Intersections of Violence and Health in the Lives of Homeless and Street-Involved Youth

Dr. Kristy Buccieri
On behalf of Voices against Violence
Project Overview

Promoting Health through Collaborative Engagement with Youth in Canada: Overcoming, Resisting and Preventing Structural Violence

This is a five-year national research project that began in 2011, and is led by Western University (under P.I. Dr. Helene Berman)

Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research
The benefits and challenges of using arts-based research methods with marginalized young people (particularly those who are homeless and/or street-involved)

Discuss evidence-informed findings about the types of structural violence homeless and street-involved youth experience, and the resulting health outcomes

Provide a concrete set of policy and service provision recommendations related to homeless and street-involved youth
Using Arts-Based Research Methods with Homeless and Street-Involved Youth
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>City (ON)</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Arts–Based Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kristy Buccieri</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Homeless youth</td>
<td>16-21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sketch-booking, word bubbles, road maps, group discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abe Oudshoorn</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Transitional housing</td>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Journaling, body mapping, poetry, water colours, canvass creation, poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc Molgat, Susannah Taylor</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Street-involved youth</td>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Poetry, painting, videography, collage, large/small group discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges

Low literacy levels (written work)
Lack of belief in their own skills
Fear of judgement
Fear of over-exposure
Benefits

Alternate engagement in research
Less pressure filled
Creative engagement / expression
Prolonged engagement
Access to information not said

YOU'RE A SNAKE IN THE GRASS
MORE SHARP POINTS THAN BROKEN GLASS
NEVER TURN AROUND WHEN IT'S DARK OUTSIDE
AND YOU'RE WALKING FAST
Findings:

Types of structural violence homeless and street-involved youth experience, and their health outcomes
Powerlessness

Solidarity

you're not alone.
Justice

Education

Shelters / Child Welfare

Justice
Shelters and Child Welfare

I need to get my own place

People

impoverished, ethically ambiguous, chaotic, senseless, mindless, benevolence, malevolence
What happened yesterday affects the choices of today. The choices of today affect the outcome of tomorrow. What happened in the past can be building blocks, but when you live in the past, how can you expect to unlock the locks? (on the doors of opportunity)
Justice

we are youth that have been forgotten
but together, we stand strong.
Walking our paths
hand in hand
parts of us all belong.
Recommendations for Policy and Service Provision
Ensure safe and clean spaces are available and accessible for those who embody difference, without singling them out

- Gender-neutral washrooms, with individual shower stalls
- Accessible facilities on main floors that everyone can use

Within shelters, create programs that allow youth residents to develop skills and earn privileges for gardening and cooking

- Fresh food, employment skills, tied to financial or other incentives

Involve youth in the selection of the social workers who assist them

- Empowered to direct their own care facilitation
Early school-based interventions are needed to keep homeless and street-involved youth in school before they leave

- Alternative in-school supports / accommodations

House alternative schools within shelters and drop-in centres frequented by street-involved and homeless youth

- Teachers who are sensitive to the demands of street life
- Curriculum that is paced to individual learners

Support workers should work with local colleges to help youth enter bridging programs and receive credit

- Such as through prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR)
Analyse court probation records to determine whether punitive trends exist for homeless individuals (and youth, where records are available)

- Further research to determine what action / intervention is needed

Repeal / prevent legislation that targets / criminalizes the subsistence behaviours of homeless persons

- Such as the Ontario Safe Streets Act that tickets individuals for panhandling aggressively and/or to a captive audience
It will be ok in the end
If it's not OK, it's not the end.

Thank-You