PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Trajectories of recovery among homeless adults with mental illness who participated in a randomized controlled trial of Housing First: A longitudinal, narrative analysis
AUTHORS	Patterson, Michelle; Rezansoff, Stefanie; Currie, Lauren; Somers, Julian

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Henwood, Benjamin University of Southern California, Social Work
REVIEW RETURNED	28-Jun-2013

THE STUDY	Manuscript was well written. Part of the methods that were not clear or confusing was that it seems that individual trajectories were rated (positive, negative, mixed, neutral) based on a quantification of qualitative data, so that there were 22 domains and if the majority were positive than the trajectory was positive. Yet at times the authors seem to indicate that the participants themselves are the one's judging the quality of their trajectory rather than assessed by the study team. So for example, on Page 15, line 32, they write that people reported on the quality of the trajectory. But weren't they assigned? That is, the trajectories are not subjectively determined by the participant. If they were, would the outcomes look any different? After all, getting housing may be the only thing good that happened to someone, but may subjectively outweigh a host of bad things that they experience. In short, it is not clear that the authors are clear on the relationship between the themes and the participants' subjective experience and how they categorized one's trajectory. So related, authors talk about drug use as significantly impacting trajectories, but no mention of substance abuse outcomes - either of the sample or what has been cited in the literature (see Tsemberis et al., 2004, Padgett et al., 2006, Padgett et al., 2011). Page 11, line 30, what did they use to co-code? A code book? What were some of the codes? What kind of coding?
REPORTING AND ETHICS	the article is well written. In addition to possibly thinking through how the trajectories were assessed, and the relationship between these assessments and the qualitative findings, there are a few other points that may strengthen the paper (in no particular order). First, the authors talk about how not meeting expectations can influence how people feel about their recovery trajectory. This is an important point that could be discussed more (see Henwood, Hsu, et al., 2012 in Journal of social work and research). On P 18, lines 3-10…the depleted social networks apply to all

| | clients, not just TAU (according to the literature cited). This manuscript gives the impression that HF are doing better in all respects but this is not what the previous literature suggests, or rather, may be doing better but it is not all positive trajectories.

Page 18, lines 14-23. Authors describe different elements of positive trajectories without considering the relationship between them. Padgett, 2007, discusses 'ontological security' as a way to understand the relationship between having housing and other aspects of one's life. More could be said along these lines.

Page 19, lines 10-13, suggest that even positive trajectories are complex (and there's good and bad within these trajectories). This could be made more clear. |

| REVIEWER | Bassuk, Ellen
Center for Social Innovation |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 03-Jul-2013 |

| RESULTS AND CONCLUSION | The authors describe a qualitative study in which they conducted "personal story interviews" to determine trajectories of recovery--in people who were chronically homeless. They categorized the trajectories based on the number of events --stating that they identified 22 domains. It is not clear what events they focused on-- and whether they factored in the nature and impact of the person's mental illness. I would suggest that these data be presented in a more organized and systematic manner--The sample is small and even smaller when you account for the different housing options.
In addition, it would be useful if the authors included small case vignettes to illustrate some of the points the authors were emphasizing--particularly the differences in trajectories.
The article would benefit from a more systematic presentation--withe the domains of interest more clearly delineated and some discussion of the role of mental illness--separate from substance abuse.. |

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer #1:
1. Part of the methods that were not clear or confusing was that it seems that individual trajectories were rated (positive, negative, mixed, neutral) based on a quantification of qualitative data, so that there were 22 domains and if the majority were positive than the trajectory was positive. Yet at times the authors seem to indicate that the participants themselves are the one's judging the quality of their trajectory rather than assessed by the study team. So for example, on Page 15, line 32, they write that people reported on the quality of the trajectory. But weren't they assigned? That is, the trajectories are not subjectively determined by the participant. If they were, would the outcomes look any different? After all, getting housing may be the only thing good that happened to someone, but may subjectively outweigh a host of bad things that they experience. In short, it is not clear that the authors are clear on the relationship between the themes and the participants' subjective experience and how they categorized one's trajectory.

We have clarified our categorization of trajectories of recovery in several ways. First, we have changed language throughout the text to indicate that participant narratives were classified as different trajectories; participants did not report trajectories. We also state in the Methods that, while participant self-report was part of the assessment of trajectory, other factors were also included as

well as "scientific/clinical judgment" on the part of the coders. As noted below, this judgment was critical for identifying change in cases were mental illness affected a participant's perception of change but clear progress was identified over time.

