

The homeless in a gender perspective

Protection and vulnerability of homeless women

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Introduction

- Little research on homeless women in France. The homeless question considered from the male point of view
- Fewer than men : 38% of the homeless in 2012 (SD2012)
- Less often roofless than men (1% vs 14%) : less visible e.g. in the street (SD2012)
- Social representations of the homeless largely male
- ➔ Invisibility but increase in number in recent years

The research (in progress)

- Characteristics of women and life trajectories in a gender perspective
- Gender : a factor of “vulnerability” because it exposes women to specific forms of violence
- Gender : a factor of “protection” because women enjoy specific protection

Data

- SD2012 survey by Insee-Ined (**SD2012**)
- Interviews from **Ined** (7 interviews out of 64)
- A qualitative survey in progress : observations and interviews in a shelter for homeless women since 2015 (35 days of observations, 12 interviews with women, 18 interviews with professionals) (**Shelter**)

1. The vulnerability of homeless women

- Homeless women are... homeless : “classical” vulnerability factors (modest social origins, precarious employment or no employment, health problems, weak social bonds, etc.) // like men
- But more vulnerable than men for the violence they suffer
- Hypothesis : Violence is structuring in their life path and in their institutional trajectory

1.1. The lack of data

- Problem with French available surveys :
 - Surveys on violence : Enveff, EVS, Virage → no homeless women
 - Surveys on homelessness : SD2012 → very few information on violence
- Importance of violence against women in the French population → it is likely that homeless women are still more vulnerable to such violence

1.2. Women more exposed to violence during childhood

- Literature : being a victim of childhood violence (or child placement) increases the risk of homelessness
- 36% of homeless women vs 19% of men were victims of violence before the age of 18 (SD2012)
- 5 out of 7 women (Ined) and 5 out of 12 women (Shelter)

1.2. Women more exposed to violence during childhood

- *“Was it your family, who was abusing you? Yes, I was mistreated, I was a slave. And when I go to the village, I do all the household chores, and then they do not give me food.”* (Melissa, 43 years old, homeless for 4 years in France, **Shelter**)
- *“The days that ... not drinking, she's very nice to me. But when she drinks, she is changed, like that, directly ... I think : one day, I do this with (the bottle of) vodka [she mimes she empties the bottle]. She strikes me, my feet, everything ... because it is covered with blood. Everywhere is black, and after, blue ... I have not forgotten that ...”* (Tina, 33 years old, homeless in France for 7 years - sold by her "mother" and confined at the age of 10 in a brothel, **Shelter**)

1.3. Violence : the cause of loss of housing

- Violence destabilizes the trajectory of women
 - either a direct factor in the loss of housing for 8% of women (<1% of men) (SD2012)
 - or the cause of migration which will be followed in the host country by a lack of self-housing.
- Concerns more women than men : 90% of homeless people who have left their home because of domestic violence are women (SD2012)

1.4. Women more exposed to violence as homeless

- All other things being equal (age, marital status - couple life and life with children - nationality, residential course, placement and childhood abuse), **women are more victims of acts of violence** during the past two years than men (SD2012)
- (+ living alone, having lived in the street, having been abused during childhood)

