

Homeless women, material objects and the making of 'home'

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Overview

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6. Home as a 'repository of memories'
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Introduction & Context

Based on a wider PhD study, ***(Re)Negotiating the Self: Homeless Women's Constructions of Home, Homelessness and Identity***

- What does 'home' mean to women who have become homeless?
- How does a loss of home impact on identity?
- How do women respond to and/or resist the stigma associated with homelessness?
- How do women construct their identities within and beyond their homelessness?

Objects, Identity & Home: A Theoretical Approach

- 'Material culture studies': material objects are part of the social world (Riggins, 1985; Bourdieu, 1984, 1993)
- Housing studies: the material ontology of the home (Thrift, 2007; Jacobs & Malpas, 2013)

Objects & The Construction of Home: The Literature

- Contemporary studies raise the complexities surrounding notions of home as more than a static domestic dwelling (Manzo, 2003; Thidaud, 2003).
- Material nature of 'home' - overly focuses on people in settled, permanent, owner-occupied housing.
- Dearth of research on homeless people and possessions (with the exception of Hill & Stamey (1990) and Hill (1991)).

Researching the salience of things: methods

- Involved **12 women** all in **homeless situations** (hostels, temp accommodation, sofa surfing) in South Yorkshire; between **ages of 18 - 49**
- Initial background interviews
- Auto-photography / photo-narrative exercise
- Follow-up 'photo elicitation' interviews

Lost possessions / lost selves

- Homelessness as absence and loss across a range of dimensions (Somerville, 1992)
- Leaving things behind: *I'd just leave everything behind. Start again... every time... that's what messes me up* (Tori)
- Insecurity of temporary accommodation

Home as a 'repository of memories'



'Salvaging the Self'



Conclusions

- Objects as 'home-making tools'
- Importance of possessions during times of transitory housing experiences
- Future directions: *"the practice of producing narratives around objects contributes to the personal work of autobiography and renders objects as meaningful participants in the social work of identity-building"* (Hurdley (2006: 178))

| Thanks for listening!

Any questions?

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