

Homelessness Research

Frankish, J. C., Hwang, S. W., & Quantz D. (March/April 2005). Homelessness and Health in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, Vol, Page(s). Retrieved March 16, 2011, from <http://www.raincityhousing.org/docs/cjph.pdf>.

The Scope of Homelessness in Canada

- The 2001 Census reveals that over 14 000 people were homeless in Canada. (Data gathered by Statistics Canada)
- Many believed that this number was not correct representation of the problem of homelessness.
- New strategies of obtaining homelessness statistics formed such as Homeless Individuals and Families System (HIFIS). HIFIS focuses on obtaining more detailed information regarding homeless shelters across Canada. Also, local homeless counts have been conducted in cities across Canada to get a more realistic statistic.
- Trouble obtaining clear range of homelessness due to four main factors:
 1. Lack of certainty/clarity in the definition of homeless.
 2. The inability to identifying homeless people.
 3. Difficulty in communicating with the homeless.
 4. Lack of participation by local agencies.
- Homelessness can be defined as living in a shelter or in a place uninhabitable by humans, those who are “couch surfing” (temporarily living with family or friends),and those who are living in substandard or unsafe housing.
- Urbanization- factor of homelessness. (80% of Canada’s populations live in cities.) Availability for affordable housing diminishes.
- Heterogeneity- diverse nature of something, in this case homelessness.
- Homelessness does not discriminate against age or race. Anyone could be affected by it whether it’s long term or temporary.
- Homelessness can be caused by:
Unfavourable childhood experiences, low educational training, lack of job skills, family breakdown, mental illness, or substance abuse.
- “Research on Homelessness has often reflected disciplinary traditions, with health researchers focussing on individual risk factors and social scientists looking at marginalization, exclusion and economic forces. This is important because the formulation of the causes of homelessness can become highly politicized and can influence public perceptions and policies related to homelessness.”

The Health Status of Homeless Persons

- Homelessness has direct impact on health.
- Shelter conditions:
 - Result in exposure to infections, lice, infestations, tuberculosis
 - Long periods of walking and standing

- Many homeless are staying in shelters for longer periods of time which suggest that Canada has more long term homeless persons.
- Many churches and private agencies provide some shelter, but still only accept limited numbers of homeless. This is band-aid solution.

Demoralizing:

- People think of shelters as “Christian charity” but the conditions of the shelters are nowhere near favourable.
- In past, Federal government built non-profit co-op housing representing 6% of Canada’s housing stock. In 1994 funding was cancelled for new developments leaving public housing up to provincial governments. (B.C. is the only province to initiate accommodations since.)

T., A.W. *A Psychological View of Homelessness. (2008)* Retrieved April 25, 2011 from eHow Database.

Website Link:

(http://www.ehow.com/about_4572162_psychological-view-homelessness.html#ixzz1KZYroBrq)

- Article about the relation between homelessness and psychology.
- “A psychological view of homelessness shows there is a mental factor involved in becoming homeless. A homeless person suffers an impaired personality as a result of the circumstances leading to their condition.”
- Homeless people perceived as a class of dirty, unemployed and poverty-stricken people.
- Psychological disorders cause homelessness, and homelessness causes psychological disorders.
- If a person is forced into homelessness, they will experience psychological consequences no matter what their situations are.
- Treatment of the mind is the way to recovery in homeless individuals
- “If psychological help is made easily available or even required for certain programs, more homeless may get the treatment needed to mentally prepare them for a better life.”

J., D. H. (February 18, 2009). *Homelessness in Canada: Past, Present, Future.* April 21, 2011, from http://intraspec.ca/51110_EN.pdf.

- “We need to focus on the bigger picture – we need to take action on the three causes, and thus the three solutions, to homelessness: adequate housing, adequate income, and adequate support services to meet the basic human needs that define an adequate standard of living for all.”

Anthropology

Problem:

"... [According to the media] the homeless remain an embarrassment and continue to be seen as transients, derelicts, "dirty" and generally not worthy of one's attention." (Connie, 2000, para. 1)

Unfortunately, the homeless are portrayed inaccurately in society by the media. They are seen as the bottom of the class system, which makes it extremely hard for them to receive employment and restart their lives. Without the resolution of this issue, homelessness will be an on-going issue.

"Although the representation of homeless people as needy and deserving seems positive and sympathetic, both representations work to keep people who are homeless on the margins of society, controlling them, disenfranchising them, and denying them full participation as citizens." (Scnieder, Chamberlain, Hodgetts, 2010, p. 166)

As a member of society, we have certain rights and basic health regulations to live by. Homeless people are not even taken into account of these factors. The homeless more support from society in order to live in even the utmost awful conditions.

