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Bachelor of Science in Politics and Economics

Homelessness - An Individual or Structural Failure?

A Discourse Analysis of the Swedish Government Between 1993-2017

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Abstract

Homelessness is one of the crudest manifestations of poverty, and addressing homelessness is thus always urgent. Discourse affects our perception, knowledge and, in the end, policymaking, and hence the perception of what the causes to homelessness are, affect what strategies and policies that are implemented. There has since long been a split in perception on whether homelessness is a result of the individual's decisions and behaviour, or of structural causes such as in the welfare system and housing market. This study examines the discursive development of the Swedish government, represented by the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) by using the lens of the individual and structural discourse. The NBHW has since 1993 conducted a national homelessness mapping every six years, and compiled the data into reports. Assuming the concept of discourse as studied by Michel Foucault, this study conducts a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis on the reports in order to study the development of the individual and structural discourse, and how this development reflects today's practices. The aim is to deepen the understanding of the contemporary governmental homelessness discourse which lay the basis of the homelessness policy development. The findings show that the individual discourse decreases and the structural development increases over time. Furthermore, current practice such as the broader implementation of the 'Housing First' strategy and the latest homelessness definition acknowledging homelessness not only as a social issue, but as a housing issue, mirrors this development.

Keywords: homelessness, individual social problems, structural social problems, Housing First, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, Sweden

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1. Introduction

“Homelessness is one of the crudest manifestations of poverty, discrimination and inequality, affecting people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. Globally, 1.6 billion people worldwide live in inadequate housing conditions, with about 15 million forcefully evicted every year according to UN-Habitat, which has noted an alarming rise in homelessness in the last 10 years.” (United Nations, 2020)

To this statement, the situation in Sweden is no exception. Homelessness is both increasing and changing in character. Since the beginning of the 1990s, homelessness in Sweden has increased notably, that is taking into account that the definition of homelessness has evolved since then (Kristiansen, 2022), and since 2005, homelessness is estimated to have increased in all homelessness categories (Knutagård, 2018). In the latest strategy against homelessness, released by the government, a new homelessness strategy is suggested to be wider implemented, but whether this strategy is welcomed is yet unclear.

Discourse - how something is thought and talked about - affects our perception, knowledge and, in the end, policymaking (Foucault, 1980). In literature and policymaking concerning homelessness, two opposing discourses regarding homelessness have grown forward, namely the *individual discourse* and the *structural discourse*. The individual discourse emphasises that homelessness is an effect of bad decisions and behaviour of the individual, and that it is the individuals' actions, which they are themselves mainly responsible of, that has led them to being homeless. The structural homelessness discourse however lifts the attention from the individual and instead regards structural causes, such as the housing market and welfare policies, to be the reason why people end up in homelessness.

The last three decades, Sweden has experienced increasing homelessness, while, at the same time, entering the housing market has become increasingly harder, which is, for example, manifested in more and more young adults involuntarily having to live with their parents (Hyresrättsföreningen, 2021). With the aim to prevent homelessness, the government released a national strategy in 2022 on how municipalities are to work against homelessness. This strategy includes the proposal to broaden implementation of the 'Housing First' approach - an approach

that is yet only partly implemented in a few municipalities, and that is based on the concept of giving people in homelessness housing as a first help, in order to have the right resources to recover from other social problems (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022). The ‘Housing First’ approach has been tested in municipalities in Sweden for over a decade, but faces obstacles in expanding due to organisational restructuring, but also due to attitudes against and mistrust of the individuals in homelessness (Knutagård & Kristiansen, 2018).

In this study, the homelessness discourse, and the view of how homelessness occurs and hence should be dealt with, is the central lens. As the new national strategy against homelessness requires a certain discursive perception, this study aims to explore the homelessness discourse in Sweden by analysing the governmental discursive development over the last three decades, and delve into the practical outcomes in today’s society that can be connected to the discursive development. The National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW, *in Swedish ‘Socialstyrelsen’*), which produces the national homelessness data in Sweden, is run by a governing board which is appointed by the government, and hence represents the Swedish government in matters concerning homelessness. Delving further into the reports presenting the results of the homelessness mappings, this study will conduct a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to trace the *individual* and *structural discourses* in the reports since they first got produced in the 1990s.

1.1 Aim and Research Question

The aim with this study is to deepen the understanding of the contemporary governmental homelessness discourse in Sweden by examining the historical discursive development. The study will apply the lens of the *individual* and *structural discourse* to follow the increase and decrease of discursive trends, which can help reveal the roots of the current governmental discourse. This will be done by conducting a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) on the National Board of Health and Welfare’s reports based on their homelessness mappings, conducted since the 1990s. The FDA will not only allow tracing the discursive development, but will also enable finding what discursive impacts they have and what practical impacts the discourses found can have on our contemporary political arena. Further, this study has the function of discursively investigating the source of the data which political decisions and

research is based upon, and thus adds to the understanding behind that data. Accordingly, the following research questions guide this study:

- i. *Using the lens of the individual and structural perspective of homelessness, how has the discourse developed throughout the homelessness mappings of the National Board of Health and Welfare between 1993-2017?*
- ii. *How is this development mirrored in today's practice?*

1.2 Delimitations

Homelessness is a wide research field, which has been approached with many different lenses, such as poverty, housing, narcotics, specific groups in homelessness, migration, mental illness and unemployment. Apart from this, discursive lenses can also be applied. As mentioned, this study will adopt a discursive lens, and more specifically, study the individual and structural discourse. Further interesting discursive lenses, such as different social groups connected to homelessness discourse are, quite reluctantly, excluded in order to fit the scope of the study.

The NBHW homelessness reports are the sole collection of documents concerning homelessness produced on behalf of the government that have been released periodically in Sweden. The surveys on which the reports are based have been conducted every sixth year since the first survey in 1993, hence they are somewhat comparable over time. At the time of this study, the most recent report was the 2017 one. Towards the end of the study, the report of the 2023 mapping was released; due to the remaining timescope, it was not possible to include the report in the analysis, with the exception of the report's definition of homelessness, as it was released earlier. Hence, the material analysed are the five reports from 1993-2017, plus the definition of the report released in 2023.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

The thesis will start with providing background, where the Swedish homelessness situation will be further elaborated, and where key concepts will be defined. In the Literature Review that follows, some further background regarding the historical development and characteristics of the individual and structural discourse will be provided, which will be followed by the development

of the two discourses in literature, both internationally and in Sweden. Having delved into the two discourses and what they entail, the chapter titled 'Theoretical Framework', will further elaborate on discourse, and what this term entails for this study. In the same chapter, a positionality statement will be presented, revealing what factors might affect this study, with its very subjective nature.

Having set the frames of this study, the 'Research Design and Method' chapter will present the chosen method, the steps the method entails, and how it is adapted to this study. After having finalised the method chapter, the Analysis follows by conducting the steps laid out in the method, step by step. The Conclusion will summarise the findings in the analysis, and use the findings to address the research questions. In this chapter, the findings in the analysis will be reconnected with the Literature Review and Theoretical Framework in order to get an even deeper understanding of the findings. Lastly, in the final chapter Further Reflections and Further Research, some final reflections will be raised, and a few pointers towards further research will shortly finalise the thesis.

2. Background

This chapter provides some further context to what homelessness is and how homelessness is characterised in Sweden. Furthermore, the 'Housing First' approach is further elaborated, along with the other model used in Sweden - the so-called 'Staircase Model'. The chapter is finalised with the defining of terms that are used in the study.

2.1 Defining Homelessness

In order to measure and compare, a set definition is needed, which is provided by the NBHW. As will be further mentioned in the literature review, to decide on a definition of homelessness is not unproblematic. There are many aspects to consider, such as what situations count as being homeless, and for example whether non-swedish members are to be included in the statistics (see Sahlin, 2020 in section 3.4). Deciding to include or exclude some types of situations changes the number of people in homelessness represented in the data. The definitions of homelessness from the NBHW have changed in pace with conducting their surveys, and haven't been the same in any mapping. In this way, the data from the surveys don't have an exact comparability. Since the

first definition of homelessness in 1993, the definition has been adapted in accordance to European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS) in 2005 (Knutagård, 2018) and has been divided into different categories of homelessness, with the most urgent type of homelessness in the first category, and the other types of homelessness (such as different kinds of temporary or unstable arrangements) in the other categories. The most recent definition of homelessness, from the 2017 report is found in Table 1.

Table 1: The Homelessness Definition in 2017

Homelessness situation	Type of accommodation
Stage 1: acute homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public space or outdoor - Tents, car, caravan, camping site - Shelters - Hotel or hostel - Temporary accommodation - Women’s emergency centres
Stage 2: institution or assisted living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported housing - Institutions – discharge within 3 months - Correctional institution - Health care institutions
Stage 3: long-term living arrangements organised by the social services (e.g. the secondary housing market)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social lease/municipal lease - Training flats - Transitional supported housing - Housing First
Stage 4: private short-term living arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involuntary staying with family - Involuntary staying with friends - Private sublet - Temporary renting a room

Source: NBHW, 2017, Translated by Knutagård, 2023

2.2 Homelessness in Sweden: an Overview

Since the homelessness definition has changed over the years, it is hard to make a clear comparison over time. Kristiansen (2022) states that, even taking into consideration the change of the definition, the homelessness in Sweden has increased since the 1990s, and by reviewing the numbers that are available, it can be read in Table 2 that homelessness has increased quite

substantially since 2005.

