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Making sense of homelessness:

What are the public perceptions, and how do policy actors understand the problem?

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

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<u>Abstract</u>

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This thesis sought to understand how homelessness is perceived and understood by both the general public and policy actors. This research was informed by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory which describes the layers of influence on an individual's life. To understand the problem of homelessness, the contextual factors around the individual must be considered. Including access to services, commissioning, policy pertaining to health and social care as well as the cultural factors that influence societal structures. In the field of homelessness, research has explored individual risk factors for homelessness as well as systemic barriers in health and social care. This research seeks to make sense of the macro-level systems around the people experiencing homelessness in society.

The first chapter provides a systematic literature review of the evidence base to answer the question: What are the public perceptions of homelessness? This paper provides a narrative synthesis of 25 peer reviewed papers and dissertations. Each investigating how the public make sense of homelessness in their respective countries, as well as which demographic characteristics were associated with more compassion and systemic formulations of homelessness. The second chapter describes an empirical research project investigating how policy actors understand the perpetuating factors for homelessness in the UK. 14 semi-structured interviews with policy actors were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Three themes are described in relation to relevant psychology and policy literature. Considerations for future research and implications are discussed.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Alice McNamara

Title of thesis: Making sense of homelessness: What are the public perceptions, and how do policy actors understand the problem?

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature:

Date:

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

What are the public perceptions of homelessness? A Systematic Literature Review.

Short running title: Public Perceptions of Homelessness.

This chapter has been prepared for submission to Wiley Journal of Community Psychology.

Author guidance (Appendix J) for this journal has been adhered to throughout. No overall word count is provided by this journal. Abstract word count is 150.

Word Count (excluding references and appendices): 7534

1.4   Abstract

Introduction: Homelessness is a social problem faced by many countries, it can be difficult to measure and define. The way the public perceives social problems is both influenced by the culture around them and influential to the policies that are developed in response.

Methods: PsychInfo, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Web of Science and PubMed were searched, resulting in 25 papers that explored public perceptions or attitudes about homelessness. Both quantitative and qualitative designs were accepted.

Results: Narrative synthesis is provided. Most papers were cross sectional survey design, using random digit dialling sampling. Papers explored what demographic factors predict perceptions of homelessness, as well as what factors contribute to compassion and stigma.

Conclusion: The majority of included papers found that younger, liberal, female participants were more likely to understand homelessness as a societal issue rather than a problem caused by individual factors. Limitations of the evidence base are discussed.

Key Words: Homelessness, Public, Perceptions, Attitudes, Psychology, Social Problems, Policy

1.5   Introduction

1.5.1   The problem of homelessness

Homelessness is a social problem in many counties across the world. The problem can be difficult to quantify depending on the definition used for homelessness and the accuracy of the reporting of each country. In the United Kingdom (UK), the Office for National Statistics provides quarterly or annual reports for homelessness and rough sleeping retrospectively. The latest UK reports detail that 73,660 households in the UK were assessed as homeless or at risk of homelessness between April and June 2023, this was a 4.1% increase since 2022 (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2023). In terms of rough sleeping, the number of people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2022 was 3,069 which is a 74% increase since this data snapshot was introduced in 2010 (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2023). In the United States (US), an annual report to congress details a point in time estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness yearly. In their most recent published report, an estimated 653,100 people were reportedly experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2023. This is equivalent to 20 in every 10,000 people and these figures were the highest recorded since this data collection began in 2007 (De Sousa et al, 2023).

1.5.2   The relevance of considering public perceptions of social issues

Public perceptions of social issues are both influenced by, and influential to the dominant narratives weaved throughout culture. For example, health and economic policies, as well as the media. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory sets out the different systems of influence on an individual's life and development with emphasis placed on the interactional processes of each system. For example, wider political narratives (macro-level) may influence school and local healthcare provision (meso-level). At the same time, individual or family (micro-level) perceptions of community social or health issues (meso-level) are likely to have an influence on the public policy that is created at a macro level (Burnstein, 2003; Page and Shapiro, 1983). In addition, the way in which the media portrays policy narratives (macro-level) is also understood to impact the way the individuals perceive policy issues (Shananhan et al, 2011). Therefore, when considering homelessness specifically, media narratives and representations of people experiencing homelessness contributes to how the public conceptualize the problem (Gaetz, 2009). The interactional relationship between individual level factors and the surrounding societal processes is both complex and difficult to empirically measure (Bramley et al, 2015).

1.5.3   Stigma in homelessness

The political frame (macro-level) should be considered when attempting to make sense of public attitudes towards social problems, and when developing interventions to reduce stigma towards vulnerable groups such as people experiencing homelessness. Stigma can be defined as, negative perceptions, beliefs, or stereotypes about an individual or group of people (Dudley, 2000). Stereotypes are formed when knowledge or experience about individual stories or behaviour is overgeneralised to all members of a group with similar characteristics (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984). The way that the public make sense of vulnerable groups such as people experiencing homelessness, is also influenced by the causes they attribute to the problem the person faces. Attribution theory suggests that when a person's stigmatised characteristics e.g., mental health are perceived as outside of their control, they receive more empathy from the public (Corrigan et al, 2003).

Stigma is an increasingly discussed topic in mainstream media in the UK. Tyler et al (2018) propose that, although stigma is increasingly discussed in UK mainstream media, the conversation is potentially at risk from encouraging the public to not pay attention to the structural systems in place that perpetuate stigma. To consider Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model; public campaigns for reducing stigma could be criticised for focussing too much on the micro-level and not enough on the most subtle ways stigma is maintained at a meso or macro-level. Theory about stereotypes has evolved to consider how stereotypes can reinforce individual level discrimination by their systemic influence on the public's perceptions of stigmatised groups (Dovidio et al, 2010). This could be understood as a cyclical process, whereby discrimination and stigma of particular groups can also impact the strength to which stereotypes are held by the public (Dovidio et al, 2010).

Hatzenbuehler (2016) explored the concept of 'structural stigma' which refers stigma at the 'macro-level' e.g. cultural and societal factors. Hatzenbuehler (2016) concluded that 'structural stigma' has a direct impact on the lives of those from stigmatised groups and therefore could be considered a causal factor when it comes to understanding health inequalities. Experiencing homelessness puts an individual at a greater risk of experiencing social stigma (Bramley et al, 2015). Further to this, Canham et al (2022) produced a model to conceptualise the different layers of stigma that people experiencing homelessness are likely to experience including structural (discriminatory polices), Interpersonal (public, family, landlords, health care staff) and Intrapersonal (internalised self-stigma). Canham et al (2022) also conceptualised the term 'homeism' to describe the discrimination a person is likely to experience when homeless, this is most commonly present when they attempt to access housing support or health care.

Rao et al (2019) cite the importance of a multi-level approach when considering how to reduce negative perceptions or stigma associated with mental health, stigma interventions should aim to have an impact at all levels e.g., micro, meso, macro levels. Reilly and Williamson (2022) found that across all included papers in their systematic literature review, stigma can impact people experiencing homelessness when they access health care, which impacts what support they can access and consequently, their health. Reilly and Williamson (2022) critique that there is a lack of research exploring the effect of stigma-interventions relating to homelessness specifically. There is a growing evidence base exploring the perceptions of people experiencing homelessness on a variety of issues including their experience of health and health care services (e.g., McConalogue et al, 2019; Rae et al, 2015; Wen et al, 2007). To date, a systematic literature review of public perceptions of people experiencing homelessness has not been completed, yet this is an area that has attracted research since the 1990's (e.g., Lee et al, 1990).

This literature review will describe a systematic review of the public perceptions of people experiencing homelessness. It was considered to be important to capture positive perceptions that the public may hold about homelessness in addition to the stigmatising or discriminatory attitudes. Negative bias should be considered upon all levels of research but to explore only the negative perceptions of people experiencing homelessness in this literature review would seek to tell only part of the story in the current evidence base.

1.6   Methods

In line with the values of the open science movement (Cruwell et al, 2019), the protocol for this systematic literature review was pre-registered to PROSPERO after initial scoping searches to assess feasibility. The protocol was updated to reflect any changes on 16/01/2024. PROSPERO record ID was CRD42023389783. This report sought to follow PRISMA guidelines (Page et al, 2021) where relevant.

To conduct this systematic literature review, five databases were searched in total: PsychInfo, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Web of Science and PubMed. PsychInfo, CINAHL and MEDLINE were searched using a multi-database search through EBSCOhost. Duplications were detected and removed by the platform. Web of Science was searched separately. The following search terms were used: ("public" OR "community") AND ("attitudes" OR "beliefs") OR ("perceptions" OR "assumptions" OR "views" OR "opinions") AND ("homelessness" OR "homeless persons" OR "rough sleepers" OR "houseless" OR "unstably housed" OR "sleeping rough"). The platform PubMed was also searched as it facilitated the use of MESH terms: "ill-housed persons" and "public opinion". Table 1.1 shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria that was used during the screening process.

Table 0.1

Table showing inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Participants were required to be considered members of the public; any age was acceptable. Student participants were accepted.	Participants were recruited as anything other than public or general public e.g., health professionals, stakeholders for homelessness services, teachers or members of staff who work with people experiencing homelessness or other excluded groups (prisoners, refugee's). Participants included only students enrolled on courses relating to social sciences or health care.
Papers from any country	Papers unavailable in English
The focus of the study was required to be about participants attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, or perceptions of people experiencing homelessness, rough sleepers, or unstably housed individuals.	Where the focus is not about perceptions of people experiencing homelessness specifically e.g., studies exploring media perceptions of people experiencing homelessness.
Any year of publication or sample size, and Quantitative or Qualitative study designs were accepted	Newspaper articles, media articles, case studies, commentaries
Peer reviewed literature and thesis/dissertations would be included.	Informal or charity surveys that hadn't been peer reviewed.

Searches and initial title screening took place between 28th July – 4th August 2023. Abstracts and full papers were screened this using Rayyan (Ouzanni et al, 2016), an online tool for systematic literature review organisation. To corroborate first author decision making, ten percent of abstracts screened were also screened by an additional reviewer. This process was 'blind' so the additional reviewer was unable to see the decision making of the first author. Agreement between reviewers was calculated as 90.9% using Cohens Kappa, this is categorised as substantial agreement between reviewers according to guidance by Landis and Koch (1977). This process was repeated at full paper screen, the second reviewer agreed with

first author decision making on all papers included in their blind assessment of 10% of papers. There was discussion within the research team when articles were cited as a 'maybe' to make the final decision on inclusion. Papers were reviewed and appraised for quality using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (Hong et al, 2018). This process was completed by the first author. The second reviewer appraised 20% of the included papers for quality to corroborate first author decision making.

1.7   Results

A flow diagram documenting the different stages of the systematic search is shown in figure 1.1. A total of 1,308 titles were screened, resulting in 131 papers where abstracts were screened leaving 36 full papers to screen. This process resulted in 25 included papers.

Figure 0.1

PRISMA Flow Diagram (Page et al, 2021) showing systematic search process.
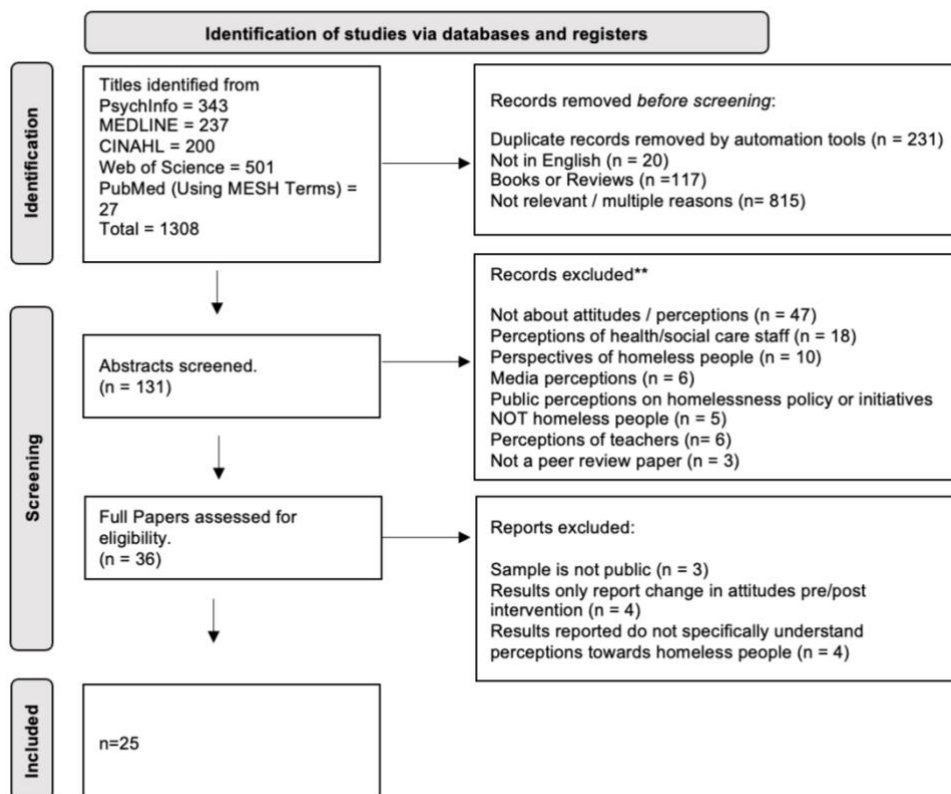
1.7.1   Study Characteristics

Appendix A shows a table of characteristics included papers. This includes information about design, sample size, how homelessness was defined, methods, and main findings. The included studies were mainly quantitative survey design (*n*=20). Three papers were qualitative in design

which included a variety of methods; content analysis of online comments, focus groups and semi structured interviews. One study was mixed methods, and one used an experimental design.

Most of the studies used recruitment methods that sought a representative sample of their chosen country (*n*=13), such as random digit dialling methods or utilising Amazon Mechanical Turk (US only). Other studies approached members of the public in the community (n=2), whilst others used university students (n=4). Sample sizes for quantitative studies ranged from 119 – 5296.

The majority of the studies were conducted in the US (*n*=20) however research was included from Ghana (*n*=1), Canada (*n*=3), Croatia (*n*=1). Three studies used European Samples including participants from UK, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, France, Ireland, and Netherlands. Ten papers were published before 2010, the oldest paper being Lee et al (1990).

1.7.2 Quality Review

Included papers were reviewed for quality using the MMAT (Hong et al, 2018). The MMAT uses a flow diagram to help the user decide which category the study would fit in to, there are 5 categories in total. The included papers mainly fell into the 'quantitative descriptive' category (*n*=21). For each category a set of 5 questions is given to prompt the reviewer to consider different aspects of the study design and reporting of results with a 'yes', 'no' or 'can't tell' response. Overall, the papers were of good quality with most questions receiving a 'yes' for the appraisal questions, ten papers met all the quality requirements given by the MMAT. Common pitfalls for the studies included that the researchers had not discussed or addressed low response bias, that the sample used was not representative of the target population. The aspects of the papers explored for the quality review and the results are shown in Appendix B.

1.7.3 Methods used across studies

Out of the 21 included quantitative descriptive studies, 13 studies had a representative sample of the population, the remaining eight were cited as 'can't tell' during the quality appraisal as this was not discussed in the papers. The most popular sampling method to gain a representative sample was random digit dialling (*n*=7). Random digit dialling is understood to be an effective method for creating a probability sample which is comparable to the population however is criticised for low response rates (Olson et al, 1992). Not all included papers with this sampling method record and discuss their response rate. Thompsett et al (2006) reported 13% of households contacted were able to participate in their 2001 sample, whilst 11-15%

households participated in their 1993-1994 sample. Thompsett et al (2006) report that although these response rates appear low, they are typical for this kind of sampling method as suggested by Olson et al (1992).

The second most commonly used sampling method was online surveys (*n*=6). Three online surveys were shared via email and social media which would have yielded a random convenience sample where samples could not be generalised to the wider population. Three studies utilised Amazon Mechanical Turk and Qualtrics via panel of respondents to specifically recruit a representative sample of the population. Mechanical Turk is a crowd sourcing platform that is understood to be a valuable resource to academics for collecting data quickly and with minimal cost (Sheehan and Pittman, 2016). Mechanical Turk is cited to recruit diverse and reliable participants and is increasingly used in research by Tsai et al (2021). Although, other research has critiqued the use of Mechanical Turk as a sampling method. Chandler et al (2019) suggest that samples recruited by Mechanical Turk are more likely to be liberal, better educated, younger and single in comparison to the US population, this could mean samples are less likely to be as diverse as the population which impacts the generalisability of results. Tsai et al (2017, 2021) used Mechanical Turk to recruit their samples, however, they did compare their samples to the general population to assess similarities. Samples were considered to be similar to the US population however with a higher proportion of white people and people with lower incomes (Tsai et al, 2017, 2021).

1.7.4 Measures used across studies.

Many studies (*n*=9) used a combination of the survey questions derived from Link et al (1995) and Toro and McDonnell (1992) which resulted in surveys ranging between 52-159 items. These surveys measured attitudes and knowledge about people experiencing homelessness, personal history and contact homelessness, policy related beliefs. Reliability and validity were measured and discussed in the reports of each study that based their measure on Link et al (1995) and Toro and McDonell (1992). Given the number of studies that used similar measures, a meta-analysis was considered. Unfortunately, the missing data from the published papers could not be accessed. Researchers were contacted to request the missing information, one researcher was able to offer this. Other researchers either did not respond or weren't able to retrieve the requested data. The required data to complete a meta-analysis was available for two of the seven studies that could have been included, it was decided that a meta-analysis would not be conducted.

A large number of included studies (*n*=10) developed their own surveys based on literature reviews and other previous research. The focus of these surveys was also to understand

attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness and policy related beliefs. Most of these studies reported their measures to be reliable and valid measures having analysed and discussed this in their papers. Dittmeier et al (2018) did not discuss this in their report, although they cite that their measure was developed after extensive research and interviews with professionals and experts by experience.

Three studies used combination of existing standardised measures in their research (Guzewicz and Takooshain, 1991; Robertson, 2017; Wagoner et al, 2022). These are described as reliable and valid in their papers. These measures included: Very Short Authoritarianism Scale (Bizmunic and Duckitt, 2018), Perspective Taking Activity (Myers and Hodges, 2013), Social Issues Advocacy Scale (Nilson et al, 2011) and Belief in America as a Just Society (Flanagan et al, 2007). Other standardised measures were used in these papers, these are shown in the Table of Characteristics (Appendix A).

