An Annotated Bibliography for Instructors of English at
El Camino College: English A and English 84

Homelessness and Its Related Problems

Anderson, Michelle D. “Special Schools For Homeless Students Bursting At The

Writer Michelle Anderson defines homelessness as “not having a stable, long-term place
to stay.” According to Sara Fuentes, Co-Principal and Chief Executive Officer of the
Monarch School, a San Diego based public school serving the homeless children’s
population in the K-12 grades, an average stay at the school is a full six months. Fuentes
also estimates that about one half of the population that her school serves is comprised of
first-time homeless families, most of their homelessness occurred because of the rash of
recent nationwide foreclosures. In neighboring Arizona, Jarret Sharp, Principal of the
Children First Academy, Phoenix campus, estimates that the enrollment has grown
twelve to eighteen percent in the past three years. His largely transient population
fluctuates from two hundred and eighty students to three hundred and twenty per year.
This past month, the school’s waiting list has grown from twelve in 2009 to sixty
currently. A major problem impacting these children is delayed academic development;
most children are one to two grade levels behind their more geographically stable peers.

Kaplan, Paula J. “Don’t know what to say to veterans? Just listen.” The Washington

Many Americans are unsure about what to say to returning veterans from the Afghanistan
and Iraq wars. Most simply blurt out a “thank you” and then flee as quickly as possible.
For their part, returning veterans suffer horribly in isolation. These veterans are twenty
per cent more likely to commit suicide than a member of the civilian population and are
also twenty per cent more likely to be homeless. According to Paula J. Kaplan, the most
important thing that a civilian can do for a veteran is simply to listen actively—to
withhold comments, and to avoid judgment. Such proactive listening, she insists, can be a
transformative experience for both the veteran and the civilian.


Deam discusses the increasing number of once stable families becoming homeless. She points out that this once stable population “blends in” with their erstwhile peers during the day but at night find themselves “sleeping in shelters, shabby motels, and on the couches of relatives.” In terms of the children of these families, research indicates that country wide, the school population has grown one hundred per cent in the first two months of the school year of 2009 from 2008. and the Department of Education estimates a total population of homeless pupils to be around 800,000 in 2007-2008, an overall increase of fifteen per cent from the previous years. According to Ellen Bassuk, Ph.D., the percentage of homeless families in 1985 was barely one percent of the overall homeless population. In 2008, this total rose to nearly forty per cent of the overall homeless population. An added feature to this article is the profiling of three homeless families—the point being that there is no “stereotypical family” in this group. Another nice feature is an insert referring readers who wish to help to appropriate organizations.


Although a highly “academic” sociological field study, this piece, nevertheless, balances the human nature of the homeless women with the technical considerations demanded by the study. In the preface to the discussion proper, the authors cite two disturbing figures regarding homelessness and women—of the thirty-eight million Americans who live in poverty, twenty-eight million are women; by 2007, 59.6% of all female-headed households were living below the federally-defined “poverty level.” The writers interviewed twenty women and found the following negotiating strategies for “coping” with the institution: Submission, adaptation, and rejection. Each of these aforementioned strategies has several poignant mini-narratives to illustrate “survival skills” that the women employ to adapt and to cope with their dismal condition for students.


According to Naomi Dillon, since 2007 the state of Nevada has had the highest foreclosure rate in the nation. Partly as a result of this loss of homes, the homeless student population in formerly affluent Clark County has grown by more than thirty per cent in the past year. The National Center on Family Homelessness (NCFH) has published the shocking figure of one in fifty American children fitting the homeless category; so the
Homelessness problem is not diminishing nor will it in the immediate future. A problem confronting school authorities is that many of the students do not fit the “homeless” stereotype. Many come to school well dressed and prepared for class. Consequently, authorities have difficulty identifying these children in order to offer assistance to them and to their families (an assistance that many families are hesitant to receive). Yet another thorny issue involves the whole area of transportation to and from school, given both the logistical and economic problems which beset districts.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. “Occupational hazards: Protestors across the nation are learning what the homeless already knew: Life on the streets is hard.” Los Angeles Times


In the wake of the nation-wide “Occupy Wall Street” movement against corporate greed, many protestors have discovered what the permanently homeless already know: Finding food, warmth, and a place to urinate without running afoul of the law. Moreover, Ehrenreich examines the laws that impact the homeless regarding things such as sitting down, lying down, or sleeping in public. Of course, police have long been concerned with keeping the homeless out-of-sight and perhaps out-of-mind by regularly breaking up homeless encampments country wide. It is, according to Barbara Ehrenreich, as if the homeless are “our native-born illegals.”


I must confess that I find this article to be both poorly written and badly reasoned. I see it as more of a “rant.” In any case, the writer Curtis Emory chastises California’s do-nothing legislative body collectively, except to collect per diem benefits and salary faithfully. In turning his attention to the ever increasing homeless population in this state, Emory faults the cities for doing nothing to assuage the ills of this community of homeless folk, except, of course, to send them on their respective ways. In a salute to the federal government, the writer believes that it will cause more problems, via “welfare reforms” and the failure to promote jobs among the various industries.

