behave in socially acceptable ways (Ghuznavi, Ghuznavi & Khan 2001). Attitudes and practices that normalize the use of violence may instil an attitude of submission and reduces the likelihood of girls confronting abuse, which may partly explain why less girls than boys become homeless (Blanchet 1996; Conticini & Hulme 2007). Violence and abuse within kinship networks has been documented as being a primary cause of children leaving households and subsequently becoming homeless in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al. 2011; Conticini & Hulme 2007).

<u>Abusive and exploitative employment practices</u>

Abusive and exploitative employment practices were risk factors for women's homelessness, prompting women to leave their place of employment. Of note, experiences of abuse as domestic workers within households were reoccurring within women's accounts. Abuse and exploitation of domestic workers has received little attention within the literature, potentially due to difficulties accessing this population. Given that many domestic workers live at their place of employment, they are subject to long working hours (15+ hours a day) and vulnerable to physical, sexual and verbal abuse from their employers. There is little or no state regulation in domestic workers living conditions or wages, with intervention only infrequently occurring if a worker received life threatening or deadly injuries (Pyle & Ward 2003).

When adolescent girls migrated to Dhaka alone from rural areas, housing would initially be sought with extended family members. In several instances, women recounted being forced to engage in domestic duties within the household for little to no payment in exchange for food and a place to sleep. Women discussed the 'difficult' work they were forced to engage in, including long hours and physically draining work as well as instances of abuse perpetrated by household members. As Nasima explained:

> …I left [the household] because I didn't like the work [as a domestic worker]. It's painful. [It's] a lot of hard work. Sometimes I had to work until 11pm or 1 am. Then the next morning they would wake me up at *namaaz* (the Muslim call to prayer at sunrise)… that's why I didn't like that work.

(8th October 2014)

Women stressed how 'difficult' and 'painful' the work was, similar to narratives highlighting the severity of violence experienced within their families, illustrative that this kind of employment is untenable over the longer term.

Likewise, Shanta related several instances of abuse within the formal employment market throughout her life history. Early on in our discussions she told me about reoccurring incidents of sexual assault when working as a domestic servant when she was approximately 11 or 12 years old. She reflected on the inescapability of abuse and exploitation for domestic workers and recounted her own experience:

> …[my employer] would pull, pull me by the arms, place his hands on my breasts…I yelled and shouted. I went away, I had to leave, he was a bad man (would sexually and physically abuse her). I couldn't find any work, then when some house did take me, it was the same situation just in a different house; if the father was good then the son was bad, if the son was good then the father wasn't good. Could I stand it anymore? It would get to 10 or 11 at night by the time dinner and the cleaning was finished. If I lay down in the kitchen for some sleep, they'd pull at the sheets or my feet, tell me to finish work even though it is 12[am]. So I ran away.

(12th January 2015)

When women felt they could no longer continue to stay within the household, often following a particularly severe incidence of abuse or unfair workplace practice, they would decide to leave. One younger woman, Pia, discussed how after a particularly adversarial conversation with her aunt, she left the house and 'wandered in the market, on the streets. I got lost and ended up at the station. I didn't want to go back' (12th May 2015). With very few social networks to draw on, and no other options of housing in the city, women would often end up on the streets.

Women cited abusive and exploitative experiences as the reasons for their initial and continued homelessness. Reoccurring instances of exploitation and abuse, within both domestic work and garments factories made women reluctant to re-engage in these forms of employment (Shoma 2010). Reported abuse within factories is consistent with other studies that report 'harassment and molestation by factory owners and managers' (Feldman 2010, p. 307). The conundrum faced by women was that despite these conditions, formal employment offered one of the few pathways out of homelessness for women. Bilkis, a woman who no longer lived in, but frequently visited, the station explained how she rationalised re-engagement in formal employment to other women:

> …I have advised others to earn money by working in households. They said 'how could they trust the people there?'. I told them in the station you can't trust everyone either. Not everyone is bad in households.
>
> (28th January 2015)

Bilkis had decided that attempting to re-engage with formal employment was a risk worth taking in the interests of leaving the station.

Likewise, Shanta's life history detailed her repeated attempts to pursue various forms of employment. The last interview I conducted with Shanta discussed around her most recent attempt at obtaining employment as a garments worker in June 2015. She had returned to the station after two months, citing insufficient wages, poor living conditions, 'disgusting' food, exploitative practices and working conditions as the reasons she had left the factory. Shanta had injured her foot whilst working and had been unable to walk and thus work for four days. For every day a worker was not present at the factory, they were docked 800 taka (19% of their monthly wage and approximately four days wages) irrespective of cause. Shanta told me she had 'given up' on ever attempting re-engagement with formal employment and that 'the street is better than [workplace conditions]' (22 August 2015). Abusive and exploitative workplace conditions with garments factories and households require further regulation and government intervention in order to make these spaces safe and accountable for women. Regulation and accountability of formal employment market is crucial to begin to address gendered homelessness, given that engaging in formal employment is one of the few opportunities for women to leave the streets without a reliance on kinship or marital relationships.

Marital relationships

Broken marital relationships were one of the immediate events that precipitated a woman beginning to sleep at the station. This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Tipple and Speak (2003), which found that divorce, abandonment or inter-marital abuse to be common causes of homelessness for women within developing countries. Compounding risk factors of either a lack of economic assets or social relationships render a woman particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless following divorce. Additionally, the stigma associated with divorce or dissolution of a relationship may further weaken social ties with kinship networks, increase a women's risk of homelessness and may discourage her from going back to her village to seek assistance.

Within women's accounts of their marital relationship breakdowns, the husband had almost inevitably instigated the cessation of a relationship, often following a second

marriage. Whist polygamous marriage have been acknowledged as a source of discord amongst the urban poor in Bangladesh, little has been discussed regarding the power imbalances and distribution of resources following a second marriage (Jesmin & Salway 2000; Rashid 2006). According to women, their husbands would begin an extra-marital relationship with another woman and subsequently wish to marry her. There were typically two scenarios that then occurred. Either the man divorced his wife and she was forced to leave the household, or the man decided to take a second wife. In the event of a second marriage, men would often allow the first wife to remain in the household and begin supporting the second wife in an alternative location, typically a nearby informal settlement and often initially unbeknownst to the first wife (Rashid 2011). Supporting two households often strained the financial resources of the man, particularly if either one of the women were unemployed or engaged within the informal sector with a sporadic income, as was common. Women discussed how over time, their husbands becoming infrequent visitors to the home, providing less money for food and other necessities and then finally neglect to pay the rent. The woman may be able to continue to live in the house for a month or two, by paying the rent with her savings, selling assets or by leveraging social capital with a landlord to provide an extension on their rental payments. However, if inconsistent or inadequate income from ones' husband continued to occur and a steady source of income was unable to be obtained through employment, women were inevitably forced to leave the slum. A second marriage amongst the urban poor is thus a risk event for a current/first wife and places her at the potential risk of becoming homeless.

Migration and deficit relationships

Migration is a central event within pathways to homelessness, as depicted in Figure 9 (Tipple & Speak 2009). Whilst migration enabled some women to achieve greater economic independence and freedom, migration can also become an unsuccessful livelihood strategy and a risk event within women's pathways to homelessness (Jolly, Reeves & Piper 2005; Tipple & Speak 2009). An absence of formal social protection frameworks and institutions for the urban poor in Bangladesh exposes migrants to multiple risks, including the structural constraints of accessing and retaining housing and employment in cities (Banks, Roy & Hulme 2011).

Rural to urban migrants with low levels of education may find it particularly difficult to obtain work and secure housing (Haque, ME & Islm 2012). Migrants with limited financial and social safety nets are especially vulnerable to risk events such as slum evictions or sudden unemployment which may render them homeless. Recent

migrants (those living in the city for less than two years) have been shown to be less economically well off than those who have been living there for longer, with economic status improving over time as migrants 'settle into' cities (NIPORT et al. 2013). Limited financial assets can be attributed to the costs associated with migration and re-establishing a household, the cash economy and increased expenses of the city, as well as difficulties in obtaining regular paid employment. As such, new migrants may initially find it difficult to afford housing and resort to living on the streets as a temporary livelihood strategy (Farhana, Rahman & Rahman 2012; Tipple & Speak 2009).

Migrants with few or 'deficit' social networks in either the city or rural areas are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. In a new, unfamiliar environment, new migrants are often dependent on their social networks, who may assist mitigating the risks associated with migration and act as a form of social protection (Kuhn 2003; Rahman, Md Mizanur & Lian 2005). Migration is not a simple task, requiring connections to establish even the most basic requirements of housing and employment and negotiate the multiple social, political and economic challenges that characterize urban life (Afsar 2000; Rokib & Islam 2009). Within the informal settlements of Dhaka, access and retention of shelter is highly dependent on client-patron relationships with *mastaans* (local leaders) who control not only access to the rental market but also to services such as water and electricity (Wood 2003). When an acute event such as a loss of employment or slum eviction occur, women and families require a 'buffer' in order to withstand these risk events. New migrants with limited financial assets, may overly rely on their social networks in order to secure temporary housing until alternative employment and/or housing is obtained. Parul's story illustrates the particular vulnerability of new migrants and how inadequate relationships within the urban setting compounds the risk of becoming homeless.

Parul was the woman who had left the garment's factory job and soon after had been evicted from slum housing following her husband's altercation with the landlord. Parul has a tenuous relationship with her family in the village who has previously provided her with monetary assistance, but were unable to continue to do so. Her relationship with her in-laws in Dhaka was likewise fragile, and who were unwilling to provide ongoing assistance. Parul explained:

> …my husband is not very reliable. If any type of problem arises he does not want to stay to deal with it… I have to work hard to pay rent. My husband doesn't work because he is very lazy…He just wants to lounge around. Sometimes I used to leave home to go to my parent's home, but they are tired of paying so much for one of their daughters. I no longer go to my parents to ask for money. My father asks me how much more

> can I give? (she starts crying)… I have ruined my life. I can no longer show my face to my relatives. I have left my parents and my relatives to live on some street. What other choice do I have?... Even my in-laws do not let me stay with them for more than five days. They keep asking me when I will leave. I feel bad when they ask me to leave so many times.
>
> (24th February 2015)

When kinship networks are unwilling or unable to provide shelter or financial assistance, women (and their families) are at risk of homelessness. Unwillingness to provide assistance stemmed from kinship networks perceiving a woman (and husband if married) as deficient in some way. A lack of support could be justified due to the perceived laziness of the woman/couple or on the moral deficiency of the woman (in the case of a divorced single woman) that had brought shame to the family. In other cases, resources within the family had become strained and they were simply unable to financially or physically accommodate additional members within the household. For some women, asking their kinship networks for assistance or returning to their village was simply not an option. Either key family members were dead or women had fled abusive relationships and asking for assistance from these would only expose them to further abuse and violence.

Risk relationships

Finally, relationships that brought women to the station are characterized as 'risk relationships.' Risk relationships include women's relationships with other women who live in the station prior to becoming homeless (station relationships) as well as young girls being trafficked into the city by much older women under false pretences and left stranded in the station.

Station relationships

Prior to sleeping in the station, several women had been familiar with the station and had pre-existing relationships with individuals who lived there. Some women had lived in a nearby informal settlement and had spent time in the station at some point. Others had engaged in livelihood strategies, such as begging or scavenging, in the Kamalapur area when they became at risk of homelessness. Other younger girls had friends who had 'brought' them to the station, particularly after experiencing abuse from either household members or employers.

Razia began coming by train with a group of friends to the station when she was approximately eight years old. Throughout her adolescence, she periodically came to

Dhaka, spending periods of time in the station. Recounting her childhood, Razia explained:

> …[my parents] couldn't keep me [at home]. I came here [to the station] with other kids…I used to stay here and liked it….Why wouldn't I like it here? I stay with everyone, roam around with the people here, we eat together, and talk to them. I have my freedom.

(28th January 2015)

Razia was married by her parents when she was approximately fifteen years old (however was unclear of the dates) and conceived soon after her marriage. Razia described the events leading to her becoming homeless:

> …after I got married...I gave birth to my son. My husband met his kid and [my husband] died seven days later. My husband came to Dhaka with his friends, who killed him… After he died, I came [to the station] after two months. At first I stayed in Shantibag, then at my aunt's house in Khilgaon. She was not nice to me, so then I came here.

(28th January 2015)

Razia's story illustrates that there were multiple compounding risk events, including the death of her husband and abuse from her aunt that had resulted in her eventual homelessness. Yet it was her pre-existing experiences and relationships with other girls from the station that had led her back to the station, a place that represented freedom, community and escape. Likewise Uddin, MJ et al. (2011) identifies that a combination of both 'pull' and 'push' relationships may result in children becoming homeless. Their research found that children developed a 'fascination' with street life and developed 'intimacy' and social bonds with street children, acting as 'pull factors,' much like the 'station relationships' discussed by women and the 'freedom' associated with station life (see Chapter 7). Structural constraints and abuse within families and workplaces act as 'push' factors and as a result girls and women are more likely to view the streets as a viable livelihood alternative to home life given their pre-existing relationships with other women or girls already living on the streets.

Trafficking

Being trafficked to Kamalapur was an additional means by which young adolescent girls 'ended up' in the station. Several women recounted stories of older women coming to rural villages and targeting poorer families, promising a garments factory job for their adolescents in exchange for 500 – 1000 Taka (8 – 16 AUD). These women

would take up to several girls from the villages on the train to Dhaka. When they arrived, the woman would ask the girl(s) to wait at the platform whilst she obtained transportation. The women would disappear, leaving the girl(s) who often had little to no money, stranded in the station.

This is Muni's story. Muni was approximately nineteen years old during fieldwork and had been living in the station for the last 15 months. Her story illustrates the cyclic nature of homelessness and compounding risk factors within a woman's pathways to homelessness. Muni was born into a chronically poor rural household and her father had passed away when she was fifteen. With her mother unable to support her, she was trafficked to Dhaka in search of employment and then abandoned in the station. Given her acute vulnerability as a new migrant, Muni entered into a marriage as both a livelihoods and protective strategy. Marriage temporarily removed Muni from the station, instead living in a nearby slum with her new husband. However, when Muni's husband left her for another woman, she once again became homeless. Muni told me:

> …a lady brought me [to the station]. I asked her to get me a job in Dhaka and my mother gave her 500 taka (8.3 AUD). I heard that if you come to Dhaka you get employed in garments factories. But she didn't get me a job, she brought me here and just left me…The lady ruined my life…I met Rini's (her daughter) father on the very first day. I remember sitting on the field near eight number [platform], when Rini's father asked me why I was here. I told him everything. His father also liked me and we got married…after 15 days…I thought, now that I am in the station, I am under a lot of threat. Many guys were after me…So I decided to get married to him…We lived in a nearby slum with his family…After my husband left me (for another woman), I had to leave the slum, His family forced me to leave…He left when Rini was three months old. Now I am here.
>
> (29th April 2015)

Muni's story illustrates that it is not just the risk events and factors that lead a woman to the station, but also what events transpire and what livelihood strategies are engaged in once on the streets that shape women's pathways into, and out of, homelessness as the following chapters will explore.

Conclusion

It is compounding risk factors and events accrued throughout a woman's lifespan, and very rarely one risk event, that results in women arriving in Kamalapur. The

mainstream development studies rhetoric that limits the causes of homeless solely to poverty and structural constraints, results in a narrow conceptualization of homelessness and limits the efficacy of programs and policies developed (Pleace 2000). Additionally, the public narrative that constructs women as morally deficient and 'bad' legitimate the perpetration of state violence against women as 'undesirable' occupants of public space (cf. Chapter 4). Yet existing development studies and public narratives do not provide a holistic conceptualization of the risks events and factors that lead to women's homelessness within this context. Rather, my analysis has demonstrated that both poverty and gender discrimination within social, cultural and legal norms create structural constraints for women to inheriting land and accessing employment and housing, reproducing and entrenching gender inequality for women. The quality and nature of women's social relationships, shaped by social and cultural norms, are demonstrated to act as key risk factors for homelessness and which exacerbate existing structural constraints to housing and chronic poverty.

Relationships may act as both 'push' and 'pull' factors to women becoming homeless. A particular risk factor for women was the loss or breakdown of relationships, particularly within kinship networks. My analysis has illustrated the changing nature and dynamics of social relationships throughout a woman's lifespan, and which directly influences economic, housing and physical [in]security, a theme that will be further explored in Chapter 6. The loss of a relationship may not only be an event that passively occurs to a woman as a result of death, divorce or abandonment, but may also be the result of women making the decision to leave a household or place of employment following severe abuse and exploitation. In doing so, women were observed to subvert 'the rules of the game' and reject the 'patriarchal bargain' of protection from men in return for submission and dependence (Kandiyoti 1988). Under classic patriarchy, informal social protection is provided through patrilocal households and kinship relationships when women experience a risk event (such as divorce, eviction or loss of employment). Yet when these kinship networks either no longer exist, are unwilling or unable to provide social protection, women have few other viable housing and livelihood options beyond resorting to a life on the street. My analysis demonstrates that the assumption that kinship networks can, and will, uphold this 'patriarchal bargain' and provide viable forms of physical and social protection is problematic. Women's life histories demonstrated the multiple ways in which social relationships prove inadequate, perpetrate violence or prevent girls from accessing an education, all of which are risk factors for women becoming homelessness. The phrase 'troubled lives' represents the way in which broken or problematic relationships are key to understanding the reproduction of violence and

inequity for the women in this study, with implications for their past, present and future lives, livelihoods and capabilities.

There is a need for development practitioners and policy makers to address the underlying risk factors for women's vulnerability to homelessness. The lack of social protection systems for urban poor women experiencing 'risk events' (eg. marital breakdown, loss of housing or employment) requires urgent attention. Gendered discourses and norms surrounding women's roles, power within kinship, intimate and employment relationships additionally create and perpetuate women's vulnerability to becoming homeless (Ghafur 2002; Kabeer 1988). Gender discrimination within social, cultural and legal norms create structural constraints to women obtaining an education, inheriting land, accessing employment and housing (Zaman 1999). Attention must particularly be paid to ensuring girls have access to education, given illiteracy amongst women is a particular indicator of homelessness, excluding them from accessing formal employment opportunities (Ahmed et al. 2011; Hossain & Tisdell 2005). Additionally, it is recommended that safe housing options are developed and made accessible within cities for single women at acute risk of homelessness following a marital breakdown or loss/cessation of employment.

Figure 10: A woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Chapter Four - The vulnerability of station life: Everyday uncertainty and violence

Introduction

This chapter aims to uncover the processes of vulnerability for women implicit in everyday life (Wisner & Luce 1993). The recognition of housing as a fundamental right is well established, with Wood (2003, p. 678) discussing adequate shelter as a 'key asset, which underpins many other components of successful livelihoods… offer[ing] security along economic, social, cultural and psychological dimensions' (UN General Assembly 1948). Yet there is a dearth of development studies literature that analyses the vulnerability that arises from experiencing homelessness and seeking shelter in precarious contexts. A three step analysis of vulnerability is provided in this chapter. Firstly, I define and explores the concept of vulnerability and its relevance to development studies. Drawing on the definition developed by Watts and Bohle (1993), I propose a model designed to interrogate the vulnerability implicit in everyday life. The model provides a useful tool for development practitioners to disaggregate and uncover the complexities of vulnerability for a specific context, an individual or population under consideration. The model offers a means to identify key risk factors and their underlying causes, and thus where programs or policy may be most effective to address or prevent everyday vulnerability, an aspect that has been largely neglected in the literature (Prowse 2003). The model is then contextualised using fieldwork data, drawing on visual participatory exercises with participants, to identify the 'everyday problems' (risks) women are exposed to. Finally, ethnographic data is utilized to demonstrate how police violence, as one form of everyday risk experienced by the homeless population in the station, perpetuates everyday uncertainty and violence for women. The protracted and constant everyday uncertainty that characterises the vulnerability context of the station, is demonstrated to have important implications for understanding women's vulnerability and the context within which livelihoods are pursued and negotiated.

Conceptualising vulnerability

Vulnerability is a multifaceted concept, with a plethora of definitions and potential applications, reflecting the diversity of disciplines that have contributed to this field. Disaggregation of vulnerability has often led to a reductionist approach and the linking of vulnerability to one causal factor, yet as a complex, multi-faceted concept,

there is a need to move beyond merely viewing vulnerability within the lens of an acute event, and instead see it as a dynamic, evolving process that changes over time (Prowse 2003). According to Wisner and Luce (1993, pg. 128), the challenge is then to 'create ways of analysing vulnerability implicit in daily life.' Watts and Bohle have defined vulnerability as a:

> …multi-layered and multi-dimensional social space defined by the … capabilities of people in specific places at specific times. In this sense a theory of vulnerability should be capable of mapping the historically and socially specific realms of choice and constraint – the degrees of freedom as it were – which determine exposure, capacity and potentiality. In a narrow sense this is about individual command over basic necessities; in a wider sense it should identify the totality of individual rights and social entitlements.
>
> (1993, pg. 118)

Vulnerability thus has three main co-ordinates, namely:

1. **Exposure:** Exposure to risk
2. **Capacity:** The capacity to cope with or adapt to risk
3. **Potentiality:** The consequences or outcomes of risk

Building on the definition provided by Watts and Bohle (1993)**,** I develop a model of vulnerability, as visually illustrated in Figure 11. The model enables practitioners to disaggregate vulnerability, identifying the underlying causes and potential outcomes of exposure to risk, and thus the potential aspects at which intervention is most warranted. The model enables practitioners to analyse vulnerability at multiple scales or for various aspects of the model, including analysis of a specific risk, social actor or context. Alternatively, the model can be used to analyse risks for a population, or all risks within a certain context, by altering the level of detail or the specific co-ordinate under investigation.

Exposure to risk

The model analyses exposure to risk(s) for a social actor(s) in a specific context any one point in time. Within the literature, what a social actor(s) is exposed to has been labelled in a variety of ways and reflects the scale and focus of the theory. Within the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), the 'vulnerability context' is said to be the 'external environment in which people exist' (DFID 2007). 'Factors' are categorized into 'trends', 'shocks' and 'seasonality,' problematically combining predictability and type of underlying cause within these categorizations, and reflects the predominant

rural and macro level focus of the theory. Other theorists have included terms such as risk, shocks, crisis and stress (Chambers, R 1989; Devereux 2001; Lloyd-Jones & Rakodi 2014). Additionally, the concept of exposure to adverse events has received some attention in the development literature (Sinha & Lipton 1999; Watts & Bohle 1993).

Yet in focusing on differentiating between and categorizing what individuals are exposed to, there is the danger that the underlying causes of vulnerability are ignored. This issue is somewhat addressed by Devereux (2001) who includes 'trigger' factors (such as ill-health or age) within his typology of vulnerability. However, the term 'trigger' is still reductionist and attributes risk to a single cause, rather than the processes or multiple reasons underlying risk. Chronic and social stressors such as 'an absence of security, basic needs, social protection, political power and coping options' are all important causes of vulnerability (Webb & Harinarayan 1999, pg. 298). In attempting to re-direct a focus on these underlying mechanisms and causes of vulnerability for particular spaces and points in time, the gamut of what an individual may be exposed is labelled as 'risk' within the model. Exposure to risk is the product of the nature of the relationship/interaction between a social actor(s) and the multi-layered and multi-dimensional context (including the social-political economy) within which they operate (Watts & Bohle 1993). Following Devereux (2001), the scale and predictability of risk is determined to be critical in determining the capacity of social actor(s) to adapt or resist risk and is noted within the model. The identification of predictability as a key element of vulnerability is demonstrated to be particularly important to the everyday lives and livelihoods of the women in Kamalapur (see Appendix 4).

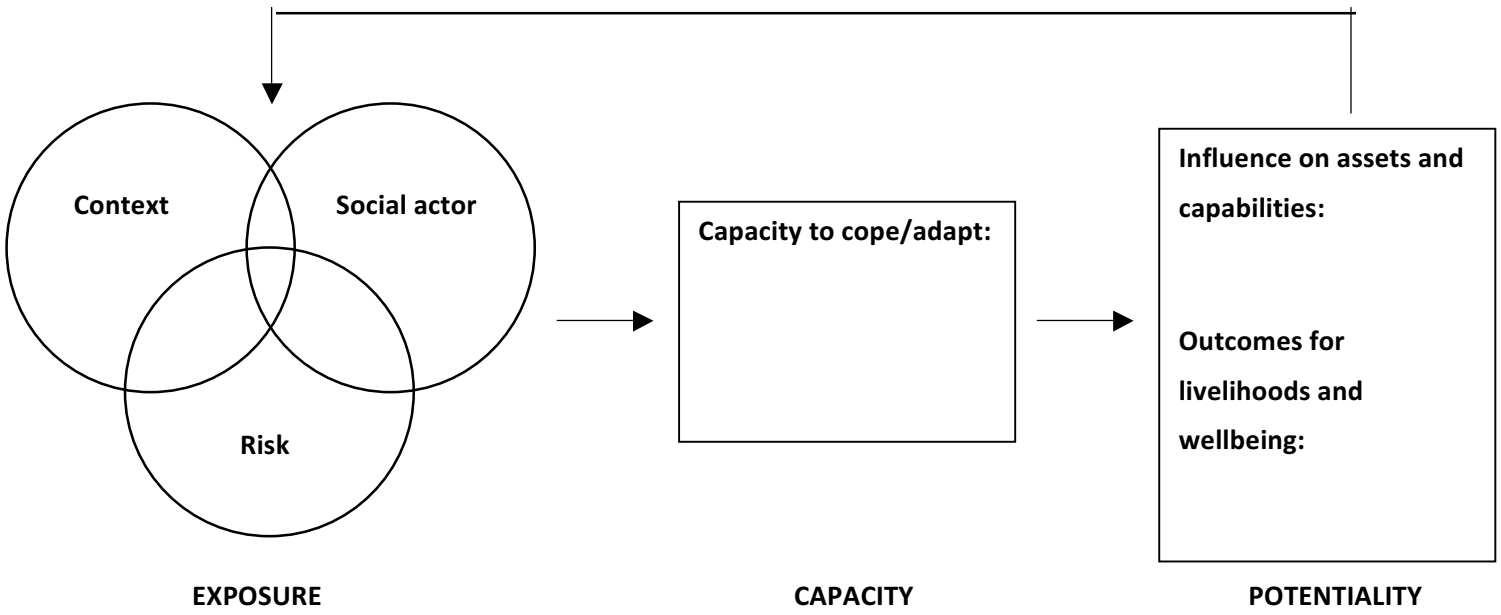


Figure 11: Model of the process of vulnerability

Context

Socio-ecological models have been favoured within social vulnerability analyses, recognizing the global, intermediate and local levels of social vulnerability and the embedded nature of social structures within political, cultural, geographical and institutional arenas (Bankoff, Frerks & Hilhorst 2004; Bohle 2007; Devereux 2001; Wisner & Luce 1993). According to Cardona (2004, p. 43) the global level includes 'social, political and economic structures…or root causes,' the intermediate level refers to 'dynamic pressures such as population growth, urban development…environmental degradation and the absence of ethics' whilst the local level are those 'unsafe conditions, such as social fragility, potential harm or poverty.' Cardona (2004) asserts that risk reduction signifies intervention at each level: conditions of insecurity, the dynamic pressures and root causes. Analysing various aspects of the environmental context allows a more explicit articulation of the underlying mechanisms through which risk is produced as well as the scale of the particular risk. For example, state and public attitudes and beliefs regarding the homeless in Bangladesh perpetuate a culture of normalized violence (social and cultural aspect of the context), which are expressed in various acts of violence and oppression by the public and state (the risk). See Appendix 2 for an example of applied analysis to Kamalapur station. The user of the model can determine at which level and the degree of detail they wish to analyse. My analysis within this chapter specifically focus' on the 'local' level or 'unsafe conditions,' so as to uncover the vulnerability of everyday life within the station context.

Social actor(s)

In including 'social actor(s)' with the exposure co-ordinate, the model acknowledges that some risks are not uniformly experienced by individuals within a particular context (Cardona 2004). Rather, the characteristics of the social actor(s) are demonstrated to be critical in shaping exposure to risk. Perhaps reflecting the historical disaster and rural poverty scholarship surrounding vulnerability, the social nature of risk and how characteristics of individuals themselves shape exposure (or degree of exposure) to risk has received little attention in the literature (Chambers, R & Conway 1991; Devereux 2001). Including a social actor(s) characteristics within the model (and how exposure to risk recursively shapes women's assets and capabilities) addresses a common critique of development models, such as the SLF, as not requiring the collection of experience-based knowledge and life histories despite endeavouring to account for vulnerability within its analysis (Speak 2012).

The model can be used to analyse the exposure to risk for a specific social actor or for a group/population, by changing the characteristics listed within the 'social actor(s)' circle within the model. The 'social actor(s)' and their characteristics listed are those for whom exposure to risk is analysed. Aspects of the social actor to analyse include their demographics, life history and current level of assets and capabilities. See Appendix 3 for an example of how this analysis may be applied to a population, or Appendix 5 to an individual. Other social actors operating within the environments of the social actor are included within the 'social structures' of the environment.

Whilst the model acknowledges the role of assets in mitigating vulnerability, it does not subscribe to Moser's theory that 'the more assets people have, the less vulnerable they are, and the greater the erosion of peoples assets, the greater their insecurity' (Moser 1998, p. 3). Rather my analysis demonstrates that it is the nature and quality of assets and how these translates into capabilities (to be and to do) that is critical to understanding vulnerability. For example, Chapter 5 will demonstrate the friendships of women engaging in sex work in the station, may protect them from sexual assault whilst also exposing them to the risk of drug use and self-harming practices. These relationships, whilst a form of social capital, may undermine women's capabilities of bodily health, integrity, senses, imagination & thought, emotions and affiliation in the long term. This model enables a disaggregation of the complexity and dualistic nature of assets and livelihoods, and a mapping of the processes and events over women's life histories, that may contribute to the dynamic and fluid nature of a women's vulnerability (see Appendix 5).

Capacity

The 'capacity' to cope with risk within the Watts and Bohle (1993) definition of vulnerability, re-iterates Chambers conceptualization of vulnerability as having:

> …two sides: an external side of risks, shocks, and stress to which an individual or household is subject; and an internal side which is defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss.
>
> (1989, p. 1)

Within the model, 'capacity' is defined as the degree to which a social actor(s) can 'cope with' or 'adapt to' exposure to risk. Moser identifies assets as a means to mediate internal and external factors of vulnerability, asserting that:

> …the ease and rapidity of a systems response to an external event, where the means of resistance are the assets and entitlements that…can [be] mobilize[d] and manage[d] in the face of hardship. Vulnerability is therefore closely linked to asset ownership.
>
> (1998, pg. 3)

Moser's conceptualization of assets (including social assets) as a means of mitigation and adaptation in response to adverse events has been widely incorporated within development literature, drawing on Sen's entitlements, capabilities and assets work (Devereux 2002; Moser 1998; Pasteur 2011; Pelling 2002; Watts & Bohle 1993). Whilst asset frameworks are a useful lens through which to view this adaptation and coping process, they do not account for the complex interactions of individuals within a broader structural conception of their environmental context, nor attempt to address the role of human agency or power relations that undermine social safety nets (see Chapters 5 and 7). My analysis demonstrates 'capacity' to be determined by the nature of risk (underlying causes, predictability and scale) and the characteristics of the social actor(s), including their current assets and capabilities. A lack of, or limited, capacity to cope with or adapt to risk is a key co-ordinate of vulnerability and will be demonstrated to be crucial within the context of the station, with implications for the potentiality of risk for women.

Potentiality

The outcomes, consequences and implications for recovery from risks are captured within the potentiality co-ordinate; these may include changes to the context, result in further or additional exposure to risk and influencing characteristics of a social actor (Watts & Bohle 1993). Changes to the assets and capabilities of a social actor holds implications for their subsequent exposure to risk and capability to adapt to and cope with risk. Outcomes are therefore noted within both the potentiality co-ordinates as well as the relevant aspects within a subsequent analysis of exposure to risk, see Figure 11. Vulnerability is thus demonstrated to be cyclical process, where the potentiality of adverse events can further perpetuate exposure to risk.

Figure 12: Sleeping in Kamalapur Railway Station (Uddin, S 2007)[18]

Vulnerability within the context of Kamalapur Station

The second section of this chapter contextualizes the model by interrogating women's everyday vulnerability as a result of experiencing homelessness. Experiencing homelessness is demonstrated to perpetuate constant violence and everyday uncertainty, strip away assets and undermines the gamut of human capabilities, further entrenching chronic poverty and homelessness for women. I argue that the vulnerability of the homelessness is not merely the result of the risks arising from the absence a shelter, but that homelessness exposes individuals to additional risks as a result of sleeping and occupying public spaces. As Fitzpatrick, KM, LaGory and Ritchey (1999, p. 439) assert, 'homelessness is more than the absence of physical shelter' and begs attention to the specific risks of homelessness itself, where:

> …homelessness deprives individuals of basic needs, exposing them to risk [and] unpredictable environments…it is a stress-filled,

[18] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'The platform of Kamalapur rail station also used to be a common place for shelter at night for the pavement dwellers, but these people are no longer allowed to sleep here... I have been taking photos of pavement dwellers since 2005. Since then I have observed that while the number of pavement dwellers is increasing, the places where the can sleep is shrinking every year making it more and more difficult for them to survive' (Uddin, S 2007).

> dehumanizing, dangerous circumstance in which individuals are at high risk of being witness to or victims of a wide range of violent events.

The model developed in this chapter allows an exploration of the underlying causes of risk, the capacity for individuals to resists or adapt and potentiality for women's capabilities. As such, the model facilitates an identification of the underlying causes and processes of vulnerability within the experience of homelessness, as well as the 'degrees of choice and constraint' within which homeless women make livelihood decisions (Watts & Bohle 1993, p. 118)

Key aspects of the Kamalapur station context and characteristics of women living within Kamalapur that are pertinent to an analysis of exposure to risk are provided in Appendix 3 and 4 respectively. Typical' characteristics of women were identified within this analysis, attempting to acknowledge the spectrum of experiences and characteristics of women that make up this heterogeneous population. Analysis of specific women would reveal individually specific exposure to risk.

The ongoing everyday risks experienced by the women of Kamalapur were found to include[19]:

- Police violence
- Physical, sexual or verbal violence from the public and other homeless individuals
- Exposure to extreme weather (hot/cold/rain)
- No physical shelter owned by individual to store financial and physical assets
- Limited access to clean water and sanitation facilities
- No access to cooking facilities
- No physical address
- Sleep deprivation
- Poor physical health

An analysis of the exposure, capacity and potentiality of these risks are provided in Appendix 4, and builds on the analysis of the social actors and context for which vulnerability is being analysed. There are multiple other additional acute and chronic risks women are exposed to that are not represented in Appendix 4[20]. Appendix 4 discusses risks with respect to women's capacity to cope with or adapt to risks as well as identifying the potentiality these risks hold for women. The remainder of this

[19] See page 98-99 for a discussion of methods utilized in the development of the list

[20] Additional risks include the death, abandonment, divorce or internment of marital partners, political instability that increases police violence and decreases number of passengers within station (and thus income from begging/selling items), internment of women in jail and pregnancy, birth and child-rearing.

chapter focuses on an analysis of police violence as a particularly prevalent and widespread risk. When I asked about the challenges experienced within the station, police violence one of the first issues women inevitably discussed. Police violence is demonstrated to have important ramifications for causing and perpetuating women's everyday vulnerability.