Table 2. Homelessness in Numbers Over the Last Three Decades

<i>Year</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2017</i>
Total	9,900	8,440	17,834	34,000	33,269
Situation 1	-	-	3,600	4,500	5,935
Rough sleepers	1,045	350	950	280	647
Situation 2	-	-	2,000	5,600	4,899
Situation 3	-	-	6,400	13,900	15,838
Situation 4	-	-	4,700	6,800	5,726

Table by Knutagård, 2023, p. 396, based on data from NBHW, 1994, 1999, 2006, 20011, 2017.

Some characteristics of the homelessness in Sweden found in the 2017 mapping is that a majority of the reported cases are living in an arrangement in the secondary housing market (in the third homelessness situation), and that more than a fifth of the persons in the mapping didn't state any other need except for housing. Substance abuse is reported to be more common amongst men than women, and a third of the women in the mapping indicate domestic violence to be a contributing factor to their homelessness. A further characteristic of homelessness in Sweden is that the number of people reported with problems such as mental illness and abuse, are fewer than earlier mappings (NBHW, 2017).

2.3 Homelessness Strategies: Housing First och the Staircase Model

The Government's Strategy Against Homelessness 2022-2026 suggests broadening the strategy called 'Housing First' by being integrated in more municipalities' and covering a larger part of the municipalities' work (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022). The initiative however seems to face obstacles during implementation. Knutagård and Kristiansen (2018) describes how the organisation of the social service is challenged since 'Housing First' requires a near to opposite structure than the present system, and would require a large organisational transition.

The dominating strategy in Sweden, is what is sometimes referred to as the 'Staircase Model', or as it is known internationally 'Treatment First'. The 'Housing First' strategy and the 'Staircase

Model', are two different policy approaches that can be found both in Sweden and internationally (see for example Johnstone et al., 2017). The 'Staircase' strategy entails that homeless persons make a housing 'career', one step on the staircase at the time. When showing good behaviour and achievements, the homeless persons are rewarded with an upgrade of living situation, whilst regress in behaviour, like breaking rules or relapsing to problematic behaviour, can be punished with a step down the staircase, by dislocation or eviction (Sahlin, 2005). The 'Housing First' model on the other hand assumes the value of housing as a human right and a prerequisite to be able to live integrated in a society, and therefore starts with providing the homeless people housing from the start, by helping them get into the housing market (Knutagård & Kristiansen, 2018).

2.4 Definition of Terms

In this paper, relations between societal groups is an important basis to understand the discourse around homelessness. A helpful term in order to explore this is the term 'othering' which entails a social division of groups. In this study, the term 'othering' will refer to the process of differentiation between 'us' and 'them', that is, a more and less powerful group, which is established and maintained by social distance (Harmer & Lumsden, 2019).

Another term that will be used in this study is 'rough sleeper'. In this study, 'rough sleeper' is found in the material and is a part of the findings of the analysis. Therefore it is important to understand the Swedish meaning behind this translation, and the connotations that it generally holds. The term 'rough sleeper' (*translates as 'uteliggare'*), is today simply referring to persons who sleep outside or in public places. The term has however historically been used interchangeably with homeless, and has been found synonymous with homeless, as rough sleepers have been the face of homelessness (see Swärdh, 2001, in section 3.4). Using the words interchangeably can still be found in everyday language, and the words are still listed as synonyms.

3. Literature Review - Homelessness as a Research Field

In the following chapter, an overview of previous research within the field will be presented. The first section offers a further introduction of the two discourses, the individual and the structural, and how they have come to emerge. The second section delves further into how the two discourses have developed over time within social research in an international context, and what discursive trends that can be found within research. The third section zooms into Swedish research and the themes and trends that has characterised the Swedish homelessness research over time since the 1980's. Lastly, the fourth section targets some of the discursive discussions that have been made within the homelessness research field in Sweden, and, finally, positions this study within that context.

3.1 The Deserving and Undeserving Poor

The homelessness research field is wide and tangent with many other research fields. It can be analysed in many different ways, and different lenses and approaches have been prominent at different times. One of the research fields intersecting most with homelessness is, in simple terms, poverty. Hence, this section will take off from a historical overview of poverty and homelessness research, and how the individual and structural discourses have emerged.

Starting in the 1830's England, the concept 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor originated, and has since then been continuously used, and later on criticised, in poverty and homelessness research (Gans, 1995). The 'deserving' and 'undeserving', or 'worthy' and 'unworthy', refers to deserving welfare assistance or not, where those that seemingly have themselves to blame for their poverty due to immoral choices and behaviour, are undeserving, while those that are helpless and have acted morally correct and yet find themselves in poverty, are deserving (Gans, 1995; Wright, 1988). This concept is intimately connected to the individual and structural discourse, as the foundation of these perspectives lies in whether the individual is themselves to be blamed for their poor situation, or if the cause of poverty should be problematised structurally.

Historically, the 'vagrant' homeless - lazy and unemployed lone men with substance abuse that are sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation - has been the archetype of homeless, both internationally and in Sweden (Gans, 1995; Kristiansen, 2022; Pleace, 2016; Sahlin, 2020;

Swärd, 2001). This is typically seen as the least deserving group of people in homelessness, while families in homelessness and lone women and children are seen as more deserving (Gans, 1995). Today, however, it is widely acknowledged within research that ‘the homeless’ is a heterogeneous group with different backgrounds and different reasons for ending up in homelessness (Pleace, 2016).

When homelessness is constructed as the result of the individual, the focus of scholars lies on the individual causes for ending up in homelessness; for example, mental illness, addiction, debts, leaving prison or unstable family situations like domestic violence or the loss of a domestic partner. When homelessness is instead regarded as a construction of the political economy, attention is instead focused on shortage in housing, unemployment and insufficient support infrastructures for groups such as victims of domestic violence, people with mental illnesses and youths at risk (Johnstone et al., 2017).

The individual discourse further entails that homelessness is not only ‘individual’ in the sense that homelessness is a result of the individual’s choice and behaviour, but that homelessness is an individual occurrence, emerging in a vacuum, viewed as an isolated and individual social condition disconnected from structural societal mechanisms. Hence, when regarding homelessness as an individual problem, homelessness is targeted only with individual level reforms and not as something wider than what some individuals come to experience (Johnstone et al., 2017; O’Connor, 2002).

3.2 Homelessness Research Over Time

Both poverty research and the political poverty debate has been shifting from addressing poverty as being a result of the individuals’ shortcomings and lack of abilities, to increasingly addressing poverty as a result of structural deficiencies (O’Connor, 2002). Pleace (2016) explains how the same development can be found within the homelessness research in an international context. The initial focus on homelessness research focused on the individuals and their behaviour and ‘moral lapses’. In the 20th century, research kept an individual approach, but was rather concerned with mental illness and substance abuse, and typically had an ethnographical and statistical approach. However, in pace with this view being increasingly questioned, ideas of

homelessness as a structural mechanism grew prominence, and attention was increasingly aimed toward the correlation between homelessness and economic recession and systematic cuts in affordable housing supply and welfare assistance (Pleace, 2016).

Scholarly critique has been raised towards both the individual and structural focus within homelessness research. Pleace (2016) summarises that either the research has been criticised for studying homelessness only in the regard of personal traits and in a specific place and setting, not taking contextual variables into account, or for regarding homelessness fully as a consequence of capitalism and the failures within the capitalist system, failing to see the individual as an agent with own capabilities. A further critique is that both lenses reduces homeless people from being independent agents, and instead becomes regarded as powerless - either by being submitted to structural forces or their own personal traits - and homelessness is seen either “as being *inflicted* on powerless people by forces that were, literally, beyond their control, or as a function of individual pathology” (Pleace, 2016, p. 21). As a result, research now generally acknowledges systematic factors to homelessness as the housing and labour market, health, welfare and social housing systems, as well as acknowledging that individual factors as behaviour, needs, characteristics and experiences, affects homelessness. Pleace (2016) also expresses the importance of avoiding old preconceptions about homelessness, and to approach the field with openness and neutrality (Pleace, 2016), which represent most of today's research.

3.3 Homelessness Research in Sweden

Zooming in on the Swedish homelessness research, a similar development can be found. Starting in the 1980s and early 1990s, Swedish homelessness research was produced in a context where no data overview of homelessness existed; hence, the research was generally concerned with understanding and mapping homelessness by studying how institutions and authorities work with homelessness on a local and limited level, and how these institutions communicate and cooperate with each other (Järvinen, 1992). These mappings typically examined the kinds of social issues the examined individuals had; mental illness and substance abuse was usually central. The institutions on which the mappings based their data were usually targeting homelessness, but homelessness research has also retrieved data from institutions targeting other social issues, particularly substance abuse and mental illness (Järvinen, 1992).

A further circumstance affecting the research during the same period was the lack of a set definition of homelessness, which made research uncomparable, both within and between cities and countries, and over time. This issue has been a target of debate within the field, both before the first official definition was set by the NBHW, and after, where defining homelessness was problematised, both discursively and practically (see for example Gullberg et al., 1994; Järvinen, 1992; Sahlin, 1992, 1996, 2000; Swärd, 2001).

