

# ‘Are we not human?!’

Human dignity in the lived experience of poor, Roma women, in Oslo

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## **Abstract**

This research project investigates the construction of human dignity in the lived experience of poor, Roma women in Oslo, Norway. It seeks to contribute to a more inclusive, less abstract interpretation of human dignity, taking into account the inner perspectives, lived experiences, and knowledge of persons unheard in current debates on human dignity. It shows that, while the theoretical interpretation of human dignity remains abstract, the construction of human dignity in the lived experience is complex, diverse and multifaceted. Poor, Roma women describe a gain or loss of human dignity in terms of personal integrity, autonomy of the person, group culture, basic needs, non-discrimination, and suffering. These components of human dignity, however, are rich, contextual, and interconnected, and cannot be easily separated in the lived experience. The gain or loss of human dignity is related to the women's inner perspectives, experiences, and identity, to their relationships, and to the environment.

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## List of abbreviations

CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EU	European Union
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
IESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

## 1 Introduction

The human rights narrative is necessarily universalist, rendering all human beings equal in dignity and rights (Brems, 2001, p. 4; Jones, 2001, p. 27; UDHR, *Preamble*). However, this universalist construction of human dignity and rights must be asserted in a world of great diversity in terms of values, lived experiences and, subsequently, claims (Brems, 2001, p. 16; Carozza, 2013a; Jones, 2001). In recognition of human diversity, at the inception of the international human rights system, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), human dignity was left as a “non-interpreted thesis” (Theodor Heuss in Schroder, 2012, p. 326). It was meant to provide a universal basis for human rights, since human dignity was ascribed to many traditions, yet, if not defined, it did not represent either one tradition (Carozza, 2013a; Morsink, 1999).<sup>1</sup> As a result, although a “basic principle of international human rights law”, human dignity remains open to various interpretations (Carozza, 2013a, p. 345; Carozza, 2013b; McCrudden, 2013).

Those differences in interpretation have, however, “dramatically different implications”, with an effect on the “protection of dignity in law” and the “legal recognition of human rights” (Carozza, 2013b, p. 615-6). Given that human dignity constitutes a terrain for competing interpretations, directly affecting afforded legal protections for individuals and groups, McCrudden (2013, p. 12) draws attention to the germaneness of ‘politics’ to the interpretation of human dignity, especially in light of the privileged role held by legal elites in interpreting human dignity in the international human rights system (Douzinas, 2013; Gearty, 2013; Rosen, 2013). Scholars such as Douzinas (2013), Gearty (2013) and Rosen (2013) warn against the perils of a privileged interpretation of human dignity constructed by legal elites. For instance, they suggest that the exclusive interpretation of human dignity

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<sup>1</sup> The drafters of the UDHR hailed from different cultural, ethical, political and religious traditions and consequently held different beliefs regarding “the nature and destiny of the human person, the authority of the state, the meaning of justice and the role of law”; therefore, human dignity served to achieve consensus on the equal worth of *all* human beings (Carozza, 2013b, p. 348). For a comprehensive history of the drafting of the Declaration, see Morsink (1999).



in courts, by judges, may be anti-democratic, non-representative of individual concerns, and open to abuse by those in power.

Legal elites, in light of their cultural, social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), are more readily able to produce and legitimate knowledge, from their positions as authoritative experts (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), given that knowledge/power cannot be separated (Foucault, 1980; Lyotard, 1984). However, other social locations, with specific material realities and the particular social experiences these generate, are accompanied by “different standpoints, epistemologies, and knowledges” (Collins & Chepp, 2013, p. 60; Dill, 2009). Consequently, a more inclusive interpretation of human dignity must consider the lived experience, beyond abstract legal reflections. As pertinently put by Carozza (2013b), “in critical ways, the foundation of the law’s preoccupation with the protection and promotion of human dignity needs to be forged in the crucible of human experience” (p. 615). For a practically effective international human rights system, where human dignity and rights are respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled for *all*, the diversity, complexity, and multidimensionality of the lived experience ought to be incorporated into the interpretation of human dignity and rights (Carozza, 2013b; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Oliver 2011).

## 1.1 Research problem and question

In this research project, I consider human dignity, empirically, in light of the diversity, complexity, and multi-dimensionality of the lived experience, and not as an abstraction, decontextualized, or exclusive to theoretical debates. I specifically focus on women,<sup>2</sup> belonging to Roma<sup>3</sup> sub-groups from Romania, who experience poverty<sup>4</sup> and are unintentional homelessness,<sup>5</sup> in Oslo, Norway.

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<sup>2</sup> Gender categories are used as identified by participants.

<sup>3</sup> The noun ‘Roma’ is an umbrella term employed in academia to refer to the different and dispersed Roma sub-groups. The participants in this research self-identify as *țigăncă/i* (tr. Romanian) or *rom* (tr. Romanés). They also identify with a particular Roma sub-group or *nație* (tr. Romanian), the place of origin, and a

I, therefore, ask:

*Q: How do poor Roma women construct human dignity in their lived experience?*

In order to address the main research question, I formulate the following two sub-questions, to elaborate on the positive and negative constructions of human dignity:

*sQ1: What experiences are constructed as dignifying?*

*sQ2: What experiences are constructed as undignifying?*

The research question and sub-questions allow for poor, Roma women's own constructions of human dignity to emerge, in light of their inner perspectives and diverse, complex and multidimensional lived experience, as located at the intersection of gendered, racist, and classist power systems.

The extant literature and research on the situation of poor, Roma women is limited, yet demonstrates the particularity of their location at the intersection of oppressive power systems. In addition, evidence by human rights organizations in Central and Eastern Europe also points to experiences of deprivation, human rights violations, and violence, at the intersection of oppressive power systems. No such data exists about poor Roma women in Norway. Therefore, empirical research is necessary to explore the inner perspective and the lived experience of poor, Roma women, in relation to human dignity, in Norway.

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specific Romanés dialect. Roma sub-groups may differ in accordance to historical occupations or trades, dialect, and geographical origin, or a combination thereof.

<sup>4</sup> Poverty is defined economically, given the relationship between the produced income and minimum income of the state, in this case Norway (Smelser & Baltes 2001).

<sup>5</sup> 'Homelessness' refers to rooflessness, houselessness, living in insecure housing, and living in inadequate housing, as defined by the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA, 2006); 'Un/intentionality' refers to the person's agency in the process of becoming homeless.

## **1.2 Aims of the research**

The aims of this research project are trifold. First, I seek to contribute to a more inclusive interpretation of human dignity, considering voices, perspectives, and knowledge of persons located at the intersection of multiple oppressive systems. Human dignity provides an opportunity for dialogue, offering a language that accommodates a variety of claims, arising from different material, social, and cultural locations. Crucially, the language of human dignity allows the dispossessed to “fight for freedom, equality and basic resources” as, ultimately, human dignity encompasses the desire for a “... fairer world where the recognition and protection of humans ... cannot be overpowered or outmaneuvered or argued down” (Schlink, 2013, pp. 631, 634)

Second, I seek to contribute to a less abstract interpretation of human dignity, taking into account the diversity, complexity and multidimensionality of the lived experience. Otherwise obscured instances of inequality, inequity or injustice may emerge, contributing to a greater strive for equality. Placing the lived experience at the center of legal claims of human dignity, holds crucial implications for the interpretation of the law and the consequent protection of human dignity and rights in law (Carozza, 2013a, p. 615-6).

Third, I seek to bring forth the voices, inner perspectives, and lived experiences of poor, Roma women in Norway, as to include them in the dialogue on human dignity. I explore the ways in which poor, Roma women, in Norway, may enjoy or may be deprived of their human dignity, given their vulnerability, yet marginal position in the production of knowledge, especially in the human dignity and rights debate. The Roma, more generally and poor, Roma women, particularly have been historically on the margins (Crowe, 1995; Stewart, 1997; Taylor, 2014). Their history is one of “hostility, segregation, and misery” and they have consistently been rendered as Europe’s “other” (Stewart, 1997, p. 4, 7). Only by including poor, Roma women in the dialogue on human dignity, can an effective protection of their human dignity and rights be ensured, in Norway.

Overall, thus, I strive to advance existing theoretical considerations on human dignity, through empirical research. I investigate the interpretation of human dignity by persons in vulnerable positions, at the intersection of multiple oppressions, resulting in multiple vulnerabilities. In doing so, I strive to contribute to a more inclusive, less abstract, contextualized interpretation of human dignity.

### **1.5 Organization of the text**

After the first introductory section, containing the research context, the question and the aims of the research, the text is organized as follows. In the second section, I reflect on the relevant theoretical literature on human dignity produced by jurists and on empirical literature on human dignity in the lived experience. I also discuss the limited literature on poor, Roma women. In the third section, I present the theoretical perspectives guiding this research project. In the fourth section, I describe the methodological approach employed for the investigation of the research question. I also consider my position within the research and the relevant ethical considerations. In the fifth section, I present the results of the investigation. Lastly, in the concluding sixth section, I discuss the implications of the research and provide the final remarks.

## **2 Relevant theoretical and empirical literature**

There is a wealth of literature concerned with human dignity in the field of international human rights law.<sup>6</sup> In this research project, I focus exclusively on the normative content of human dignity. Extensive theoretical literature on the normative content of human dignity has also been produced by jurists,<sup>7</sup> in the field of international human rights law, however, empirical literature concerned with the lived experience of human dignity is scarce.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, literature on human dignity in the light of the inner perspectives and lived experiences poor Roma women's is completely lacking. In this review, I reflect first on theoretical interpretations of the content of human dignity by jurists, on the basis of international human rights instruments. Next, I discuss the existing empirical literature focused on human dignity in the lived experience. Finally, I evaluate existing literature concerned with poor, Roma women and I highlight the necessity for empirical literature on human dignity, in light of their lived experience.

### **2.1 Theoretical literature on the normative content of human dignity**

Interpretations of the normative content of human dignity by jurists are made on the basis of international human rights instruments. For this reason, in this section, I first present the origin and use of human dignity in the instruments and, then, I turn to the interpretations of the normative content of human dignity by produced by jurists.

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<sup>6</sup> There is for instance, significant literature on the history of human dignity in law, the basis of human dignity, human dignity as a basis of rights and a rights in itself, debates on content, its functions in law, critiques of human dignity, and so forth. For a review of significant debates, see Düwell, Van Steenbergen, & Düring, 2014, and McCrudden, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Jurists are eminent legal scholars, lawyers, and judges. Since, the “teachings of the most highly qualified publicists” are recognized as subsidiary sources of law, according to Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), I consider the interpretations of human dignity produced by jurists as part of the theoretical literature review for the purpose of this research project. I do so, given that jurists produce the normative content of human dignity debated or recognized as legitimate in the international human rights system. Besides interpretations by legal scholars, I also consider the interpretations produced by advisory committees to the international human rights law bodies, as they are composed of jurists. I, however, do not consider judicial decisions, specifically, as they represent an aspect of legal practice, rather than theory, and as they, in any case, inform jurists' opinions.

<sup>8</sup> This is the case in the human, social, and legal disciplines, with the exception of the medical, health and care sciences, literature on the lived experience of human dignity of persons in care is growing.

### 2.1.1 Human dignity in international human rights instruments

Human dignity has been a tenet of the international human rights system, since its inception, in the 1940s (Carozza, 2013a, p. 349; Düwell et al, 2014; McCrudden, 2008). Human dignity made its first appearance in the Charter of the United Nations and was subsequently affirmed as a foundational principle of all human rights, in the UDHR.<sup>9</sup> From there on, the United Nations (UN) declared human dignity as the basis of all human rights and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) required that all new international human rights instruments should be, *inter alia*, of “fundamental character and derive from the inherent dignity and worth of the human person” (Düwell et al, 2014; UNGA, Res 41/120, 1986, at 1.b.). I present the references made to human dignity in the UDHR, as a foundational text, given the reproduction of these references in all other instruments, then turn to the core international human rights instruments.

The UDHR mentions human dignity no less than five times, providing a “key to the document’s vision of human rights” (Carozza, 2013a, p. 347). The “inherent dignity” and “equal and inalienable rights of all” as well as “faith in the fundamental human right, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women” are affirmed, respectively reaffirmed, in the Preamble (UDHR, *Preamble*). Article 1 UDHR, introducing the first section of the text, provides that “[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and Article 22 UDHR, introducing the second section, provides that “[e]veryone ... is entitled to the realization ... of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity”. Finally, Article 23 UDHR states that those who work have “the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity”. Human dignity, thus, serves to affirm the inalienable, inherent, equal worth of all human beings (Carozza 2013a, p. 348). Nonetheless, as set in the UDHR, human dignity remains indeterminate, with no specific indication to its normative content.