Figure 13: Women and children in Kamalapur (Uddin, S 2007)[21]

Analysis of everyday life within Kamalapur Station

One of the central aspects of this research was to investigate the 'everyday life' of women and thus these implicit processes of vulnerability (Cannon 1994; Wisner 2004; Wisner & Luce 1993). The concept of 'everyday life' has been developed and utilized in various forms by ethnographers and feminist researchers, providing an actor-oriented approach to development (De Certeau, Giard & Mayol 1998; Long & Long 1992; Smith, DE 1987; Speak 2012). Analysis of everyday life calls attention to relations between the material and social worlds of social actors across time and space (Healey 1997). Within efforts to elicit the everyday routines of women, multiple methods were utilized, including participatory and visual exercises, interviews and observations. One participatory exercise, asking women to draw the *protekdin shomossha* 'everyday problems of the station,' elicited insightful visual

[21] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'With help from a neighbor, a mother cleans her baby's excrement with a cloth but no water' (Uddin, S 2007).

representations of the challenges (articulated here as risks) faced by women, examples are provided in Figure 16, Figure 18, and Figure 19. As part of the activity, I asked women to assign these risks to particular times of the day or year. Time and time again, women looked at me blankly as I asked them to verbally or visually articulate when, where and the degree to which these risks may be faced, instead telling me 'all the time' or 'most of the time.'

In another activity, I asked women to explain the 'the activities they did in a day' and assign these activities to approximate times of the day. I would ask women what they would do when they first woke up, how they spent their day, if they had routines around washing, toileting and income generating activities. Most women again looked at me blankly and then told me that these activities were performed 'when they were able to' or 'when they needed to,' demonstrating how contingent daily activities were on external events, actors and assets and could not be articulated as certain, temporally bound practices. Some women had regular routines, predominantly centred on either sending their children to school, or around income generating activities, yet even these were observed to be subject to the inevitable frustrations of the unpredictability and temporariness of station life. Structure and routine were found to be largely absent within women's every day and instead, uncertainty and precarity characterised station life (cf. Eighner 1994). Days came and went, people came and went, violence suddenly erupted and dissipated. There was a rhythm to the station, but the rhythm was more of an unpredictable improvisation. Some days the station would be packed with women and people, other times it would be empty – with women themselves being unable to, and uninterested in, articulating the 'reasons' for these daily and temporal differences. According to women, the unpredictability of the station was just 'how it was.' There was no other explanation.

Figure 14: Snatching a moment of sleep on a deserted platform. Photographed by TA Nibir.

Figure 15: Drying clothes near the train tracks. Photographed by TA Nibir.

Everyday uncertainties: Police violence

Police violence was of the few constants within the chaos and ever changing dynamics of the everyday for station dwellers. The police subject the station dwellers to constant surveillance, regulation and violence due to their 'offending' and 'criminal' behaviours and perpetrate a culture of arbitrary, indiscriminate violence, instability and fear within the homeless population to further re-iterate their undesirability, illegitimacy and 'undeserving' status (cf. Pain, R & Francis 2004; Samara 2005). Police violence was an inevitable part of living in the station, as Shanta explained, 'you have to get beaten [by the police] to stay here' (22nd March 2015). Similarly, Lucky told me that 'we come here [to the station], then we are hungry... (indistinct)…we are beaten by the police' (14th November 2014). Police violence is a well-documented threat within the everyday of the homeless in both low and high income settings (Aliber 2001; Bourgois 2010; Busza & Douthwaite 2010; HRW 2006; Pain, R & Francis 2004; Reddy, Kumar & Raju 2014; Wernham 2004). Likewise, Koehlmoos et al. (2009) found that almost half (44%) of street dwellers in Dhaka had ever been assaulted by authority figures, including the police, whilst staying at transportation hubs in the city.

The example of exposure to police violence illustrates the inter-relatedness and social production of risk within the intermediate and local levels of the station context. Normative attitudes and beliefs surrounding homelessness and gender (Chapters 1 and 3) legitimate state perpetrated violence at the local level. The certainty of unpredictable police violence is demonstrated to be central in perpetrating violence, further exposing the homeless to multiple risks and in undermining their capabilities. My analysis reveals 'everyday uncertainty' as central to understanding women's everyday lives. Everyday uncertainty is demonstrated to undermine the capabilities of practical reason and control over one's environment which are identified as central to how women develop and negotiate livelihood priorities.

The day of a station dweller begins with the violence of the police at 5am. The police move from their night posts around the perimeter of the station and come en-mass into the station courtyard and steps. They blow sharply into their whistles, breaking the near silence of the station, waking those who are still asleep and beating those who didn't move in time with sticks and truncheons. Those sleeping on the steps of the station, or those who had managed to get behind the gates and sleep on the platforms were the first targeted. The first train didn't arrive till 5:30 or 6 am, yet the police wanted to be sure that the undesirable bodies of the station dwellers were not present when the first passengers disembarked.

Figure 16: 'Being beaten by the police with a truncheon'[22]

I only slept in the station once and it was the reported physical violence from the police that I was most scared of. In the morning, the whistles jolted me from the sleep that I hadn't thought I would be able to attain, sleeping on the rough, uneven surface of the courtyard, the flood lights not having been turned off until 1am, a rat running past my face several times during the night. Throughout my fitful sleep, I had recurringly seen the image of a man's face. He had stood staring at me the night before and then asked incessant questions about me to Shumi and Jorina, with whom I was staying. The knowledge that these women were adept at preventing violence from other station dwellers, and had verbally threatened him with physical violence of the men that slept in their area (some of the more powerful drug dealers in the station), had somewhat allayed my fears.

The only aspect of the stay I had genuinely worried about was the inevitability of the police violence in the morning and what this might entail. Even Jorina and Shumi were scared of the police. That morning I was lucky, and the police didn't come over to that section of the courtyard. Instead I witnessed the police beating those sleeping on the steps of the platform in the distance. As I began to pack up the bedding, I asked Shumi how often the police came to her corner. She shrugged her shoulders, disinterested, 'sometimes they come, sometimes they don't. They come here [to this corner] less than over there (pointing to the station steps).'

Once sufficient disturbance to the station dwellers had been ensured, the morning raid was finished. The majority of the police moved back to the entrance of the

[22] Example of drawing from visual activity conducted on the 12th January 2015, asking women to draw the main everyday 'problems' they experienced.

station, a few remaining near the entrances of the platforms to regulate access to the train platforms. Station dwellers would begin to pack up their bedding, to perhaps wash their faces, to toilet in the nursery, against a wall or in the station bathrooms if they had the necessary social connections. Over the course of the morning some (primarily men) would again lie down and attempt to gain a few more moments of sleep before they began work. Those who dared to lie down faced the very real risk of being further beaten by the police if seen. Women would visit one of the food vendors immediately outside of the station, buying rice, dhal and perhaps some vegetables and carry them back to eat in the station.

It was almost impossible for station dwellers to cook or store their own food due to the lack of physical infrastructure to cook or safely store food and cooking items. Stealing was rife through the night, and thieves would target anything from jewellery to shoes. Valuable items such as cooking pots and utensils were a prime target from thieves. As Shahanara, one of the key participants of the study explained:

> …[when] I lived at the station…. [I was not] able to bathe or wash clothes or cook and eat. All the [eating] items had to be kept in a sack, otherwise the thieves would take them. I couldn't keep cooking pots.
>
> (5th November 2014)

The intolerance of the police to street dwellers setting up small fires in the station created additional barriers to women cooking their own food. When asked if she had ever tried to cook in the station, Yasmin told me:

> …yes [I've tried to cook], but the police don't allow us. I did many times when I was pregnant, but they beat me, kicked my pots and threw away the rice. The police don't allow us to cook, they beat us, take us and hold us [in jail].
>
> (8th August 2015)

The police would kick over cooking pots, throw away the food and punish the 'culprits' with physical abuse, serving to create a hostile living environment and sense of impermanence for the station occupants. The homeless are thus forced to rely, almost exclusively, on street food as their sole provider of nutrients, forming the backbone of their food security and which held adverse ramifications for their nutrition and health (Etzold 2008).

Following eating, the days of the women who did not engage in sex work (the majority of my participants) were spent begging or scavenging so as to 'earn enough for food' or various other income generating activities. The remainder of their day was spent sitting in groups in one of the station courtyards or on the station

platforms, coming and going, chatting, combing hair, eating, perhaps smoking and looking after their children. As Desjarlais found within an analysis of everyday of the homeless in Boston, there was a pursuit of 'timelessness' as a strategy to get away from the constant tensions, distractions and mundane-ness of daily life on the street. Like the station, 'smoking, eating and talking' were the practices engaged in to 'pass the time' in a place that was bereft of routine and structure (Desjarlais 1997, p. 19, 93). There was almost inevitably a group of woman I could join and sit with in the station. Yet these groups were subject to sudden and abrupt change as women (and men) came and left with few explanations or fan-fare. Wandering off to get a cigarette, spotting a friend in the distance, suddenly deciding that they should engage in income generation or that sleep was needed was common.

Figure 17: Sleeping in the station. Photographed by TA Nibir.

Throughout the day there was a constant, yet unpredictable threat of a police or RAB[23] raid. Sometimes these raids were the police merely moving those sleeping, sitting or generally 'hanging' around the station, and occurred almost daily, with little or no warning. Other times these were specifically 'drug raids.' According to women's reports, drug raids occurred approximately once a month, yet my records showed twelve drug specific raids that were reported to me over the ten months of

[23] The RAB (Rapid Armed Battalion) is the elite anti-crime and anti-terrorism force of Bangladesh, under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. They have been accused of using excessive force, and have been implicated in numerous unlawful killings and alleged torture of prisoners (Humans Right Watch 2006). The RAB have a reputation amongst the station residents of perpetuating more extreme forms of violence than the police, with one women explaining, 'at least with the police you can get some mercy, there is such no luck with the RAB' (6th February 2015).

fieldwork. National holidays, particularly Eid, marked a dramatic increase to the flow of passengers through the station due to higher utilization of train transportation to return to the *gram* (family village). Police and RAB presence increased during this time, whilst the tolerance to station dwellers presence decreased. I observed a marked rise in police perpetrated physical beatings or the 'movement' of station dwellers from sitting at the entrance of platforms, as well as from sleeping or begging on the platforms themselves during the day. It was only those who bribed the police who were allowed to remain on the platform to sell their wares (including snack food, drinks, newspapers) or engage in begging, often their sole form of income.

Figure 18: Not enough sleep[24]

Sleep deprivation was an important every day risk for women. The police of Kamalapur utilized sleep deprivation as a tool to perpetuate a sense of undesirability, impermanence and disorientation of station occupants. In speaking of police violence, Yasmin told me matter of factly, 'at night we are not allowed to sleep' (8th August 2015), as if sleep was a privilege only afforded to those with shelter at night. Sleep deprivation has multiple adverse implications for mood, affective reactivity and regulation, increase irritability and lower frustration tolerance (Pilcher & Huffcutt 1996). Sleep deprivation may undermine women's capabilities of emotions and increase the likelihood of station violence between station dwellers (Chapter 5).

[24] Example of drawing from visual activity conducted on the 12th January 2015, asking women to draw the main everyday 'problems' they experienced.

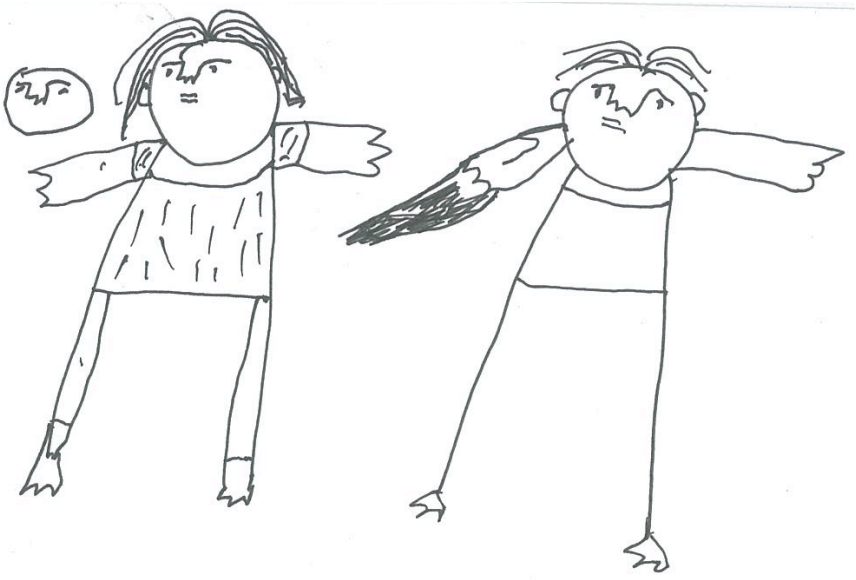


Figure 19: Harassment from other station dwellers'[25]

Additionally, sleep deprivation compromises women's functional ability and bodily health, impacting her ability to engage in livelihood pursuits that require physical exertion (eg. garments factory work, domestic service, scavenging). Ongoing sleep deprivation, difficulties in accessing sanitation facilities, and ensuring cleanliness have direct implications for women's access to and retention of formal employment (Shanta, 22nd August 2015), as is well documented within homelessness literature (Dachner & Tarasuk 2002; Etzold et al. 2009). Undermining women's capacity to care for their bodies was in direct assault of their bodily health and thus human capital. Human capital is recognized as 'the most valuable asset among the poor…because the poor depend disproportionately on labour earnings for their livelihoods. Ill health is both the cause and consequence of extreme poverty' and can form a particularly devastating and chronic trap for the poor (Barrett & McPeak 2003, p. 8). Police violence is thus demonstrated to reinforce and perpetuate other types of risks and demonstrates the cyclical and inter-related nature of risk.

After dark, the police would continue to prevent station dwellers from using the station as a sleeping space, beating anyone who dared to lie on the ground, particularly early in the evening. Shanta explained, 'every night the police come and make us leave. I can't sleep' (22nd March 2015). The flood lights within the station courtyard and platforms would remain on until 12pm, encouraging the public and

[25] Example of drawing from visual activity conducted on the 12th January 2015, asking women to draw the main everyday 'problems' they experienced. The item in the hand of the left figure was identified as a stick, or 'it could also be a brick' (unidentified woman, 12th January 2015).

station residents to stay awake; perhaps playing badminton or soccer in the courtyard, sitting in groups to talk or engage in drug use. The combination of the lights, noise from these activities and the ever-present threat of police violence prevented station dwellers to be able to sleep until at least 11 or 12 pm. After 12, once the last train had arrived, the flood lights had been turned off, and the police had retired to the perimeter of the station, there was a tacit acceptance of the inevitability of the station dwellers by police.

Yet the station dwellers could not guarantee a full night's uninterrupted sleep. Occasionally the police or the RAB could come during the middle of the night to rouse the station dwellers from sleep. Some raids had seemingly no purpose but to move station dwellers and re-iterate their unwanted presence. On other occasions these raids are conducted with the explicit purpose of discovering 'those who sell drugs.' As Shumi explained:

> …at one, two or three in the night they [the police] will come and wake us up…They will hit us and wake us up. Where can we go? They don't listen to us even if we tell them [we are not involved in drug dealing].
>
> (22nd March 2015)

Likewise, Lucky, a woman living in the station for the last few years, discussed the seemingly indiscriminate nature of violence during raids:

> …yesterday the RAB came and beat everyone…whoever was here. They attack us because people take *ganja* (marijuana), they sell *yabba* (methamphetamines)… They don't know who does it… So, ah, they beat everyone, randomly. [The police] say that none of us can stay here.
>
> (10th November 2014)

Raids could also occur as 'punishment' or as retribution for alleged transgressions. For example, one morning in February 2015, Shumi told me that the police had conducted a raid the previous night, particularly targeting women in their beatings and shouting at them not to talk to journalists. Shumi had surmised from discussions with other women that perhaps this was linked to a journalist coming into the station the previous week and spending time with sex workers asking about police perpetrated violence and rape. 'Probably the police commissioner read a bad story about them in the newspaper' she told me.

Police perpetrated rape was no small issue in the station. Several other women, who were not regular sex workers, spoke of accepting payment from police after being propositioned for sex because 'he would force himself on us anyway, and it's better to be paid' (Shumi and Shanta, 18th May 2015). One women recounted (in an

unrecorded conversation) how she had gone to the police to report a rape. She had been taken to a room to 'fill out documents' and then forced to strip naked, undergo the two finger 'rape test,' and then sexually abused by the police officer (7th January 2015). Even small children were at risk of abuse from the police, as Shanta reported:

> …the police come and lure [the girls] away. Being young, they are easily fooled and they get abused…That's what we faced since we were children.

(6th January 2015)

There was little sympathy from the police when reporting crime and instead could place women at further threat of violence rather that providing them with the protection of the law (Pain, R & Francis 2004). The lack of avenues to report and hold police accountable to violence underpinned women's perceptions that they were powerless to avoid or address the multiple forms of violence within their everyday lives. As Nipia reflected, 'who can I tell, or who will do anything about this [violence]? I can't do anything' (7th January 2015). As such, women not only begin to lose trust in the state, but also the capacity for trust and affiliation with social actors.

The same morning following this particular raid, another woman sought me out, asking for some (antiseptic) cream for wounds acquired from the previous night. One side of her face had several small open wounds, the result of having been beaten on the ground by the police, as she curled up to one side to sustain the blows, and rocks having become embedded in her cheeks. An ugly bruise had formed on the other cheek, a swollen eye, and bruises on her ribs evidence of the beating she had received. She was worried that the wounds would scar and that she would become 'ugly.' The 'ugliness,' and in particular the scars that had resulted from the physical violence experienced in the station, was of particular concern to women and held implications for their ability to leave the station and experiencing long-term homelessness (Chapter 7).

The violence of the police thus not only undermined women's bodily integrity and health, but also ongoing psychological ramifications for the women. As Shanta explained:

> …there is no way to sleep in this station. Here [the police] come and hit us. No one stays here purposefully. Do you understand? The pain might go away after sometime but the words and actions remain in our minds.

(12th January 2015)

The words and actions of the police tell the women that they're social outcasts, that their 'dirty' and 'bad' bodies are undeserving of even the attention of the state. They

say that street dwellers don't deserve even a place to sleep, let alone protection from the many other forms of violence, exploitation and abuse they experience from other social actors in the station. In doing so, the police directly undermine women's capability for affiliation, disregarding any social basis for women's 'self-respect and non-humiliation,' where women are not treated as 'a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others' (Nussbaum 2001, p. 79). Instead, as Shumi reflected following our discussion regarding police violence, 'a dog leads a better life than us'[26] (22nd March 2015) (cf. Shoma 2010). It is this continual verbal and physical abuse that contribute to undermine women's capability of emotions, or to experience 'over whelming fear and anxiety…by traumatic events of abuse' (Nussbaum 2001, p. 79).

Everyday uncertainties: Undermining control over one's environment and practical reason

The uncertainty and lack of control to mitigate exposure to risk is a pervasive and destructive aspect of the life of station residents. Shumi described the fear and worry that arose from this constant exposure to risk, telling me, 'I feel sad every day, constantly worrying and living in fear, when the cops will start chasing us away, when I will get my next meal' (24th November 2014). It is the combination of the constant, unavoidable, yet unpredictable nature of police violence that serves to perpetrate the 'constant worry and fear' of living in the station. The unpredictable nature of threats is a key feature of vulnerability and a source of worry for vulnerable populations (cf. Aliber 2001). Likewise, uncertainty surrounding certain exposure to everyday risk is characteristic of homeless lives (Desjarlais 1997, p. 19). A participant in the study by Auerswald and Eyre (2002, p. 1502), described their everyday as 'you just never know when somebody's gonna attack you or you're gonna get run over…' Likewise Shoma noted, 'living on the pavement [in Dhaka] is like living in uncertainty' (2010, p. 52).

The capability of 'control over one's environment' (being able to hold property, having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure) is directly undermined by the experience of homelessness, resulting from a lack of adequate shelter and by exposure to police violence within the context of the station (Nussbaum 2001, p. 80). The 'control over one's environment' may also be applicable to the extent to which social actors are exposed to unavoidable risk within their environments, and which is exacerbated by not 'holding property [and] having the right to seek employment' which are protective factors against exposure to risk. Yet for the women in the

[26] Street dogs are typically viewed as a menace by the public, and are frequently exposed to violence, including being kicked, beaten with sticks/bricks, spat on and yelled at.

station, secure housing and employment are not basic needs that are afforded to them, with their everyday instead characterized by constant and certain uncertainty.

As such, I propose that this lack of control over one's environment and exposure to risk directly undermines women's 'practical reason…the ability to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life' (Nussbaum 2001, p. 79). The concept of practical reason speaks to the extent to which women perceive and are able to exercise agency over the practices and decisions that shape their everyday lives and livelihoods. Nussbaum emphasises the centrality of practical reason and affiliation for the attainment of other capabilities:

> …since they both organize and suffuse all others… to plan for one's own life without being able to do so in complex forms of discourse, concern and reciprocity with other human beings is…to behave in an incompletely human way…we are saying that a government that makes available only a reduce and animal-like mode of…living, has not done enough.
>
> (2001, p. 82)

Nussbaum is referring here to the premise upon which the list of human capabilities were developed as 'basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by the governments of all nations, as a bare minimum of what respect for human dignity requires'(Nussbaum 2001, p. 5). Yet within the station, it is the state that directly and brutally assaults women's capabilities and perpetuates 'everyday violence' and uncertainty within this context (Bourgois 2001, p. 8; Scheper-Hughes 1993). The concept of everyday violence shifts the attention to the problematic nature of treating various forms of violence or risk separately and instead focus' on the expressions of risk and how they operate and impact everyday life. The everyday violence that characterises women's everyday lives within the station is demonstrated perpetuate these constant uncertainties for women. My analysis of women's livelihood strategies of sex work and marriage in the following chapters demonstrate that the constant uncertainty of the everyday directly shape and influence women's livelihood priorities and strategies within the station.

Conclusion

Understanding the processes of everyday vulnerability is essential for the creation of well-informed development programs and policy that seeks to address complex issues such as extreme poverty and homelessness (Lloyd-Jones & Rakodi 2014). The model outlined in this chapter provides a useful and efficient tool for practitioners to

disaggregate and uncover the complexities of vulnerability for a specific context, an individual or group of social actors. In doing so, the model enables users to identify the underlying processes and source of risk and thus the key points at which intervention and responses could be made, an aspect that has been largely neglected in the vulnerability literature (Prowse 2003). Attention must be given to the various aspects of the 'exposure' co-ordinate of vulnerability to identify and reduce the underlying causes of risk. Within the context of everyday violence and vulnerability in the station, these include the social discourses surrounding women occupying and living in public space, which in turn legitimate and render invisible the everyday state violence perpetrated against women. Additionally, interventions should focus on strengthening the assets and capabilities of social actors, which can act as both risk reduction or coping strategies (eg. focusing on developing safe physical and affiliative spaces for women to sleep and perform everyday activities). Providing opportunities, resources and strategies for social actors to draw on and developing their capacity to cope with or adapt to inevitable risks is a secondary intervention to that of risk reduction (Sinha & Lipton 1999).

Attention to the 'everyday lives' of women and micro-level of contexts provides crucial insights into the ways in which the police, contested public spaces and dominant narratives regarding homeless women collide, and which perpetuate everyday violence and vulnerability for the women Kamalapur. Police violence is a reiteration of the dominant social narrative of the homeless and women's acceptable geographies, into a formalized, politically condoned, form of justified aggression. The police violence is what Bourgois terms a 'normalized violence.' Yet, instead of a 'social production of indifference to institutionalized brutalities,' violence within this context become institutionalized as a result of the social production of indifference (Bourgois 2009, p. 20). The homeless of Dhaka are individuals criminalized by the state by virtue of the 'type' of poverty they experience and the way in which they pursue livelihoods, or whom Harriss-White (2005) labels as 'destitute'. The homeless do not conform to what the state views as acceptable forms of poverty, where poverty is constructed as a rural and economic problem (Banks, Roy & Hulme 2011). The urban poor, and in particular the homeless, whose poverty is visible, who engage in 'undesirable' strategies, and who contend for the use of public space are not desirable to the state.

The violence perpetrated by the police is additionally driven by a 'spatial purification' to undermine the habituality of the station in an effort to discourage migration to and occupation of public space. Sibley (1995, p. 68-69) asserts that it is 'the representation of social categories either side of a boundary, defined by notions of purity and defilement and the mapping of this boundary onto particular

places…[which] translate into exclusionary practice.' These practices seek to further marginalize the station dwellers as part of a political and social marginalization process that seeks to erase their struggle for a safe space to live and sleep (Fernandes 2004; Wacquant 2009). The 'permanent temporariness' of Yiftachel's (2009) 'gray spaces,' referring to political geographies of urban informalities, between the 'whiteness' of legality/approval/safety, and the 'blackness' of eviction/destruction/death urban spaces is applicable here. Yet it is how the use of certain spaces by certain types of (undesirable) people that legitimates state violence in the regulation of the station, inscribing risk and a certain uncertainty into the lives of station residents (Hackenbroch 2013).

Everyday uncertainty was the only constant within the precarious lives of the women in Kamalapur. Butler (2009) proposes that precariousness is a shared social condition. Likewise, Whyte (1997 pg. 18) argues human 'experience is characterized by uncertainty, ambiguity and contingency.' Yet as Grabska and Fanjoy (2015, p. 92) assert, certain environments and populations experience precariousness and uncertainties in 'radical and protracted' ways. The concept of 'protracted uncertainty' when 'plans for the future cannot be made because the past and present are marked with precariousness and unpredictability' was developed to captures the state of liminality experienced by refugees and returnees to post-conflict zones, yet also has relevance to the women of Kamalapur (ibid. p. 77). The constant uncertainties of violence and insecurity, with multiple, compounding constraints for the women of Kamalapur in exercising choice over their bodies and lives in the station, illustrates an extreme and protracted state of everyday vulnerability (Watts & Bohle 1993).

To be homeless is demonstrated to be constantly exposed to inevitable violence and risk. The violence of homelessness, as illustrated in this chapter, calls for urgent attention from development practitioners and the state to address the underlying causes of risk and vulnerability for homeless women. Whilst uncertainty arises from multiple sources, violence fundamentally occurs from a break in a recognition of the interdependability and social nature of bodies (Butler 2009). Risk is demonstrated to be socially produced and reproduced throughout women's lives. Broken relationships as a result of violence and exploitation are one of the most common reasons women arrive at the station, compounded by a lack of social protection at the state level and structural barriers to housing (Chapter 3). By virtue of becoming homeless and occupying public space, women's bodies become 'bad,' devoid of morality and thus become legitimate 'ungrievable' objects to be regulated by the state through constant police brutality (Butler 2009).

One afternoon, early on in fieldwork, I was having a conversation with Shumi about another woman and asked whether Shumi thought this woman would be able to maintain her current job. Shumi looked over at me and sighed (the way she always did when I had asked a question that revealed the extent of my ignorance about station life), 'I'm not able to predict [other street dwellers] futures or say anything about it. They earn and eat and eventually one day they will die. That's all I know' (24th November 2014). These were the certainties of everyday life in the station for women: to struggle every day to somehow earn an income and eat, with the certainty that one day they will die. Everything else, the routines, structures and life events are largely uncertain, less important to women's struggle to survive. Women contend with the constant uncertainty and risk that constitutes the 'normalcy' of their everyday lives (cf. Hackenbroch 2013). The resilience of women and the ways in which the station context shapes women's capacity to fluidly adapt and cope with everyday uncertainties, reconfiguring their capabilities and livelihood strategies, are explored in the following chapters.

Figure 20: A young woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Chapter Five - 'I came [to the station] and I changed': Living for today in the pursuit of survival

Introduction

This chapter explores the livelihood strategies women adopt to meet their shifting livelihood priorities in response to the violence, impermanency, and insecurity of everyday life in the station. My analysis reveals women's livelihood priorities to include survival, protection and honour. For Shanta, 'living' and survival was synonymous with the pursuit of food, where life in the station was said to be 'all about a day's food, nothing else' (12th January 2015). In addition, physical protection and honour are identified as, often competing, livelihood priorities pursued by women. The three primary livelihood strategies available within the station (sex work, marriage and 'being alone') are demonstrated to be unable to meet all three livelihood priorities of women. Women are 'forced' to make complex and difficult trade-offs between livelihood priorities, with sex work one of the only ways in which women discussed as being able to pursue certain 'survival' in the present (see Table 1). My analysis demonstrates that 'the lack of means to cope without damaging loss,' proposed by Chambers, R (1989) as an indicator of vulnerability, applies to almost every woman within Kamalapur. As such, a more nuanced approach to identifying and articulating 'damaging loss' is offered, linking loss (and thus extent of vulnerability) to women's immediate and potentiality of assets, capabilities and the extent to which she can attain both immediate and long term livelihood priorities.

The chapter firstly investigates the arrival of 'new girls' to the station. The necessitated hyper-vigilance and reactive states that define arrival are adopted as the means by which women continue to cope with constant exposure to ongoing risk. The sexual assault of 'new girls' serve as an initiation to engagement in sex work. Rape is discussed by women as not only 'ruining' their bodies, but to also re-order women's moral, affiliative and livelihood possibilities and subsequently 'ruin [their] li[ves]' (Bilkis, 28th January 2015). Having 'lost' their honour, women's priorities are reduced to that of physical protection and survival, offered through engagement in sex work. I consequently conceptualize sex work as a dualistic and multiplex livelihood strategy. The term 'dualistic strategy' refers to the dualistic nature of both advantageous and adverse outcomes associated with this form of livelihood. Sex work offers women a degree of economic security, and access to particular forms of social networks, thus enabling them meet their priorities of survival and protection in the short term. Yet sex work has multiple adverse immediate and long term

outcomes for women's assets, capabilities and ability to leave the station. Sex work as a 'multiplex strategy,' refers to the way in which this form of livelihood is often accompanied by drug use and self-harm. Drug use and self-harm are explored as livelihood and coping strategies women engage in as they become increasingly enmeshed in the 'dark' social networks of Kamalapur in an effort to cope with a precarious every day.

Survival, protection and honour: Women's livelihood priorities

The livelihood priorities of women themselves must be interrogated before an investigation into the ways in which women pursue these. Living in the station is first and foremost a process of endeavouring to access the necessary financial and social assets each day in the pursuit of food. As in other urban contexts, the need for cash income becomes the primary means by which women pursue livelihoods. Given the monetized nature of urban economics, access to a cash income is essential for survival (Lloyd-Jones & Rakodi 2014). In the absence of access to other resources (such as physical, natural and social assets as discussed in Chapter 3 and 4), a cash income was one of the few means by which women could access the necessary goods and services required for survival, particularly that of food. Women discussed their income as a means to 'make a living,' thus reducing reliance on other, more uncertain livelihood assets and strategies that relied on a moral economy such as marriage (Chapter 6) or friendship (Chapter 5). A cash income is thus seen to be an appropriate and necessary livelihood outcome within this context for women.

Income and the pursuit of food were inextricably tied within women's narratives. When discussing income generation (either employment or marriage) women would refer to their earnings with respect to the amount and type of food that could be obtained. For example, when discussing her various forms of itinerant informal employment, Jorina commented, 'I collect paper and garbage sometimes, so after selling them I buy a meal (rice and curry) to eat' (15th February 2015), illustrating the immediacy of connection between her income and that of her need for food. Some women spoke of their income generating activities in a fatalistic sense, whereby income was the means by which they ensured survival. As Jorina told me another day, 'If I can't go work, [Mali and I] will die from hunger' (3rd January 2015). The term 'survival' in this chapter thus refers to obtaining economic assets in order to procure the food necessary to 'get through another day.'

Yet my analysis will illustrate that women's priorities transcend merely that of food or 'survival' and also include those of physical protection and honour. Women's livelihood priorities mirror the three priorities of 'survival, security and self-respect'

pursued by the poor as identified by Chambers, R (1989, p. 2). Yet security is a problematic concept when applied to the poor, with Chambers, R (1992), asserting that security, is in fact, the reversal of poverty. Chambers discusses security as possessing a command over adequate resources to mitigate vulnerability (which is linked to independence and self-respect) and a freedom from subservience and exploitation. As such, the term 'security' in not used as an analytic concept within this thesis, as these freedoms are largely elusive concepts in the station. Instead, the distinction is made between the often-conflated concepts of economic and physical 'security,' as is advocated by Beall and Moser, by referring to these as 'survival' and 'protection' throughout (Beall 1995; Moser 1996). For the purposes of this discussion, and in line within women's own disucssions of these concepts, survival is defined as adequate access to income and food to 'get through a day' whilst protection refered to women's subjective sense of protection from avoidable physical and sexual abuse. Additionally, a woman's honour (*izzat*) was an important livelihood priority of women, and refers to a subjective self-evaluation of morality, relative to other women in station. Honour as a livelihood priority reflects the inextricably intertwined nature of religion and faith within everyday lives and the insidious role shame (*sharam*) has to play for women in this context (Devine, Joe & Deneulin 2011; Kabeer 1988, 1991).

Livelihoods in the station

Women tended to discuss three 'ways,' or livelihood strategies, available to them within the station context. Women faced the certainty of an adequate income, and thus survival, through engagement in the 'bad' and shameful act of sex work; precarious protection and honour in the present through marriage (Chapter 6); or 'being alone'. Yet it was rare for women's livelihood strateg(ies) to meet all three livelihood priorities (see Table 1). Marriage held the potential to meet all three of women's livelihood priorities, yet this is a rare occurrence within the station. Marriage somewhat pprotected woman from public/station violence, yet often exposed women to intimate partner violence and placing them at risk of remaining in long-term homelessness (cf. Chapter 6). 'Being alone' was a way of women describing pursuit of a life outside of dependence on a relationship with a man; often including engagement in itinerant livelihood strategies such as begging and scavenging. Occasionally women could earn higher incomes through front line drug selling, but which placed her at risk of arrest and physical assault from the police. Being alone initially placed women at risk of all forms of physical and sexual violence. Yet, as women 'became older' and spent more time in the station, accruing street

capital, there were several examples of long-term term station residents who quite successfully navigated station life 'alone' as chapter 7 will explore.

This chapter particularly explores the dualistic and multiplex nature of sex work. Whilst sex work enabled women a certain means of obtaining income and access to food and drugs in the pursuit of survival, it came at the cost of a woman's honour and placed her at risk for violence within the social networks sought for protection. Women were only able to engage in one predominant and one backup livelihood strategy (eg. sex work and begging, marriage and begging), with sex work and marriage incompatible complementary strategies (with the exception of one participant). Engagement in particular livelihood strategies (or a combination of these), thus necessitated complex trade-offs between the survival, protection and honour that woman sought.

