



Welfare Conditionality

SANCTIONS, SUPPORT AND
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Consumerism, Empowerment and Resistance:

Understanding Migrant Responses to
Homelessness



An ESRC large grant



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1.0

Migrant Homelessness



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A Comparative study

Investigating

- Causes of Homelessness
- Housing Strategies
- Normative Responses

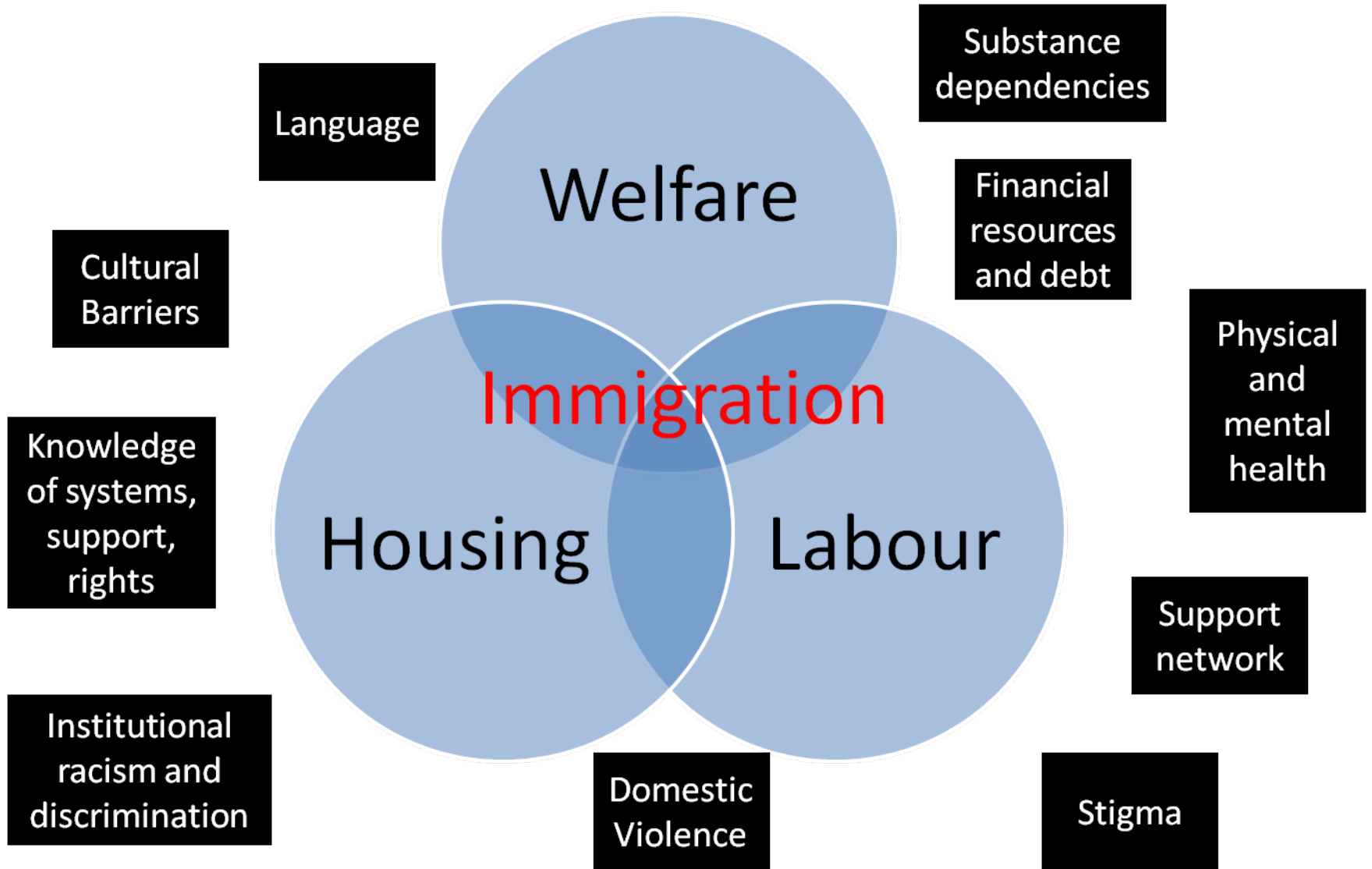
Questioning

- What is the role of agency in the context of constrained choice?
- How do homeless migrants **resist** power?