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<sup>9</sup> I consider the UDHR here since it is the foundational text of the system and acquired the status of *jus cogens* in international human rights law.

Much like the UDHR, the nine core international human rights treaties<sup>10</sup> all invoke human dignity in their preambles, as the foundation of human rights. In addition, they provide some indication to its normative content, by relating human dignity to specific substantive rights. For instance, Article 10 ICCPR references human dignity in relation to personal integrity, especially for persons deprived of liberty. Article 13 ICESCR states that education is necessary to human dignity. The preamble of CERD and the preamble and Article 11 of CEDAW recall that discrimination is an affront to human dignity. CRC references human dignity in relation to the treatment of children with disabilities (Article 23), deprived of liberty (Article 37), in infringement of the law (Article 40), the punishment of children in institutions (Article 28), and the rehabilitation of children victims of neglect, exploitation, or abuse, cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment, or armed conflict (Article 39). ICMW invokes human dignity in relation to persons deprived of liberty, especially in relation to cultural identity (Article 17), and labor conditions (Article 70). CPED references human dignity in relation to privacy (Article 19) and reparations (Article 24). Thus, while still indeterminate, some indication to the normative content of human dignity arises from the connection to substantive rights in these provisions.

Therefore, as referenced in international human rights instruments, human dignity is, first, an “ontological claim” referring to the status of persons and, second, as a “meta-legal principle” (Carozza, 2013a, p. 346). As an ontological claim, human dignity affirms the inherent, inalienable, and equal worth of all persons. As a meta-legal principle, human dignity requires the protection of such worth, in relation to substantive rights. While no specific definitions of human dignity are provided in the instruments, indications to its

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<sup>10</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (ICESCR, 1966), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD, 1965), Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT, 1984), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICMW, 1990), Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances (CPED, 2006)

normative content are given, in relation to substantive rights. On this basis, jurists have been debating interpretations of the normative content of human dignity.

### 2.1.2 The normative content of human dignity

The theoretical debates on the normative content of human dignity are of great importance, since the legal practice of international human rights bodies shows that human dignity, although indeterminate in the instruments, has bearing in the opinions, decisions, and judgements of international human rights bodies (Carozza, 2013b). Following from the use of human dignity in international human rights instruments, Andrew Clapham (2006), legal scholar and Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists,<sup>11</sup> states that concern with human dignity implies concern with:

“(1) the prohibition of all types of inhuman treatment, humiliation, or degradation by one person over another; (2) the assurance of the possibility for individual choice and the conditions for ‘each individual’s self-fulfilment’, autonomy, or self-realization; (3) the recognition that the protection of group identity and culture may be essential for the protection of personal dignity; (4) the creation of the necessary conditions for each individual to have their essential needs satisfied” (p. 546).

Simply put, the normative content of human dignity assumes concern for (1) personal integrity, (2) autonomy of the person, (3) group identity, and (4) the satisfaction of basic needs. In addition to this, Carozza (2013a) identifies non-discrimination and equality as an important component of human dignity.

First, the principle of personal integrity assumes that all persons have intrinsic value as human beings and should be treated, with respect, as such. More practically this is referred to as ‘worth’. Personal integrity has achieved wide consensus as a normative component of human dignity. In theoretical literature, it is usually discussed in relation to the prohibition

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<sup>11</sup> The International Commission of Jurists consists of approximately 60 lawyers, senior judges, attorneys, and academics who are “dedicated to ensuring respect for international human rights standards through the law” (ICJ, 2015, para 1)



of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, specifically punishment, the deprivation of liberty, and conditions of detention (Carozza, 2013a). Second, the principle of autonomy refers to a person's freedom to make their own decisions, to have a voice, and control over their life. Most often, personal autonomy has been related to medical decisions (Carozza, 2013a). In addition, the CEDAW Committee, for instance, recognizes that a "woman's right to choose a spouse and enter freely into marriage is central to her life and to her dignity and equality as a human being" (Gen Rec No 21, para 16). Third, regarding group culture, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) establishes a direct relation between the human dignity of the person and the right to culture. It states that "... respect for cultural rights is essential for the maintenance of human dignity ... in a diverse and multicultural world" (Gen Rec No 21, para 40). Fourth, in relation to basic needs, CESCR developed a comprehensive interpretation of human rights in light of the principle of human dignity. For instance, adequate housing, adequate food and water, the highest attainable standard of health, the right to work, and the right to social security are considered inherent to human dignity and to its guarantee (CESCR, General Comments 4, 12, 14, 18, 19). Next, the principle of equality and non-discrimination is also considered of relevance to the content of human dignity, based on the text of the international human rights instruments and its application in jurisprudence (Carozza, 2013a). Based on international human rights instruments and their interpretation by jurists, five principle interpretations of human dignity emerge, related to personal integrity, autonomy of the person, group identity, the satisfaction of basic needs, and non-discrimination.

Nonetheless, these interpretations of human dignity in the international human rights law narrative are under debate, especially in terms of scope of application in relation to substantive rights (Düwell et al, 2014, McCrudden, 2013). Moreover, although bearing practical implications, the interpretations of human dignity in theoretical debates remain abstract, possibly undermining the practical usefulness of the international human rights system in protecting persons who experience violations of their dignity and rights, in light

of the diversity, complexity and multidimensionality of the lived experience (Jones, 2001; Oliver, 2010). It is, therefore, necessary, to consider human dignity in the lived experience.

## **2.2 Empirical literature on human dignity in the lived experience**

There are few studies that consider human dignity in the lived experience. Consequently, in the second part of this review, I present studies from different fields, in the English language, concerned specifically with human dignity in the lived experience.

### **2.2.1. Beyond an abstract human dignity**

In this sub-section, I review studies that consider human dignity, as voiced by participants in their lived experience, and not as a theoretical abstraction. To begin with, I present a comprehensive study from the field of medical, health, and care sciences, a field giving increasing consideration to the topic.<sup>12</sup> The study conducted by Win Tadd and colleagues, resulting in a series of publications,<sup>13</sup> focused on human dignity in the lived experiences of elderly persons, women and men, in care or hospitalized, due to illness or disability. The findings of the study suggest that the participants perceived human dignity as multi-faceted. Participants give great importance to personal integrity and autonomy of the person. For instance, not being treated as an individual and being referred to in derogatory or patronizing terms is considered undignifying. So is the loss of independence, the loss of control over one's life, and the feeling no longer being heard in terms of claims or represented through advocacy. Group identity is also a source of human dignity. For instance, the lack of opportunities to undertake specific cultural and religious practices was also experienced as detrimental to some of the participants' dignity.

In addition to this, a wide range of consideration of human dignity emerged from the participants' lived experience. For instance, mixed gender wards as well as a lack of

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<sup>12</sup> For a more general review of literature on considerations of human dignity in the medical, health and care sciences, please see Jacobson (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Bayer, Krajcik & Tadd (2005); Stratton & Tadd (2005); Tadd, Bayer & Dieppe (2005); Woolhead, Calnan, Dieppe & Tadd (2004).

privacy were considered undignifying by some participants. A lack of assistance with tasks such as eating, or accessing hygiene facilities, or maintaining a respectable appearance are experienced as undignifying. Moreover, the loss of purpose or meaning resulted in a loss of human dignity. The validation or invalidation of human dignity was related to the participants themselves, staff, and the environment.

Undoubtedly, the studies conducted by Win Tadd and colleagues confirm the interpretations of human dignity, in light of the importance of personal integrity, autonomy of the person, and belonging to a cultural group. Moreover, they further attest to the varied experiences of human dignity or a loss thereof. Although not explicitly addressed in the studies, they bring forth the different experiences of human dignity at the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities, in this case predicated on age, illness or disability, gender, religion, or belonging to certain cultural groups. They also point out the importance of everyday activities, interactions, and settings, experienced as dignifying or undignifying, in light of intersecting inequalities and consequent vulnerabilities.

In another study, Miller & Keys (2001) set to investigate human dignity in the lived experience of homelessness persons, women and men, in the USA, and conclude that human dignity is crucial to the understanding of the experience.<sup>14</sup> Miller & Keys (2001) specifically consider human dignity in terms of worth, as both internal and externally assigned, in relation to environmental events. Specific activities, interactions, and settings perceived are perceived by participants as dignifying or undignifying. This relates to received care, individual identity, service, group belonging, resources, roles and opportunities in the community. For instance, receiving care, support or encouragement is perceived by participants as most affirming of human dignity. Being treated as an individual, as opposed to being treated like a 'number', a 'child', an 'animal' or being stereotyped or ignored, also validates human dignity. Belonging to the group, in affirmative

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<sup>14</sup> Previous older studies also found out that persons experiencing homelessness perceived a loss of their human dignity due to social stigma and events and conditions experienced as degrading (Seltser & Miller, 1993; Snow & Anderson, 1993).

terms, is also a source of humanity, whereas association with negative stereotypes about persons experiencing homelessness is not. The study shows diverse experiences of human dignity in relation to personal integrity and autonomy of the person.

It further shows the importance of self-sufficiency and the satisfaction of basic needs to the experience of human dignity. Participants in the study “frequently discussed the availability of resources as promoting their dignity” (Miller & Keys, 2001, p. 342). Specifically, they considered sufficient resources for basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, and medical and hygiene needs), resources for self-sufficiency (employment), and resources to access opportunities in the community (cultural, sporting events) as positive sources of human dignity. A negative physical setting (e.g. inadequate hygiene facilities) is also considered undignifying by participants. This study, thus, illustrates that a loss of human dignity in the lives of persons on the margins, in vulnerable positions, may occur from the experience of structural inequality, reflected in everyday activities, interactions, and settings.

Simic & Rhodes (2008) present another account of human dignity in the lived human experience, describing human dignity at the intersection of inequalities and consequent vulnerabilities. In their study, they set off to explore female and transvestite sex workers’ accounts of the HIV risk environment in Serbia. Violence emerges as a key theme. Within the context of risk management in sex work, the participants perceive the preservation of their human dignity of absolute importance.<sup>15</sup> For instance, control over transactions with clients is of great importance, as it allows participants to maintain a sense of autonomy of the person and personal integrity. Control over one’s body or the parts of one’s body made available to clients, allows for the maintenance of human dignity. Participants experience a loss of human dignity when they lose control over their bodies when violence is enacted upon them (by clients or the police). Moreover, participants also seek to separate public

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<sup>15</sup> Ethnographies on sex work also show that the preservation of human dignity is essential, through the construction of a positive identity and separation of the self from sex work (Campbell, 2000; Sanders, 2004).

spaces and their sex work identity from private space and their other identities. For instance, being filmed, having their families informed of their work, being identified as sex workers by the police in front of ‘normal’ others is experienced as deeply undignifying. The study shows, thus, the importance of personal integrity and autonomy of the person in the participants’ lived experience, in relation to both the material or physical self and the immaterial or inner selves.

The authors also show in their study that in a generalized context of vulnerability experienced by all sex workers, transvestite, Roma sex workers appear to experience the most extreme forms physical and structural violence as well as humiliation. Transvestite, Roma sex workers, some of whom were refugees from Kosovo, face “multiple vulnerabilities and stigma, including lack of official citizenship recognition and access to public services” (Simic & Rhodes, 2008, p. 8). The study brings forth, thus, the experience of persons on the margins, at the intersection of multiple inequalities, creating multiple vulnerabilities, resulting in an experienced loss of human dignity. It also must be noted, that the theme of human dignity emerged from the data, not being in the initial focus of the study.

Overall, the three studies confirm that the theoretical components of human dignity, specifically in relation to personal integrity, autonomy of the person, cultural belonging, and the satisfaction of basic needs, are relevant to the lived experience of persons on the margins. Nevertheless, in addition, human dignity in the lived experience emerges as rich in normative content. The studies show that in the lived experience, human dignity is multifaceted, especially at the intersection oppressive power systems and consequent vulnerabilities. They also show the importance of the physical and non-physical self and their interaction in the experience of human dignity or a loss thereof. They demonstrate that, in the lived experience, at the intersection of inequalities and vulnerabilities, human dignity is validated or invalidated in everyday activities, interactions, and settings.

Therefore, in light of the diversity, complexity and multidimensionality of the lived experience, human dignity ceases to be a theoretical abstraction and gains richer content.

