The role of Values in Social Exclusion of the Homeless

An examination of psycho-social barriers faced by the homeless.
Aims

- Look **beyond structural factors** contributing to homelessness.

- Understand core factors influencing homeless people’s **life choices**.

- Understand the **psychology** of the homeless from their perspective.

- Understand **psycho-social barriers** homeless may face reintegrating back into the community.
Why measure values?

- Values are believed to be underlying drivers of behaviour / action.

- Significant life events have been shown to change the importance of values.

- Value differences could explain some of the difficulties experienced by the homeless in reintegration to society.
What are Values?

- **What is important** to people in their lives
  - Basic motivations
  - Perception and behaviour

- General (transcend situations)
- **Relatively stable**
- Available to consciousness
- Organized in **personal hierarchies**
Schwartz Value Theory (1992)

- Openness to Change
- Self-Directedness
  - Creativity, Freedom
- Stimulation
  - Exciting Life
- Hedonism
  - Pleasure
- Achievement
  - Success, Ambition
- Power
  - Authority, Wealth
- Universalism
  - World at Peace, Tolerance, Equality, Wisdom
- Benevolence
  - Helpfulness
- Conformity
  - Obedience
- Tradition
  - Respect for Tradition, Devoutness
- Security
  - National Security, Family Security

Self Transcendence
Self Enhancement
Conservation
Method

- **Compare homeless to housed participants**
  - Homeless sample of 58 people
    - 75% had slept rough.
    - 61% reported experiencing multiple instances of homelessness.
  - Housed population sample of 57 people
Method

- Paper and electronic questionnaires given to participants.
- Questionnaire titled ‘What is important to you and how has this changed?’
- Items measured Values, Life Events, Perceived Value Change, Self Esteem and Self Mastery.
Method

Measures

Values - PVQ40 (Schwartz, 2001)
- 40 statements that a person indicates the degree to which they reflect them.
- ‘It is important to me to be in charge and have a lot of money and expensive things’ (Power)
- ‘It’s very important to me to help the people around me. I want to care for their wellbeing’ (Benevolence)

Life Event – 12-item modified Social Readjustment scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967)
- Relationship difficulties/separation from long term partner?
- Volunteering?
- Dismissal, redundancy or retirement from work?
- Other life-changing event?
Method

- **Measures**
  - **Self Esteem** - Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).
    - 10 items with a mix of positive and negative statements.
    - ‘I take a positive attitude toward myself.’
  - **Self Mastery** - Pearlin Self-mastery scale (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978)
    - 7 items containing a mix of positive and negative statements.
    - ‘I have little control over the things that happen to me.’
  - **Control Question**
    - Have your experiences of homelessness changed what is important to you?
    - Have your experiences of homelessness changed the way you view life?
Results – Values Homeless and Housed

- Homeless sample placed **less importance** on self-enhancement values:
  - **Power** values (p<.01)
  - **Achievement** values (p<.05).

- Homeless sample placed **more importance** on conservation values:
  - **Tradition** values (p<.05)
  - **Security** values (p<.05)
Results – Self Esteem and Mastery

Homeless have significantly lower levels of self mastery (p<.01, two-tailed)
Results – Self Esteem and Hedonism Values

Housed

p<.01

Homeless
Results – Self Mastery and Hedonism Values

Housed

p<.01

Homeless
Results
First-time and Multiple Homeless

- First-time homeless (n=16) and multiple homeless (n=26)

- **Benevolence** was significantly more important to the first-occasion homeless than the multiple homeless (p<.01)

- The longer a person is homeless, the less likely they are to value Benevolence (p<.01)

- First-time homeless participants reported significantly higher levels of **self-mastery** (p<.01)

- Benevolence was significantly positively correlated with self-mastery in all participants (p<.001).

- **Repeat homeless** have more clearly defined and homogenous value profiles.
Results – Control Questions

- 80% of homeless respondents reported that their experiences of homelessness had changed what is important to them.
- 89% of homeless respondents reported that their experiences of homelessness had changed the way they view life.
Future Research

- What are the levels of actual value change?
- Are value differences an antecedent or result of homelessness?
- What is the relationship between hedonism and self esteem?
- Why are benevolence levels so low in the homeless population?
Study 1 – Questionnaire Study

Measures
- PVQ40
- Self Mastery
- Wellbeing
- Life event
- Social Interaction
- Social proximity

Aims
- Expand previous study to national level
- Introduce additional measures relevant to the intervention
Study 2 – Qualitative Study

AIMS:
- Value priorities
- Value change
- Social barriers
- Coping strategies

METHOD:
- Interview 20 homeless individuals
- Analyse other qualitative data sources
- Thematic analysis to inform intervention measures.
Study 3 – Intervention Study

Assess the effects of a return to work programme for the homeless on psychological constructs of participants.

- Provide feedback to service providers
- Leverage existing infrastructure
- Measure participants at 4 x 3 monthly intervals.
Groups and Measures

**Groups**
- Homeless Intervention
- Homeless Control
- Homeless Colleague
- Worker Control

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**Measures**
- PVQ40
- Self Mastery
- Wellbeing
- Life event
- Social Interaction
- Social proximity
- Success in maintaining work.
Participate

Please contact Jessica Rea at mwjt045@rhul.ac.uk for more information

The project’s value for your organisation

- Look at existing research content in a new way.
- Ability to review practices across a number of organisations and identify which factors contribute to successful long term rehousing of the homeless.
- Derive empirically supported interventions.
- Participating organisations will be provided with a summary of the findings and custom reports according to your interests.