Livelihood strategy	**Livelihood Priorities**		
	Survival	Protection	Honour
Sex work	Certain	Limited. Dualistic[27]	None
Marriage	Uncertain	Dualistic	Certain
Being alone	Uncertain	Limited	Limited

Table 1: The extent to which livelihood strategies met women's livelihood priorities

My analysis demonstrates that the livelihood strategies women engage in are the product of both renegotiated priorities as well as a response to their everyday vulnerability within the station context. As such, women's livelihood strategies are, by necessity, dynamic and shifting as they navigate station life. Prolonged fieldwork and engagement with key participants elicited the fluidity of women's livelihood strategies over my fieldwork period, responding to the latest shock or event with 'backup' livelihood strategies. The nature of backup strategies utilized was dependent on a number of factors, including a woman's life history (particularly previous experiences of livelihood strategies); her present situation, including her marital status and presence of children as well as the assets a woman currently had access to or was seeking. Additionally, the type of shock or event was instrumental in determining the strategy utilized. For example, a particularly acute shock (such as a health event) or infrequent event (such as a husband unexpectedly not providing

[27] Dualistic strategy: Refers to the dualistic nature of both advantageous and adverse outcomes associated with this form of livelihood

'money for food' of an evening) would elicit a different response to a chronic shock (such as a husband being put in jail). As will be demonstrated in this chapter, sex work was less often a 'back up' livelihood strategy in respond to an acute shock or infrequent event.

Formal employment was almost never discussed as a viable livelihood strategy amongst the women. Very few women engaged in the formal employment market whilst co-currently living in the station. There were multiple barriers to women entering the formal employment market, including that of illiteracy and potential exploitation (Chapter 3) but also how the constant everyday uncertainty of station life altered women's livelihood priorities. As women's lives and routines became enmeshed within the station, the fluid and reactive coping strategies that enabled women to survive became focused on 'living for today.' A reactive, day-to day form of living and coping in the present became incompatible with the rigidity and requirements of formal employment (cf. Miller & Neaigus 2002; O'Grady & Gaetz 2004). Identification of a women's priorities and the ways in which livelihood strategies adapt and change in response to the violence and constrained possibilities within vulnerability contexts are crucial for development practitioners to be able to work within these fluid and ever-changing spaces.

Sex work

Sex work was a particularly prevalent and important livelihood within the station context for women, as opposed to other concentrations of street dwellers throughout Dhaka (SJF Program Co-ordinator 14th August 2014). The focus on sex work in this chapter is not intended to perpetuate the narrative that all street-dwelling women engage in this livelihood strategy, particularly given that the only gender-specific research amongst street-dwellers in Dhaka is with 'street-based' or 'floating' commercial sex workers' (Mondal et al. 2008; Rahman, M et al. 2000; Sabet, Rahman & Ahmad 2012; Sarker et al. 1998). The majority of sex work research in Bangladesh has focused on the prevalence, beliefs and behaviours that contribute to sexually transmitted infections (Azim et al. 2006; Hosain & Chatterjee 2005; Nessa et al. 2004). Studies by Ward et al. (2004) and Haque, R (2015) are notable exceptions, researching sex work as a form of employment in Bangladesh, exploring both the macro-and micro level factors that influence women engaging in sex work or being trafficked. Within Haques' discussion of women's entry into 'floating' sex work (or street sex work), economic poverty and women's life-histories are discussed, yet there is little discussion of the experience of homelessness as mediating and influencing women's entry into, and experiences of, sex work as a

livelihood strategy. Within the development literature, limited attention has been given to gendered entry into, and the implications of, engaging in risky, precarious and what has been construed as 'criminal' livelihoods.

The following section will explore the way in which sex work is culturally and socially constructed in Bangladesh and the processes by which women make sense of engaging in this form of livelihood. My analysis reveals entry into sex work within the station resulting from a gendered re-ordering of both women's economic and moral possibilities and priorities, often mediated through sexual assault. Women feel like they have 'no other choice' but to engage in sex work in order to survive (cf. Carlen 1996). Existing literature supports the following discussion of entry into 'survival sex' resulting from a combination of economic necessity, a lack of alternative livelihood strategies (due to gender inequality and low education levels) as well as environmental factors providing opportunities and attitudes that favour sex work (Balos & Fellows 1999; Cusick 2006; Greene, Ennett & Ringwalt 1999; Muecke 1992; Rabinovitch & Strega 2004; Rekart 2006; Watson, J 2011).

Advice to new girls: 'I would tell them not to go with men who offer them food'

My analysis reveals three predominant risk factors for women engaging in sex work: girls and women who have recently experienced rape; are 'alone' (unmarried); or hungry (experiencing recently failed alterative livelihood options). New arrivals, typically experiencing all three, are thus the most vulnerable to entering sex work. New arrivals or 'new girls'[28] are bewildered, lost, experiencing acute hunger, acutely vulnerable to physical and sexual assault and have limited capacity to earn an income or survive the chaos of the station.

When asking women about the advice they would give to new girls arriving at the station, particularly with respect to avoiding the 'traps' of the station, most women would shrug their shoulders. 'How can I say?' was a common response, speaking to the acknowledgement of individuality of survival strategies and the perceived unavoidability of violence. Whilst Fatema frankly remarked to me, 'I don't know, and I don't care really…you are on your own in the station' (25th February 2015). One of the few risk mitigation strategies proposed was for new girls to 'not to go with' or 'not to trust' men who offer food. On face value, this refusal of food appears counter-intuitive, given that one of the most pressing concerns of new girls is their

[28] New arrivals are referred to as 'new girls' in this chapter, given that most women are under 18 years old if they come to the station alone.

hunger. Yet accepting food from a man was a particular risk factor for sexual assault and subsequent entry into sex work. Jorina explained to me:

> …a man sees a new woman. They will chat and she will…eventually tell him… 'I am new here and I haven't eaten any food for the last two days. I am not getting any work.' Probably the man will offer her some food to eat or… some work. Then he will use (sexually assault) her… I would tell [the new girls] to not go with men who offer them food…If she goes, she will be in trouble. She will be trapped under the influence of bad people.
>
> (23rd February 2015)

Jorina's comments refer to an all too common scenario that unfolds in the station. Under the guise of a promised meal, the girl would follow a man from the station courtyard into the secluded nursery (an open space filled with plants and trees to one side of the station courtyard) or the shipping yards near the train tracks. The lack of light, regulated access by the drug dealers of the station and ample space within both locations provided the perfect conditions for assault. Here the girl is raped. Occasionally by one man, often by a gang.

Nipia was one of the few women who shared the details of her rape as a new arrival. She was an example of one of the many women who were never quite able to leave the station, as if her fate was somehow intertwined with Kamalapur (Chapter 7). When I met Nipia she was living in a slum along the railway track on the fringes of the city. Several mornings a week she would jump onto a train to the station to beg with her child. I'll never forget Nipia, not only because of her soul-searching eyes, or as the only woman I met that had the same short, cropped hair as myself (we established it had fallen prey to lice and was not a choice like my own). Instead, I remember Nipia for the bravery of baring her story to me in a first interview.

Nipia sat on Marli's mat with me, sitting in a small ball, her arms wrapped tightly around her. It was a defensive, yet common position to assume, and I noted the need to proceed slowly. I started with all the normal initial questions, finding that she was approximately seventeen when she arrived. Then in an offhand manner I asked, 'so tell me about what it was like when you first arrived in the station?' Most women would launch into a narrative of hunger, yet instead, Nipia looked up, 'you surely understand the situation that a girl faces when she comes to the station, the men, the stuff they do….' 'Would you like to tell me?' I asked. And so, Nipia wrapped her *orna* (scarf) more tightly around her head and across her chest, as if to protect herself and elaborated:

> …when I first came… I didn't understand sex and all of that. I had been in the station two days. I had only eaten one *shingara*[29]. This guy came and told me he would give me food if I came with him. I didn't understand… and on premise of taking me to get food he took me to a bad place. There, many guys forced themselves on me. After that, I couldn't stay in this area after it became dark *(starts shaking*) …Whenever a new girl comes (*pauses, her voice getting lower to almost a whisper*) …they ruin her like that.
>
> (7th January 2015)

And then she shook herself, as if to rid herself from the memories and looked around for her daughter, who was happily playing with Mali a few meters away. Several women approached us and the interview came to an abrupt halt. Later, Shanta told me that Nipia had been 'forced' into sex work at a brothel where conditions were so bad 'women swallowed nails' as a means to commit suicide. Nipia had somehow managed to 'escape' back to the station where she continued engaging in sex work for several years.

Rape was used as an initiation of 'new girls' to station life, often precipitating entrance into sex work[30]. The most insidious process was that of the recruitment by longer-term sex workers of the station who had formed their own livelihood strategy from preying on vulnerable new girls. These women would receive 100-300 taka (1.7 – 5 AUD) for each recruitment from men in the station. Women would be on the lookout for new arrivals, and they would inform the group of men. The men would offer employment or food, lure the new girl into a secluded location and (often gang) rape her. Following the rape, the older woman would conveniently 'find' the girl abandoned in the field or nursery and assist her, give her a meal and offer her protection that night. The girl, lulled into a false sense of security, relieved to have finally had a meal, to experience a modicum of safety, begins to trust this woman. This may continue for a day or two, until the woman makes it clear that the security provided can only continue if the woman begins to engage in sex work. At this point, the girl can conceive of nothing else. This is the first time she has slept properly, been able to eat. She views herself as already 'ruined' and sex work as what she has to do to survive.

Similarly, several women told me that they had been recruited by the man who had initially raped her, telling the women that unless they began to take clients, they

[29] Street food, a small pastry filled with a mixture of vegetables and spices costing 5 taka (0.12 AUD).

[30] Rape is a well-documented as precipitating entry into sex work. In a study of sex workers in Dhaka, 44% of sex workers reported their first sexual act as being 'forced' (Azim et al. 2006).

would continue to be 'taken by force' without payment. The fear of another incident of rape, having no control over how this interaction was to take place and to not receive money in return, facilitated women to begin to rationalise their engagement in sex work. Additionally, women who rarely engaged in sex work reported that despite refusing the advances of the street dwelling men, they were powerless to refuse those of the police. If propositioned by a police officer, women told me that they would 'go with them,' preferring a potential financial payment and ensuring a level of negotiation regarding location, rather than the alternative of almost certain physical force and potential gang rape by a group of officers. When asked if the police would really pay women afterwards, there were mixed reports – some women said the police always paid, others reported having received no payment and that they had been 'too scared to ask.' I was told of several instances of rape by the police during fieldwork, including one young girl, no more than 15 years old, who had been gang raped in a police van and then thrown out of the moving vehicle. The extent of the physical injuries, compounded by her pre-existing poor health and the structural violence of the public health system, resulted in the girl eventually spending six months in hospital and necessitating five plastic surgeries to repair the wounds on her feet, legs and buttocks[31]. The police held in-ordinate forms of power and control over women's bodies in the station. It was not only their unparalleled physical and social power, but also the lack of accountable legal processes to report and provide recourse against sexual violence which perpetuated rape and violence within Kamalapur, see Chapter 4 (Coomaraswamy 2005).

[31] According to hospital staff, this girl had been 'dumped' at Dhaka Medical hospital by a police officer who had quickly left (28th March). Despite having acquired extensive physical wounds, the girl had been left to rot in a corner of the hospital, with her wounds and physical needs (including toileting) left unattended to by hospital staff in the absence of having no family or carer to assist her to meet her immediate needs and to navigate the public health care system. Whilst some well-meaning medical students and public had endeavoured to assist her for a time, the girls often unpredictable and violent behaviour (in part the result of drug withdrawal), discouraged their continued assistance. The girl had eventually managed to convince someone to put her on a rickshaw to get back to the station to access drugs for pain relief (having only been given the occasional paracetamol in the hospital). I came across the girl sitting on a platform in the station with extensive necrosis, almost gangrenous wounds crawling with maggots, and in an incoherent mental and verbal state. She was eventually admitted to the Sajida Foundation hospital, where she was able to access the surgeries she required.

Figure 21: A woman on the roof of Kamalapur station (Uddin, S 2010a) [32]

'Becoming ruined'

The process of becoming and arriving at the station told women that their bodies were expendable and 'bad'; including the violence within kinship and marital relationships and the everyday violence of police brutality, ongoing hunger and sleep deprivation that constituted station life (Chapter 4). Rape, 'as perhaps the ultimate domination of another's body' sends powerful messages about the worth and 'use' of a woman's body (Pain, R 1999, p. 126). In speaking of her own arrival to the station, Bilkis, told me, 'I understood everything after coming to the station…How if you don't want to go somewhere you would be taken forcibly. How one person ruins another person's life' (28th January 2015). Women discussed becoming 'ruined' following rape, and as such, having lost all perceived honour and worth.

The phrase 'becoming ruined' was not only referring to initial trauma of rape, but was also used in reference to the way in which women subsequently renegotiated their moral identities and livelihood priorities. As Nipia, the woman who had shared her story of rape above, told me, 'I gradually became bad after [being raped], people

[32] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'A sex worker searches for a place to sleep on the rooftop of Kamalapur Railway Station. Previously, they would sleep on train platforms and in waiting rooms. But the authorities no longer allow them to sleep there, with police detaining those who try. The rooftop may also be used as a 'room' for sex workers during business hours' (Uddin, S 2010a).

want to ruin others… I didn't have any life left. Having nothing else to do, I did [sex work], to prevent myself from starving' (6th January 2015). Likewise, Pain comments:

> …experiences of violence changes self-identity and sense of geographical world…The experience of awareness of the threat of aggression…affects the way we live, perceive and manage ourselves, our bodies and the spaces we use.
>
> (1999, p. 126)

In viewing themselves as ruined or fallen, and having lost their honour and even their 'life', women begin the process of internalizing the dominant discourse that conflates the morality of homeless women with that of sex workers, see also discussion in Chapters 1 and 2 (Ghafur 2002). Shumi recounted her experiences of coming to the station and how they 'changed' her so that she became 'bad:'

> …I came [to the station] and I changed. Here in the station, men would call me and touch me. Having no other way, I had to resort to becoming bad. People cannot stay good in the station way of life. No one can say that he or she is good. I cannot say that I am good. Do you understand what I am saying? I changed myself over time. I was doing bad work for…three to four months maybe... I did that out of suffering and to feed myself.
>
> (24th November 2014)

Sex work is highly socially stigmatized in Bangladesh. Whilst sex work is legal within a brothel, soliciting for clients in public, is illegal and punishable by imprisonment for a month or a fine under the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933, Section 7 (Godwin 2012). The exact number of sex workers in Bangladesh is unknown, partly due to the avoidance of the term 'sex work' in official documentation. Instead, sex workers are referred to as 'women in moral danger,' and 'socially deprived/handicapped women' (Morol & Tahmina 2004; Sultana 2015). Women suspected of engaging in sex work may be labelled as being bad (*kharap*), ruined or spoiled *(nosto*), fallen (*potita*), and the colloquial equivalent of 'sluts' (*beshya*). Additionally women may be called market-place women (*bajarer-meye*) or street-women (*rastar-meye*), illustrating the spatialization of this livelihood and the extent of conflation between homelessness and sex work within dominant discourse (Ghafur 2002; Sultana 2015). Religious leaders may refuse to perform funeral rites for sex workers, or not allow their bodies to be buried in Islamic cemeteries because of their immorality (Blanchet 1996). Indeed, several women told me that one of their biggest fears was 'not being buried' following their death. Telling a woman living in the station that she would not have a funeral was a common form of verbal abuse

instigated by the public or during arguments with family and acquaintances, and which was often recounted with much distress by women. It is within this highly stigmatized context that sex work is entered into by women.

There is a distinct lack of agency within women's narratives of entry into sex work and is reflective of the constrained choices faced by women, as well as the social and cultural context within which this livelihood is engaged in. Whilst Shumi had since left sex work, she still spoke of 'having no other way, I had to resort to becoming bad' whilst she was new to the station. The inescapability and inevitability of engaging in sex work as a single woman on the street punctuate women's accounts. 'Having no other choice' or being 'forced' to engage in sex work were some of the many phrases that were used. Other women, like Nipia, spoke of starving or dying as the only perceived alternative to sex work. This conceptualization of sex work differs from discussions of this livelihood a form of resistance or 'active coping strategy' in other contexts (Watson, J 2011).

Figure 22: A couple in Kamalapur (Uddin, S 2010a)[33]

[33] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'Jummon and his partner, Ontora, in an abandoned rail carriage in Kamalapur Railway Station. Jummon earns his living from various occupations, from manual labour to stealing and mugging. Ontora is a sex worker. She works in various places in and around the station, including on rooftops, in abandoned carriages and gaps in between rail lines. She also makes love to Jummon in these spaces' (Uddin, S 2010a).

Problematizing the 'strategy' of livelihoods

Care must be taken when adopting the phrase 'livelihood strategy' within this context. The term 'strategy,' gives the illusion of agency and choice in deciding how survival will be pursued, and is to profoundly misrepresent the constrained decisions faced by women in order to cope with the circumstances they find themselves in. Likewise, Rakodi (1991) has asked if urban poor women can be conceived of as strategists, or if they are 'victims of circumstance,' without the opportunity to plan ahead or make decisions that are advantageous for their longer-term outcomes, commenting:

> …poverty is thus characterised not only by a lack of assets and inability to accumulate a portfolio of assets, but also by lack of choice with respect to alternative coping strategies…and will instead seek a survival strategy which will enable them simply to protect their biological reproduction.
>
> (1991, p. 414)

Rakodi astutely captures what acute vulnerability entails: a lack of choice regarding the coping strategies utilized to pursue survival and keep the threat of hunger at bay. Yet Rakodi's description does not capture the extent of constraint experienced by women in this context, where engagement in sex work does very little to 'protect biological reproduction' and instead places women's reproductive choices in jeopardy. Whilst the term 'strategy' is adopted in this thesis in the interests of congruence with development literature, it is stressed that a lack of choice and agency surrounds livelihood strategies within the station context and characterises the most vulnerable within this context. Indeed, women's livelihood choices are constrained to such an extent that the pursuit of food (survival) comes at the direct cost of their physical safety (protection) and further undermines their already 'lost' honour. Likewise Cornwall (2007b), discusses how the individualist orientation of development studies misrepresents the extent to which women are able to pursue strategic 'choices.' Instead, the inter-subjective and relational dimensions of women's agency is stressed, where Cornwall (2007b) differentiates, following De Certeau (1984), between the 'choices' and 'tactics' women adopt to manage uncertainty.

Women begin to view their body as the only asset they have left to procure a livelihood. As Kabeer notes, 'the poor…are poor because they must run down their only asset – their bodies – simply to survive' (Kabeer 1994, p. 83). Sex work was the most lucrative livelihood strategy available to women in the station, where women would earn on average, 100 taka per client, although this could be as high as 200 taka

if a girl was particularly attractive and skilled at negotiation (1.7-3.3 AUD)[34]. Yet sex work also came at a cost, where many of the women began engaging in various strategies to cope with the physical, emotional and mental stresses associated with sex work, and which had both immediate and longer term implications for their livelihood outcomes and vulnerability trajectories.

Additionally, women were observed to occasionally engage in sex work as a last resort during their time in the station. Sex work was a response to the failure of other livelihood alternatives, the lack of viable alternative options, or an increased need for income (such as a health episode or the incarceration of a husband). Noddi had been living in the station for approximately seven years. She initially came to the station to beg, and entered sex work following a rape. Several years later she was 'forced' into a marriage to a local drug dealer in the station. When I met Noddi, her husband was in jail, and whilst she told me that she was living off of her husband's savings and selling some jewellery during our initial conversations, I later found out that she had been engaging in occasional sex work to 'get by.' When her husband returned to the station, Noddi went back to occasional begging to supplement the income she received from her husband. Noddi's story illustrates the fluidity and reactivity of livelihood strategies for women throughout their time in the station, and the multiple, different reasons underpinning entry into the same strategy over a woman's lifespan.

The dark social 'side' of the station

Whilst social actors and existing relationships are part of the reason why women enter into sex work, relationships with other sex workers are formed as a result of engaging in this livelihood strategy. The social and spatial ostracism of sex workers within Bangladesh is reflected within the social and spatial organization of station residents (Caldwell et al. 1999). As a result of their livelihood strategy, the social networks of practicing sex workers were limited to fellow sex workers or clients.

[34] 'Survival sex,' particularly that of street-based sex work has been associated with increased risk of violence and STD's (including HIV) due to macro and micro level factors, including violence and gendered power dynamics, that mediate women's ability to negotiate risk reduction strategies (Amaro & Raj 2000; El-Bassel et al. 2000; Shannon et al. 2008; Wechsberg et al. 2006; Zierler & Krieger 1997). Women were reluctant to discuss condom negotiation and use with me, with mixed reports of condom usage. The women I spoke to had free access to condoms and appeared to know that they 'should' use these, however actual usage largely relied on negotiation abilities. Two women also reported that using a condom would lower the price of the transaction, however other women refuted this comment. Given that each sex worker largely negotiated her own clients and price, such discrepancies were likely, and left women vulnerable to economic and gendered power dynamics during these negotiations.

Bilkis, an ex-sex worker commented to me, 'there is no-one else there for us,' reflecting the extent of social ostracism experienced by sex-workers within their kinship networks as well as from non-sex working women in the station. Several women called their closest friends in the station as 'sisters,' as one women explained of her relationships in the station, 'you're like sisters or you're nothing' (28th January 2015). When walking through the station, women could be observed sitting together, combing each other's hair for head-lice, sharing a cup of tea, watching over someone else's child, putting on each other's makeup in the late afternoon as they prepared for an evening. Women would walk with each other to the 'club,' a sexual health clinic that provided showers, lockers and a place for women to sleep securely through the day.

Figure 23: Two 'sisters' (Uddin, S 2010a)[35]

Investing in social and affiliative relationships is a common coping strategy, particularly amongst homeless women (Radley, Hodgetts & Cullen 2006; Taylor et al. 2000). Relationships with other sex-working women were largely situated within pragmatic assessments of the political economy of station life and attempts to access 'street capital.' 'Street capital' has been used to refer to 'latent knowledge gained through observations and experiences…that enable [a homeless individual] to develop survival skills in the street economy' (Lankenau et al. 2005, p. 11). Within

[35] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'Panna and Rita have been friends for the last two years. They stay together in the street and have now become family' (Uddin, S 2010a).

this context, street capital will also be used to refer to the power and protection individuals accrue from other street actors as result of their embeddedness within the street economy. Following Schulman and Anderson (1999), who discuss social capital as a 'form of power that can be created, accumulated, or destroyed' (ibid, pg. 351), woman gained recognition amongst other street dwellers as 'belonging' to a certain group within the political economy of the station. Unlike symbolic capital, which Kabeer (2000, p. 44) defines as the 'duties, debt, claims an obligations built up in the investment in social relationships that can be converted into material resources in times of need,' street capital does not necessarily translate into material resources. Instead, street capital confers a degree of protection from the risk of sexual and physical violence, given that women were more likely to experience violence from other street dwellers or individuals known to them, rather than strangers (Breton & Bunston 2009; Fisher et al. 1995).

Shanta attempted to explain to me how she had gained protection as a function of accruing the knowledge, power and skills over the ten years she had spent on the street:

> …now I can sit around and stay with friends, but initially [when I came to the station] if I go [and try and sit with] some woman from around here she would shoo me away. Over time gradually as we have been living here we became smarter…We are able to stay here and no one has the strength to do stuff to us.

(12th January 2015)

There was safety in numbers in the station, and obtaining street capital or accessing the capital of others through relationships, was one means by which women could gain this modicum of protection.

Yet like the routines and events of the everyday, relationships between sex workers were precarious, unreliable and inevitably violent. Despite a modicum of protection, social groups were dualistic, simultaneously exposed women to the outbursts of violence that occurred within and between groups and included disputes over drugs, infidelity, broken trust or loyalty and food. Pia explained:

> …suddenly a fight could break out [on the sex workers side of the station]. The fighting is such that they beat each other bloody. It could be for anything.

(8th May 2015)

Some days I would arrive at the station and groups of women, women whom I had understood to be friends, standing and yelling at each other. Sometimes it was over

something seemingly trivial such as an accidental knock or bump, other times it would be something more serious such as trying to 'steal' a regular client or fights over the sharing of drugs. Fights could sometimes rapidly escalate, and I heard of women quite seriously injuring and wounding other women, including slashing other women's face with a blade, one of the 'worst' (shameful) injuries a woman could accrue. Shanta commented to me one day, 'sex workers, they'll bite at anything' (23rd January 2015), referring to the often volatile emotions and aggressive communication style employed by many sex workers. These communication styles were partly attributable to the lack of sleep and hunger that were widely prevalent within the station population, as well as the past and continual violations of women's bodily integrity, undermining women's capabilities of health and senses, imagination and thought (Chapter 4). Yet these modes of communication and dealing with conflict were, however, less conducive for women in developing and maintaining affiliative relationships (Chapter 7).

The relationships between sex-workers were precarious, fraught and in constant negotiation, where the struggle for survival came in competition with women's relationships. As May, Cloke and Johnsen comment:

> …whilst homeless people form friendships and enter into sexual relationships for the same (complex) reasons as do other people, the rigours of life on the street means that such relationships may also involve more complex dynamics.
>
> (2007, p. 17)

The precarious everyday existence within the station strained the moral economy of sex workers, where the extent to which women could expect reciprocity and altruism within their social relationships was limited. These relationships contrast with the 'moral economy' that is said to exist amongst social networks in rural areas and provide a degree of food security amongst the poor (Scott 1985).

In a conversation delving into her life history, Shanta discussed the inadequacy of her friends when she had faced one of the most acute crisis' to date. During her first year in the station, Shanta had become pregnant and subsequently abandoned by her previous partner who had been trading food for sex throughout their volatile and ever increasingly abusive relationship. After several failed abortion and suicide attempts, another woman in the station convinced Shanta that she had to live. Yet Shanta's so called 'friends' were either unable or unwilling to assist her with the food she needed to get through the day. Shanta explained:

> …you have friends who are only there with you because of your food and they're not really there for you when you need them…I had helped

> others in their times of trouble, and we were all living and eating together, but now seeing the troubling situation I was in, they had abandoned me.

And so, Shanta continued:

> …I did bad work…What else could I do, to eat and live? To make [the baby] live, I myself needed to live. There was nothing else for me to do. What does it feel like for a person to have an empty stomach for an entire day?

(24th February 2015)

When all the members of a group experience similar levels of poverty, violence and precarity, the extent to which women could provide mutual support for each other was limited. During an acute crisis, women's own self-interests almost inevitably came first, and proved unreliable in being able to provide emotional, practical or physical support to others if it placed them at risk. As Beall notes, 'reciprocal relations among the very poorest are particularly fragile and provide an unstable base for long-term security (Beall 1995, p. 435).

Social networks within the station context are demonstrated to be a dualistic coping and livelihood strategy for women. Women engaged in particular social relationships as a result of engagement in sex work and the loss of alternative social networks with family and other station residents, proving to be a necessary, yet ultimately unreliable, strategy. The 'street capital' accrued through these networks offered women certain forms of protection. Yet relationships, like life in the station, were precarious, exposing women to the risk of everyday violence, drug use (discussed below), as well as the inevitable unreliability of these networks as a viable form of social protection. Likewise Conticini (2008) found that social networks may strengthen immediate protection and security of street children in Dhaka, whilst increasing their vulnerability. Within the SLF, social capital is defined as, 'the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives' (DFID 2007). Women's life histories illustrate that conflating relationships within a term such as 'social capital,' ignores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the quality, nature and gendered dimensions of social relationships, shaped by particular social and cultural contexts and how these have ramifications for women's capabilities and poverty trajectories, as will be argued in Chapters 6 and 7.

Drug use: 'To able to lead [this] lives…the drugs go along with it'

For many of the station residents, particularly sex workers, drug use was a social practice and formed an integral part of their livelihood strategy. Drugs were the means by which the women deal with the violence of homelessness, the chronic pain, hunger, exposure, social exclusion, but also to get through the day (or night of sex work) and thus continue to survive. I wish to challenge the overwhelming narrative of homeless drug users as 'subordinating everything in their lives' in the pursuit of their drug consumption (Bourgois 2010, p. 239). Instead, a more nuanced understanding is offered, where drug use is conceptualized as both the means and ends of livelihood strategies. In doing so, I propose a differentiation between drug 'users' and 'addicts,' as discussed by station residents.

Every woman I talked to who had ever engaged in sex work within the station also discussed an accompanying engagement in drug use. In addition, several women (such as Fatmea) continued drug use outside of an engagement in sex work as their primary source of income. I would conservatively estimate at least 30% of long-term station residents engaged in regular drug use. The most commonly consumed drugs by women included inhaling *dandy* (shoe gum), smoking *ganja* (marijuana), or taking sleeping tablets, cough syrup and *yabba* (methamphetamines). The gendered nature of drug consumption within the adult street population in Dhaka has been misrepresented in the literature, with a survey discussing a distinct gender disparity (69% of men vs. less than 1% of women) of drug consumption that does not reflect the observations of station residents in this study (Koehlmoos et al. 2009). The survey reported marijuana (73%), heroin (12%), alcohol (5%), chewing tobacco (4%) and sleeping pills (4%) use within reported drug users. Whilst it must be acknowledged that men largely operate the drug dealing within the station and were both observed and reported to consume drugs in both higher levels and more frequently than women, this is not to say that women did not engage in drug use. Given the Koehlmoos et al. (2009) study was multi-sited survey and reported on city-wide prevalence, results may have obscured the specific prevalence of drug consumption in particular areas such as Kamalapur. Even so, there is an apparent disconnect between this study's results and that of my fieldwork data, once again calling into question the validity and reliability of utilizing once-off engagement methods with the female homeless population when researching such sensitive, stigmatized issues.

Drug use as a coping strategy for street populations has been discussed in the literature as a means for street populations to gain acceptance, for emotional escape and to reduce hunger (Kidd & Davidson 2007; Sherman et al. 2005). Yet the way in which drug use may advantageously enable individuals to engage in certain livelihood

strategies has limited recognition. Shohag, a staff member from Sajida Foundation, and whom had previously worked in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program, described to me his perception of why street dwellers consumed drugs:

> …[street dwellers] take drugs because of their lifestyle. Some of them…do sex work. These women, their lives are very hard, in order to manage all that they have chosen…[to consume] tablets. To save themselves they take these. Please don't mind, but let me tell you, they'll have sex with four to five people each night. Five men will be five different types [and] they'll get abused in five different ways. To forget all of this she'll take the … *yabba* (marijuana), *dandy* (shoe gum) or tablets. They get beaten a lot, but after a while they just get up. They can't feel the pain…So to be able to lead lives like that, they have chosen the tablets to go along with it.

(8th February 2015)

Drug use was conceptualized by Shohag as a useful, understandable and perhaps even necessary means of facilitating continual engagement in livelihood strategies, including sex work[36]. Drugs became the means by which women coped with abuse from clients, enabled them to have 'stamina' and have sex with multiple men in a night. Street sex is a particular risk factor for violence, with a study finding that sex-workers in Dhaka were more likely to report sexual or physical violence than non-sex working women (78% compared to 27%) (Azim et al. 2006; cf. Vanwesenbeeck 2001).

Drug use to reduce hunger was widely reportedly throughout the station, and may form part of a livelihood strategy when women were lying or sitting for prolonged periods of time. One afternoon during another interview, Shohag remarked:

> …the [station dwellers] have these tablets, called *chakki,* and they also eat different kinds of tablets. The reason is that if they are sleeping or if they lie about all day, then they do not feel hunger.

(3rd November 2015)

A woman who was sitting with us, chimed in, 'day and night are the same to them.' The pursuit of timelessness, achieved through drug consumption, was perceived as beneficial or even necessary for some women's livelihood strategies.

[36] There is a body of literature, albeit predominantly from high income countries, that discusses the overlap between drug using and sex working populations and the relationship between the sex and drug markets, and yet does not acknowledge drug use as a strategy to facilitate sex work (Azim et al. 2006; Cusick 2006; Miller & Neaigus 2002).

Figure 24: A woman smoking in Kamalapur (Uddin, S 2010b).

Drugs were often exchanged and consumed in a bid to access social groups within the networks of sex workers. I asked Shohag how one would become a member of a group and he explained:

> …suppose I am the boss, and you are a junior who wants to join me. Then the first condition is that you have to give me something, a jar of *dandy* (shoe gum) for instance. Then since you have listened to what I've said, I'll look out for you…Those who are more powerful have more followers/supporters with them. There are three main groups here among [the sex workers].
>
> (8th February 2015)

Group drug consumption was used to bond with other street dwellers, and as a means to access, accrue and maintain street capital and social relationships. Drugs such as *dandy* (shoe gum) were typically consumed in groups, enabling the cost of drugs to be shared. As Shohag continued to explain:

> …you will see that there are five or six people sitting together around one *dandy* (shoe gum) jar; one jar now costs 70 taka (1.2 AUD). They will all share it, one person will buy it and the everyone will have a little bit. It is like a religion for the drug users. Like we share the meat after *qurbani*[37] they will share it like that with everyone. One person will buy

[37] The Islamic holiday during the Eid-ul-Azha sacrifice.

> and give it to everyone, then the second time another person will buy and share with everyone.

For some women, their daily routines were shaped around obtaining and sharing the drugs and food necessary to get through the day within their social group, and these practices become both a risk and protective factor. Drug consumption in groups decreased the likelihood of a woman being found under the influence and alone, to some extent protecting her from sexual or physical assault[38].

Yet social networks were also a risk factor, where peer consumption of drugs was seen to both initiate and increase the likelihood of consumption. Fatema told me 'the first time I took drugs I was with a guy and a girl taught me how to take tablets. She introduced drugs to me. I didn't know what it was' (6th May 2015). Shanta told me about how her friends would regularly engage in drug use, 'when I am going with my friends, if they smoke… because they are smoking in front of me, I will take a sip. We just get used to [drug consumption] by always seeing people and [then] trying [ourselves]' (8th October 2015). Regular drug use, as influenced by social actors, may have serious health effects and lead to addiction, particularly in the case of *yabba (*methamphetamine*)* (Auerswald & Eyre 2002; Kidd & Davidson 2007, p. 231). As Padgett et al. (2006, p. 466) comments of homeless women who were drug users, 'proximity to…drug dealers and fellow substance abusers…was one of the few constants in these women's lives' and was one of the only ways in which women could escape their 'painful realities', illustrating the way in which proximity, normalized drug consumption and social networks can facilitate drug use.

Shohag also discussed that for some women, drug consumption gradually became the sole pursuit of the day:

> …for example…I have a routine…I sleep for six hours, get up in the morning, wash and get dressed. I go to work. That is my daily life. [An addicts] daily life is to do drugs, then pass out at some place. Day and night goes by, they have no concern or worry, no tension about anything. They do not have to worry about going to a job or being late like us. They will get *dandy* (shoe gum) with five other people and will… share it. That is the only plan they have.

[38] Group drug consumption decreased the likelihood women would endeavor to be mobile whilst under the influence of a drug. Given that much of the drug consumption occurred on the roof of the station or on trains in the train yard (allowing drug deals and drug consumption to take place out of the watchful eyes of the police), there was the risk of falling off the roof. I not only heard accounts of this occurring, but also cleaned and bandaged numerous wounds of young boys scraped legs, cut feet and hands from 'falls' when they were 'high' (although occasionally this excuse was used as a cover for a fight they were reluctant to discuss).