### 2.2.2 Criticism of an abstract human dignity

Human dignity as an ‘abstraction’ in the international human rights narrative is criticized by Oliver (2011) and deemed as harmful by Toombs (2004). Oliver (2011) examines the loss of human dignity in accounts of torture and cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment, as she explores the “lived experience of suffering human beings” (p. 85). Specifically, she focuses on the experience of dehumanization from the perspective of the victims, analyzing various historical accounts. Based on various testimonies on dehumanization, through inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment as well as torture, she brings forth the corporeality of the experience. Among other, she argues, it is imperative to recognize the essential position of the body in these testimonies. The body serves as a physical metaphor of dehumanization. The denial of the body comes to represent a total loss of personal autonomy, integrity, and identity for the victims. By being reduced to just a suffering body, the victims also experience a loss of voice and personhood, and ultimately a loss of their humanity. Corporeality and suffering are rendered crucial to the understanding of human dignity. The author is critical of the international human rights narrative, arguing that references to the human being, including human dignity, remain entirely abstract, with no references to corporeality, ignoring the important moral relation to suffering.

In an account of living with multiple sclerosis, Toombs (2004) reflects on her own experience and argues that prevailing cultural values, concerning health, independence, physical appearance, and mortality result in a loss of human dignity for persons living with incurable illness and disability. Toombs (2004) states that in everyday life, human dignity is equated with ‘worth’, as perceived internally or as perceived by others (p. 193). First, she suggests that the prevailing cultural value placed on independence and self-reliance, stemming from the construction of personal autonomy, is harmful to persons with physical disabilities. Personal autonomy, equated with ‘doing’ rather than just ‘being’, has

detrimental effects on the validation of human dignity for disabled persons, who cannot always 'do'. A second cause of the loss of human dignity, related to personal integrity, comes from the lack of bodily control, such as the use of the body, appearance, or control over bodily functions, such as bladder or bowel control. This is identified as a great source of humiliation. Third, the public perception of disabled persons as not living a meaningful, but limited life is perceived to cause a loss of human dignity. Consequently, as argued by the author, persons with disabilities are "needlessly handicapped by social structures and practices". She suggests that persons with disabilities should be tended to as *persons*, not in terms of their *disabilities*, in order to enjoy a life in human dignity. Toombs (2004) argues that prevailing ableist values, such as those that imbue the interpretation of human dignity, are detrimental to persons with disabilities and result in a loss of human dignity in the lived experience.

Overall, from the works of Oliver (2011) and Toombs (2004), human dignity in the lived experience, emerges as more than a theoretical abstraction. Corporeality, in terms of control, appearance, and connection to the inner self or the moral self, is essential to human dignity or the loss thereof. Ignoring corporeality, suffering, and the connection between the material and immaterial self, or reinforcing abstract interpretations of human dignity, may result, in fact, in an overlooked loss of human dignity in the lived experience.

### **2.3 Research considering poor, Roma women**

Finally, following theoretical and empirical literature on human dignity, I turn to the specific case of poor, Roma women. More generally, their concerns have been subsumed under literature and research on mainstream Roma issues (Kocze, 2008). Theoretical literature and empirical research considering the specific location of poor, Roma women at the intersection of multiple oppressive systems only began emerging in the last decade. Their inner perspectives and lived experiences have not been extensively considered. Therefore, the construction of human dignity by poor Roma women, in their lived

experience, at the intersection of multiple oppressive systems has remained thus far uninvestigated.

In the last decade, several studies concerned with European policies towards Roma, began to take into account the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and class, and the specific perspective this entails for poor, Roma women. Kocze & Popa (2009) analyze policy efforts towards Roma in Central and Eastern Europe and conclude that policy debates do not consider Roma women's social position intersectionally in policy-making. More recently, D'Agostino (2015) points to the lack of attention given to the specific position of Roma women, at the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity based discrimination, in EU policies in Central and Eastern European states. However, as these studies are concerned with policy initiatives, the perspectives and lived experiences of the poor, Roma women are not investigated. A notable exception is constituted by a study by Kocze & Popa (2009), where Angela Kocze's incorporates her own experiences as the daughter of illiterate Roma parents, Roma woman, feminist and Roma rights activist. All these studies, however, focus exclusively on the situation of poor, Roma women in Central and Eastern Europe.

In addition, several reports by human rights organizations focus on the situation of poor, Roma women, in light of their perspectives and lived experience. These reports show that poor, Roma women are particularly vulnerable to violence, both in the public and private sphere. A report by *Medica Zenica*<sup>16</sup> (2001) highlights the violence experienced by Roma women in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the intersection oppressive race, class, and gender power relations. A further report by *Asylum Aid*<sup>17</sup> (2002), focusing on the experiences of Roma women in Romania, Czech Republic and Poland, shows that Roma women inhabit "a fourth world", experiencing multiple intersecting discrimination, particularly relating to

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<sup>16</sup> Medica Zenica is the Bosnian chapter of Medica Mondiale, offering assistance to women traumatized by war, domestic violence, or street violence.

<sup>17</sup> Asylum Aid is a non-governmental organization that seeks to to secure protection and offers legal advice to refugees in Great Britain.



gender violence, persecution, and a lack of protection from the state. These reports, too, however, focus exclusively on Central and Eastern Europe.

Theoretical and empirical literature concerning the situation of poor, Roma women is extremely limited. The research reports produced by human rights organizations confirm findings in academic literature and research. However, the inner perspectives and lived experiences of poor, Roma women remain largely unconsidered and their construction of human dignity remains unknown. Moreover, theoretical literature and research focuses on Central and Eastern Europe, not considering recent Roma migrations across Europe into Western and Northern Europe.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This review of theoretical and empirical literature on human dignity has shown that the theoretical interpretations of human dignity in the international human rights narrative, as produced by jurists, remain abstract, failing to incorporate the diverse, rich, and multifaceted content emerging from the lived experience. They also fail to capture the inner perspectives and lived experiences of persons located at the intersection multiple oppressive power systems and consequent vulnerabilities. This is also the specific case of poor, Roma women. Theoretical literature and empirical research concerned with their position at the intersection of classist, racist and gendered power systems is scarce, rarely considered the lived experience, and it is focused on the Central and Eastern European context. Knowledge, thus, on the construction of human dignity by poor, Roma women, especially in Norway, is notably missing.

### 3 Theoretical perspectives

In this research project, I rely on feminist modes of inquiry. Feminism, as a research perspective, is characterized by “multi-, inter-, trans- and post-disciplinarity”, resulting in a diversity of feminisms (Harding 1986; Lykke, 2010, p. 127; Tong, 2001). I rely, specifically, on intersectional feminism,<sup>18</sup> which in itself, as a perspective, shows further diversity (Collins & Chepp, 2013; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005; Walby, Armstrong & Strid, 2012).<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, several common features characteristic to intersectional feminism are identifiable and are central to this research project. Specifically, these are: the production of knowledge, knowledge/power inequalities and the need for reflexivity in research; the intersection of oppressive power systems; the diversity, complexity, and multidimensionality of the lived experience; and giving voice to women and other oppressed groups. In this section, I present the central concepts characteristic to intersectional feminism and, then, outline their relevance to this research project.

#### 3.1 Relevant theoretical concepts

To begin with, feminist modes of inquiry give particular attention to epistemology *per se*, as it seeks to “unlock fixed and stereotyped ideas and concepts of gender, sex, science, and knowledge production” (Lykke, 2010, p. 3). *Knowledge production* is always “situated” (Anderson, 2012; Haraway, 1991, p. 183-201; Lykke, 2010, p. 4). The researcher is always “*in media res* (i.e. in the middle of), participant and in compliance with the analyzed world”, not outside, detached, objective (Lykke, 2010, p. 5). From this perspective, the production of knowledge entails a subjective aspect, where the researcher is “involved, in compliance and co-responsible” in the production of knowledge (Lykke, 2010, p. 5). The researcher does not simply present an objective description, but “produces a story, of which she or he is a part”. Nonetheless, reflecting on her or his position and research

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<sup>18</sup> Intersectionality as a perspective is not exclusive to feminism, but to many other theoretical perspectives.

<sup>19</sup> For an overview of feminist theorizing on intersectionality, please see Collins & Chepp, 2013; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005; Choo & Ferree, 2010; and Walby et al, 2010. I employ feminist intersectionality as a perspective, rather than a specific method (see Choo & Ferree, 2010 for a discussion of the differences).

technologies, the feminist researcher offers knowledge of the reality that the “she or he ‘sees’ from the position in which she or he is materially discursively located in time, space, body and historical relations” (Haraway, 1991; Lykke, 2010, p. 5)

Furthermore, feminist scholars, in light of Foucault’s (1980) and Lytorad’s (1984) work, emphasize that knowledge and power relations cannot be separated as knowledge is constructed within and, simultaneously, constructs power relations (Collins, 1986; Collins & Chepp, 2013).<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, intersectional feminist perspectives point to the inter-relations nature of power relations, their co-production, and fluidity, in an attempt to move away from Western binary thinking (Collins 1991; Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis 2002; Phoenix and Pattynama 2006). Different locations, within intersecting power relations, may result in different knowledges, and, given the existing structural arrangements, some may gain a legitimate and authoritative position, in relation to other locations (Collins & Chepp, 2013). By examining the production, legitimation, and authority of specific knowledge, feminist scholars seek to discover the ways in which women and other oppressed, subordinate, or discriminated groups are disadvantaged in/by dominant *knowledge/power* practices (Anderson, 2012; Lykke 2010).

In doing so, feminist scholars point to the *intersection*<sup>21</sup> of power systems (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, country of origin, citizenship status and so forth) that co-produce one another (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins & Chepp, 2013). For instance, “sexism, racism, class exploitation and similar oppressions, mutually construct one another, drawing upon similar practices and forms of organization” (Acker, 1999; Collins & Chepp, 2012, p. 59). This intersecting ‘constellation’ of power relationships then produces “unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for individuals and groups positioned within them” (Collins & Chepp, 2012, p. 59-60). Given this perspective, *the diversity*,

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<sup>20</sup> Feminist intersectionality scholars acknowledge that this applies to intersectionality as a knowledge project as well (Collins & Chepp, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> The term ‘intersectionality’ was coined by Crenshaw (1991), however, other terms to describe an intersectional perspective are the following: ‘matrix of domination’ (Collins 1990), ‘complex inequality’ (McCall 2001), ‘integrative approach’ (Glenn 1999), ‘race-class-gender’ approach (Pascale 2007).

*complexity, and multidimensionality of the lived human experience* have to be taken into account (Dill, 2002). By acknowledging the lived experience, feminists seek to link theory and practice and *give voice* and render visible individuals in groups at “neglected points of intersection” (McCall, 2005, p. 1774).<sup>22</sup> For instance, Crenshaw’s (1991) seminal work shows that in the case of women of color, given the categories of gender and race, an analysis focused on either gender or race, would miss the complexity of the experience of this group. Intersectional feminism brings forth the experiences of women at the intersection of oppressive power systems, giving voice to those on the margins (Edin & Kefauver, 2005).

Intersectional feminism, consequently, makes a significant contribution to the study of *inequality* (Collins & Chepp, 2013). By locating power “relationally and complexly across multiple intersecting systems of dominance ... operating within different domains of social organization”, an intersectional feminist perspective allows for a richer account of power and inequality, in light of the diversity, complexity, and multidimensionality of the lived experience (Collins & Chepp, 2013; Dill, 1983; Collins, 2009). An intersectional account brings forth the experiences of individuals on the margins, outside of or in-between social boundaries (Collins & Chepp, 2013). Furthermore, the attention given to complex, relational, and co-constructing power relations points to the importance of not only researching oppressions, but also privilege, in light of the “complex and multifaceted dynamics of inequality” (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Collins & Chepp, 2013, p. 66).

### **3.2 Analytical framework**

In this research project, I am concerned with the construction of human dignity from different material, social and cultural locations that result in different knowledges. I am particularly interested in the knowledge produced by persons at the intersection of

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<sup>22</sup> Intersectional feminist approaches have been reviewed by McCall (2005) in the following categories: intra-categorical approach (focusing on groups at the margins), anti-categorical approaches (that seek to deconstruct social categories), and inter-categorical (that seek to analyze the changing configurations of inequality).

oppressive power systems, given that the knowledge of human dignity, considered authoritative and legitimate in the international human rights system, is produced by persons in privileged positions, thus reflecting power/knowledge inequalities. In doing so, I consider the diversity, complexity and multidimensionality of the lived experience, for a more inclusive, contextualized, and less abstract interpretation of human dignity in international human rights law. I am concerned, specifically, with the location of poor, Roma, women, at the intersection of multiple oppression systems, since their experiences are usually analyzed along a single axis of power and do not account for the diversity, complexity and multidimensionality of their lived experience. Finally, in this research project, I also reflect on my own location in the production and legitimation of knowledge.