During the same time, research addressing homelessness in relation to housing issues has been identified (see for example Sahlin, 1996; Stenberg, 1990). During the 2000s, only a few studies on ‘the organisation’ - how authorities, institutions, social workers and clients are organised in homelessness work - have been made (Knutagård, 2009). Those that were made however criticised the ‘Staircase Model’, and problematised how discursive assumptions about homeless persons shape ‘the organisation’ (see Hansen Löfstrand, 2005; Sahlin, 2005). In 2009, a group of researchers from Lunds University started a small-scale ‘Housing First’ trial (Knutagård & Kristiansen, 2018). Since then, ‘Housing First’ has been increasingly researched (Larsson, 2020), meanwhile the increased housing shortage has been criticised and structural causes to homelessness has been continuously highlighted, both in terms of the will to change the structure of ‘the organisation’ and in terms of political regulations, especially on the housing market (see for example Knutagård, 2018; Kristiansen, 2022; Sahlin, 2013).

3.4 Swedish Research on the Discourse of Homelessness

During the Swedish development of homelessness research, the debate concerning discourse has continuously been present. The connection between the view of how homelessness is caused and characterised, and how this affects policy making and the situation of the homeless, is continuously highlighted in research. This last section will highlight some of the research made where a discussion of how the discourse of homelessness connects to policies and society are held.

One discursive discussion about homelessness, is how society in general has a faulty and skewed picture of what it means to be homeless and what characterises homelessness. Hans Swärd

(2001) investigated the 'Portrayal of need', meaning how the media and philanthropic campaigns portray homelessness in an unrepresentative way, only displaying those in deepest poverty living on the street. Swärd (2001) discusses how this is done to bring sympathy for philanthropic reasons, but that these portrayals misrepresents homelessness as they only show a small part of the homeless population, and hence fails to capture the complex character of homelessness. For philanthropic purposes, a common portrayal is the picture of someone sleeping outside, freezing in the winter. At the same time, the image mediated is the one of the 'typical' homeless men, sleeping rough, with alcohol or drug problems, that are 'vagrants' who don't want to settle down. These depictions focus on the individuals and fail to acknowledge structural factors, but also fail to explain that homelessness can have more faces than the portrayed 'vagrant' (Swärd, 2001). Swärd (2001) enhances that homelessness is not a personality trait or attribute, but is a state that can occur sometime in a person's life. Hence, there is not a strong and sharp line between those that are homeless and those who aren't, and most homeless people aren't so different from the rest of the society. "It is wrong, according to this perspective, to reduce homelessness to a state of negativity and misery and to place people in problem categories or to establish permanent social boundaries between 'them and us'" (Swärd, 2001, p. 68, my translation). The discourse creates an 'othering' of the homelessness and a separation between 'the homeless' and the rest of the society which is greater than the differences of their actual situation.

In an effort to answer why the 'portrayal of need' persists, Swärd (2001) also mentions that the contemporary wave of individualism also creates an individualisation of social problems, and that the persisting 'story' about the individual which lives on the street due to a certain behaviour and personal traits, facilitates guilt relief in the rest of the society, as there is a logical reason for the individual to be homeless (Swärd, 2001).

Further, the perception of the characteristics of homelessness plays an important part in policy making, and Hansen Ljöfstrand (2005) explains that discourses shape what problems are formulated, and further how this determines the measure. This is exemplified in Hansen Ljöfstrand's (2005) dissertation, as she reveals how the assumed cause behind homelessness, at the time when the dissertation was written, was substance abuse, and thus the solution presented was mainly consisting of substance abuse care.

This misrepresentative portrayal of homelessness further matters in the homeless persons' struggle to get hold of an accommodation, which Sahlin (2005) delves into and explains. The 'Staircase Model' builds on sustained exerted control of the social service where the individual undergoes training programmes in 'independent living'. Sahlin (2005) however argues that this type of 'organisation' affects the perceived view of the individual's capability of independent living, and that it implies and emphasises deficiencies among the homeless persons. This, in return, affects their chance of getting an accommodation, since landlords get to select and deny their tenants. As Sahlin (2005) describes it, "by treating those who are excluded from the regular housing market as 'incapable' of being housed, local social authorities confirm, reinforce and legitimize the landlords' negative presumptions about homeless people and, hence, their exclusion policies." (Sahlin, 2005, p. 130). Here, the societal discourse of the individual as incapable shapes the 'organisation' of the social service, but is also reproduced due to the organisation, and affects the individuals opportunities to reenter the housing market. These reproduced attitudes consolidate the practice and routines of the 'organisation' and inhibit development. Knutagård and Kristianssen (2018) explains how attitudes towards homeless people constitute an obstacle of organisational change from the 'Staircase Model' to the 'Housing First' model, as there is mistrust of the clients within the social work organisation (Knutagård & Kristiansen, 2018).

Lastly, Sahlin (2020) did an analysis on the discursive development in the Swedish Parliament, analysing minutes from the period of 2015-2019. In this study, a focus is aimed at the homeless people that fall outside of the homelessness definition, often due to them migrating or fleeing from other countries, and how the differentiation of these 'foreign homeless', constructed as less deserving than the 'Swedish homeless', plays into the hands of populist agendas. Although the individual and structural discourses are not the main discursive focus of this study, Sahlin (2020) still calls attention to how the 'socially homeless' (homelessness caused by social reasons such as mental health, family issues, violence and substance abuse) and the 'structurally homeless' (caused due to housing shortage, landlords or poverty) are treated differently, and that social services, in some cities, only claim to be accountable for socially homeless, while no one accepts responsibility for the structurally homeless (Sahlin, 2020). This way of thinking can be connected back to the labelling of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.

Having examined all of these studies, it is clear that bringing a discursive perspective to the homelessness research is certainly not a new approach to the field. Previous literature has demonstrated that discourses affect the perception of our society, policy making, and the possibilities for those in homelessness. With the chosen material of this study I hope to bring a further understanding of how the governmental official line, here represented by the NBHW, has developed, and how this development affects the practice from today onward.

4. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter presents the theoretical framework and starts with stating the ontological and epistemological approach used in this study, and providing a positionality statement. The second section delves further into discourse, and more specifically, Foucault's approach of discourse. A finalising section shortly ties the theory and the theoretical application of Foucault's discourse to this study.

4.1 Philosophical Worldview and Positionality Statement

This qualitative study conducts a discourse analysis through a social constructivist and relativist lens, and therefore assumes that there are various views of reality, and that science is not capable of knowing reality, and assumes that the world is subjective and that different individuals create different meanings based on their experience (Creswell, 2014; Peter, 1992). The aim of the study is to deepen understanding of homelessness and how the phenomena is and has been viewed, rather than finding any explanations. I myself do not have first or second hand experience with homelessness, and have never experienced a justified fear of ending up in a situation homelessness. Nor have I worked with homelessness. My experience of homelessness is merely the one of a citizen that has followed the local development from the side by observing and interacting with people in homelessness and social workers, and by following media and political debates, and now, by delving into research. As stated in the background, there are structural deficiencies in how Sweden deals with homelessness, which I acknowledge and stand by. I however don't want to reduce homelessness by submitting homelessness completely to a cause that is outside of the individuals control, regardless if that is structural or individual causes.

4.2 Discourse

Discourse is concerned with how language creates meaning, and it can be described in many ways. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) state, the term ‘discourse’ has become increasingly used in research, and has therefore been used increasingly vaguely and indiscriminately, often without being defined. According to Hamilton et al. (2001), discourse refers to a broad conglomeration of linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that together construct meaning to a phenomenon (Hamilton et al., 2001). According to Gee (2005), the analysis of discourse is the analysis of the ‘language in use’, while Cap (2019) describes discourse studies to be “characterized as ways of exploring the meanings produced by language use and communication, the contexts and processes of these meanings, and practices caused by these meanings” (Cap, 2019, p. 1). However it is phrased, the study of discourse is widely regarded to be concerned with the construction of language, and how these constructions create meaning; as well as acknowledging how nonlinguistic social practices, such as context and actions, affect meaning. One of the most prominent names within the field of discourse is Micheal Foucault, who formulated discourse using a constructivist worldview, and who introduced that discourse influences power and knowledge. It is through this Foucauldian lens that this study will be conducted.

4.2.1 Foucauldian Discourse

Foucault’s description of discourse is based on the idea that discourse is a system of thought and knowledge. This idea is based on how language and its meaning formulates how we think about things, and what we know. That is, the thoughts and the knowledge that we possess are products of discourses. Communicating our thoughts, which are products of a discourse, reproduces that very discourse. In this way, discourses govern our way of thinking, and our perception of what is sayable and thinkable (Foucault, 1980, 2002; Hall, 2001).