In a nice contrast to the article above, the writers of this journal article seek to quantify the relationship between “housing insecurity” and the health of very young children, three years of age and younger. Although very “academic” from the perspective of the sociology discipline, the piece is, nevertheless, very readable. Filled with charts, graphs, and six pages of endnotes, the essay is still highly engaging. The writers interviewed precisely 22,069 “low-income care givers” from the period of 1998-2007, from seven urban medical centers nation wide. After this exhaustive process, they concluded that “housing insecurity” is associated with the poor health, lower weight, and developmental risk that confront this population. Conversely, housing security is beneficial and should be promoted at all cost. A further problem with stable housing rests in the area of rent. Half of the renter population paid thirty per cent of its total income on rent, and about twenty-five per cent paid fifty per cent. Consequently, to reduce this population, some type of subsidy must be provided.


In his piece, Dennis Freeman explores the disturbing social phenomenon of tremendous percentage of Homeless African Americans, particularly those inhabiting the streets of Los Angeles. Although people become cognizant and subsequently charitable toward this population in the Thanksgiving through Christmas season, when shelters and soup kitchens overflow with volunteers, not much is done for the homeless in the other eleven months. Freeman cites a shocking statistic published in the Economic Roundtable Report, wherein it is reported that the African American homeless population is “represented” by a five to one margin for the city of Los Angeles’ total homeless population. Moreover, African Americans comprise only nine per cent of the entire population of Los Angeles County. According to National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, a full one half of the three million total, national homeless group is comprised of African Americans.

The writer provides a useful definition of an oftentimes amorphous term, “Homeless children,” a term he defines as “any youngster who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” Gargiulo offers the disturbing statistic regarding homeless families with children—a full forty per cent of the entire homeless population. And ten years ago the United States Department of Education estimated the number of homeless children and youths at about 740,000. Today, the number has soared to over one million, including some 250,000 preschoolers. Moreover, these kids are beset with myriad problems; they are, for instance, twice as likely to exhibit a learning disability and three times more likely to manifest emotional than their housed counterparts. Though legally entitled to a free, public education, these children, nevertheless, confront obstacles including proof of residency requirements, immunization records, and lack of transportation. Gargiulo insists that early childhood specialists must be actively involved in diagnosing and aiding these children.


According to this writer, forty-one per cent of the nation’s homeless population—a full 1.35 million—are children. In light of this depressing fact, Holgersson-Shorter opines that teachers play an incredibly significant role in providing an environment wherein children feel safe and nurtured. Oftentimes, teachers have the opportunity to win a child’s trust and in providing help for this population. Although the McKinney-Vento Act is a good start in helping homeless children, the 65.4 million dollars allotted to this effort serves only about nine per cent of the group.


The First Vanguard Church of God (FUCG) conducted both religious service and food sharing for the homeless population surrounding a downtown Orlando. Florida park. Beginning in 2005, the group met weekly on Wednesdays at five o’clock p.m. to perform its services. In response, an ordinance was passed prohibiting the feeding of a group of twenty-five or more without a permit—and such a permit was limited to two per calendar year. The case went to a federal court which ruled in favor of the FUCG.

*Los Angeles Times* columnist Steve Lopez discusses the phenomenon of readers asking him where to go to volunteer—soup kitchens, shelters, and missions—during the holiday season. Ironically, during this period these establishments do not need additional help—inasmuch as their kitchens are overflowing with volunteers. Lopez takes the opportunity to laud an organization dedicated to permanently housing some twelve thousand homeless by 2016. Readers are urged to go to the website, [www.HomeForGoodLA.com](http://www.HomeForGoodLA.com), in order to obtain the necessary information to assist those in need. A coalition of normal citizens, business leaders, and members of public office, this organization has already succeeded in securing permanent housing, both for some two thousand homeless veterans as well as other chronically homeless individuals. Homeless activist Jerrod B. Neuman, an attorney at law, laments the current system which was set up to manage homelessness rather than to find a solution for the problem. Some seventy-five percent of the funds, 875 million dollars, allocated for this social ill are inadequately spent on only one quarter of the population according to Neuman.


According to Andrew Mach, since 2007, the homeless children’s population has increased more than fifty percent in fifteen of the states. One of every forty-five children is homeless; most of these kids are under the age of seven. Ellen Bassuk, president of the National Center on Family Homeless, claims that “the [current] recession has been a man-made disaster for vulnerable children, who remain invisible because they have no [collective] voice and no constituency.” Homeless children are two times more likely to suffer illness and emotional health issues as well. Bassuk warns against further cuts to aid from both the federal government and the state governments as well.