Lee et al (1992) used data relevant to homelessness from a national poll however their focus was on one of the questions related to public compassion and homelessness. Their conclusions should be interpreted with caution given the minimal data explored from a data set which was not gathered by the researchers themselves. Markowitz and Syverson (2021) used an experimental design with a vignette which had four different iterations where the name of the person experiencing homelessness was changed to reflect a different gender and race to investigate the differences in how the person was perceived by the participants. Markowitz and Syverson (2021) produced a high-quality paper according to the MMAT. Although their sample was not representative of the general public, their conclusions were based on reliable and valid measures with appropriate analysis methods used.

1.7.5   Qualitative Measures

Phillips (2015) used a mixed methods survey to gather data from participants about their perceptions of the causes and best solutions for homelessness. Their justification for using qualitative methods in their survey was unclear which bought into question if there was an adequate rational for mixed methods during the quality review process. Unfortunately, the themes derived from the qualitative analysis were not extensively discussed. Abekah-Carter and Oti (2022), Robillar and Howells (2023) and Schneider and Remillard (2013) all used exclusively qualitative methods to answer their research questions. Their papers had all the required elements posed by the MMAT to conclude the papers to be of good quality.

1.7.6   Overview of key findings

The results of the quantitative studies in this review explored what demographic factors predicted attitudes, compassion, and causal beliefs of homelessness in their samples. In addition to describing the differences between countries. Some of the included quantitative papers as well as the qualitative studies sought to comment on what factors perpetuate the stigma of people experiencing homelessness and how we can understand how participants past experiences may contribute to their compassion.

There are a range of views described across the included studies which are conflicting at times. For example, whilst Manrique (1995) found their participants to be mainly sympathetic towards people experiencing homelessness and well informed about the problem; whilst Phillips (2015) noted that 55% of their sample cited 'laziness' as a cause of homelessness. When exploring changes in samples over time, Tsai et al (2017) noted that their modern sample demonstrated more compassion and more liberal attitudes. Conversely to Phillips (2015), who found lower agreement with beliefs about the 'laziness' of people experiencing homelessness in their sample. When interpreting these results, it is important to consider that both Manrique (1995) and Tsai et al (2017) cited their samples as representative of the US population, whilst Phillips (2015) was a student sample so likely less representative of the population.

Further information and key findings from each paper are detailed in the Table of Characteristics (Appendix A).

1.7.7   Pooled Percentages

Where multiple studies asked similar questions to their samples, the percentages and sample sizes were pooled to give an overview. Lee et al (1992), Manrique (1995) Lee et al (1990) and Toro and McDonell (1992) reported the percentages of their sample that cited a belief in structural causes underlying the problem of homelessness. Percentages ranged between 45%-66.6% across these studies, when pooled together 49.3% percent cited structural causes for homelessness.

Lee et al (1990), Petit et al (2019), Phillips et al 2014 and Toro and McDonnell (1992) reported the percentage of their samples that agreed with the statement 'homelessness is a personal choice.' These percentages ranged between 10%-48.3% with the pooled percentage being 52.1%.

Link et al (1995), Petit et al (2019), Manrique (1995), Toro and McDonell (1992) asked their samples if they would consider paying more taxes to support people experiencing homelessness, between 31%-65% of their samples agreed which when combined means that

39% of 7373 people asked across these studies would support an increase in taxes to reduce homelessness.

1.7.8 Differences by country

Four included studies explored differences between samples recruited from different countries: Hobden et al (2007), Tompsett et al (2003), Toro et al 2007 and Petit et al (2019). Hobden et al (2007) reported that Canadian respondents were more sympathetic, supportive of public rights and increases in federal spending than their US respondents. Canadians were also more likely to see the government responsible for helping people experiencing homelessness. US respondents were more likely to view the homeless individuals as criminals or mentally unwell or depressed.

When comparing a German and US sample, Tompsett et al (2003) found German respondents had more compassion towards people experiencing homelessness, were more trustworthy of people experiencing homelessness and cited the relevance of social isolation and economic factors as causes, they were less likely to attribute homelessness to personal failings. Overall, their German sample was more willing to help and less likely to advocate for limiting public rights of homelessness people than the US sample. Despite this, the German estimates of the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness was more stereotypic e.g. 'alcoholics' or 'street homeless.' In a comparison of US with other European countries by Toro et al (2007) they found their US sample to also be most likely to cite personal failings as a cause for homelessness and their views were generally less compassionate whilst indicating homelessness as a serious problem in their country.

Toro et al (2007) and Petit et al (2019) looked at various European countries in their studies, they found personal failings as a casual belief about homelessness to be highest in US, followed by UK, Belgium, Italy, and Germany being the lowest. Whilst Petit et al (2019) found that in Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden they were most likely to identify addiction as the main casus of homelessness whilst France, Italy, and Spain referenced unemployment as a cause most often.

1.7.9 Demographic predictors of attitudes

1.7.9.1 Age

Many of the included studies reported that the younger respondents in their sample had more compassion for people experiencing homelessness and were more likely to suggest structural causes and remedies for homelessness than older respondents (Hobden et al, 2007, Tompsett

et al, 2006, Manrique, 1995, Toro and McDonnell, 1992). Dittmeier et al (2018) compared millennials (18–29-year-olds) with 'other generational groups' (Participants over 40 years old) and found that millennials were more likely to believe irresponsible behaviour and lack of effort caused homelessness. Dittmeier et al (2018) suggested that millennials were less empathic towards homelessness. However, this was the only paper that did not describe the reliability and validity of the measure used. Although the sample acquired for this study was relatively large (n=455), it was a convenience sample of students and therefore not generalisable to the larger population (Dittmeier et al, 2018). Similarly, Guzewicz and Takooshain (1992) found no differences in attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness between age groups, however they also cite that the sample was potentially unrepresentative of the general population at the time.

1.7.9.2   Gender

Findings across the studies were consistent in their conclusions that females were more likely than males to hold compassionate beliefs, attribute cases of homelessness to structural and economic factors, and favour policies to create change (Lee et al, 1992, Ljubotina et al, 2022, Tompsett et al 2006, Phillips, 2015, Guzewicz and Takooshain, 1992, Hobden et al, 2007, Toro and McDonell, 1992, Tsai et al ,2017). Phillips (2015) explored the degree to which participants would seek social distance from people experiencing homelessness and found men more likely to maintain social distance than women in their sample.

Petit et al (2019) found that demographics did not have an impact on positive attitudes towards homelessness, their study was one of the two European samples included. This could suggest that outside of the US and Canada demographic characteristics are less likely to predict attitudes.

It should be noted that gender differences was the term used throughout the cited papers. It is not described in the included papers if the authors asked participants about other gender identities e.g., nonbinary.

1.7.9.3   Ethnicity and Race

Two studies made conclusions about ethnicity or race as a demographic predictor of attitudes (Petit et al, 2019; Tompsett et al, 2006). Additionally, Markowitz and Syverson (2021) directly explored race and gender in relation to the perceptions of homeless character in their experimental study. Markowitz and Syverson (2021) used four experimental vignettes which were the same story using different character names depending on race or gender. They assessed how this impacted how the participants perceived blameworthiness, dangerousness,

and desired social distance from the character. Their study found that white participants were less likely to blame the individual and the race of the character had no effect on perceived blameworthiness. However, the black homeless character was more likely to be perceived as dangerous compared to the white homeless character. Petit et al (2019) found that black participants were more likely to cite structural causes for homelessness and Tompsett et al (2006) found that African American participants demonstrated more socially conscious and liberal orientation in regard to homelessness. African American participants were also found to have less stereotyped views of people experiencing homelessness when compared to other ethnic groups (Tompsett et al, 2006).

1.7.9.4   Political Orientation

A theme across included studies was that participants identifying with liberal views (e.g., Democrats in the US) were more likely to cite structural causes for homelessness, show more support for an increase in federal funding, report more compassion and a belief in the capabilities of people experiencing homelessness. (Tsai et al, 2017, Tompsett et al, 2006, Petit et al, 2019). Conservative or right-wing participants were more likely to experience fear and anger towards people experiencing homelessness, seek greater social distance, and blame homelessness on those experiencing homelessness (Markowitz and Syverson, 2019, Wagoner et al 2022, Lee et al, 1992). Tsai et al (2021) found that Republican respondents reported more compassion for homeless veterans than other homeless adults.

Conversely, two studies found no significant effects of political orientation and perceptions of people experiencing homelessness (Robertson, 2018), Toro and McDonnell, 1992). Although Robertson's (2017) sample was not considered representative of the target population at quality review, no other quality issues stand out for these papers that would call their differing conclusions to be questioned.

1.7.9.5   Education and income

In terms of income, those falling into a bracket of 'higher income' were understood to be more likely to consider the individual as a cause for homelessness (Lee et al, 1992; Ljubotina et al, 2022). Tsai et al (2017) similarly concluded those with higher incomes demonstrated less compassionate views, less trust, less belief in the structural causes of homelessness and were more likely to support restrictions and less likely to support increased funds to support people experiencing homelessness. Manrique (1995) found that respondents identifying as 'poor' were the most favourable to people experiencing homelessness.

In studies where level of education was explored as a predictor of attitudes, findings were mixed. Lee et al (1992) found that more highly educated participants were more likely to blame society and structural causes for homelessness. Whilst Ljubotina et al (2022) and Guzewicz and Takooshain (1992) found attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness was not associated with level of education. Conversely, Tompsett et al (2006) found that a higher level of education was associated with a stronger belief in individual causes for homelessness and weaker support for structural interventions to support people experiencing homelessness. In terms of the samples used, Ljubotina et al (2022) and Lee et al (1992) were understood to have drawn conclusions from samples representative of the target populations so in this respect could be considered more reliable in describing the public perspectives at the time. They also used sample sizes over 1000 whereas Tompsett et al (2006) and Guzewicz and Takooshain (1992) used smaller samples of 435 and 222 retrospectively. Other notable differences between Ljubotina et al (2022) and Lee et al (1992) are that their research took place in different countries, Lee et al (1992) used a US sample whereas Ljubotina et al (2022) used a Croatian sample. In addition, the studies took place around 30 years apart.

1.7.9.6   Religion

Few included studies explored religion as a predictive variable, however Lee et al (1992) concluded that those that identified as Protestants were more likely to cite individual causes for homelessness than those who identified as 'non protestant.' It is notable that other religions are not specified in the binary categories cited by Lee et al (1992). In a more recent paper by Petit et al (2019) people who identified as 'very religious were more likely to understand homelessness as a result of individual factors rather than societal structures.

1.7.10   How is stigma maintained?

In exploring what other factors may contribute to attitudes and casual beliefs about people experiencing homelessness, Wagoner et al (2022) explored participants level of social dominance orientation. They found that higher support for social hierarchy predicted negative stereotypes associated with the competence of people experiencing homelessness as well as, less pity for and more contempt toward homeless individuals. Guzewicz and Takooshain (1992) used additional measures to allow for comparison with participants responses to the homelessness scale e.g., Belief in a Just World (Rubin and Peplau, 1975). They concluded that more sympathy to homeless individuals was associated with a lesser belief in a just world, lower authoritarianism, and greater concern for poverty. Higher need for social approval from others was associated with less sympathy for homeless individuals.

Robillard and Howells (2023) qualitatively analysed public community Facebook groups and concluded that stigma was both created and perpetuated during general conversations about community issues (e.g., theft). Such conversations were noted to be shifted to be about homelessness by some members. This led to 'them and us' discussions, where homeless individuals were blamed and 'othered' for their situation. In addition, videos or pictures were shared on the group, assumed to shame, and expose people experiencing homelessness sometimes members even encouraged violence towards them. These often gave locations and raised privacy concerns for those pictured. Although the focus of the paper was to explore the negative discussions about people experiencing homelessness only, their paper offers some insight into how homelessness is discussed on social media in a harmful way.

Schneider and Remillard (2013) used focus groups to explore perceptions of people experiencing homelessness using media articles as discussion prompts. Their analysis described two strategies through which their participants constructed positive identities about people experiencing homelessness and examined how these statements may maintain stigmatizing conceptions of people experiencing homelessness. For example, they described how stories from participants where they had offered money or support to people experiencing homelessness in the past, were associated with an anger in their tone. The researchers described that stories were layered with dialogue which implied the person experiencing homelessness as incapable. The second strategy the researchers described was "They're just like us…": although such comments can appear to overcome division, the researchers comment on how they can be understood as a way to highlight that people experiencing homelessness are different to themselves; because these comments were usually followed by the comments about the participants own abilities to function within societies expectations.

1.7.11 What contributes to compassion?

Research explored other factors that contribute to compassion for people experiencing homelessness. Mullenbach et al (2023) found that witnessing people experiencing homelessness do something nice for others or themselves was associated with more positive attitudes towards homelessness and compassionate ideology, as was personal experience of homelessness and contact by volunteering. Whilst Toro et al (2007) found in their sample that participants who had experienced homelessness were more likely to have better awareness of the problem and be more sympathetic. Tsai et al (2019) also found that experience of homelessness and experience of trauma was associated with greater endorsement of funding and fewer restrictions. Robertson (2018) found that participants who had a low level of belief in America being a just society had more positive attitudes and higher empathy towards people experiencing homelessness.

Some papers offered conclusions about how exposure to people experiencing homelessness influenced public perceptions. For example, Tsai et al (2018) found that participants with more homelessness in their communities reported greater compassion, trust and cite structural causes. Link et al (1995) explored if compassion fatigue was more likely with increased contact with people experiencing homelessness however found little evidence to support this. Markowitz and Syverson (2021) found that participants with more familiarity with people experiencing homelessness were less likely to perceive them as dangerous.

Tsai et al (2021) found that participants reported significantly different attitudes and beliefs about homelessness among veterans than other homeless adults. Participants cited more structural, health related causes and less intrinsic causes for homelessness among veterans than other US adults. Participants also reported stronger beliefs that lack of government aid and physical illness were causes of homelessness among veterans. They were more compassionate and supported more funding for services, policies and though programs were more effective for homeless veterans when compared to other adults experiencing homelessness.

1.8 Discussion

The aim of this paper was to systematically review the evidence base for papers that explored public perceptions and attitudes towards the people experiencing homelessness. Many of the papers explored how the public made sense of the problem of homelessness, as well as issues such as stigma and stereotypes. Overall, much of the research suggested that women, liberal, and younger participants had more compassionate views towards people experiencing homelessness, they were also more likely to have a societally formulated understanding of how homelessness is caused, maintained, and should be addressed. Much of the included research was from the US, with only one paper exploring the public perceptions of homelessness in the UK (Toro et al, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and the results of this literature review demonstrate how public perceptions are informed by dominant cultural and political narratives, as well as media representations of people experiencing homelessness. Public opinion on the topic can vary and so considering factors such as individuals' political orientation, education, generational group, and gender when making sense of public attitudes is important. These factors are influenced by the systems the public exist within, which influences their perceptions towards people experiencing homelessness. Findings from this review are consistent with some of the evidence base. For example, how socioeconomic status influences the way individuals make sense of their social environment (Manstead, 2018), or how those from a lower social

class are more likely to display more empathy to others welfare and engage in pro-social behaviour (Piff & Robinson, 2017).

Lee et al (1992) suggested that the more social stability and advantage a participant had, the more likely they were to make sense of homelessness in an individualistic way. Their paper cited more socially advantaged groups to be males, older adults, and protestants. This suggestion that more socially advantaged groups typically shared an individualistic formulation of homelessness could also be drawn from the results of this literature review. Research cites that men (Ljubotina et al, 2022, Tompsett et al 2006, Phillips, 2015, Guzewicz and Takooshain, 1992, Hobden et al, 2007, Toro and McDonell, 1992, Tsai et al 2017), older people (Hobden et al, 2007, Tompsett et al, 2006, Manrique, 1995, Toro and McDonnell, 1992), those with higher income (Lee et al, 1992, Ljubotina et al, 2022, Tsai et al, 2018) were more likely to have been reported to hold less compassionate views and a more individualised or blaming understanding of homelessness.

Petit et al (2019) and Lee et al (1992) found participants who identified as 'very religious' or protestant were more likely to conceptualise homelessness in an individualistic way. This is an interesting finding given that faith-based organisations are understood to be involved in meeting some of the needs of the homeless population in the US e.g., The Salvation Army and Gospel Rescue Missions (Bass, 2009). Similarly, in the UK, most homelessness services that meet the core needs of the population e.g., night shelters are run by faith-based organizations. However, these services have expanded over time and there is less visibility of the religious routes (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2009). Ethnicity was also a minimally explored demographic factor in the evidence base. However, black people are overrepresented in population of people experiencing homelessness in the US (Jones, 2016) and in the UK (Finney, 2022). Jones (2016) systematically reviewed the evidence base about race and homelessness, disparities between races are noted in terms of their vulnerability to homelessness and how likely they are to be supported effectively by services. Therefore, in future research about how the public perceive homelessness, it is important for race to be considered and measured to understand this disparity further and measure if change is occurring.

Many studies explored the demographic predictive factor of political affiliation in their surveys; indicating that those participants identifying as liberal, or democrat were more likely to have more compassionate views towards people experiencing homelessness. This finding is in line with research by Hasson et al (2018) who explored if conservative and liberal participants from the US, Israel and Germany differed in their empathy towards others. They found the liberal participants had a stronger desire to feel more empathy and generally experienced more empathy towards excluded groups than conservative participants. From the included research

in this systematic literature review it is understood that conservative participants may be more likely to promote an individualised understanding of the causes and solutions of homelessness, this is fitting with the values of the US republican party in terms of the promotion of personal independence (Petit, 1999).

The majority of the papers in this systematic literature review were quantitative in design, commonly conclusions described participants as having *either* an individualised understanding of homelessness *or* a systemic formulation of the problem. This narrative of seemingly opposing theoretical perspectives has been critiqued within the evidence base (e.g., Pleace, 2016). In simplifying the results in this manner, this could be critiqued as not capturing the complexity of the public perceptions towards homelessness. This criticism is common to quantitative research more broadly (e.g., Zyphur and Pierdes, 2017). In addition, this criticism of the evidence base as not capturing the complexity of the public's perceptions of homelessness is reflected in critiques of policy development about social problems such as homelessness. For example, Haynes et al, (2020) criticises that policy seeks short term and simple solutions to complex health and social problems which prevents effective change.