Assuming discourse to be the production of knowledge, Foucault argued that discourse also is intimately connected power, which is a central concept in Foucault’s study of discourse (Foucault, 1980). Foucault introduced the concept “Power/Knowledge”, which also is the title of one of his works (see Foucault, 1980), which highlights the way that knowledge and power relates to each other, and how power and knowledge, in the context of discourse, can be used

interchangeably. The concept of power/knowledge stems from the notion that the language and what is said, is not so distinctly separate from the action and what one does, and that language and practice is intimately connected (Hall, 2001, p. 72). Hence, in the same way as discourse is a system of knowledge, it is also a system of power. Foucault explains how

“Each society has its regime of truth ... that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

The ‘regime of truth’, being the discourse, affects every part of how we build our society, such as what knowledge is produced, within what frames it is produced and how it is operationalised and systematised. Hence, the study of discourse is therefore also concerned with who has the authority to talk about and construct a discourse, as well as how the discourse is put into practice by institutions (Foucault, 1980; Hall, 2001). However, power shouldn’t be seen as centralised and governed only by a few, distributed to the many, but is simultaneously co-created by the entire society, as it also works from the roots and up, through a “capillary network” (Foucault, 1980, p. 201), resembling how the blood is transferred from the heart to all body parts and back in a circular system. This is what Foucault calls the ‘micro-physics of power’, and it emphasises that power is not merely reproduced at the individual level as a projection of central power in society, but that the local individuals also create discourses (Foucault, 1980, p. 201; Hall, 2001, p. 77). Despite this co-creation within the capillary network, dominant discourses get reproduced due to their already privileged and legitimised position, and existing power relations reconfirms those versions of social reality and social structures (Willig, 2022). “Some discourses are so entrenched that it is very difficult to see how we may challenge them. They have become ‘common sense’” (Willig, 2022, p. 133).

4.2.1.1 The Subject and the Epistemes

So, what can we know for sure if our knowledge is shaped by a discourse? Hall (2001) explains how knowledge, according to Foucault, is not merely produced by subjects - subjects as beings that can think. Instead the production of knowledge is constrained within the limits of discourse, and that it is the discourse that produces the knowledge. Subjects can produce a text, but is

limited and submitted to the ideas of the existing discourse. One of the most controversial arguments of Foucault, according to Hall (2001), is the idea that the subject is produced *within the discourse* and not independently. Thus, the subject is limited to producing knowledge within the discourse of its time and must submit to the rules and conventions of the discourse, that is, its power/knowledge (Hall, 2001). This idea is connected to the concept of governmentality, which highlights that our society holds a self-imposed moral regulation and moral social ordering, and that we behave according to norms which we pose both on ourselves and others. This is what Foucault famously illustrated with his thought experiment Panopticon (Foucault, 1979).

Discourse constantly changes throughout time. The construction of a discourse varies over time and will continuously be questioned or spurred on, creating new discourses. The different eras in which a certain construction of a discourse lives are by Foucault called an 'episteme'. Every time has its own 'ruling' discourse, and what can be talked about in one way in one episteme, can not be talked about in the same way in another. We are all subjected to our episteme, and no matter what a subject produces, it is always within the limits of its episteme (Hall, 2001).

4.3 Application of Theoretical Framework

Summarising the theoretical framework shortly, it can firstly be stated that discourse is the study of how language affect our thoughts; secondly, that discourse according to Foucault is a system of Power/Knowledge, thirdly, that a subject is subjected to the discourse it lives in; and lastly, that a discursive era is called an episteme. The theory of discourse laid out by Foucault is the core theory on which the chosen method builds on, which will be presented in the next chapter. Further, having examined the discursive development, the contemporary context in which the reports were produced will be connected to the epistemes, which the NBHW - the subject - are subjected to.

5. Research Design and Method

In this chapter, the method and how it will be applied in this study, is first presented. This is followed by a presentation of the material analysed - how it is created, and how it is collected to and applied in this study. Lastly, having described the data and how it is produced, the collection and selection of the data in this study is made clear.

5.1 Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Even though Foucault wrote much about studying the discourse, he never constituted a method based on his thoughts. There are however many that have presented methodological frameworks of how to study discourse in accordance with his work, constituting the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, FDA (Parker, 2014). Carla Willig (2022, p. 132-145) presents a step by step method on how to conduct a FDA, which will be adopted in this study. Willig's FDA is inspired by Foucault's thoughts about discourse, and that discourses constitute social life. The FDA laid out by Willig entails Foucault's view on discourse as power, and how power relates to institutions and individuals. Not only does Willig's stages provide clear guidance on how to structure the analysis and how to consider and analyse the data, but the FDA also takes a historical perspective and explores in which ways discourses have changed over time. In analysing the discourse, there is a focus not only on what words are chosen and how objects and subjects are constructed, but also in what context constructions are created and what the aim with that particular context is, or could be (Willig, 2022). Willig's method provides six analytical steps, which are presented below. This study however will only adapt five of them, as the sixth and final one is not applicable to this study. In *5.1.6 Subjectivity*, where the last step is presented, it will be further explained why this step is not applied to this study.

5.1.1 Discursive Constructions

In this first step, *Discursive Constructions*, the main task is to point out the discursive *object*, how it is constructed and how it is referred to (Willig, 2022). In this study, where the discourse of homelessness is studied, the discursive object is 'people in homelessness'. Although this is the keyword used most frequently in presenting the study, the task in this first stage of the analysis is to find other search words and mentionings that refer to 'people in homelessness'. It is these

variations in discursive construction of the object, and the inflicted meaning behind it, that are the main interest of this first step (Willig, 2022).

5.1.2 Discourse

The second section builds upon the findings of discursive constructions, and focuses on locating which wider *discourses* the discursive constructions belong to. “What appears to be one and the same discursive object can be constructed in very different ways” (Willig, 2022, p. 135), and in this stage the aim is to find and categorise the discursive constructions found in the first stage and analyse what wider discourse they make up and categorise which of these they are located in (Willig, 2022). What system of knowledge does the discursive construction of ‘people in homelessness’ belong to? Since this study aims to investigate if homelessness is depicted as a result of the individual or of the societal structure, these are the wider discourses in which the discursive constructions are going to be categorised into.

5.1.3 Action Orientation

In this third step, the researcher considers the intentions and implications of formulations, and examines in what direction, or orientation, the subject steers the language in order to create a certain discourse (Willig, 2022). *Action orientation* is about understanding how language operates as a tool for directing and influencing human conduct, and this stage raises questions such as ‘what is gained from the producer when constructing an object this particular way and in that particular context, and what is the function and effects of that construction?’ and ‘what is to be achieved with that particular construction and how does it relate to the other constructions produced in the text?’ (Willig, 2022).

5.1.4 Positionings

In the fourth step of the analysis, the aim is to identify the *positionings* created by the texts and how those shape the discourses. This is done by identifying the ‘subject positions’, which are positions within networks of meaning that subjects and objects can take up (Willing 2022). In this case, the NBHW producing the text is the subject, and the objects are people in homelessness. Sahlin (2020) explains *subject positions* in a context of homelessness:

“Subject positions, i.e. how individuals position themselves and others in relation to each other, to a problem, or to society, is another useful analytical tool ... It is employed by a wide range of discourse analysts, regardless of their main affiliation. For instance, homeless people can be positioned as ‘one of us,’ as victims of the market, as ‘deserving poor,’ miserable losers—or as a burden or even a threat to society” (Sahlin, 2020, p. 45).

When allowed to reflect on how different actors are positioned, as described by Sahlin (2020), one is also allowed to reflect on how positionings affect the discourse. This can answer questions such as how a homeless person is positioned in comparison to other actors, and what discourse this positioning creates.

5.1.5 Practice

Willig’s fifth step investigates how discourse affects *practice*, that is, what outcomes such as actions and behaviour that result from discourse. Here it is examined how discursive constructions, and the subject positions that they hold, affect what is put into practice and what is not. Not only can discourse affect the practice, but the relationship also goes the other way as practice in turn can reproduce the discourse that it is shaped by. The practice examined can be both societal norms, or institutional or political practices (Willig, 2022). In the case of this study, the practice translates to what strategies, policies or political decisions that the homelessness discourse, here represented by the NBHW, leads up to.

5.1.6 Subjectivity

The sixth step, called subjectivity, is what Willig (2022) describes as “the most speculative” (Willig, 2022, p. 140), and entails to find what subjective experience can be linked to the discursive constructions by making an effort in describing what can be felt, thought and experienced (Willig, 2022). Willig (2022) however explains that the researcher can not, of course, know what is *actually* felt, thought and experienced, but can only guess - hence it is a speculative step. The subjective experience that is searched for in this step, however, is the one of the subject, but since the subject in this study is an authority and not an individual, as in Willig’s guide, a ‘subjective experience’ is not applicable; hence, this study will not adapt this last step of the FDA.

5.2 Data and Data Collection

In this section the data and how and why it is created, is further introduced and summarised in Table 3. This is followed by a presentation of the structure of the data collection of this study.

The empirical material chosen for the study are the five reports presenting mappings of homelessness conducted by the NBHW every sixth year from 1993 until 2017 based on surveys (see Table 3). The surveys are based on questionnaires handed out to organisations and authorities that come in contact with people in homelessness. During a randomised predetermined week of the year of investigation, employees of the organisations and authorities complete the form when in contact with a client that is in homelessness. One form is completed for every person that is found homeless according to a set definition. This definition has been different each year of the surveys. The sixth report containing the 2023 survey, was published towards the end of the process of writing this paper and has therefore not been possible to include in this study. What has been available to the public during the work however is the definition of homelessness used in the 2023 survey. Since this has been available, it will be included in the analysis in the 6.5 section, where practical outcomes of the discursive development are discussed.