## **4 Methods**

In this section, I outline the empirical background to the research, and then proceed to present the research approach and methods employed, ethical considerations, as well as my own position within the research. I employ a qualitative approach, through an exploratory case study design. As a specific method, given the purpose of this research, I make use of thematic narrative analysis. I explain why, in the context of this research, such a design and methods are most suitable. I analyzed the data, collected through in-depth interviews, group interviews, and participant observation, through qualitative analytic procedures. I explain my data collection and fieldwork strategies as well as analysis strategies, within the scope of this research. Finally, I reflect upon my own position within the research and I address the ethical considerations raised by this research project.

### **4.1 Empirical context**

In this section, I present the empirical context to this research. I briefly outline the situation of Roma in Europe and of poor, Roma women in Norway, as to show the necessity of empirical research related to their human dignity.

#### **4.1.1 Roma across Europe and into Norway**

Poor, Roma women's migration to Norway, in recent years, has been part of a greater migration of Roma across Europe. Seeking to escape discrimination, poverty, and violence, Roma from Central, Eastern and Southern began migrating to Western and Northern Europe, as the enlargement of the EU and of the Schengen area allowed for free travel across the continent (OSCE, 2010; Norwegian Center against Racism, 2012). However, the Roma have encountered a similar situation in the receiving states. As shown in a report by the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE, 2010), Roma migrants in Western and Northern European states experience violations of their fundamental human rights in the receiving states, e.g. in terms of freedom of movement, protection of residency, privacy, liberty and security of the person, and access to socio-economic rights, such as housing, health services, and education. Moreover, public attitudes regarding Roma

in Western and Northern European states have been increasingly discriminatory (OSCE, 2010).

While it is difficult to establish the exact number of Roma in Norway, it is estimated at roughly one thousand, the majority coming from Romania (Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015). Roma from Romania have begun traveling freely to Norway since 2007, when Romania acceded to the EU and in higher numbers since 2012, when the transitional controls were lifted. Much like in the rest of Europe, in Norway, too, Roma migrants experience poverty and deprivation. They support themselves, and their extended families in Romania, by begging, recycling, shifting through commercial or residential waste, or as street entertainers (Oslo Church City Mission, 2013). The Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (2014), in a periodical report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), stated that Roma persons are described in public discourse as “organized criminals who beg, steal and litter” and identify hate speech towards Roma in online newspapers, social media and websites designed for such propaganda (p. 9). Moreover, in a report by the Norwegian Center against Racism (2012), Roma respondents reported extensive harassment and discrimination in Norway. Overall, the Roma migrants appear to be the most discriminated minority in the Norway (Norwegian Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities, 2012).

In political, media and public debate, the situation of poor, Roma women, and Roma in Norway more generally, is discussed in relation to their human dignity, particularly of those who beg on the street. Roma women activists from Romania also describe the situation of poor, Roma women in Oslo as an affront to Roma dignity (Norwegian Helsinki Committee Panel Debate, 2015).

## **4.2 Methodological approach**

In this research project, I employ a qualitative research methodology, as it allows for theory to emerge from the empirical setting. Since no investigation of poor, Roma women's own construction of human dignity has been conducted to date, a qualitative methodology allows for an in-depth investigation. In addition, a qualitative methodology allows for the participants own voices, inner perspectives, and interpretations to emerge.

### **4.2.1 Exploratory case study research design**

I opt for an exploratory case study design, as it allows for an in-depth study of a little explored, yet complex issue, through contextual analysis (Patton, 2002, Yin, 2003). The case study is that of poor, Roma women, unintentionally homeless in Oslo, living on a subsistence income gained from begging. The case study is made up of three distinct, nested case studies, each representing the story of one poor, Roma woman. The exploratory case study design is especially appropriate for the investigation of the construction of human dignity by poor, Roma women, as a case of special interest. This specific case requires investigation as to bring forth the experience of persons previously under-researched, under-represented, and unheard.

### **4.2.2 Narrative methods of inquiry**

As methods, in this research project, I employ narrative methods. These methods are favored in feminist research as they allow for women's own concerns, voices and knowledge to come forth. Narrative methods comprise of methods to collect and interpret texts in narrative form, as to illuminate, in as comprehensively as possible, the complexity of the lived experience (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). Narrative methods, as put by Riessman (2008), explores how "knowledge is constructed in everyday world, through an ordinary communicative act – storytelling" (p. 14). Narratives create meaning, imposing "a meaningful pattern" on events and ideas, which would otherwise be disconnected, and establish coherence in time and space (Ochs & Capps, 2001, Salmon & Riessman, 2008, p.



79). In this way, individuals construct their story, their identity, their experience, through narrative. Narrative methods are particularly useful for case centered research, as they render a more comprehensive image of a person's live, in specific social spaces, at certain social times, from their own perspective (Abbott, 1992, p. 428). As observed by Yuval-Davis (2006), "identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)" (p. 202).

The use of narrative methods, in this research project, allows me to present a story of poor, Roma women's *own stories* of human dignity. They also allow for human dignity as a construct to emerge from the context of *their life experience* and *perception of this experience*. Narratives, thus, offer "especially translucent windows" into meaning and the construction of meaning from specific perspectives (Patton, 2002, p. 116). Moreover, 'the narrative turn' in qualitative inquiry "honors people's stories as data that can stand on their own as pure description of experience, worthy as narrative documentary of experience" (Patton, 2002, p. 116). Narrative methods allow, thus, for the emergence of the voices of poor, Roma women and validates their interpretations of human dignity as knowledge, given their subjective perspectives and lived experiences.

### **4.3 Data collection**

In this section, I first present my data collection strategies and data collection methods. Second, I present the participants in this research, selected purposefully, for diversity and richness of data. Lastly, I present my data collection methods, specifically participant observation, group interviews and in-depth interviews, chosen as to allow for a comprehensive analysis of human dignity in the inner perspectives and lived experience of the participants.

#### **4.3.1 Data collection strategies**

All data for this research project was collected in 2015 in Oslo, Norway. Nonetheless, my intellectual and practical engagement with the environment and poor Roma, women and

their human dignity concerns began as early as 2013. I began fieldwork specifically for this project in February 2015. I was already known to most of the poor, Roma women, from my previous volunteering and work with undocumented homeless migrants, at the Oslo City Mission and Oslo Red Cross and from another research project on homelessness in Oslo, conducted by the Norwegian National Institute for Human Rights. It had taken some time, but I had been *accepted*. As an ethnic Romanian and speaker of Romania, I was included in the women's joys and woes, given our perceived cultural affinity. My direct contact and closeness to the population, my personal experience, and my insights into the situation have been an essential part to my inquiry, in terms of defining the research question and, subsequently, choosing the methodology, methods employed in this research project, and the themes explored (Patton, 2002). I sought to immerse myself into the "naturally occurring complexity" of the situation, as this makes possible "*both* a description and understanding of both externally observable behaviors *and* internal states" (worldview, opinions, values, attitudes, and symbolic constructs)" (Patton, 2002, p. 48, *emphasis in original*). Following Bruyn's perspective (1963), I consider that "understanding can only be achieved by actively participating in the life of the observed and gaining insight by means of introspection" (p. 226). My purpose was to acquire "an *inside* understanding - the actors definitions of the situation" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 102, *emphasis in original*). In this way, poor, Roma women's own interpretations of human dignity emerge in light of their inner perspectives and the diversity, complexity and multi-dimensionality of their lived experiences.

#### 4.3.3 Participant selection

Based on my preliminary fieldwork, I initially selected four participants, who manifested interest in the project. Due to reasons unrelated to this research project, one participant withdrew. Purposeful sampling allowed for the selection of diverse, information rich cases, necessary for an in-depth analysis. Each participant represents a distinct case study, nested under the specific case study of poor, Roma women, from Romania, unintentionally homeless in Oslo, Norway. I sought to select participants who differed in background in as

much as possible, besides having the representative characteristics of the group, in terms of class, race/ethnicity and gender. The participants self-identify as women, Romanian Roma, and poor. They are all unintentionally homeless in Oslo and sleep in the Oslo City Mission Emergency Shelter for Undocumented Migrants (from here on referred to as ‘the shelter’)<sup>23</sup> and, occasionally, outdoors. Three make a subsistence income from begging. They originate from different regions of Romania and belong to different Roma sub-groups. They have different ages. They have a different background in terms of education and employment. They also manifest different perspectives and experiences of human dignity. The selected participants showed an interest in the research project and wished to share their experiences with me and the reader. They all spoke about wanting to tell their stories, to be heard, “for things to get, perhaps, a little bit better” (Participant, 2015, *author’s field notes*)

#### 4.3.2 Data collection methods

For the purpose of this research project, I collected data through participant observation, unstructured group interviews, and semi-structured, in-depth, individual interviews. As preliminary fieldwork, I spent several evenings a week at the shelter, I spent time around Oslo’s Central Station, and on the streets of Oslo, together with poor, Roma women, as they went about their days, moving around the city, begging, making food, washing up and getting ready for sleep. Participant observation and the unstructured group interviews allowed me to identify the themes relevant to the construction of human dignity in the lived experience of the participants. It also allowed me to establish relationships based on trust, know the participants, and begin to understand their experiences. I, consequently, identified

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<sup>23</sup> Oslo City Mission Emergency Shelter for Undocumented Migrants (Akuttovernatting for fattige tilreisende Oslo) offers emergency shelter to women and men over sixty years old. The cost of a night is 15 kroner and a maximum of five nights at a time can be reserved. The guests, women and men over 60, share all facilities, which consist of one large sleeping room (capacity of 50 beds), a sitting area, and two toilets. Should capacity be exceeded, priority is given to persons over 60, pregnant women, and persons with disabilities. A ‘lottery’ is then organized for the remaining free beds. The shelter regulates behavior and activities there and breaking the rules generates a warning or a ban, depending on the severity of the action (e.g. washing clothes in the sink generates a warning; verbal abuse or threats towards staff generate a 5 day ban).

the participants for in-depth, semi-structured interviews, who wished to participate in the research project and tell their stories. For the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, I developed an interview guide,<sup>24</sup> developed through an iterative process. The interviews were conducted, in private, at the shelter before opening hours. I explained to the participants that I was there to learn from *their knowledge*, as I had been all along on the course of the research project.

#### **4.4 Data preparation**

With regard to data preparation, I transcribed and categorized all field notes, marked quotations, significant personal reactions, and points to be further investigated. I then followed up on several points in the interviews. I audio recorded the semi-structured, in-depth interviews, and transcribed them verbatim. I removed from the transcripts all directly identifiable information, volunteered by participants in the course of the research project. For use in the final text, I have translated the quotations from Romanian to English.

#### **4.5 Data analysis**

Part of the family of narrative methods, described in section 4.2.2, I employ specifically thematic narrative analysis. This particular method of analysis is focused on content, on “*what is said*” by participants, in light of identifiable themes in the data (Risemann, 2008, p. 53-4, *emphasis in the original*). I interpreted the data in light of prior developed themes, the data themselves, and the purpose of the investigation. By using thematic narrative analysis, unlike with other similar qualitative methods, I sought to maintain the integrity of the participants’ stories.

I developed the themes for analysis through an iterative process that involved the interplay of empirical knowledge gained in the field in the last two years, in light of the participants’ perspectives and experiences, and theoretical considerations of human dignity. As a result of this interactive process, I developed six themes: personal integrity, autonomy of the

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<sup>24</sup> The interview guide is attached in Appendix 1 to this document.

person, satisfaction of basic needs, group identity, non-discrimination, and suffering.<sup>25</sup> Each theme had a positive and a negative aspect, as to capture the gain or loss of human dignity. Personal integrity was considered in terms of ‘worth’ or ‘humiliation and cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment’. Personal autonomy comprised of ‘decision making’ and ‘voice’ or a lack thereof. Group culture comprised ‘cultural identity’ and ‘cultural practices’. Basic needs accounted for ‘education’, ‘food and water’, ‘health’, ‘housing’, ‘sanitation’, ‘work’ or a lack thereof. Non-discrimination consisted of ‘non-discrimination’ and ‘discrimination’. Suffering encompassed ‘joy’ and ‘suffering’, both physical and emotional.