This review included papers published as early as 1990, therefore the results drawn span a 35-years. It is notable that more modern papers have drawn similar conclusions to older papers, perhaps indicating a relatively stable public opinion in regard to homelessness. However, this could also be considered as a limitation of this paper as the majority of large sample size surveys of the population were published before 2010. From what is known about rates of homelessness, increased have been documented in both the US and the UK since 2010 (Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2023; De Sousa et al, 2023), therefore, how perceptions have changed as the problem has increased is something that is currently unanswered by the evidence base. In addition to homelessness itself becoming a worsening problem, it is understood that the rates of political polarization and income inequality has continued to rise over time in the US (Duca and Saving, 2016). Whilst in the UK, polarization is a less academically researched topic (Grechyna, 2023). However, there is evidence of increased fragmentation of party-political support and increased affective polarisation since Brexit (Duffy et al 2019). The changing political landscapes in the UK and US could be associated with differences in how social problems (e.g., homelessness) are perceived by the public. This area could benefit from further up to date research.

This systematic review included one paper that used a UK sample to explore public perceptions, so the voice of residents of the UK is largely missing. In addition, the voice of Australian citizens was absent from this systematic literature review . A contributing factor to this is likely that homelessness charities regularly survey the general public about their perceptions of

homelessness e.g., Centre for Homelessness Impact (UK) & Wesley Mission (Australia). Documents such as this were not retrieved in this systematic search as academic databases were used. Although surveys like this offer an indication of how the public perceive homelessness in the UK, assessing the quality of these papers is difficult given the lack of methodological information provided e.g. The Centre for Homelessness Impact's most recent published survey (Lowe, 2023). However, it is increasingly considered that the inclusion of grey literature provides a more complete understanding of the evidence base, reducing the risks of issues such as publication bias and delay between survey administration and publication (Paez, 2017). As well as the UK and Australia many other countries are not represented in this systematic literature review which is important to note. It is likely that differences in definitions of homelessness and available data to capture homelessness contribute to this. Future reviews could consider including informal surveys and other forms of grey literature within their systematic search to diversify the amount of research included. Another limitation of this paper is that it was not possible to conduct a meta-analysis due to missing data from seven studies.

This paper offers some implications for practice. For example, which demographic groups could benefit most from interventions to reduce stigma or to increase public compassion for homelessness. Corrigan (2011) describes strategic use of social media to reduce stigma for mental health, which is based on targeted campaigns informed by marketing principles. Such efforts could be replicated in the area of homelessness and this research offers conclusions about what demographic groups may value most from systemic interventions.

Exposure and proximity to homelessness was understood to be contributing factor for compassion from the findings of this review. This finding highlights the importance of individual's stories when attempting to foster compassion in communities. Those with personal experience of homelessness or poverty are more likely to hold compassionate views towards people experiencing homelessness, therefore their perspectives would be beneficial to draw upon in service development and delivery. This is already developing with the use of peer mentorship in homeless services (Barker and Maguire, 2017). More broadly in health and social care, experts by experiences are being consulted and collaborated with to improve education, training and service delivery (Horgan et al, 2018; Happelle et al, 2021; Fox, 2020). The results of this systematic literature review therefore fits with the existing literature promoting the importance of the voices of those with lived experience to be heard and valued by professionals and policy makers.

This systematic literature review offers a basis for comparison for future academic and grey literature exploring public perceptions of homelessness. Such comparisons could explore how public perception's change over time. Additionally, this review could provide a basis to compare

how public perceptions with western societies may differ to eastern, in particular to those with more collectivist cultures e.g., India, Korea compared to individualistic cultures e.g., UK, US (Triandis, 1988).

1.8.1   Conclusion

This paper provides a useful narrative synthesis of the available literature that has explored how the public perceive homelessness. Research is mainly from the US however other European countries are included. Future reviews of the literature would benefit from the inclusion of more grey literature in their systematic search. The evidence base would also benefit from further research about how the public perceives homelessness and what contributes to compassion or stigmatising views towards people experiencing homelessness. This paper offers implications for the development of campaigns or interventions to reduce stigma for people experiencing homelessness. In addition, the results of this systematic literature review complement the existing body of evidence supporting the value of experts by experience in the development and delivery of services for people experiencing homelessness.

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Appendix A   Table of Study Characteristics

Table 0.2

Study	Country	Design	Sample	How researchers defined homelessness	Measures used	Main Findings
Abekah-Carter and Oti (2022)	Ghana	Qual - Semi Structured Interviews	20	Rough Sleeping	Semi-structured interviews for 40-60mins about homelessness and mental health	• Theme 1: Impact of the presence of people with mental health problems on the streets - Perceived impacts on the wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness with mental illness and Threat to the safety of residents. • Theme 2: Reasons for their presence on the streets - Neglect by family members and Limited access to healthcare
Dittmeier et al (2018)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	455	Not specified	Survey developed for this study, attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness and policy issues. Millennials were compared to other generations	• Other generational groups were more likely to believe lack of affordable housing and lack of family support contributed to homelessness. They rated a higher frequency of mental illness in the homeless population. • Millennials were more likely to believe irresponsible behaviour and lack of effort contributed to homelessness. • Half of those surveyed indicated a willingness to volunteer but only a quarter of the sample had taken voluntary action. Millennials were less likely to donate than other generational groups (32.4% compared to 68.75%)

Guzewicz and Takooshain (1992)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	222	Rough Sleeping	• Poverty survey measure • Achieving Tendency (Mehrebian and Banks, 1978) • Belief in a Just World Measure (Rubin and Peplau,1975) • Authoritarianism scale	• More sympathetic participants were more likely to oppose laws prohibiting 'begging' and to perceive the problem as increasing. They were also more likely to have a lesser belief in a just world, lower authoritarianism, and greater concern for poverty. • No significant differences found in relation to age or education, but women were more sympathetic than men. • Those scoring higher on a need for social approval expressed less sympathy towards people experiencing homelessness.
Lee et al (1990)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	292	Not specified	40 item survey developed for study.	• Religious and political views influence beliefs about causes of homelessness. • Those from outside the south of America, who identified as liberal or black were more likely to cite structural causes. • People who identified as 'very religious' had a more individualistic understanding of homelessness. • Those who had been asked for money by people experiencing homelessness were more likely to regard homelessness as a personal choice. • Respondents believing in structural causes considered few issues more important than homelessness and though the government response was inadequate. • Those believing homelessness to be an individualistic issue were more likely to devalue homelessness as societal issue.

Lee et al (1992)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	1084	Not specified	12 item survey developed for the study. 1 item is the focus of this report.	• 45% of sample judged society to be responsible for homelessness, 33% fault people experiencing homelessness. • Men, older adults, Protestants, Republicans, and those in high income brackets were more likely to blame people experiencing homelessness. • More highly educated people were most likely to blame society for homelessness. • Living in a metropolitan area had little effect on casual attribution of homelessness.
Link et al (1995)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	1507	Not specified	Survey developed for study exploring willingness to help, support for federal efforts, emotional responsiveness, empathy, attributes of people experiencing homelessness, restrictions and social desirability.	• No strong evidence that the public has become less supportive of spending over recent years, public has consistently supported increase in spending. • Majority willing to pay 100 dollars per year in taxes to reduce homelessness, large proportion favour federal intervention. • Majority reported sadness of compassion and disagreed that their compassion was decreasing. Most people think that irresponsible behaviour (72%) and laziness (64%) contribute to homelessness. • Most people indicated that people experiencing homelessness make neighbourhoods worse, spoil parks and harm local businesses.

Ljubotina et al (2022)	Croatia	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	1010	Visible Homelessness: those living on the streets, in abandoned buildings on in hostels	Survey combined from previous research and measured: perceptions, attitudes, causes, contact, role of the state, willingness to help.	• Women and older people were more likely to attribute causes of homelessness to broader social context. No differences relating to level of education. • Participants with a higher household income and those that encountered more homelessness people were more likely to attribute individual causes. • There were differences in attitudes between the different areas of Croatia. • Participants who attributed causes of homelessness to the broader social context expressed a positive perception of people experiencing homelessness.
Manrique (1995)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	360	Not specified	155 item survey based on Link et al 1992 and Toro et al 1992	• Respondents endorsed more money being allocated for housing, free alcohol and drug treatments and raising the minimum wage. • Majority of respondents view homelessness as a very or fairly serious national problem. 52% of people viewed the problem as structurally induced. • Participants were relatively well-informed about characteristics of people experiencing homelessness. • Younger people and females were more compassionate and in favour of economic policies to create change. • Poor and marginally poor respondents were the most favourable to people experiencing homelessness.

Markowitz and Syverson (2019)	US	Quant - Between groups design	195	Rough Sleeping or unstably housed.	Participants given 1 of 4 vignettes. 2x2 design using race and gender. Social distance, perceived dangerousness and blame were then measured. The Homeless character in the experimental vignette lived in a shelter.	• Race and gender of the homeless person had no significant effects on perceived blameworthiness. No significant effect of character on desire for social distance • The male and black homeless character was more likely to be perceived as dangerous. • White people were less likely to blame the individual and less likely to perceive the character as dangerous. • More politically conservative people expressed greater social distance from the homeless character and were more likely to blame and perceive danger.
Mullenbach et al (2023)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	952	Rough Sleeping	Survey designed for study. Measuring experience with homelessness, ideology, policy opinions	Witnessing a person experiencing homelessness do something nice for others or self, personal experience of homelessness or contact by volunteering were positively associated with positive attitudes towards homeless.
Petiti et al (2019)	Europe	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	5296	Rough Sleeping or living in emergency or temporary accommodation	Survey designed for the study to assess knowledge, attitudes and practices of the general population regarding homelessness.	• A general increase in homelessness was reported by respondents in the previous three years. • In Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden they were most likely to identify addiction as the main casus of homelessness. • France, Italy, and Spain referenced unemployment as a cause most often. • 'Homelessness as a choice' was found to be a widely held opinion across countries.

						• Majority of participants were reluctant to pay more taxes to address homelessness. • Demographics did not have an impact on positive attitudes towards homelessness which is contrary to other research.
Phillips (2015)	US	Mixed	115	Not specified	Survey developed using literature review about causes and solutions. Adapted version of Bogardus (1933) for measuring Social Distance	• Women were more likely to see limited housing as a cause of homelessness and were less likely to desire social distance from a homeless person. • Women were more likely to see medical care, housing vouchers, educational programmes and outreach services, transitional housing as solutions than men were. • Those with past volunteer experience were more likely to see job availability as a cause than those without this experience. • 'Being lazy' was cited by 55% as a likely cause, 'not working hard enough' was cited by 58%. 10% said it was a 'choice.' • Majority of participants indicated a willingness to volunteer, about half had volunteered.
Robertson (2018)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	119	Unsheltered and sheltered homelessness included e.g. rough sleeping, temporary or unstable accommodation and overcrowding due to poverty	• Perceptions of the homeless (Van Zomerman et al, 2007) • Perspective Taking Activity (Myers and Hodges, 2013) • Social Issues Advocacy Scale (Nilson et al, 2011) • Belief in America as a Just Society (Flanagan et al, 2007)	• Political party and demographics had no significant effect on perceptions of people experiencing homelessness. • Attitudes towards homelessness was related to advocacy behaviours. • No significant relationship between attitudes and belief in America as a just society. • Analysis showed individuals with more positive attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness and higher empathy tended to have lower scores on the belief in America as a just society measure

Robillard and Howells (2023)	Canada	Qual - Content Analysis of online comments	0	Rough sleeping	14 Facebook Groups, exploring 609 comment Threads Analysis of Negative/Toxic Comment Threads	Three main ways that stigma about homelessness is created, perpetuated, and reinforced among public community Facebook groups: • General conversations about theft or waste are shifted to be about homelessness. • Second, create stronger community ties by othering those experiencing homelessness. • Third, Facebook users post images and videos to shame and expose homelessness even encouraging violence against them.
Schneider and Remillard (2013)	Canada	Qual - Focus Group	43	Not specified	60-90 minutes sessions. Media articles to be used as prompts for discussion.	Two strategies through which people construct positive identities about people experiencing homelessness and examine how these statements may maintain stigmatizing conceptions of people experiencing homelessness. 1: Giving to 'the homeless': although describing a willingness to help in descriptions of interactions with people experiencing homelessness, participants described a frustration with people experiencing homelessness identifying people experiencing homelessness as incapable of being responsible independent agents. 2: 'They're just like us...': on the surface these comments can appear to overcome division however these statements also serve to make it clear that people experiencing homelessness are different, statements serve to reassert the participants abilities and capabilities to function in society

Thompsett et al (2003)	US and Germany	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	685	Rough Sleeping or Unstably Housed	124 item survey used adapted from Toro and McDonnell (1992), Link et al (1994 and1995) and Manrique (1995).	• Lifetime literal prevalence of homelessness was 6.2% of US sample and 2.4% of German sample. • Germans had higher scores for compassion towards people experiencing homelessness, trustworthy of people experiencing homelessness and relevance of social isolation and economic factors, they were less likely to attribute homelessness to personal failings. • Overall, German sample was more willing to help and less likely to advocate for limiting public rights of homelessness people. Despite this, the German estimates of the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness was more 'stereotypic' e.g. 'alcoholics' / street homeless.
Thompsett et al (2006)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	795	Rough Sleeping or Unstably Housed	159 item survey was adapted from Toro and McDonnell (1994) and (Link et al 1995).	• Decrease in lifetime prevalence of literal homelessness between samples. • In 2001 there was an increased recognition of diversity and estimation of mental illness in homeless population. 2001 sample suggested a conflicting ideology: they supported structural interventions but minimised structural causes. • Demographic predictors remained stable over both time points: female and younger respondents considered homelessness more serious, they were more sympathetic and more likely to attribute economic factors and suggest structural change.

					• Older adults are more likely to be politically conservative. More liberal people were more likely to support increased taxes and federal spending, they were more compassionate and more attuned to structural causes. • African Americans demonstrated more socially conscious and liberal orientation in regard to homelessness, they had less stereotyped views of people experiencing homelessness. • A higher level of education was associated with a stronger belief in personal causes for homelessness and weaker support for structural interventions to help homelessness. However, higher level of education was also associated with greater willingness to give money and pay higher taxes.
Toro and McDonnell (1992)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	240	Rough Sleeping or Unstably Housed	77 Item survey developed for the study about attitudes, knowledge and policy related beliefs.	• Most blamed society rather than the individual for their homelessness (66%). Most respondents 61% disagreed that homelessness was a lifestyle choice. • Respondents were generally well-informed about the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness. However, respondents underestimated the amount they came into contact with people experiencing homelessness and overestimated people experiencing homelessness drug use. • There was high variability, which was not as entirely predictable, background characteristics and political affiliation were not predictors, but age and gender were. • Women in the sample were more concerned about homelessness, less likely to see personal failings. • Older people less likely to see homelessness as a national problem and more likely to see it as a personal failing.

Toro et al (2007)	Europe and US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	1,546	Rough Sleeping or Unstably Housed	63 item survey adapted from Toro and McDonnell (1992) and Link et al (1994 and 1995).	• High rates of literal homelessness in US and UK. Lowest rates in Germany. • Previous experience of homelessness was associated with respondents being more aware and more sympathetic. • Strongest national effects found for personal failings causing homelessness. This was highest in US, followed by UK, Belgium, Italy and Germany being the lowest. • UK and US generally less compassionate but saw homelessness as a serious problem. • A clear majority of each sample would pay more taxes to address homelessness; between 69-86%.
Tsai et al (2017)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	541	Rough Sleeping or Unstably Housed	26 items from Link et al, 1995 and Toro and McDonnell (1992).	• Older sample was Toro and McDonnell (1992) and Link et al (1995) • Significant changes were observed in 15 items indicating more federal support, more compassion and more liberal attitudes in the modern sample. • Larger changes were in allowing people experiencing homelessness to sleep and ask for money in public places and fewer beliefs about the 'laziness' of people experiencing homelessness. • More support for affordable housing, increasing minimum wage, fewer fears about homeless individuals. • In terms of perceived characteristics there was significant changes between samples e.g., modern sample overestimating and the 1997 sample underestimating certain groups e.g., under 40yrs, black, married.

| Tsai et al (2018) | US | Quant - Cross Sectional Survey | 541 | Rough Sleeping or Unstably Housed | 52 items adapted from Link et al, (1995) and Toro and McDonnell (1992). | • 77% reported homelessness as a problem in their communities, 13% of sample had been homeless.
• 59% expecting homelessness to worsen. Majority 62-72% endorsed structural factors and intrinsic causes.
• Majority endorsed health problems as a cause and supported increased federal funds to support.
• Females more likely to report compassion, belief in structural and health causes of homelessness, a belief in capabilities and effectiveness of policies.
• Higher income was associated with less compassion, trust and belief in structural causes. In addition to being less likely to support increased funds to support people experiencing homelessness and more likely to support restrictions.
• Democrats more likely to report compassion, less likely to believe in intrinsic causes and support increase in funding, effectiveness of policies and capabilities of people experiencing homelessness.
• Experience of homelessness and experience of trauma was associated with greater endorsement of funding and fewer restrictions.
• More donations were associated with being less likely to believe in intrinsic causes, support for federal spending and policies, fewer restrictions and more compassion and trust.
• More homelessness in communities reported greater compassion, trust and cite structural causes. |

Tsai et al (2021)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	541	Not specified	• Survey developed for study included questions about perceived causes of homelessness, role of federal government, compassion for homeless individuals, legal restrictions and rights, personal attitudes, and beliefs. • PTSD was assessed with a measure by Tsai et al 2018 (8 items). • Knowledge about PTSD was also assessed with 8 true or false questions.	• Participants reported significantly different attitudes and beliefs about homelessness among veterans than other adults. • Participants indicated more agreement for more structural, health related causes and less intrinsic causes for homelessness among veterans than other US adults. • More compassion was reported for veterans, less concern about dangerousness, and supported fewer legal restrictions, a belief that they were much more likely to maintain a home. • Republican endorsed greater federal funding, more support for financial policies and more compassion for veterans compared to other US adults.
Wagoner et al (2023)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	328	Rough Sleeping or Unstably Housed	• Very Short Authoritarianism Scale, (Bizmunic and Duckitt, 2018), • Social dominance orientation using a	• Stronger social dominance orientation predicted negative competence and warmth stereotypes and more contempt and less pity. • Stronger right-wing authoritarianism predicted negative warmth stereotypes.

					modified scale by (Ho et al 2015) • Stereotypes measured using an adapted version of SCM (Fiske et al, 2002) • Adapted version of the BIAS map (Cuddy et al, 2007). • Support for permanent supportive housing were measured with a 5 items scale developed for study.	• Lower warmth predicted fear, anger and contempt. Less pity and more contempt was associated with an opposition of supportive housing.
Walters et al (2021)	US	Quant - Cross Sectional Survey	134	Rough Sleeping or Unstably Housed	Survey developed for the study exploring landlord knowledge, landlord attitudes, landlord comfort, landlord willingness.	• 1/3 of the sample answered one of more of the factual knowledge questions correctly. Knowledge of homelessness in the area was not associated with willingness to rent. On average landlords endorse favourable views of individuals experiencing homelessness. • Landlords were more comfortable to rent to individuals with a physical disability or survivors of domestic abuse, less comfortable renting to those with a prior eviction or history of substance misuse. • The older the landlord was the less comfortable they were with renting to tenants with multiple challenges, the more properties they owned the more comfortable they were to rent to tenants with multiple challenges. • When a landlord agreed that the individuals who are homeless were responsible for their circumstances, they were less willing to rent to them.