The stages of the FDA presented in section 5.1 will be conducted and applied on the five reports. Due to the extent of the reports stretching from 109-135 pages, and considering the scope of this study, a smaller selection of sections to focus on had to be done. Hence, the analysis will cover mainly a) the titles of the reports, b) the questionnaire of the survey on which the data and the comments are based on, c) the definition of homelessness used in the questionnaire and the report. Except for these segments, the report contains statistics and comments on the statistics, based on the survey and the definition. Even though the entire report is not covered, this selection, chosen with consideration, can represent the core discourse, since most of the material presented in the reports builds on these sections. Apart from the a-c) segments, a few selected segments from the remainders of the reports will be included, which confirms and thus enhances some of the findings made in the a-c) segments.

In order to make the selection of material, an overview reading was necessary. Hence, I as a researcher have read more parts of the reports than what is chosen as empiric material to this study. This affects the holistic picture given to me as a researcher, as it builds on more material, and affects my interpretation. However, I do not regard this fact as a disadvantage since, in this way, the findings have an even better chance of representing the document they are in.

Table 3: Years, Titles and Sources of the Empirical Material

Year of report	Title (<i>my translations</i>)	Source
1993	The Housingless' Situation in Sweden	NBWH, 1994
1999	Homeless in Sweden 1999 Who Are They, and What Help Do They Get?	NBWH, 2000
2005	Homelessness in Sweden 2005 - Extent and Character	NBHW, 2006
2011	Homelessness and Exclusion From the Housing Market 2011 - Extent and Character	NBHW, 2011
2017	Homelessness 2017 - Extent and Character	NBHW, 2017

Source: NBHW, 1994, 1999, 2006, 2011, 2017

6. Analysis

In this chapter, the five reports from the NBHW are analysed according to the FDA. The steps build on each other and each have their own sections to allow for a clear separation of similar findings; however, it is important to remember that the findings of each step are connected and overlapping. The findings of section 6.1-6.4 are presented in tables, and are summarised in one final table (Table 8) at the end of the chapter.

6.1 Discursive Constructions

In the first part of the analysis, where the discursive constructions are to be identified, the main task is to find ways in which the *object*, in this case *a person in homelessness*, is constructed. Discursive constructions found in the a-c) segments of the material stated in section 5.2 are presented first in the table, followed by an analysis of the construction.

Table 4: The Discursive Constructions Found in the Report

Report	Discursive Constructions
1993	<i>the housingless, the client, rough sleeper, unemployed, assumed abuser</i>
1999	<i>the homeless, rough sleeper, unemployed, assumed abuser</i>
2005	<i>the person, rough sleeper, unemployed, assumed abuser</i>
2011	<i>the person, homelessness, unemployment, sleeping outside or in public spaces</i>
2017	<i>I, you/the person, homelessness, unemployment, sleeping outside or in public spaces</i>

Sources according to Table 3

A majority of the constructions found in Table 4 are posed in the third person, which is due to the questionnaires primarily being created for organisations and authorities to fill in. In the 2017 questionnaire however, the formulations were for the first time aimed either to the authorities and

organisations or to the persons that are homeless themselves. Hence, *I* and *you/the person*, are used in the 2017 report, while a third person-formulation is used prior to 2017.

In the questionnaires and definitions, more discursive constructions can be found. In the 1993 questionnaire, the only discursive construction of the object, outside the definition of homelessness stated in the beginning, is *the client*. The term *the client* was however not reoccurring in the later questionnaires. The 1999 questionnaire instead used the construction *homeless person* (indefinite form), *the person* or, most repeatedly, *the homeless* (singular). From 2005 and forward, the main discursive formation used was *the person*. Furthermore, the term *rough sleeper* and *unemployed* was used up until 2005, both in the definition of homelessness and in the questionnaire. In the 2011 and 2017 reports, these terms are reformulated to *unemployment* and *sleeping outside or in public spaces*.

Another discursive construction found in the questionnaire is the one of the *assumed abuser*. This construction is not explicitly formulated, as the constructions above, but is constructed implicitly. Hence, the material concerning abuse is compiled, facilitating an overview (see Appendix A). Overlooking the five reports, there is a development in the way the object is narrated in relation to narcotics, alcohol and other abuses, such as gambling with money (from here on collectively referred to as ‘abuses’). In the reports from 1993, 1999, and 2005, there are questions posed in the questionnaire regarding abuse that indicate an assumption that the person in question is abusing in some way: “Dominating abuse the last month:” (NBHW, 1994) in 1993 and 1999, and “What has the person abused in the latest month?” (NBHW, 1999), in 1999. The 2005 report both poses assumptive questions about abuse and about support against abuse (see A4 and A5). In the 2011 and 2017 reports, however, there are questions about abuse, but these questions are not posed in a way that assumes abuse. Instead these reports pose a question that asks whether there is an abuse, and then have a follow-up question with a separate list of different kinds of substances that is to be filled only in the case of abuse (see A6-A11).

Summarising, the *assumed abuser construction* is prominent in the earlier reports, but not in the later ones. Further, the development over time showcases a transition from *being homeless* and *being unemployed* as personal traits or identities, to the constructions of *homelessness* and

unemployment as a state or situation that a person can end up in. The same development applies to the term *rough sleeper* as an identity, transitioning into the situation of *sleeping outside or in public spaces*.

6.2 Discourse

In this section, a categorisation of discourses are determined based on the discursive constructions found in section 6.1. Since this research aims to trace the discourses of homelessness as a result of the individual or the societal structure, the predetermined discourses to examine are *the individual discourse* and *the structural discourse*. The findings are summarised in Table 5.

6.2.1 The Individual Discourse

The individual discourse emphasises homelessness as a result of the individual's choices and behaviour, and how the responsibility of their situation is their own. Therefore, the *assumptious abuse construction* found in section 6.1 is included in the individual discourse since abuse is seen in relation to individual behaviour and choices. Further, the discursive constructions found in 6.1 can be grouped into two discursive constructions, namely the *identity construction*, and the *alienating construction*.

The first grouping of discursive constructions, the *identity construction*, is about ascribing homelessness as an identity or a personal trait, which implies that homelessness is inherent rather than external. The discursive constructions belonging to this group are *the homeless*, *the housingless*, *rough sleeper* and *unemployed* found in the 1993, 1999 and 2005 reports, which are all constructed as personified traits describing a person. Not only do these discursive constructions make homelessness an identity, but creating a group with these specific characteristics and traits alienates homelessness and distances homeless people as an 'other' group that oneself is not associated with. Hence, the *alienating construction* can also be found. This will be further delved into in section 6.4.

The *assumptious abuse construction*, the *identity construction* and the *alienating construction* are all found in the 1993, 1999 and 2005 reports. In the reports from 2011 and onward however there

are no longer assumptions of the connection between abuse and homelessness, and the excluding phrasing and the identity making of homelessness as something inherent, decreases. The development showcases a transition away from the discourse of focusing on the individual being the cause of their situation.

6.2.2 The Structural Discourse

The *structural discourse* focuses on a lack of resources provided by the state or on market failures that make the market unavailable for some groups in the society, such as the housing market not being affordable. Using the discursive constructions found in 6.1, two groupings of discursive constructions can be made: the *homelessness as a situation-construction* and *inclusive construction*.

As opposed to the homelessness as an *identity construction*, the 2011 and 2017 reports instead display *homelessness as a situation* that a person can end up in, and not as an identity that is inherent. This doesn't frame homelessness as something ascribed to another group in society that oneself doesn't belong to, but as a situation that any person can end up in if meeting the wrong circumstances. This construction also narrates homelessness as a societal issue, and not as a problem only on the individual level. These thoughts are humbling, and these discursive constructions increase incentive to want well working social welfare structures to function when individuals are not able to manage themselves. Consequently, the responsibility is lifted from being placed solely on the individual, to shared amongst the individual and society. *Homelessness as a situation* is however not only found implicitly in the discursive constructions, but is also explicitly formulated in the chapters presenting the definition of homelessness of the 2011 and 2017 reports. The 2011 report states that "Homelessness does not describe a person, but the situation the individual can be in during a shorter or longer time" (NBHW, 2011, p. 19), and the 2017 report describes that "Defining homelessness is a way to categorise the problem and to pinpoint different situations that an individual can be in" (NBHW, 2017, p. 11, My translation). These statements explicitly take the stance that homelessness is not an inherent identity, but a state a person can be in. A statement similar to this can also be found in the 2005 report, which states that the NBHW "perceives homelessness as a situation in which a person finds themselves and not as a criterion for categorising people. Being homeless is only one aspect of a person's

life, albeit a very central and crucial one.” (NBHW, 2006, p. 17, my translation). Still, the 2005 report contains the *identity constructions* as presented and explained in section 6.2. Thus, there is an internal contradiction in the report, where *homelessness as a situation construction* is stated as advocated, but is not followed as the *identity constructions* are used.

Further, as showcased in section 6.1, the construction of the object transitioned from being called *the homeless* to being called *the person*, and lastly *you/the person* in the latest questionnaire. In this development, a gradually *inclusive* language is showcased. As opposed to the *alienating construction* found in the 1993 and 1999 questionnaire, the 2017 report is instead using *inclusive constructions* by providing the possibility for the homeless individual themselves to complete the questionnaire and to contribute to the survey.