(8th February 2015)

The potential for drug use to provide the way by which station dwellers could escape the difficult realities of station life was what made it a risky strategy. Livelihoods, such as sex work, and drug use become mutually reinforcive practices, mediated through social actors and the ever-present violence of station life. As a participant in Kid and Davidson's study discussed, 'drugs were there for me,' with other supports or forms of coping, such as friends, either not available or an unreliable alternative, themes that were prevalent within women's narratives during fieldwork (Kidd & Davidson 2007, p. 231).

Shanta, a previous drug user, discussed with me how drug use was a potential, yet negative coping strategy for station dwellers:

> …after living for a time [in the station] we have adjusted, but those young girls who are coming now…although we [both] have suffered and have been tortured, they are not able to manage as well as we did. They are going into drug addiction…they get into drugs and go on the wrong path.

(12th January 2015)

Drug addiction was widely conceived of as the 'wrong path' by many of the women, and even Fatema, a regular drug user herself, discussed her drug consumption as 'bad' and her various (occasionally successful) attempts to discontinue use (3rd February 2015). Women discussed the health impacts (including death), the potential for violence and injury, as well as the economic ramifications of drug use and the way in which the stigma of drug use 'trapped' women within the station, unable to visit families or engage in formal employment (Chapter 7). When drug consumption became the end, rather than the means of livelihoods, or as Shanta explained, when 'someone earnt for drugs rather than for food' (7th May 2015), they were seen to be an 'addict' by other station residents. Addicts would resort to various 'desperate' strategies to fund their consumption.

In particular, there were accounts of women either 'selling' their babies or capitalising on their child's ill-health to obtain income from begging. I heard of numerous occasions of women selling their children, and held interviews with two women who briefly mentioned, but were unwilling to discuss, previously selling a child 'out of desperation.' Other long-term station residents and key participants, such as Shanta, asserted that drug addiction was the predominant reason for women selling their children and told me that women could earn up to 20,000 taka (334 AUD) for a child, equivalent to approximately 3.5 months wages from full time garments factory work.

One particularly distressing incident for station residents is when a known *yabba* (methamphetamine) 'addict' had been using her child with a growing tumour to beg for approximately 6 months. I had been approached by this woman on several occasions for financial assistance, but had been told by several women not to provide money 'because she [the woman in question] was going to use it on drugs and wasn't going to take the kid to hospital anyway.' I had been advised that the surgery the child required was free of charge, but that the woman wanted to capitalise on the tumour for begging income as long as possible. One evening where the child was unable to stop crying, the woman went to Dhaka Medical Hospital at the insistence (and economic assistance) of several station residents. The next morning, the woman was back in the station, seeking her next hit, claiming that the blood for a surgery was too expensive[39]. The woman continued to beg with the rapidly deteriorating child. That night, the women got high on *yabba* and was sitting in a group of men smoking *ganja.* Another male station resident, Parul's husband, told me that:

> …suddenly the crying [of the child] stopped. I woke up and all I could hear was their yelling. I went over to them [wanting to tell them to be quiet and allow his family to sleep], and the baby was dead on her lap...just lying there. I don't think she had even noticed.

(3rd March 2015)

The apparent disregard for the child's wellbeing and the callous way in which this woman had used the dead child to beg for additional money, 'all for drugs' was particularly distressing for this station resident who continued, shaking with anger, 'if she was a man, I would beat her bloody'. Whilst this story is an extreme example of trading a child's health for begging income, and the only one I observed, several key participants confirmed it was by no way an isolated incident during their time in the station. Drug addiction, is demonstrated to have profoundly detrimental immediate and long term outcomes for women's capabilities, relationships and ability to leave the station context, forming a particular 'trap' for women (Chapter 7).

Self-harm

Self-harm in another practice particularly associated with women engaging in sex-work within the station, as Shilpi's story will illustrate (25th February 2015). Shilpi was twelve when she entered sex work. She was initially forced by her step-mother's daughter at their house, where she was 'tied up and sold to a customer.' She told me

[39] Whilst this statement was inaccurate, as blood was free in the Dhaka Medical Hospital, there was various other barriers in accessing health care within the public hospital system that undoubtedly made it difficult for the woman to navigate.

that, 'I was forced for the first few times, then I did it voluntarily… not for money, but for food.' Shilpi eventually left the house and moved to the station. Here she continued sex work, earning 100 taka (1.7 AUD) per hour, sometimes more, 'because I had a lot of stamina, I used to get paid more because of that.' Her income varied, and Shilpi could earn anywhere between 100 and 400 taka (1.6 - 6.6 AUD) a night. When asked what she would do with the money, and if she was able to save, she told us, 'I would spend it… on rice, food, drugs, clothes, makeup…these things. No point in saving when you don't know what will happen tomorrow.' Shilpi discussed her entry into drug use, which started when a guy she had liked had started to tease and ridicule her. 'I was sad' she told me, 'I needed to forget.' She began to sniff shoe gum with a group of women, later turning to marijuana and sleeping tablets. A few months later Shilpi started to cut herself, 'to get rid of the anger.' Shilpi is now married to another man in the station, with her marriage acting as an impetuous for her to discontinue sex work and drug use. Shilpi's story illustrates the multiplex nature of sex work and how this livelihood is linked with drug use and self-harm in often complex ways. Drug use and the psychological wellbeing of women were the immediate 'reasons' discussed by women for their self-harm, however it was engagement in sex work that was often the reason these coping strategies were required.

Self-harm in the station was observably widespread and more prevalent amongst the women engaged in sex work. Self-harm in this context refers to the practice of cutting arms, legs, stomachs and occasionally necks. The extent of self-harming practices amongst the women was described by Fatema:

> …lots of women, most of the women in this railway station have cut their arms...just look at that young girl (*pointing across the platform*). [The one] who spat just now, that girl has cuts on her arms like *semai* (noodles)…In the station, even little girls cut their arms.
>
> (16th October 2014)

There are no statistics on self-harm within this population, but of the 49 women interviewed, at least 20 had visible self-harm wounds. Given that I was told that even more women cut in less 'visible' locations to hide wounds, and that women who had ever engaged in sex work only compromised a small proportion of participants, I would anticipate the prevalence of self-harm amongst sex-workers is even higher. The implications of self-harm as a risk factor for long term homelessness will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Self-harm was almost always initially discussed by women as being associated with drug use, a link that has also been found within the street population in Pakistan

(Sherman et al. 2005). Drugs were often discussed by women as means of 'forgetting' the abuse and/or exploitation they had experienced in their life histories. Yet when drugs were consumed in a highly emotional state, women were at particular risk of self-harming. The discussions I held around this topic suggested that women were at acute risk of drug use and subsequent self-harm when they had either recently experienced a breakup, abandonment or infidelity of an intimate partner that they loved or had experienced verbal abuse that defamed their family, or that reminded them of the abuse within their life histories. Self-harm as a manifestation of mental and emotional disorders or trauma is consistent with existing literature (Connors 2008; Yates 2004).

Fatema, in a discussion around her own drug use, attempted to describe to me the physical and psychological effects of consuming *yabba* (methamphetamines). 'If you take this tablet…you feel sleepy, forget things people have said, you feel irritable… They cut their arms and legs because they take drugs' (3rd February 2015). The 'irritability' Fatema articulates may refer to the symptoms produced by drug withdrawals, including irritability and aggression (Homer et al. 2008). Additionally, long term methamphetamine use has been linked to depression, anxiety, impaired judgement and suicidal ideation and which may lead to self-harming behaviours (Homer et al. 2008; Marshall, BD & Werb 2010). Caution must be taken however with attributing all self-harm to drug use, as drug use may be the most easily articulable 'reason' for this practice and mask the compounding or additional psychological, cultural and social factors that underpin this practice.

There appeared to be a social element to self-harming, both with respect to 'learning' and beginning cutting practices, as well as some women engaging in group cutting. In our initial discussion about her drug use, Fatema told me 'I learnt [cutting] from other people by seeing their cuts' (16th October 2014), a finding that was alluded to by several other women (Raika and Bilkis 28th January 2015). In another un-recorded conversation, Fatema also mentioned that 'some women do this together… they sit together and cut' yet she herself would 'sit alone and cut' (16th October 2014; 3rd February 2015). Shohag, one of the workers from the Sajida Foundation PDC, confirmed group cutting as a phenomenon in the station, telling me that 'some [women] cut their arms together after taking drugs' (8th February 2015). The station appeared to be a context that normalized self-harming behaviours, where women 'learnt' cutting from observing and engaging in this practice with other women. The normalization of cutting as a practice is consistent with 'epidemic like' patterns in institutional settings (Taiminen et al. 1998).

The social stigma the perceived 'ruin' of women's bodies as a result of rape and engagement in sex work may also be a contributing factor to self-harm. Women may

either consciously or unconsciously view the act of cutting as spiritual penance for their perceived moral failings. As Jorina explained, '[women who cut themselves] would say that they want this blood to flow out of their body as they are involved in things (sex work) they are not proud of' (23rd Feb 2015). The shame and dishonour associated with sex work is demonstrated to psychologically influence women, with their 'ruin' permanently documented on their bodies, further undermining their capabilities of emotions, senses, imagination and thought and bodily integrity (Chapter 7). Fieldwork was unable to delve more deeply into the issue of self-harm and requires the availability of professional mental health support for further research to be ethically conducted. Given that self-harm was particularly prevalent amongst women who engaged in sex work, and appears to be part of the multiplex nature of sex work, it warrants acknowledgement. The prevalence and extent of self-harm on women's bodies speaks to the despair, anger and trauma endured by women engaging in sex work, and the limited coping strategies available to them.

Living for today

'Living for today' was an adaptation adopted by women in response to the uncertainty and precarity of everyday life women were exposed to within this context. Women didn't know what tomorrow was going to hold and as such there was no way to plan for the future. Rather, women had to cope in the present in whatever means necessary to get through that day. This 'living for today' adaptation strategy was evident in the spending practices of women, with the income obtained from sex work often spent in its entirety on whatever food and drugs could be procured. One of the staff members from Sajida Foundation explained:

> …[the station dwellers] don't think about their future. They think like, I have earnt 500 taka (8.3 AUD) today, so that is what I will use [for food]. But the next day their cooking pot is empty. Do you understand? Their eating is [only] as good as their [daily] income.
>
> (16th October 2014)

Both Fatema and Shumi told me that when they were sex workers they rarely saved money beyond one or two days. As Shumi explained:

> …I never saved money until I had children. When I worked (as a sex worker) I would spend whatever I earned on good food at restaurants, on jewellery and makeup. I would earn (and then I would) eat. Tomorrow was far away.
>
> (22nd May 2015)

In saying this, Shumi reflected upon how, during her time as a sex worker, she earned and ate what she could on a day-to-day basis. This is how she survived. The problems she encountered, such as abuse and violence, she would soothe over temporarily through the use of drugs. Like other women in the station, she lived and coped with each day as it came.

Shumi's commentary has overlap with insights provided by scholars who also found that the homeless often focus on 'living for today.' As the participant of a particular study stated, 'you have to adapt because you have no other choice' (Kidd & Davidson 2007, p. 223). For the researchers involved in that study, this mentality results in 'liv[ing] in the moment' (ibid.) As Desjarlais notes, the realities of living on the streets lend to 'dealing with problems day by day,' where on the streets:

> …constant exposure and brutal harshness led to non-reflective states. Losing everything but a sense of survival, people had to take it as it came…Responses to the world were reactive…Their ability to sense or make sense of the world was often overwhelmed by the harshness of the physical and social environments.
>
> (1997, p. 111, 224)

'Living for today' is a survivalist orientation whereby women's livelihood priorities are reduced to that of survival. Women learning to react and cope with events as they occurred, to get through another day, is the way they survive and adapt to the vulnerability context of the station.

Conclusion

The events that transpire within the first few days of arrival to the station are key in determining the type of livelihood strategy a woman initially engages in once homeless. In particular, the initiation rape of 'new girls' in the station is a risk factor for their entry into sex work. The rape of new girls re-iterates cultural and social messages that in occupying public space outside of the protection of a male, women's bodies are without honour and thus a legitimate site for the perpetration of sexual violence (Kannabiran 1996). Rape was discussed by women as 'ruining' their honour, bodies and lives and is demonstrated to renegotiate women's livelihood priorities, moral identities and perceived possibilities for their lives. The livelihood priorities of women in the station are demonstrated to include survival, protection and honour. Yet following rape, women discussed having 'no other choice' but to engage in sex-work as a pragmatic and economic means by which they could pursue the survival and protection that they sought, one day at a time.

The concept of 'living for today' critiques the notion that those experiencing extreme forms of poverty and vulnerability have the capacity and impetuous to conceive of and invest in alternative futures for themselves. Existing urban livelihood literature suggests that the urban poor, whilst 'living in the present' will attempt to 'move beyond survival' and invest in livelihood strategies that may enable longer term security (Beall 2002, p. 71). Instead, my analysis demonstrates that pursuing precarious livelihoods such as sex-work in contexts characterized by violence and uncertainty, significantly undermines the capabilities of 'control over one's environment' and 'practical reason', and which results in women pursuing their livelihood priorities one day at a time. The concept of 'living for today' is beneficial for development practitioners attempting to identify and work with vulnerable populations. Not only is this coping strategy an indicator of a context where extreme and protracted uncertainty and everyday violence may be operating, but it also suggests that the livelihood priorities, and strategies utilized to obtain these, may likewise be shifting, fluid and precarious.

This chapter identifies the need to understand how women discuss and conceive of the degrees of choice and constraint when making incredibly difficult livelihood decisions in the pursuit of their livelihood priorities. My analysis of sex-work within the station offers a more nuanced insight into the 'Faustian Bargain' where 'strategic preparation for the future' of the urban poor is said to be 'postponed for survival and security in the present' (Wood 2003, p. 455). This chapter has demonstrated that for those experiencing extreme and protracted vulnerability, even security in the present is often an elusive concept. Despite the constant violence and precarity of women's everyday lives, it is reductive to assume that women's priorities are limited to that of survival. My analysis demonstrates the importance of understanding the livelihood priorities of women themselves as also including that of protection and honour, and subsequently how women rationalize engagement in the livelihoods available to them. The distinct lack of agency surrounding women's narratives of entry into sex work within this context illustrates the extent to which structural and everyday violence intersect to perpetuate and re-inforce women's vulnerability (Farmer et al. 2004). The livelihood strategies available to women are so constrained within the station, that women are demonstrated to make constant and shifting trade-offs between the often conflicting livelihood priorities that they seek. The chapter provides empirical data to outline the common immediate and potential outcomes of women's various livelihood strategies in the station (Table 1), providing development practitioners insights into the constant difficulties women have procuring their livelihood priorities in the present.

Sex work is demonstrated to be a multiplex livelihood strategy, where engagement in this livelihood often resulted in drug use and self-harm as additional, and often problematic, livelihood and coping strategies. The differentiation between drug 'use' and 'addiction' is offered, where drug use is conceived of as a livelihood strategy women may employ in order to facilitate their continued engagement in sex-work, whilst addiction is defined as engagement in livelihoods in the pursuit of drug consumption. Yet sex-work and drug use could become mutually reinforcive practices, blurring the lines between drug 'use' and 'addiction' for women. My analysis of the multiplex nature of sex work highlights the need for development practitioners to understand interconnectedness of livelihoods and associated coping strategies, mediated by social networks, that may be occurring within extreme vulnerability contexts.

Sex work, self-harm and drug use can also act as dualistic livelihood and coping strategies. Dualistic coping strategies enable women to 'live' and get through their day, potentially meeting some of their immediate needs, but which undermines their assets and capabilities in the long term – in particular the perceived and actual abilities of women to leave the streets. The engagement in 'dualistic' coping and livelihood strategies can be used by development practitioners to identify those experiencing extreme and protracted vulnerability. When dualistic livelihoods, such as sex work (and associated multiplex strategies), are viewed as 'the only way' in which to pursue survival, the futility of expecting women to easily and readily disengage from such strategies must be recognized (see Chapter 7). 'Living for today' as ultimately undermining women's capability to conceive of an alternative futures and thus engage in critical reflection about the planning of their lives (practical reason) outside of the station context is determined as central to the 'damaging loss' of extreme vulnerability for women (Chambers, R 1989). The challenge, then, is for development practitioners to work within these extreme vulnerability contexts, enabling women to meet their current livelihood priorities whilst facilitating a realistic conceptualization of, and engagement with, alternative possibilities and priorities.

Figure 25: A young woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Chapter Six - 'They say it is not possible (for a woman) to lead a life in the station by herself': Marriage in the station

Introduction

This chapter seeks to understand the multiple reasons women enter into, remain, maintain or disengage from marital relationships; and the ramifications these hold for women, particularly with respect to their livelihood priorities, capabilities and homelessness trajectories. Within the development literature, 'social capital' is commonly viewed as an asset that can be readily and easily accrued and utilized to manage vulnerability and poverty (Woolcock & Narayan 2000). In exploring marriage relationships as a form of social capital utilized by women, I critique overtly positivist and simplistic understandings of the concept, and argue for the need to understand the dynamic nature and quality of relationships within the socio-cultural context of life-histories. The capabilities approach, in critiquing what marital relationships enable actors to 'be and do' enables a more nuanced analysis of relationships and the role they have to play in both mitigating and perpetuating vulnerability (Nussbaum 2001).

Following Bourdieu (1979) and Putnam (1993, 1995), the term 'social capital' has gained increasing currency within the development literature (Bebbington 2007; Fine 2002; Woolcock 2010). Moser (1998, p. 4) defines social capital as 'the informal and organized reciprocal networks of trust and norms embedded in the social organization of communities - with social institutions both hierarchical and horizontal in structure.' Woolcock and Narayan (2000) have further differentiated between different types of social capital, identifying 'bridging' (getting ahead), 'linking' (advancing interests) and 'bonding' (ties between family, neighbours and friends). The poor are said to have few 'bridging' or 'linking' forms of social capital yet possess 'plenty of bonding capital,' which are understood to be based on mutual trust, shared norms, and reciprocity (Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Social capital has been viewed as an important resource, particularly in the absence of access to other forms of assets, that can be readily and strategically mobilized by the poor as an effective means of recovering from and managing risk, crisis and vulnerability (Moser 1998; Pelling 2002; Woolcock & Narayan 2000). The claims placed on social capital do not end here, with the World Bank heralding social capital as the 'missing link' in providing an explanation for outcomes that economists could not merely attribute to financial or physical assets (Grootaert 1998). Social capital is viewed as enabling individuals access to resources as well as facilitating collective action as a result of

norms and networks embedded in social structures (Portes 2000; Woolcock & Narayan 2000).

The use of the term 'social capital' is a polarizing issue for anthropology and development academics. For some, the attention given to social capital has signalled a welcome shift from a focus on 'getting the economy right' towards an understanding of social relations as a means and ends of poverty as well as the social ramifications of development (Molyneux 2002; Woolcock 1998). Woolcock (2010) discusses social capital as an 'essentially contested concept' and argues that the usefulness of the term comes from providing a 'common frame of reference' to allow useful interdisciplinary conversations around 'the salient features of the social and political world…that…play a role in…. everyday life.' Conversely, Cornwall (2007a, p. 472) argues that it is precisely the perceived universality of 'buzzwords' (such as social capital) within global development discourses that masks their origins and 'encode seemingly universal values.' As a result, the 'loose' and cavalier use of the term has resulted in 'shoehorning the specificity of culture and society into abstract and essentialising frameworks' (Du Toit, Skuse & Cousins 2007, p. 522). The use of the word 'capital' is to 'falsely empiricise the nature of social and cultural life' and for Fine (2004) represents the problematic colonisation of the social sciences by economic imperialism (Stirrat 2004, p. 25). Likewise, my analysis of women's marital relationships demonstrates that conflating, often complex and shifting, relationships within a term such as 'social capital,' ignores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the dynamic nature and gendered dimensions of social relationships and the, not always singular, nor positive, implications they hold for women's capabilities, livelihoods and vulnerability.

The problematic application of a decontextualizing analysis of social capital has been perpetuated through the 'Sustainable Livelihoods Framework' that is widely used by the World Bank, DFID and various other development institutions (DFID 2007). Social capital, whilst acknowledged as a contested term, is defined within the model as 'the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives,' and identifies three means by which social capital may be developed: through networks and connectedness, memberships of groups and through relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchanges that provide the basis for informal safety nets (DFID 2007). This reading of social ties as operating only within specific and overtly positive ways, does little to reflect the complexity of the power relations embedded within the social, cultural, political and institutional relationships that mediate and underpin the vulnerability and livelihoods of social actors – relationships that the model seeks to understand and explain (Du Toit, Skuse & Cousins 2007).

The overwhelmingly singular reading of social ties within development literature, as holding either negative or positive outcomes, does not allow for a more nuanced understanding of social capital. Whilst acknowledging the issues fraught in the social ties and relationships of the urban poor, the literature largely attributes this to a 'lack' of social capital, as a result of 'social fragmentation' and weakened mechanisms of trust and collaboration (Moser 1998). The urban poor have been acknowledged as being a highly heterogeneous group, with Evans, P (2002, p. 14-15) remarking that, 'the romantic vision that "community" automatically entails homogeneity and unity of purpose is misleading…urban communities contain a…daunting spectrum of interests, identities, and political positions.' Urban poverty said to differ from rural areas, where a 'moral economy' may serve to protect the poor from hunger in times of crisis (Moser 1998; Scott 1985). Other explanations of disadvantageous outcomes attributes the 'dark side' of social capital, recognizing the negative effects of conformity within groups that exhibit antisocial norms or activities; or for the obligations entailed in kinship networks to economically disadvantage poor households (Di Falco & Bulte 2011; Portes & Landolt 1996). My analysis illustrates the complexity and dualistic nature of marital relationships, which are shown to protect and enable certain capabilities and livelihood priorities of women at various points within her life-history, whilst undermining other capabilities and priorities at other times, as women attempt to manage complex and intersecting experiences of everyday risk.

A final critique of the social capital literature is the apparent lack of consideration to gendered dimensions of inequality and power within social ties (Cleaver 2005). Where gender is acknowledged, women are viewed as possessing innate characteristics that are conducive to developing and maintaining social ties, with women constructed as 'competent' social capitalists (Edwards, Franklin & Holland 2003; Molyneux 2002). The assumption that individuals can readily develop and advantageously utilize their existing relationships as 'social capital' to cope with risk has been critiqued as causing individuals to be held responsible for their 'lack' of social capital and subsequent marginalization and vulnerability (Schuurman 2003). Within the station context, women are presented with difficult 'choices' regarding obtaining bodily, economic and food security, as well as attempting to preserve a sense of self identity as a 'good woman,' with women entering in marriage to pursue these priorities. Yet as Chapter 5 discussed, the lack of livelihood 'strategies' available to women within this context, and the inevitability of trade-off's between such integral aspects of security and livelihood priorities within these, calls into question the appropriateness of using terms such as 'strategies' and 'choice' and

instead illustrates the extent of women's vulnerability within this context (Cornwall 2007b).

Problematic assumptions surround the nature of kinship networks, their role within livelihoods and their ability to manage risk and uncertainty. The institution of the family, or kinship network, has been viewed as a:

> …strategic response to the problems of meeting needs and organizing behaviour in an uncertain world, based on long term implicit exchange contracts between individuals of different generations related by birth or marriage…these individuals, who have distinct preferences and personal economic constraints pursue their self-interests through family exchanges in a world of risk and uncertainty.
>
> (Todaro & Fapohunda 1987, p. 108)

Likewise Kabeer (1994, p. 108) asserts that kinship networks are an institutional response to these uncertainties, with individuals seeking 'long-term stable environments in which to live [and] to bring up children.' The assumption that risk and uncertainty are external to kinship networks, and that kinship networks can be accessed and utilized to enable individuals to meet their security needs and livelihood priorities is largely not reflective of the lived realities of women's everyday lives and life histories. I argue that the often limited opportunities to be strategic and meet all livelihood priorities for women experiencing homelessness, demonstrates the difficulties women experience in managing gendered power dynamics within intimate and kinship relationships, and thus the extent of their vulnerability. I show that women engage in marital relationships as a livelihood strategy, where kinship relationships are assumed, even by women in this context, to provide a modicum of security and to enable them to meet at least some of their livelihood priorities. Yet over time, women's expectations of relationships are reconfigured, where the reasons for women engaging in marital relationships are different than the reasons women remain and maintain these relationships. Asking what kinds of being and doing are served or subverted through such marital relationships for the women of Kamalapur provides insight into how considering the nature and quality of relationships is critical when discussing 'social capital' as a concept.

Entering into a station marriage

Muni's story

This chapter is shaped around excerpts from interviews with Muni, one of the key participants of this research. Muni was a small, slight woman, no more than 20 years

old. I met Muni one morning, standing at the gate to the station platforms chatting to another woman I knew. Muni was holding a small child that looked no more than 12 months old. Seeing me approach, the child squealed with joy and stretched out its arms to me. I broke into a huge smile – all too often children cried in fear, hid behind their mothers or outright ran away from me and my scarily unfamiliar *shada mukh* (white face). I asked Muni her name, and after a short conversation, if I could hold the squirming child, eager to be passed over. The child's name was Rini. She sat in my arms – taking my face in her two hands and stared at me intently. Then she laughed in delight and threw herself backwards. My research assistant and I spent the rest of the morning playing with Rini and a few of the other station kids. We taught Rini how to do black flips holding my hands and played with a puppy that one of the boys had adopted. The puppy was almost half the size of Rini herself and laughed as they ran and tumbled through the yard. Muni spent the morning sitting with another friend, sitting, quietly observing us, and combing each other's hair. The next day I saw Muni again and we sat and had a conversation. It was one of those rare times where a woman, with few reservations, just started to tell me about her pain, her loss and what I sensed was 'the truth' regarding the 'difficult' details of her life history (Chapter 2). This conversation began our relationship that spanned the last few weeks of my fieldwork, where we sat and held recorded interviews on three separate occasions, in addition to sitting together numerous times within groups of other women. The chapter follows Muni's marriage, providing insights into the reasons why marriage was entered into, how the nature and quality of this relationship changed over time, the potential risks marriage exposes women too, and finally, the reasons why women may choose to remain in or disengage from a marital relationship.

Marriage is nearly universal in Bangladesh and viewed as a major rite of passage for women as a practice that is both religiously and socially prescribed (Jesmin & Salway 2000; White 1992). The majority of women in the station had engaged in multiple marriages and were typically in their second to fourth marriage. Marital breakdowns were typically instigated by men, although there were also instances of women leaving particularly violent men or those engaged in addictive behaviours (eg. drug use or gambling). Multiple marriages were a source of shame and dishonour, and thus a women's martial history was often only fully discussed during the latter end of an initial interview, or perhaps in a subsequent interaction. Disclosure of multiple marriages by a woman was an indicator of her level of comfort and trust, and often signalled a turning point in our interaction when deeper and more difficult topics could begin to be explored.

Arranged marriages (*shamajic beye*) is still a prevalent and accepted practice within Bangladesh, holding social and economic implications for the wider family (Jesmin & Salway 2000). For many women in the station, their kinship relationships had become fragmented or lost as part of their pathway to homelessness (Chapter 3) and thus marriages within the station context were not arranged, but rather entered into by women outside of their families' involvement. Yet very few women referred to their marriages as 'love marriages' (*premer beye*) which is the only alternative term for a non-arranged marriage. Instead marriages were more often discussed by women in cynical, practical and pragmatic ways as 'station marriages', acknowledging the lack of perceived choice and instrumental nature of marital relationships. Lucky discussed what her marriage afforded her, saying, 'what sort of love and care? It's a station marriage. Just getting through the day is enough' (7th December 2014). Women discussed entering into marriage often in response to economic and physical vulnerability.

Muni's story is a common one. She recalled arriving at the station:

> …I remember sitting in the field near platform eight on my very first day I came here, when Rini's father asked me why I was here. I told him everything. The next few days he gave me food. He cared for me. I got married [to him] fifteen days later. I thought that now that I am in the station, I am under a lot of threat. Many guys were after me, trying to woo me. They would pull my hand, pull my *orna* (scarf) and offer me food and money…But I trusted him, so I decided to get married to him.
>
> (29th April 2015)

Another woman, a friend of Muni and who had joined us partway through the interview, interjected with an ironic smile on her face, 'men really help a lot here. Some offer rice, some offer clothes, and then the next day they will ask you to be their wife.' The practice of offering food was a strategy commonly employed by men as way of developing and entering into a relationship with a woman. It was a means of establishing trust, demonstrating that they were a worthy partner by virtue of being able to provide resources and security.

The patriarchal, Islamic culture of Bangladesh perpetuates the dependency of women on a man for livelihood and tenure security, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Kabeer 1988). As Masika, De Haan and Baden (1997) note, there is typically a gendered response to insecurity by the urban poor. Whilst men may turn to crime and violence, women are seen to more frequently resort to dependency on men. My analysis revealed women were more likely to enter into a marriage when experiencing an acute crisis, for example a woman whose alternative livelihood

strategies have recently undergone a recent shock or are no longer viable. This finding is similar to other homeless research that found homeless women are more likely to engage in strategic relationships with men during 'transition' or crisis periods (Auerswald & Eyre 2002).

Kolpona was another key informant who had been living in the station for approximately the last 15 years, who entered into marriage during a period of acute vulnerability. Kolpona was initially working as a sex worker upon arrival to the station, however staff at the local homeless shelter convinced her to discontinue sex work about 10 years ago:

> …I had stopped doing bad work [sex work]… I was looking for work. I used to go out and search for work and didn't find any so I used to come back and cry. I couldn't feed myself. Sometimes, people feel sad for other people and feed them. When he (her now husband) fed me for two days, people began to ask as to why he was feeding me, why he was sleeping with me, whether I was his wife. People started saying a lot of things, so eventually we got married… I married him because he was a hard working person. I thought he would be able to take care of me properly, that he would be able to feed me. He behaved well with me.
>
> (9th June 2015)

In a state of acute vulnerability, desperate to discontinue sex work, yet facing hunger, with no financial savings and ostracized from her former social network which primarily consisted of other sex workers, Kolpona found herself accepting food from one the station men. What seemed like only a temporary strategy to get by, became the means by which a marriage spanning the last ten years was entered into.

The pursuit of honour and protection

Marriage was one of the few livelihood option available to women in the station and was an alternative to engaging in sex work and drug selling (entailing acute vulnerability, shame and a high risk of violence) or 'being alone' and engaging in begging (a highly precarious and fluctuating income). When asked what her advice to a new girl would be, Shumi (who was an ex-sex worker and who was now married to a prominent drug dealer and long-term resident of the station) explained, '[I would tell a new girl] not to go down the wrong path, or get involved in wrong work [sex work]…[and] not to do drugs' (9th June 2015).

Marriage was a strategy that enabled women to contend with the prevalent narrative of being a 'bad' women that was constructed of them and pursue a semblance of honour for themselves (see Chapter 3 and 5). Marriage was the often

the only conceivable alternative to sex work, and a means by which women could 'behave and live properly' (Shumi, 9th June 2015). It was not merely security that Kolpona sought in entering marriage, where her definition of 'tak[ing] care of…properly' was equated with the male's ability to feed her. It was additionally the social pressure from other station occupants, asking why she was sleeping with and accepting food from a man that was not her husband, that influenced her decision to enter into this 'station marriage.' Being married afforded women status and respectability both within the station as well as broader society. As Rashid (2006) notes, a woman's only source of approval and status in Bangladesh is through marriage and motherhood. Women were able to reference 'their husband,' and in doing so, somewhat disassociate from the stigma surrounding, particularly single, women living on the streets. Entering into, and remaining in a, marriage was not merely a pragmatic livelihood strategy. If it were, there would be far fewer marriages in the station. Rather, as Davis, J (1992, p. 155) discusses, recognition must also be given to 'the immense effort people make to preserve what they can of their culture and way of life during times of suffering' in an effort to preserve identity and meaning.

There is a moral and political economy of the station within which livelihoods are pursued (Banks 2015; Kabeer 1991; Popkin 1979; Scott 1985). Those women who didn't engage in sex work, drug selling, drug consumption or self-harm, as the visible practices of being associated with the streets, saw themselves as 'doing better' than the women who engaged in these practices. There was a clear delineation of association, social interaction and sleeping location strategies between sex workers and those women who were married. Women socially and morally positioned themselves within the station through differentiating between the types of livelihood strategies employed. As Kolpona remarked:

> …Kamlapur has many different kinds of people. There are good people and there are bad people. Some people sell marijuana, some people beg, some people work as domestic workers and some people do bad things [sex work]. That's how everybody lives.
>
> (7th December 2014)

When asking Jorina about another woman (as I often did, to gain insights into Jorina's perspective as a long-term station resident), her initial response would invariably comment on the woman's livelihood strategies; if the woman was a 'bad woman' (sex worker), a 'beggar,' if she were married, or would shrug – which either meant that she didn't know, or was unwilling to divulge that she was involved in drug

dealing. Livelihood strategies became, as Cornwall (2007b, p. 29) discusses, 'part of who [women] are rather than simply what they do.'

Becoming homeless is as much a loss of honour and status as it is a loss of the relationships upon which employment and shelter was dependant (Chapter 3). The public view the women as a homogenous group, with blanket narratives made about their perceived morality as 'bad women,' and which translates to an understanding that women must be engaging in sex work (Chapter 1). Smith suggests that discussing the 'crime' or 'offending' behaviours of others is a mechanisms through which people preserve and assert their own social status, where gossip is 'only partly about transmitting information; it is largely an evaluative assessment of morality, and an expression and affirmation of norms' (Smith, SJ 1989, p. 248). In providing an evaluative assessment of another woman's morality, as demonstrated through a discussion of another woman's livelihood strategy, women such as Jorina were socially positioning themselves in an effort to reclaim a sense of honour that had been lost within their moral economies as a result of an altered living location.

Marriage was an effective strategy to protect women from physical, sexual and verbal abuse from other station dwellers. Women explained to me that it was not merely a husband sleeping besides them at night that offered them protection from physical or verbal assaults. Rather it was the act of being married that offered protection. Husbands would make it clear amongst other station occupants that the women were 'theirs.' Any man who dared to talk 'badly,' (make sexual innuendoes, proposition or 'disrespectfully' speak), as well as touch or assault the woman would be dealt with by the husband.

Minera, another key participant, explained to me why she had entered into a marriage following her arrival to the station. Minera was one of the most relentless, strong and pragmatic women I met in the station – a tigress whose sole aim in life was to protect her children. Early on in the fieldwork Minera explained how her marriage afforded her protection from verbal harassment and sexual abuse. She told me, 'Now have a husband, no one will say anything to me. Those [women] who don't have a husband, they get… harassment the most' (30th September 2014). Minera spoke of her arrival to the station, and how she was, 'really scared…because I was a girl, I was scared that men would try to do any bad things with me,' and then she, quite matter of factly continued, 'Yep bad things (being raped) happened. That's why my life was destroyed. After that, I got married.' Marriage was a means by which Minera attempted to take back control after her rape in an effort to construct herself as a respectable woman, to procure security and contend with the fear of further abuse whilst living in the station. She elaborated, 'Now I'm not scared because I have been staying here for a long time. Also my husband is a labourer in the station.' The

extent of protection afforded by a husband was somewhat proportional to the social status and influence the man had within the station. For example, Minera's husband as a long term resident and labourer in the station had a higher social status and recognition than a newly-arrived day labourer or rickshaw driver. The other men of the station respected him, and by extension, would not dare to assault his wife. Given that the majority of verbal and physical assaults were made by other station dwellers (outside of police violence and small incidents with passengers), being married was often an effective protection strategy against these risks.