Appendix B   Table showing MMAT (Hong et al, 2018) Quality Review Questions and Reviewer Results

Table 0.3

Study	Category	Question	Reviewer 1 Yes (Y)/ No (N) / Can't Tell (CT)	Reviewer 2 Yes (Y)/ No (N) / Can't Tell (CT)
Abekah-Carter and Oti (2022)	Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
		1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	Y	
		1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Y	
		1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	Y	
		1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Y	
Dittmeier et al (2018)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	CT	CT
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	CT	N
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	Y

		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	CT	CT
Y		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	Y
Lee et al (1992)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Ljubotina et al (2022)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	CT	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Manrique (1995)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	N	

		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Markowitz and Syverson (2019)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	CT	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Mullenbach et al (2023)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Phillips (2015)	Mixed methods	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	CT	N
		5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Y	Y
		5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Y	Y
		5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Y	Y

		5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	N	N
Robertson (2018)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	CT	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Robillard and Howells (2023)	Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	Y
		1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	Y	Y
		1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Y	Y
		1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	Y	Y
		1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Y	Y
Schneider and Remillard (2013)	Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
		1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	Y	
		1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Y	
		1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	Y	

		1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Y	
Tsai et al (2021)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y	Y
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y	CT
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	Y
Wagoner et al (2023)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	CT	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	CT	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Walters et al (2021)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	CT	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	CT	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	CT	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	

Guzewicz and Takooshain (1992)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	CT
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	CT
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y
Hobden et al (2007)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y
Petiti et al (2019)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y
Link et al (1995)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y

		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y
Link et al (1995)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y
Thompsett et al (2006)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	CT
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	CT
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y
Tompett et al (2003)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	CT

		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Toro and McDonnell (1992)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y	Y
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	CT	CT
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	Y
Toro et al (2007)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	CT	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	CT	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	
Tsai et al (2017)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y	
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y	
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y	
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y	
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y	

Tsai et al (2018)	Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Y
		4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	Y
		4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	Y
		4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Y
		4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Y

Chapter 2

How do policy actors understand the perpetuating factors for homelessness in the UK?

Short running title: Policy actors understanding of homelessness.

This chapter has been prepared for submission to Wiley Journal of Community Psychology.

Author guidance (Appendix J) for this journal has been adhered to throughout. No overall word count is provided by this journal. Abstract word count is 150.

Word Count (excluding references and appendices): 8572

2.1   Abstract

Introduction: Homelessness is a complex social issue in the UK. Although the roots of the psychological professions are not linked with politics, increasingly Psychologists are working for social justice. Psychologists would benefit from increasing understanding of the beliefs of policy actors. This resesrch explored how policy actors understand homelessness in the UK.

Method: 14 Semi-structured interviews took place with policy actors (including civil servants, councillors). Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was used to develop themes.

Results: Three themes were developed: There isn't enough compassion towards people experiencing homelessness to create meaningful change; systemic factors inhibit change for homelessness, this creates hopelessness; the siloes and dichotomies in policy making prevents change for people experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion: This study offers a novel contribution to clinical and community psychology literature by exploring beliefs and perceptions of policy actors regarding the topic of homelessness. This article uses psychological theory to support the ongoing formulation of what perpetuates homelessness in the UK.

Key Words: Homelessness, Rough sleeping, Policy, Politics, Psychology, Thematic Analysis, Semi-Structured Interviews.

2.2   Introduction

Homelessness is a complex social issue. The problem of homelessness is not only related to a lack of appropriate accommodation but also physiological, emotional, territorial, ontological and spiritual deprivation (Sommerville, 2013). The legal definition of homelessness is 'a household that has no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world available and reasonable to occupy' (Public Health England, 2019). Unfortunately, homelessness is a persistent problem in the United Kingdom (UK).

The UK Government's Department of Levelling up, Housing & Communities report quarterly statistics for statutory homelessness. In their latest report (published May 2023), 72,550 households in England were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, this is a 4.7% increase between December 2021 and December 2022. Rough sleepers are recorded in an annual single night snapshot survey. In November 2022 it was estimated that 3,069 people were sleeping rough on the night surveyed, this was 26% increase since autumn 2021 (Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities, 2023).

In addition to figures that are captured regularly there are other forms of homelessness that are not well understood through statistics. These are referred to as 'hidden' types of homelessness, which could include people who are sofa surfing, squatting, living in refuge accommodation or those living in severely overcrowded situations e.g., hostels (Office for National Statistics, 2023). When considering the example of sofa surfing, there is no UK wide official statistics published however statistics can be estimated through other means. For example, the English Housing Survey reported that from 2019-2021 there were 538,000 households that had someone staying with them who would otherwise be homeless (Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities, 2022). The Homelessness Monitor (Watts et al., 2022) is an annual report commissioned by the charity, Crisis. Their 2022 report concluded that levels of 'core' homelessness' (most extreme forms e.g., rough sleeping) and the use of temporary accommodation for families is consistently higher in England compared to Wales and Scotland. They projected a rise of 'core homeless' households in England, especially in London, unless there is a change in policy approach.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2022) describe that casual and risk factors for homelessness included structural, societal, and economic factors. In addition to other individual factors including, adverse childhood experiences, brain injury, family conflict, substance misuse. Research has explored the individual risk factors for homelessness (Nilsson et al, 2019). Including the prevalence of traumatic brain injury (Topolovec-Vranic et al, 2012) and neurodiversity (Churchard et al, 2019) in people experiencing homelessness.

The social distribution of homelessness in the UK suggest that the chance of experiencing homelessness is more likely for those who have certain individual characteristics, and social circumstances, none of which are within their control (Bramley & Fitzpatrick, 2018). Bramley & Fitzpatrick (2018) therefore critiqued the phrase 'we are all two pay checks from homelessness' (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011), citing it as a myth rather than a helpful statement to raise public awareness. Despite growing awareness of how homelessness is related to experiences rather than choice or personal failings, social stigma impacts people experiencing homelessness disproportionally (Bramley et al, 2015). A recent survey (Lowe, 2023) of a sample of the British public commissioned by the Centre for Homelessness Impact, concluded that only around half (49%) of the participants agreed that homelessness is a consequence outside of an individual's control. Therefore, the assumption of individual level responsibility is still present in society likely contributing to the stigma towards people experiencing homelessness.

Psychological and health care models can be utilized to describe and understand the intersectionality of homelessness. Maguire (2017) presents a multi-level model of complexity describing the historical, psychological, and behavioural factors that contribute to the repeated cycle of homelessness. Nooe and Patterson (2010) developed an ecological model of homelessness which describes the intersectionality of the complex biopsychosocial risk factors for homelessness as well as the social and financial impact on society. The Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was originally intended to understand childhood development, however its application has developed and extended both by Bronfenbrenner (1983, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000), and other researchers to conceptualise other social issues in the social work and psychology literature (e.g., Crawford 2020). The model describes the different layers of influence around an individual (micro; meso; exo and macro level). This encourages an understanding of the interconnected environmental factors that have a direct and indirect influence on a person's life e.g., school, local council, politics, cultural values. Research has explored how the problem of homelessness relates to organisations and structures that make up the exo or macro systems around individuals. For example, the impact of policing and law on homelessness (Stuart, 2014) and the impact of the welfare state (Anderson, 2004).

Mental Health problems are highly prevalent in people experiencing homelessness; reported as 76.2% in a recent systematic literature review (Gutwinski et al, 2021). It is also understood that the term 'complex trauma' is likely to describe the experience of around 60% of adults living in homeless hostels in England (Gutwinski et al, 2021). Therefore, the evidence base points to the value of creating psychologically informed services for people experiencing homelessness (Keats et al, 2012). Applying key psychological skills e.g., case formulation, within homelessness services has been understood to increase staff understanding of their service

users and regard themselves and their service users more positively (Buckley et al, 2021). Demonstrating the impact that psychological approaches can have when applied at a meso-level, to consider Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979).

Clinical Psychologists are increasingly working both directly with and indirectly for people experiencing homelessness who have faced multiple disadvantages across their lives, including exclusion from mainstream services, however traditionally Clinical Psychologists may not have worked with this client group in their NHS roles (Wells et al, 2023). Clinical Psychologists are facing a changing profession in the current health and social care climate. The roots of Clinical Psychology as a profession are in supporting individual functioning with limited consideration of the impact of the meso or macro-system around a person. The profession has typically focussed on alleviating distress that exists because of social problems rather than prevention (Hage et al, 2007).

Although Psychology was originally designed as a science to understand individual functioning, without consideration of political issues (Burton et al, 2012); it is argued that just by doing their jobs, Clinical Psychologists are unavoidably political. Psychologists are in a good position and perhaps even have a duty to engage in policy development and challenge dominant narratives around mental health and social problems in UK politics (Rahim & Cooke, 2019). However, there are many ways to work as a Clinical Psychologists in the UK and discussions about the politicisation of the field can be a contentious topic, often played out on social media (The Psychologist, 2020).

Sloan (2010) asserted that the lack of training in macro level concepts for Psychologists has resulted in the field's expertise being pushed out of the social, economic, and political debates. However, increasingly there is a drive for Clinical Psychologists to work at a macro-level in the UK and Clinical Psychologists who engage in such work perceive that their training does provide them with the skills and knowledge to intervene at different layers of systemic influence (Browne et al, 2020)

With a growing aspiration for Psychologists to work in a more socially justice orientated way (Psychologists for Social Change, 2022), and for Psychologists to influence policy making processes (Perriard-Abdoh & Murray, 2020). Psychologists must develop their understanding of how policy actors e.g., members of parliament (MPs), councillors, civil servants and commissioners, understand the social issues both professions seek to support. Historically it has been understood that psychologists and policy actors tend to live in different professional worlds, perhaps with different values and different knowledge and expertise (Hosticka et al., 1983). Policy is criticised for a lack of systemic understanding and attempting to solve complex health and social issues with short-term, individual level responses (Haynes et al., 2020).

Although research has explored Stakeholder perspectives of people experiencing homelessness and services in the UK (e.g., Johnsen & Teixeria, 2012; McCormack et al, 2022), to date the evidence base has not considered the understanding policy actors have of the problem of homelessness in the UK.

The present study seeks to contribute to the academic study of psychology and policy research by exploring the way policy actors understand homelessness. The psychology of policy making isn't widely explore in the evidence base. Although Psychology literature offers some theoretical considerations for how cognitive bias may influence policy actors' approach to societal issues (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2008; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), there is more to explore, particularly in the UK context. The theoretical concept of Bounded Rationality, which is cited in policy and economics literature, speaks to the human decision- making process of seeking adequate rather than optimal conclusions that are limited by available knowledge and bias (Sent & Klaes, 2005; Sent, 2017; Cairney, 2019). The present study seeks to explore such theoretical concepts further with a qualitative exploration of policy actors understanding of homelessness and how this influences their decision making in their roles.

Homelessness is the chosen social issue to explore as it is an example of a complex social problem that psychologists are increasingly working to support (Wells et al, 2023). Homelessness is also persistent social issue which has solutions that are not utilised in this country for a multitude of reasons which perhaps include, a lack of political will to resolve the problem (Mackie et al, 2019). To explore this further from a psychological perspective, this study initially explored the broad question: How do policy actors make sense of homelessness in the UK?

2.3   Methods

Given the exploratory nature of this research, this study was designed as a qualitative study. Participants were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews with the first author (AM).

2.3.1   Recruitment & Participants

To be included in this research, participants were required to be in a professional role that had a national or local level of policy influence. These included commissioners, councillors, civil servants, and MP's and Ministers. Participants were not required to be working specifically on homelessness, housing, or mental health policy. As with other research exploring the perceptions of the professionals involved in policy (e.g., Litterton et al, 2021; Carey & Crammond, 2015), participants are referred to as policy actors.

A total of 25 people were invited directly, 56% of these opted in. Fourteen participants were recruited to this research; their demographic characteristics are shown in Table 2.1. Demographic information was collated verbally at the start of each interview. Participants were recruited via email and at networking events for the Homeless Community of Practice (Associated with University of Southampton). The research team devised a list of potential participants considering their if they had policy influence at a local or national level and their likelihood of replying or taking part. Participants themselves supported the recruitment of other participants in some cases.

Table 0.1

Demographic information for Participants

Gender	Males (n=6)
	Females (n=8)
Age	Range: 34-71
	Mean (SD): 55 (10.73)
Ethnicity	White British (n=11)
	White Other (n=2)
	White Irish (n=1)
Level of Policy Influence	National (n=10)
	Local (n=4)

2.3.2   Ethical considerations

This research received approval from the University of Southampton ethics committee ERGO approval number: 79551 (See Appendix C). All interviewees were given an information sheet (Appendix D) and Consent form (Appendix E) which detailed how their information would be stored and used. To protect the identity of the participants, personal information was removed or changed, and their data set was anonymised using participant numbers. Participants were given the option to review their data set to confirm their identity was protected however no participants took up this option. It was agreed to collect minimal demographic information as this information could make participants more easily identifiable.

2.3.3   Sample size

During initial research planning the research team reflected on the concept of information power (Maltured et al, 2016) to guide the anticipated sample size. The four factors to consider,

as set out by Maltured et al (2016) were discussed. These included the narrowness of the research aims, specificity of sample, degree of applied theory, quality of dialogue and how exploratory the analysis strategy was intended to be. Discussion within the research team included consideration of the first authors (AM) novice status in regard to qualitative research and semi-structured interviews and how this would impact the 'quality of dialogue'; as well as the relatively specific aims of the research question and the specific type of professionals sought to be recruited. Given these factors as well as contextual factors to the study e.g., one interviewer, a sample size of 12-15 was considered appropriate.

2.3.4 Interviews

Semi structured interviews were completed so that the participants experienced an interview unique to their own personal experience of their role. Participants are more likely to engage well when they are having a positive experience, they don't feel on edge or misunderstood (Bearman, 2019). Interviews were between 45 minutes to 1 hour in length and took place via Microsoft Teams (Microsoft, 2024). Interviews followed a Topic guide which is shown in Appendix F.

Before the topic guide was created, people with experience of homelessness were consulted to discuss what topics they felt were most important to be covered during the interviews. Notes from these individual discussions were used to inform the first draft of the topic guide developed by the research team. This draft was then reviewed by a retired MP to consider the language used in the questions.

2.3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was informed by Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) as described by Braun & Clarke (2022). Reflective TA (Braun & Clarke, 2022) is a method for the analysis of qualitative research which broadly includes the systematic process of data coding and development of themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) set out six-part process of analysis however, their more recent writing (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2022) describes their approach to TA which informs the data analysis in this research. The addition of 'reflexive' encourages the analysis to value a highly subjective, curious, and critical approach to the process of TA (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This is aligned with the assumptions and values of 'Big Q Qualitative Research' (Kidder & Fine, 1987), which is to say the purpose of the research is to focus on the meaning derived by the research about the situation and context specific data. Based on the ontological understanding that language, experiences, and culture drive the meaning making processes in a world where truth is not absolute (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Within qualitative research it is possible to hold an ontological and epistemological approach from various perspectives. This research was undertaken from a critical realist perspective. Critical realism assumes a singular reality however holds awareness that the knowledge we develop about reality is embedded in our language, context, and interpretation (Maxwell, 2012). In applying this perspective to reflexive TA is to acknowledge that the participants in this research have provided an interpreted, context specific narrative of reality, this has further been interpreted through the lens of the researchers' cultural and social context (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

The six-part process (Braun & Clarke, 2006) informed data analysis. As the first author completed the interviews, this supported their familiarisation with the data. NViVo Software (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2023) was used to manage data coding electronically. The data set was coded twice, initially the coding was more deductive and semantic in approach however as the process continued, latent codes were developed allowing for more interpretation of the data set as a whole. To help order the initial codes they were separated into broad categories, although this process was the beginning of theme development, the categories were more descriptive at this stage to help with the organisation of ideas and codes. A codebook with example quotes is shown in Appendix G. The first author continued to develop themes using thematic maps which evolved with reflection and discussion with members of the research team. The initially broad question was reviewed to become more specific given how the analysis process evolved.

2.3.6 Interpretive position

Given the subjective interpretation of data in qualitive analysis and the importance of the reflexivity in this style of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), the first author (AM) kept a reflexive journal throughout the process. This brought awareness to their interpretation of the data and specifically personal context which was of particular relevance to the data e.g., personal political orientation, understanding of the problem of homelessness, assumptions about policy actors. Increased awareness of personal assumptions and background during the analytical process facilitated a critical, in-depth analysis of the data and the layers of interpretation made during coding and theme development. AM is a white cisgendered heterosexual woman from a middle-class background. The research process was taken from the perspective of a social justice orientated Trainee Clinical Psychologist with a critical approach to a medical or individualised understanding of mental health, addiction, and social problems. These factors will have influenced their approach to interviews and analysis, and this was reflected upon in their reflective log.

2.4   Analysis

The following results section describes three themes from the data set, these themes are discussed in the context of the literature that was explored in relation to these themes for transparency. Braun & Clarke (2022) suggest this structure to highlight the interpretive process of analysis within the qualitative framework. Findings are shown visually as a thematic map in Figure 2.1. Appendix H shows the evolution of the thematic map during the analytical process.