The *homelessness as a situation construction* can be found in the 2011 and 2017 report, and signify an increased emphasis on structural causes behind homelessness and on the *structural discourse*. The *inclusive construction* can be found in the 2017 report, and opposes the *alienating construction* found in the *individual discourse*. Summarising the development of discursive constructions found, the 1993 and 1999 reports contained discursive constructions that produce an *individual discourse*, while the 2011 and 2017 reports showcased discursive constructions fitting the *structural discourse*. This suggests that the *individual discourse*, which was dominating in the 1990’s and 2000’s, has ceased to dominate, and that the *structural discourse* has grown in its place to be increasingly dominant.

Table 5: The Discursive Construction Grouping Found in the Report

Report	Discourse: Discursive Construction Groupings
1993	<i>identity, alienating, assumptious abuse</i>
1999	<i>identity, alienating, assumptious abuse</i>
2005	<i>identity, alienating, assumptious abuse, homelessness as a situation</i>
2011	<i>homelessness as a situation</i>
2017	<i>homelessness as a situation, inclusive</i>

Sources according to Table 3

6.3 Action Orientation

In this step, an effort is made to reveal the action orientation of the different reports, and examine how these orientations have changed over time. What can be said about the intentions behind the reports is only reliable if the intention is explicitly stated. Conducting a discourse analysis however, the implicitness is also of interest, which is interpreted in this section. The findings are summarised in Table 6.

Starting with the early reports, there is no action orientation to be found in the chosen material in the 1993-1999 reports. As mentioned in the 6.2.2 section about the structural discourse, there is a statement in the 2005 report where the NBWH states that they view *homelessness as a situation*, meanwhile this is contradicted as the discursive constructions used create the opposite effect, namely constructing homelessness as an *identity*. Even though it cannot be known for sure, the statement is what is actually considered in this case, while the constructions are rather products of the episteme. Thus, even as the usage of the constructions are contradictory, there is a stance - an action - taking an orientation towards the *structural discourse*.

Moving forward to the 2011 report, a conscious use of language is found and it contains both explicit explanations and implicit language to highlight the structural factors of homelessness. Firstly, the title of the 2011 report, “Homelessness and Exclusion From the Housing Market 2011

- Extent and Character” (NBHW, 2011) poses a clearly pronounced suggestion that structural force is excluding people from the housing market. Taking this stance already in the title, instantly sets an agenda and direction, and thus a strong and clear action orientation is created, advocating the *structural discourse*. A further element in the 2011 report that confirms an action orientation in line with the *structural discourse* is that throughout the report there are quotes from people in homelessness who comment on their situation. Giving voice to homeless people is done with the purpose to “make the humans behind the numbers visible” (NBHW, 2011, p. 17). The quotes, making the individuals visible, contrast the ‘othering’ typically found in the *individual discourse*. Creating this counteractive narrative is also an action orientation away from the *individual discourse*, enhancing the *structural discourse*. In sum, the action orientation found throughout the 2011 report opposes the ‘othering’, typically found in the *individual discourse*, and aligns with the *structural discourse* as it acknowledges structural factors, in this case *the exclusion from the housing market*. This can be interpreted as an active counteract, or even compensation, of the previous reports. It seems as if discursive considerations have been made, corresponding to contemporary literature about structural forces and about respecting the persons in homelessness, and not distancing, or ‘othering’ them.

In the 2017 report, there are still elements that construct a *structural discourse*, as stated in 6.2.2. This is confirmed by a statement acknowledging that homelessness is a situation and not an identity (NBHW, 2017, p. 10). As opposed to the 2011 report however, where exclusion from the housing market is central already in the title of the report, the 2017 report title has been changed back to only hold the formulation “Extent and Character” (NBHW, 2017), as was the title of the 2005 report. The type of action orientation that is found in the 2011 report, where sympathy for people in homelessness is invoked and the responsibility of the system is enhanced, is not found in the 2017 report. Nor is the type of counteractive and compensating formulations and initiatives that could be found in the 2011 report.

Summarising the action orientations, the 2005, 2011 and 2017 report acknowledged *homelessness as a situation*, in line with the *structural discourse*. Further, the 2011 report acknowledges that *homelessness is related to structural forces* and *opposes ‘othering’* by making the persons in homelessness have their own voices. What does this say about the action

orientation over time? First, none of the reports have shown an active action orientation towards the *individual discourse*. Second, the action orientation in line with the *structural discourse* is restrained in the 2017 report. It is not possible to know for sure why the action orientation has changed; what is evident is that there is a shift from a clear action orientation in 2011, which enhances the *structural discourse* and opposes the *individual discourse*, to a less outspoken action orientation in 2017.

Table 6: The Action Orientations Found in the Report

Report	Discourse: Discursive Construction Groupings
2005	<i>homelessness as a situation</i>
2011	<i>homelessness is related to structural forces, opposing ‘othering’, homelessness as a situation</i>
2017	<i>homelessness as a situation</i>

Sources according to Table 3

6.4 Positionings

When analysing the positionings, the ‘subject positions’ are in focus, where the subject views the object and themselves in relation to each other and the society. As mentioned, the subject is in this case the NBHW as they produce the text, and the object is people in homelessness. In this section, the subject positions will enable delving further into the *alienating* and *inclusive* discursive constructions, and will further reveal the object positioned as ‘*othered*’, *alienated*, *included* and *excluded from the housing market*. The findings are summarised in Table 7.

Revisiting the development of inclusivity found in 6.2, the lens of subject positions enables analysing how the object is positioned in relation to the subject and to society. The construction *the homeless*, in comparison to *the person*, suggests a distance, and that the object belongs to a category that the subject does not identify with and can not relate to. This is further enhanced by the formulation of the 1999 title “Who are they, and what help do they receive?” (NBHW, 1999), which suggests not only distancing, but an alienation. This depicts ‘the homeless’ as someone

out there that is not identifiable, and that is positioned in a distant, or even unknown, category in perspective of the subject. 'The homeless' are '*othered*' and positioned as *alienated*. *The person* is however someone that is just any person, and that belongs to society. *You/the person*, is not only a person, but is a person that the subject collaborates with and has a dialogue with. The subject asks something of *you*, and *you* can contribute to the survey by filling in the questionnaire, which is of help to the subject. The transition implies a more inclusive language and a flatter organisational structure of the process, and the people in homelessness are positioned as *included*.

Further, the title of the 2011 report, "Homelessness and Exclusion From the Housing Market 2011- Extent and Character" (NBHW, 2011), positions the object as *excluded* due to structural forces - the housing market. The persons in homelessness are positioned in an exposed and vulnerable situation which is inflicted on them, suggesting a powerlessness in the face of structural forces as explained by Pleace (2016). A clear suggestion of structural forces affecting homelessness is made, and this title becomes a part of the structural discourse. This positioning is however not kept in the 2017 report, which goes back to using only "Extent and Character" (NBHW, 2017), as done in 2005. This formulation doesn't position the persons in homelessness in a position submitted to the helplessness of the system, as found in 2011, nor does it position the object according to the *individual discourse*, where it is constructed as being the unknown, unrelatable other, as found in the 1999 report title.

The development of how the subject, NBHW, has positioned people in homelessness has shown to be less alienating and more inclusive over time, which confirms the findings of section 6.2, and which implies that the *individual discourse* is stronger in the earlier reports, 1993-2005, and that the *structural discourse* is stronger in the later reports, 2011-2017. Further, when using subject positions, it is found that the presence of the *structural discourse* is less prominent in the 2017 report than in the 2011 one - a pattern also found in the section 6.3.

Table 7: The Positionings of the Object

Report	Discourse: Discursive Construction Groupings
1999	<i>'othered', alienated from society</i>
2011	<i>excluded from housing market</i>
2017	<i>included in survey process</i>

Sources according to Table 3

6.5 Practice

This stage examines how discourses and the discursive development allow for different practical outcomes. A discourse can open or close the opportunities of some practices, either by containing discursive constructions, or by not containing them. In this step, the historical discursive development matters, as the findings from section 6.1-6.4 are connected to today's practice. Even if focusing on the practice of today, and trying to forecast the future, the past is helpful in mapping what discursive constructions to give attention, since not only the present, more visible, constructions matter but also the un-present ones, which might be harder to detect without the past.

Firstly, a changed structure of the homelessness definition has been presented, which can be understood as a result of the increasing prominence of the *structural discourse*. As mentioned, the definition of the 2023 survey has been available during the time of conducting this study, and what is new to the 2023 survey is that the third homelessness situation - "long-term living arrangements organised by the social services (e.g. the secondary housing market)" (translated by Knutagård, 2023; NBHW, 2017) - is no longer included in the NBHWs survey, but is instead treated in a separate survey conducted by the the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (NBHBP), which was presented in the *National Mapping of Homelessness 2023* (NBHW, 2023). This change in practice reveals the recognition of homelessness as not only a social issue, but also a problem to be regarded in relation to the housing market. This mirrors the increasingly prominent *structural discourse*, which has repeatedly been manifested in the

development of discursive constructions, subject positions, and consequently in the discourse and action orientation which these create.

