IDENTITIES OF ENGLISH HOMELESS AND IMMIGRANT HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

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Abstract

There have been an increased number of people rough sleeping, especially those whom are immigrants. The financial cuts in services for these people and the short fall in research on immigration and homelessness proposes the need for research. This will be explored from a social identity perspective. This research looks into the differences within immigrant homeless individuals' identity and the identities of English homeless people. Episodic-narrative semi-structured interviews were carried out with eight individuals, four English and four immigrants. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data recorded and this showed the following themes. Three themes were found to be present within both conditions: addiction, institutions and the presence of others. Two distinct themes were found in each condition. Within the English condition it was parenthood and being young. Within the immigrant condition it was alone and loss. This shows the need for different interventions for different subgroups of homeless individuals, due to the different ways in which they view themselves and the different negative effects of stigmatised identities they may experience.

Why Study This?

- Comparisons between an individuals 'in' group and other groups can lead to negative self image when in low status groups (McLeod, 2008).
- > Homeless and immigrant groups are seen as stigmatised identities, meaning they are at risk from poor self esteem, depression, loneliness (Kidd, 2006).
 - Increase in people living on the street (Department for communities and local government, 2016).
 - Immigrants more at risk of homelessness (Diaz, 2008).
- Increase in immigration (ONS, 2007) and increase in homeless immigrants (Anderson, 2014).
- Are homeless immigrants, more at risk of negative effects of stigmatised identities as they hold two?

Table 2: themes found within interviews

Immigrant Individuals	English Individuals
Others	Others
Institutions	Institutions
Addiction	Addiction
Loss	Young
Alone	Parenthood

Others

Within the immigrant group this was presented as loss of contact because of their own decision and lack of friends. Within the English condition it was presented as addiction within their family, positive family, relationships, lack of friends and family cutting them off.

Institutions

Within the immigrant condition this was only homeless specific agencies. Whereas, the English condition also had references to non-specific homeless agencies

Addiction

Within the immigrant condition it was presented as addiction with reference to self and addiction as means of communication. Within the English condition it is presented as personal addiction, recovery, negative effects of drugs and others drug us.

English only themes

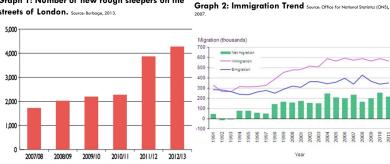
Young, this is presented as young homeless institutions, learning and maturing, young behaviour and experiences and growing older. Parenthood, this is presented as change due to children

and lifestyle limiting parenting.

Immigrant only themes

Loss, which is presented as loss of self, accommodation and social life. Alone, which is presented as feeling and being alone.

Graph 1: Number of new rough sleepers on the streets of London. Source: Burbage, 2013.



Methodology

- Small Scale qualitative study
- Semi-structured episodic interview
- Questions adapted using Homeless link toolkit (2015) and Snow and Anderson's (1987) identity talk
- > Three sections (Flick, 2014) SS1- unstructured opening question, SS2- follow questions on first response, SS3- semi-structured questions on research aim.
 - Three parts to SS3- The self, the community and the future

Table 1: examples of questions



Participants

- 8 = 4x English 4x Immigrant
- Voluntary recruitment from
 - Oxford hostel
- 24-52 yrs. (mean 40 yrs.)
 - Five yrs. + homeless

Hierarchy

English individuals saw a level of hierarchy between which floor of the hostel the individual stayed on, but the immigrant condition saw a difference between the English homeless people and them, speaking in a hierarchical manner.

- **Identity Talk** Distancing: both conditions show associational distancing and role distancing. However, institutional distancing was not seen in either condition.
- Embarrassment: Only seen in the English condition when refereeing to the past. Not seen in the immigrant condition.
- Fictive Story Telling: found only in the English condition (Snow and Anderson, 1987)

Conclusions

There are some similarities and differences between the identities of English homeless people and immigrant homeless people. Similarities show that the identity of both English and immigrant homeless people are similar. This is most likely to be the homeless part of the individuals' identity. There were also two unique themes within each condition. These findings suggest that individuals construct their identities in different ways, this is suggested to be the English and immigrant parts of their identities, leading to the conclusion that each group will have different needs and will need to be supported in a different manner in order to overcome the unique barriers and different negative effects of each of their stigmatised identity within homelessness.

Immigrant Interventions

- See homelessness as a stagnate event, a permeate negative change to identity. Support needs to advocate seeing homelessness as a process which can be changed, with small goals for the future.
- Training and support to understand English culture and language Support in linking with their existing family and friends
 - Motivational interviewing

English Interventions

- > See homelessness as a timed process, which is an adaptive change in identity. More emphasis on the individuals reasons to change, i.e. parenthood.
- A close friend, or support network which they trust, can limit the amount of negative outcomes experienced.
- > Access to agencies for employment, accommodation and recovery of addictions.
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