Figure 0.1

Thematic map to show findings
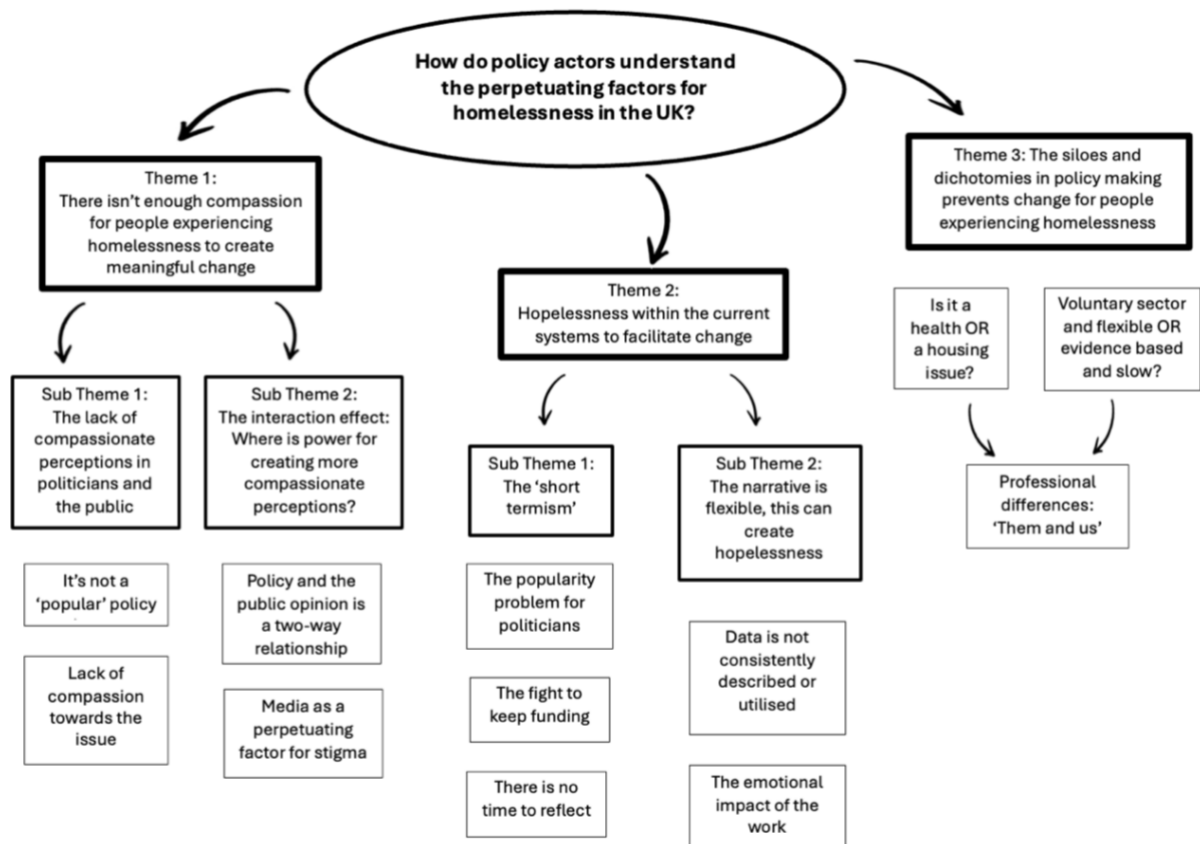
Note: Boxes below themes and sub-themes express key codes that informed theme development.

2.4.1   Theme 1: There isn't enough compassion towards people experiencing homelessness to create meaningful change: "…nobody cares to be frank" (Participant 11)

Many interviewees' either directly or indirectly described the British public and politicians as having a lack of compassion for people experiencing homelessness. This was described as a barrier to the problem being reduced by policy actors. Interviewees spoke about the factors that

influence this compassion 'problem' and the relationship between public perspectives and politics.

2.4.1.1 Sub theme 1: The lack of compassionate perceptions in politicians and the public

Many participants described their perceptions of the public as uncaring or unempathetic in various ways, often relating this view to an individualised or blaming perspective as to the causes of homelessness. When talking about the voters in their constituency, participant 10 described "They're bigots and they're this and that, they don't mean to be. If you sat and had a conversation with them, you could shake them out of most of their strange beliefs of racism, sexism, homophobia or whatever it is." Similarly participant 12 expressed their belief that the public are uncompassionate towards people experiencing homelessness in the following quote: "And also, do you know what people are? People are inured to it, so look, we all want to give cash to civilians being bombed in Gaza…Nobody feels sorry for drug addicts or prostitutes on the streets of XXX."

These two participants expressed these descriptions in different ways. Participants 12's excerpt conveyed sadness and frustration which was interpreted with hopelessness public compassion wouldn't change in the near future. However, participant 10 had a tone of empathy and understanding. Later in the interview participant 10 described that they themselves had a journey from being 'bigoted' to more compassionate towards social issues such as homelessness. This conveyed a sense of hope for change in public perceptions if more awareness was developed about homelessness, as increased knowledge helped them to develop a more compassionate understanding of the problem. Interventions to change perceptions of people experiencing homelessness are documented in the literature. For example, Parks et al (2014) describe preliminary research exploring the positive effects of meditation exercises to reduce prejudice towards people experiencing homelessness, whilst training sessions have been shown to improve compassion towards people experiencing homelessness in students (e.g., Ohara, 2019; Gardner & Emory, 2018). Suggesting that the perceived lack of compassion for homelessness could change with increased targeted intervention.

Whilst it is difficult to ascertain how compassionate the public are towards homelessness in the UK within the current evidence base, survey data published by the Centre for Homelessness Impact (Lowe, 2023) reports that 84% agreed that homelessness is a serious problem. This is a contrast to the interviewees who considered the public to be uncaring towards the problem. However, although survey respondents may agree that homelessness is a serious problem, this does not necessarily reflect their top priorities for policy change. Other literature exploring

public perceptions of people experiencing homelessness in the United States (US) and other European countries concludes that a majority of their sample had compassionate views towards people experiencing homelessness (Petit et al, 2019; Tsai et al, 2017). It is interesting that participants within this study may hold a belief about the public's lack of compassion which is potentially contrasting to research in this area.

When describing colleagues in government, participant 8 said; "Homelessness and rough sleeping is not seen as a big-ticket item, and if I can say it that way, it's not seen as 'sexy' compared to some of the issues, social issues that we face." This participant was understood to be describing how there is a lack of interest in prioritising homelessness in wider government which is interpreted to be linked with a lack of compassion and understanding for the problem. Participant 11 highlighted how although policy actors often work in policy development or politics, they are members of the public too and therefore not absolved from stereotyped or uncompassionate views towards people experiencing homelessness. "Everybody in government is also just a person, and so the sort of general culture that pervades about individual level choices, having the biggest impact on your health which just isn't true. It's still pervades." This perspective highlighted how it is important not to consider policy actors as separate from the public. The acknowledgement here is understood as a comment on cultural assumptions about individual responsibility for health as the norm in the UK which poses as a challenge when policy actors seek to understand health and social care problems differently. This challenge of thinking in systemic way about social problems is echoed in the literature (e.g., Nguyen et al, 2023). Furthermore, this is compounded by the fact that policy actors are subject to the same influences the British public are, such as media coverage perpetuating stigma about people experiencing homelessness (Hodgetts et al, 2006; Bowen & Capozziello, 2022; Truong, 2012).

2.4.1.2   Sub Theme 2: The interaction effect: Where is power for creating more compassionate perceptions?

Participant 6 described the public as in a powerful position in relation to their own role as a policy actor by explaining "Every time we write something, or we do something in that area, you just always have to keep in mind that I am working for the British people." This quote highlights power that the public have in directing how policy actors work and what issues are prioritised. Participant 11 also highlighted the interactional relationship between the pubic and policy actors, "there is obviously a two-way relationship with politics and what people commit to doing and what they want to see. And you don't really...hear the public outcry of. Um. Homelessness." The public's potential lack of concern about homelessness is in this quote is described as a barrier to effective policy change in the area, as a result of this interactional relationship.

Similarly, when thinking about the causes of homelessness, participant 7 said "it's related to the government in power, but the government was voted into power by the people." This participant conveyed hopelessness when reflecting on the powerlessness they feel in their role because of the way the British public vote. These quotes were understood to be situating some of the power within the public, to create compassionate perceptions in government for homelessness. The suggestion here is understood as, if there was more compassion within the public, this would demand more compassion within government, therefore more could be achieved by policy actors to reduce homelessness.

By contrast, other participants understood that less compassionate perceptions from the public towards homelessness was relating to the politicians and governments that have served the country over time. For example, when considering why the public are potentially less compassionate, participant 9 reflected on the role of politicians in influencing the common sense of society "...there's a sort of hegemonic individual conservative view, it doesn't so much permeate particular political parties, but it's actually something which relates to the common sense of society." Similarly, participant 10 explained "So there's a leading role where you lead and change the way the country is... But I think it's governments that...make people care about other people...I think in general, if you leave people alone, they just care about themselves." These participants are understood to be positioning the power to influence public compassionate perceptions towards homelessness and other social issues, within politicians and government.

Participants also described how the relationship between the public and policy issues is mediated by the media, developing the complexity of understanding the relationship between the public and policy actors. For example:

> Quite cynically, I don't think there are any votes in it, or many votes in it. I think they *(the public)* like to think, and this is a sort of narrative that's peddled in some of the right-wing press as well, that, you know, it's their own fault... There's a sort of hard-nosed cynicism, I think. Which has got worse. (Participant 13)

This participant describes how a lack of effective policy change can be related to the public stigma, which they believed to be related to the media narratives around homelessness. They also reference the 'right-wing' press here, which alludes to the power within the particular political narratives that are portrayed. This echoes research that shows how the media can perpetuate a stigmatising, blaming attitude toward individuals for their homelessness (e.g., Bowen & Capozziello, 2022; Truong, 2012). The relationship between the public and the media in mobilising for social change is discussed by Happer and Philo (2013), they highlight the powerful influence the media can have on the public's perception of social issues and

consequently their behaviour as a result. Lee et al (1991) analysed print and broadcast news in relation to people experiencing homelessness and discuss the influence of media on public perceptions in the US, however, highlight how difficult it is for researchers to disentangle this relational influence between policy, media, and the public. It is therefore challenging to understand where the power is to create more compassion for people experiencing homelessness, as this is key to facilitating positive change for this vulnerable group.

2.4.2 Theme 2: Systemic factors inhibit change for homelessness, this creates hopelessness.

A large part of the discussions in some interviews were spent reflecting on the system of national and local politics in the UK and how this is incompatible with a future without homelessness. Participants described that the interview provided an opportunity to reflect that was rare for them. This allowed for some latent exploration about the emotional impact of working in policy and how difficult this can feel when seeking to make policy work for people experiencing homelessness.

2.4.2.1 Sub Theme 1: "There's lots of short-termism" (Participant 14)

The level of ministerial changeover was highlighted by participants; for example, participant 10 explained:

> We've had at least eight housing ministers, more than that, so I think there's a lack of continuity. I've got a friend...and they really wanted to become housing minister. Now that's a person they should have made housing minister. But they don't, because in our game. They promote their friends. They promote the ones that are loyal to them. They then promote a couple that are not, so it doesn't look like that's all they do. (Participant 10)

The tone in this quote was received as despair at the lack of continuity in leadership which has an impact on the work that is achievable by policy actors. Participants at a local level of policy influence also reflected how their work is often under threat of funding being removed. For example: "My concern is always what happens at the end of 2025...Is the funding going to still be there? Because what I've seen in the past has often been initiatives which then stop after so many years" (Participant 3). This participant considered how the funding cycles put pressure on teams to deliver results in a short space of time as well as conveying the experience of anxiety this can create in the workforce.

Experiences of working from a threat mode are echoed in other studies that explored the experiences of professionals working in homelessness services at different layers of the system such as local government and service commissioning (e.g., Peters et al, 2021; Pleace, 2020;

Camp, 2023, Renedo, 2013). In particular, how short-term funding cycles do not encourage the long-term planning of service provision that is required for working with people experiencing homelessness (Pleace, 2020). Meaning the structures of services and commissioning are incompatible with the concept of person-centred care (Renedo, 2014). This was a challenge in the role of a policy actor that was referenced frequently throughout the data set. For example, participant 5 described: "it is really hard to be person centred, that for me is about them leading the way...we don't have the scope to do that."

The challenges policy actors face in attempting to create change in a short term focussed system could be interpreted as a natural response to working within a system that is constantly under threat. In threatening situations, humans experience tunnel vision and unnecessary psychological and physical processes and systems are paused in order to manage the danger in front of them (Chu et al, 2022). When individuals experience chronic stress, this has an impact on their cognition (Scott et al, 2015). How does chronic stress impact a system? Perhaps this reduces the collective systems ability to think broadly and widely about complex issues. Rather, the system seeks to provide solutions for simplified narratives of the social problems we face. This chimes with what participants described in considering how homelessness is sought to be resolved in a context of 'short termism'. For example, participant 9 reflected "it's prioritised in headlines, but not in detail, ever."

2.4.2.2   Sub Theme 2: The narrative is flexible, this can create hopelessness

Most participants reflected at the end of their interviews how little time they have to reflect, think, and pause in their roles. Consequently, this could limit the time they have to critically think about the information they receive and other perspectives which is an important factor in developing effective social policy (Williams, 2016). Participant 6 experienced a revelation within the interview about how their beliefs can inform the way their team present data on homelessness:

> I suspect my beliefs will influence what I think about. That it will influence everything from the start. Actually, probably will influence which indicators we choose to start off with...It will influence how we present those indicators visually. Just the choice between a bar chart or a line, for example, can make a big difference in the way that that information is perceived by people. And we know that it will impact the way we describe the data... (Participant 6).

This interviewee described how their beliefs influence their approach to certain tasks and reflected on how data may be perceived by the public; whilst other participants were more critical of how the narrative, and data describing homelessness can be flexibly interpreted. For

example, participant 5 explains, "We'll only say there's more or less *(homelessness)* because of the way that we record it...we'll define it and we'll name it according to what suits our purposes."

The idea of a changeable narrative contributed to the sense of hopelessness that some interviewees described when reflecting on what is needed to resolve homelessness in the UK. For example, participant 5 described, "I don't think the societal structures will change so much that actually...all the components that generate multiple needs, including homelessness, will ever be solved. That's so sad." This participant's expression of sadness was interpreted as a live reaction to their realisation, further confirming for the researcher that these topics were not often reflected upon within the participant's roles. Another participant reflected on the emotional drive that is needed for the work. For example*:*

> I think very few people carry on in this kind of work for the paycheck cause... and if you are doing it for other reasons, other than the passion for it, then I think you're the burnout is gonna happen and a little more quickly because it's not easy work (Participant 2).

This participant's quote describes burnout as an inevitability for all, but something that is further in the future for those that have passion for the work. This further echoed the sense of hopelessness that can be experienced by policy actors. The influence of emotions and policy making is something that has been discussed in the literature in recent years. It is important to make sense of policy actors whilst considering complexity of human emotions that may drive policy decisions (Cairney & Weible, 2017; Pierce, 2021). Burnout within the civil service is not a topic that has been widely explored in the UK evidence base, although the Whitehall II Cohort Study (Marmot et al 1991, Marmot & Brunner, 2005) has explored psychosocial health longitudinally within a cohort of civil servants, this does not include burnout relating to the role directly. In the US, Sciepura & Lindos (2024) explored burnout in public servants and concluded that those who relate poverty to systemic factors rather than individual's responsibility were more likely to experience higher work-related distress.

The tone of hopelessness throughout some of the interviews was striking; participants reported sadness at their inability to give more positive answers to questions. Hopelessness is a potential emotional cost for policy actors when they are seeking to understand homelessness in the context of societal structures. Especially when they are working within a system they perceive to be fighting against. Space to reflect in the interviews on the situation of homelessness was reported as both grounding to think about their beliefs and values; and emotionally difficult to consider the barriers to change that they perceived as outside of their control.

2.4.3 **Theme 3: The siloes and dichotomies in policy making prevents change for people experiencing homelessness: "You know I think we have a society that is reacting to a government who are driving the politics of division and hate." (Participant 9).**

This theme captures the way in which participants described homelessness in a dichotomous way. Some participants expressed frustration with the siloed working in Government and how this prevents effective policy change for people experiencing homelessness. At the same time, participants were found to be describing causes of and solutions to homelessness using dichotomous narratives which reflected the siloed approach.

Many participants in the data set described homelessness as either a housing or health issue, a dichotomous narrative. For example, participant 2 explained: "I consider, rough sleeping…to be a health issue rather than a housing issue." Participant 6 described another perspective: "this is a health issue that housing is needing to pick up…we have to provide public services to them when we shouldn't have to if the health issues had been addressed from the start." These perspectives often related to the interviewee's professional background or the department they are working within, highlighting how siloed approaches can create dichotomous narratives.

Defining homelessness as health or housing issue was conflicting at times for participants. For example, participant 3 explained, when describing their goal within their role as, "…making sure that people recognise that homelessness is a health issue." However shortly afterward, when asked about what keeps the problem of homelessness going, they firstly answered, "Yeah, this just needs to be a lot more housing really, and also suitable housing." It was interpreted as difficult for policy actors to resist understanding the issue of homelessness as either housing or health. Whilst at the same time, they would reflect on how unhelpful they find this siloed approach to be when pushing for change in this area.

Participants reflected on the 'Everyone in Initiative.' This was part of the UK Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic. In 2020 local authorities were requested to find accommodation for all people who were rough sleeping at the time (Cromarty, 2021). Participant 2 described "I've never seen partnership working like that…Everyone just joining what do we need to do in order to make this happen but inevitably, everyone's slips a little bit back into their siloed working and protecting the budgets." Garvie et al (2021) described how the 'Everyone in initiative' demonstrated what is achievable with political will and adequate funding however sustaining the response was proved difficult with many rough sleepers not moving to adequate housing. However, as participant 2 suggests; the collaborative working was key and this was not able to be continued in the same way beyond the pandemic, whilst working within siloed systems.

The benefits of working collaboratively, pooling resources and formulating policy problems with diverse professional perspectives is evidenced, however neoliberal ideals draw governments away from this approach (Olney, 2021). Whilst the structures of government can work effectively for implementing policy for more routine, predictable problems, it has been considered in the policy literature how these structures are less well equipped to manage the more complex problems faced by society (Head & Alford, 2015). For policy actors, this means that they aren't facilitated to work collaboratively within siloed systems. This makes it a challenge to hold in mind the perspectives of other departments and leaves them frustrated with the lack of collaboration to make sense of complex policy problems such as homelessness. This challenge for policy actors was observed within the interviews, having time to consider other departmental perspectives and priorities is not something they have space for in their role.

