

Ontological Security and Home: How Housing First Changes Lives

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There's no place like (a) home: Ontological security among persons with serious mental illness in the United States

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Abstract

As the homelessness 'crisis' in the United States enters a third decade, few are as adversely affected as persons with serious mental illness. Despite recent evidence favoring a 'housing first' approach, the dominant 'treatment first' approach persists in which individuals must climb a ladder of program requirements before becoming eligible for an apartment of their own.

Four Markers of Ontological Security Related to Housing

- (1) home is a place of constancy in the material and social environment
- (2) home is a place in which the day-to-day routines of human existence are performed
- (3) home is where people feel in control of their lives because they feel *free from the surveillance* that characterizes life elsewhere
- (4) home is a secure base around which identities are constructed

A Picture Is Worth . . . ? Photo Elicitation Interviewing With Formerly Homeless Adults

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Abstract

We report on the use of photo elicitation interviewing (PEI) with 13 participants in a qualitative study of formerly homeless men and women with serious mental illness. Following a respondent-controlled approach, participants were asked to take up to 18 photographs visually portraying positive and negative aspects of their lives and to subsequently narrate the meaning of the photos in a one-on-one interview. Thematic analysis of the photos ($N = 205$) revealed two approaches to PEI: (a) a “slice of life” and (b) “then vs. now.” Examples show how PEIs yielded deeper, more elaborate accounts of participants’ lives compared to earlier verbal-only interviews. Participants spoke of the benefits of PEI and preferred taking positive as opposed to negative photographs depicting their lives. Implications of PEI as a means of complementing verbal-only data are discussed. By moving away from predetermined content and meaning,

Constancy

“Sometimes it gets stressful. But I manage because I got a home to come home to and relax.”

“You mind your own business. You live by yourself. You go to the park.. You look at the birds, you look at the dogs. You say hello to normal people.”

DAILY ROUTINES... *“now I have a kitchen. I can prepare meals andget up and walk to the refrigerator in the middle of the night and grab a snack...”*



Feeling in Control

“People can’t tell you what to do in your life. You have your own say-so”

“I have my own privacy. I don’t depend on finding a man.”

“I never needed all that supervision....I was already in my late fifties.”



“That’s the biggest positive, right there, you know. “

Secure base for identity construction

- *“It wasn’t until I got with Pathways that I started straightening up, like, learning how to stop using, you know, taking a good look at me, and realizing who I really am.”*
- *“I didn’t expect to live to be 40. So every time I say, when it hits 4 more years, I’ll ask God, can you give me 4 more? I’m on my medications. I’m doing great having my own apartment.”*

Art on the Walls



Art In The Street



THE ROAD BACK TO MYSELF

"I lost myself. A long time ago. This road is hopefully a road that I can come back, you know. Come back to myself...Any direction you want to go with your life, you could."



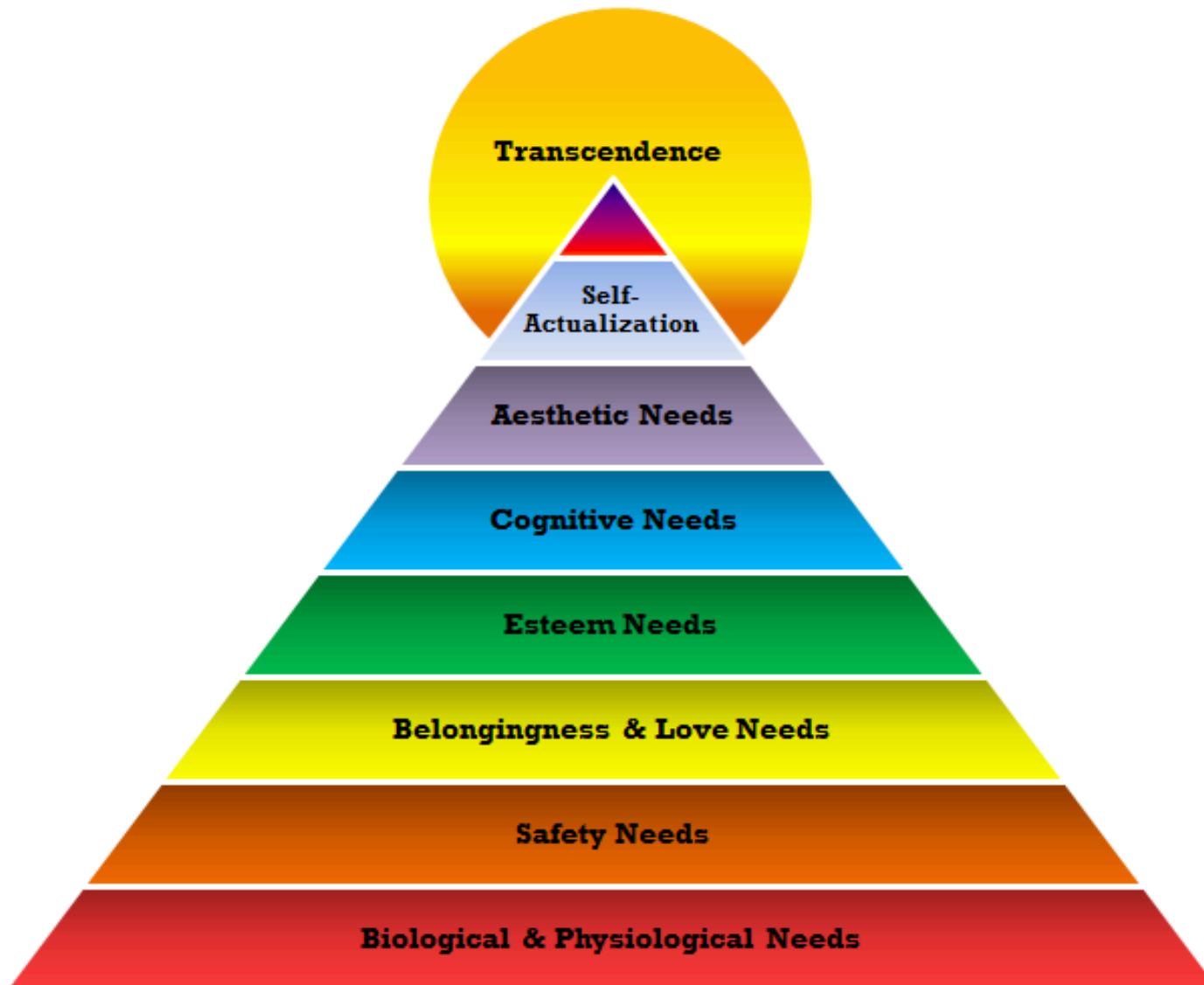
“These are some beautiful places. Maybe some places I was walking by but I wasn’t thinking about taking no pictures or looking at the scenery. All I was thinking about was gettin’ a dollar, whatever to get a hit.”



ON THE STAIRCASE: THE FRUSTRATING WAIT FOR HOUSING

“...that’s how I feel sometimes, closed in, behind the gate, you know? Nowhere to go. Sometimes I feel like that. Sometimes I feel like I’m locked in.. “





Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs Pyramid

Grazie!