Although a dated piece, the topic is, nevertheless, still relevant. Because of the various measures that the City of San Francisco has taken against its large homeless population, several groups of activists have begun to teach this group to advocate for themselves and not rely too heavily on sympathizers to challenge the established authorities. According to Mesler, thirty-two of forty-nine major cities have enacted legislation targeted at the homeless population. In San Francisco, for example, the Matrix Program has criminalized
the homeless by legislation, among these acts is a “Quality of Life” penalty that stipulates that any of a number of violations will result in a seventy-one dollar fine. Litigation has proven ineffective thus far. The only other option, then, is to form a rather considerable political alliance to change the status quo. As one activist member claimed, “no change without conflict.”


This article largely falls into the genre of a “diatribe,” this one targeting then Mayor of San Francisco, Art Agnos, for his “do-nothing” policy regarding the homeless population. Though well intentioned, the writer has severe problems with fundamental elements such as mechanics, diction, and syntax. Even worse, the solution to the homeless problem offered by the writer is quite nebulous—generally falling into the repeated statement that the “government” should do something.


According to the authors of this piece, some 1.7 million youth are homeless countrywide. This article focuses on nineteen young people, aged sixteen to twenty-one, and divided gender-wise into fifteen males and four females. Further, all of these youths were interviewed over an eighteen-month period, and all resided in a common area across from a major northeastern university, they dubbed “the pit.” The government’s term for young folk like these is “street youth.” And the problems of this group involve their shying away from potential help because they deem themselves “marginalized.” Instead, they sell drugs, steal, turn to prostitution, or do anything else they can to survive on the streets. Many band together and form street families, naming their groups for distinctive qualities such as “Goths,” “Wicca,” and so forth. The members of this group also practice a version of “Wicca” as their religion. They have as well their own brand of music as well. The writers conclude that current programs formed to aid this population need to be reevaluated, reassessed, and redesigned.


Veteran sex offenders are a generally acknowledged reentry and housing challenge nationwide, for both the Veterans Administration and the criminal justice system. The
Homeless strategies developed to help this population are two-fold: To develop, negotiate, and contract per diem housing for ninety days, and to provide sex offenders with clinical treatment services. This piece also contains a fair number of graphs and charts for those expressing an interest in the topic.


After a horrific discovery of violence and sexual abuse exacted upon his daughter by a nanny over a period of years, powerful Florida lobbyist Ron Book championed legislation against sex offenders. Key among this legislation was a proviso which forbade registered sex offenders from being with 2,500 feet of places where children gather. Because of his efforts and his daughter’s as well—they often spoke together at various functions—some sixty counties followed suit in passing like legislation. A typical result of this legislation is the “Julia Tuttle Camp,” in fact, a causeway under which sex offenders gather during evenings. The three-year-old settlement now has a nightly population of seventy sex offenders who stay during the prescribed hours of ten p.m. to six a.m. However, there is not evidence that this legislation results in greater protection among children. According to Jill Levenson, a professor of human services at Lynn University, only about eleven per cent of sex offenders are strangers—the balance is comprised of friends, relatives, and teachers. Lauren Book, the girl who suffered the abuse, has grown into a successful young woman at twenty-four; she is happily married as well to a high school sweet heart. Both she and her father have concluded that the law did not serve its intended purpose. Sex offenders need stability, counseling, and treatment that they cannot get living a transient existence.


Wilber Tatum chronicles the horrible winter conditions that beset the homeless in Manhattan, New York. Record freezing temperatures will lead to many deaths—a fact, he maintains, that will be ignored by bureaucracy, inasmuch as this population is largely politically and economically powerless. He ponders the irony of soldiers dying abroad, oftentimes at the hands of the same people they help to feed during the day. If these soldiers were to exact revenge on these folk, the country would not abide it. However, the homeless people living in the midst of an affluent community do not even merit a glance sometimes—let alone concern and the necessary aid.

In a cross sectional study, focused on marginally housed men living with HIV virus in San Francisco, the authors availed themselves to the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) instrument to measure and to assess the rate of depression among men in this particular population. Of the two hundred and thirty-nine men that formed the basis of the study, the researchers concluded that one hundred and thirty-four, or fifty-six per cent of the interviewees, tested “positive” for clinical depression. Of note was the conclusion that this population was three times more likely to suffer from depression than people in the general population. Moreover, white men were twice as likely to suffer from depression as were members of other ethnic groups. The researcher averred that better screening for depression was a necessity in order to treat it properly.


The number of homeless veterans declined by nearly twelve per cent between January of 2011 and January of 2011 according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. In raw numbers, the decrease was nearly nine thousand, or a drop from 76,329 to 67,495 on a particular January night from each year. Moreover, since 2009, some 33,597 veterans have been placed in permanent, supportive housing according to the same source. The figures were arrived at by teams representing some four hundred communities country wide. These teams visited shelters, parks, and other areas frequented by the homeless. The Veterans Administration is making more than one hundred million dollars available, via federal grants, to communities that assist the agency in housing endeavors. Other efforts are being made to prevent the loss of housing for 42,000 veterans and their families, or—at the very least—to return them to stable housing conditions.