Dichotomous narratives were re-occurring within in the interviews. The challenge of upholding evidence-based practice or being able to respond quickly through voluntary sector action was discussed by participants. For example, participant 5 described:

> ...it's so hard to influence in that somewhere between that voluntary sector where you can make snappy decisions from...Rather than the ingrained bureaucratic evidence...academic, need to prove that it's worth doing. There's a horrible big grey space in between where you try to influence change, but you either haven't got the gift of the voluntary sector to do it quickly or the research, the evidence base...that said, this is the right way to do it. (Participant 5)

Descriptions such as this were noted across the data set, where the third sector was described as flexible and responsive, whilst the evidence base and guidance was described as an inhibiting factor in creating change. This further developed an interpretation that a middle ground between the two was difficult to conceptualise for policy actors. Participants professional backgrounds contributed to how they described their relationship with evidence-based practice. Participants who had worked directly with people experiencing homelessness in their early career were perceived as more critical of the drive for evidence-based practice health and social care. For example, Participant 4 explained "Of course it makes perfect sense, but we had to get somebody to write it down in the Calibri 11, you know, with some, with some references so that you can go. This is the evidence." They reflected on the frustration of awaiting evidence to catch up with what workers already know to be true when working with vulnerable groups.

Siloed systems and dichotomous narratives are likely to have an influence on the way policy actors approach their work, including their relationship to others with different professional

backgrounds. There is a risk here, that policy actors are subject to a 'them and us' experience within their own teams depending on their backgrounds in either 'on the ground' work or academia. Workplace cultures can be described as facilitating a culture in which professionals' group together based on common values or experiences. This can sometimes result in the development of negative stereotypes about colleagues if they are from a different professional or ideological perspective (Braithwaite et al, 2016). Social identity theory offers a warning when this occurs, situations where there is opportunity to develop an 'in-group' can lead to conflict and make genuine collaborative working less attainable (Tajfel et al, 1982; Bochatay et al 2019) which is particularly prevalent when there already is a power hierarchy within Government and Healthcare systems.

The challenge of the 'them and us' dynamics presents another dichotomy that participants may experience in their roles which contributes to the challenge of effective working within their teams for people experiencing homelessness. As well as, when holding two or more perspectives at the same time to inform their decision making. The concept of 'both/and' which is to hold multiple truths and conflicting perspectives at one time is at the heart of effective problem solving for leaders (Smith et al, 2016). However, this is difficult to achieve in systems where participants described both siloed working and dichotomous narratives, e.g., "I'd like it if we stopped silo-ing, Why? Homelessness is no more or less important than mental health" (participant 5).

2.5   Discussion

This research considers how policy actors understand the perpetuating factors for homelessness in the UK. The initial research question was left intentionally broad as this was a novel research area for Clinical Psychology. As the analytical process went on, the different 'paths' the analysis could take were considered. Taking into account the codes and the initial categorical themes, the research question was reviewed. The themes that are described firstly speak to the perceived lack of compassion for homelessness within the public, the media, and politicians. Secondly, to the hopelessness felt within the current structures and systems that should be able to facilitate change. Finally, the siloes and dichotomies in policy making for homelessness and how this inhibits collaborative working for change. These themes are described in this report and reflected upon whilst considering other theoretical literature and research studies.

2.5.1 Strengths & Limitations

Exploring the perspectives of policy actors from a psychological perspective, including in interviews and analysis, is considered to have a number of strengths. A psychologist recruiting and leading the interviews likely helped the process to feel more reflective and non-judgemental for participants. Cowley (2022) discusses the difficulties researchers can have recruiting MP's to be interviewed for research, including their time pressures and suspiciousness of academia and researchers. The interviewer maintained a curious stance, without attempting to criticise the participants perspective which was received well. Psychological therapy skills e.g., validation during in the interview supported participants to reflect on this topic in a more personal way which allowed for more depth of analysis in the next stage. Participants reported taking part in this research to be a positive experience, which is encouraging for others considering similar research topics in the future.

Increasingly, Clinical Psychologists are aiming to, and seeing the benefits of working at a 'Macro level', which is in part to consider how they can influence both local and national policy within their roles (Browne et al, 2020). Despite psychologists' enthusiasm to inform policy through their research, Walker et al (2018) describe how this relationship between psychology and policy should be approached strategically. With the audience of Clinical and Community Psychologists in mind, this research aimed to form a narrative about how policy actors make sense of homelessness in the interests of breaking down barriers between different professional backgrounds and continuing a dialogue about how these two fields can work more closely together. Although results have not sought to be generalisable to all policy actors, these results could provide some transferable theoretical considerations for policy relating to other vulnerable groups e.g., asylum seekers.

There are some methodological limitations that are important to highlight. When this research was planned it was anticipated that recruitment would be a challenge. Consequently, participants from various policy actor roles were recruited and specific consideration was not given to the diversity of the sample when planning recruitment. For future research, it would be useful to consider narrowly defining the term policy actors, to allow for a more in-depth exploration of a homogenous professional group. At analysis, the breadth of perspectives was a challenge for the researcher, a narrower professional recruitment pool could have reduced this challenge. In addition, future research could consider recruiting local policy actors from different areas of the country to increase diversity in samples as well as more explicitly considering factors such as ethnicity, age and disability when planning recruitment strategy to ensure diverse voices are captured.

It was important for the first author to consider and reflect upon their own political perspectives as well as their relationship with the topic in a lot of depth. It was notable during the analysis process that pre-conceived stereotypes or assumptions about members of certain organisations or political parties would influence how the data was interpreted. Keeping a detailed reflective log was helpful, this reflection was a constant part of the process. Re-reading data and coding the entire data set twice through allowed for alternative interpretations to come to light which benefitted the theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

This research included expert by experience perspectives in the initial planning of the study by consulting with peer mentors in a local homelessness service about the topic guide for the interviews. This was valuable and informative for the researcher however it would have been beneficial to include experts by experience more in the research process, including the analysis stage. In particular, considering how little opportunity people who experience homelessness are offered a voice in research (Armstrong et al, 2021). Considering designing future studies as community-based participatory research (Collins et al, 2018) would be beneficial to the applicability of the research and ensure the study is meaningful to people experiencing homelessness.

2.5.2 Implications and considerations for future research

A hope of this research was that other psychologists are inspired to carry out more research about policy actors and their understanding of social issues. If the profession seeks to move towards more involvement with attending to issues of social justice (Psychologists for Social Change, 2022), understanding the perspectives of this group of professionals is imperative. For Clinical and Community Psychologists who are working with people experiencing homelessness, this research provides an understanding of some of the key issues in developing effective policy for this vulnerable group. For the growing body of literature about the role of psychology and policy making (e.g., Cairney & Kwiatkowski, 2017; Crowley et al, 2019), this research offers some qualitative evidence which mirrors challenges identified by academics about the reality of implementing evidenced-based policy making (e.g., Cairney & Oliver, 2017; Sanderson, 2010).

Existing literature asserts policy development as a complex, value-laden process, influenced by individuals' different perspectives in conjunction with their interpretation of the evidence base (Greenhalgh and Russell, 2009). An unexpected finding of this research was the lack of time and space policy actors have to reflect on their values, beliefs, and own individual understanding of social issues such as homelessness. Psychologists could have a role in advocating for importance of understanding personal influences on decision making for the benefit of

increasing self-awareness in policy actors. In their own roles, Clinical Psychologists are reported to find reflective practice supportive for their professional development (Fisher, Chew & Leow, 2015) and a useful process for developing understanding of personal biases; however, there is no united definition within the profession of what reflective practice is (Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020), making the practice challenging to replicate across professions. However, given theoretical considerations such as Bounded Rationality (Sent & Klaes, 2005; Sent, 2017; Cairney, 2019) in conjunction with findings from this research it could be suggested that increased professional reflection for policy actors could have an influence on the development of more inclusive, effective policies for the future.

The analysis of the data for this research has drawn on social identity theory (Tajfel et al, 1982; Bochatay et al 2019) to formulate the difficulty in professional groups collaborating with each other when working to make sense of complex problems such as homelessness. Given the historical lack of collaboration between Policy actors and Psychologists (Sloan, 2010), they could be considered at risk of stepping in to 'them and us' dynamics within their different professional positions. Working collaboratively and attempting to understand each other's professional perspectives will be important as Psychologists embark on attempting 'macro' or 'system' level interventions.

Future research exploring other stakeholder perspectives e.g., commissioners, about homelessness would be a valuable addition to the evidence base to continue to consider how people experiencing homelessness are understood by the professionals they either work with directly, or whom have an indirect influence on their life through commissioning decisions. In addition, future research could benefit from qualitatively exploring how beliefs are shaped over time and what factors influence changes to professionals' perspectives.

Throughout the analysis process, it was observed that more research about the values, beliefs and perspectives of civil servants and MPs would be beneficial. This would develop understanding about how they experience their roles and what motivates them to work in their fields. Future research may also consider the perspectives of policy actors regarding other vulnerable groups or social issues that are relevant to the work of the psychological professions e.g., mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, violence against women and girls.

2.5.3   Conclusion

This was a novel research area for Clinical Psychology, offering an interpretation of why the problem of homelessness continues in the UK according to a group of policy actors. A psychological approach to the interviews and analysis allowed for exploration of participants' beliefs and emotional responses to the current policy narratives about homelessness in the UK.

Implications of this research are largely strategic for discipline, contributing to the academic discussion about psychology and policy making. For Psychologists working with other professionals, commissioners and local councillors, this paper also provides support for the potential need for increased value-based reflection on the process of decision making and value of the role of Psychologists in systems outside health and social care.

2.6   References

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Chapter 2

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Appendix C   EGRO Ethical Approval

ERGO II – Ethics and Research Governance Online https://www.ergo2.soton.ac.uk

Submission ID: 79551.A1
Submission Title: How do policy makers and political stakeholders understand the problem of homelessness and mental health within the homeless population? (Amendment 1)
Submitter Name: Alice McNamara

Your submission has now been approved by the Faculty Ethics Committee. You can begin your research unless you are still awaiting any other reviews or conditions of your approval.

Appendix D   Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: How do policy actors and political stakeholders understand the problem of homelessness?

Researcher: Alice McNamara, Trainee Clinical Psychologist

ERGO number: 79551

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This research is being completed as a Thesis Project towards the completion of a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. I have chosen to complete this project as I am interested in understanding how policy actors and political stakeholders understand the problem of homelessness and how they think about people experiencing homelessness and their mental health. It is hoped that this project will contribute to evidence that seeks to understand how Psychologists can influence policy around prevention health care for this population.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been asked to participate in this research as you are in a professional position that has an influence on policy which may directly or indirectly impact people experiencing homelessnesss lives. I am interested in hearing your thoughts and perspectives on how the problem of homelessness is maintained in the UK.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in this study you will be asked to meet with the researcher, for a semi-structured interview about your perspectives on homelessness.

This interview will be up to 1 hour and can be online, via Microsoft teams, or face to face. Interview time and location is flexible to suit participants schedules.

The interview would be audio recorded if it is face to face. If we meet online the meeting will be recorded via Microsoft teams, which will include audio and video. Recording is necessary so that a transcript of our conversation can be generated, this is what will be analysed for the purposes of this project.

If you are not happy for your interview to be recorded this would impact your participation in this project. Feel free to ask any questions if you have any concerns about confidentiality or being recorded.

Your transcript will be qualitatively analysed. This process will result in key themes being identified which will be included in the write-up of this research project. Some quotes from your transcript may be included, any identifiable information will be removed or changed and you would be referred to by your participant number within the write up.

This research project is due in May 2024 and will be submitted for publication to an academic journal after this date.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The main benefit will be helping psychologists to understand how people who influence policy understand the problem of homelessness. This will support us to develop our understanding of the differences and similarities in how health professionals and policy actors make sense of the problem. Having this insight may inform psychologists and other professionals who strive to make changes for people experiencing homelessness's lives.

Are there any risks involved?

As the interview may require you to reflect on your professional values and personal perspectives there is a chance you may experience some minor psychological discomfort by taking part in the interview. There will be no expectation for you to share anything you don't want to talk about and you can withdraw your consent to take part at any time before or during the interview.

It is acknowledged that it is difficult to assure complete anonymity as some of the information you share in the interview may be identifiable to you or your job role. During the transcribing process any identifiable information e.g. locations, job department will be removed or changed to protect you from being identified by readers.

It is recognised that some of what you may say during your interview may be identifiable to some other professionals working in your field. If you are particularly concerned about this following your interview, you are able to opt-in to reviewing your transcript yourself. You will have two weeks following your interview date to do so. You will then be sent the transcript and offered the chance to review for any potentially identifiable information _only_, it will not be possible to make changes to your answers. You will have two weeks to complete this review and negotiate changes with the researcher or withdraw your consent to take part in this project.

Please note that it will only be possible to withdraw your consent until the analysis stage of this project, after this point it will not be possible to withdraw your consent. The researcher will inform you of the date the transcripts will begin to be analysed.

Following the interview, if you have concerns or questions, you will be able to contact the researcher.

What data will be collected?

- Name and signature on the consent form only
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Level of policy influence (local or national)
- Audio/Video recording from your interview
- Transcript from your interview

Your consent form and contact details will be stored in a password protected my Personal University OneDrive that only I have access too. Your contact details will be deleted when the project has been completed.

The transcript from your interview will either be generated by Microsoft Teams and reviewed by the researcher or completed by a transcribing service. This service is approved by the University of Southampton, it is called PageSix transcribing services and they have their own privacy and data protection policies which are in line with the Data Protection Act (2018). The transcript will be made pseudonymised; any personal identifiable information will be removed and your transcript will be stored with a participant number.

The rest of your information as well as the transcript will be stored separately on a password protected folder that the researcher and supervisory team will have access to whilst the data is being analysed and the project written up.

The recording of the interview will be destroyed when the transcript has been generated.

Demographic characteristics of participant group will be summarised in the write up of this research. In addition, quotes will be used in the write up of this project, using participant numbers to differentiate between interviewee's, quotes will be linked to the level of policy influence the participant had. e.g., 'participant 1, member of parliament.'

In line with University policy, the transcripts and non-identifiable information will be stored for 10 years following the projects completion.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation and the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to data about you for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time before or during the interview without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected. If you would like to withdraw you can get in touch with the researcher via email.

Once you have taken part, it will only be possible to withdraw your consent until the analysis stage of this project, after this point it will not be possible to withdraw your consent. The researcher will inform you of the date the transcripts will begin to be analysed.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent.

Where can I get more information?

You can contact either the researcher, Alice McNamara (a.mcnamara@soton.ac.uk) or the projects main supervisor, Nick Maguire (nick.maguire@soton.ac.uk)

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at

http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20 Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you.

Appendix E   Consent Form

Study title: How do policy actors and political stakeholders understand the problem of homelessness?

Researcher name: Alice McNamara

ERGO number: 79551

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (Version 2: 3rd February) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw any-time before my transcript has been finalised and assigned a participants number, I can withdraw for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	
I understand that taking part in the study involves audio recording which will be transcribed and then destroyed for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet.	
I understand that if I wish to review the transcript after my interview is completed for the purposes of checking for identifiable information only; I will have two weeks from the date of the interview to opt in by informing the research directly. I will then have two weeks to review the transcript when it is complete. After this time I will not be able to review the transcript.	
I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that I will not be directly identified (e.g. that my name will not be used, identifiable information will be removed or changed).	

Name of participant (print name)...

Signature of participant...

Date...   ....

Name of researcher (print name)...

Signature of researcher ....

Date...

Appendix F   Interview Topic Guide

- What interested you in taking up your role as councillor / MP / other?

- What are the personal beliefs about politics that you hold that motivate you towards your role?

  o Follow up: How did you end up working in this particular area (inclusion health / homelessness / vulnerable groups / housing) within your professional role?

- What's your perception of how policy change can influence the lives of vulnerable groups?

- This research is about homelessness, so I was wondering what definition of homelessness makes most sense to you?

- Why do you think people become homeless? Why do you think people stay homeless?

  o Follow up: What other factors may contribute to people becoming homeless (individual / societal)?

  o Do you think homelessness is more prevalent now? If so, why…?

  o Has your perception of why people become homeless changed over time?

- Thinking about the experience of being homeless, what saddens you most about it?

- How do these beliefs about homelessness shape your decisions on how to work with this issue when / if it comes up in your consistency? For example, decisions that influence policy or resourcing for people experiencing homelessness.

  o How does you're thinking about what causes and maintains homelessness influence how you approach your work?

  o Tell me more about why you think you work in that way.

- Comparatively to other social issues, what is your perception of how homelessness is prioritised as a policy issue?

  o What are the obstacles to homelessness being prioritised more?

- Do you think there is a version of the UK without homelessness in the future?

- How did you find the interview?