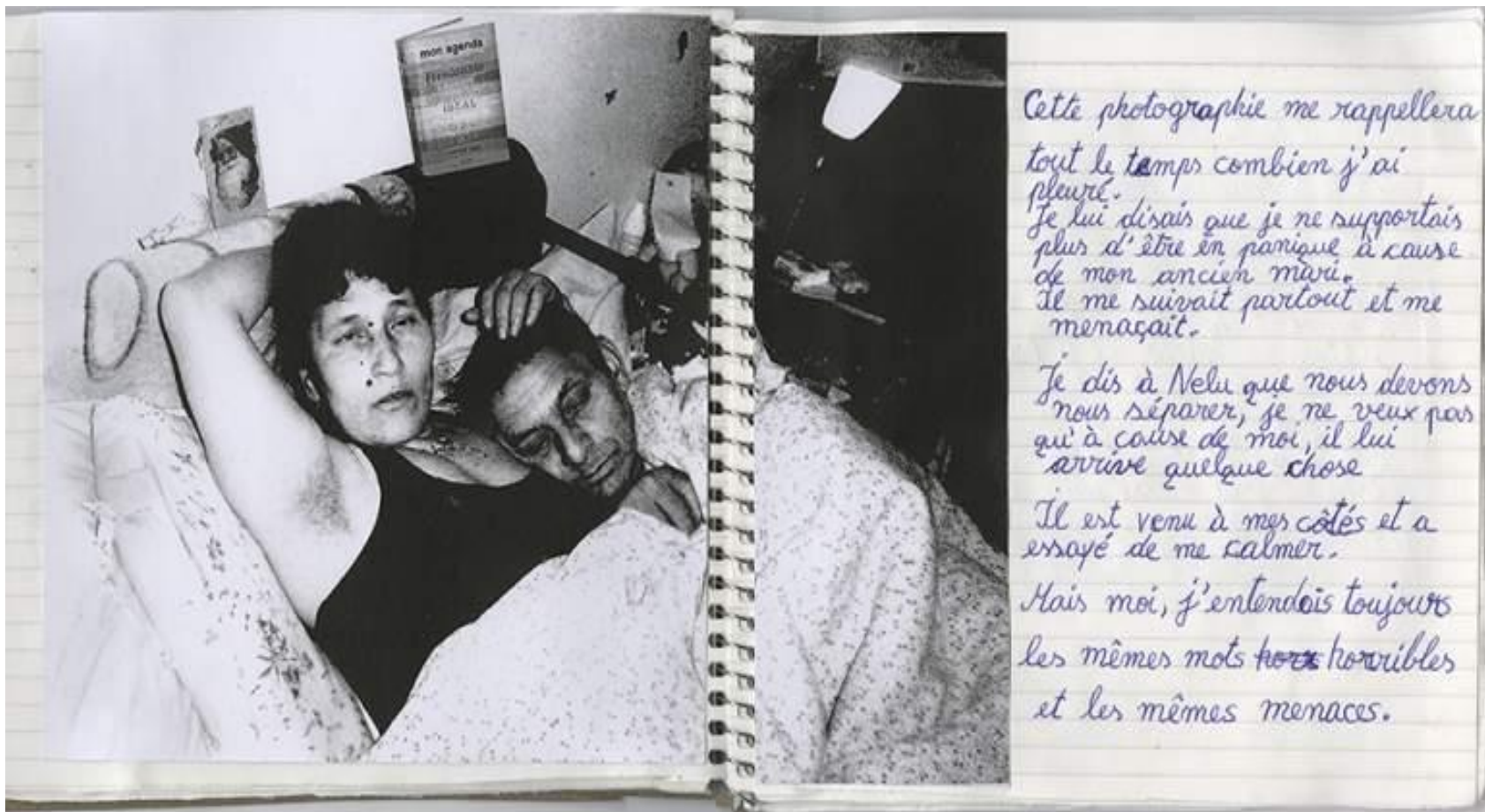
Regression 1. Effect of socio-demographic variables of homeless people on being victims of assaults or acts of violence in 2012 (%)

Variables	Coef.	Significance
<i>Intercept</i>	- 1,01	***
<i>Sex</i>		
Female	Ref.	
Male	- 0,43	***
<i>Age</i>		
Less than 25 years old	Réf.	
25-49 years old	0,07	ns
50 years old and over	- 0,49	*
<i>Situation familiale</i>		
Live without children	Réf.	
Live with children	- 0,03	ns
Not live with so	Réf.	
Live with sb (couple)	- 1,38	***
<i>Nationality</i>		
Foreign	Réf.	
French	0,20	*
<i>Residential course</i>		
Not having been homeless all year	Réf.	
Having been homeless all year	- 0,21	*
Not having lived on the street	Réf.	
Having lived in the street	0,53	***
<i>Placement</i>		
Not have been placed during childhood	Réf.	
Have been placed during childhood	- 0,25	*
<i>Childhood maltreatment</i>		
Not have been abused during childhood (before 18 years old)	Réf.	
Have been abused during childhood	1,07	***

* P(khi²)<0,01, ** P(khi²)<0,001, *** P(khi²)<0,0001

Source : INSEE, Enquête auprès des personnes fréquentant les services d'hébergement et de distribution de repas, 2012

Champ : personnes sans domicile francophones de 18 ans ou plus, agglomérations de plus de 20 000 habitants, France métropolitaine



Cette photographie me rappellera
tout le temps combien j'ai
pleuré.
Je lui disais que je ne supportais
plus d'être en panique à cause
de mon ancien mari.
Il me suivait partout et me
menaçait.