Origin (ethnicity)	N
Romania	3
Romania (Roma)	7
Poland	5
Total Scotland	15
Dominican Republic	10
Haiti	3
Guatemala	1
Belize	1
Total Massachusetts	15

2.0

Structural and Individual Causes



3.0

Power and Empowerment

Concepts of Power

- Foucaudian or Judicial (Young, 1997)
- Individual or Collective (Pease, 2002)
- Personal or Political (Rose, 1989)
- Private or Public (Trethewey, 1997)
- Fragmented or Organised (Okely, 1992)
- Top Down or Bottom Up (Graham, 2002)
- Constant or Variable Sum (Wilkinson, 1999)
- Consumerist or Liberational (Starkey, 2003)



4.0

Forms of Resistance

Resistance to Power

Outside (Trethewey, 1997)

- Parodying/ Refusing Confessional Practices
- Fighting Bureaucracy
- Playing Games
- Breaking Rules
- Revisioning Relationships

From Within (Fraser, 1989)

- Displace official interpretations of need – ‘needs talk’
- Practice or behaviour counter to official intent
- Accept assistance and reject conditions

Displace Official Interpretations

- **Re-present circumstances to fit pre-defined service**
- Example: Illegal basement apartments in Boston

“I had to grab and hold the pride and all morals and go... I told them my case, I had no home, had three children, the older one suffer from asthma every night and he had attacks so then they sent to investigate and monitor the area and because of the kids they gave me housing... The first time I was turned away, a lady saw me and took my case and told me to go back to Santo Domingo, I had nothing to tie me here, so supervisor showed [up], a very good one and she said no, that things were not like that, that **the children needed a home and that she was going to give them one**” (Valentina, F, Dominican).

Counter Official Intent

- **Utilising assistance in a way that was not intended**
- Example: HomeBase transitional housing voucher in Boston

“Once I'm stable and have a job and won't get fired tomorrow, I'll definitely give HomeBase an opportunity. If they're going to help me with \$500 of the rent. My wife is going to be in bed rest for 3 months [after the birth]. Once HomeBase is over, with me and her working, if she's making \$1000 a month, I'm making \$1500, you know. That's \$2500, we can definitely get an apartment on our own” (Mateo, M, Dominican).

Accept and Reject

- **Taking up assistance, exerting right to better/more service**
- Example: Motels and emergency family shelter in Boston

“There's terrible help [in motels]. It takes weeks until you see a case manager versus being in a shelter, people tell me, you hit the lottery. Cuz you have a case manager, uh a case worker 24/7 where you're at. So it depends where they put you...Say we didn't have the baby, we wouldn't be here. We would still be in the hotel...I don't think DTA [Department of Transitional Assistance] is doing something bad. **But they're not doing something good either**” (Blanca, F, Dominican).

Parodying and Refusing Confessional Practices

- **Challenging the requirement to divulge personal info**
- Example: Accessing temporary accommodation in Edinburgh

“I’ve been in Access Point [drop in service], they told me that I had too much money per week to take the Housing Benefit. And I told her, ‘I can work less’. And she told me, ‘**this is not the answer**’. I know people, Polish people don’t work at all, and they have B and Bs for free. But I don’t know how this works. This is country where everything you can just talk about. Everything you can make here just by talking!” (Jakub, M, Polish).

Fight Bureaucracy

- **Overt challenge to rules and rule enforcers**
- Example: Deportation interview in Edinburgh

“I won't take any money from them because I have my honour...I prefer not to live on any benefits. People would say that Poles are coming here to live on benefits...I don't need that money...Woman from Home Office speak me: 'Better when you take JobSeeker'. Better for Home Office when I take money? When I take benefits, When I don't need? She said 'You must take benefits or go to job!' This is communism, woman! You don't learn history... I'm no good homeless. I'm not good [obedient/compliant]” (Piotr, M, Polish)

Playing Games and Breaking Rules

- **Defying conditions perceived to be pointless/ arbitrary**
- Example: Compulsory English language classes in Edinburgh

“I thought that we’re going to have a group consisting of people only from Poland and the teacher will be Polish as well. That would enable us to learn faster...But it was different. There was a huge diversity in our group...Teachers were also not from Scotland so they had completely different accent. But what really annoys me is that we had different teachers each time and every teacher was doing something else. One was teaching us something very simple, another one something very hard. It was just a mix of everything. It wasn’t consistent. **I feel even more confused now than I was before. So I drop out** after 2 or 3 months” (Antoni, M, Polish) .

5.0

Resistance and Homelessness

How does resistance empower homeless migrants?

- Exercise agency in the face of constrained choice
- ‘Accommodating protest’ obscures power from within (MacLeod, 1992)
- ‘Frontal attack’ on structural subjugation from outside (Martin, 1986)
- Degree and measure of liberation/ emancipation
- Self-determination through transgression

**What are the implications of consumerist forms of
resistance for social policy?**

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