Appendix G   Codebook (March 2024)

Table 0.2

Category	Code Name	Example	Files	References
Self in the role	Beliefs influence how we work	So it will choose the indicators we choose it will. It will influence the indicators we choose. It will influence how we present those indicators visually. Just the choice between a bar chart or a line, for example, can make a big difference in the way that that information is perceived by people. And we know that it will impact the way we describe the data we describe its caveats. (P6)	2	2
	accidental area of work	So look, I'm the accidental politician. I'm not one of these weirdos that aged 9 decided I wanted to change the world, and therefore I was going to inflict my political views on the planet. (P12)	6	6
	belief in people over state	So big State thinks that they know best for everyone. And um, I would. I would suggest that they don't. And then people know best, mostly for themselves what the state should do is make sure that when people have difficulties, when they're struggling, then they can help, and they can guide (P10)	2	2
	Belief in the system when its funded	And a lot of people underestimate and what good local government can do, properly funded local government. It's a game changer...And then that's the greatest thing that we can do and that's what politics can do. It can change people's lives. It can change people's lives for the better. (P8)	2	3
	beliefs embedded by being challenged	And so she would. She would always be. Questioning, challenging and unpicking, thinking around homelessness and assumptions that people make. Um, which I think I've just. Kept up myself. (P2)	3	3
	citing where values come from	And so I think it's about, I think it's about growing up in a city that. Is fiercely political. Um. The hates injustice that has suffered injustice in many forms...And so I think it's hard to be from XXX and not be a bit gobby and and	4	7

		A and a bit sort of...political and and that shapes you that that will shape you as a person. (P8)		
	driven by fairness	Obviously there are times where like I am very motivated by like fairness and equality. I always have been and so I really, really want a fairer and more just society for people. That's that's one driver, but also on a personal level. (P11)	3	8
	Driven by inequality	My dad was a leprosy specialist, so I suppose from an early age I've seen inequalities and the practical response to inequality. So what's possible? (P3)	7	8
	Driven by injustice	So you kind of find something. It's unjust or unfair. So I get involved with it...I think I've always had a perspective, but. Um. There is a lot to challenge just for a lot of people in different settings and and it can be very unjust at times	5	8
	Driven by power	Well-being really honest, I it feels more powerful than I enjoy the power. You know, it feels much more powerful than than academia. (P6)	1	3
	Early work experiences driving current values	...And it just made me like that whole thing just made me think. And at the same time, my head was in my PhD and I was thinking what the **** is my PhD? What difference is it going to make in in the life of these people? And it's like I couldn't draw a line even a very long line between my work and the impact. (P6)	3	4
	Favoring liberal approach	Lifelong democratic socialist, I would say that. Um. That's a fundamental duty of society. To actually be rich enough. Within it, I don't mean rich enough in money, I mean rich enough in texture. Alice McNamara 38:57 Yeah. participant 9 38:59 To have. That. That facility. Just woven into society as a whole, so it's not just about, you know, compassionate Christmas. It's about the society as a whole having the texture whereby it picks its citizens up on a regular basis. So I can see a world where that does happen. Alice McNamara 39:17 Yeah. Hmm. participant 9 39:24 But we are nowhere near that right now. (P9)	5	7
	Follow the rules or make the rules	And I reached a point in my career where I needed to decide whether I was going to become more than management trying to deliver what someone else was telling me (P5)	1	1
	Guided by personal beliefs	But equally, I'm not naive enough to think that I don't also drive forward my	3	5

		agenda and my beliefs (P5)		
	Making small changes	'how often small changes could make huge amounts of difference.' (P8)	2	3
	Motivated by wanting to help people	'I'm really proud of. Of leading a local government branch and and, you know, being able to help people often in in their darkest times' (P8)	2	4
	Motivated to be a change maker	'What interested me really around the time I got involved in students union at XXX was what you were broadly call working for change.' (P1)	10	17
	Motivations of politicians	'I think they used it nationally, politically as a bit like the sewers, wasn't it? When we first got sewers built around London? It's because the rich were scared about the sewers rather than they actually cared about the poor. Maybe the everybody in was more caring about the COVID hitting them than it was the homeless, but hey, we we ride those waggons, don't we?' (P5)	4	6
	Neutrality as credible	'you're not neutral, you'll lose credibility, right? And so I tried to reinforce how important it is to be credible and to be good, to be known for being good at what you do.' (P6)	1	1
	Passion can cloud neutrality	'Think about the evidence only and focusing on the evidence only and trying to present that in the most neutral way that can be really challenging when you fee, when you might feel passionately, yeah.' (P6)	1	4
	Passion drives a committed approach	'I think very few people carry on in this kind of work for the paycheck cause you can you can earn a lot more doing other things. So, and if you are doing it for other reasons other than the passion for it, then I think you're the burnout is gonna happen and a little more quickly because it's not easy work.' (P2)	5	10
	Relate to the client group	'It's because my background is one that I've experienced a number of those factors or I can resonate with them having empathy and stuff like that.'(P5)	3	5
	Seeing change motivates continued effort	But you know, I'll settle for a little victory because it's a little victory that keeps us going along the way. Yeah. (P8)	3	3
	value of listening	Think it's really, really big part of that because unless you. Actually listened to people. And and here people stories as to why they're there. You're very unlikely to be able to find a sustainable route off the street for people because you're not addressing what's actually going on. (P2)	1	2
	Wanting to provide a voice for vulnerable groups	I'm still not quite sure about. It's been suggested to me before that there's something about homelessness and lack of attachment that attracts me. I think it's more about disenfranchisement and people who don't have as clear a voice publicly known in the public forum as most of us do (P2)	2	2

	Black and White	'you know you've got the same you got the same slight definitional problem is somebody who comes out of the services having served in Iraq or somewhere with PTSD. Is that a mental health problem or is that a services problem?' (P1)	3	6
	Enjoying the challenge of the work	It's not that I would say I am someone who's had like a long standing interest in in this area, although it's it was sort of interesting enough to me from the outside that I'd want to do something that I'd be keen to work and it kind of thing. It's not one of those sort of really dry policy areas like. I don't know medicines or. Something really technical, which I just don't find interesting. I like the sort of, yeah, the combination of sort of health and social policy. (P11)	4	6
	Family experience of politics	'Well, I think it was not just the holding of the beliefs, but it was also probably growing up in a family which had had it had a tradition and a culture of of, of conversation around politics and kind affairs, but also a history of of political activity and activism.' (P13)	3	3
	Highlighting personal achievements	I do that and I justify that on the basis that I've been kicking around a long time now and there's something that sort of says, well, actually. You know when you know something? (P5)	2	5
	L - reflecting on cliche language	It sounds it sounds a bit Miss worlds of the 80s, but I really I really do want to change the world for the better (P8)	2	4
	Limited space to reflect on self in role	'We're working level officials, obviously. So none of us are discussing our beliefs.' (P6)	3	4
	Other people suggest role	'So the first thing to say about me is that I never actually set out to be an MP. I did set out to be a counselor. I got selected largely by accident in that.' (P1)	3	3
	part of role is to challenge	When people come to me with stuff that's really judgmental and not intend it's interest, there's challenging it. (P7)	2	3
	Personal or Relational credit matters	'it's XX. So XXX suggesting this might be a good idea. Maybe we should listen. He might not be right, but at least we can listen. And and have a think about it and start working on it, but then it's it's then finding the other way to engage other people and that's through spreadsheets.' (P14)	5	8
	Rejecting political label	'And I do sound a bit Tory, don't I? It's all drugs and alcohol. But, you know, that's the stark Reality is. It's it's a huge problem.' (P12)	3	5

Why we are stuck	Changing the narrative by not really making changes	So we've just changed the frame around it...We've gone from institutionalized and yeah, so. So I think it's changed, but we've got the same people, we just boxing in different ways. (P5)	3	6
	3rd Sector as flexible	I've also really enjoyed, is the partnership working and I've worked with a lot within the voluntary sector agent with the voluntary sector agencies and often they could be very innovative where....Where sometimes statutory services were a bit more limited in what they could do and they had to keep to their KPI.	3	5
	Abuse of power as constant	Abuse of power. Yeah, I mean, and I know there's been a bit. There's always abuse of power, right. But again, it's always, it's always vulnerable people that are disproportionately affected always. (P11)	1	3
	Bureaucracy as a barrier to change	you have to to have to have a passion because you're up against a lot of bureaucracy, a lot of the time. P5	1	2
	Challenge of being person centered	So we we weren't person centred and we didn't lead from the person and I still think we lack that a little...Ohh and I don't know whether that's a concept that's nice to have rather than real To be...How do we hear that voice from people are in that position. It's very hard to hear it, to engage it. (P5)	5	9
	Collaborative working needed	The fact that commissioning is very separate, so that if there is more joint commissioning between organisations to share the risk share, the burden also share the outcomes. There would be. I think there would be a lot more positive. P14	5	10
	Conservative as punitive	'I think it the UK is an interesting country. I mean, I'm a migrant myself, so I sometimes observe this from the outside, but it's in a country that is very progressive, while at the same time being very conservative and it's just a very, very strange mix...People so punitive. They're so. In that way, so conservative.' P6	3	4
	Current political agenda of homelessness	'You need you need political will. As massive, we don't have any of that at the moment. I mean, I know they say about levelling up and stuff, but. That's from a. It's not really in a way that helps on homelessness and rough sleeping. Um. You need some. I think you need some investment. So if you had the political will then, then people would invest in it and people would	6	9

		get behind it. That's how it works in government. Like, if you have a minister or somebody that's really behind something, they then sort of mobilise.' P11		
	Data is context specific	'We just we have really, really poor data. And and and mostly people are invisible within data sets. You just can't. It makes it very difficult to Commission and do all the right things you need, cause you just don't have the data, but also to make any sort of change is really hard because we just don't have anything that we can present that's like as robust as you would normally use when sort of making funding decisions and things like that.' P11	7	9
	Difficult to see the impact of work	'seeing again seeing the line between that and the impact that it's going to have on the ground isn't always that clear.' P6	1	1
	Discussion about academia or evidence base	'Think about the evidence only and focusing on the evidence only and trying to present that in the most neutral way that can be really challenging when you fee, when you might feel passionately, yeah.' P6	5	11
	Everyone In - Will and Money	'During the pandemic, the government and local authorities. Through. Tonnes of cash at the problem, yet still if you were to go into Southampton you would see. A hardcore of about 20 people who are still street homeless because their lives were simply so chaotic they could not cope with being in in the hotel accommodation that was provided.' (P12)	5	5
	It's a fight	'Um and I expect and want results for people and often to the point of me getting quite bad tempered at times. You know, with, with myself, really. Because I want the best possible outcomes for people.' (P8)	4	9
	Hopelessness	'I don't think the societal structures. Will change so much that actually. Property is readily available, needs are met from childhood through to adulthood that.' (P5)	4	6
	It's not easy to create change	'So you've got rising demand and underfunding, I think makes it very difficult to even to sustain. Well, it's impossible to sustain the level of services they used to be as well as direct investment in things like heising, charities and support organizations.' (P1)	5	9
	It's not good enough	'The cycling around um addressing those recovery services, getting a multi agency wrap around for support for people with it tends to be people with more complex needs that that do cycle around. And again I see that as a failure or for services.' (P2)	9	23
	Limited by systems	'Cross government cross system working at all levels, so even if you have it	5	14

		at like official level which you often do to be honest, officials are pretty good at working together. You also need it above. You need it at ministerial level, but you also need it at local level. You just need it everywhere and. It doesn't. Often doesn't doesn't work out like that.' (P11)		
	Offsetting power to different groups	'it's it's it's a top down approach that needs to be. I need managers to can't, can't. Can't. Be me. I need the executive director of the Director and the managers below.' (P7)	8	14
	Our work is a reflection of the publics wishes	'I am working for the British people' (P6)	2	2
	people lead how society works	'society constructs itself from the people' (P5)	2	2
	power = money	'So. So what I do is I haven't got any power. I haven't got a budget,' (P14)	6	10
	Power isn't with the operational staff	'And it's really good to work on the ground with individuals, either as a case worker or as a manager with teams that are case working and I became a. A manager, senior manager within the sectors, and. But you're always restrained by what's available. What's happening in the decision makers.' (P5)	4	7
	power isn't with people	'And they don't have the resources to challenge the local authority if they don't make the right decision. So it's just the support, isn't there?' (P7)	1	1
	public don't want to interfere	'Because it's it is uncomfortable to see. Somebody suffer? It is uncomfortable to know that this is what our society is doing. In the way it's set up and so I think lots of people's. Um. Instinct is to just not engage and we're so busy, aren't we? We're so overwhelmed by information everywhere we look and go. That most of the time, people don't even people don't even realise or acknowledge that there's all these people that are just, quite frankly, being failed.' (P11)	3	4
	Radical change is needed	'And I'm just impatient to get to a position where we can be bold because I always think we're better when we're bold, where we can be bold with our opinions and our views and our aspirations for the country and our aspirations for all people.' (P8)	3	7
	Questioning Status-Quo	'I met a lot of resistance because I started with saying right? How do we know everything we've got works well? That we've had it for years and it's worked for years, but how do you know it works?' (P5)	2	4

	The complexity is overwhelming - paralyses engagement with the topic	'I genuinely and I this is probably 98% of the reason why I didn't want to do this interview. I don't know what the solution is. I genuinely don't because. So people who are St homeless. You sit and scratch your heads and I don't know. I don't know how you help this person' (P12)	3	3
	There isn't enough resource	'We don't have the resource to deliver the service that services that that might be required' (P4)	3	4
	L - Implied preference of 3rd sector approach	'it's very important to say that in a city like XXX, all of the expertise in this area was in the voluntary sector.' (P1)	2	5
	MP as wanting quick solutions	'Who can give me the? The the the the quick. And list of problems and asks that I can then take up and run with.' (P13)	1	2
	Norm is to be siloed or detached	'I've worked how much silo work in there is, so the organisation does their bit of their job but doesn't look at the whole individual.' (P14)	4	10
	people want to help homeless with other motivations	'Ohh absolutely yeah. And and this particular government is there, there's a lot of rhetoric around like cleaning up the streets and things like that. So it's about getting it.' (P11)	4	6
	politicians as people too, just as stereotyped	'Um, but I think there is also. At a level at which everybody in government is also just a person, and so the sort of general culture that pervades about individual level choices, having the biggest impact on your health which just isn't true. It's still pervades.' (P11)	1	1
	politics as influencing cultural thinking	'Ohh, that's a sort of. Hedgemonic individual conservative view. That. Um. Doesn't so much just...permeate particular political parties, but it's actually something which relates to the common sense of society at that particular time.' (P9)	2	3
	prioritization of issue	'It is the one that's prioritised over the other inclusion health groups that we look at so. It's the biggest one.' (P11)	1	1
	problem of the political grand gestures	'The the detail and rigour of policy is just usually not there.' (P9)	2	4
	problem of the short term thinking	'Is the funding going to still be there? Because what I've seen in the past has often been initiatives which then stop after so many years.' (P3)	6	10
	provision has declined	'There's absolutely no doubt that austerity policies have contributed dramatically to all of these things, and that's that's in terms of direct investment. But it's also in terms of the cutbacks in the support services you might have expected to be there.' (P1)	2	3

	public as uncaring	'That's when they care, because they see it in the news, its rammed into their living rooms on television screens but otherwise they don't care so in the background the government has to care; local, national, charities, voluntary sectors and no one knows or cares but that is a thing that they have to do,' (P10)	5	17
	system keeps people out not in	'But it's just some real basic stuff around stigma and discrimination and assumptions, you know, walking into a G PS waiting room and you've got all the patients looking at you and you may not get the best reception from the the first staff member you've talked to about your appointment.' (P14)	2	4
	The actions taken don't address the problem - is this intentional	'Rather than really getting to the nub of the problem, which if you were getting to the nub of the problem you'd be, you'd be looking across everything to be able to like like. It's not one thing that causes somebody to become homeless or or sleep rough. It's a combination of multiple different things in their lives that have gone wrong. And so you would be looking to across all parts of that system to improve it, to stop people becoming homeless in the 1st place. But nobody's really doing that.' (P11)	2	2
	the problem isn't related to money	'Um, but but with one thing that came out the conference, which was really encouraging is 2018, I think it was and that was four or five years before the pandemic was all of the practitioners said. It's not about money. The government give us more money than we've ever had. It's not about money. Sometimes it's even difficult to spend it.' (P10)	2	2
	the way the media present homelessness	'Like to think, and this is a sort of narrative that's peddled in some of the right wing press as well, that, you know, its their Own fault.' (P13)	2	2
	theory or evidence only gets us so far	'It's only sort of. 20% about the theory and 80% about the practise in terms of getting those policy changes made.' (P9)	3	3
Culture we live in	cultural obsession with money	'We have a very skewed. And. Attitude one towards property ownership. So we, we, we or taught property we see we see we see a House or a flat as an asset. We don't see it as a home. So we're not actually valuing it for what it is. So...So we're obsessed. We're absolutely obsessed with personal wealth.' (P7)	2	4
	blame culture	'Then politically, you you are, if you are the agency trying to cure homelessness. You are being beaten around the back of the head by the	1	2

	political masters for not doing it very well when you actually haven't got any other stuff to do it properly anyway…So no policy is odd in that direction, is it's, it's. It very rarely. As it were, the blame very rarely sits in the right place. Put it that way.' (P9)		
Individuals are blamed	'Sometimes you hear people saying that, you know it's a lifestyle choice, which I've never accepted. If it, if it's a choice, it's not an informed one, then it's probably taken by someone that's not coming from a place of great self esteem and self worth and feeling that they deserve a safe home.' (P2)	5	8
Services as excluding	'if you keep pushing people into corners, it's harder and harder to help them get out of that corner.' (P4)	4	5
staff lacking compassion in housing	'In terms of rented accommodation in the social sector, it's broken from the perspective of attitudes towards and towards social housing tenants. There's a belief that they're living in a subsidised accommodation and they should have a lower standard of service and lower quality of work because of that,' (P7)	4	6
Society values independent living	'Well, I think that if you if if you give people responsibility, leave people with a responsibility that they had rather than taking it away from them all the time, they, they're mostly make the right decisions, they make the right decisions for themselves, they make the right decisions for their families, they make the right decisions in their work and careers.'(P10)	4	10
politics influencing common sense	'the common sense of society you can get captured. By particular political. Viewpoints at various times. So actually the the, the you might say the common sense about society…20-30 years ago. Was quite substantially to the left of the common sense of our society now.' (P9)	3	5
Society dictating how they should live	'Who are we to say you who chooses to live like this need to come and live in the way that we want you to live.' (P5)	1	5
we are a vulnerable population	'You know that old adage, we're all one paycheck away from from being homeless? You know that's true… I think prevention preventing rough sleeping is often kind of easier because you look at the journeys journeys to the street that people take and and can put in prevention upstream prevention activity there, but with homelessness. When it could happen to, you know, 80% of the population. Without much warning.' (P2)	6	8