2. Authors talk about drug use as significantly impacting trajectories, but no mention of substance abuse outcomes - either of the sample or what has been cited in the literature (see Tsemberis et al., 2004, Padgett et al., 2006, Padgett et al., 2011).

Text describing the importance of substance use in recovery and adjustment to HF has been added to the Introduction. Additional studies are cited (not restricted to HF) that reported relationships between substance use and housing stability. Of interest, a separate manuscript based on our study cohort (under review) found that housing stability among HF participants was not affected by substance dependence or daily drug use over 12 months of follow up.

3. Page 11, line 30, what did they use to co-code? A code book? What were some of the codes? What kind of coding?

We have clarified the coding process as well as our approach (a mix of deductive and inductive). Coding was initially based on questions from the interview, which elicited a number of codes that were then refined through within case and across case coding. Our approach was primarily deductive and based on a grounded theory approach; however, we also looked for themes identified in past literature and field notes related to the emotional tone as well as the response style (e.g., cryptic vs. verbose; structured vs. disorganized).

4. The authors talk about how not meeting expectations can influence how people feel about their recovery trajectory. This is an important point that could be discussed more (see Henwood, Hsu, et al., 2012 in Journal of social work and research).

Thank you for directing us to this reference – we found it very helpful and have incorporated more discussion of both expectations for change and "ontological security" both of which were very prominent themes in our narratives.

5. On P 18, lines 3-10…the depleted social networks apply to all clients, not just TAU (according to the literature cited). This manuscript gives the impression that HF are doing better in all respects but this is not what the previous literature suggests, or rather, may be doing better but it is not all positive trajectories.

We agree – our HF participants struggled with social interactions and many continued to experience loneliness and isolation. This has been clarified in both the Results and Discussion.

6. Page 18, lines 14-23. Authors describe different elements of positive trajectories without considering the relationship between them. Padgett, 2007, discusses 'ontological security' as a way to understand the relationship between having housing and other aspects of one's life. More could be said along these lines.

Thank you for the reminder of Padgett's work on "ontological security." This concept fits very well with our finding that secure, good-quality housing provides a platform for change across a wide range of domains. We have included discussion of this concept in several places in our manuscript.

7. Page 19, lines 10-13, suggest that even positive trajectories are complex (and there's good and bad within these trajectories). This could be made more clear.

We have tried to make this clearer and believe that the inclusion of case vignettes for each trajectory (as suggested by Reviewer #2) help characterize the complexity inherent in different trajectories.

Reviewer #2

1. It is not clear what events they focused on--and whether they factored in the nature and impact of the person's mental illness. I would suggest that these data be presented in a more organized and systematic manner--The sample is small and even smaller when you account for the different housing options.

We did consider the nature and severity of the participant's mental illness. In addition to the domains, scientific and clinical judgment were important factors in the coding and classification of trajectories (two of the coders were clinical psychologists and all of the interviewers/coders had extensive experience working with homeless people).

We also agree that the organization of our original manuscript presented a number of opportunities for improvement, and we have re-organized the Results and Discussion sections in an effort to more clearly communicate our findings. Originally, our Results were presented in terms of the "codes" that contributed to different trajectories. We have reorganized the Results under key themes that support (1) positive trajectories, and (2) negative, neutral and mixed trajectories.

In the Limitations, we caution readers that the sample is small (although it is larger than many existing qualitative studies) when divided into TAU vs. HF and especially different kinds of HF. Throughout the manuscript, we focus our "comparison" on TAU vs. HF, given that there were no observable differences in trajectory classification among different kinds of HF. Moreover, the focus of our manuscript is on the themes that support different types of trajectories.

2. In addition, it would be useful if the authors included small case vignettes to illustrate some of the points the authors were emphasizing--particularly the differences in trajectories.

We agree and have included vignettes for each of the four trajectory groups.

3. The article would benefit from a more systematic presentation--with the domains of interest more clearly delineated and some discussion of the role of mental illness--separate from substance abuse.

As noted, we have re-organized the manuscript (Results and Discussion) in order to achieve a clearer, more systematic presentation. We have also added discussion of the role of mental illness, separate from substance use.

In addition to the revisions suggested above, we have carefully edited the manuscript and have removed unnecessary words and detail. For example, we removed details regarding the randomization arm in the Methods as this is not a focus of the current paper and is described in detail in previously published work. This extra space allowed us to provide more detail around our data analysis, case vignettes, and in the Discussion.