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

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Social and Economic Integration of Homeless People



- Introduction
- Research
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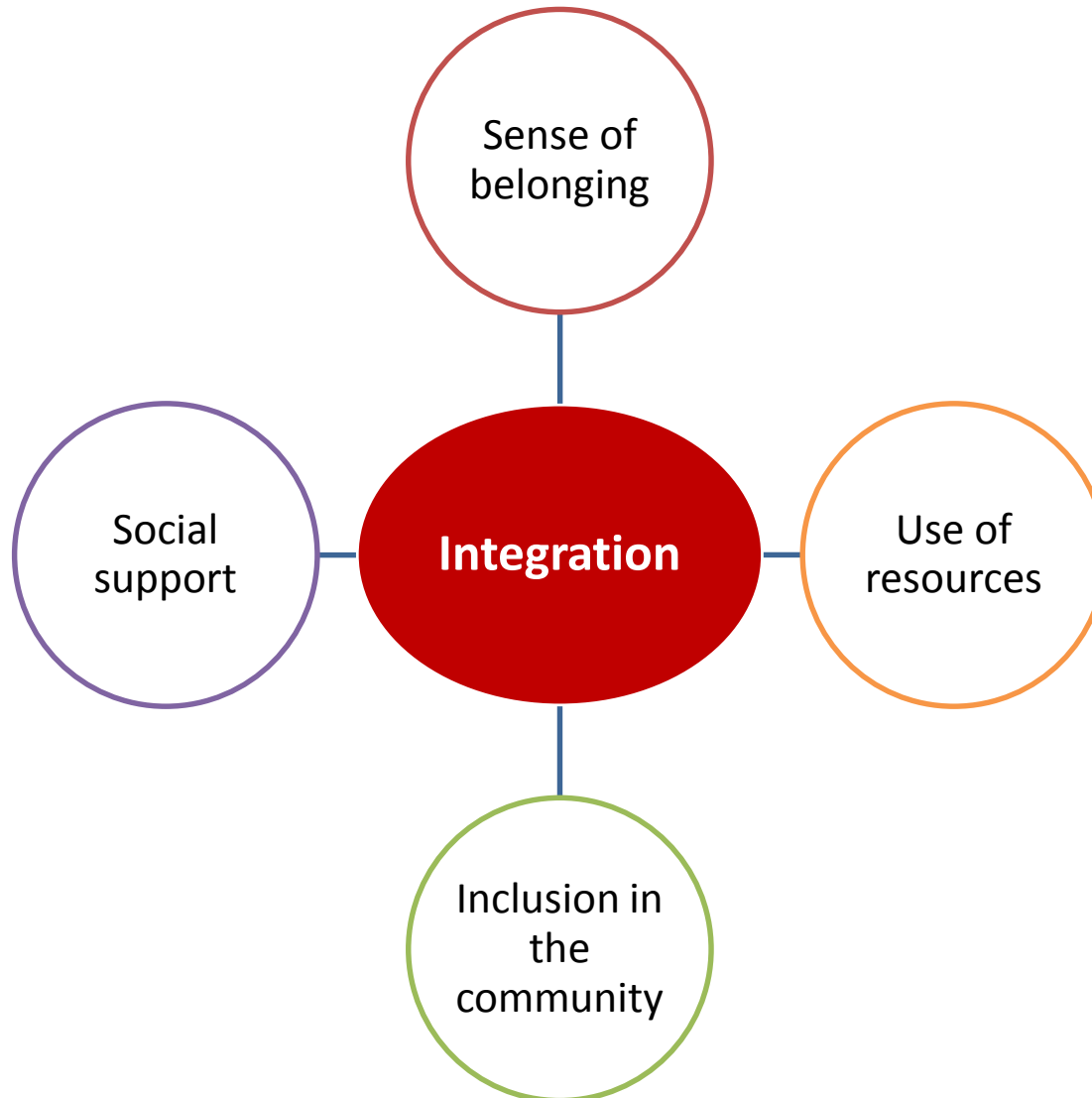
Integration is a major goal of recovery-oriented services

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.