In terms of analysis, I developed two levels. On the first level of analysis, I organize the story of each participant, from the collected data, relying on the participants own words, as to allow for their own inner perspective and lived experiences and, ultimately, own interpretation of human dignity to come forth. On the second level of analysis, based on existing theoretical literature and empirical literature on human dignity in the lived experience as well as knowledge gain through field work, I analyze the women’s interpretations of human dignity.

On the first level of analysis, based on the data, I sought to organize the narrative accounts of the participants, which moved across in time and space, in the form of a story. I have also considered unspoken communication, for instance, in the form of emotions expressed through laughter or crying, and sought to include it in their story. On the second level of analysis, I performed a thematic narrative analysis, using the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti. I sought to identify the themes of human dignity within the overall narrative, as constructed by participants across different experiences, interactions, and environments.

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<sup>25</sup> The detailed code manual for each theme can be found in Appendix 2 to this document.

## **4.6 Reflexivity**

I use this section to reflect upon my own position within this research, the participants', and the reader's (Patton, 2002). To begin with, I became interested in the lives of poor, Roma women, while volunteering with organizations working with Roma in Oslo. As one of the few Romanian speakers, my role was to bring forward the concerns of Roma to Norwegian service providers and facilitate their access to resources and facilities. The women would generally speak about their suffering, which remain largely unknown to most. I, thus, decided to undertake this research project as means to bring their voices forth.

As an ethnic Romanian, able to speak Romanian, with an understanding of Roma culture, Norwegian culture, and of the participants' context, I was described 'universal' by participants and allowed to enter their lives. I also sought to emerge myself in the environment, explore the differences, and establish various relationships, as to be able to bring their stories forth. As I am a white, middle class, woman, the participants aware of the knowledge differences among us, sought to explain their perspectives and experiences, with care.

The participants in this research, too, were self-reflexive in relation to the knowledge they sought to transmit. They made conscious choices as to what should be shared with me and then with the reader. The data in this research project is self-reported and, thus, dependent on the participants' perspectives and experiences. I also urge the reader to reflect upon their own knowledge regarding human dignity, rights, and social justice, in seeking to understand the knowledge presented here.

## **4.7 Ethical considerations**

In this section, I address the ethical considerations relevant to this research project. First, I present the recommendations for ethical research of the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, followed in this research project, and supply the formal approval for this research project, granted by the Norwegian

Social Science Data Service.<sup>26</sup> Second, I describe a specific ethical issue that arose in the course of this research project.

#### 4.7.1 Formal requirements

In this research project, I followed the recommendations of the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, specifically with respect for human dignity, in relation to the topic, relation to research subjects, and the reporting of the results. In this research project, I ensured that the participants' integrity, freedom, and right to participate were respected. The participants were given information regarding the research in question, their participation in the research and the purpose of the research. I, thus, ensured that free and informed consent was granted by participants. The participants were also made aware they were able to withdraw at any time, with no consequences, and none of their data would be stored. I also took all measures to respect the participants' privacy and treat all data confidentially. No data making the participants directly identifiable was stored and no data making the participants indirectly identifiable was presented as such in the research project. All collected data was de-identified and stored responsibly, following the data security requirements of the University of Oslo. Since the participants in the research project are part of a vulnerable population, I was under obligation to request and was subsequently granted approval from the Norwegian Social Science Data Service, under project number 42599, as a result of the ethical commitments described in this section.

#### 4.7.2 Specific issues

In the course of this research project, I was faced with one specific ethical issue. One of the participants requested financial compensation for the time she would spend in the semi-structured, in-depth interview, as this would generate a significant loss of income for her,

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<sup>26</sup> The Data Protection Official for Research (NSD) is responsible for data protection in research undertaken in all Norwegian Universities and must, hence, grant formal approval of any research dealing with personal information undertaken in a Norwegian university.

that day. I explained the ethical considerations and concerns that prevented me from making such a payment. She understood and agreed to meet at the end of a day of begging, as not to cause a loss of income.



## 5 Results

In this section, I present the results of the empirical qualitative investigation. I first relate the stories of three, poor, Roma women from Romania, gaining a subsistence income from begging, and unintentionally homeless in Oslo, Norway. Next, I analyze their own constructions of human dignity, in light of their inner perspectives and the diversity, complexity and multi-dimensionality of their lived experience, at the intersection of multiple oppressive systems.

### 5.1 The women\*

I relate here the stories of Maria, Lina, and Ana,<sup>27</sup> as they wished to be heard. “Write about all of this”, Maria said, “many ask and want to know about our problems, but we cannot answer, so write about it”. While the accounts presented here are not comprehensive, due to the constraints of this research project, they offer a glimpse in the women’s lives. These stories also address concerns that arise frequently in public debate, in which they are just objects of discussion, and never participants,<sup>28</sup> such as their lives in Romania, the move to Norway, begging as a source of income, life on the streets, their hopes for the future, as well as concerns related to their dignity. Ultimately, the stories allow for the women’s own constructions of human dignity to emerge from their lived experience.

*\*please be advised that this section contains some information about sexual assault and violence*

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<sup>27</sup> These are pseudonyms, chosen based on most popular Romanian names, in order to protect the participants’ confidentiality.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, recently, in January 2015, in a debate organized by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, in Oslo, with a local politician, a representative of the Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud, a Roma activist, and a Council of Europe trainer and the National Focal Point of the ROMED/ ROMACT programs in Romania

## 5.2 Maria's story

Maria is a short, heavy set woman, with the look of exhaustion on her face. She begs on the streets of Oslo. She has no choice, she says, there is no work at home, in Romania, and she could “no longer face the hardships”. She worked all her life. But better beg than steal. She used to buy and sell fruit and vegetables in Romania, then worked in agriculture in Portugal, for several years. As Portuguese economy went into crisis, she was forced to migrate up North, first to another Nordic country and now to Norway. She has been travelling back and forth between Romania and Norway for about four years. The money she makes from begging she sends home to her family. She keeps enough to pay for a bed in the shelter and for some food. She has to support her four children, two grandchildren, and her husband, who is sick and cannot work. In Romania, all eight share the two rooms of her house. And they all depend on her.

Maria sends them money for food, for the house, and the younger children's school expenses. She wants her children to stay in school. She was pulled out of school, when she was 14, after she was married off. She did not even know the man, now her husband, but he and his family had decided he would “capture” her. She tells this in a very matter-of-fact manner. He raped her and, following “Gypsy law”, she had to marry him. She did “not have a choice”. She never loved him, “how can you love at 13, 14?” Her parents didn't want her to marry either. But, “so were the times”. They separated at times, there was violence, sometimes she went to the police, but they always got back together for the sake of the children. The children “just happened”, that's how it usually goes. Due to some problems she conceived late, though, only at 17. Her husband is still in her house now. She resents him. A “good for nothing” man. She doesn't want him there, but now that they are old, it's no longer possible to separate. It is difficult to kick him out, since he's a man. She doesn't want to be “shamed by the community” and have to “give up everything” she has worked for all her life, to start over, elsewhere, with someone new, until “it's all forgotten”.

She does not impose any of this “thousand year old Roma nonsense” on her children. A lot has changed, since she was a girl. Gypsy law is no longer as strict. Girls may stay in school, they needn't cover their hair, and they can wear trousers. Some things are still the same, though. Girls must be “chaste” until marriage. It's a matter of honor. They must respect their elders, be industrious, clean, never lie, or curse. Otherwise, they will “lose their value”. Her children, Maria says, have always been free to make their own choices. Her two elder daughters married whom they wanted, when they wanted. She wants her two younger children to stay in school. She wants to care for them and give them all they need. That is why she is in Oslo, on the streets, begging. For her children. Everything is for them.

But it is hard. There is so much pressure, so many thoughts, and so much stress. She hardly ever sleeps at night. “These risks, they will kill you, this stress, it will kill you. When you don't have a bed in the shelter, you're afraid you'll get killed on the street by junkies, when you're not afraid of getting killed on the street, you're afraid the police will take you. Tomorrow a new day starts. God, what will I do if I don't make enough money? I don't have money for food, I don't have money to pay for a bed in the shelter, I don't have money for a cup of coffee, I don't have money to send to my children, at home. And you feel like dying, I swear, or you go insane”. On the street, there isn't much in the way of protection, except in numbers, but she is here alone. She was kicked by some junkies, she was spat on, she was cursed, and her money was stolen. “It's a risk, my life here is a risk. On the street, I risk death. I have no protection. Especially alone. Especially as a woman. This is my biggest fear”.

A day out, begging, is hard. She would “do anything, but sit and beg on the streets, abused and spat on”. She wakes up at 6 am, then goes to the Oslo S train station, with the rest of the women. There is nowhere else to go. But they are always immediately chased out by security. Some mornings, security will not even allow her the time to buy herself a coffee. She sits begging, for about seven or eight hours, whether she wants to or not, in the cold, in the rain, in the snow. She makes 100 kroner, maybe 200, never enough for everything.

Sometimes she eats, sometimes she doesn't. "But how can you live your whole life hungry?" Her body hurts, her bones hurt. But there is no alternative. "Let's say you just can't do it anymore. But there's nowhere to go. You are not allowed in the train station, you are not allowed in the metro, you are not allowed in a restaurant. Where should you stay? On the street? After an hour or two, the police will spot you". For instance, once she was sitting with some others, eating. The police came and ID-ed all of them and, without a word, took her to the police station. She kept asking, in English, what the problem was, but the officers would not reply. She was so concerned, she was shaking. It turned out she had to sign a document for a fine she had gotten some weeks before, for sleeping under a bridge. That time, too, she had been taken to the police station for six hours and fined six thousands kroner. That night she had felt like heart might just give and she might die. The stress is getting to her.

She gets some down time at the shelter. There wasn't even a minute of peace before. But at the shelter, too, she is never sure she will get a bed. Then, once inside, in the one hour before the lights go off, she cannot go through her entire evening routine and must sacrifice something, be it eating, or washing up, or chatting to friends. There are fifty women in the shelter and there is always a line. The conditions in the shelter are "inexistent". She desperately misses having a bathroom and a kitchen. "There is nowhere to wash up. We are women. Is this not a shame? We have our periods, too. It's worse for us than for men. Many of us are going into menopause, we are getting our periods twice, three times in a month. What can you do? It's bad. Where can I wash up? And even if you don't have your period, how long can you carry on without washing up? You wash up in toilets. It's difficult ... You have nowhere to wash your clothes, either ... I carry everything I own ... There's nowhere to make a soup ... There is no conditions for hygiene, for food, for water ... It's difficult ... This is no decent living." The women are not allowed to cook or wash up in the shelter. Breaking the rules will get them warnings and several warnings will get them banned for five days. Maria once washed her underwear in the toilet as "she couldn't take it anymore", was caught, and got a ban. She had expected some

understanding from the Romanian social workers. To the Norwegians, she would not say anything, it is their country. She is afraid to speak up.

Maria says the situation of Roma and Romanians is different from that of Norwegians. “It’s not just us Gypsies, but also Romanians, here in Norway, we don’t have equal rights to them [Norwegians], so we can’t speak up and do what they do in their country ... For instance, you can’t stay in the train station like they do, to get warm, you can’t sleep on the street like they do, you can’t go into a shop to buy food, without being afraid, or sit in a bus without being harassed ... To wash up ... to get clothes ...you don’t have the same rights as them.” And while she says she has felt discriminated not once, but thousands of times, there is one instance that has stayed with her. She tears up as she begins to speak about it. She was in church and the pastor thanked the congregation for their prayers. “He said ‘all of you, *Gypsies*, here in the church’ ... Why did he say that? Why did he not say ‘all of you, *people*, here in the church’. He called us Gypsies, right? But we are all god’s people in the church... We’re not dogs. Are we not human? We are Gypsies, that’s how god made us ... I shouldn’t have felt like that, this is how god made me, a Gypsy, I’m not ashamed, I’m not ashamed ... But you feel offended. You feel separated. You feel like you are not part of their world. Isn’t it so?” She wipes away her tears. “We’re human. I’d like to have it like Norwegians, have a home, have my job, have my children cared for, have welfare. Would I live Romania? I would never leave my own country. But they don’t know our situation in Romania.”