A good husband is one that gives money for food

Traditional gender roles within marriage in Bangladesh include the provision of economic and physical protection by men, whilst women are expected to provide sex, cooked food, and children within the relationship (Jesmin & Salway 2000). As such, women often entered into marriage with the expectation that their husband would provide economic support and began to rely on them as their primary source of income and food. As Halima, one of the women remarked, 'If [my husband] didn't give me money every day, how else would I eat?' (3rd January 2015). In a survey of street dwellers in Dhaka (not specific to Kamalapur station), almost half (48%) of women reported that they were unemployed (Uddin, MJ et al. 2009). This is not to say that these women never engaged in additional income earning activities, but illustrates the extent to which women relied upon strategies outside of paid employment, potentially such as marriage, for their livelihoods. Utilizing intimate relationships as a means to access resources is not a unique strategy. In high-income countries, homeless women have been shown to be particularly dependant on their partners for financial, as well as practical support (Anderson, R 1996; May, Cloke & Johnsen 2007; Dobath & Dobash 1992 in Pain, R & Francis 2004).

One morning, several months into fieldwork, I was sitting with Shumi and one of her friends who had recently come out of jail for drug dealing. I was asking them to explain to me what constituted a 'good' marriage in the station. As Shumi began an evasive answer, her friend interjected, 'a good marriage is when your husband gives you money for food.' I asked, still naïve to the ways of the station, 'money for food? Not whether or not he hits you, or whether or not he has another wife, or what sort of job he has?' The woman shook her head, 'they're all good, but if he doesn't give me money for food, how can I live? That's why I was in jail. I had to sell drugs to feed my baby' (6th January, 2016).

From that point, when discussing relationships with women, I began to ask about the reliability of their husband providing them with 'money for food.' This question

served as a means to not only understand the extent to which women relied on this form of income, but also acted as an indicator to the vulnerability status of the women who were married. There were a few occasions where I spoke to women whose husbands reliably gave them income. These women were amongst the least economically vulnerable in the station. Yet these accounts of regular 'money for food' were few and far between. The remainder of this chapter will explore how, within women's narratives of marriage, marriage was in fact an uncertain and precarious livelihood strategy and held, often long-term, implications for women's vulnerability trajectories.

Marriage as an uncertain and risky livelihood strategy

The men of Kamalapur

Lucky, one of the women I spoke to on several occasions, explained the men of the station to me:

> …no, you don't get [a good marriage in the station]. Drunks, thieves, addicts, these are the kind of men you'll find here. Then there are the ones that have a wife and children in the village, but here they'll say they're unmarried.

(7th December 2014)

There were two broad categories of men living in the station. First were the longer-term residents, with some having come to the streets as children. These were the men referred to by Lucky as 'drunks, thieves and addicts.' Some worked in the station yards, whilst the majority were employed in the informal employment sector, as rickshaw drivers, food venders or day-labours. As such, income was sporadic and subject not only to market and seasonal forces, but also the motivation of the men in seeking or engaging in employment from day to day. Many women blamed their 'lazy' husbands as the reason their husband earnt little income, or on their drug 'habit' (Parul, 17th March 2015). Some men were more heavily involved in the drug trafficking and distribution business that operated out of the station, and were amongst the more powerful station residents.

The second group of men were those who had migrated to Dhaka in search of employment, many with the intent of sending their income back to their wife and children in the village. For some men, migration was a seasonal strategy and would engage in short-term relationships with women in the station whilst living and working in Dhaka. Whilst these men generally proved to be somewhat more reliable

in regularly providing income and food, there were two predominant risks associated with entering relationships with this group of men. As Pia explained:

> …here in this station, people marry a lot…in exchange for three meals [a day] I'll have to [sleep] with someone for five days. He wouldn't treat me well and it is not a legal marriage, a few days later he might leave and go…. and I wouldn't be able to say anything to him.

(12th May 2015)

Short-term 'station marriages,' were not legally binding, entered into by each party placing their hands on the wall of the mosque and repeating the *kalima* (Islamic marriage ritual). Fatema explained:

> …yeah, marriages are done by placing hands on the mosque. This happens in the station. Do you understand? Sometimes it happens that the title of 'husband' is attained that very night, in exchange for 30 taka (0.50 AUD) worth of food.

(3rd February 2015)

The itinerant nature of employment and entering an informal 'marriage' meant that men could easily leave the station and their 'wife' with no consequences. Women faced the risk of waking up one morning and find their 'husband' gone, having left for alternative employment, sleeping location or having returned back to their village. The second risk, closely related to the first, was the way in which the women were perceived and subsequently treated by men within the relationship. Living in the station and entering into this type of marriage resulted in these women being viewed as little more than sex workers. Women recounted, sometimes severe, physical, sexual and verbal abuse, particularly towards the end of the relationship. As Lucky recounted, 'when he was tired of me and ready to leave [the station]… he beat me, called me a *rastar mohila* (girl of the street/sex worker)' (8th May 2015).

Figure 26: Men sleeping in Kamalapur (Uddin, S 2010a)[40]

'He broke my trust every day'

Several weeks after Muni's station marriage, her husband ceased to work as a station labourer due to an alleged injury, 'he told me he had hurt his leg, but it was just an excuse' (29th April 2015) she told me. Muni was forced to begin begging in order to feed both herself, her husband, and on occasions his extended family, with whom they lived. She reflected:

> …I have learnt that men only ruin everything. I believed my husband, that he could take care of me, but see what happened? Men will only steal their wives' money and not tell them. My husband stole so much from me. He broke my trust every day.
>
> (29th April 2015)

There was very little trust within marital relationships. The daily uncertainty surrounding physical and financial security within the station was compounded by the insecurity of the marriage as a livelihood strategy. Several women I spoke with were unsure of the amount their husband earnt daily or whether or not he saved his income. Women engaged in various strategies to cope with the unreliability of their

[40] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'A rickshaw driver sleeping in his rickshaw at Kamalapur Railway Station. He uses it as his bed as it is safer for both him and the rickshaw. A lot of male pavement dwellers pull rickshaws for a living' (Uddin, S 2010a).

husband's income stream, one of which were to put aside money whenever their husbands did provide them with income, as Halima (who was married to a regular drug user) told me:

> …I spend some on food, and the rest I put away. I don't know when he will next give me money… No, he doesn't know I do this. He doesn't know how much [I have saved].
>
> (16th May 2015)

Likewise, Salway, Jesmin and Rahman (2005) found that urban poor women, particularly those who do not work, engage in covert strategies to save income in order to protect their individual interests should familial entitlements prove unreliable.

Women also had to contend with the competing demands for a husband's income. This may include a husband's drug habit or other family members (including additional wives, children or parents). Two of my key informants, Minera and Fatema, had husbands in the station that had subsequently entered into a second marriage with women in nearby slums. These second marriages had resulted in the 'first wives' being placed in a precarious economic position, whereby the newer wives' needs were prioritised above that of their own (Chapter 3). By the end of fieldwork, Fatema's husband had 'divorced' her, leaving her and her child in an acutely vulnerable position, whilst Minera had managed to retain and utilize her children as a bargaining tool and means to extract income from her husband, as is explored further below.

Women who were dependant on a regular drug user for their primary source of income were amongst those most vulnerable – in terms of access to food, experiences of violence, and vulnerability to chronic homelessness. Drug users regularly prioritized their habit above that of providing food for their wife. Additionally, if husbands had become high and passed out in another part of the station, they would be unable to provide the woman with protection during the night. Marium was approximately 25 years old and had been living in the station for the last three years. When I asked her if her husband regularly gave her money for food she explained:

> …my husband is not good; If he stays here for one day, he will stay somewhere else for three days. Sometimes he doesn't have money to give me at the end of the day… he has spent it. He eats and also spends on drugs and alcohol. Then there is nothing left. My husband is spoiled. Here he mixed with the wrong people…. He is addicted to *yabba* (methamphetamines).

(10th November 2014)

Marium wouldn't know if she was getting money for food that day until the evening. If and when her husband came home, only then would she know if she had money for the next day's food. Sometimes Marium would enter into a verbal altercation with her husband over his drug habit, risking physical abuse, but which occasionally resulted in her husband giving her the last of his *bhanti* (small change) so that perhaps she could get a snack, if not a full plate of rice. Other nights she would go to bed hungry and the next morning 'beg for my living' when the first train arrived as a 'backup' income strategy in order to eat breakfast. Men (and women) involved in the drug trade business faced the very real threat of being put in jail. For those women whose husbands were arrested and placed in jail, either for drug offences or some other 'crime,' this event was a sudden and acute shock to their livelihoods. The women I spoke to had often turned to risky livelihoods strategies during this time, including short-term sex work, engaging in drug selling themselves, or perhaps re-partnering with another man.

Re-partnering and the risk of facial slashing

Re-partnering was perhaps one of the riskiest strategies a woman could engage in. Re-partnering by women (most typically entering into an informal marriage with other station resident) was common if husbands had appeared to leave the station for any indefinite period of time – either getting jail time, leaving for the village or entering into a second marriage. Jesmin and Salway (2000) hypothesize that serial monogamy amongst urban poor women maybe, in part, due to the increased interaction between sexes and thus increased options for re-partnering. Survival without male protection is viewed as a 'highly problematic option,' with re-partnering a means to ensure short term physical security and access to food (Wood & Salway 2000, p. 679). Yet, if or when, men return to the station and find 'their' wife with another man, women were at acute risk of violence, particularly that of face slashing from their previous partner. As one of the staff members at the Kamalapur PDC told me:

> …when [the police] take the men to jail, their wives don't wait for them. They feel 'probably they will not be back' and they get married someone else. When they come back and find that she already gone with another man… he will be very angry. Last time I told you about cutting with the blade? In anger he will hurt them this way.

(16th October 2014)

The practice of 'face slashing' was an almost unique form of violence employed in the station. Many of the women in Kamalapur were observed to have slash scars on their faces, running diagonally from their cheekbones towards their mouth. Some were small slivers, cut with the razors carried by men (a multi-purpose tool: used for drug consumption, in self-defence, and to threaten or perpetrate violence). Other scars were raised, thick, and jagged, with visible stich marks, often the result of a glass or knife wound. Of the 49 women I held formal interviews with, seven had face slashes. This is in no-way representative of the extent of face-slashing in the station, as it was particularly difficult to conduct interviews with women who had scars and so actual prevalence of slash scars amongst long-term residents of the station is estimated to be some-what higher.

Women cited infidelity, a woman refusing to sleep with a man or a woman trying to leave a relationship as 'reasons' for facial slashing (16th October 2014; 24th February 2015; 2nd June 1015). Occasionally, women cut other women, typically in a fight over drugs. Pia explained:

> …the cuts on the cheeks are made by guys when girls don't sleep with guys, or leave a guy or go to another guy. Then they do that. Sometimes women do it too… Suppose they had an argument with someone and they could not win in a fight. They will pretend to be normal with them and when they find her alone, they will make a cut on her cheek. Revenge for the anger… Guys are the ones who do it mostly… Some guys even threatened to make cuts on my cheeks if I don't stay with them.
>
> (12th May 2015)

'Revenge for anger,' over resources, drug consumption, perceived or actual indiscretions were the most common instigators of facial slashing. As Pia explained, facial slashes are most often perpetuated by men, and often an intimate partner as a form of embodied anger and violence. Facial slashes were used as 'terror tactics to silence' and served as visual reminders to the women of the station that their public bodies were objects of shame and to be controlled by men (Bandyopadhyay & Khan 2003, p. 63).

It is what these scars represent to the world outside the station, that influences a women's relationship with their family, their marital prospects as well as the livelihood opportunities available to them. Facial scars are interpreted by the public as a visual representation of the 'bad' character of a woman, and are socially associated with sex work, irrespective of whether or not a woman has been or is currently involved in this form of livelihood. The stigma of scars, particularly facial slashes, have similarities to that associated with acid-burning practices in

Bangladesh. Facial scars symbolize to the public a women's unruliness, boldness or inadequacy as a wife that has 'necessitated' such a violent reaction from her husband (Bandyopadhyay & Khan 2003). As Pia explained:

> …if they [the other station dwellers] make a cut on my cheek, people will think negatively of me…people will say I am not a good girl since I have cuts on my face…people will not think well of me, if I ever were to go to a decent place then I wouldn't get much respect.

(12th May 2015)

Pia had spent very little time (nine months) in the station, but she already knew about the shame associated with facial scars and the barriers this posed to engaging in a life outside of Kamalapur. Likewise, Jorina speaks of the scars as 'falling into traps,' (23rd February 2015) in an attempt to capture the permanency and implications this has for women's futures. Facial scars, with women's bodily integrity crucial forms of human capital within this context, formed significant barriers to women's ability transition out of the station context into formal employment or to re-establish relationships with their kinship networks, as will be explored further in Chapter 7.

Ongoing risk of intimate partner violence

Marriage further exposed women to the risk of chronic physical, verbal and sexual abuse from their husbands. Gender-based intimate partner violence (IPV) is a prevalent issue in Bangladesh, with a WHO survey finding that 53% and 62% of ever married women (urban and rural respectively) in Bangladesh have ever been physically or sexually abused by their partner (García-Moreno et al. 2005). In comparison, a survey specifically investigating the incidence of sexual and physical abuse amongst street dwellers in Dhaka found that 66% of married women had ever been abused by their husband (Koehlmoos et al. 2009). Given that urban areas are reportedly a protective factor for intimate partner violence, these figures suggest there are particular risk factors for intimate partner violence associated with sleeping on the streets (Shoma 2010; WHO 2005). Theories regarding the causes of gender-based violence include ideological differences between men and women, social and cultural constructions of gender identities, patriarchal forces and witnessed or normalized attitudes towards violence (McIlwaine 2008). 'Global risk factors' for IPV are widely prevalent within the station context and include poverty, early marriage, infidelity, alcohol or drug abuse and low educational level in men, experiencing abuse childhood or growing up with domestic abuse, attitudes supportive of wife beating and experiencing or perpetrating other forms of violence in adulthood. Protective

factors for IPV were less prevalent or non-existent within in this context, including higher socio-economic status, secondary education levels and formal marriage (Abramsky et al. 2011; Jewkes 2002; Morrison, Ellsberg & Bott 2007).

Figure 27: Intimate partner violence on the streets (Uddin, S 2007)[41]

Seemingly trivial issues would regularly result in disproportionate verbal or physical altercations between station residents. Living with ongoing uncertainty regarding financial, social, and physical security created multiple stressors for station occupants. Additionally, sleep deprivation and hunger kept the station population constantly irritable and on edge (Chapter 4). One morning, I witnessed a woman being kicked and then dragged by her hair by her husband across the station courtyard and I asked Shumi, one of my key participants what was happening. Shumi said in an offhand, seemingly disinterested way, 'oh, she accidently woke him up' (12th March 2015). The wounds acquired by station occupants were often the result of a petty fight (so explained by the women or men themselves) that had rapidly escalated. For example, one morning I was asked for assistance to take a woman to a medical clinic. She had been hit with a brick by her husband, following a fight over the 'disgusting' cold food she had procured for them both (17th May 2015). Urban poor women have discussed livelihood insecurity, including a lack of money and food, as an important cause of inter-marital conflict and attribute men's anger and

[41] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'An angry lover beats his ex-girlfriend for not returning the money he spent to release her from police custody, after she was arrested as a sex worker. No one around comes forward to help' (Uddin, S 2007).

feelings of frustration to poverty and insufficient earnings (Masika, De Haan & Baden 1997; Moser 1996). Women are particularly at increased risk of IPV when they are dependent on their partner as their primary source of financial and practical support. Fights over food scarcity or insufficient 'money for food' being provided by husbands were a significant source of conflict (cf. Moser 1996; Rashid 2011).

Those women who were addicted to drugs were at an increased risk of abuse, due to the extent of their dependence on their husband for income to both access food as well as to maintain their habit. Women were more likely to make repeated requests for money from their husbands than other women, as their backup livelihood strategies were often insufficient to support their needs. The act of repeatedly asking for money often incited men's anger and resulted in violence. Several (non-drug using) women spoke of 'addicts' in disparaging, as well as pitying terms, particularly in regards to the physical abuse they endured within their marital relationships. Bilkis, an ex-sex worker who used to have several friends who regularly consumed drugs commented:

> …women who take drugs here [in the station] can never recover. They take everything, from *dandy* (shoe gum), to *yabba* (methamphetamines). They get beaten by their husbands and then forget the next day he feeds her.
>
> (28th January 2015)

Women 'forget' and endure the violence, in part due to the extent of their dependency on their husbands and their own inability to secure a livelihood as a regular drug user.

Intimate partner violence was rationalised by some women as the price they had to pay in order for them to secure immediate needs. Accepting violence reiterated men's dominant position within the relationship, whilst tacitly re-enforcing women's position of defencelessness and thus need for assistance in procuring food and other resources. As Muni told me:

> …I have to go [have sex] with him when he asks… what else can I do? Otherwise he won't give me money for food.
>
> (25th February 2015)

Patriarchal norms were strategically collaborated with or resisted by women in order to negotiate marriage, livelihoods, their own physical security and wellbeing. As Rozario (2002) discusses, meekness and obedience are strategies that Bengali women adopt within gendered relationships to ensure security and access to resources.

Whilst the women in the station treated inter-marital violence as a routine, expected and unavoidable aspect of marital life, it was never spoken of as justified. Literature suggests that violence against women may be more prevalent when women internalize beliefs that violence is normal or justified, as has been discussed within research amongst Bengali women in rural contexts (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005; Yount et al. 2013). However other research suggests that Bangladeshi women endure IPV not because they believed it is justified, but rather that they see no other viable alternative but to remain in the marriage (Schuler & Islam 2008p. 56). Likewise, the women in the station spoke of enduring 'suffering' abuse at the hands of their husband. Discussions then often centred on women's coping mechanisms and narratives they utilized in order to justify enduring this suffering. As Halima explained:

> …after nine years [of marriage], he couldn't stand me anymore, he used to hit me, I still have the marks on my body. The spots on my body, they are scars from the beating. He married again you know. I saw that since I get beaten and abused, there was no point in me hanging around there anymore. I suffered a lot with two of my children, I did it so that we could eat and live.
>
> (3rd January 2015)

So Halima had made the difficult choice of leaving her husband, deeming life on the street preferable to the ongoing abuse from her husband for both herself and her children.

Many of the, particularly long-term, residents of the station were noteworthy in that they were often not helpless, passive victims of ongoing IPV. Women were also perpetrators and initiators of violence, and I both observed and was told of multiple instances of women perpetrating violence against other women, as well as women initiating verbal and physical altercations with their husbands. Nibir, one of my research assistants, reflected one day:

> …the women in the station are the strongest women in Dhaka. They don't take abuse from anyone. They stand up for themselves. That's why they're there. They didn't want to take the abuse in their families or workplaces, they were sick of it. They're different from other women.
>
> (7th July 2015)

This is one possible interpretation of, particularly the longer-term residents of the station. Many of the key informants within this study (particularly Shanta, Shumi and Jorina) strongly felt the injustice of the exploitative nature and structural constraints to employment and housing, or would speak up about the violence perpetrated by

the police, their employers, and occasionally their marital partners. In this way, the station women transgressed the cultural norms of a women's largely silent and submissive role within a household and broader society (Kabeer 1988). These women continually enacted their sense of justice with respect to attempting to preserve their bodily integrity. Whilst this sense of justice regarding IPV has been articulated by other Bengali women, existing research suggests this is rarely enacted upon (Schuler & Islam 2008). As Yount et al. (2013) suggests, women in Bangladesh are likely to internalize and accept violence as part of the 'patriarchal bargain' in order to obtain the benefits that the system is viewed to provide (Kandiyoti 1988).

Protesting against violence or acting in subversive ways which contravened patriarchal norms were additional risk factors for inter-marital violence for station women (Jewkes 2002). At times, women's anger at the injustice and 'suffering' they experienced, at 'having' to live in the station, at the ongoing discrimination, violence, and the unreliability of their husbands in providing them with 'money for food,' would suddenly erupt. Women would express their anger by questioning or disobeying their husbands' orders, to 'fight' for their husbands' income (for food or to meet the needs of their children) or to question their husbands drug habits and relationships with other women. Yet these acts would only inevitably result in women experiencing further violence at the hands of their partners, further perpetuating the cycle of violence and vulnerability.

Children, abandonment and chronic vulnerability

After approximately two years of marriage, Muni's husband entered into a relationship with another woman, leaving Muni with their three-month-old daughter, Rini. Because Muni had been living with her husband's family in a small slum beside the rail tracks, she was forced to leave once the relationship had dissolved. Muni explained,

> …after my husband left me (for another woman), I had to leave the slum, His family forced me to leave…He left when Rini was three months old. Now I am here [in the station].
>
> (29th April 2015)

Divorce or separation has very real social and economic implications for women. In Bangladesh, patrilocal practices may serve to weaken ties with a woman's kinship networks and undermine her autonomy, with there being very 'little basis for solidarity with the woman from her husband's kin' (Kabeer 1988, p. 102). If a woman is divorced, all ties with the ex-partners kin is severed, with shame and potential

geographical distance forming barriers to engaging with kinship networks and place her at acute risk of homelessness (Chant 2008). And so, Muni returned to sleeping in the station, her vulnerability status altered since first arriving. On one hand, Muni's immediate vulnerability had decreased since last sleeping there, having gained street capital in terms of familiarity with the station and tenuous relationships with its occupants. In addition, Muni now had experience earning an income to economically provide for herself, rather than relying on the marriage to provide for her, and having a small child increased this income gained from begging.

Yet Muni's vulnerability status had transitioned from acute to chronic as a result of the marriage. Muni had been able to take no assets with her from the marriage, leaving only with 'the clothes I was wearing and another [set of *shalwar kamiz*]. They wouldn't even let me take a blanket.' Muni had however left with a child. She loved Rini, but Muni expressed that she felt 'unable to look after [her] properly. I cry at night thinking about what will happen to her' (29th April 2015). The psychological impacts of the abuse of trust and abandonment by her husband, the mistreatment by her in-law's, and now the constant worry over her child's immediate and future welfare was taking its toll on Muni's psychological wellbeing. The ways in which women psychologically mediate ongoing trauma and loss within relationships in order to be contextually resilient within the station is demonstrated to place women at particular risk of long-term homelessness (Chapter 7).

Figure 28: A mother in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Marriage as a trap

Marriage to a long-term resident of the station is one of the particular 'traps' for women. Long-term male residents have their own barriers, life history and experiences within the station that only compounds women's' own barriers to leaving. For men who have grown up on the streets, the station is their home and the only, or preferred way in which to conceive of their lives and livelihoods. There are very few reasons for men to leave and many for them to stay. These reasons include existing social networks, access to drugs, alternative ways of constructing their days, lives and relationships (eg. having multiple sexual/marital partners') and flexible, informal livelihood opportunities that are facilitated by living on the street (eg. night time rickshaw driving or drug dealing). Whilst these reasons may also hold resonance for women, the degree of choice, autonomy and levels of stigma experienced within the station create a distinctly different experience of homelessness for woman.

Parul, a relatively new arrival to the station of nine months, spoke to me despairingly of her 'lazy' husband, how he 'refused' to work, and how he didn't 'care for her' because she hadn't been able to provide him with a son. Parul desperately wanted to leave the station. Yet her husband refused to allow her to re-engage in garments work because of 'what people would say.'. Parul sighed, 'it's fine, if my husband can look after me and I have to do no work then it is good really…' She paused, 'but he doesn't, and we're here,' and she gestured to her daughter playing in the dirt of the station courtyard. She angrily wiped away a tear, 'we're *here.'* Later Shaoli, my research assistant, and I were sitting on the steps of the station. We noticed Parul's husband busying a cigarette and *cha* (tea). He began to chat to the several women sitting on the steps, and flirt with one of the more attractive girls. As he played with the woman's son, throwing him in the air, teaching him about how to (violently) play with a local station dog, Shaoli turned to me:

> …Parul wants to leave, but that's going to be tough. [Her husband] is not going to want to [leave]. Guys have it so good in the station. It's so easy for them here. Access to drugs, to women. Here they're kings.

(27th February 2015)

This statement was confirmed by Shanta later on in the day, who told us that 'men, they will not leave, especially if they are [drug] addicts. Men [can] live good lives here.' Male residents of the station who had become embedded within the social networks and practices of the station, were unlikely to ever wish to leave. There were multiple reasons why men found station life attractive, including the relative ease of movement and 'freedoms' of station life. In addition, those who were involved in the drug culture, either part of the acquisition, distribution or

consumption of drugs, were amongst those who became tied to Kamalapur for their livelihoods and survival. Yet women who tied their livelihoods and security to one of these men through marriage were likely to become 'trapped' in the station, particularly if additional ties were procured as a result of children or either partners drug addiction.

Fatema spoke of her marriage as pivotal in her transition from conceiving of the station as a temporary abode to that of place she would continue to live. She discussed her arrival where, 'at first [the station] didn't feel like this. I didn't like it… I never thought that I'd have to live [here].' Yet Fatema spoke of now 'feel[ing] at place here [in the station].' She explained, 'I didn't know I'd have to live here, I hadn't thought about getting married or having children with a guy here.' Fatema's life had unfolded in a drastically different way to how she had imagined, with her marriage as a critical turning point in her own relationship with the station. She continued:

> …people get ruined if they get married…They try to be good, but they can't be good, the boys don't let them be good. Marriage in the streets is like that…I would drink and take drugs [with my husband] … Now I am trapped.

(3rd February 2015)

As Chapter 5 discussed, Fatema had begun drug use with her previous husband and which she had attributed her 'ruin' and in contributing to her 'never being able to leave the station.'

The lengths to which women endured abuse, instability and uncertainty surrounding their marriages, illustrates the extent to which women were prepared to go to preserve these relationships and the integral role these played within women's livelihoods (Beall 2002). Likewise Rashid (2006) found that adolescent girls in urban slums in Dhaka tolerated 'partially absent' husbands, or those with second marriages in an effort to procure not only economic and physical security but also social acceptance and respectability for both themselves and their children. Women preferred to remain in a somewhat un-reliable and insecure marriage than 'manage on their own' (Rashid 2006, p. 4). There was an ongoing social dependence on marriage to maintain respectability to honour for women, even though many of the longer-term station residents were somewhat economically independent from their husbands. It was this dependency on marriage that perpetuates chronic vulnerability for women, undermining their autonomy and self-efficacy and which eventually served to 'trap' them in the station (Chapter 7) (Fordham 2004; Sen, A 1992).

'For the future of our children'

Women remained in marriages due to the extent of dependency within the relationship, either because they could conceive of no other way in which to meet their survival needs, or for the moral capital it afforded their children. Lucky was a woman who had been born in the station and who had experienced cyclical homelessness throughout her life history. Despite being married to a gambling and drug addict, she refused to divorce her husband because of 'shame' and 'struggles' her own mother had experienced in leaving her abusive father. 'I never want that for myself' she told me. Women recurringly discussed not wishing to relive their own parent's experiences, or conversely, to replicate their own life-histories for their children. Lucky explained:

> …my own mother got married twice. Many of the other women is this station, they got married many times. They let go of one husband and married someone else. But not me. Although I might have suffered a lot, I never did anything like that. So here I am. This is my fate. You can end up with someone who is good or someone who is not good. Nothing much can be done about it. Where shall I go with these three children of mine?'
>
> (10th November 2014)

Women felt the responsibility to provide a 'better life' and to ensure the 'wellbeing' of their children, trying to provide opportunities that had not been afforded them by their own parents. Yet the struggle for women was that part of this 'better life' was ensuring that children had a father to provide them moral and economic capital, and which 'trapped' women within their marriages and the station context.

One morning I was having a conversation with Shumi and Minera about how they keep 'fighting' every day. Both women were married to 'station guys,' who were long term residents of the station and had several children who had been born and raised there. Shaoli (my research assistant) asked Shumi where she gets the 'mental strength' to keep going on. Shumi answered:

> …our source of strength, despite everything that has happened to us…Allah has given us children, whatever we do, we can try to make a better life for them, see that their lives are not like ours.

Minera interjected:

> …for the future of our children, we work and continue on with our lives. It is for their sake we keep going everyday...This is something that our

> parents did not do for us. They might've given birth to us, but they did not work for our well-being.
>
> (24th November 2014)

Children acted as psychological protective factor for women, and were one of their few sources of hope and strength, the reason they 'keep going everyday'. Similar to other research with homeless women, children could motivate women to begin move beyond strategizing and living in the present and begin to conceive of a future outside of the station (Banyard 1995; Beall 2002; Kidd & Davidson 2007). Sumi had begun to save money for land in her village so that her children could 'escape' the station in the future. Kolpona eventually sent her children back to her villages to live with her extended family, whilst she herself returned to the station. Minera, utilized her children as a bargaining strategy with her husband and eventually managed to convince him to pay for their rent in a nearby slum.

Yet children could also serve as a risk factor for women's' psychological health, vulnerability status and long-term homelessness. The economic burden that children placed on women, including providing adequate food, clothing and, in particular, education, were sources of much anxiety and stress (Fatema, 3rd February 2015, reoccurring discussions with Jorina, Shumi and Minera). Yet it was the futures of women's children that were a particular source of worry and despair (Meadows-Oliver 2003). For Jorina, with a child with a chronic disability, Marli's future was a burden 'constantly weighing [her] down' (27th January 2015). Or one morning, Minera sat with me talking about her future plans and dreams, and then turned, taking my hands, seemingly in an effort to stress the importance of her next statement. 'My children are getting ruined here' she told me, and angrily brushed away a tear. 'What can I do?' in evident despair and with a sense of deep hopelessness (3rd March 2015).

Children served as a tie to a woman's husband, and were often the reason women cited for staying in marriages, or accepting husbands back into their lives. Kolpona discussed her unstable marriage with her husband, explaining, 'We had a fight and I left. Now we're back together. We weren't separated. And we have a son. My son needs an identity…We have the son [together]' (9th June 2015). Remaining married to her son's father, was a means for Kolpona to provide her son with an identity. Kolpona continued:

> …I need to do something for [my son], so that people don't point at him and say he has become what I was at the station. I just wish to give him a better life…I want [him] to have proper education…So that no one can loathe him and say he is a street kid. I want my son to be able to bury

> me when I die. I don't expect him to feed me and take care of me when I am older.

For Kolpona, her son's future and wellbeing was improved through Kolpona's investment in her marriage and his education, enabling his access to moral and human capital and as such, providing a distance from the shame associated with being a 'street kid.' Kolpona's only expectation in return was to be buried upon her death, and as such, distancing her body in death from the shame of 'not being buried' as perhaps one of the more final practices representing the immorality of a woman's body and life (Chapter 5). Yet in attempting to ensure her son's future wellbeing and future, through marriage and drug dealing in the station, Kolpona was resigning herself to chronic homelessness in the station. Kolpona rationalised, 'my life is already ruined, my son's is not,' speaking to the way in which she had reconfigured her own life possibilities, resigning herself to life in the station, and yet was unwilling to reconfigure that of her son's. For women like Shumi, Minera and Jorina, their children were the 'only source of love' they had experienced within their life histories and they were willing to sacrifice whatever it took to ensure a 'better life' for them. Marriage and children were thus relationships that could bind women to the station, perpetuating their long-term homelessness.

Conclusion

A capability and life history analysis of women's marriages problematizes the concept of 'social capital' as a positivist and enduring asset that enables women to manage risk and vulnerability (Pelling 2002; Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Instead, my analysis highlights that the quality and nature of intimate relationships are complex and constantly shifting throughout women's life histories, intertwined with the emotions of love, fear and mis-trust that are re-enforced by the social, cultural and religious contexts surrounding marriage, family and relationships in Bangladesh (Jesmin & Salway 2000; White 1992). Asking what marriages enable women to 'be and do,' illustrates that intimate relationships can be both a livelihood strategy to navigate spaces of vulnerability, enabling women to meet certain livelihood priorities, whilst creating other risks and undermining other priorities. Women utilized marriages to negotiate their own identities as 'good women,' in an effort to obtain honour, food and to mitigate the continual fear of sexual or physical assault from other station dwellers. Yet marriage also exposed women to the risks of IPV, pregnancy, broken trust, dependency and, ultimately, vulnerability to long-term homelessness. 'Social capital' existed within relationships to the extent to which marriages enabled women to meet their livelihood priorities and protect their capabilities. As such, social capital

is demonstrated to be dynamic and amorphous, subject to the precarious environments, including volatile political, economic and moral economies, within which station residents operated.

The pursuit of morality and self-respect as integral livelihood pursuits was made accessible through marriage in this context. Marriage is a culturally and socially sanctioned practice that is engaged in as a means for women to maintain a way of life that is understandable and acceptable; both to women themselves as well as other social actors within and outside the station (Davis, J 1992; Jesmin & Salway 2000; White 1992). Through marriage, women contended with the narrative that they are 'bad women' in an effort to procure social status and honour. As such, marriage facilitated women's capabilities of 'affiliation' in that marriage enabled women to meet the 'social bases of self-respect' for both themselves and within relationships with other station residents and kinships networks (Nussbaum 2001, p. 79). The status, honour and morality women derived from marriage is one of the few examples where 'social capital' is demonstrated to exist within marital relationships in the station.

The social capital literature has the tendency to perpetuate normative notions of kinship relationships that hold overwhelmingly positive outcomes for individuals (Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Within gendered and intimate relationships, mutual trust and reciprocity between individuals cannot be assumed to exist, despite assumptions to the contrary (Cleaver 2005; Fukuyama 1995; Kabeer 1988; Moser 1996). Kabeer (1994, p. 128) has asserted that household systems in Bangladesh are 'more likely to be characterized by an absence of overt conflict in household decision-making' and attributes this to men controlling the majority of household assets and women's labour, where women are 'socially constructed as passive and vulnerable, dependent on male provision and protection for their survival.' My analysis has instead found conflict, violence and 'broken trust' to characterise homeless women's marital relationships. Violence is often the result of either partner not conforming to the 'patriarchal bargain,' where men may not provide the expected economic and physical security for women, with women protesting the physical violence or lack of financial support provided by their male partner (Kandiyoti 1988). Violence was particularly prevalent within relationships where women was economically dependent on men for food, their child's wellbeing or access to drugs (Dobash & Dobash 2003). The extent of dependency on marriage as a livelihood strategy and the level of bargaining power within relationships in order to access resources is demonstrated to be a key predictor of violence and conflict within marital relationships in this context.

