«Community integration of homeless people: what do we mean?»

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EUROPEAN RESEARCH CONFERENCE
Social and Economic Integration of Homeless People
• Introduction

• Research
  – Aims
  – Methods
  – Participants
  – Analysis
  – Results

• Conclusion
  – Implications for research and practice
Integration is a major goal of recovery-oriented services.

A recent study showed that changes in social support predicted well-being over and above housing stability (Johnstone et al. 2015).

Social support may be considered an aspect of a broader concept: community integration.

What do we mean?
Integration

Sense of belonging

Social support

Use of resources

Inclusion in the community
**Introduction**

**Program Domains**

- **Housing Environment**
  - Accessibility of community resources
  - Supportiveness of community
  - Safety of neighborhood
  - Normalization of housing

- **Behavioral Environment**
  - Degree of independence
  - Clarity of program expectations
  - Availability of services

- **Support Environment**
  - Active support
  - Personal expression
  - Practical orientation
  - Intensity & interconnectedness of individual support system

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**Personal Factors**

- Socio-demographic factors
- Clinical characteristics
- Health & functioning
- Psychiatric symptoms
- Consumer housing preference
- Length of stay
- Living arrangement

**Community Integration**

- Physical Integration
- Social Integration
- Psychological Integration

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*Wong & Solomon, 2002*
Physical integration refers to the extent to which an individual spends time, participates in activities, and uses goods and services in the community.

Social integration has two subdimensions—an interactional dimension and a social network dimension.

Psychological integration refers to the extent to which an individual perceives membership in his/her community.
The major **difficulties** for research in this area are:

• the lack of a gold standard to define and operationalize the construct
  → difficult to compare research findings

• the construct of community integration needs an operationalization that reflects marginalized people’s experiences and cultural background

(Tsai et al., 2012)
What does it mean ‘integration’ when referring to homelessness?

Which factors can facilitate or hinder the integration of homeless people?
Analyze the point of view of homeless people about “integration”

**Specific aims:**

– Explore their places, relationships and interests
– Know how they describe integration and what they associate with it
– Identify facilitators and obstacles of the integration
Semi-structured interviews (1 h and half)
– Condition of homelessness at least 2 months
– No psychiatric diagnosis

3 Different Services (shelter, housing first, day center)

Questions:
• How do you spend most of the days? (places, activities, interests)
• With whom do you relate more?
• Do you feel integrated? Why?
• What helps or hinders you to integrate?
• Are there any personal features that help or hinder your integration?
• Are there any features of the place where you live that help or hinder your integration?
26 people:

Gender: 5 female, 20 male, 1 trans
Age: from 27 to 64 years
Nationality: 13 Italian, 13 foreigners
Services: 7 HF, 13 shelter, 6 day center
basing on «Grounded Theory»

- Transcription of semi-structured interviews
- In-depth reading
- Creation of codes: identify units of meaning
- Comparison of codes between two independent researchers
- Creating categories
Individual level:

- Dignity and feeling normal people
- Feeling useful
- Respect and trust
- Adaptation
- Good character
- Open character
- Feeling free and autonomous

«I like talking to people, socializing»
Relational level:

- Sharing something with other people
- Have relationship with other people
- Feeling supported
- Supporting other people
- Stay well with other people

«I'm looking for people who understand me... people with dignity, with respect»
Contextual level:

- Knowing the society
- Being involved in activity
- Occupy the time

«Do something...become part of something»
## Results

### Facilitators n. = 318

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal character</strong></td>
<td>Adaptation, social skills, problem solving,</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>«I like talking to people, socializing»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
<td>Work as an economic source and social/motivational facilitator</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>«With work you have a home, you have many things...If you lose your job, you lose everything, you have no friends»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support from services</strong></td>
<td>Economic support and approach of the services</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>«Thanks to the municipality I am here»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Support from family and friends</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>«So many people help me, they understand me»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>House</strong></td>
<td>House as a safe base</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>«I would like to have a home to stay with my children»</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results

### Obstacles n. = 326

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of work</td>
<td>Difficulty in searching job and lack of economic resources</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>«Since I do not have a permanent job, I feel excluded from being able to choose what I want»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter and life in the street</td>
<td>Structural characteristics and relational aspects</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>«You can not integrate here, there are times to must respected, go out at 8 in the morning (...) and come back at 8 pm. You have no time even (...) to have a relation with other people»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal character</td>
<td>Distrust, aggression, insecurity</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>«I would be less irascible»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach of the professionals</td>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>«who should manage the structure does not care about what happens here»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal problems</td>
<td>Health problems, release, alcohol/drug addiction</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>«they all abandoned me after the incarceration»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of the people and prejudice</td>
<td>Indifference, lack of respect</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>«Some look at us a bit badly»</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Community Integration
- Physical Integration
- Social Integration
- Psychological Integration

- Work
- Social Integration
- Character
The **research** could explore the dimensions:

- Involvement in activities/work
- Relationship
- Personality

The **services** could implement:

- Implement job search: activities in which people can have an active role/responsibility
- Create opportunities to socialization: laboratories
- Promote personal skills to create positive relationships (volunteers)
References


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