### 5.2.1 Considerations of human dignity

In her account, Maria takes a primarily negative approach to the construction of human dignity, focusing on the loss of human dignity. She describes experiences, events, and interactions that cause a loss of human dignity and consequent suffering. She says the interviews in this research project seemed to be “more like therapy” for her. To begin with, the loss of human dignity for Maria comes from a lack of satisfaction of basic needs. Not having paid work, for instance, is experienced as a primary cause of loss, resulting in a

further loss of human dignity in all other aspects of her life. Not having paid worked has forced her into begging, homelessness, and away from her own country, resulting in various associated experiences of a loss of human dignity. She also perceives the lack of sanitation, access to food and water, and current housing, in general terms and in terms of cultural appropriateness, as undignifying. For instance, the lack of access to proper sanitation, particularly in relation to women's issues (e.g. menstruation), also causes her a loss in terms of personal integrity. The lack of separation of spaces,<sup>29</sup> in relation to hygiene and food and water preparation, characteristic to Roma culture is experienced as undignifying. For Maria, the lack of satisfaction of basic needs generates thus a loss of personal integrity, in terms of humiliation, and personal autonomy, in terms of having a voice in relation to housing standards, as well as suffering.

With regard to personal integrity, the loss is not only associated with the lack of satisfaction of basic needs, as presented above, but also stems from interactions with the Norwegian public, Norwegian police and private security. Specifically, Maria experiences a loss of personal integrity, while begging, when she is spoken to in a derogatory manner (e.g. 'f\*\*\* you, go home'), spat on, or when her cup is kicked by passers-by. She is also chased away from some begging spots. She experiences this as "abuse". It is not begging in itself that she experiences as undignifying, begging is the next best alternative to work, but the treatment she receives while begging. Her interactions with the police have also caused her to experience a loss of personal integrity. She has been stopped and searched repeatedly, unable to associate with other Roma in public spaces, and taken into custody, without due process. Similarly, private security personnel prevent her from accessing certain areas (e.g. central train station and shops or cafes there), while using derogatory language. These experiences and interactions result in a loss of personal integrity and also

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<sup>29</sup> The upper body is pure and the lower body is impure and subsequently so are spaces associated with the upper and lower part of the body and their functions (e.g. spaces related to the upper body/ingestion are pure and spaces related to the lower body/excretion are impure). The two spaces/functions should not mix.

cause her suffering (in terms of anxiety and fear as well as an aggravation of her heart problems).

With regard to personal autonomy, the loss stems from relations with social workers at the shelter as well as relations within the Roma community. Housing conditions and the employees are not sensitive to the needs of homeless, Roma women, she believes, nor open to change. For instance, the women have to share the facilities with men<sup>30</sup> and should they not wish to do so they would have no other option but to sleep outside. Moreover, Maria is afraid to communicate her grievances to Norwegian social workers, and feels that Romanian social workers do not listen or want to listen. Maria has no decision making power nor a voice in her relation to the employees at the shelter, resulting in an overall loss of personal autonomy. In relation to the Roma community, Maria experienced a loss of personal autonomy (specifically in the case of her forced marriage, as a result of bride capturing), but accepts it as a fact of the culture at that time and as well as her immaturity. Growing into a woman she has been able to make her own decisions. The only reason she is now still with her husband is related to the very high social and economic cost of a separation.

Another source of loss of human dignity for Maria comes from the experience of discrimination and inequality. Maria experiences discrimination and inequality (or “not having the same rights” as she puts it) in interactions with the police and in relation to Norwegian citizens. She states that homeless, Roma beggars, women and men, are the one group constantly harassed by the police and security services, not allowed to occupy several spaces (e.g. train station, shops, cafes), nor to come together in groups in public spaces (e.g. parks, squares), while Norwegians are allowed to. Maria also feels treated differently when it comes to the distribution of basic resources and services. For instance, she is not given clothes at various distribution points in the city, as she is told they are exclusively for Norwegian substances users. Maria says she must accept this as it is “their

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<sup>30</sup> Men over 60 are also accepted at the shelter.

country”, however, she feels frustrated and angry because of what she describes as differential, unfair treatment.

Finally, suffering, in terms of physical and emotional wellbeing, is associated with the experiences of a loss of human dignity described above. Life on the streets, sitting and begging, the interactions with the police, security forces, and the public have aggravated her physical health problems (heart problems, back problems, she got frost bite) and caused her mental health problems as well (intense anxiety, feelings of depression) that now interact.

Overall, Maria experiences a loss of personal integrity following humiliating and degrading treatment experienced while begging in relation to the Norwegian public as well as in interactions with the police and private security personnel. These experiences and interactions also cause her to feel discriminated. She also experiences a loss of personal autonomy as well as an inability to enjoy housing, food and water, in a culturally appropriate manner, given her current housing conditions. The experiences, interactions, and events also cause her significant physical, mental, and emotional suffering.

### **5.3 Lina’s story**

Lina is a lively, cheerful, woman, with a beaming smile. She knows how to speak, she says, and she “speaks the truth”. She will tell it like it is. She is an “honest woman” and she came to Norway, about a year ago, for “honest work”. Begging is her “honest work”, now, on the streets of Oslo. She is here with her husband, who also begs and recycles bottles. They are here to “make an honest buck, not other wrongdoings ... to survive the winter, at home, in Romania”. Life is better here than in Romania, she tells. Before, she was in Italy, for several years, working in agriculture. She met her husband there, too. But, after the economic crisis hit, there was little work left in Italy and they decided to come to Norway.

She had nothing left in Romania, no home, no family. She had lost her house, after property restitutions in the 1990s, and was left with nothing. She had to leave the country



to make some money. She tears up speaking about it. In Romania, she worked for 17 years as a cleaner in a police station. She was held in high regard by police officers, clerks, cleaning staff. She was always among “important people”. She respected them and they respected her. She was invited to office parties, she had coffee with the head of the office, she would care for her colleagues’ belongings. She can be counted on, she says, she has character, because she worked. She was always an honest woman, she never stole, not once in her life, she always worked to support herself and her family. She is “different”, she says, than the other [Gypsies]. “To have seen me”, she says, “young, beautiful, speaking without a [Gypsy] accent, you would not have thought I was a Gypsy”. She keeps the Gypsy law, “it would be unheard not to”. She is a settled Gypsy, though, much like Romanians. And she only associates with those Gypsies that are “honest”. People who work are honest. They have character, they respect rules, they are different. And that is why she begs, now, in Oslo. “This is my work now ... I am hired here”. She would never steal, cheat, or commit any other illegalities. She would rather sit on the street, begging for a kroner or two, so she can “make an honest living”.

The money they make from begging, some they save for a house in Romania, some they send to her husband’s family, for her father in law’s medical care. She administers the money, as she is a woman. Men may be tempted to spend it on other things. She and her husband always confer on all their decisions, though, on money and all else: “He listens to me and I listen to him”. He truly cares for her, she says. He is such a “good man”. He saved her from the “sickness” she had, a sickness caused by her first husband, a “wretched, wretched man”. He was a violent man, too. He beat her up constantly, always over the head. Her vision has been impaired since. He brought another woman in the house, too. It made her sick. She decided she would make it on her own, so when she was 19, she took her little son and left. She never wanted to marry her first husband, anyway, but her parents had died when she was nine, her grandparents when she was 12, and she had been promised to this man. She had no one, she was a child, just 12. She did not know any better: “That’s how it is for us [Gypsies]. Did I have the head I have now? I didn’t. If I had

the head I have now, probably I wouldn't have married. What did I know? A child! What did I know?"

Poverty pushed her and her husband into begging. "Rather than stealing, better to beg". People here [in Norway] are kind. Anyone will give you some money for some food. There are Norwegian people who know her and help her with money, food, or clothes. It would be impossible to manage otherwise. They do so, she knows, because she is an honest woman, she has character, and she shows respect. It makes her happy when people stop to chat, laugh with her, when they look her in the eye, and maybe put some money in her cup, rather than throw the money at her. Where she sits and begs, everybody knows her. She sits there quietly, she respects the place, the people around. She keeps it clean. Shopkeepers around are kind to her, they help her out with this and that. If she ever feels unsafe, she knows she can run in one of the shops for help. It is not that she ever feels unsafe, really. Police cars pass by regularly, the street is busy enough, the shops are near. Just sometimes junkies kick her cup and she feels frightened. She does not want any trouble, though, so she just leaves it be. It is "their country, you cannot do anything about it." She would be terrified to sleep on the street, though. Her poor husband has to sleep often on the street and there is a police rule against it. The police is right to have this rule, she says, it is dangerous to sleep on the street, anything can happen. But people who sleep on the street are right, too, they have no choice. So, she is extremely grateful for the women's shelter.

She appreciates the atmosphere at the shelter, the clear rules, and the cleanliness. However, personal hygiene constitutes an important problem and she is sure that "any department of sanitation would tell you the same". Food preparation and water are also important issues. There are no showers and the women cannot wash up, cannot change, or wash their clothes. Lina washes up in public toilets as best as she can, but still, she smells, she says, she needs to change her clothes, she is sick, she is old, she is a woman. She needs to wash up "like any other woman". "We should have a shower. There are no proper facilities ... Every night, to wash in the toilet ... You, to be in our place, you would do the same, dear. You

would wash up”. It is also difficult to never feel clean, not have cooked food or access to water. But there is no choice. So is her life, a life of “destitution, with no home, on the road, working here to make enough to be home for a while, then back”. But, they will not be here forever, she says. She dreams of finding work again as a cleaner, she’s cleaned all her life, and that’s all she would ever want, to clean, to work. And eventually they will save enough money for their “own little house” in Romania.

### 5.3.1 Considerations of human dignity

In her stories, Lina presents a positive construction of human dignity, as she also seeks to construct a positive identity for herself, in terms of her intrinsic worth and in relation to others. She draws her worth from being an honest, truthful, respectful, dutiful, and hard working woman. She sees herself as “different” that “the other Gypsies” in Oslo. What makes her different she thinks is her work experience, her consideration for rules, and her relationships, always based on respect. Lina takes pride in having worked as a cleaner for almost twenty years in Romania and then in Italy in agriculture. She does not experience begging as undignifying and describes it as “honest work” and her “current work” in Norway. Work, thus is an essential source of Lina’s worth, and thus personal integrity.

While she dissociates herself from the “those other Gypsies”, who may be dishonest, disrespectful, criminal, she draws worth from being a Gypsy and having this cultural identity. Like with any people, though, with the Gypsies, too, “there are good people and nasty people”, she says. She wants the Gypsies who commit crimes to be punished, according to the rules. She is proud of all the educated Gypsies, doctors, ministers, engineers, directors, presidents. She is proud of Gypsy art and the language. Anyone could easily learn it. There are Gypsies everywhere in Europe. Europe would not be the same without Gypsies. Group culture, too, constitutes a source of human dignity for Lina.

Relationships based on mutual respect also contribute positively to Lina’s personal integrity. In Romania, at her job, she worked with “important people”. She respected them and they respected her, in turn. She was treated as an equal, she was trusted, appreciated. In

Norway, too, she has established positive relationships, based on respect. Some Norwegians now know and support her, with food, clothing, and money. It makes her glad when passers-by acknowledge her, with a look, or a nod, or a smile. It makes her particularly glad when they stop, try to speak to her, rather than just throw the money at her. She also has a good relationship with the private security personnel in the area where she begs. They always greet her. It means a lot, being greeted, being acknowledged. She has had no interaction with the police, except for one time they stopped and searched her in front of the shelter and found she had a clean record. The police give her a sense of security. Positive relationships, interactions and events are, thus, a source of worth for Lina.

Lina is also proud of the large degree of personal autonomy she has experienced over the years. While, as a child, her marriage was arranged, she puts that down to her immaturity, stating that no child has the maturity for such decisions, and lack of guidance at the time, as she did not have her parents. As an adult, however, she decided to start over, left her first abusive husband, and sought employment in a Romanian city and then abroad. She also shares a relationship of equality, happiness and love with her current husband, whom she chose herself. She sees her autonomy and resilience as great strengths.

The only experiences she has felt were undignifying, while begging, are related to interactions with some of the substance users. Some have kicked her cup or taken her money. There's nothing she can say or do, as it is "their country". She is also afraid for her physical integrity, as she believes any further response would result in violence. She has no voice here and, thus, experiences, to an extent, a loss of personal autonomy. The other undignifying experiences for Lina are related to the satisfaction of basic needs, specifically in relation to sanitation and health and food and water. The lack of access to proper sanitation is experienced by Lina as undignifying, especially in relation to her gender, age, and health. As a woman, and particularly, and elderly, sick woman, she experiences it as undignifying not to be able maintain personal hygiene. She suffers from a perineal tear that

causes her to lose control over her bladder. A loss of personal integrity, in the form of degradation, is thus associated with this, both internally and in relations with others.