Solution:

"One means of overcoming this [stereotype of the homeless] is to develop relationships between researchers and journalists to create a meta-commentary that allows for "warts and all" portrayals without undermining the need for empathy and support." (Scnieder, Chamberlain, Hodgetts, 2010, p. 169)

In society researchers take time to establish bonds with the homeless, whereas journalists write to get their own voice heard. If a relationship could be established between the homeless and those who write about them, there will be a greater chance that all societal preconceptions will diminish.

"This [solution] may require journalists and their employers to look beyond the simple stereotypes that underpin the narrative of regulation and control and to work actively to present stories that promote the social conclusion and citizenships of all members of society, regardless of their housing status." (Scnieder, Chamberlain, Hodgetts, 2010, p. 169)

The media portrays the homeless as people who lack control and citizenship. In order for the issue of homelessness to be resolved, everyone must learn to accept their situations, and promote equality support the progress of the homeless who are suffering.

Sociology

Problem:

“In our corpus, 79.8 percent of the people described in items [articles from the Calgary and Vancouver news papers] in which the gender and age of the main homeless person could be identified were adult males.” (Scnieder, Chamberlain, Hodgetts, 2010, p. 169) ✓

The number of articles that are specifically about homeless men is increasingly high which is feeding the stereotype that only men are homeless. This is a great issue because not only are poor men more likely to be stereotyped as homeless, but also the issues of homeless women and children are often disregarded.

“Because the education levels of people who are homeless are lower than the general public, they experience challenges with participating in the formal labour market, which is subject to taxation and regulation, and often provides benefits.” (Power, 2008, para. 3) ✓

The uneducated homeless are a distinct group of individuals who really have no way of attaining employment. Education institutions are extremely important for youth to insure financial support in the future to improve the quality of life. The uneducated homeless miss many opportunities to improve their situation.

Solution:

“The Salvation Army provides 6,370 shelter beds, one-quarter of all the shelter beds in Canada, for the homeless each night through a national network of 52 shelters and hostels” (Francis, 2011, para. 7) ✓

The support of charities such as The Salvation Army provide temporary relief for those experiencing homelessness. Having a roof overhead allows individuals to regroup and face the world one day at a time. If more charities extend a helping hand, more people would be off the streets and in a bed.

“Rather than shuffling homeless people from service to service and back to the street, the aim of all government agencies, nonprofits, and institutions in the homeless system must be to first get homeless people into permanent housing.” (Steffey et al, 2004, p. 3) ✓

It seems as though many agencies and institutions overlook the long-term needs of individuals who are homeless. Institutions must now work towards establishing more stable housing to achieve a lasting solution. The comfort of one's own home is incomparable.

Psychology

Problem:

“Stigma negatively influences the emotional well-being of those in society who are homeless, and also the ability of these individuals to grasp help and support in their time of need.” (Shier, Jones, Graham, 2010, p. 14)

Homelessness is physically and mentally a demanding state. The shame and embarrassment of homeless people often cause them much emotional pain and lack of motivation to get out of their current situation.

“Many people who are homeless remain at risk for poor health even if they obtain stabling housing. In addition, certain health conditions (particularly mental illness) may contribute to the onset of homelessness and then in turn be exacerbated by the homeless state.” (Frankish, 2009, p. 6)

Sadly those who are homeless have a huge risk of developing mental illnesses. A mental illness often worsens the states of homelessness, which will continue to feed the illness until it gets to a severe state. Those who are homeless and mentally ill require the most attention and support, which is not offered.

Solution:

“I think I am more tolerant of others now. I think I have come into a part of me that I didn’t actually know before. I would say that I have more compassion for people now—more of an understanding. I’m not so quick to judge. I was very judgmental before. But then I lived in my own sphere.” (Shier, Jones, Graham, 2010, p. 25)

Finding positivity in one’s situation is one of the first steps in gaining confidence to overcome homelessness. By realizing a change in their own perspective of themselves, many homeless persons are able to really reflect on the importance of life and avoid mental hostages such as depression.

“... Improved health and adequate housing are means of achieving the ultimate goal of improved quality of life. Researchers are now recognizing the need to understand and measure the impact of interventions on quality of life, in addition to housing and health outcomes.” (Frankish, 2009, p. 6)

It is important to be aware of how necessary it is to have a stable house. Improved quality of life and health greatly depends on permanent housing. Creating well-established housing is the first step to creating a mentally and physically healthy atmosphere for those who are currently homeless.

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