My analysis demonstrates the fluidity of social relationships, with their nature and potentiality changing over time. Social capital is not merely constituted, but rather requires continual investments, with Bourdieu commenting that:

> …the genealogical definition of kinship relations… is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly useable in the short or long term.
>
> (2011, p. 22)

Additionally, Schulman and Anderson (1999, p. 351) discuss social capital as a 'form of power that can be created, accumulated, or destroyed,' in which 'the ties that bind people together may also constrain and prevent alternative futures.' Adopting a capabilities life history approach enables a critical analysis of what marital relationships allow women 'to be and do' and the fluid nature of relationships, as they both mitigate and create risk, to be uncovered (Nussbaum 2001). My analysis of women's life histories moves discussions around social capital from merely considering the immediate ends of relationships within women's present realities, and instead provides insights into the fluid and emergent nature of relationships and the implications these hold for women's future possibilities and outcomes.

Investing in marital relationships can act to reinforce and reproduce risk factors for vulnerability and long-term homelessness. If social capital is defined as the extent to which a relationship enables access to livelihood priorities and protect capabilities; it then raises the question of how to account for the dualistic nature of relationships, with the potential of relationships to cause adverse long-term implications for women's capabilities, livelihoods and vulnerability. Whilst marriage is a strategy women utilize in an attempt to make sense of the suffering within their life histories, marriage instead often reproduces experiences of broken trust and violence, further entrenching inequity and vulnerability. Not only did marriage to a 'station guy' imbue the everyday with further, subtler forms of uncertainty and violence, including the responsibilities and 'worries' of child-rearing on the streets and ongoing IPV, but often also compounded experiences of fear, loss and broken trust within women's life histories and created physical, financial and social barriers to women exiting the station and homelessness. Marriages thus seem counter-intuitive to women's interests and capabilities, yet are often retained in the interests of their children's capabilities (May, Cloke & Johnsen 2007). My findings illustrate the need for development practitioners to understand the often complex reasons underlying women's engagement in multiplex livelihoods within contexts shaped by violence, despair, and uncertainty.

Marriages enabled women to 'be and do' in ways that meet some, but not all of their livelihood priorities. The inevitability of trade-offs between women's livelihood priorities within marriage illustrates the extent of women's vulnerability when engaged in this livelihood strategy. Marriage in the station confounds a singular reading of the 'social capital,' where relationships are unable to be cast in binary terms as either advantageous or disadvantageous for women's livelihoods, vulnerability and homelessness trajectories. My analysis demonstrates that whilst intimate relationships can be integral to a women's pursuit of their livelihood priorities, there is a need for development practitioners to have a more nuanced understanding of the quality, nature, gendered and dynamic dimensions of relationships within the lives of the urban poor. Adopting a life-history approach when asking women what priorities and capabilities their relationships enable them to meet, enables practitioners to elicit the ways in which social capital is accrued, lost and rebuilt as women's priorities shift and are renegotiated over time. Mapping the dynamic nature of relationships throughout the life-span not only provides insight into the nature and extent of a woman's current vulnerability status, but also that of her potential vulnerability. The following chapter will demonstrate how re-occurring instances of broken trust, trauma and loss within relationships throughout a woman's life history holds ongoing implications for women's potential vulnerability, including that of long-term homelessness.

Figure 29: A woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Chapter Seven - 'You can't leave a place you have given your everything to': Becoming trapped in the station

Introduction

This chapter examines the processes underpinning women's resilience and vulnerability to long-term homelessness within the station. My analysis reveals the concept of 'reconfigured capabilities' to provide a lens through which the processes underpinning women's vulnerability to long-term homelessness, as well as their resilience, can be understood. 'Reconfigured capabilities' is a term used to capture the fluid and emergent nature of capabilities in response to life events, and the way in which capabilities are constantly being undermined, re-built, fought for, lost, and won throughout women's lives. Existing conceptualizations of vulnerability, commonly linked to a 'depletion' or 'downward spiral' of assets within development studies literature, are revealed to be far too simplistic to capture the dynamic processes of vulnerability for women (Grant 2005; Hulme & Shepherd 2003). The chapter problematizes a singular, static and blanket use of the terms 'vulnerability' and 'resilience'; instead, the chapter prompts development practitioners when utilizing these concepts to question: 'vulnerability to what?', 'in this context what does resilience look like?' and 'how and why has vulnerability and resilience shifted over time?' Understanding and mapping the processes behind women's reconfigured and constantly fluid capabilities, enables practitioners to meet women where they are, and begin to meaningfully work with them towards their goals and aspirations.

Women are particularly vulnerable to long-term homelessness in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al. 2011). In high-income countries, patterns of long-term homelessness are primarily associated with men (Edgar & Doherty 2001; Mayock, Sheridan & Parker 2015). Yet according to a survey, women in Dhaka live longer on the streets than men (nine compared to six years respectively) and that 30% of women had been homeless for over 10 years, as compared to 18% of men (Ahmed et al. 2011).The length of time spent on the streets is often used to identify those individuals most at risk within high income contexts, and within this context women experiencing long-term homeless is an indicator of chronic poverty and social exclusion (Mayock, Sheridan & Parker 2015). Existing homelessness literature acknowledges the role of life histories in contributing to long-term homelessness, suggesting the factors (including individual and structural) that underpin women becoming homelessness are often also those that contribute to homelessness continuing (Mayock, Sheridan & Parker 2015; Speak 2010). Other studies have focused on factors that predict long

term homelessness and include age, arrest history, experiences of rape and HIV infection (Caton et al. 2005; Fisher et al. 1995). Of note, experiencing childhood sexual or physical abuse is linked to women experiencing long-term homelessness in the USA (Zlotnick, Tam & Bradley 2010). Despite identifying factors that predict long-term homelessness, existing studies often do not often explain the mechanisms or processes by which these factors are accrued. Existing homelessness theories were found to be inadequate to explain the complexity surrounding why women found it difficult to disengage from the station, re-engage with and maintain opportunities and relationships elsewhere.

A 'reconfigured capabilities' approach to understanding women's vulnerability to long-term homelessness is proposed. Reoccurring trauma and loss within dependency and intimate relationships (employers, friends, marital and kinship relationships) is demonstrated to be a reoccurring feature of women's life histories (Browne 1993). I argue that trauma and loss reconfigure women's capabilities, possibilities, and livelihood priorities in ways that develop women's contextual resilience whilst increasing their vulnerability to long-term homelessness. These reconfigurations include women's actual and perceived ability to access and trust affiliative relationships (social disaffiliation), how women conceive of the extent to which they have control over, and thus the possibilities for, their own lives, and women's developed capability to successfully navigate and 'become habituated' to the station (see Figure 30).

Participant observation, interviews and an exploration of women's life histories uncovered multiple instances of long-term station residents (those who had spent the majority of the last two years in the station) attempting to engage with opportunities or relationships in an effort to leave the station. Whilst these attempts may have had short-term success, these almost invariably, saw women once again returning to Kamalapur. Over time, many women were demonstrated to prefer life in the station above entering into and trusting dependency or intimate relationships. Whilst relationships potentially offered women potential pathways out of homelessness, these often only resulted in further abuse, exploitation and social exclusion – further undermining women's trust. This chapter draws on my interactions, observations and interviews with three long-term station residents – Kolpona, Jorina and Shanta and their own individually resilient means of navigating their capabilities and priorities within this context. Kolpona and Shanta had spent the majority of the last five years in the station, whilst Jorina had lived there for the last three decades.

Trauma and loss were reoccurring through women's life histories and instrumental in the reconfiguration of women's capabilities as a result of becoming and living long

term homelessness. The importance of understanding the impact of trauma for homeless populations is receiving increasing attention by homeless service providers within high income contexts (Cash et al. 2014; McManus & Thompson 2008). As demonstrated in Chapters 3 to 6, homelessness is a traumatic experience, including losing social relationships and roles, employment, housing, often involving a life history of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, neglect, as well as witnessing ongoing community violence and the loss of 'safety, predictability and control' once living on the street (Brown, KS & Ziefert 1990; Goodman, Saxe & Harvey 1991p. 1219; Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet 2010; Zlotnick, Tam & Bradley 2010).

Development studies literature has paid limited and superficial attention to the impact that trauma, loss, and poverty may have on mental health and wellbeing, despite evidence to suggest this is a prevalent and pressing issue within urban contexts (Aliber 2001; Harpham 2009; Lund et al. 2010). An absence of rigorous discussion regarding the intersection of mental health, livelihoods and vulnerability within the literature is notable, given that human capital is widely recognized as an 'essential' resource for the poor (Barrett & McPeak 2003). Cannon (2008, p. 5) identifies mental health as a 'component of vulnerability,' stating, 'morale and personal resilience, stress and general mental health [are] factors that are likely to affect the ability to resist the impact of a hazard;' he then goes on to state that 'morale and stress need to receive far more attention than they do.' Yet Cannon does not identify or discuss the factors or processes that may result in poor mental health, nor the ways in which mental health may impact livelihood outcomes or vulnerability. Reducing mental health considerations to a focus on 'morale and stress,' dilutes and obscures the extent and severity of mental health implications for those living with chronic poverty and vulnerability.

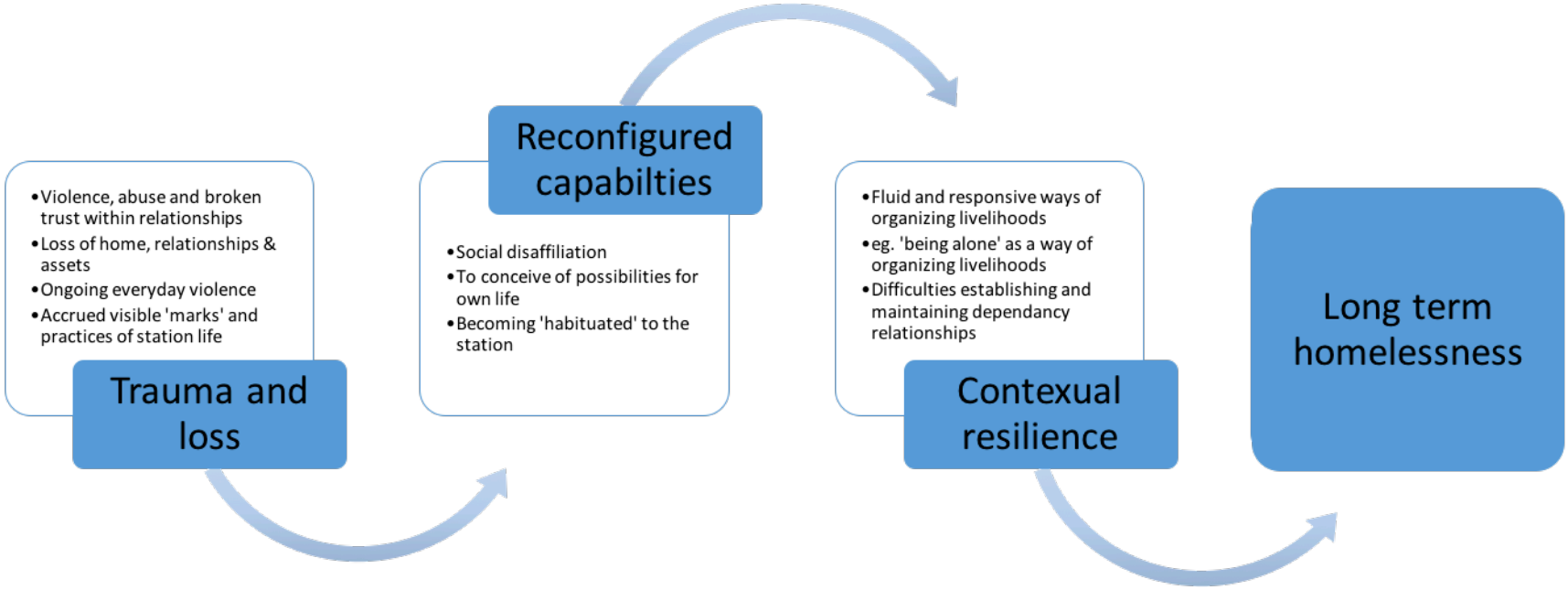


Figure 30: The development of contextual resilience and vulnerability to long term homelessness

Analysis of life-histories enables the underlying processes of vulnerability to be understood for an individual and population. Wisner (2004, p. 189) asserts that 'vulnerability studies have not given enough attention to local capacity' and advocates for context specific vulnerability analysis. Yet there are limited tools that specifically aim to aid practitioners in understanding the root causes underpinning vulnerability processes (Grant 2005). Given that migration, rapidly changing contexts and fluid livelihoods are characteristic of urban poverty; tools that enable development practitioners to interrogate the processes underpinning, and complexity of, these issues whilst enabling identification of key points of entry for intervention are needed (Lloyd-Jones & Rakodi 2014). The use of the cyclical vulnerability model developed in this thesis enables development practitioners to map the fluidity of vulnerability for individuals throughout their lifespan and within various contexts, see Figure 11. Life history analysis moves the focus of vulnerability away from an analysis of the 'type' of risk and conceptualizing risk as either a stochastic phenomenon (as seen in the SLF) or as a chronic set of conditions (DFID 2007; Wood & Salway 2000). Instead, women's life histories demonstrate the multiple and ever-fluid exposure to multiple acute forms of risk within the context of chronic structural constraints (Chapter 3 and 4). The vulnerability model developed within this thesis provides the opportunity for practitioners to interrogate the capacity and potentiality of exposure to risk with respect to the capability of social actors 'to be and to do' within specific contexts and conditions (Wisner 2004). The model enables a conceptualization of process by which trauma and loss occur within the life histories of individuals, how this reconfigures women's capabilities and has subsequent implications for their capacity to cope and adapt with exposure to risk and pursue livelihoods. Appendix 5 utilizes the vulnerability model to map the role trauma and loss in reconfiguring Shanta's capabilities throughout her life span.

The resilience of women within the station

It is here that a consideration of the term 'resilience' is appropriate. Resilience, much like social capital, has become a buzzword, adopted with enthusiasm throughout development studies literature and practice (Brown, K 2015). Yet there are very few ethnographic studies that rigorously interrogate the concept of resilience to understand the multiple meanings and nuance this concept may have for those operating within contexts of extreme and protracted vulnerability. 'Resilience' has been described as 'the capacity of people or "systems" to cope with stresses and shocks by anticipating them, preparing for them, responding to them and recovering from them'(HPG, 2011, pg. 5 in Pain, A & Levine 2012). My analysis sheds light onto

each of these four purported aspects of resilience and illustrates how a fine-grained, ethnographic account of women's lives unpick some of the inherent assumptions made in such a broad brush and generic definition.

The word resilience is derived from the Latin '*resilio*' meaning 'to jump back' (Klein, Nicholls & Thomalla 2003, pg. 3). Early definitions of resilience intimated that resilience was an outcome and included descriptions such as 'to bounce back' or notions of a 'quick recovery,' and about returning to 'normal,' a person who 'recovers' from shocks unchanged (Manyena 2006, pg. 438). This simplistic understanding of resilience does not account for change occurring within and because of individuals experiencing significant life events, and assumes that the original state experienced by an individual was adequate and useful in some way. Ideas of 'bouncing back' fail to recognize that individuals may engage in an adaptation process that reconfigures their capabilities and livelihoods in ways that does not fit with their previous functioning or state. Where previous functioning or states no longer serve an individual, there is a need instead, to map other 'outcomes' that exposure to risk entails (including individuals reconfigured assets, capabilities and life history events). Conceptualizing resilience as a process, acknowledges the capacity of individuals and populations to undergo and adapt to change in response to vulnerability contexts (Brown, K 2015).

Most definitions of resilience link the process of coping or adaptation to a desired outcome (Brown, K 2015; Kaplan 2005). Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990, p. 425) define resilience as 'the process of, capacity for or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenges of threatening circumstances… good outcomes despite high risk status [or] sustained competence under threat,' whilst Manyena (2006) proposes resilience may constitute adaptations that enable individuals to be outside the zone of vulnerability altogether. I argue that the incorporation of externally defined 'good' or 'desirable' outcomes within a definition of resilience is problematic, where linking the capacity of an individual to a morally or externally defined outcome does not allow for resilience to be a process, nor recognize the rights of individuals to define their own livelihood priorities. Pelling's (2003, p. 48) definition of resilience is one of the few that conceptualizes resilience as a process without reference to externally defined outcomes, discussing resilience as 'the ability of an actor to cope with or adapt to hazard stress.' Yet Pelling's definition does not explore what a resilient adaptation or coping strategy may entail, neither does it overtly privilege the knowledge, desired outcomes and priorities of the individuals themselves. Asking women to articulate their desired livelihood priorities and outcomes not only firmly establishes an individualised understanding of resilience, but also enables a

contextually specific understanding of coping and adaptation to be elicited (Wisner 2004).

The life histories of women are used to critique existing generic, overly optimistic and simplistic conceptualizations of resilience. I suggest that women's ability to survive and navigate the precariousness of station life is a triumph in of itself and is a testament to the resilience of women. Yet this 'success' is neither all-encompassing to all aspects of women's lives and livelihood priorities, nor are these capabilities necessarily transferrable to other contexts and settings. Women's cyclical homelessness, or their repeated and then failed attempts at disaffiliation with the station, and an attempt to access and maintain relationships outside this space demonstrate women's limited capabilities to permanently pursue livelihoods outside the station. The reconfiguration of capabilities and strategies that enable women to be resilient within this context have limited transferability elsewhere and instead may serve to 'trap' women in long term homelessness. The station becomes the only conceivable place where women can 'be and do' in ways that enable them to meet their reconfigured capabilities and livelihood priorities. I propose a contextual understanding of resilience, linked to the capabilities of an individual to 'be and do' within a given context in ways that meet their existing livelihood priorities.

Social Disaffiliation: Broken trust and disengagement from intimate and dependent relationships

Within Bangladesh, relationships are central the construction of identity and happiness (Camfield, Choudhury & Devine 2009; White 1992). Repeated loss and trauma throughout women's life histories, particularly within intimate relationships, holds implications for women's ability to trust and invest in social relationships (or to exercise the capability of affiliation). I argue social disaffiliation as underlying the other reconfigurations of conceiving of possibilities and become habituated to the station; and which is key to understanding women's long term homelessness and resilience (Brown, KS & Ziefert 1990; Goodman, Saxe & Harvey 1991). Intimate relationships are defined as relationships with kinship networks, marital partners as well as the friendships women have made throughout their lives where friends have been given kinship relationship type importance by women themselves. Nussbaum (2016, p. 94) proposes that intimate relationships 'involve great vulnerability because they involve trust' highlighting the implications a rupture or breakdown of these relationships may hold for individuals. Trust or 'opening oneself to the possibility of betrayal, hence to a very deep form of harm,' is identified by Nussbaum as a cornerstone of vulnerability, in that it involves 'attaching importance to actions by

other, over which one has little control. It means, then, living with a certain degree of helplessness' (ibid). The inherent trust in intimate relationships had been violated, often repeatedly within women's life histories.

For women such as Shanta and Kolpona, the abuse perpetrated within their kinship networks began when they were young children. The abuse and exploitation perpetuated against women (or girls) was fundamentally a lack of recognition, concern and compassion for another human being (and their right to other capabilities such as bodily integrity/thought/emotions), or exercising the capability of affiliation by the perpetrator. Following violence within intimate relationships, women's own capability for affiliation was routinely and constantly undermined (Goodman, Saxe & Harvey 1991). Trauma, particularly childhood experiences of abuse, have long-lasting effects throughout an individual's lifespan (Van der Kolk 2007). Attachment theory suggests that humans have a biological need for social attachments to experience safety, connection and to develop self-reliance, autonomy, trust and self-esteem (Bowlby 1973). Child abuse, or a breaking of social attachments within intimate relationships, can be particularly detrimental to an individual's wellbeing, influencing mental health, self-confidence and ability to establish trusting relationships (Davis, JL & Petretic-Jackson 2000).

Women and girls were forced to make the choice between enduring ongoing violence or maintaining shelter – both of which had implications for their pursuit of bodily health and integrity (Nicholls 2010). The decision to leave a place of shelter (either a kinship home or place of employment) was thus fundamentally a break in affiliation within a relationship. As Kolpona described:

> …if [I could live in my parents] house, would I be living on the streets? …. After my birth mother died, my step-mother treated us very badly. She didn't give us food, she used to beat us. I got tired of being tortured. It hurt so bad that I can never consider her as my family. If she treated me well, if she treated me as her own daughter, I would have never left the house.
>
> (14th May 2015)

The abuse perpetrated by Kolpona's step mother reconfigured Kolpona's ability to 'consider her as family' and thus her ability to remain in her families' village household. Social disaffiliation, or the inability to trust and invest in social relationships, is suggested to be both the cause and outcome of homelessness. As a case worker from a UK homeless service commented, 'being on the streets isn't the problem, it's part of the solution' where the 'problem' is one of damaged and

damaging relationships and subsequently 'damaged capacity to relate' (Homeless Healthcare 2012).

Once homeless, the station context further exposes women to the constant risk of everyday violence and precarious relationships (Chapters 4-6), further undermining women's capabilities of bodily integrity, health, senses imagination and thought, emotions and practical reason (see Appendix 5). When Shanta was approximately 17 she began sleeping in the station. She was raped by one of the male station occupants during her first few days as 'payment' for a meal he had offered her earlier in the afternoon. This event began an abusive, dependent relationship with this man, whereby he would consume alcohol or drugs and then seek Shanta out at night for sex. If she refused, he would threaten her with physical violence particularly that of disfiguring her face by slashing her cheeks. Shanta felt trapped in this situation, recounting:

> …how could I leave him? Back then in Kamalapur if the police were paid then they wouldn't say anything. The police would…see him beating me and not say anything at all…Even if [the police] did something, could they stop him forcing himself on me or cutting me?
>
> (24th February 2015)

When Shanta became pregnant, the male (and his income) disappeared. Soon after, Shanta began a period of sex-work out of 'desperation' and as the only way she could conceive of to survive. She felt abandoned and very alone, not only by this man but also by her friends she thought she had established in the station, she explained:

> …what is it like when you have friends who are only there with you because of your food and they're not really there for you when you need them? It was like that…I had helped others in their times of trouble, and we were all living and eating together, but now seeing the troubling situation I was in, they had abandoned me.

Discussing feelings of abandonment, loss, deep hurt and anger at the violence, abuse and exploitation perpetuated by intimate relationships was a reoccurring theme within women's narratives, a finding consistent with homelessness literature (cf. Finfgeld-Connett 2010).

Everyday exposure to violence between street dwellers further undermined trust and created fear and insecurity within the station community. Pia, who had only lived in the station for nine months, revealed that 'I am living in fear. I am afraid of many girls and guys in the station' and explained:

> …I don't trust people [in the station] that much… We are living together, but I have no faith in them, it will all break down in case of any argument or fight... They will break that trust someday, so that's I why I don't really trust anyone. Now if I were to trust a guy and live with him, then later on he might leave me and break my trust. He might go and marry another woman, and my trust in him will be broken. That is why no girls or guys at the station can be trusted. That is why I don't trust anyone.
>
> (12th May 2015)

In nine months, Pia had 'come to know' that even intimate relationships were not to be trusted and whilst they may enable Pia to access resources and opportunities in the present that these could not be relied upon, given that they could suddenly 'break down' with an argument or fight.

Pain and suffering is, most immediately, socially produced, and so, the trauma and loss associated with homelessness 'produces a psychological sense of isolation or distrust as well as the actual disruption of social bonds,' fostering disaffiliation within interactions and relationships with other social actors (Davis, J 1992; Goodman, Saxe & Harvey 1991, p. 1220; Lafuente 2003). Women's life history experiences continuously re-iterated that relationships could not be trusted and rather that intimate relationships only placed women at the potential (or perceived inevitable) risk of further broken trust and helplessness. Social disaffiliation thus became an adaption to reoccurring trauma and loss throughout life histories.

Longer term residents of the station such as Jorina, Shumi or Shanta, were observed to consistently have limited trust and dependency within relationships. As Jorina very matter of factly told me one afternoon, 'It is not written on people's bodies whether they are good or bad, you have to understand from their behaviour' (31st May 2015). Experience had taught these women that appearances held no bearing on the trustworthiness of an individual and that it was only through observing ones 'behaviour' over a period of time that would provide insights into what kind of person they were. Instead, women were observed to be reticent to engage and invest in relationships with 'unknown' individuals, including myself as a researcher as well as 'Amrao Manush' program staff (Chapter 2). As one staff members from the program observed:

> …[street dwellers] often don't trust because there a lot of people come and promise them things, but never keeps their promises. And since they don't keep their promises, the [street] dwellers don't share true information with everyone.

(29th April 2015)

A reticence to trust and invest in relationships had several implications for women's potential pathways out of the station and vulnerability to long-term homelessness.

Reconfigured sense of control and possibilities for the future

Reoccurring trauma and loss reconfigured women's sense of control over their own lives and thus their perceived possibilities for the future (Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet 2010). Attributing responsibility to other social actors or on their 'fate' and their own subsequent inability to change their situation was a coping strategy women utilized to make sense of the abuses of trust, respect and reciprocity within relationships and how their lives had subsequently unfolded. Women's accounts were often constructed around the events that had happened 'to' them, with women attributing these events to, more often than not, the social actor who were perceived as causing events to occur. When Shanta was unsuccessful in obtaining a job through 'Amrao Manush' she was quick to blame the 'corrupt' and 'bad' staff at the organization (19th January 2015), rather than acknowledging the possibility of the structural factors including the unavailability of jobs at that particular factory or her own lack of education. This situation was just one example of many where women's initial explanation for disadvantageous outcomes was to immediately resort to blaming social actors rather than other potential factors.

In attributing life history events to other social actors, or by constructing them as events that had happened 'to' them, women were not only re-enforcing the lack of reliability of other social actors, but also creating and reinforcing narratives of perceived lack of control to change their current situation. Within the psychological literature, resilient individuals are understood as having an 'internal locus of control' or who believe that they, not their circumstances influence their outcomes (Garmezy, Masten & Tellegen 1984). Yet when women had repeated experiences to the contrary, where only negative experiences were perceived to occur within their life histories, adopting an internal locus of control is an unviable and potentially detrimental strategy. Narayan-Parker et al. proposes that the poor attempt to:

> …psychologically mediate their experience… to externalize the responsibility for the current situation…[to] feel that at least to a certain extent their impoverishment was not the result of personal failings, but of events utterly beyond their control.

(2000, p. 57)

Rather than believing that it was their own 'fault' or 'sins' that had resulted in their life experiences, women's re-orienting their world view to that of externalizing events and experiences was a resilient psychological reconfiguration in response to their current circumstances.

Externalizing and relinquishing a sense of control over life events is not an uncommon response to homelessness. Tischler's (2009) study investigating coping strategies amongst homeless women, found that several participants utilized disengagement and survival strategies. Focusing on one day at a time and disengaging with a sense of control over events was viewed as a 'comprehensible, if not optimal' coping response to events (Tischler 2009, p. 197). Lewis, CS et al. (2006, p. 350) likewise discusses 'situationally responsive strategies to survive,' highlighting the need to understand the context within which responses occur in order to determine its adaptability.

Women's assessment of their lives as being that of continual misfortune was largely reflective of their lived experiences, with women having few, if any, positive experiences to the contrary. Repeated negative experiences only served to re-iterate narratives of perceived lack of control to change their situation. Aliber notes:

> …resignation [a]s perhaps the most succinct subjective correlate to the notion of chronic poverty, i.e. that the poverty will endure…such resignation may be a person's honest and sober assessment of the low probability of ever escaping poverty, but it may also have the practical effect of discouraging people from taking steps to increase their chances of living a more rewarding life, or of escaping their present state.
>
> (2001, p. 27)

Re-occurring trauma within intimate relationships reconfigures women's perceived and actual possibilities for their lives, including their ability to leave the streets. Intimate relationships are 'unusually pivotal to people's sense of what it is for their lives to go well…a rupture thus disrupts many aspects of one's existence' (Nussbaum 2016, p. 93-94). The abuse and violence within intimate relationships produced a deep sense of unease and the possibility that women would 'ever experience happiness again.' Within a discussion of Jorina's life history; detailing the trauma of her childhood, being abandoned by her parents during the war, the abuses of trust within her marital relationships and violence at the hands of employers, Jorina told me:

> …this is how my whole life gone, all the time bad, no happiness. I thought that after marriage that I would probably get some happiness,

> but it was the same [as before] and now everything is over. I'll never have happiness again.
>
> (2nd October 2014)

Broken trust within an intimate relationship reconfigured Jorina's perceived possibilities for the future, where marriage had only further undermined Jorina's ability to conceive of her 'getting some happiness.'

An individual's perception of their capability to create change is an important aspect of vulnerability (Anderson, MB & Woodrow 1989). Women viewed the events that had caused or re-enforced their homelessness as unavoidable and uncontrollable. In resigning themselves to their 'fate' of remaining in the station, and in adopting a narrative that externalized life events premised on the unreliability of social actors, women's possibilities for their own lives and ability to permanently leave the station began to be reconfigured. As Kolpona explained to me after her most recent attempt to leave the station, 'our fate is cursed. [Women leave and] after a while, we have to come back' (9th June 2015), demonstrating her resignation to continued homelessness. This process is similar to that of learned helplessness, defined as 'a network of cognitive, motivational, and emotional mechanisms that explain performance changes following uncontrollable outcomes' (Mikulincer 2013, p. 1). Over time, women were observed to became less likely to seek out and engage with opportunities that may have enabled women to leave the station. However, these opportunities often required women to trust other social actors, and as such, women often only anticipated failure. Women began to believe that they could not control the events that shaped their lives and instead began to perceive engaging in opportunities and relationships that held the potential of enabling them to leave the station as futile.

Following Shanta's failed attempt to obtain employment in a garments factory through the 'Amrao Manush' program in January 2015, I observed Shanta to struggle with acute feelings of hopelessness and despair. Shanta spent her days listening to music on her mobile phone, telling me it was her best friend. Music became Shanta's refuge and escape. She barely ate, with her food funded by short begging sessions during the afternoon/evening train arrivals. She only needed 35 taka a day (0.60 AUD) for her breakfast of *shingara* (a cheap road-side snack costing 5 taka or 0.08 AUD) and a plate of rice and dhal for her evening meal. One afternoon as I was waiting for Shaoli, my research assistant, to arrive at the station. I saw Shanta sitting alone, ear-phones in her ears. I walked over, and instead of giving me a huge smile and immediately launching into a conversation as she normally would, Shanta was silent, eyes gazing into her lap. I sat beside Shanta, sensing that she was deeply

upset. I didn't say anything and instead gestured, asking for an earphone. Without speaking, Shanta removed one ear-bud and placed it in my ear, and after a few moments placed her head on my shoulder. About half an hour went past, and I noticed tears had begun to run down Shanta's face, with my *kamiz* (dress) slowly becoming wet with her tears. Shaoli arrived, and she gently asked about the tears. Shanta began to cry in earnest:

> …I don't want to do anything else anymore. Shoshannah *apa* (big sister) knows very well how much I tried to get a job. It's hopeless… I'm never going to leave the station… This mobile, it's my only friend here.

(25th February 2015)

It is this perceived uncontrollability of the events shaping women's lives that is key to understanding women's subsequent adaptation and difficulties in leaving the station. Women became disillusioned with the prospect of finding employment that would not be exploitative or perpetrate abuse and instead resigned themselves to their marriages or other forms of livelihoods in the station as inescapable realities that 'trapped' them there. Instead of focusing on leaving, women instead attempted to make sense of station life in their own unique ways.

Reconfigured ability to navigate station life: We've become habituated

Over time, women developed the capabilities necessary to navigate the violence and precarity of the station, becoming 'habituated' to this space. One morning (12th January 2015), I asked Shanta and Shumi, as long-term residents, what they perceived were the reasons for women 'remaining' in the station. Shanta began the conversation by referring to the 'abuse' she had faced throughout her life history, including that as a new arrival and then told us:

> …over time, gradually, as we have been living here, we have become older and our minds developed more sense. We are able to stay and here and no one has the power to do stuff to us. But previously they had this power, so there was more possibility for us to face abuse.

Shanta explained how over her time in the station the abuse experience within this space had reduced as a result of 'develop[ing] more sense' and a reconfiguration of power within social networks in the station. Discussing how her own conception of the possibility of leaving the station had been reconfigured, Shanta continued,

> …we have been living here since childhood, suffered and faced obstacles here all this while, but still we haven't left this place. We wouldn't be able to live anywhere else if we were to leave this place.

Building on this theme of an inability to conceive of a life outside the station, Shumi interjected:

> …we have been living here since the time when we were naked (very young age), if we were to leave this place, we wouldn't be able to find any place like this elsewhere. Do you understand? We know this place well, we know everyone, everyone and everything is familiar**,** we've become habituated to living here. We won't get these conditions in any other place. We won't be able to live there the way we live here. That is the problem.

Shumi highlights that it not only the abuse, relationships and reconfigured possibilities that keep women in the station, but also their own habituation to the station, where women are unable to live 'in any other place…the way [they] live [in the station].'

For longer-term residents there became a certain familiarity and sense of connection to the station. As Kolpona articulated:

> …I am used to this place since childhood; I can't live in my house [in the village] anymore… I struggled since I was a little kid. I grew up here. All my happiness and my sorrows are entwined with Kamalapur. I have shared all my emotions here, with the people here.

(14th May 2015)

Themes of being more at ease or 'at place' on the street than in other contexts are prevalent in studies of homelessness, particularly amongst individuals who have grown up on the streets. As a participant in Kidd's study said, 'if something is familiar to you, it is comforting. You know the people in it, you know the lifestyle of it' (Kidd & Davidson 2007, p. 224). There was a certain type of freedom that was a part of station life. Radley somewhat acknowledges this freedom in discussing 'street living' as having a 'non-judgmental quality' commenting that homeless women 'could be themselves without the fear of having to live up to other people's views of how they should live their lives ' (Radley, Hodgetts & Cullen 2006, p. 453).

Life in the station offered women an opportunity to sit, walk, talk, be and do in ways that may not have been possible elsewhere, due to the gendered social and cultural expectations that limited practices and women's own reconfigured bodies outside this space. 'Reconfigured bodies' refers to the way in which station life leave permanent marks on women's bodies, including that of self-harm and facial slash scars. As Kolpona described, 'I can live here, pass my time here…I can talk and walk whenever I feel like,' suggesting that these ways of being were limited in other contexts, or as Shumi articulated 'we won't be able to live [any other place] the way

we live here.' For example, women could smoke or take drugs in public, that was largely impossible elsewhere without the risk of abuse, and formed a particular barrier to women engaging with livelihood and living opportunities elsewhere. Many women didn't wear *orna's* (scarves that women wore as part of their three-piece *shalwar kamiz*).

Figure 31: A woman smoking in Kamalapur (Uddin, S 2007)[42]

Perhaps most importantly, the station offered the only conceivable context for women with scars from facial slashes and self-harm a space to live (Chapter 5 and 6). Scars were normalized within the station and largely did not limit women's being and doing within this context. By contrast, the shame and stigma associated with facial scars formed formidable barriers to women conceiving of ever re-engaging with kinship networks or formal employment. I was sitting with Kolpona one morning on the ledge in the station courtyard as she sold rolls of *ganja* (marijuana) from under her *orna* (scarf). I asked her about why she continues to live in the station, given her high income from drug selling (up to 500 taka or 8.3 AUD per day). She gestured to her left arm, filled with the scars of repeated self-harm and then to her face, where the scars of two large slashes traversed her cheeks and told me:

[42] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'Marjina, a sex worker, posing for a photo' (Uddin, S 2007).

