STRATEGIES FOR CONCEPTUALIZING AND MEASURING HOUSING STABILITY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

INTRODUCTION

- The concept of housing stability is important to many facets of the work we do:
  - Important to how we identify people at risk of homelessness
  - How we gauge the appropriateness of a person's housing for their needs
  - How we measure the impact and success of our interventions and policies to address homelessness

  - How we choose to define housing stability is also very relevant to the explicit and implied goals of our work
    - Is the priority providing a roof and avoiding homelessness (e.g. days housed)?
    - Is the priority a feeling of stability and satisfaction for our participants (e.g. subjective perceptions)?
    - Is the priority future stability (e.g. predictive factors)?

CONCEPTUAL CONFUSION

- Varied terminology: Housing stability, housing security, housing need, housing satisfaction, tenancy sustainment, etc.

- These various terms are poorly defined

- Aim of this presentation is to:
  - explore different ways of conceptualizing and measuring housing stability (and related concepts) that have been suggested within the research literature
  - Recommend a conceptual model for thinking about stability
  - Share recent findings based on a measure we have been working on

GENERAL APPROACH

- I don't think there is one way to conceptualize or measure housing stability

- I think it works best if we approach it as multi-faceted concept

- I think there are strengths and weaknesses to different conceptualizations

PAST EXPLORATIONS ON THE TOPIC

- Frederick, T., Vitopoulos, N., Leon, S., & Kidd, S. (2021). Subjective housing stability in the transition away from homelessness [https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22702]. *Journal of Community Psychology*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22702

- Frederick, Tyler J., Michal Chwalek, Jean Hughes, Jeff Karabanow, and Sean Kidd (2014). How stable is stable? Defining and measuring housing stability. *Journal of Community Psychology, 42*(8): 964-979.

GENERAL STRATEGIES: SINGLE MEASURES

- Most common:

  - **Housing type** (housed vs. homeless; subsidized vs. market; rent vs. own)

  - **Days housed**

  - **Number of evictions/forced moves**

- Pros: Simple to define and measure; easier to standardize and compare

- Cons: No information about the quality or experience of that housing; assumes a correspondence between past and future; cut-offs can be arbitrary (how many forced moves is unstable? how much time in housing is stable?)

GENERAL STRATEGIES: MULTIPLE MEASURES

- Weir et al. (2007): Housing type, number of moves, whether they considered their place stable, received housing services, needed housing services

- Dickson-Gomez et al. (2017): type, transience, perceived housing stability, 'social contextual housing factors' (pay rent or expenses; violence, sexual exchange, conflict)

- Burgard et al. (2012): 3 moves in the past 3 years; moving because of cost; doubling up; behind on rent/mortgage or evicted in past 12m

- Pros: Provides a more holistic or rounded viewpoint; can capture subjective elements

- Cons: Not obvious what dimensions to include; wording of the components can be challenging to sure they are clear and capturing the intended information

OTHER RELATED APPROACHES/INSPIRATION

- Social Integration (Thulien et al., 2018)

- Thriving (Marshall et al. 2021)

- Fit/dynamic 3 factor model (person, housing, supports) (Sylvestre et al., 2009)

- Home (Woodhall-Melnik et al., 2017)

- Housing Security (Cox et al., 2019)

- Core Housing Need (CMHC)

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL COMPONENTS OF HOUSING STABILITY

- Housing Security/ Housing Need
  - Housing that is inadequate or unaffordable can be deemed inherently 'unstable'
- Risks/Threats to Housing
  - Housing arrangements can be more or less "at risk" due to factors like conflict, exploitative landlords, substance abuse, etc.
- Feelings of Stability/Housing Satisfaction
  - How stable people feel in their lives and housing is important as a holistic indicator; as a source of instability; and in-and-of-itself
- Safety Net
  - Shocks happen and the presence of a safety net is an important source of stability

Conceptual assumptions:

-These are related vantage points on stability, rather than perfect sub-components of a singular construct

-Trade-offs are commonplace

-Alignment, but not perfect

(e.g. feelings of stability can be relative or influenced by optimism/cautiousness)

HOUSING STABILITY INDEX

- 19 questions; 5 point Likert-style (recommend a 6 point going forward)

- 4 subscales

  - Housing Need – 2 questions (dichotomous index)

    - No major quality issues; affordable

  - Subjective Stability – 5 questions (scale)

    - Housing satisfaction; feel settled in place; life feels stable; place feels like home; making progress on goals

  - Safety Net – 3 questions (index)

    - Some money saved; an alternative place to go; supportive people

  - Threats/Absence of Threats – 9 questions (index)

    - Have necessary skills and supports for housing; follow landlord's rules; months housed

    - Conflict in the home; problematic roommates; conflict with landlord or housing provider; history of evictions & forced moves; pending legal problems; problematic substance use

A RECENT EXAMINATION

- Longitudinal research with young adults transitioning into housing
  - 4 sites: Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax (n=65)
  - 16-26 years old
  - Started Aug/Sept 2022
  - 3m in housing or actively searching for housing
  - Focused on housed sub-sample (n=52)

- Reliability for the full scale (Cronbach's alpha): .76
- Reliability for subjective subscale (Cronbach's alpha): .74

	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev
Total	2.63	4.11	3.2	.34
Subjective	1.6	5	3.83	.86
Safety net	1	5	2.97	1.00
Lack of threat	2.67	4.78	3.98	.51
Need	52% report unaffordable or inadequate housing			

- Number of threats (max 6/8)
  - 25% report 0 threats
  - 25% report 1 threat
  - 44% report 2-3 threats
  - 8% 4+ threats

- The various sub-components are significantly correlated (absolute strength of .5 to .65)
  - except 'safety net' which is not correlated with lack of threats or subjective stability

PROFILES

- Adequate and Affordable Housing
  - High stability (low threat) subgroup (38%): Low threats, med to high subjective stability
  - High stability (medium threat) subgroup (10%): Med threats, med to high subjective stability

- Inadequate or Unaffordable Housing
  - Medium stability group (25%): Medium threats; mostly med to low subjective stability
  - Low threat/feel unstable (6%): Low threat; low subjective stability
  - Low stability group (21%): High threats; split evenly between high and med subjective stability

*Most profiles can be split by low safety net, high safety net

*Profiles are based on high, med, low categorization based on score of threats and subjective

THANK YOU!

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