Further, the development of the 'Housing First' initiative is reflected in the development away from the preconceptions found in the *individual discourse*, and towards the *structural discourse*. 'Housing First' is announced to be more broadly implemented in the *The Government's Strategy Against Homelessness 2022-2026* (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022), and the 'Housing First' initiative builds upon the foundational values that housing is a human right. Knutagård and Kristiansen (2018) experience that this value challenges the view of homelessness in Sweden, since the organisational work surrounding homelessness in Sweden is based on the idea that people in homelessness "need to submit to control and requirement of treatment to have someplace to live" (Knutagård & Kristiansen, 2018, p. 8). Since the *assumptive abuse construction* and the *identity construction* has receded, and the *inclusive construction* and the *homelessness as a situation construction* has grown stronger, the climate to recognise someone as deserving of help, despite social problems such as abuse or illness, challenges the discursive obstacles of 'Housing First'. Recognising that homelessness is a situation and having an inclusive mindset, increases respect and the belief in the individual as capable, which might be a first step in order to even consider reorganisation and redistribution in resources towards the implementation of 'Housing First'.

Viewing the present practice in Sweden, it can be seen it reflects the discursive development that has occurred. Having followed the discursive development since the 1990s and knowing what type of discursive constructions that has or has not been taking place then and now, it can be detected what discursive trends have emerged or disappeared, and how these have opened or closed possibilities for different practices. Understanding the discourse of the different epistemes, thus is a tool for understanding the processes behind practical outcomes.

Table 8: Summary of Analysis

Year	1993	1999	2005	2011	2017
Title	The Housingless' Situation in Sweden	Homeless in Sweden 1999 Who Are They, and What Help Do They Get?	Homelessness in Sweden 2005 - Extent and Character	Homelessness and Exclusion From the Housing Market 2011 - Extent and Character	Homelessness 2017 - Extent and Character
Discursive Constructions	<i>the housingless, the client, rough sleeper, unemployed, assumed abuser</i>	<i>the homeless, rough sleeper, unemployed, assumed abuser</i>	<i>the person, rough sleeper, unemployed, assumed abuser</i>	<i>the person, homelessness, unemployment, sleeping outside or in public spaces</i>	<i>you/the person, homelessness, unemployment, sleeping outside or in public spaces</i>
Discourse: Discursive Construction Groupings	<i>identity, alienating, assumptious abuse</i>	<i>identity, alienating, assumptious abuse</i>	<i>identity, alienating, assumptious abuse, homelessness as a situation</i>	<i>homelessness as a situation</i>	<i>homelessness as a situation, inclusive</i>
Action Orientation			<i>homelessness as a situation,</i>	<i>homelessness is related to structural forces, opposing 'othering', homelessness as a situation</i>	<i>homelessness as a situation</i>
Positionings (of the object)		<i>alienated from society, 'othered'</i>		<i>excluded from housing market</i>	<i>included in survey process</i>

Sources according to Table 3

7. Conclusion

Having finalised the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, the research question will be revisited and answered. This chapter will present the discursive development of the NBHW reports found in the analysis, presenting what practical outcomes in today's society can be connected to the discursive development, and point to connections between the discourses found in the reports and the epistemes they are created in. The first section, *7.1 The Development of the Individual and Structural Development*, presents the discursive development, both by presenting long term trends, and by zooming in on particularities. The section finalises with a summary of what practices mirror the discursive development. In order to more fully understand how contemporary context has affected the discourse of the reports, the second section *7.2 The Reports in Their Epistemes*, delves into how the reports relate to the episteme they were produced in by considering the literature of their time.

7.1 The Development of the Individual and Structural Discourse

In this section, the discursive development found in the analysis is firstly presented as a trendline, followed by further explorations of two points on the trendline. Lastly, the practical outcomes mirrored in this development, are presented.

7.1.1 From Individual to Structural

Three out of the five steps of the analysis - the discursive construction, the discourse and the positionings - show a development in discourse over time that highlights a decreased presence of the individual discourse, and that the structural discourse has grown stronger with time. This has been demonstrated as the reports have become more inclusive and aware of the situation of being homelessness, and no longer contain formulations based on preconceptions stemming from a narrow and misrepresentative image of 'the homeless'. A similar development was found when examining the action orientation, as the later reports, 2011-2017, had a discursive action orientation toward the structural discourse. There is no outspoken action orientation that emphasises the individual discourse, however, and the evidence of an individual discourse can only be found with the help of the discursive construction, the discourse and the positionings.

7.1.2 2005: The Transitional Report

In the 2005 report, it is not clear which discourse is dominating. As found in section 6.3 about action orientation, the NBHW claim to view *homelessness as a situation*. The discursive constructions fall under the category *identity constructions*, which is the opposite to *homelessness as a situation*; thus, internal contradictions are created in the report. Further, the 2005 report contains *inclusive constructions*, falling under the structural discourse, but also contains *assumed abuse constructions*, which in contrast falls under the *individual discourse*. Summing these contradictions up, the 2005 report can be described as 'transitional', since some elements belonging to the *structural discourse* are implemented, while some elements from the earlier reports, aligning with the *individual discourse*, still exist.

7.1.3 The shift between 2011 and 2017

Consulting the action orientation and the positionings, the discursive development, from individual to structural, has not assumed one straight direction, as it is thrown off its trendline when examining how the 2017 report differs from the 2011 report. As found, the action orientation is not as strongly present in the 2017 report as in the 2011 one. Further, the positioning of the object in the 2011 report title has a stronger connection to the structural discourse than the 2017 report. But where is the trend broken? Is the structural discourse of the 2011 trend an upward bump in the otherwise increasing trendline, or is there an ebbing presence of the discourse in 2017? Where the trend deviates and why will be discussed in chapter 8.

Further Reflection and Further Research

7.1.4 Practice

Drawing on the last step of the analysis, *Practice*, a review on current events within research and policy making concerning homelessness and how they connect to the discursive development found in the reports is made. The practice found today can be connected to the discursive trends, where some discursive constructions are growing and some receding. As mentioned in section 6.5 *Practice*, a connection to the development can be made both with the goal of the 'Housing First' expansion, and with the fact that the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (NBHBP) is now a part of the national homelessness mapping. This connection manifests that discourse does affect political outcomes. To clarify, the discourse that has led up to

these practical outcomes is not enabled by the NBHW, but the reports merely represent how the governmental discourse has developed, which in turn is affected by the larger societal discourse - the episteme. This will be further delved into in the following section, 7.2. Having demonstrated how discourse affects some practical outcomes, a further discussion elaborating on possible outcomes in the future is held in the next chapter 8. *Further Reflections and Further Research*.

7.2 The Reports in Their Epistemes

Reviewing this development, the phenomena of the subject being subjected to its episteme and therefore producing a language within the limits of the contemporary discourse, should be considered. In the following section, the reports will be viewed in light of the epistemes they are in, using the Literature Review to help circle the contemporary debates to the different reports. The first part concerns the 1993 and 1999 report, since the pair only contain discursive constructions belonging to the individual discourse, and do not show any action orientation towards the structural discourse. The second part focuses on the 2011 and 2017 reports, which instead contain only discursive constructions belonging to the structural discourse and do contain an action orientation towards the structural discourse. Lastly the 2005 report, which contains elements aligning with both the individual and structural discourse, is treated separately.

7.2.1 1993 - 1999

Starting with the 1993 and 1999 reports, none of the reports have shown any formulations that give reason to assume any ill will, based on the material presented. For example, no action orientation towards the individual discourse is made. Thus, it can be assumed that the individual discourse found is not created ‘out of spite’, but that the constructions used merely are products of the epistemes of the reports. Delving into the episteme of the 1990s by revisiting the Literature review, it can firstly be found in 3.3 *Homelessness Research in Sweden* that the research of the late 20th century was focused on individual problems and often centred around substance abuse and mental illness. Further, as presented in section 3.2 *Homelessness Research Over Time*, the homelessness research field has had an ethnological, observing tradition. Third, as explained by Swärd (2001) in the section 3.4 *Swedish Research on Discourse of Homelessness*, media constructs ‘the homeless’ as a certain kind of being with a certain profile, creating ‘othering’, but also ascribes certain traits to homeless people. Viewing social problems

as individual problems, and thus being able to distance oneself from homelessness, is believed to be a product of the wave of individualisation in the 90's (Svärd, 2001). With these historical trends in consideration, there is a connection to be found between the ethnological tradition, the othering of the media and the *alienating* and *identity construction*, and between the individual research focus and the *assumptious abuse construction*. Hence, the individual discourse that is found can be seen as a product of the episteme.

7.2.2 2011 - 2017

Continuing with the 2011 and 2017 reports, the construction found are exclusively aligning with the structural discourse, and an action orientation towards the structural discourse can be found in both reports, and in particular in the 2011 report. Delving into how these constructions mirror the episteme of which the language is produced in, the language of the reports seem to answer to the critique found in the contemporary discourse. As learned from studies presented in section 3.4 *Swedish Research on Discourse of Homelessness*, highlighting studies from the 2000's and forward, the discursive constructions of the homelessness affect how homeless people are regarded and can create alienation and 'othering'. Furthermore, these perceptions can disfavour homeless people and their chances of finding a way out of homelessness. The critique raised in these studies can be connected to the change of formulations in the 2011 and 2017 report, which are implicit, with discursive constructions, and explicit, with statements, making sure to construct *homelessness as a situation* that someone can end up in, and not a trait or an identity. This critique can also be mirrored in the creation of more *inclusive constructions*, which marks a recognition of the people in homelessness as a part of our society. Concerning the *you* and *I* constructions particularly, they mirror the critique of the construction of homeless people as powerless as explained in section 3.2 *Homelessness Research Over Time*, and they show a recognition of the individual's capacity, and don't frame people in homelessness as a distant and unable group.