Je dis à Nelu que nous devons
nous séparer, je ne veux pas
qu'à cause de moi, il lui
arrive quelque chose

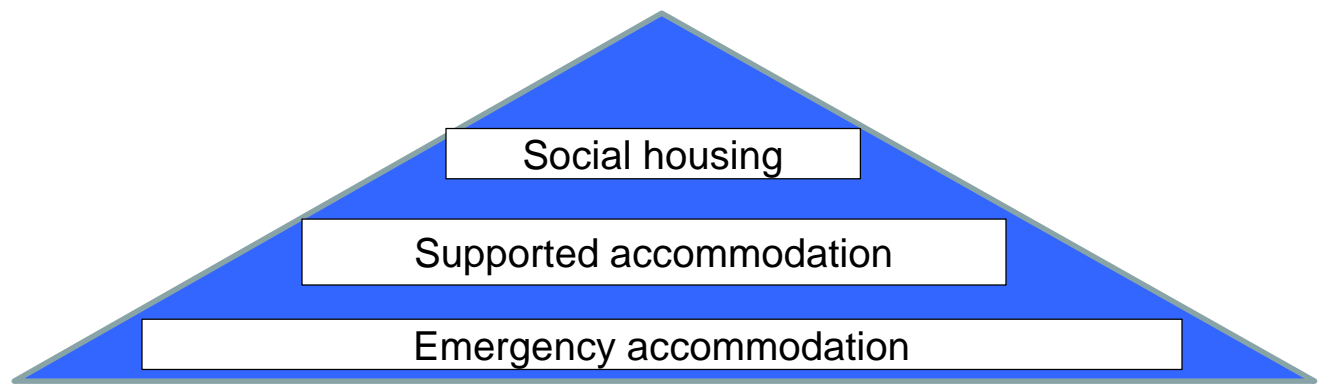
Il est venu à mes côtés et a
essayé de me calmer.

Mais moi, j'entendais toujours
les mêmes mots ~~horre~~ horribles
et les mêmes menaces.

- “This photo will always remind me how I cried. I told him I could no longer be in panic because of my former husband. He followed me everywhere and threatened me (...). He came by my side and tried to calm me down but I still heard the same horrible words and the same threats” Gaby, « L'une et l'autre . Carnets de route » (Met her in **Shelter**)

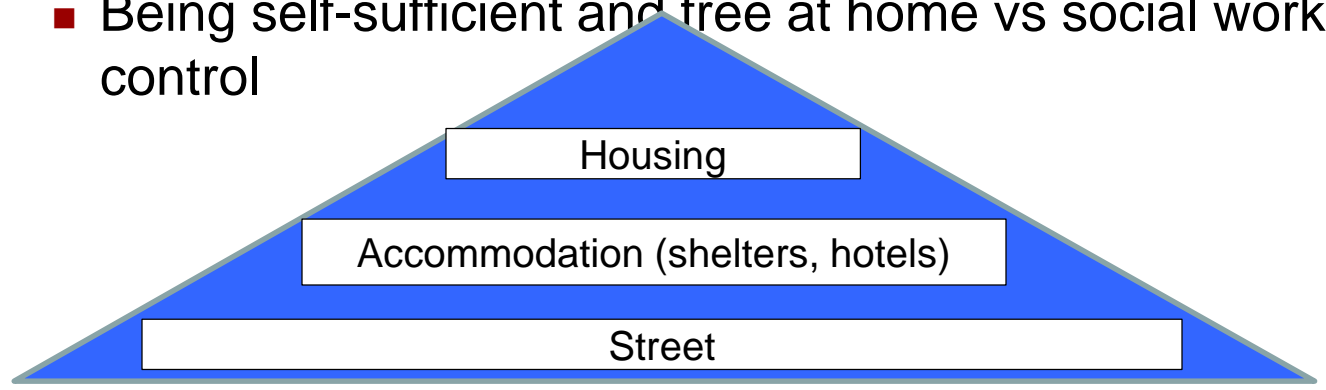
2. The protection of homeless women

- Institutional social assistance for homelessness
 - Segmentation : lots of public action mechanisms
 - Hierarchy : from emergency to insertion, accommodation places are heterogeneous (size, number of individuals per rooms, comfort, safety, opening hours...) → “the staircase of transition” (Sahlin, 2005)
 - Competition : selection of the least “damaged” people



2. The protection of homeless women

- The “comfort” of accommodation :
 - Physical properties of accommodation
 - Privacy, safety, comfort
 - Possibility so settle in the long term
 - Being in accommodation where you can stay : stabilization vs avoid “institutional anchorage”
 - Autonomy towards institutions
 - Being self-sufficient and free at home vs social workers control



2.1. Accommodation conditions more favorable for women

Table 1. Situation of homeless people in relation to accommodation according to sex (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Homeless in shelter	53	35	46
- <i>With obligation to live the room</i>	23	4	16
- <i>Without obligation to live the room</i>	30	31	30
Homeless in hotel	7	20	12
Homeless in housing	26	44	33
Roofless	14	n<20	9
Total	100	100	100

N=3 727

P(khi²)<0,0001

Source : INSEE, Enquête auprès des personnes fréquentant les services d'hébergement et de distribution de repas, 2012

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- Shelter : 35% of women in shelters (53% of men) – 89% of homeless women in shelter can stay in their rooms (56% of men)
- Hotel : 20% of homeless women (7% of men)
- Housing: 44% of homeless women (26% of men)
- Street : “only” 43% of homeless women have ever lived on the streets during their lifetime (71% of men)

