

Rationale

Homelessness has captured the attention of communities as a major social issue for years (Toro et al., 1995). In fact, published literature addressing homelessness has dramatically increased since the early 1980s as a direct result of the nation's outcry (Toro et al., 1995). Recently, The American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force (2009) defined homelessness as "Homelessness exists when people lack safe, stable and appropriate places to live. Sheltered and unsheltered people are homeless. People living doubled up or in overcrowded living situations or motels due to inadequate economic resources are included in this definition, as are those living in tents, or other temporary enclosures." As of 2009, The National Coalition for the Homeless reported 3.5 million individuals experience homelessness annually. Additionally, an estimated 94% of those homeless were identified as single adults (The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Accounting for gender, Toro et al. (1995) indicated 63% of the homeless population was single adult males. The Urban Institute (1999) conducted a similar study which indicated 77% were single adult men. Meanwhile, the Urban Institute (1999), suggest that single women represent approximately 23% of the homeless population. Recently, there has been a demand in the resources available to homeless women and family. However, in regards to my CICLR I will focus exclusively on homeless single men.

Meanwhile, several empirical studies have indicated that homelessness is a risk factor for mental health, substance abuse and incarceration (Toro et al., 1995). An estimated 20 to 25% of homeless individuals suffer from a serious mental illness compared to only 6% of the general population (Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration, 2003). Compared to the general population, substance abuse use is far more common within the homeless population (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Meanwhile, several studies revealed 40 to 80% of the homeless individuals reported frequent consumption of alcohol or some type of an illegal substance (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2010). Substance abuse was the most significant factor causing and attributed as a direct result of homelessness among single adult males (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009) according to a 2008 survey. Mental illness was reported to be the third most contributing factor that causes homelessness for single adult males (National Coalition for the Homelessness, 2009). Drake, Osher and Wallach (1991) suggest homeless individuals with a co-occurring disorder are more vulnerable than the general population. SAMHSA (2003) findings suggest many homeless individuals' psychological needs are significantly unmet when diagnosed with a co-occurring disorder. In addition, those that are afforded access to treatment typically receive less than adequate care. Stated previously, homelessness has been an ongoing societal issue for many years.

Homelessness among people of color, specifically African American single men has drastically increased since the emergence of Homelessness in the 1870's (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Despite accounting for only 12% of the U.S. adult population; National Coalition for Homeless (2009) reported that African American single males were between 47 to 77% of the total homeless population. Obviously African American single homelessness varies geographically, however this is still a social justice issues that needs to be addressed. Johnson (2010) suggests that current homelessness literature often omits historical facts regarding African Americans.

The United States Department of Justice (1999) reported that inmates with a mental illness were twice as likely to report homelessness in the past 12 months compared to general population. Literature suggests higher rates of homelessness, alcohol and drug use amongst incarcerated individuals with a mental health diagnoses (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999). Disturbing statistics regarding incarceration statistics are quite similar to homelessness figures. A report developed in 1999 by the United States Department of Justice revealed that 68% of US inmates were minorities.