Employing what has been presented concerning the epistemes so far, the reports have matched with the contemporary research. Something that deviates however is the change in action orientation 2017 that is less outspoken than in 2011, while the research keeps highlighting these issues. It is, as mentioned, hard to spot whether the deviant report is the 2011 or the 2017 one.

Whatever the reason could be for a shift and how this relates to the episteme, in this study represented by the literature, is discussed in chapter 8. *Further Reflections and Further Research*.

7.2.3 2005

As concluded 2005, the 2005 report exhibits a transition of the discourses, since both the individual and the structural are present. What then can be said about the episteme? Consulting contemporary literature in research, discussions on the importance of discourse are produced and are highly relevant, as found in section 3.4 *Swedish Research on the Discourse of Homelessness* (see Hansen Löfstrand, 2005; Sahlin, 2005; Swärd, 2001). However, the research criticises the use of some discourses, which are present at the time. Those discourses are thus a part of the episteme. It can therefore be guessed that, while the NBHW consults contemporary research literature, which aim to change the discourse, the discursive constructions found in the report are a reflection of the episteme it is created in, which is the one criticised by research.

Having used the lens of the structural and individual discourse to analyse the reports of the NBHW it can be found that the structural discourse has become increasingly prevalent over time, and that homelessness is no longer portrayed as a result of individual failures. The stereotype of the homeless abuser is no longer assumed, and homelessness is recognised to be a situation in which a person can end up, and not as an identity or lifestyle. Employing the epistemes it can be found that the early formulations found in the reports are affected by preconceptions and a narrow portrayal of homelessness, and the wave of individualisation in the 90's is believed to enhance the portrayal homelessness as an individual problem. Later reports made in the context of a research criticising the individual discourse, show an action orientation against a language blaming the individual, and acknowledge structural factors to be a cause of homelessness. Having considered the epistemes by employing the literature, and the discursive developments of the reports mirroring the epistemes, the discourses influencing today's practice have been found. Understanding the governmental discursive development, here represented by the NBHW, is an important tool to understand the ongoing practice in Sweden, as the discourse reflects the values and knowledge that the current practice is influenced by.

8. Further Reflections and Further Research

Having addressed the research question, some further reflections concerning both the results and the study are lifted. The first section, *8.1 Further Reflections*, presents reflections based on the results of the study and speculations on what these results could entail in the future. The section *8.2 Further Research* finalises the thesis with reflections on how a wider material, in a study with an extended scope, could bring further insights, understanding and conclusions.

8.1 Further Reflections

8.1.1 Reflections on the Discursive Development

As concluded in the previous chapter, the most recent reports, the 2011 and 2017 one, have displayed a shift, both in the break in the otherwise clear trend of the reports containing an increasingly stronger structural discourse, and in the way that this deviating trend does not have a clear connection to contemporary literature. Why does the 2017 report possess a less outspoken structural discourse than the 2011 report? Is it a matter of values and conceptions, or is it an attempt to be less ‘politicised’ and more ‘factual’? As stated in section *3.2 Homelessness Research Over Time*, a critique of the structural perspective within research is the narrative of powerlessness in the sense that individuals are helplessly submitted to structural factors, which take place outside the control of the individuals. The 2011 title, which suggests exclusion due to structural forces, can be interpreted to assume these qualities. Could this type of critique lifted in research, though not specifically aimed towards the NBHW, be the reason why the title was changed back? Investigating what factors led to the discursive choices that the reports are based on, would give further insight to the current discourse of the NBHW, representing the Swedish government. If, in further research, interviews were to be conducted with the author of the reports, this could be answered, and a further understanding of the discourse upon which the data presentations are made would be enabled.

8.1.2 Reflections on Practice

As concluded, practical outcomes found in today’s society that can be connected to the discursive development of the NBHW reports are the expansion of the 'Housing First' initiative, and the new structure of the national homelessness mapping, where NBHBP are included in the 2023 mapping. Having made that connection, some further reflections follow.

Starting with the 'Housing First' initiative, discursive obstacles have been challenged, but to what extent have those obstacles been overcome? How close is implementation? And apart from the discursive obstacles, the initiative requires reorganisation and redistribution, thus logistical, economical and intellectual changes might pose obstacles as well. If the 'Housing First' initiative proves successful on a larger scale however, reorganisation might reproduce the discourse that enabled the initiative in the first place, resulting in a supported implementation and establishment, both from within the social service and from outside actors. Furthermore, a possible reproduction of discourse could also affect the perception of people with addictions in general, not only those in homelessness, as this discursive development entails increased understanding and respect.

Moving on, this paragraph reflects on what further outcomes of the fact that NBHBP is now a part of conducting the homelessness mapping might be. First, it is important to review whether the data change in accuracy or representation of the population. Second, it is interesting to follow the practical outcomes stemming from the involvement of the NBHBP in the homelessness mappings. Will it affect the strategies against homelessness to suggest regulations in the housing market? This cannot be known of course, but further research could give a better understanding of what direction this change might take. An inquiry with interviews, as further suggested in the coming section, would create an understanding behind the new mapping, the decisions behind the design, what discussions that are currently held and what directions and goals are set up. Moreover, if a study where the analysis includes the new report from 2023 was to be made, more of these answers might be found.

8.2 Further Research

This section will raise reflections on the material and its representations, and how a different material could answer different questions or guide the chosen research question further. The first reflection is that the NBHW reports have in this study acted as the representation of the Swedish government, and the discourse found in the reports are to mirror the Swedish national governmental discourse and how it has developed over time. Since the reports first got released the regime in office has changed several times. Although the NBHW is run by a governing board

which is appointed by the government, it is difficult to know whether the discourse represents that of the regime in office of that time, or if the discourse produced in the NBHW can be seen as disconnected. Thus, the choice of the material might not reflect the Swedish governmental discursive development, and in order to get a more accurate representation, other material would be needed to complement the NBHW reports. However, no matter the accuracy of representation, it is still crucial to review the material on which strategies, policies, research and political debates are based.

A similar comment addressing the representation of the material is that in this study, research presented in the *Literature Review* is the only context given to the discourse of the time they are made in, the episteme. Even though this literature reflects the media and the political state of the time, they may not represent the wider societal debates, thoughts and knowledge. Employing another material such as coverage of medial and political forums, would give another kind of societal accuracy and representation, and would enable a further understanding of the reports in the context of their epistemes.

Continuing on the discussion of the selection of the material, a wider material selection than the chosen a)-c) would enable a deeper understanding and more accurate representation of the reports. Furthermore, including the 2023 report would achieve a more up to date result. Some of the questions expressed in the discussion, such as what direction of discourse to interpret, might be answered only by employing the material of the latest report.

What should additionally be considered regarding the material is the lost data. With inspiration from the study of Sahlin (2020), which is concerned with the homeless people outside of the homelessness definition, often due to them migrating or fleeing from other countries, an awareness is raised that the material of this study does not allow to cover where this group fits into discussion. Any coverage of the homeless people that falls outside the definition is left outside the chosen material, and is thus not covered in this analysis. How the social service manages the 'other' homeless, outside the homelessness definition, and how this relates to the structural and individual discourse is a gap of this study, which could be further researched.

Finally, a wider material allowing for a deeper analysis could be achieved by interviewing the authors of the reports. As mentioned before, interviews of the authors of the reports could help deepen the understanding of the discursive development, but interviews could also generate data on which the *Subjectivity* step of the analysis could be based. In this study, which adapts the FDA laid out by Willig (2022), the sixth and last step, *Subjectivity*, is not conducted due to it being constructed to fit an individual as the subject, but also considering its speculative characteristics. *Subjectivity* aims to capture the subjective experience of the subject and how it relates to the discursive constructions. Interviews with the authors would both supply subjects in the shape of individuals instead of an authority as NBHW, as well as produce data based on their experience. Thus, interviews could make the *Subjectivity* step possible, which, in turn, would add to the understanding of what experiences, thoughts and feelings shape which discourse. Conducting interviews in order to enable this analysis did however not fit the scope of this essay. Moreover, the age of some of the reports can create an obstacle in conducting these types of interviews, and could therefore be quite challenging to implement.

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Appendix A

- 1993** A1 "Dominating abuse the last month"
- 1999** A2 "11. What problem does the homeless have that entails treatment or nursing care?"
with the alternative "abuse problems"
- A3 "12. Dominating abuse the last month"
- 2005** A4 "13. What has the person abused in the latest month?"
- A5 "16. Which of the following voluntary interventions against abuse has the person taken part in during the past year? "
- 2011** A6 "13. In addition to problems with housing, does the person have other problems that require assistance, treatment, care or support during week 18, year 2011? Please note that abuse and addiction problems are answered under question 14!"
- A7 "14. In addition to housing problems, does the person have substance abuse or addiction problems that require assistance, treatment, care or support during week 18, year 2011?"
- A8 "15. If "Yes" to question 14 above, state below which type of drug/drugs the person uses (does not apply to prescribed use)"
- 2017** A9 "9. Which factor(s) have contributed to your/the person's current homelessness situation, during week 14?" *with the alternative* "abuse or addiction"
- A10 "11. Do you/the person have needs that require interventions, support, treatment or nursing care during week 14, in addition to the accommodation?"
with the alternative "abuse or addiction [see question 11a]"
- A11 "11a. What type of abuse or addiction do you/the person have during week 14?"

Sources according to Table 3