2.1. Accommodation conditions more favorable for women

Tableau 2. Housing conditions of homeless people in housing and hotels according to sex (en %)

In hotel	Male	Female	In housing	Male	Female
Have access to hot running water inside the room	100	100	Have access to hot running water in the accommodation	100	100
Have access to toilet inside the room	56	63	Have access to hot running water inside the accommodation	93	96
Have a shower or bath inside the room	56	70	Have access to toilet inside the accommodation	95	98
Have a kitchen inside the room	n<20	21	Have a shower or bath inside the accommodation	79	86

Source : INSEE, Enquête auprès des personnes fréquentant les services d'hébergement et de distribution de repas, 2012

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Lecture : 56% des hommes qui vivent à l'hôtel ont accès à des WC à l'intérieur de la chambre ; c'est le cas de 63% des femmes qui vivent à l'hôtel.

- Hotel is less comfortable than accommodation
- Women have more than men access to certain amenities such as toilets, shower or bathtub, kitchen **even at the hotel**

2.2. Better protection for mother

Table 3. Situation of homeless people in relation to accommodation according to sex and the presence of children (%)

	Female		Male		Total
	With children	Without children	With children	Without children	
Homeless in shelter	19	53	9	58	47
Homeless in hotel	29	8	29	5	12
Homeless in housing	51	37	57	22	32
Roofless	n<20	n<20	n<20	15	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

N=3741

P(khi²)<0,001

Source : INSEE, Enquête auprès des personnes fréquentant les services d'hébergement et de distribution de repas, 2012

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- When accompanied by children : in housing : 51% of homeless women and 57% of homeless men
- 52% of homeless women live with children (9% of men)
- People without children : in shelter

2.4. Sex : a discriminant variable anything else equal

Table 3. Situation of homeless people in relation to accommodation according to sex and the presence of children (%)

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	With children	Without children	With children	Without children	
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Homeless in hotel	29	8	29	5	12
Homeless in housing	51	37	57	22	32
Roofless	n<20	n<20	n<20	15	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

N=3741

P(khi²)<0,001

Source : INSEE, Enquête auprès des personnes fréquentant les services d'hébergement et de distribution de repas, 2012

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- Women living without children are more accommodated in housing provided by associations than men : 37% vs 22%

Regression 2. Effect of socio-demographic variables on the type of accommodation for homeless people in 2012 (%)

Variables	Homeless in shelter		Homeless in housing		Homeless in hotel	
	Coef.	Significance	Coef.	Significance	Coef.	Significance
<i>Intercept</i>	0,78	***	- 1,88	***	- 1,48	***
<i>Sex</i>						
Female	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Male	0,06	ns	- 0,52	***	- 0,49	**
<i>Age</i>						
Less than 25 years old	Réf.		Réf.		Réf.	
25-49 years old	- 0,36	**	0,08	ns	- 0,16	ns
50 years old and over	- 0,06	ns	0,18	ns	- 1,05	***
<i>Family situation</i>						
Live without children	Réf.		Réf.		Réf.	
Live with children	- 1,37	***	0,88	***	1,02	***
<i>Not live with so</i>						
Live with sb (couple)	Réf.		Réf.		Réf.	
	- 1,52	***	1,11	***	0,74	***
<i>Nationality</i>						
Foreign	Réf.		Réf.		Réf.	
French	- 0,17	ns	1,10	***	- 1,23	***
<i>Activity</i>						
No job	Réf.		Réf.		Réf.	
Job	- 0,30	**	0,68	***	- 0,33	*

* $P(\chi^2) < 0,01$, ** $P(\chi^2) < 0,001$, *** $P(\chi^2) < 0,0001$

Source : INSEE, Enquête auprès des personnes fréquentant les services d'hébergement et de distribution de repas, 2012
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- Being a woman, living with children or living in a couple increases the likelihood of being accommodated in housing or hotel
 - ➔ Sex is strongly correlated with the type of care for homeless people.

Conclusion

■ Vulnerability

- Homeless women are first homeless
- But they are also victims of violence, more than men (in childhood and as homeless)
- Violence cause homelessness (domestic violence)

■ Protection

- Women have priority for access to the more comfortable accommodation

Conclusion

- Caution : permeability between this two poles
 - Maternity protects but not completely : when children grow up it can become a “handicap” to be taken care of
 - Violence: in some cases, women have access to protection in shelters specialized in the fight against domestic violence

→ Gender is a structuring factor in understanding the life path and the institutional trajectory of homeless women, and helps to shed light on both specific vulnerability factors and specific forms of protection



Thank you for your attention

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