Overall, Lina has a positive construction of human dignity, where work, including begging, contributes to her personal integrity and so do positive relationships and cultural identity. Her personal autonomy, in the form of an equal relationship with her current husband and her decision to leave her first, abusive husband and make a life of her own, is also important to her sense of worth. Her most important source of loss of human dignity comes from the lack of satisfaction of basic needs, particularly in relation to sanitation, health and proper access to food and water.

#### **5.4 Ana's story**

Ana has a strong demeanor, she is loud, expansive, but she softens as she speaks. She is a veteran on the streets of Oslo. She first came many years ago, she cannot exactly recall, together with her husband. Some other relatives of theirs also come occasionally. She begs and he is a street entertainer. They usually stay for a few months and go back to spend time with their children. The first year, they stayed just a month, then gradually longer. Life in Romania got more expensive and they needed more money to support the children. They are also saving money for their own house. They now all live in the house of a relative. This year, she has been in Oslo for nine months straight. It has been too long and she cannot stand it anymore. "I will tell you the greatest suffering we have here on the streets. Not that you are cursed, spat on, kicked. You get over that. The greatest suffering comes from not seeing your children. But no one [here] knows what it is like to be without your children". She begins to sob. And with this "suffering in her heart", she has to spend her days on the streets of Oslo, begging.

"A day out, begging is like a rainy day", she tells. "Imagine you sit in your house and look outside the window: dark clouds, rain, bad weather. That's your soul when you beg. And you think of how you'd like to make it all better, you think of your children ... Just waiting on charity ... A beggar's life is woeful, better not to be born than be born and have to beg.

You have to wait for a kroner. I can work, but there is no work to be found ... You are humiliated. The greatest humiliation. You are spat on. Cursed. You wait. Even dogs are treated better than us, here, on the street ... And you can't say anything. You risk violence ... You have to be quiet and accept it. You hold your head low. I don't like it. I don't love this life. I wish I never had to beg again. I've had enough". She remembers her first day in Norway, walking pass the other beggars in the street, seeing them "in that state". She started crying and could not stop that whole day. "What kind of life is this?" she thought to herself.

Before coming to Norway, she never begged, not once. In Romania, she used to work in a brick factory, but no one needed bricks anymore, so the factory shut down. There were no other means to gain an income in the area. She had known poverty before, though. When she was 17, in the last year of high school, her parents separated. Her mother left her father and Ana and her siblings followed their mother. Although Ana's father was a wealthy man, running multiple businesses, since Ana's mother decided to leave, she was left with nothing. Ana remembers the days where they had nothing but dried beans for dinner, at her mother's place, eating and crying. It was then when she first learned about hunger and pain. She had decided to leave with her mother because her father was a harsh, violent man. But he then stopped paying for her education and her mother was unable to pay. She could no longer afford enrolling in university as she had planned. She had dreams to study medicine and become a surgeon. She had chosen that path herself. She was always the smartest of the lot. But when her father stopped paying "it was all over, everything was lost", she says. If she had known, maybe she would have stayed with her father, but she was a child, what did she know?

At the same time, in her mother's hometown, she met her husband. They fell in love. He used to be a "handsome man". In the region where her mother was from, child marriages were not common, girls could choose. If the parents had someone in mind, for their daughter, they would always consult the girl, never force her to marry. Ana and her

husband had their first child “very late” when Ana was already 23, “other [Gypsies] have their children at 14”. They had tried and tried to conceive for years. The relationship with her husband deteriorated throughout the years, though. “He is very jealous”. He constantly holds her back. She would have gone back to school if it weren’t for him. She had some opportunities here in Oslo. She was offered a job at an organization that works with Roma. She is a smart woman, she says, she is educated, she can think. But he always prevents her from advancing in life. He is afraid she would leave him behind. But how could she? They are a family, they have their children together. When he gets drunk, though, he suspects her of “this and that”, he checks on her on the street, he is violent. She has suffered so much because of his jealousy, controlling behavior, and violent temper. He even attacked her on the street, in broad daylight, while she was begging. A Norwegian man intervened and helped her out. Until she came to Norway and saw couples on the street, she had not seen tenderness. She did not know men could be tender. She has only known him.

Also for the first time, in Norway, she has experienced real kindness. She has a friend, a “kind Norwegian woman”. “My Norwegian”, she calls her. She can go shower at her place, sleep, and make food. “She is Norwegian and she respects me, because I am just and fair. She trusts me”. She could go and stay with her Norwegian whenever she wanted, but she only goes on Sundays. She feels more comfortable in her “own world”, with the Gypsy women, at the shelter. Every Sunday she cooks traditional food and her Norwegian packs it neatly and sells it to her friends. Ana asked her not to tell who made the food. She doesn’t want anyone to know “it’s the girl sitting on the corner, begging”. Then they enjoy Sunday dinner together. They chat, they laugh. They have an understanding for one another. Ana speaks some English and she is learning. “Nobody else knows me like she does ... I love that woman ... I would do anything for her.”

But others don’t know her in that way. She has a reputation: “tough”, “argumentative”, “combative”. “They see me as the black sheep”, she says. At the shelter, she respects the rules, but one way or another she always seems to get the blame. It is because she speaks

up, she speaks her mind, she cannot tolerate injustice. For instance, once, she gathered all the women to discuss matters of hygiene and cleanliness, since 50 women have to share a sink and two toilets, and not everyone has the same standards. She explained how the facilities should be used. She explained the rules written by the employees, since not all women can read. As she was explaining she was admonished by an employee for “shouting” at the women. She was just trying to help, since hygiene is a problem. “In your opinion, how can a woman not wash up? Especially during her period. At least a little bit, here and there. It cannot be otherwise”. But they are not allowed. Some employees, women themselves, act as if they do not understand women. Or do not want to understand. She is an educated woman, she also knows Gypsies, she can speak Romanés, it should have been her working at the shelter. If only her husband had not prevented her, it would have been her. It is too much for her to come to the shelter and be further humiliated.

The “greatest humiliation and injustice”, though, comes from the police. She has been stopped and searched, on the street, so many times, for no good reason. She always asks what the problem is, but the officers tell they have to “control” her, she looks “suspect”. She tries to speak to the officers but they usually tell her to “shut up”. She has never broken any law, but they still humiliate her like that. It has gotten better in the last couple of years, she says, the police has “calmed down now”. She recalls 2011, 2012, and 2013 as particularly tough years. She was even put in prison once, for one night. Several families were sleeping in an abandoned building and a fire started and parts of the building burnt down. The firefighters came, the police came, most Gypsies were taken by the police, but she fled. She came back the next day to collect her belongings and the security personnel there told her she could not go in, but had to call the police, if she wanted to. She did so and when the police came they arrested her. She was fined six thousand kroner and put in a cell. They undressed and searched her. She cried and cried and knocked on the door for hours. “Why did you put me in here? Why did you arrest me? Why?” She hadn’t done anything. “Police officers here think they are gods”, she says. Between 2012 and 2013 the police would constantly drive them out of town. Families, friends, acquaintances would



meet in Grønland in the evenings, after work. And there used to be this one police officer who would round them up, put them in a van and drive them out of town. He would then drop them one by one, maybe 40 kilometers out of town, always at night. It was hard to come back, on foot, at night. There was so much suffering then. “He would laugh. He would humiliate us and laugh. And not once, as many times as he wanted. But only him. And his colleagues would help him. And they would laugh”. They were humiliated in other ways, too. For instance, when they made food on disposable grills, in the park, “like any Norwegian did”, the police officers would kick the grills with the food still on and tell them to leave. Both her and her husband would cry. They could not believe it. But now it is better. They don’t get “that kind of abuse, anymore” from the police. As for private security ... “they still think they are gods”.

Ana is going back to Romania, at least for a while. Her older daughter just told her that her “money’s worth nothing” if she was not there. She is very tired, too. She had yet another terrible argument with her husband, over money, he threatened her, hit her. She is now considering taking any job opportunity that might arise and leaving him. Her Norwegian friend is trying to help her out. She needs to think long term now, for the children. And she has suffered far too much. She is forty-something and feels as if she were seventy-five. But she smiles. “Gypsies, they always adapt”, she tells. They are “universal”.

#### 5.4.1 Consideration of human dignity

In her account, Ana presents both a negative and positive account of human dignity and seeks to construct an identity as a righteous, intelligent, and resourceful woman. She draws a sense of self-worth particularly from having an education, from having worked, and from positive inter-personal relationships. Work also contributes to her personal integrity and thus begging, which she does not define as work, is defined as “the most humiliating” activity. For Ana, begging is an undignified activity as it reduces her personal autonomy. She cannot exercise agency and she is forced to “wait on charity”. She experiences this as particularly undignified since she would like to and is able to work. Begging also affects

her personal integrity as she experiences verbal and physical abuse. She has been spoken to in derogatory and offensive terms and she has been kicked as well, while begging. These instances are seen by Ana as “deeply humiliating” and cause her severe emotional suffering.

Her formal education and her “street smarts” also contribute to a positive construction of personal integrity and autonomy. She states she has the knowledge that allows her to stand up for herself, prevents her from being taken advantage of, and allows her to gain the respect of others. She knows her rights. For instance, in interactions with private security forces, due to her language skills and knowledge of her rights, she can stand up for herself, unlike the others. Nonetheless, she feels discriminated against and experiences humiliation and suffering in these interactions.

For Ana, the experiences of humiliation, discrimination and injustice also come from interactions with the police. She has experienced, she states, purposeful humiliation, degradation, and discrimination from the part of the police. In self-reported instances of police-initiated trans-jurisdictional transports,<sup>31</sup> during 2012 and 2012, or later, in arrest, Ana suffered humiliation and degradation, both following verbal abuse and ridicule and physical acts, such as being undressed. This also generated a loss of personal autonomy, and experiences of severe physical and emotional suffering. In addition, being deprived of liberty has also caused her a loss of personal integrity and autonomy, the feeling of being discriminated in relation to other groups, and profound suffering.

With regards to basic needs, Ana’s current housing situation in the shelter causes her to experience a loss of personal integrity and autonomy. She feels unheard and powerless in relation to the personnel. In addition, the conditions and personnel are not accommodating to women’s issues or practices specific to Roma culture. There are no separate sleeping

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<sup>31</sup> Police-initiated trans-jurisdictional transports also known as ‘dumping’ are an informal police practice often used to deal with ‘troublesome persons’ in situations not necessarily best handled by arrests (see King & Dun, 2004).

spaces for women and men, space is not divided appropriately for the preparation of food and access to water and respectively for hygiene and sanitation facilities are improper for women's issues and health.

In terms of her relationships, Ana experiences a loss of autonomy, integrity and suffering in relation to her husband, but also gain in relation to Norwegian friends. While she was free to choose her husband, once married, their relationship deteriorated. She is subject to constant abuse and violence. Moreover, he denies her opportunities for development, in terms of education and employment. She has remained with him for their children. In relation to her Norwegian friends, however, she feels a sense of worth. She feels respected and valued as a person, rather than just the "girl, begging on the corner".

Overall, in her story, Ana seeks to construct a positive identity of a just and smart women, holding strong in the face of adversity, discrimination, and suffering. Her construction of human dignity is associated with experiences, events and relationships, specifically related to personal integrity, autonomy, non-discrimination and equality, group identity and suffering.

## **6 Discussion and conclusions**

In this section, I briefly reiterate the findings related to the construction of human dignity in the lived experience of poor, Roma women. I then discuss the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of these findings. In relation to the theoretical implications, I specifically focus on the need for a less abstract interpretation of human dignity, in light of the lived experience; the importance of an intersectional perspective for a more inclusive understanding of human dignity; and the implications for literature on Roma women. Next, in relation to the employed methods, I discuss the importance of narrative methods in bringing forth inner perspectives and lived experiences as well as the positive role of storytelling for persons usually unheard. I discuss the practical implications of this research project, focusing specifically on the enjoyment respectively violations of the human dignity of the participants. I then address the limitations of this research project. Finally, I provide closing remarks.

### **6.1 Summary of results**

The results of this research project show that, in the lived experience, human dignity has rich, multifaceted, and interconnected components. Personal integrity, autonomy of the person, group culture, the satisfaction of basic needs, non-discrimination, and the experience of suffering/joy, both in their positive and negative construction, cannot be easily separated from one another. More than an abstract construct, human dignity or the loss thereof has a profound impact on the lived experience, not having only legal implications, but also implications for human physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Contextualized, in the lived experience, human dignity gains the depth and breadth necessary to an inclusive interpretation that would allow for more comprehensive legal protections.

