

Changes in At Home/Chez Soi Participants' Lives: Early findings comparing baseline and 18 month narrative interviews

Eric Macnaughton, Ph.D.

Wilfrid Laurier University; emacnaug@telus.net

Lauren Polvere, Ph.D.

Douglas Mental Health University Institute

Myra Piat, Ph.D.

McGill University

Introduction

- Context: *At Home/Chez Soi*: federally funded, mixed methods RCT evaluating *Housing First* in five Canadian cities
- Aim: to examine the relationship between housing, recovery and identity (both personal and social), and how it may be experienced within the Housing First intervention.

Methods

- Semi-structured interviews with participants within the three English-language research sites at baseline & 18 months (17 x 2 = 34)
- Analysis of early findings
- Constant comparative method leading to theme identification

Results

- **Reclaiming Personal Identity: Becoming Unstuck**
- Background: Becoming housed facilitates hope for reclaiming personal identity
- Coming out of “survival now mode” → “stable base”
- Establishing a “*nice routine*”
- “*Doing things that matter*”
- **Reclaiming Meaningful Social Roles**
- housing allows control over relationships
 - Having a place to host → Being a “more reliable parent”
- Housing signifies dignity and social worth
 - *Having to tell son “I’m an addict and living on the street” → “living in Kitsilano”*

Conclusions

- housing allows people to “become unstuck”, and allows freedom to move forward
- Housing facilitates freedom and motivation to reclaim both personal and social aspects of identity
- Implications: attend to both the material and meaningful aspects of housing (a stable base, but also a signifier:
 - → hope for “getting back on track”
 - → a source of self-worth facilitating reconnection