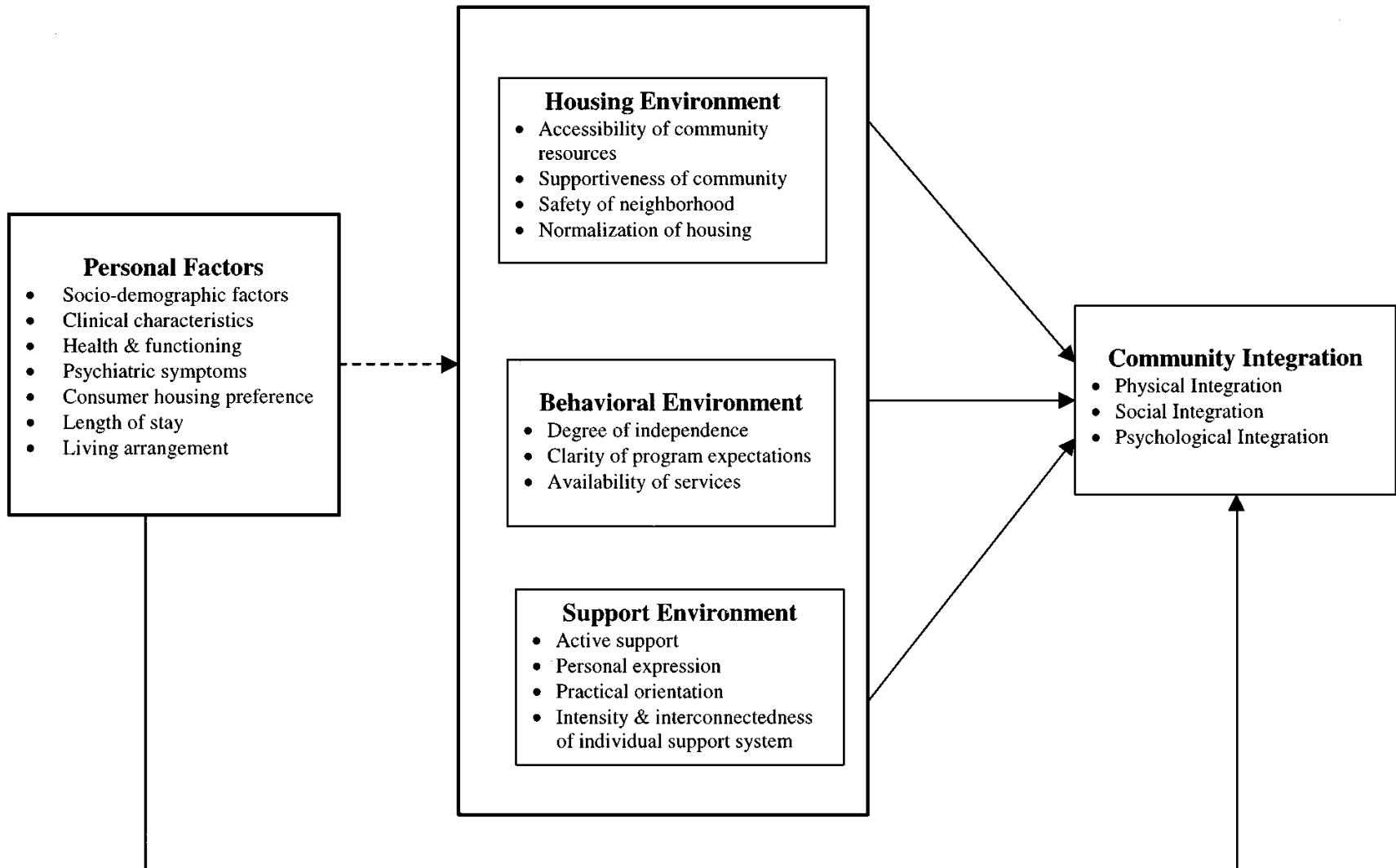
What do we mean?





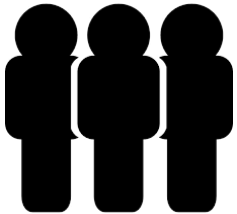
## Program Domains

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?*



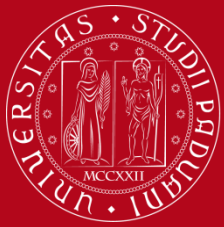
26 people:

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»



## Facilitators n.= 318

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





## Obstacles n.= 326

Category	Definition	Frequency	Cit.
<b>Lack of work</b>	Difficulty in searching job and lack of economic resources	69	«Since I do not have a permanent job, I feel excluded from being able to choose what I want»
<b>Shelter and life in the street</b>	Structural characteristics and relational aspects	55	«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»
<b>Personal character</b>	Distrust, aggression, insecurity	53	«I would be less irascible»
<b>Approach of the professionals</b>	Lack of support	45	«who should manage the structure does not care about what happens here»
<b>Personal problems</b>	Health problems, release, alcohol/drug addiction	32	«they all abandoned me after the incarceration»
<b>Attitude of the people and prejudice</b>	Indifference, lack of respect	29	«Some look at us a bit badly»



## **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)



Johnstone M., Parsell C., Jetten J., Dingle G. & Walter Z., (2015). Breaking the cycle of homelessness: Housing stability and social support as predictors of longterm well-being. *Housing Studies*, 1-17

Tsai J., Mares A. S., Rosenheck R. A. (2012). Does Housing Chronically Homeless Adults Lead to Social Integration? *Psychiatric Services*, 63(5), 427-434.

Wong Y. & Solomon P. (2002). Community integration of persons with psychiatric disabilities in supportive independent housing: A conceptual model and methodological considerations. *Mental Health Services Research*, 4, 13–28.

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