> …I'm never going to see my family again because of these [scars]…I've tried many things to get rid of the marks [on my face]... How can I see my family like this?... So I'm here [in the station].
>
> (30th November 2015)

Jorina speaks of the scars as 'falling into traps,' in an attempt to capture the permanency and implications scars have for women's futures. When I asked women what was the biggest challenge in leaving the station, it was the women with the scars, either on their faces or arms, like Raika that looked at me with despair and pain, who told me, 'I can't leave because of these scars' (28th January 2015). Likewise, Bilkis commented in reference to self-harm, 'I didn't cut… I dreamt of going back home…[if I cut] my kids would learn from me and do the things I do' (28th January 2015).

Scars formed barriers for women to accessing and retaining formal employment. My last conversation with Shanta centred on her most recent attempt to obtain employment in a garments factory. In addition to discussing the abuse and exploitation she experienced, we also discussed the social stigma and exclusion she experienced as a result of coming to the factory with Lydia, another woman from the station who had extensive self-harm on her arms and upper thighs. Following several months of verbal abuse, Shanta and Lydia returned back to the station, partly attributing their return to their exhaustion at the ostracization they experienced as a result of the stigma surrounding these scars. Scars are 'lasting visible impairments,' with not only aesthetic and social, but also tangible, ramifications for women's access and retention of viable livelihood opportunities that hold the potential of enabling women a way out of the station (Bandyopadhyay & Khan 2003, p. 68).

Within the station, women's days were not limited to the rigidity of the hours of formal employment, rather their income generation could be determined by other priorities. Their days, routines and practices could be, and were by necessity, fluid and adapted to the station context (Chapters 4 and 5). Women could be observed sitting for hours, talking, 'gossping' and 'hanging out' during daylight hours and would then work late into the night. Yet these practices and adaptations did not transfer well outside the station context, particularly when attempting to engage in the rigidity of formal employment (Chapters 4 and 5) (cf. Miller & Neaigus 2002). Where Radley discusses women being able to 'be themselves' on the streets, he appears to be referring to personal 'preferences' or ways of organizing lives. Rather, the actions and behaviours of the women challenged entrenched gendered social and cultural norms as well as gender inequity and violence that women in Bangladesh routinely experience (Bandyopadhyay & Khan 2003).

Figure 32: A woman with facial scars living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

The act of leaving a kinship household or place of employment, as many of the women have done, is to reject the notion of a household and male as a protector or provider (Kabeer 1988). In doing so, women are already beginning to become advocates for their bodily integrity and right to have greater personal control over their lives. Yet women have experienced few benefits as a result of these decisions and actions that defend their bodies and lives from gendered inequality and violence, given that these events that have typically been part of women's pathways to the streets (Chapter 3). Instead, women have often only experienced further abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence at the hands of the state, the public and their own intimate partners (Chapters 4 to 6). When women attempt to revert and conform back to 'acceptable' performances of gender, through entering into marriage or attempting to re-engage with kinship networks, they are often once again disappointed with further experiences of broken trust or abuse.

Long term residents of the station were observed to perform very differently within the station than outside this space. Inside the station, women like Shanta and Jorina were fierce, strong and fiery, transgressing traditional gender norms of how a woman 'should' act, particularly in a public space. These women didn't take abuse from anyone (with the exception of the police) and were advocates for themselves, their bodies and their children; observed in the way in which they overtly claimed space in the station, building physical shelters or claiming the corner of the courtyard as their 'own' (and indeed, other residents recognized this as such). Likewise, these women would verbally and physically reprimand station residents, irrespective of their gender, if residents dared to transgress the, admittedly fluid rules and boundaries they had established.

When women left the station they 'became different people' as Nibir, one of my research assistants, observed (24th January 2015). When Nibir and I accompanied Jorina to the public Dhaka Medical Hospital, during an acute health incident for Mali[43], Jorina became observably smaller, quiet and defeated. No longer was she the fierce, protective mother. In the hospital Jorina was the powerless 'street woman,' an object of shame and at the whim and mercy of the hospital system. Mali became a side show for medical students to crowd her bed and subject to repeated tests, despite her failing limbs and evident distress (24th January 2015). The strategies Jorina utilized within the station context to ensure her resilience and protection for herself and Mali were not transferrable to a new, unfamiliar setting outside the station.

[43] Jorina's daughter.

The strategies that served women within the station were demonstrated to be disadvantageous in other contexts due to the different social rules and power structures that governed these spaces. During my last conversation with Shanta, we spoke of her arrival back to the station after a brief period living and working in a garments factory outside Dhaka. Shanta was brimming with the anger and resentment she had previously been unable to vocalize regarding the extent of the exploitation and abuse she had experienced during her time there. As the result of a foreman's careless mistake whilst working, Shanta had sustained an injury to her foot. Not only had Shanta been refused health care and been forced to pay for treatment herself, but she had also been penalized for the unavoidable work days lost. For every day not worked, three days' pay was taken out of her monthly wage. When Shanta endeavoured to advocate for herself, attempting to negotiate the equivalent of one day's wage docked per day absence, she was told that if she didn't like these conditions, she could leave, which she eventually did. When Shanta had eventually left, women told her that she was a 'bad woman' and that she was 'better on the street.' Women's coping strategies and bodies that had been shaped by the station no longer 'fit' nor served women in other contexts. Likewise, researchers of homelessness refer to developing a 'street mindset' or 'street orientation' that was incompatible with relationships and life off the streets where 'main-stream values' exist (Auerswald & Eyre 2002; Kidd & Davidson 2007, p. 229). Over time, street life becomes the more attractive option as engagement with the public only re-iterates the 'mainstream world [as] another source of abuse, rejection and fear' (Auerswald & Eyre 2002, p. 1504).

Figure 33: A woman running in Kamalapur (Uddin, S 2007)[44]

'Being alone' as an expression of resilience

Several of the more resilient women in the station were observed to engage in the strategy of 'being alone' in the station. Kolpona's life history is particularly reflective of how trauma and loss reconfigured her possibilities for self and capability to navigate station life. She explained:

> …I had a difficult childhood growing up. After staying [in the station], I have had to struggle a lot more. Now I just don't feel like going back home and go through the past sorrows. I just want to live with my present life. This is why even after being bothered here I choose to stay here. I know it is going to hurt more if I go back home…I have realized that this life is much better than the life I had living with my step-mother. At least here, no one taunts me for nothing, no one beats me, I am on my own here, and I like it here.
>
> (14th May 2015)

[44] Photo from Shehab Uddin's 'Amrao Manush' photography series of street dwellers in Dhaka. The caption to this image reads: 'Champa with her son Ridoy, rushing to me as they see me after a while. In the beginning, Champa was very hesitant towards me, but she soon became quite willing to pose in front of the camera. To trust or distrust someone is a matter of whimsy for her' (Uddin, S 2007).

Living alone in the station was viewed by Kolpona as preferable to the certain abuse and control experienced within her kinship relationships that offered her only conceivable pathway out of homelessness.

'Being alone' was a less often, yet contextually adaptive, strategy utilized in response to reconfigured affiliation, sense of control and possibilities for women's lives. Shanta saw herself as 'alone' in the station (9th January 2015), in that she was not married, nor engaged in the social networks of sex workers that provided their own forms of tenuous support (Chapters 5 and 6). Shanta had decided that other social actors were inherently unreliable, and that it was only women themselves that could 'look after [their] selves' (7th May 2015). Shanta spoke of husbands as only being 'obstacles,' saying that, 'now I don't have anyone to hold me back' (26th February 2015).

An acceptance that one's fate was intertwined with the station lead women to invest in context specific livelihood strategies which enabling them to improve their everyday life, but which made it difficult for them to ever leave. Jorina was an example of one of the few women who was had successfully negotiated station life for approximately 30 years. Jorina took a pragmatic and fluid approach to dependency within relationships. Jorina was observed to refuse some forms of assistance (for example food for her daughter Mali from the 'Amrao Manush' program), whilst accepting others (for example medication for Mali which was initially obtained from another researcher working with Jorina and Mali and then later through the program).

Over time, Jorina had become embedded within the 'dark' social networks of the station's drug dealing network. Several years ago she had managed to negotiate for a small hut to be built in the back corner of the station courtyard. The hut, made from scrap metal from the station, was just big enough to hold a large shelf for Jorina's meagre possessions and a bed for herself and Mali to lie on. Critically, Jorina's hut had a lock-able door. Jorina's hut was crucial within the drug trade of the station, allowing the monetary profits from drug deals as well as left over drug stores to be securely stored overnight. As such, Jorina's hut was an important and powerful form of physical capital for both Jorina and the local drug dealers, and represented power and security for these station residents in direct opposition to the power and violence of the police that governed this space. In carving out this role of middleman for herself, Jorina had created her own, precarious form of power that was predicated on her accrued street capital (Chapter 5), a kind of mutual interdependence between herself and the powerful actors of the station, as well as an ability to autonomously navigate the station.

In May 2015, with limited warning, Jorina's hut was demolished. Later, I was told by Shanta that the hut's demolition was the result of Jorina's uncooperativeness with the local drug dealers; partly the result of Jorina being unable to be present in the station whilst Mali was in hospital (March 2015) and her refusal to allow access to her hut. More importantly, Jorina had become increasingly unwilling to allow dealers to store drugs over-night (April – May 2015) due to an increasing police presence in the station and fear of a physical violence and harm coming to Mali. As a result, the drug dealers had found alternative means to store their drugs and drug money, rendering their relationship with Jorina and her hut unnecessary. Suddenly, Jorina's source of social and physical power had disappeared.

Whilst Jorina was vocal about the need for Mali to leave the station during fieldwork, she had consistently been reticent to engage with potential opportunities that would result in Jorina herself ever leaving the station. She told me many times that she 'could never leave' and that 'my home is in Kamalapur,' speaking not only to the way in which her networks within the drug trade pragmaticaly kept her in the station, but also the extent of her own resignation to remaining there and her habituation to this space. Jorina began to turn to alternative social actors for support following the removal of her hut. During my fieldwork, Jorina was observed to tenuously, but strategically, develop relationships with myself and Ruhul[45], a friend who frequently visited Kamalapur. In October 2016 (post my fieldwork), Ruhul proposed that Mali live in a 'street kids' shelter that he had worked with, following numerous requests from Jorina to find a 'place for Mali to stay.' Ruhul suggested that Jorina accompany Mali to the home during the transition period and that she herself could consider moving into the shelter. After two weeks, Jorina decided that Mali could stay in the shelter, but herself returned to the station, where she has continued to live since.

Jorina's story illustrates the importance of social relationships within women's lives and the way in which the type and quality of relationship can hold varying implications for women's livelihood outcomes and homelessness trajectories. Investing in the 'dark' social networks of the station provided Jorina with forms of power and security that would have been otherwise unavailable. Yet once Jorina transgressed the rules and obligations that bound her to these social actors, she was suddenly devoid of the protection that had been afforded her. The devastation that had resulted from the break in these relationships, including that of a sudden and dramatic plummet in Mali's health after being forced to once again sleep in the station took its toll on Jorina. She spoke of 'never trusting again' and the way 'people

[45] Ruhul was an artist who had been regularly visiting the station since 2015 to draw station residents and whose work is featured throughout this thesis.

will only hurt you.' It took Jorina almost two years of ongoing and repeated engagement with Ruhul to develop enough trust and affiliation to consider Mali being moved to the shelter (even though this was her own expressed wish), whilst she herself decided to remain in the station. The children of women often became their most important livelihood priority, where children's wellbeing and possibilities were considered more important than those of women themselves (Chapter 6). Jorina's story represents what it is to be a resilient station woman, to be wary of social actors and their own priorities and agendas, to make the most of the few resources available to you, to utilize fluid and emergent strategies in order to make sense of one day at a time, to continue to try different strategies as priorities and risks shift and change.

The adaptation to station life afforded a sense of freedom for women. As Jorina reflected to me one morning as she combed Mali's hair:

> …those, to whom god gave assets, he didn't give a heart. Rich people have help for everything they need. And we have nothing, absolutely nothing. But we are much more peaceful than the rich, that I am certain. We don't have the fear of losing anything. We don't have anything else to lose.

(31st May 2015)

For Jorina having 'lost' everything, yet in managing to continue to survive for the last thirty years in the station had brought its own kind of peace.

Life in the station is seen to reconfigure the way in which women view and perceive of themselves and other social actors, their livelihood priorities and how they wished to organize their lives. Innumerable ties and assets had been lost and reconfigured within women's pathways that had lead them to living in the station. Over time, remaining and living within the precarious freedom of station made more sense for women than leaving. This was particularly the case where leaving the station required women to, once again, attempt to re-engage with opportunities and relationships elsewhere that woman could only conceive of as problematic, inevitably abusive and again breaking their trust. As Kolpona articulated, 'I gave up everything and came here, I fought to come here. Lost and learned to live here. I can't let go of this place. You can't leave a place you have given your everything to' (14th May 2015).

Conclusion

Resilience is demonstrated to be a fluid and contextually emergent quality that ebbs and flows as women's capabilities are continually reconfigured within precarious and violent contexts. As Jorina's case study illustrated, a resilient strategy one day may not necessarily be resilient, nor meet women's needs and priorities the next. My analysis demonstrates that women's resilience was not in the coping or livelihood strategy itself, but rather in the capacity to be constantly fluid, adaptive and responsive to uncertainty; to make pragmatic assessments regarding which of their needs and capabilities to prioritize in the present. Existing definitions of resilience require individuals to 'anticipate' and 'prepare' for stresses and shocks, or to 'mak[e] decisions about future losses' (Manyena 2006, p. 436), whilst Pain, A and Levine (2012, p. 3) assert that a 'core ingredient of resilience' is 'people's agency, their ability to make and follow through on their own plans in relation to socioeconomic security' (cf. Wood 2007). Yet for the women of the station, with the capability for practical reason routinely undermined (Chapter 4), their ability to survive is premised on their investment in reactive coping strategies (such as sex work or drug dealing) that mitigate the need for extensive anticipation or preparation to potential stressors and shocks. Resilience in the station was women's capability to successfully navigate the fluidity and precariousness of the everyday risks as they emerged. Similarly, in their discussion of the uncertainty that characterizes conflict-induced displacement, Horst and Grabska (2015, p. 5) discuss that 'coming to terms with uncertainty, then, is often not about calculated risk taking but about coping through…negotiating, and navigating.' Resilience as contextually defined and constantly in negotiation highlights the necessity of development studies to acknowledge the individually and contextually specific nature of women's capabilities.

My focus on reconfiguration highlights that the downward spiral of asset depletion, commonly associated with vulnerability and poverty, is insufficient to explain the strategies and decisions women are observed to make in order to navigate their homelessness within Kamalapur (Hulme & Shepherd 2003; Moser 1998). The vulnerability model developed in this thesis provides insight into the processes underpinning reconfigured capabilities, enabling practitioners to map the contextually specific vulnerability and resilience of individuals over time (see, for example Wiser 2004 and Appendix 5). Such fine-grained analysis provides practitioners with an understanding of the complexity surrounding long-term homelessness and highlights that there are no simple solutions to such an issue. My analysis suggests that providing economic assets and employment opportunities alone to women is insufficient to enable women to successfully and permanently transition out of homelessness (Jackman 2016). Yet economic poverty remains as the

predominant explanatory paradigm that underpins the work of existing programs attempting to address homelessness in Bangladesh (Concern Worldwide 2016). Instead, a reconfigured capabilities approach to homelessness recognizes the need to understand how women's capabilities have been shaped, lost, built and won throughout their life histories, and which have ongoing implications for how women 'be and do' in the present. For many women, transitioning out of protracted vulnerability contexts is a slow and potentially cyclical process, requiring recognition of the reconfigurative and dynamic nature of capabilities. There is thus the need for development practicioners to utilize formative research during the design phase of projects, in order to embed fluid and adaptive processes that enable these to be responsive to the lives and needs of vulnerable urban populations.

Reconfigured capabilities, underpinned by repeated and ongoing experiences of trauma and loss are key to understanding women's vulnerability to long-term homelessness and resilience. Broken trust, violence and exploitation at the hands of social actors resulted in reconfigured capabilities for social affiliation. Social actors and events are blamed by women for the multiple negative events within their life histories. In externalizing blame, women relinquish a sense of an internal locus of control, reconfigure their perceived possibilities of the future and instead become resigned to a continued state of homelessness. This resignation, coupled with a distrust in social actors, cause women to become reticent to seek out and engage with opportunities and relationships that may enable them to exit homelessness, but entailed trust, dependency and the potential for further trauma and loss (Zlotnick, Tam & Robertson 2003). Even if women do temporarily engage with these relationships and opportunities, maintaining these relationships is the most formidable barrier to women's permanently and successfully leaving the station. Women's assertiveness, their learnt capability to autonomously navigate and make decisions over their lives and, the often shameful, scars on their bodies form barriers to women engaging in and maintaining relationships outside the station. As such, women's reconfigured capabilities and resilience that enable them to navigate, 'be and do' within the station are often incompatible with the social and cultural expectations placed on women and women's bodies outside this space.

Social disaffiliation, where women became reticent to invest, trust and maintain social relationships is particularly central to understanding women's long-term homelessness. Long term station residents are seen to disavow engaging in strategies that create and perpetuate further dependency on social actors to (precariously) meet immediate needs (such as marriage or patron-clientism) (Wood 2003). Women in this context are instead observed to pursue strategies that limit dependency within social relationships as a result of reconfigured social affiliation. Women pursue

'being alone' in the station, often resulting in limited access to social and economic capital, as a means of to navigate the precarity and violence of station life. Women's pursuit of 'being alone' as a contextually resilient strategy dispels the assumption that social assets are necessarily an essential strategy in mitigating social vulnerability and to enhance security (Pelling 2002). My analysis adds further nuance to Devine's (2006, p. 91) argument that for someone to say *amar keu nai* (I have no one) in Bangladesh indicates 'a...profound sense of helplessness and vulnerability;' suggesting that whilst vulnerability may be shaped by a lack of affiliative relationships, women can become contextually resilient despite these experiences. Simply viewing poverty and vulnerability as a process of asset and capability 'stripping' does not do justice to the resilient means by which women adapt to and survive in this context and subsequently how practitioners may work with this population.

Acknowledging and understanding the mental health ramifications of homeless trajectories are crucial in understanding the livelihood strategies of those experiencing long-term homelessness (Mayock & Sheridan 2012). Women engaged in strategies that enable them to psychological mediate their experiences and mitigate the potential for further broken trust within their relationships. Women who were actively 'being alone' in the station were engaging in a resilient practice for their ongoing psychological wellbeing, in an effort to possess greater personal autonomy, self-efficacy and freedom outside of dependent social relationships. My analysis demonstrates the need for development studies to recognise ongoing violence and uncertainty as holding implications for the capabilities, assets and coping strategies of the urban poor. Reoccurring trauma and loss throughout life histories is demonstrated to have both immediate and long term ramifications for individuals lives, including the livelihoods adopted in order to cope and adapt to precariousness and everyday violence. Importantly, any development intervention must recognize women – not only in terms of their current capabilities and the journey they have taken to get where they are; but also as humans worthy of dignity, respect and justice (McManus & Thompson 2008).

Figure 34: A woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Chapter Eight - Conclusion

This thesis promotes three main arguments of critical relevance to development theory and practice. Firstly, I argue that vulnerability is multi-dimensional, multi-layered and dynamic, as demonstrated within the lives of the women living in Kamalapur station. An anthropology of development approach has enabled this thesis to provide a fine-grained analysis of everyday vulnerability and develop a model to capture this analysis. Long-term and engaged fieldwork provided insights the complex interplay of global, intermediate and local level factors, creating and perpetuating the processes underlying vulnerability within women's life histories (Cardona 2004; Watts & Bohle 1993). Such disaggregation enables advocates, development practitioners, and policy-makers to identify key points at which intervention may be possible to address the factors causing and perpetuating vulnerability, particularly the risks of becoming and remaining homeless for women. My analysis highlights women's homelessness as not merely an economic 'problem' that has simple, financial solutions. Rather, addressing homelessness requires understanding and sensitively engaging with the structural inequities and social relations that cause and perpetuate extreme poverty (Green, M & Hulme 2005). My analysis highlights gendered discrimination within the social, cultural and political narratives and norms that surround women and urban poverty in Bangladesh and illustrate the implications these hold for women's livelihoods, capabilities, and in perpetuating their vulnerability.

Through my analysis, informed by ethnographic methods, I have developed a tool for practitioners attempting to engage with and conceptualize the vulnerability of women experiencing homelessness in Dhaka (see Appendix 6). The tool provides a list of topic areas for program workers to explore with individual women over two to three conversations. Investigating these topic areas enable key indicators of women's current and potential vulnerability status, as well as protective factors, to be elicited and documented. The tool enables development practitioners to identify women most at risk and the risk factors and/or processes that create and perpetuate exposure to risk. Identified protective factors can be harnessed within a strengths based approach to addressing trauma and loss for women, as discussed below. An understanding of the structural and environmental contextual factors that create exposure to risk for a population is recommended in conjunction with the tool. The tool enables the complexity of individual vulnerability to be mapped, and provides practitioners with a starting point to working with extremely vulnerable urban poor women.

Secondly, I have argued for a capabilities approach to understanding vulnerability. My analysis provides a nuanced interrogation of the processes underpinning what constrains or enables women's capabilities to 'be and to do' within the processes of becoming, living and remaining homeless (Nussbaum 2001). The nuance and detail of women's vulnerability processes provided within this thesis, as linked to women's capabilities and the insights this holds for understanding their livelihoods, demonstrates the usefulness of such an approach. My analysis demonstrates the three livelihood priorities of women to include survival, protection, and honour. An asset focused understanding of vulnerability and livelihoods, commonly adopted within development practice, does not do justice to the multiplicitous and dynamic ways in which women attempt to pursue their priorities whilst negotiating everyday violence and uncertainty. Adopting a capabilities approach provides insight into the means and ends of livelihoods and vulnerability, as well as the processes that enable and/or constrain women from 'being and doing.' The (limited) opportunities women have to meet all three livelihood priorities, irrespective of the strategy adopted, demonstrates the extent of women's vulnerability whilst homeless. The extent of the 'choice' and constraint surrounding women's livelihoods, compounded by the dualistic and multiplex nature of sex-work and marriage within this context, highlights the complexity and harsh realities of engaging in precarious livelihoods within urban contexts (Cornwall 2007b; Rakodi 1991). The multiplex nature of the station's dark social world, women's drug use as a livelihood strategy, and the self-harm that often accompanies sex work, are identified as particular issues that require further research to understand how these might be addressed whilst protecting women's capabilities and livelihood priorities.

Finally, I highlight the social production of trauma and loss as key to understanding women's capabilities and vulnerability trajectories. Relationships throughout women's lives both cause and perpetuate trauma, loss, and their vulnerability to homelessness. When (particularly intimate) relationships are broken, lost or dissolved as a result of death, divorce, abuse or exploitation, a lack of formal social safety nets for the urban poor cause women to become acutely vulnerable to becoming homeless. The precarious and dualistic nature of relationships within women's lives problematize the conceptualization of 'social capital' as a resource that can be readily accrued and utilized to manage risk and vulnerability (Woolcock & Narayan 2000).

Gendered homelessness arises from women's 'troubled lives' (Minera, 11th April 2015), where broken, exploitative and inadequate relationships were painful realities not merely regulated to the past, but which continue to hold implications for women's present and future lives. Whilst existing homelessness literature within high

income contexts identify abusive relationships as a key contributor to women's initial and continued homelessness (Mayock & Sheridan 2012; Mayock, Sheridan & Parker 2015; Zlotnick, Tam & Bradley 2010), this study illustrates the cruicial importance of understanding type and changing nature of relationships throughout women's lives within low-income contexts, and how these may enable, but also constrain, their possibilities and capabilities.

Embracing uncertainty

It was difficult to make sense of the ongoing and reoccurring, overt and insidious forms of violence within and throughout the lives of women. My fieldwork journey took me into not only the violence, but also the accompanying despair and hopelessness of women's narratives and experiences of long-term homelessness. As I came to the end of fieldwork, my own beliefs had been reconfigured around the ability for myself as a researcher to make 'sense' of the lives of women, as well as the potentiality of change within this context (Lammers 2007). It took time, removal from the station context and prolonged engagement with fieldwork data, reading, listening and being with women's narratives that facilitated further reconfigurations around my perception of these issues. I argue that there are multiple opportunities for development practitioners, advocates and the state to address gendered homelessness and protect women's capabilities. Yet there is no making sense or way of reconciling of the often horrific, ugly violence and trouble of women's lives. Rather, in adopting an anthropology of development approach, this thesis has uncovered the complexity and messiness of women's lives, revealing the way in which capabilities are constantly being fought for, lost and won throughout the lives of women. Adopting a capabilities approach, asking where women are now and what processes have lead them to that point, has illustrated that making sense of women's often violent, traumatic and 'troubled' lives is to place them at the centre of vulnerability and inequality analysis.

An investigation of women's lives revealed that it is difficult to conceptualize women's vulnerability and livelihoods into binary and enduring conceptualizations of 'assets' or 'strategies'. The dualistic and dynamic nature of marriage as a form of 'social capital' or sex work as a livelihood 'strategy' reveals the need for development studies and practicioners to embrace the chaos of urban contexts where constant violence, uncertainty and precarity exists. The categorization of assets and strategies into 'advantageous' or 'disadvantageous,' 'lost' or 'gained' only further perpetuates problematic narratives surrounding women's lives and life histories. These conceptualizations of assets and strategies are not conducive to conceptualizing the

dynamic nature of women's vulnerability, nor in enabling development practitioners to address vulnerability processes and develop a means by which women can begin to move out of spaces of despair, violence and distrust. Likewise, within Davis's (1992) discussion of suffering, he problematizes the 'comfortable' anthropological pursuit of seeking the order or 'perfect hexagons of a honeycomb' of social structures. Instead, Davis discusses the uncomfortableness of researching pain, breakdown and repair, and the ways in which social structures perpetuate inequity and violence. The violence, trauma and loss reoccurring within women's life histories are caused and perpetuated by 'normal' social structures. Gender discrimination is inherent within social, cultural and legal norms and which creates structural constraints to women obtaining an education, inheriting land, accessing employment and housing (Zaman 1999). In addition, gendered norms surrounding women's roles, their power within relationships, and when navigating and occupying private and public spaces, creates and perpetuates the everyday violence that underpins women's vulnerability (Ghafur 2002; Kabeer 1988; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004).

Bourgois, quoting Walter Benjamin, states that 'every day is a state of emergency for the structurally vulnerable' (Bourgois 2009, p. 24). To be homeless, in both having a lack of access to shelter as well as in occupying public space, is demonstrated to expose women to inevitable and constant violence and risk. The everyday lives of women within the station were characterised by protracted uncertainty – if the police would come and beat them that night, if a husband would return and provide money for food, if there was going to be enough water to have a shower, if they and their children would go to bed hungry, if they would wake up with their possessions stolen. The constant uncertainties of violence and insecurity, with multiple, compounding constraints for the women of Kamalapur in exercising choice over their bodies, environments and practical reason illustrates an extreme and protracted state of everyday vulnerability and which was reflected in a 'living for today' survivalist orientation for some women (Grabska & Fanjoy 2015; Watts & Bohle 1993). Whilst there are 'triumphs of human creativity, subtle and ingenious solutions to real problems,' Davis instead suggests most strategies attempting to cope with violence and pain are:

> …temporary, ad hoc ramshackle shelters, short-lived, fragile and inadequate…a shanty-town, patched and improvised, constructed from whatever lies to hand in a creative and often doomed attempt to keep chaos out. All our comfortable anthropological culture tempts us to imagine the honeycomb and to strive to represent it. I am sure this is a mistake.

(1992, p. 159)

Likewise, my analysis has attempted to capture the chaos, fluidity, individuality and uncertainty of women's lives and livelihoods, precisely because these are the elements that are so important for development practitioners to conceptualize and engage with. Despite the demands of women's lives that require short-term and often inadequate strategies to meet their immediate priorities, women themselves are not fragile or inadequate. Rather, women's continued ability to navigate, to be and to do in the station is a testament to their resilience within this context.

Women's resilience is discussed as a dynamic, shifting and emergent quality that is contextually shaped and defined. Resilience in the station is women's capacity to be constantly adaptive and responsive to uncertainty and everyday violence, knowing which needs and capabilities to prioritize in the present and how to best meet these. Whilst women's contextually resilient strategies of 'being alone' or engaging in precarious livelihoods of sex work or drug dealing may further perpetuate women's vulnerability to homelessness, these strategies also enabled women to survive. In contexts of protracted and extreme vulnerability and everyday violence, getting through another day is a triumph in of itself. Davis' metaphor of the 'ramshackle shelter' holds resonance with women's livelihood attempts to navigate the certain uncertainties of everyday violence. The contextually resilient coping strategy of 'living for today,' is characterized by immediacy, temporariness and precarity in response to ever-changing threats, priorities and reconfigured capabilities. A strategy that worked yesterday may not meet the demands or risks of today, and so women's resilience within this context is in the extent to which women can improvise and negotiate the temporariness of Kamalapur to meet their priorities for that day. Some days, women successfully managed to keep the chaos out, to obtain food, protection, and a semblance of honor. Other days are doomed to hunger, pain, despair and heartache.

Trauma and capability informed approaches

I propose a trauma and capability informed approach as a means by which development practitioners can sensitively engage with, conceptualize and address the vulnerability, capabilities and livelihoods of marginalised urban populations. Homelessness as a traumatic experience is increasingly receiving attention in the literature (Browne 1993; Cash et al. 2014; Goodman, Saxe & Harvey 1991; Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet 2010; McManus & Thompson 2008). Whilst this research did not aim to specifically gather information on women's symptoms of trauma; fieldwork observed patterns of behaviour that have resonance with trauma symptoms;

including hyper-vigilance, increased arousal, poor sleep and strong emotional and physical reactions to traumatic stimuli, and for some women, high levels of drug use and self-harming practices as discussed in Chapter 4 and 5 (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Given the trauma and loss that underpins women's life histories and experiences of living homelessness, it is recommended that programs adopt a trauma-informed approach to working with the homeless population in addition to providing psycho-social support where appropriate (McManus & Thompson 2008).

The principle of recognition

I suggest that development programs attempting to engage with women experiencing homelessness in any meaningful way must embed a recognition of women, their fluid realities and truths, into their practice, to meet women where they are (Scheper-Hughes 1993). Care must be taken within any approach or program to resist the assumption that women are part of a homogenous population and instead recognize the individualized processes that underpin a women becoming, living and remaining homeless. It is essential that an agenda of social change acknowledges the individual interests, unique life history events and experiences of women that have necessitated a reconfiguration of capabilities to navigate homelessness in their own way(s), as can be facilitated through use of the tools in Appendix 6 and Figure 11 (May, Cloke & Johnsen 2007; Molyneux 1985). This concept of 'meeting women' can be as practical as engaging with women in their own spaces and in their own ways (eg. sitting 'beside') as well as thoughtfully engaging in assistance around women's basic needs (eg. health care) (Mayock, Sheridan & Parker 2015). Principals of recognition must include that of a women's worth and dignity, and of reconfigured capabilities as a result of long-term homelessness, including women's sense of agency, control over and possibility for own lives (Nussbaum 2001). Similarly, a shelter for women in Pakistan are guided by the principles of dignity and respect for women as 'human beings' (Critelli & Willett 2010, p. 414). The principal of recognition thus builds on existing research that provides evidence for adopting a strength-based, rights-based and flexible approach to working with homeless populations (Baer, Peterson & Wells 2004; Bender et al. 2007; Critelli & Willett 2010). Strength-based approaches aim to 'focus on the strengths already possessed by the [individual], as well as those found within [their] environment' (McManus & Thompson 2008, p. 7). Adopting a strength-based approach may not only facilitate development practitioners and program staff to recognize women's current capabilities, but also provide opportunities to identify the means by which programs may work with women to meet their current and future goals.

Women are demonstrated to prefer, or resort to, a life in the station above that of the violence perpetrated by partners or families, and which offers two important insights into the ways in which gendered homelessness can be addressed. Firstly, homelessness can be conceived of as a strategy women utilize in the absence of other, more viable, institutional supports or options available to them. Whilst the right to shelter must be protected and upheld, particularly given the violence women are exposed to in the absence of shelter (Chapter 4), it must not be assumed that access to private space for shelter is a priority for all. Following Jackman (2016), I assert that attitudes which understand homelessness as a form of destitution and something that 'all poor people…fear' adopts a judgement position about a population and form of livelihood that is not supported by this study (Loughhead & Rakodi 2002, p. 227). Women have multiple reasons for seeking shelter in public spaces, in addition to factors that prohibit them from engaging in alternative living and working locations (cf. Tipple & Speak 2009). It is important therefore that programs adopt a non-judgemental position, seeking to understand if remaining in the station is a woman's preference or rather the result of an inability to conceive of a life or form of livelihood elsewhere. Secondly, and importantly, violence and abuse within marital, kinship and employment relationships are the driver of much of women's homelessness and must be given urgent attention by programs and policy makers (Critelli & Willett 2010).

Protecting the capability of affiliation

Affiliative relationships, that enable and protect women's capabilities to 'be and to do,' within this context are essential for what it is for women's 'li[ves] to go well' (Nussbaum 2016, p. 93). As such, development studies must pay urgent attention to the problematic power dynamics within relationships that create and reproduce violence and inequity and find ways to protect women's capabilities within these. The pragmatics of addressing the complex social issues, including structural gender discrimination, violence and exploitation underpinning the vulnerability of gendered homelessness, requires changes at the structural, community and inter-household level, a lengthy time-frame, considerable resources and political commitment. Yet it is critical that the 'change makers' – those involved in policy, program and advocacy – take these insights and leave the political apathy that the multiple challenges to addressing such complex issues can sometimes evoke. Following Gardner and Lewis (1996) I assert that the fields of anthropology and development must be actively engaged in challenging the conditions and processes that create and perpetuate poverty, inequality, violence and marginalization. As such, I suggest the problematic

social relations and gender discrimination underpinning gendered homelessness remain at the top of a development agenda.

Programs addressing long-term homelessness must focus on building and fostering strong, trustworthy relationships within women's lives (Cash et al. 2014). As Conticini reflects on his work with street children in Dhaka,

> …development practitioners and policy makers cannot get away from love and respect as a first step of intervention: words used so often in humanities but hardly ever heard in development debates. Paradoxically, providing some affection, some smiles, some play time to these children will be the best initial support we can give them to make their day look better while working to improve their future on a more programmatic and systemic manner.