Formulating Homelessness	Allowing people autonomy and control	'Hmm, interesting. I remember having a conversation when I was back at XXX and there was a scenario of care leaver, who... ended up rough sleeping at quite a young age. I remember making a flippant comment about that and that is so clearly a systems failure....And and I remember my colleague, I'm meeting tomorrow. Lunch funnily enough, colleagues saying what about personal responsibility? And I was just really sure. Should say that the obviously there is a bit of both there and if if we're not attributing any personal responsibility to people were completely robbing them of their autonomy as well, so that, you know, there's. It is more complicated,' (P2)	3	3
	Complex = Unpredictable	And one grant that came through worked out to about 20 grand ahead. Well, if it was just money, you could go and give them a check. Couldn't go. Here's £20,000 streets and go sort your life out. It's not about money. It's about all those other things that....And you know, some of them are so complex that you probably never get them off the streets or certainly into anything that's really, really permanent. (P10)	3	6
	complexity = predictable	'And I think it's like I think it's feels similar to climate change in that way. It's like we kind of know we know enough about what works to be able to. If somebody somewhere said right this is what we're doing and we're doing it properly, we could do it. But I don't see that happening anytime soon because nobody cares to be frank and it's not the kind of thing that like as I think it's so wrapped up isn't it the politics is so wrapped up in society.' (P11)	3	4
	Health vs Housing issue	'Yeah, it's. I mean I have, you know, I consider. Rough sleeping in particular rather than homelessness, um to be a health issue rather than a housing issue. So yeah, that yeah, possibly.' (P2)	4	10
	Home as a potential need for a homeless person	'It's particularly with rough sleeping housing isn't the main issue getting, you know, helping someone to come inside is not the end of the story.' (P2)	3	5
	Homelessness as a constant societal issue	'I think they (people experiencing homelessness) will always be the hardest to reach...There will always be an enduring homeless population' (P12)	5	9
	Homelessness because of societal limitations	So every situation that I imagine or every, every possible cause of homelessness is regarding things that happen to people and people don't have no control over...So it's a variety of things that I would describe as always out of people's control. (P6)	7	11

|				
	individual factors maintaining homelessness	'it (homelessness) will never always go away because the things that go wrong in people's lives that can create homelessness will never always go away. So you're not gonna stop everybody having mental health problems or becoming addicted to different substances or having their relationships catastrophically breakdown.' (P1)	4	7
	lack of agency in homelessness	'What saddens me most is the complete lack of agency that the homelessness, the homeless person has...Particularly where there. And again, I've been talking different kinds of homelessness, particularly where. Their life has fallen apart. And they have become homeless. And the ability of. That person to actually pull themselves out of that situation. Which? Quite popularly is sort of described as sort of pull yourself together and get yourself sorted out well. But in the majority of instances. People just don't have the agency to actually do anything about it. For variety of reasons.' (P9)	2	4
	Person first language	'The prospect of having more of a national influence on policy and delivery. And but also language used and things like that. I'm very frustrated, but particularly national organisations tend to use quite poor language around homelessness and rough sleeping. And say. Yeah. When this sort of micro level and the policy level, hoping that I would be able to have a bit more kind of influence. In that area.' (P2)	5	6
	prevention is better than cure	'So think about early prevention and promotion. So in health terms that might be where services were delivered, where they were screening people, but it was also thinking about the pathways, people coming out of prison, leaving care,' (P3)	3	5
	Problem with our offer	'I think that's part of the problem when very often when I'm. umm visiting agencies, and they're frustrated and outreach workers are frustrated because someone's refusing, refusing to come in. Other than that, refusing the support and always my challenge is.... You know what's wrong with the offer? What's wrong with the way you're engaging with that person? What could be done differently? The issue here isn't with that individual. It's the. It's the way in which services are being brought to that individual.' (P2)	5	6
	systemic understanding of homelessness as educated	'I don't think I ever had a position where I thought it must be their fault and then had to relearn it. I mean, I think I've always sort of....Broadly, I hope try to have an intelligent understanding of what the problem is.' (P1)	4	7

| | 5 | Their situation is their comfort zone | 'And then I've jumped into a it's kind of the use of drugs and alcohol to to address some of that trauma in inverted commas, and so therefore have then spent an extended period of time still not developing those skills. The idea that I'm going to have to pay bills and not just go from minute to minute and and. You know what? It's terrifying.' (P4) | 4 | 5 |

Appendix H   Thematic Map Evolution
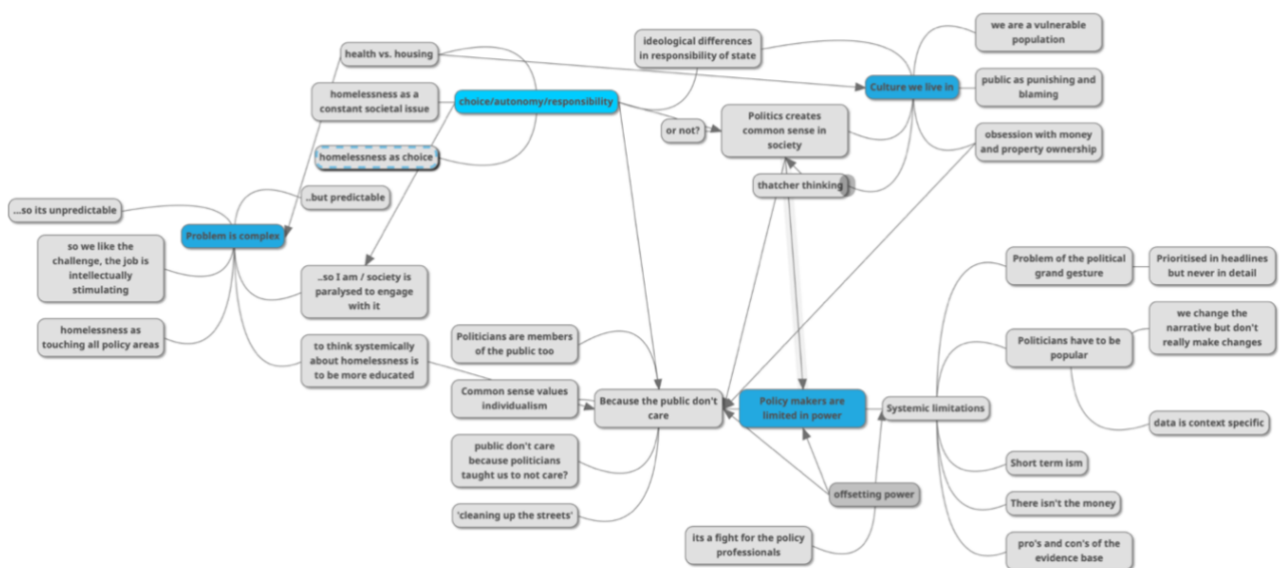
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Figure 0.2
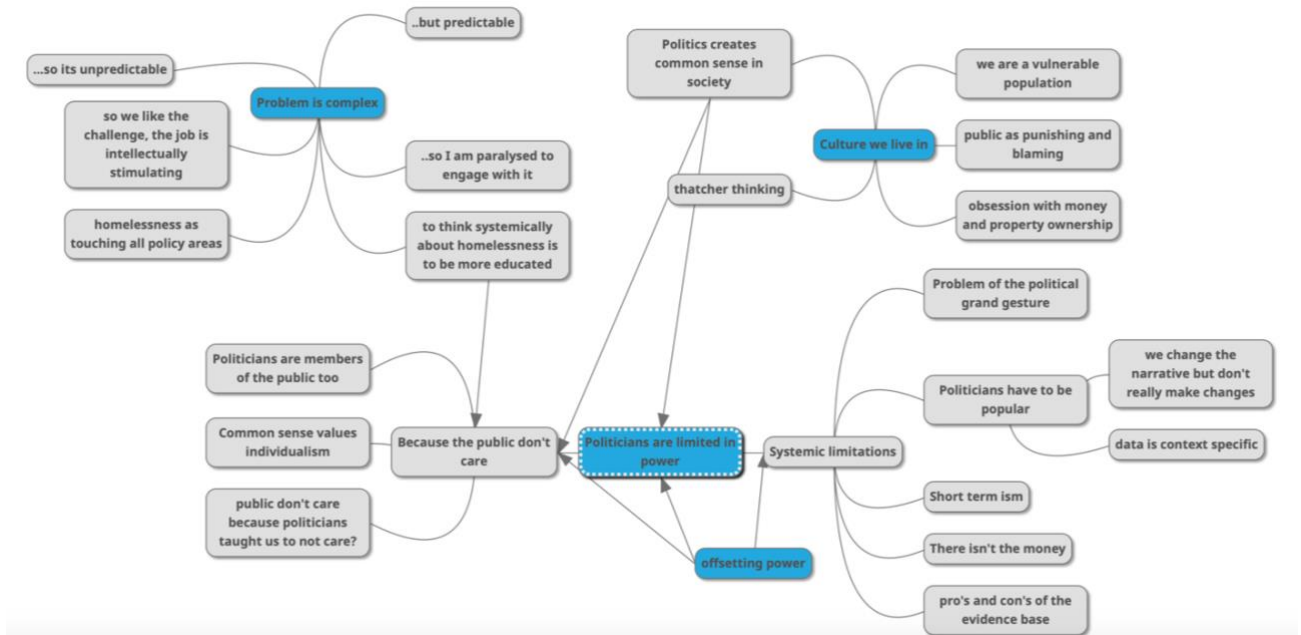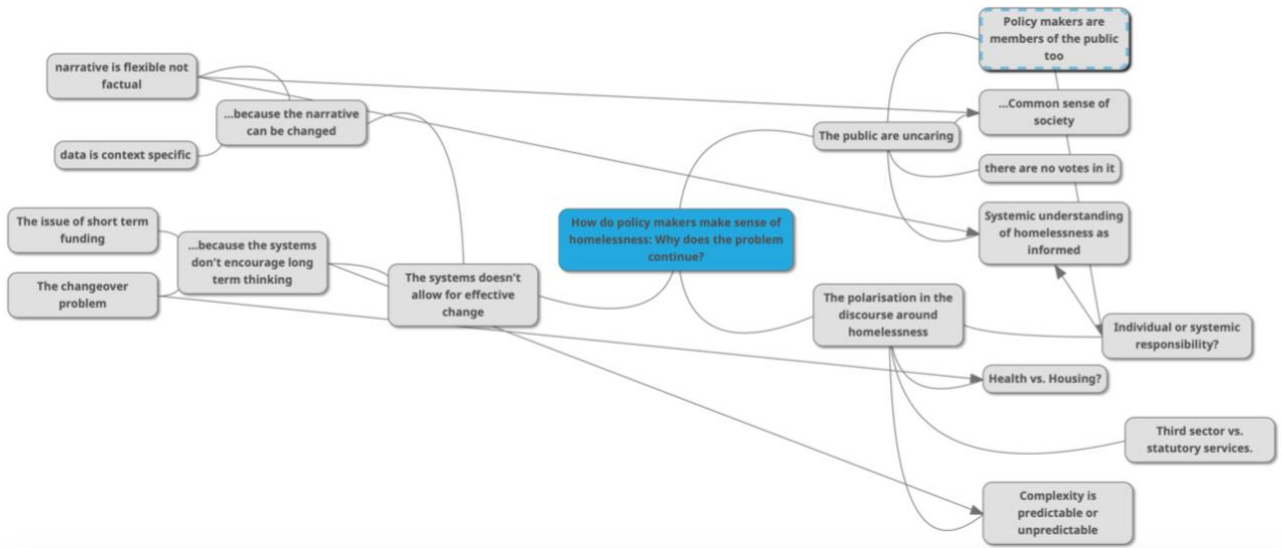

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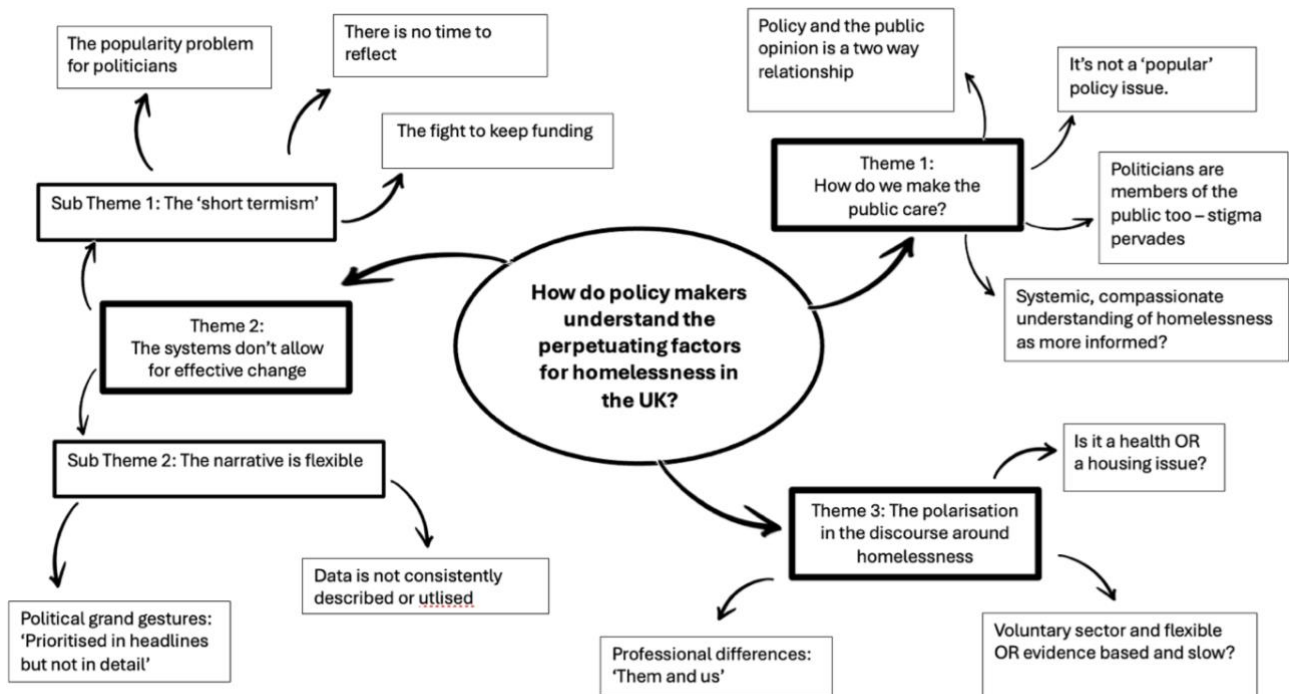
Figure 0.3

H.3   Version 3: 28.04.2024

Figure 0.4

H.4   Version 4: 11.04.2024

Figure 0.5

Appendix I   Author Guidelines for Wiley Journal of Community Psychology

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3. PREPARING YOUR SUBMISSION

Article Preparation Support

[Wiley Editing Services](#) offers expert help with English Language Editing, as well as translation, manuscript formatting, figure illustration, figure formatting, and graphical abstract design – so you can submit your manuscript with confidence.

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Parts of the Manuscript

PLEASE NOTE: All submissions should include a short, bullet list document of research highlights and details on how the submission is ***community-based and psychology-related***. This will allow the editor to see the reasoning more quickly for why the authors think the article is in scope before rejecting or unsubmitting.

The manuscript should be submitted in separate files: title page; main text file; figures.

By submitting a manuscript to or reviewing for this publication, your name, email address, and affiliation, and other contact details the publication might require, will be used for the regular operations of the publication, including, when necessary, sharing with the publisher (Wiley) and partners for production and publication. The publication and the publisher recognize the importance of protecting the personal information collected from users in the operation of these services, and have practices in place to ensure that steps are taken to maintain the security, integrity, and privacy of the personal data collected and processed. You can learn more at https://authorservices.wiley.com/statements/data-protection-policy.html.

Title page
The title page should contain:

- (i) a short informative title that contains the major key words. The title should not contain abbreviations (see [See Wiley's best practice seo tips](#));
- (ii) a short running title of less than 40 characters;
- (iii) the full names of the authors;
- (iv) the author's institutional affiliations at which the work was carried out;
- (v) acknowledgments
- (vi) three to four referees (see below).

Authors will be <u>required</u> to include the names, institutions, e-mail addresses, and research specialties of <u>three to four</u> persons outside the author's institution who have not collaborated with the author(s) in the past 5 years and who are qualified to referee the paper. An effort will be made to obtain at least one referee from this list.

The present address of any author, if different from that where the work was carried out, should be supplied in a footnote.

Authorship

Please refer to the journal's authorship policy the Editorial Policies and Ethical Considerations section for details on eligibility for author listing.

Acknowledgments

Contributions from anyone who does not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed, with permission from the contributor, in an Acknowledgments section. Financial and material support should also be mentioned. Thanks to anonymous reviewers are not appropriate.

Conflict of Interest Statement

You will be asked to provide a conflict of interest statement during the submission process. See the section 'Conflict of Interest' in the Editorial Policies and Ethical Considerations section for details on what to include in this section. Please ensure you liaise with all co-authors to confirm agreement with the final statement.

Affiliations

REX will extract listed affiliations from the manuscript and then ask the submitting author to verify each author's affiliated institution(s). Authors should be encouraged to include the complete affiliation addresses in the manuscript (Institution Name, Country, Department Name, Institution City, and Post Code). When verifying their institution, authors are asked to locate their <u>base institution</u> only (not necessarily the department or school).

Main text

Manuscripts can be uploaded either as a single document (containing the main text, tables and figures), or with figures and tables provided as separate files. Should your manuscript reach revision stage, figures and tables must be provided as separate files. The main manuscript file can be submitted in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) format. As papers are double-blind peer reviewed the main text file should not include any information that might identify the authors.

Your main document file should include:

- A short informative title containing the major key words. The title should not contain abbreviations
- Acknowledgments;
- Abstract structured (aims/methods/results/conclusion)
- Seven keywords;
- Main body: formatted as introduction, materials & methods, results, discussion, conclusion
- References;
- Tables (each table complete with title and footnotes);
- Figures: Figure legends must be added beneath each individual image during upload AND as a complete list in the text.

Abstract

The Abstract should be divided into the following sections 'Aims', 'Methods, Results' and 'Conclusion'; it should not exceed 150 words for articles and brief reports.

Keywords

Please provide seven keywords. Keywords should be taken from those recommended by the US National Library of Medicine's Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) browser list at https://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/. REX will attempt to automatically extract keywords from the manuscript.

Main text

As papers are double-blind peer reviewed the main text file should not include any information that might identify the authors.

The journal uses British/US spelling, however authors may submit using either option as spelling of accepted papers is converted during the production process.

Footnotes to the text are not allowed and any such material should be incorporated into the text as parenthetical matter.

References

References should be prepared according to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition). This means in text citations should follow the author-date method whereby the author's last name and the year of publication for the source should appear in the text, for example, (Jones, 1998). The complete reference list should appear alphabetically by name at the end of the paper.

A sample of the most common entries in reference lists appears below. Please note that a DOI should be provided for all references where available. For more information about APA referencing style, please refer to the [APA FAQ](#). Please note that for journal articles, issue numbers are not included unless each issue in the volume begins with page one.

Journal article

Beers, S. R. , & De Bellis, M. D. (2002). Neuropsychological function in children with maltreatment-related posttraumatic stress disorder. The American Journal of Psychiatry, 159, 483–486. doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.159.3.483

Book

Bradley-Johnson, S. (1994). Psychoeducational assessment of students who are visually impaired or blind: Infancy through high school (2nd ed.). Austin, TX: Pro-ed.

Internet Document

Norton, R. (2006, November 4). How to train a cat to operate a light switch [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vja83KLQXZs

Endnotes

Endnotes should be placed as a list at the end of the paper only, not at the foot of each page. They should be numbered in the list and referred to in the text with consecutive, superscript Arabic numerals. Keep endnotes brief; they should contain only short comments tangential to the main argument of the paper.

Footnotes

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Tables should be self-contained and complement, but not duplicate, information contained in the text. They should be supplied as editable files, not pasted as images. Legends should be concise but comprehensive – the table, legend and footnotes must be understandable without reference to the text. All abbreviations must be defined in footnotes. Footnote symbols: †, ‡, §, ¶, should be used (in that order) and *, **, *** should be reserved for P-values. Statistical measures such as SD or SEM should be identified in the headings.

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