For the participants in this research project, a loss of dignity in relation to the lack of satisfaction of basic needs, specifically in relation to the right to work and the right to an

adequate standard of living,<sup>32</sup> causes a further loss of human dignity, in relation to personal integrity, autonomy of the person, cultural identity, and non-discrimination, as well as suffering. Suffering can be both a consequence of the loss of human dignity, for example as a result humiliation, and a cause for the loss of human dignity, for instance in relation to illnesses. A loss of human dignity, in terms of personal integrity and autonomy is experienced in relation to the police, security personnel, and humanitarian personnel. The lack of culturally appropriate facilities and services also causes a loss of human dignity. Overall, the participants also state that they experience discrimination. The participants experience human dignity or the lack thereof in relation to their inner selves, others, and the environment. In their lived experience, the components of human dignity are deeply interconnected. The participants also experience human dignity in ways that are specific to their location at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression.

## **6.2 Theoretical implications**

The interpretations of human dignity in theoretical literature, as produced by jurists, specifically in the international human rights legal narrative (McCrudden 2013, Düwell et al, 2014), remain abstract. As this research project shows, the complexity, diversity and multidimensionality of the lived experience causes equally complex, diverse and multidimensional interpretations of human dignity. This research project aligns itself with extant empirical research on the interpretation of human dignity in the lived experience (Miller & Keys, 2001; Oliver, 2011; Simic & Rhodes, 2008 Tadd et al, 2005; Toombs, 2004), as to highlight the importance of an interpretation of human dignity that is not abstract, decontextualized, or disconnected from the lived human experience. Human dignity in the lived experience garners diverse, complex, and multifaceted interpretations. Furthermore, the findings show that in the lived experience, the different components of human dignity are deeply interconnected and cannot be comprehensively understood in separation, as often done in theoretical literature. In addition, the findings show that the

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<sup>32</sup> This is the case particularly in relation to access to adequate housing, sanitation, and access to food and water.

experience of suffering is essential to the interpretation of human dignity in the lived experience. The experience of suffering is not considered in theoretical interpretations, in relation to human dignity (Oliver, 2010; Toombs, 2004). Nonetheless, the findings show that physical and emotional suffering, and their interaction, may be both a cause for the loss of human dignity as well as an effect of this loss. Overall, this research project contributes to the dialogue on human dignity as initiated by McCrudden (2013) or Düwell et al (2014), by bringing forth the interpretations of human dignity in the lived experiences of persons seldom heard, positioned at the intersection of oppressive power systems.

Interpretations of human dignity, as this research project shows, must also be understood in light of different material conditions, social locations, and the subjectivities they produce, particularly at the intersection of oppressive power systems. The findings in this research project support the theoretical assumptions of intersectional feminism (e.g. Acker, 1999; Crenshaw, 1991; Collins & Chepp, 2012; Dill, 2009), showing that in the case of the women in this research project, their interpretations of human dignity are mediated by the intersection of gender, class, race/ethnicity, nation, age, education, and occupation. As a consequence, the women in this research project find themselves vulnerable to violations of their human dignity and rights.

This research project makes a contribution to extant literature dedicated to Roma women (Kocze, 2008; Kocze & Popa, 2009). As the findings show, the experiences of poor, Roma women cannot and should not simply be subsumed under 'Roma issues', gender issues, or poverty issues. The location of poor, Roma women, at the intersection of multiple oppressions requires a complex analysis of their subjectivities, perspectives, and experiences, beyond simplistic analysis predicted either on class, race/ethnicity, or gender. Moreover, the findings show the diversity of the experiences of poor, Roma women and contribute to an understanding of the Roma community as a diverse one. In addition, unlike in the extant literature on poor, Roma women, in this research project the women were considered participants in the research, co-researchers, rather than simply objects of

research. This research project brings forth their inner perspectives and lived experiences, showing their agency, strength, and courage in the face of adversity, dismantling prevalent stereotypes about poor, Roma women. The women navigate inner, interpersonal and public spaces and negotiate their position constantly, with their human dignity at stake.

### **6.3 Methodological implications**

The use of feminist narrative methods in this research project sought to give voice (Lykke, 2010) to poor, Roma women, previously unheard in the debate on human dignity. This allowed the women participating in this research project to tell their own stories and subsequently present their inner perspectives and lived experiences. Ultimately, this allows for *their own* construction of human dignity to emerge, in light of the diversity, complexity and multidimensionality of *their own* lived experience. As a result, the debate on human dignity has become more inclusive, considering different experiences, perspectives, and validating the knowledge of persons unheard in this debate.

In addition, this research project substantiates the theoretical assumptions underlying narrative methods (Riesseman, 2008). To begin with, the poor, Roma women participating in this research, in and through their stories, sought to construct a positive identity for themselves and the group. They especially emphasize ‘honesty’, ‘respect’, ‘truthfulness’, ‘justness’, ‘correctness’, and ‘dutifulness’ to construct their identities and to dissociate from negative stereotypes referring to the group. Their stories are, thus, functional and purposeful. Their stories must be considered in the current context and power relations, of which the participants are well aware, a context in which they have been judged, stereotyped, and demonized. Therefore, second, storytellers seek to convince the audience of the veracity of their story. Third, as suggested by the use of narrative methods in the medical, health, and care sciences, storytelling has a therapeutic function, as substantiated by one of the participants in this research project. Making participants the subject rather than object of research holds benefits for both research and the participants themselves. Fourth, storytelling should allow the reader to engage with the narrator on an intellectual

and emotional level and, fifth, stories often contribute to mobilization for change. The fulfillment of the fourth and fifth assumption of narrative methods, however, depends on the reader.

#### **6.4 Practical implications**

The findings of this research project have implications for academia and human rights organizations, humanitarian organizations in Norway, and the Norwegian state. The results of this research project, based on self-reported data, describe possible violations of the human dignity and rights of the participants. In relation to their human dignity, participants reported violations of their personal integrity, autonomy of the person, basic needs, group identity, and non-discrimination and equality, in relation to state institutions and organs (such as the police), humanitarian organizations, and the public at large. Concurrently, related violations of human rights have been reported by participants. Consequently, further investigation is necessary, both from the part of researchers and human rights organizations in order to substantiate or refute these claims.

Humanitarian organizations, specifically those providing basic needs resources and services, must consider the diversity of the population they cater for, particularly the specific needs of poor, Roma women, as to contribute to the enjoyment of their dignity, rather than a lack thereof. Of particular importance for the participants in this research project are housing, sanitation, and food and water, both in terms of access as well as cultural appropriateness. The specificity of Roma culture must be taken into account. Moreover, given the severe suffering, both physical and emotional, experienced by the participants in the current conditions, permanent rather than emergency resources and services should be considered. Counselling should also be included as a service, given the psychological strain suffered by poor, Roma women on the streets of Oslo.

Finally, the Norwegian state is under obligation to implement its human rights commitments, to investigate, and to prosecute any possible human rights violations. In light of the claims made by the participants in this research project, an investigation into the



actions of police officers belonging to the Oslo Police District in relation to their treatment of poor, Roma women, homeless in Oslo, is advisable. A similar investigation in the practices of private security personnel is also necessary, given the state's obligation to protect persons from violations of their human dignity and rights. In addition, the Norwegian state should take measures to prevent a public climate conducive to discrimination against poor, Roma women, as highlighted by the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, and prevent violations of their dignity and rights.

## **6.5 Limitations**

The theoretical perspective and methods employed in this research project are not without criticism. Theoretical perspectives that seek to “give voice” receive criticism for obscuring the macro-structures that cause inequality (Choo & Ferree, 2010). However, in this case, when very little is known of micro-level, it is necessary to first bring forth possible unique instances of inequality, which would otherwise remain uninvestigated. Methodologically, too, “giving voice” is not a simple endeavor (Risessman, 2008). It requires a responsibility of choice, knowledge, and the appreciation for the participant's own concerns. In addition, while the case study approach does not allow generalizing the results to a wider population and the interpretation of the results applies to the present case study (Patton, 2002), it nonetheless provides a crucial understanding of the construction of human dignity in the lived experience of poor, Roma women in Norway, a topic thus far uninvestigated and yet with crucial implications for the protection of human dignity in law. While different theoretical and methodological frameworks may reveal different considerations, within the chosen, I conducted this research project in a systematic, rigorous, and transparent manner.

## **6.6 Closing remarks**

To close with, in this research project, I sought to make the voices of poor, Roma women in Oslo heard, to relate their stories of human dignity or a loss thereof, to make space in the theoretical debate on human dignity for interpretations emerging from the perspectives and lived experiences of persons seldom heard. I have been motivated to do so following my

interactions with the women and their environment in Oslo and driven by a critical feminist perspective on the necessity of progressive social action through the law. The international human rights system can only be said to be practically effective when protecting the inalienable, inherent, equal worth of *all* human beings.

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### **Panel debates**

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks, 21 January 2015, *Current Challenges and Opportunities for Human Rights in Europe* (Introduction by Inga Bostad, director of the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights). Litteraturhuset, Oslo, Norway.

Helsinki Committee Panel Debate, 27 January 2015, *Time for a New Norwegian Roma Policy* (Moderator: Gunnar Ekeløve Slydal, Deputy Secretary General, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee). Litteraturhuset, Oslo, Norway.

## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Semi-structured interview guide

1. (Background information)
  - a. personal details (age, education, literacy, language proficiency, health, disability, family & Roma group belonging, other details deemed important by participants): ‘tell me about yourself’
  - b. how much time have you/do you spend in Norway? migration patterns?
  - c. how did you decide to come to Norway?
  
2. ( Private space)
  - a. who are you with here in Norway (family/group membership)?
  - b. how did you decide to get married? have children?
  - c. do you have family in Romania still? What is the situation of your children?
  - d. how do you divide tasks with husband/family here?
  
3. (Income)
  - a. how do you generate income? (what was the situation in Ro)
  - b. how did you decide for this work?
  - c. can you describe a day’s work (i.e. begging, bottle collection)?
  - d. how do you experience the situation?
  - e. what do you do with the money? who administers the money?
  - f. what did you do in Romania?
  - g. what would you ideally do for a job? why?
  
4. (Humanitarian organizations)
  - a. how did you decide to go to the shelter?
  - b. what do you like/do not like about the shelter?
  - c. do you feel understood by the workers there?
  - d. how do you find the rules?

- e. are you consulted regarding the rules? changes?
- f. what do you think about the facilities? adequate?

5. (Public space)

- a. can you describe your interactions with Norwegians?
- b. can you describe your interactions with Police and Security?
- c. do you feel safe in public spaces?
- d. how do you protect yourself?
- e. how were your interactions in Romania? is anything different here?

6. (Dispute resolution)

- a. have you experienced any offenses from the part of others?
- b. what are the most common offenses?
- c. how are disputes resolved in the family?
- d. in the community?
- e. with 'gaje' (non-Roma)?

7. (Discrimination)

- a. what do you know/think about the stereotypes about Roma?
- b. have you heard about human rights? do you know your rights?
- c. do you feel treated differently in your family? community? in Norway?  
Romania?

8. (Homelessness)

- a. what was your living situation in Romania?
- b. how does homelessness affect you?

9. (Food & water)

- a. what do you eat/drink here? is it different from home?
- b. how do you prepare food? is this important to you (similarly with water)?
- c. what was the situation in Ro?

10. (Health & sanitation)

- a. how is your health?
- b. how do you address health problems?
- c. how do you/can you keep personal hygiene?
- d. how do you deal with pregnancy (if applicable)
- e. how do you deal with your menstruation (if applicable)?
- f. what was the situation in Ro?

11. (Leisure)

- a. do you have time to rest?
- b. do you spend quality time with the husband/family/friends?
- c. what do you enjoy doing?
- d. how was it at home?

12. Anything else you would like to say?



## **7. 2 Code book**

### 1. Personal integrity

- integrity loss (humiliation, degradation, inhumane treatment)
- integrity gain (worth)

### 2. Autonomy of the person

- autonomy decision making loss
- autonomy decision making gain
- autonomy voice loss
- autonomy voice gain

### 3. Group culture

- group culture identity loss
- group culture identity gain
- group culture practices loss
- group culture practices gain

### 4. Basic needs

- basic needs education loss
- basic needs education gain
- basic needs food and water loss
- basic needs food and water gain
- basic needs health loss
- basic needs health gain
- basic needs housing loss
- basic needs housing gain
- basic needs sanitation loss
- basic needs sanitation gain
- basic needs work loss
- basic needs work gain

5. Non discrimination and equality

- discrimination & inequality loss
- non-discrimination & equality gain

6. Suffering

- suffering (physical and emotional) loss
- joy (psychical and emotional) gain