(Conticini 2008, p. 432)

Likewise, initially developing strong affiliative relationships initially between women and service providers, and then subsequently with housed family and friends, may facilitate transition off the streets, with individuals who disaffiliate from these relationships at risk of long-term homelessness (Brown, KS & Ziefert 1990; Kidd & Davidson 2007; Rog & Holupka 1999; Zlotnick, Tam & Robertson 2003). Fostering strong relationships built on trust is key to adopting a trauma informed approach that address' the trauma and loss of long-term homelessness (McManus & Thompson 2008; Siegel & Solomon 2003). It is recommended that programs develop spaces and opportunities for women to develop trustworthy, reciprocal relationships between women and program staff, employers, within their immediate and extended kinship networks; as well as nurturing friendship relationships with other women not premised on the exchange of food, but rather on the principal of 'love and care' that women discussed as seeking (Lucky, 7th December 2014).

Protecting the capabilities of control over environment and practical reason

A prerogative of any attempt to address gendered homelessness must be to facilitate women's control over their environments. As my analysis has demonstrated, constant unrelenting violence, impermanency, and disruption characterized everyday life in the station, undermining women's capability to 'control [their] environment' where the everyday became largely uncertain, reactive and dictated by external events and actors. The inability to control one's environment is demonstrated to perpetuate and underpin multiple ongoing and acute risks for women, including that of undermining practical reason. Protecting women's capability to exercise control over their environment(s) must be recognized as essential to any agenda that

attempts to address homelessness. Discussions surrounding gender equity identify the need for women to have greater control over their lives and 'the ability to make choices' (Kabeer 2005, p. 13; Sen, P 1999). Likewise, at the heart of the capabilities approach is the notion of a person's right and ability to choose a way of living (Nussbaum 2001; Sen, A 2001).

I argue that the environments within which women operate largely determine the extent to which women have control and the ability to make choices and acts to either constrain or enable capabilities. Research suggests that an initial goal of intervention within the homelessness and trauma space must be to provide a sense of safety and control for individuals (Wilson, Friedman & Lindy 2012). Homelessness research suggests that the provision of 'basic needs' including safe shelter, food security and meeting health care needs are necessary initial interventions for this population before women can begin to engage in addressing the long-term barriers to leaving the streets (Kidd & Davidson 2007; Tipple & Speak 2009). Likewise, in discussing experiences of suffering and developing resilience amongst communities Afghanistan, Eggerman and Panter-Brick (2010) discuss that:

> …focusing on everyday social ecology – strengthening family and wider social networks – need to go hand in hand with interventions focusing on everyday material ecology – altering daily economic stressors that are the nexus of social suffering.
>
> (2010, p. 82)

There is a need to focus on strengthening the 'everyday material ecology' or structural and economic factors underpinning women's homelessness. As such, providing food and meeting health care needs may be important initial steps in addressing the most immediate and basic needs of the homeless (Seers 1969; Tipple & Speak 2009). Yet these survivalist interventions must be viewed for what they are: instrumental means to address acute risk, to build trust with individuals and provide sufficient security to facilitate a process by which women can begin to conceive of possibilities outside of the streets.

Merely providing shelter does not necessarily promote women's capabilities nor address their needs. 'Providing shelter' and the (often) subsequent imposing of rules, structures and institutionalization of individuals can serve to confine and routinize everyday lives in a way that causes disruption, despondency and complacency (Desjarlais 1997). Whilst night shelters may be an appropriate means of addressing acute exposure to risk (particularly for new arrivals to the streets), these shelters must be structured in ways that provides safe and achievable ways for women to exert choice and control over the space (Padgett et al. 2006).

Consideration therefore must be given to the multiple spaces women engage with, and how to facilitate and protect women's capabilities when navigating new forms of shelter (including bodily integrity, senses imagination and thought, practical reason etc.).

Development programs and policy must address the underlying economic, social, cultural and legal barriers to women accessing safe housing in cities. Following numerous academics, I re-iterate the need for the state to honour the right to safe, affordable and tenured housing for all citizens, rather than the current neglect of the urban poor within programs and policies, and which only further perpetuates homelessness through ongoing slum evictions (Banks, Roy & Hulme 2011; Ghafur 2004). There is also an urgent need to ensure women are protected within housing, land and marriage laws as well as within places of employment to begin to address the gendered structural constraints to housing (Tipple & Speak 2009; Zaman 1999). It is recommended that low-income housing settlement re-development projects focus not only on providing physical shelter, but also enabling environments for women to feel safe and at 'home' within these (Ghafur 2004; Rahman, SZ 2013). Of note, the high levels of stigma and violence experienced by women in both public and private spaces outside the station must be acknowledged and addressed. Developing an public acceptance of women who have facial and self-harm scars, particularly within urban and rural communities', kinship networks, and amongst potential employers may be helpful in addressing the social and livelihood exclusion associated with the visible practices and scars resulting from living homelessness.

Supporting women to access and maintain safe and acceptable employment whilst also addressing the structural barriers to employment is essential to addressing long-term homelessness (Ghafur 2004; Tipple & Speak 2009). Support may include working with employers and existing NGO's endeavouring to advocate for and provide enabling environments for women's employment (eg. providing alternative options to women signing their name on an employment contract, ensuring the workplace financially compensates with the basic minimum wage, provides basic health care coverage in the case of a workplace accident and access to child care services). Attention must particularly be paid to ensuring girls access to education, given illiteracy amongst women is a particular indicator of homelessness, excluding them from accessing formal employment opportunities (Ahmed et al. 2011; Hossain & Tisdell 2005).

This thesis has enabled an insight into the problematic narratives and beliefs surrounding gendered homelessness, compounded by structural, political, social and cultural norms which creates and perpetuates women's vulnerability. As such, the promotion of gender equity must move beyond addressing the immediate challenges

for women in accessing and retaining education, housing and employment. Rather, as Kabeer (1994, p. 87) has articulated, the pursuit of gender equity necessitates the 'transformation of the basic rules, hierarchies, and practices of public institutions' including reconfiguring the norms and practices upon which the relations of kinship networks, social and legal practices are founded.

Conclusion

The lives of the women of Kamalapur are a testament to their resilience. Women's strength can be seen within their subversion of gendered cultural and social norms, by refusing to remain in abusive or exploitative relationships, re-iterating their rights to bodily integrity, dignity and respect. As Kolpona explained to me one day:

> …I have had to go through a lot of pain and suffering… From the beginning I have been struggling, from the time I was born.
>
> (7th December 2014)

The resilience of women is within this struggle, where their capabilities have been reconfigured to be able to constantly adapt, negotiate and cope with the fluidity, uncertainty and violence of station life; where exposure to risk is continually emergent, dynamic and changing. My analysis has not only shed light into the pain and suffering that inevitability occurs within the experience of homelessness, but also the triumph of the human spirit, the courage, fearlessness and incredible resilience that women exhibited within their daily lives.

Figure 35: A woman living in Kamalapur. Portrait by Md. Ruhul Abdin.

Appendix 1: List of ten central human capabilities

1. **Life.** Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length…; not dying prematurely.
2. **Bodily health** . . . Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; being adequately nourished…; **being able to have adequate shelter…**
3. **Bodily integrity**. Being able to move freely from place to place; being able to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault…; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction
4. **Senses, imagination, thought.** Being able to use the senses; being able to imagine, to think, and to reason--and to do these things in . . . a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education . . . ; being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing, and producing expressive works and events of one's own choice…; being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech and freedom of religious exercise; being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain
5. **Emotions.** Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves; being able to love those who love and care for us; being able to grieve at their absence, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger; not having one's emotional developing blighted by fear or anxiety. . . .
6. **Practical reason.** Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life. (This entails protection for liberty of conscience.)
7. **Affiliation.** Being able to live for and in relation to others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; being able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; having the capability for both justice and friendship. . . . Being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others.
8. **Other species.** Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. **Play.** Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. **Control over one's environment.** (A) Political: being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the rights of political participation, free speech and freedom of association... **(B) Material: being able to hold property (both land and movable goods);** having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others…

Note: Underlined sections are those that have particular relevance to the women of the station their homeless processes. Highlighted sections refer to those aspects that directly acknowledge shelter and property as integral aspects of capabilities.

(Nussbaum, 2001, p. 78-80)

Appendix 2: Analysis of Kamalapur Station context

Context Level	Kamalapur Railway station
Global level	• Social, cultural and religious contexts that perpetuate gender inequalities (Chapters 1 and 3).
Intermediate level	• Social and cultural contexts that criminalize and construct the homeless (particularly women) as marginal and 'invisible' (Chapter 1). • Structural constraints to housing: Inadequate housing and employment markets (Chapter 3). • Political instability.
Local level **Social and cultural context** ***Who are the social actors operating in this space?? What are the dominant livelihood practices in this context?***	• Police. • Station workers. • NGO workers. • Other station dwellers. • High volume of public 'passengers'. • Widespread drug selling/use. • Significant sex work trade.
Physical context ***What functions does the space afford/prohibit? Are these regulated by social actors?***	• Lack of physical infrastructure to meet basic needs (limited and regulated water and sanitation facilities). • Large, open, highly visible areas (eg. old station courtyard, station yard). • Busy, crowded areas (eg. new station). • More 'private' and 'hidden' areas (eg. nursery, inside abandoned train carriages). • Station platforms (access regulated by police). • Hard ground, often filled within dirt, rubbish and refuse.
Temporality ***How does the social and physical spaces change throughout the day/with seasons?***	• Wet season: High rainfall, muddy/wet/flooded ground. • Hot season: Limited shade. • Cold season: Cold, hard cement of station exacerbates the cold.

Appendix 3: Analysis of women as social actor(s) within Kamalapur station

Characteristics to analyse	Social actor(s): Women of Kamalapur Station
Demographics ***Gender, age, religion***	• Identifies as a woman. • Age: 16-30. • Class: From chronically poor rural family (Chapter 1) • Religion: Typically identifies as Muslim.
Life history ***Include events that have long-term or ongoing implications for assets and capabilities.***	• Typically experienced repeated experiences of broken trust, abuse and exploitation (sexual/verbal/physical) within intimate relationships and/or formal workplace (Chapters 3 and 7) • May be married to another male street dweller who engages in informal sector employment, may be a regular drug user (Chapter 6) • Limited experience of engaging in income generating strategies within informal sector. Length of time on street (influences exposure to risk) • Newly arrived single women: Increased risk of exposure to violence and sexual abuse (Chapter 5) • Older residents: Decrease risk of exposure certain risk due to developing contextual resilience. Also comes at increased risk of remaining homeless developing assets and strategies appropriate for street (Chapter 7)
Assets ***Human, social, physical, economic & natural capital as appropriate.***	• Individually specific to women. • **Human assets**: Typically low. Often illiterate and experience poor health (Ahmed et al. 2011; Uddin et al. 2009). • **Social assets:** Typically low, particularly if broken relationships with kinship networks or currently single. Engage in tenuous forms of reciprocity with other women in station. • **Physical assets:** Typically low. Can accrue over time as strategies to store/secure assets improve. Vulnerable to theft/weather. • **Economic assets:** Often low. Women typically engage in low-income, itinerant and fluctuating income-generating activities such as begging/scavenging/day labourer (Ahmed et al. 2011; Uddin et al. 2009). Find it difficult to save (Chapter 5). • **Natural assets:** Typically none.
Capabilities ***Life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination & thought, emotions, affiliation, practical reason, control over one's environment, play, other species.***	• Individually specific to women • Bodily life and health: Typically, low levels due to environmental exposure/poor diet. • Bodily integrity; Senses, imagination & thought; Emotions and Affiliation: Typically undermined, particularly if there if there is a history of sexual and physical assault (Chapter 7). • Practical reason and control over one's environment: Limited and undermined by protracted uncertainty of everyday life in station.

Appendix 4: Analysis of 'everyday' exposure, capacity and potentiality of risk for women of Kamalapur

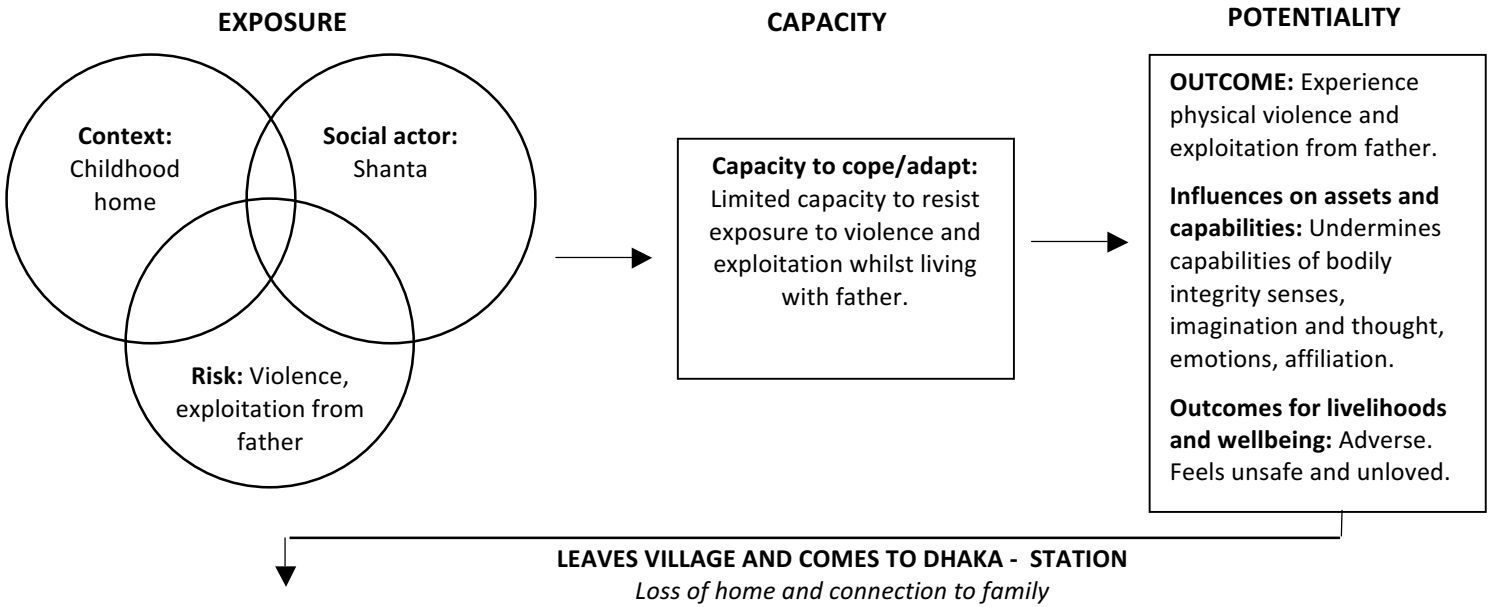
Exposure to risk	Capacity	Potentiality
1. Police Violence (Koehlmoos et al. 2009) **Predictability: Some types predictable and constant, others unpredictable**	Limited to no capacity to resist.	**Outcomes:** Sexual assault, physical violence, sleep deprivation, destruction of physical assets, poor health (Chapter 4). Depletes human capital. Undermines capabilities of bodily health, bodily integrity, senses imagination and thought, emotions, affiliation (B), practical reason, and control over one's environment (B).
2. Physical, sexual or verbal violence from the public and other homeless individuals (Koehlmoos et al. 2009) **Predictability: Unpredictable. New girls at acute, more predictable risk of sexual assault from other station dwellers Decrease exposure by accruing 'street' capital or by marriage (Chapters 5 and 6).**	As a new girl limited to no capacity to resist. As an older resident, some capacity to resist, dependant on developing 'street capital' (Chapter 5) and relationships with station residents (Chapter 6 and 7).	**Outcomes:** Sexual assault, verbal assault, physical violence (Koehlmoos et al. 2009) Depletes human capital. Undermines capabilities of bodily health, bodily integrity, senses imagination and thought, emotions, affiliation (A&B), practical reason, control over one's environment (B). Influence women to engage in either sex work or marriage as livelihood strategies (Chapters 5 & 6).
3. Exposure to extreme weather (hot/cold/rain) **Predictability: Seasonal (predictable). Decrease exposure by accruing physical assets (eg. warm clothing, plastic sheeting) as well as street capital enabling claim to sheltered spaces within station.**	Limited capacity to resist. Access to platforms to enable shelter from rain regulated by police.	**Outcomes:** Sleep deprivation and ill-health (Uddin et al. 2009). Depletes human capital. Undermines capabilities of bodily health, emotions and control over one's environment (B). Difficulties engaging in physically demanding livelihoods.

4. No physical shelter owned by individual to store financial and physical assets Predictability: Constant, known risk. Theft unpredictable	Strategies develop over time (eg. store with local store owner, at Sajida Foundation Pavement Dweller Centre (PDC), at a friend's/employer house, tie valuable items inside clothing). Limited capacity to resist if sleeping with belongings.	**Outcomes:** Theft of physical/economic assets from other station dwellers, physical assets ruined by rain, can only store/retain a limited number of physical assets. Depletion of financial and physical assets. Undermines capabilities of affiliation (A), control over environment (B). Difficulties saving. Engage in livelihood strategies that enable 'living for today' (Chapter 5).
5. Limited access to clean water and sanitation facilities (access mediated by social actors/financial cost) (Ahmed et al. 2011; Uddin et al. 2009) Predictability: Constant, known risk. Constant exposure to risk, yet impact can be mitigated.	Access to water available. Strategies develop overtime. Eg. Learn how to access water tanks in the station, women urinate/defecate in nursery/in station yard at night, women may develop relationships with station workers enabling access to toilets.	**Outcomes:** Difficulties washing body and physical assets such as clothing. Poor health (Uddin et al. 2009). Depletes human capital by undermining bodily health. Difficulties engaging in physically demanding livelihoods.
6. No access to cooking facilities Predictability: Constant, known risk	Limited capacity to adapt. Only two long term residents were observed to retain cooking infrastructure. There is a history of the police removing/destroying cooking infrastructure (Chapter 4). Develop reliance on ready-prepared street food (low quality/nutrition).	**Outcomes:** Limited nutrition intake, experience poor health and hunger. Women less likely than men to have three meals a day (Ahmed et al. 2011). Depletes human capital by undermining bodily health. Undermines capability of control over environment (B). Difficulties engaging in physically demanding livelihoods. Requires women to 'earn money for food' each day (Chapter 5).
7. No physical address Predictability: Constant, known risk	Limited capacity to change. *Amrao Manush* can assist women registering births, accessing National ID cards and providing education to children if 'members' of the NGO.	**Outcomes:** Low education of children, unregistered children, no National ID cards and inability to vote Undermines capability of control over one's environment (A) and emotions.

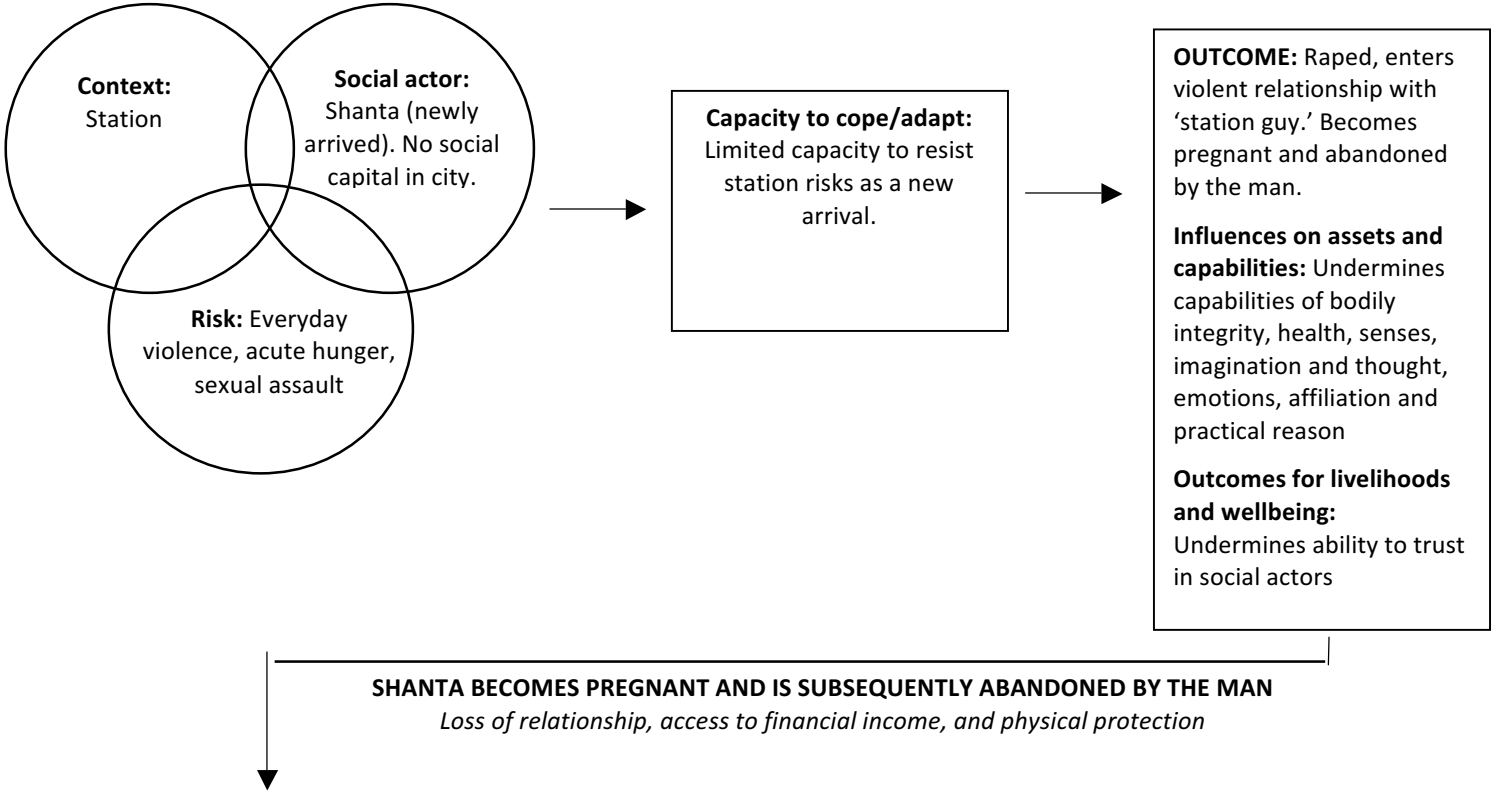
8. Sleep deprivation (resulting from noise/flood lights until 12am/police moving people from 5am/violence from police/station dwellers during the night) **Predictability: Constant, known risk. May increase with unpredictable police violence.**	Limited capacity to resist. Risk experienced by most women. Develop capacity to adapt to environmental stimuli and sleep during day (cf. Cooley-Quille & Lorion 1999). Decrease exposure by sleeping with others (accruing social capital)	**Outcomes:** Sleep deprivation and associated outcomes (Chapter 4) Depletes human capital by undermining capabilities of bodily health, bodily integrity, senses imagination and thought, emotions. Undermines capabilities of control over one's environment (B), affiliation (A & B) and play. Difficulties engaging in physically demanding livelihoods. f
9. Poor physical health (associated with risks #1,2,3,5,6,8) (Ahmed et al. 2011; Uddin et al. 2009). **Predictability: Constant risk, unpredictable incidence of ill-health/injury**	Limited access to geographically, economically and socially accessible health care. Urban primary health care facilities limited. Requires registration, storage of papers (see Risk 4 and 7). *Amrao Manush* provides 'members' access to a limited number of primary health care interventions. Access to tertiary level hospitals prohibitive (economic and geographical barriers). Hospitals require a social actor (often kinship member) to act as 'carer' to provide essential support. May resort to kinship networks in case of acute event (not always possible).	**Outcomes:** Poor experiences in hospitals including verbal/physical abuse, refusal of treatment and neglect. High rates of acute and chronic health conditions. Physical disability. Increased reliance on illicit substances to manage chronic pain. Death. Depletes human capital by undermining capabilities of life, bodily health, senses, imagination and thought, emotions. Undermines capabilities of affiliation (B) and play. Depletes economic assets. May prohibit engagement in some livelihoods due to disability/health condition.

Appendix 5: Shanta's life history depicted by the vulnerability model

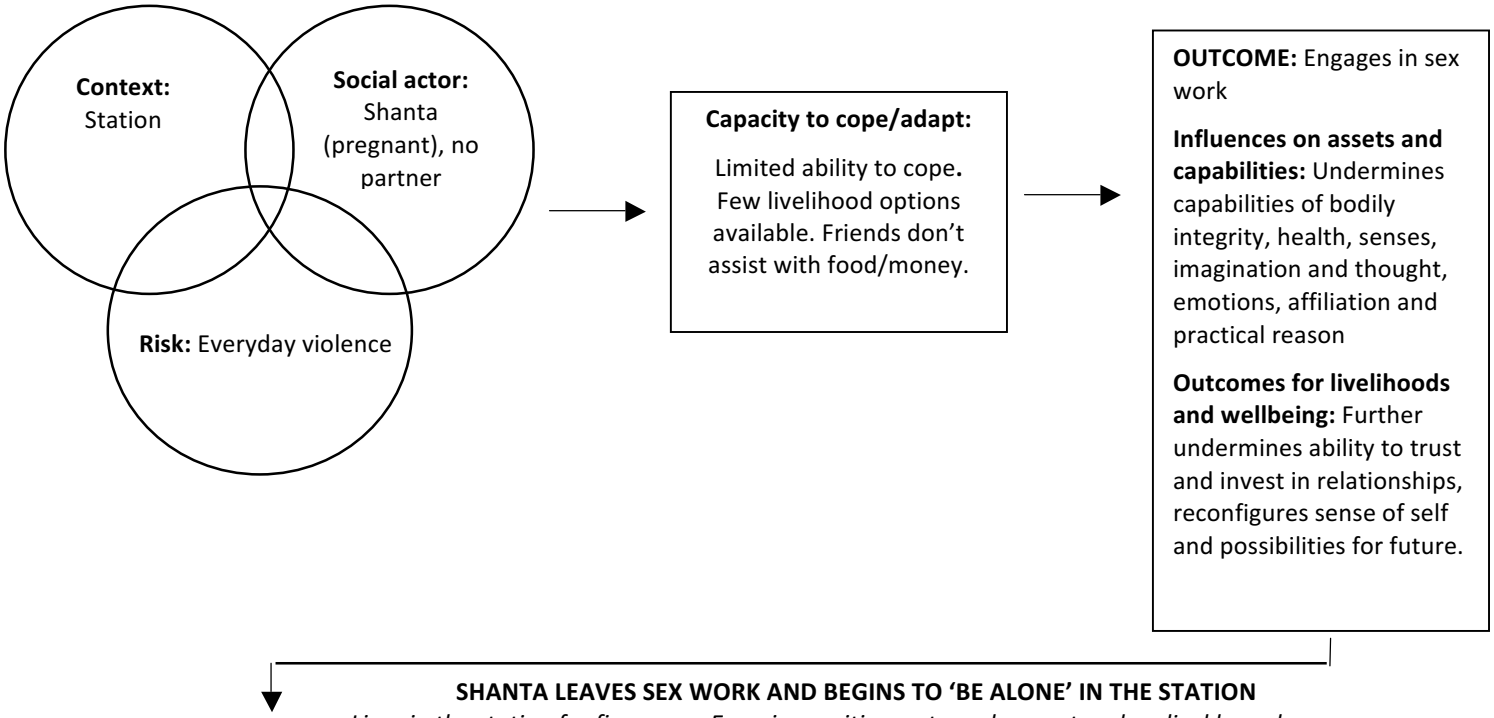
Part 1 of 4



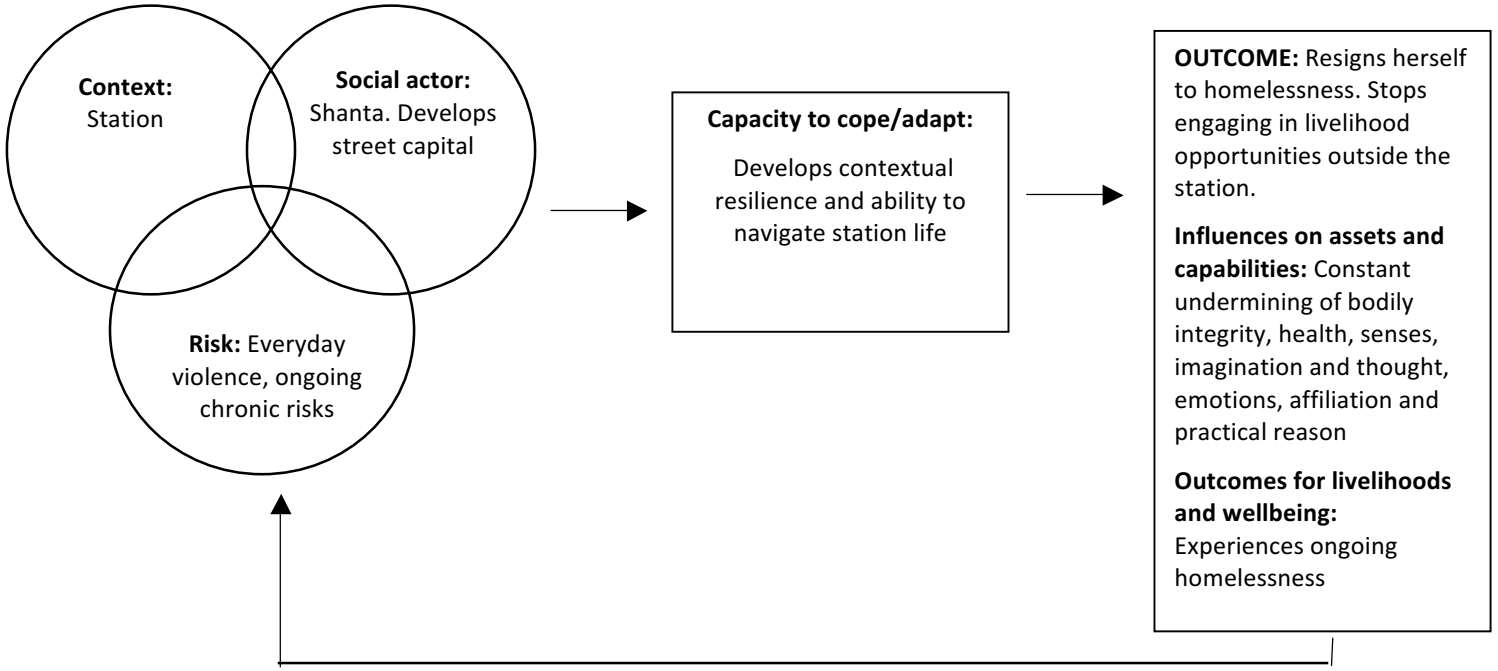
Shanta's life history depicted by the vulnerability model: Part 2 of 4



Shanta's life history depicted by the vulnerability model: Part 3 of 4



Shanta's life history depicted by the vulnerability model: Part 4 of 4



Appendix 6: Interview tool to analyse women's vulnerability

*Bolded responses indicate key indicators of vulnerability for women

	Immediate risk	Ongoing/potential risk	Protective factor
INITIAL QUESTIONS			
What level of education did you achieve?		Didn't finish primary school education /**illiterate***	Literate
Tell me a little about your family. Are your parents still married?		Parents deceased/ has step-parents	Parents alive/married
How often do you go back to your village? **When is the last time you saw your parents?**		**Never**	Regularly/occasionally
In the event of a big problem (eg. health issue or in event of divorce) would you go back to your village and ask your parents for assistance?		**No**	Yes
What is your main source of income? • How much do you earn on average? • How much did you earn yesterday? **Is your income stable or irregular?**	**Sex work/drug dealing**	Husband **Sex work/drug dealing** **Highly fluctuating income – can't estimate approx. daily income.**	Has some form of formal/informal employment that allows financial independence from marriage. Stable income (including from sex work). Can estimate approx. daily income.
If husband: Does he regularly give you money for food? **How many days in a week would he give you money?**		**Husband unreliable in providing money for food**	Husband reliable in providing money for food
What is your back-up strategy if your husband doesn't give you money for food?		Cannot mention a back-up strategy	Can mention a backup strategy (including sex work)

Do you save money? • How much would you save on average per week? • Do you know the balance of your savings account?		No. Is not aware of savings balance.	Yes. Note how much on average: Is aware of savings balance
Where do you store your money? (with NGO, bank or keep $$ on person)		Keep money with me	NGO/Bank
Are you currently married? **Do you have children?**	Yes/No Yes/No		
Do you purchase or cook food? • How much money would you spend on food each day?		Purchase food	Cook food
How many meals would you normally eat each day? • Tell me what you've eaten the last three days? • When you eat how many people do you eat with?		**Less than two**	Two or more
How often would you share food with friends/family?		Rarely	Often/Every day
Do you have any ongoing health problems?		Yes	No
Does your health prevent you from working?	**Yes**	Yes	No
When is the last time you had a major health event that required you to access a clinic or hospital? • What was the event? • Who did you take with you? • How were you able to pay for treatment/medicine?		**No one accompanied** Was unable to pay. Required NGO assistance. Engaged in sex work/drug selling to pay. Used all savings.	Someone else accompanied Paid for own Healthcare/marital partner or family paid

SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS **The following questions should be approached with caution, ensuring a woman feels comfortable (eg. is alone/or with a friend as appropriate.) Interviewer must have a sufficient level of rapport with the woman (eg. does the women openly discuss her marital history). If the women exhibits signs of distress or discomfort, the interviewer should discontinue asking questions.**			
	Immediate risk	**Ongoing/potential risk**	**Protective factor**
Why did you leave village?		Experienced abuse within kinship network	Not abused in childhood
What made you come to the streets? (if not mentioned)		**Abuse or exploitation within family/employment**	Do not mention abuse/exploitation as a reason for coming to the streets
If married: Has your husband ever beaten you? • How often would your husband beat you?		Yes/Regularly	Never/rarely
How many marriages have you had? **Have you ever left a husband?**		Multiple	Have left husband
Does your husband ever talk of leaving the station, or is he content to stay?		**No, wants to stay**	Yes, would like to leave
Does your husband consume drugs or alcohol? Regularly/irregularly?		**Yes**	No
Does he prioritize his drug habit over giving you money for food or providing for your children?		Yes	No
What would you do if your husband left you or went to jail?		**Can't mention a back-up strategy.** **Mentions she can't go back to her village.**	Utilize social networks (family/station dwellers)
How many children have you given birth to? How many children are alive?		Have children Children died	Have children
Do you currently consume drugs (including cigarettes)? If yes:	**Yes**		No

What type? Alone or in group? **How often would you consume drugs?**			
If no: Have you consumed in the past?		Yes	No
Have you ever done sex work? **If Yes: How often would you engage in sex work (daily/weekly/monthly/as needed)?**		Yes Regularly/Infrequently/as needed	No
Note presence of self harm/scars. If not visible: Have you ever cut yourself?		**Has visible cuts**	Never cut Cuts not visible
If woman has self harm cuts: • **When is the last time you cut?** • **Where were you, and what were you doing at the time?** • **Do you have friends who cut?**	**Recently cut, attributes cutting to drug use and is currently regularly consuming drugs**	Presence of cuts/ scars Has close friends who cut	No friends who cut
If has scars (either self-harm or facial): **Have you been to see your family since acquiring the scars?**		**No**	Yes
Do you ever feel like nothing can make you happy? • Are feelings of sadness ongoing or are there particular events/things you think about that make you particularly sad?	**Yes**	Yes	No

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